God wants us to pray only to him.

Bible Verse
“Never stop praying” (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

Growing Closer to Jesus
Children will
- learn that God wants us to pray only to him,
- understand that we can pray no matter what anyone says,
- share about prayer with friends, and
- learn to thank God through prayer.

Teacher Enrichment

Bible Basis
Daniel prays to God.

Daniel was taken to Babylon as a teenager. More than 65 years elapsed between his arrival in Babylon and the events described in Daniel 6. After the fall of Babylon to the Medes, Darius, the new king, immediately appointed Daniel to be one of three rulers of Babylon. Because of his age, Daniel was a valuable source of information for King Darius, and Darius may have been impressed by the fact that Daniel had predicted the fall of Babylon.

Daniel did such a good job as one of the three administrators that Darius set him above the others—above the whole kingdom, in fact. The other administrators didn’t like that idea, so they first tried to find evidence that would discredit Daniel. When none was to be found, they resorted to deceit to get rid of Daniel. Since they knew Daniel would never violate his faith, they suggested an extremely flattering proposition to the king: No one would be allowed to pray to anyone but the king.

When he heard the new law, Daniel never wavered, but continued in his devotion to God, which included faithful prayer.

Prayer
- Read Psalms 91:15.
- How does the promise in this verse comfort you?
- Pray: Dear Lord God, your promises are so powerful. Help these little ones in my class to find comfort in turning to you in prayer when they are in need.
Before the Lesson

- Collect the necessary items for the activities you plan to use. Refer to the Classroom Supplies and Learning Lab Supplies columns to determine what you'll need.
- Make photocopies of the “Today I Learned…” handout (at the end of this lesson) to send home with your children.
- Pray for the children who will be attending your class.

This Lesson at a Glance

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*See the end of this lesson for extra-time ideas and supplies.*
Welcome Time

SUPPLIES: “Heart Name Tags” (p. 23), markers, pins or tape
• Bend down and make eye contact with children as they arrive.
• Greet each child individually with an enthusiastic smile.
• Thank each child for coming to class today.
• As children arrive, ask them about last week’s lesson or take-home page. Use questions such as “How did you keep a friend in your heart while you were apart?” or “How did you feel when you were apart?”
• Say: Today we’re going to learn that God wants us to pray only to him.
• Hand out the heart name tags children made during Lesson 1, and help them attach the name tags to their clothing. Have some extra heart name tags on hand for children who were not in class last week or to replace damaged name tags.
• Direct children to the Let’s Get Started activities you’ve set up.

Let’s Get Started

Set up one or more of the following activities for children to do as they arrive. After you greet each child, invite him or her to choose an activity.

Circulate among the children to offer help as needed and to direct their conversation toward today’s lesson. Ask questions such as “Who’s the only one who can answer our prayers?” or “Is a king or queen as powerful as God? Explain.”

Option 1: Where to Pray?

SUPPLIES: long sheet of butcher paper, tape, crayons or markers

Before class, tape a long sheet of butcher paper on a wall near the floor. Set the markers or crayons out for the children to use to draw pictures showing the different places that they can pray. Encourage them to draw outdoor places, such as a park, and indoor places, such as a dinner table or a bed. Tell children that today’s Bible story is about a man who prayed by his window. This man knew that God wants us to pray only to him, and the man kept praying to God even though he was going to be in big trouble with the king for praying.

Option 2: Prayer Tag

SUPPLIES: none

Tell the children that today they’ll learn about some mean men who tried to make another man stop praying to God. Choose one person to be the Stopper. The rest of the class will be the Prayers. The Stopper tries to gently touch the Prayers before they can kneel and fold their hands in prayer. If the Prayers kneel and fold their hands in prayer, they are safe from the Stopper. They can only remain on their knees long enough to say “Thank you, God!” If a Prayer is touched by the Stopper before kneeling and folding his or her hands, the Prayer must sit down until the game begins again. Allow the children to play for a few minutes, and then choose a new person to be the Stopper.

X-TRA IMPACT

Locate a large appliance box, and lay it on its long side. Use scissors or a box cutter to cut out a window and a door. Have the children draw the outdoor places to pray on the outside of the box, and indoor places to pray on the inside of the box.

Teacher Tips

As you think about the spiritual development of your 5- and 6-year-olds, remember that they
• understand that God made them,
• trust that God loves them, and
• are beginning to develop a sense of conscience.
Option 3: Really Royal

SUPPLIES: newspapers, white paper, crayons or markers, glitter, glue

Spread newspapers on a table, and set out white paper, crayons or markers, glitter, and glue. Have children draw themselves as kings and queens. Be sure they add sparkly crowns with the glitter. Ask questions such as “Is a king or queen an important person? Why or why not?” “Should we pray to a king or a queen?” and “Can a king or queen give you everything you need? Explain.” Remind children that God can give us what we need when we ask him in our prayers. Tell children that God wants us to pray only to him.

When everyone has arrived and you’re ready to move on to Bible Story Time, encourage the children to finish what they’re doing and get ready to clean up.

Pick Up Our Toys

SUPPLIES: CD player

Lead children in singing “Pick Up Our Toys” (track 2) with the CD to the tune of “Skip to My Lou.” Encourage children to sing along as they help clean up the room.

If you want to include the names of all the children in the class, sing the song without the CD, and repeat the naming section. If you choose to use the CD, vary the names you use each week.

Bible Story Time

Setting the Stage

SUPPLIES: Bible

Tell children you’ll clap a little rhythm to get their attention. Explain that when you clap, children are to stop what they’re doing, copy the rhythm you clapped, and focus on you. Plan to do a couple of clapping rhythms each time so children will have to listen carefully in order to copy what you clapped. Practice this signal a few times. Encourage children to respond quickly so you’ll have time for all the fun activities you’ve planned.

Sit in a circle on the floor with the children. Hold up the crown and ask:

• Who might wear this crown? (A king or a queen; someone who lives in a castle.)
• What can you tell me about kings and queens? (They’re the bosses of castles; they wear crowns and jewels and have lots of gold; they have lots of servants.)
• Can a king or queen give you everything you need? Explain. (No, because they don’t have enough power; yes, because they have lots of money.)

Let children take turns trying on the crown and passing it around the circle. As the crown is being passed, ask:

• What are some things a king or queen can’t give you? (Happiness; a family; heaven.)

Say: Kings and queens may wear crowns and live in castles and have lots of money, but they can’t give you everything you need. Hold the crown up and ask:

• Who is the only king who gives us all we need and is with us all the time? (God.)

Say: God is the only king who is with us all the time. God is the only king who hears our prayers and has the power to answer them. God wants us to pray only to him. Today we’ll hear a story about a man named Daniel who prayed only to God and kept praying even when others tried to stop him.

Our new Bible verse, 1 Thessalonians 5:17, tells us that we should do what Daniel did. The verse says “Never stop praying.” Have children form a line, and put the crown on the head of the first child in line. Tell the child to remove the crown and place it on the head of the next child in line, saying, “Never stop praying!” Continue until everyone has had a chance to wear the crown and say the verse.

Return the crown to the Learning Lab box.

### Bible Song and Prayer Time

**SUPPLIES:** Bible, scissors, CD player, basket or box, construction paper

Before class, make surprise cards for this activity by cutting construction paper into 2x6-inch slips. Prepare a surprise card for each child plus a few extras for visitors. Fold the slips in half, and then stamp the lion stamp inside one of the surprise cards. Bookmark Daniel 6:1-10 in the Bible you’ll be using.

Have children sit in a circle. Say: Each week when we come to our circle for our Bible story, I’ll choose someone to be the Bible person. The Bible person will bring me the Bible marked with our Bible story for that week. Then I will choose other children to do other things for me. Each of you will get a chance to be the Bible person. Before I choose today’s Bible person, let’s sing our Bible song. As we sing, I’ll pass out surprise cards. Don’t look inside your surprise card until the song is over.

Lead children in singing “Read God’s Book” (track 3) with the CD to the tune of “The Muffin Man.” As you sing, pass out the folded surprise cards.

**SING**

Now it’s time to read God’s book,
Now it’s time to read God’s book.
Let’s hear a Bible story.
(Repeat 3x.)
After the song, say: **You may look inside your surprise cards. The person who has the lion stamped inside his or her card will be our Bible-bringing person for today.** Identify the Bible-bringing person. Ask the Bible person to bring you the Bible. Help the Bible person open the Bible to the marked place, and show children where your story comes from. Then have the Bible person sit down. Choose other children to be the stamp card collector, the Bible-replacer (to put the Bible away when you are finished), and helpers for various other little jobs you might have around your room.

Say: **[Name] was our special Bible person today. Each week, we'll have only one special Bible person, but each one of you is a special part of our class! Today we're all learning that God wants us to pray only to him.**

Let's say a special prayer now and ask God to help us learn about praying to him. My special helper will pass around this basket. When the basket comes to you, put your surprise card in it and say, “God, please help me pray only to you.”

Have your helper pass around the basket or box. When you’ve collected everyone’s surprise card, set the basket aside, and pick up the Bible. Lead children in this prayer: **God, thank you for the Bible and for all the stories in it. Teach us today that God wants us to pray only to him.**

In Jesus’ name, amen.

Keep the surprise cards for next week.

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### Hear and Tell the Bible Story

**SUPPLIES:** Bible

Spread the *Learning Mat: Daniel and the Lions’ Den* out on the floor, and have the children sit around the edge of the mat. Say: **Our Bible story today comes from the book of Daniel. We'll learn about a man who loved God very much and wanted to pray only to God. The man’s name was Daniel. Daniel got on his knees three times a day to pray only to God. There is a picture on the Learning Mat of Daniel praying. Everyone, please walk on your knees to the picture of Daniel praying.** Pause while children walk on their knees to the picture on the mat of Daniel kneeling beside the window.

**Daniel was a friend of King Darius. Next walk proudly like a king to the picture of King Darius on the mat. Demonstrate a “royal walk” with your head and nose held high, your posture stiff, and hands in a circle on your head like a crown. Pause while children walk “royally” to the picture of King Darius. **King Darius chose governors to help make the laws in the kingdom. King Darius made Daniel the boss over all the other governors. But the other governors were jealous of Daniel, so they planned a sneaky way to get rid of him. Now sneak on your tiptoes to the picture of the evil governors on the mat. Be sure to frown and grumble! Pause.**

**The evil men came up with an idea to get rid of Daniel! They tricked King Darius into making a new law that would force Daniel to stop praying to God. Now walk like a king to the picture of King Darius reading the new law. Pause. The new law said that all the people must bow and pray only to King Darius!**

Ask: **Do you think Daniel prayed to anyone other than God?** Have the class shout “no!” together. Have children walk on their knees to the picture of Daniel praying.
Say: Even though Daniel knew that King Darius would have to punish him, it didn’t matter. Daniel knew that God wants us to pray only to him. And Daniel wouldn’t pray to anyone but God.

Ask: Why did the evil governors want a law making people pray only to the king? (So Daniel would disobey the law; so King Darius would punish Daniel, and the evil governors could take over.)

• How do you think Daniel felt about the new law? (Sad, because he wanted to pray to God; angry that anyone would try to make him pray to someone else; a little afraid of what the king would do to him.)

• How would you feel if someone stopped you from praying to God? (Mad, because God wants us to pray only to him.)

Say: Even though Daniel might have felt afraid about disobeying the king’s law, Daniel knew that God was bigger and more powerful than any other king. And Daniel knew that God wants us to pray only to him.

Return the Learning Mat to the Learning Lab box.

Hold up the Bible again. Say: The Bible tells us about lots of people who prayed, but one of the most important people in the Bible was Jesus. Jesus prayed a lot.

Ask: Why do you think Jesus prayed? (He loved God; he wanted God’s help.)

• What should you do if you want to be like Jesus? (I should pray, too; I should learn about him.)

Say: God loves to hear our prayers. He told us about people like Daniel and Jesus in the Bible to help us understand that God wants us to pray only to him.

■ Do the Bible Story

SUPPLIES: newsprint, black marker, CD player

Before beginning this activity, create a paper window using newsprint and a black marker. Outline the edge of the newsprint with the marker. Then draw four windowpanes on the paper.

Gather children around you in a circle on the floor. Say: Daniel loved God and wanted to obey God. He knew that God wants us to pray only to him, and Daniel didn’t stop praying to God. The Bible tells us Daniel knelt before the window three times a day and prayed only to God. Let’s pretend we’re Daniel praying in front of the window. I’ll choose someone to be the Window Person to stand at one end of the room while the rest of us line up at the opposite end of the room. The Window Person will hold this window. Hold up the paper window you made. When the Window Person faces away from you, you may quietly sneak forward on your tiptoes. But when the Window Person turns around and holds up the window, you must drop to your knees. The first one to reach the Window Person becomes the next Window Person.
Pockets: (Comes in holding a tissue and sniffling.) Oh, my! Oh, my! What will I do?
Teacher: Hello, Pockets. What’s wrong? Why are you crying?
Pockets: Oh, dear! Oh, my! I’m so worried about my test tomorrow.
Teacher: What test, Pockets?
Pockets: (Wringing her tissue) My hopping test. In kangaroo school we learn all about hopping, and I’m worried because we have a hopping test tomorrow. (Sniffling louder) What if I don’t hop high enough? or far enough? or well enough?
Teacher: You seem very worried, Pockets. When I’m worried or afraid, I pray, and that helps a lot! Kids, can you share with Pockets a time you were worried or afraid and you prayed? (Allow time for volunteers to share.)
Pockets: Prayer must help you a lot! I’m so happy I feel like jumping (jumps) for joy! Thanks for helping me, friends! ’Bye.

Play the game several times. Then set aside the paper window and say: Like Daniel, we need to pray to God every day. It’s important to know that God wants us to pray only to him.

Now let’s sing a song about that.
Lead the children in singing “Worship God and Only God” (track 15) to the tune of “Michael, Row the Boat Ashore.”

SING
Worship God and only God.
Hallelujah!
Worship God and only God.
Hallelujah!

Pray to God and only God.
Hallelujah!
Pray to God and only God.
Hallelujah!

Sing to God and only God.
Hallelujah!
Sing to God and only God.
Hallelujah!

Closing

Share a Prayer

SUPPLIES: tissue or hankie, tape

Before this activity, tape a small tissue or hankie to one of Pockets’ paws. Bring out Pockets the Kangaroo, and go through the following script. After you finish the script, put Pockets away and out of sight.

Pockets: (Comes in holding a tissue and sniffling.) Oh, my! Oh, my! What will I do?
Teacher: Hello, Pockets. What’s wrong? Why are you crying?
Pockets: Oh, dear! Oh, my! I’m so worried about my test tomorrow.
Teacher: What test, Pockets?
Pockets: (Wringing her tissue) My hopping test. In kangaroo school we learn all about hopping, and I’m worried because we have a hopping test tomorrow. (Sniffling louder) What if I don’t hop high enough? or far enough? or well enough?
Teacher: You seem very worried, Pockets. When I’m worried or afraid, I pray, and that helps a lot! Kids, can you share with Pockets a time you were worried or afraid and you prayed? (Allow time for volunteers to share.)
Pockets: Prayer must help you a lot! I’m so happy I feel like jumping (jumps) for joy! Thanks for helping me, friends! ’Bye.
Set Pockets out of sight. Then say: Let’s learn a fun finger rhyme to help us remember that ★God wants us to pray only to him. Follow along and do what I do.

I pray to God (fold hands in prayer)
Each morning and night (put arms overhead to represent the sun; fold hands and lean head on them with eyes closed to represent the night),
And when it’s dark (cover your eyes),
God gives me light. (Uncover your eyes.)
When I’m worried (frown and shake your head back and forth),
God’s there, too. (Cross hands over your heart.)
He makes me smile (give a big grin)
When I’m feeling blue. (Lean your head on your hands and sigh.)
God is with me every day (point upward)
When I work or sleep or play! (Imitate skipping, bouncing a ball, or other playtime activity.)

Repeat the finger rhyme several times.

Untangled Prayers

**SUPPLIES: none**

Have children sit in a circle. Set a tangled handful of shiny streamers in the middle of the circle. Say: Sometimes our problems can make life seem like a tangled mess, just like these tangled streamers. Let’s pray and tell God about some of the hard times we face.

Go around the circle, and have children take turns taking one streamer from the pile. As each one takes a streamer, allow the child to share a problem he or she has faced or is now facing, such as going to a new school, not getting along with siblings, or dealing with parents who are going through a divorce. It’s OK if some children don’t want to share.

When each child has a streamer, pray: Thank you, God, for hearing our prayers. We’re glad we can bring our tangled-up problems to you anytime and anywhere. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Have children hold up their streamers. Say: ★God wants us to pray only to him. When we pray, God helps us sort out our problems. God can help us just as he helped Daniel. God takes the tangles out of our lives! Take your streamers home as a reminder to pray to God about your problems.

Growing closer to Jesus extends beyond the classroom.

Photocopy the “Today I Learned…” handout (at the end of this lesson) for this week, and send it home with your children. Encourage parents to use the handout to plan meaningful family activities to reinforce this week’s topic.
Lively Learning: Clapping Game

Teach children a simple rhythm such as clap-clap-stomp, clap-clap-stomp! Have children echo your rhythm. Add words to the rhythm that focus on all the times the kids could pray—for example, “pray at school,” “pray in bed,” or “pray at night.”

Make to Take: Daniel Diorama

Use rectangular plastic-foam meat trays to make Daniel dioramas. Give each child a meat tray and a photocopy of the “Daniel Diorama” handout (p. 147). Have children color their handouts and staple them to the meat trays. Then have children glue tiny pebbles or cereal bits to the floor or walls of Daniel’s room. Help children stretch clear plastic wrap over their dioramas and tape the edges of the plastic wrap to the back of the meat trays.

Treat to Eat: Royal-Seal Cookies

Before this activity, mix equal parts of powdered sugar and cream cheese until the mixture becomes a soft dough. Give each child a small handful of dough on a square of wax paper. Tell children how King Darius showed that the laws were from him by using official seals to stamp the paper that the laws were written on. Let children roll out the dough and use cookie cutters, plastic knives or forks, or other kitchen utensils to make their own “royal seals.” When children are done, allow them to eat their royal seals.

Story Picture: Daniel Prays Only to God

Give each child a photocopy of the “Today I Learned…” handout (at the end of this lesson). Set out crayons or markers and glitter glue. Let children color the picture. Then have them add glitter glue to King Darius’ crown. Remind children that God is the only king who is able to give them all they need through prayer. Remind them that God wants us to pray only to him.
Daniel Diorama
Today your child learned that God wants us to pray only to him. Children learned that Daniel refused to pray to King Darius. They talked about praying anytime and anywhere.

Verse to Learn

“Never stop praying” (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

Ask Me...

- Why do you think Daniel wanted to pray only to God?
- How can God help you when you pray to him?
- When could you pray with your family?

Family Fun

Your 5- or 6-year-old will enjoy starting a family prayer chain at mealtimes. Have the family join hands. Let your child begin a prayer, and then partway through the prayer, he or she should squeeze the hand of the next person. That family member will continue the prayer from there, and so on around the table. When the prayer has traveled back to your child, allow him or her to end the family prayer.

Daniel Prays Only to God (Daniel 6:1-10)