God wants us to pray and give thanks.

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

Growing Closer to Jesus
Children will

- explore different ways to praise God,
- understand how important it is to thank God,
- help Pockets learn to express gratitude, and
- learn that God wants us to pray and give thanks at all times.

Teacher Enrichment

Bible Basis

- Daniel and the king give thanks.

Daniel 6:25-27

Daniel certainly praised and worshipped God for saving him from the lions, though we're not told of his specific reaction. Instead, we read of the king’s response to Daniel's safety. Upon reading today's passage, one might believe that the Persian king, Darius, was so affected by Daniel's safety in the lions’ den that he changed his religious views to worship God alone. He did demand that the people of his kingdom fear and revere God. He also gave high praise to Daniel's God; he didn't want this God to become angry with him or with his kingdom. But he never stated that God alone was God. Instead, he apparently was just adding God to his list of gods, perhaps as the greatest of those gods. This kind of pronouncement does not indicate a true and complete faith in God. One thing it did do, however, was make things easier on the Jews living in exile in Persia.

At the end of today's passage we see Daniel prospering once again. Daniel lived a long life and completed his work for God before his death at over 80 years old.

Prayer

- Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18.
- Consider what prayer has to do with being joyful and with being thankful in all circumstances.
- Pray: Dear God, I thank you for all you’ve done for me. Help me be faithful to you in my prayers and thanksgiving. Help me be as true to you as Daniel was. And help the children in this class see how important it is for them to be thankful.
## 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 it feel to give God your worries last week?” and “What special times did you pray?”
- Say: **Today we’re going to learn that God wants us to pray and give thanks.**
- Hand out the heart name tags children made during Lesson 1, and help them attach the name tags to their clothing. Have 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 “What have you been thankful for?” and “How do you feel when someone says thank you?”

**Option 1: Thank-You Banner**

**SUPPLIES:** large sheet of newsprint, colored chalk, crayons, balloons, tape

Lay a large sheet of newsprint on a table or an uncarpeted part of the floor. Set out colored chalk and crayons. Have the children work together to create a colorful expression of things they’re thankful for. As they work, direct them toward thankful thoughts with comments such as “It’s good to be thankful for the things around us” and “God gives us many people to be thankful for.”

When children are finished with their project, tape shiny streamers and balloons to the corners of the banner. Have the children help you put the banner up on a wall in the classroom or hallway.

**Option 2: Special Delivery**

**SUPPLIES:** index cards, markers, envelopes, stickers, shoe box, white paper, scissors, pencils, pens, glue

Before class, cover a shoe box with white paper. Cut a slit in the top of the box for children to slide envelopes through. Write the words “Special

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**WARNING:**

CHOKING HAZARD—
Children under 8 yrs. can choke or suffocate on uninflated or broken balloons. Adult supervision required. Keep uninflated balloons from children. Discard broken balloons at once. Balloons may contain latex.
Delivered” on the box, and draw red hearts to decorate it.

Create a post office in one corner of your room. On a table, set out index cards, markers, pencils, pens, glue, envelopes, and the shiny streamers. On one corner of the table, place the special delivery shoe box, the lion stamp, and the ink pad. Have children write or draw thank-you cards to God. Have each child draw something he or she is thankful for. Suggest ideas such as their families, church, friends, special pets, health, favorite foods, love, Jesus, and the Bible. Children may decorate their notes with pieces of the shiny streamers.

Let kids seal their cards in envelopes. Have them use stickers as postage. Then allow children to “cancel” their postage stickers by stamping them with the lion stamp. Allow the children to “mail” their cards by sliding them into the special delivery box. Save the thank-you cards for the “Delivering Thanks” activity.

**Option 3: Musical Praise**

**SUPPLIES:** variety of “musical” instruments such as bells, pots, pans, plastic bowls, combs, paper, plastic and wooden spoons

Set out a variety of items for children to make music with. Use bells, pots, pans, and plastic spoons for rhythm instruments and plastic bowls with wooden spoons for drums. Provide a few combs and small pieces of paper, too. Show children how to fold a piece of paper around a comb and then place their lips on the paper and hum. Explain that there are many ways to say thank you to God, and making music is one good way. Tell the children that today they'll hear a Bible story about giving thanks to God.

When everyone has arrived and you're ready to move on to Bible Story Time, encourage 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.

![SING](image)

- We will pick up our toys.
- And put them all away.
- We will pick up our toys.
- There's [name] picking up toys.
- We will pick up our toys.
- There's [name] picking up toys.
- We will pick up our toys.
- There's [name] picking up toys.
- And put them all away.
- Putting them all away.

(Repeat.)
Bible Story Time

Setting the Stage

SUPPLIES: 2 oranges, napkins, knife

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.

Have children join you in a circle on the floor. Say: God has given us many wonderful things and people to be thankful for. But sometimes we’re busy and forget to thank God. Close your eyes. We’ll use our senses to discover something we can be thankful for. Don’t peek, or our activity won’t be as much fun.

When children have closed their eyes, cut both oranges in half. (You’ll be cutting a small section of orange for each child in the room and one piece to use with Pockets the Kangaroo later.) As you cut the oranges into pieces for the children, say: Use your nose to help you guess what I have, but don’t guess out loud. Hold out one of your hands, and I’ll give you a piece of our surprise. Keep your eyes closed!

Hand each child a piece of orange on a napkin. When everyone has a piece, say: Use your tongue to help you guess our surprise. Then open your eyes to see if you’re right. After everyone has tasted the orange and opened their eyes, ask:

• Were you surprised when you saw that it was an orange? Why or why not? (No, because my senses helped me know it was an orange; yes, I thought it was a lemon or a lime.)

• If you were going to thank God for oranges, what would you say you like about them? (They smell good; they’re bright and pretty; they make good juice.)

Say: It’s important to remember to look for little things and big things we’re thankful for. We want to thank God for all he’s given us because God wants us to pray and give thanks.

Say: Even Jesus thanked God. There are many times in the Bible when Jesus prayed to God to thank him. Jesus knew it was important to thank God.

Ask: • What do you think Jesus thanked God for? (He thanked God for hearing his prayers; he thanked God for food.)

• Do you pray for the things Jesus prayed for? (I like to pray for my friends, too; I don’t pray like him.)

Say: It’s nice to have a wonderful friend like Jesus. He wants all of us to be like him. Praying is one way you can be like Jesus.

Today we’ll learn how Daniel and King Darius thanked God.

Hold up the extra orange slice and say: Let’s save this piece of orange for Pockets. We’ll see if she knows how important it is to say thank you.
Have the children wipe their hands and throw away their napkins. Set the extra piece of orange aside to use with Pockets in the “Attitude of Gratitude” activity.

**Bible Song and Prayer Time**

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

Before class, make surprise cards for this activity by cutting the construction paper into 2x6-inch slips. Prepare a surprise card for each child plus a few extras for visitors. Fold the cards in half, and then stamp the lion stamp inside one of the surprise cards. Bookmark Daniel 6:25-27 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-bringing 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 learn 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 surprise 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 and give thanks.*

Let’s say a special prayer now and ask God to help us say thank you.

**Bible Point**

My helper will pass around this basket. When the basket comes to you, put your surprise card in it and say, “God, help me be thankful.”

Have your helper pass around the basket or box. After 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 and give thanks.* In Jesus’ name, amen.
**Hear and Tell the Bible Story**

**SUPPLIES:** basket or box, 3 index cards, markers

Before you begin this activity, take three index cards and draw one of the following on each card: a mouth, praying hands, and a few musical notes. Place the cards in a basket or box.

Bring out the *Learning Mat: Daniel and the Lions’ Den*. Have the children sit with you on the floor around the mat. Say: *Our Bible story comes from the book of Daniel. Our Learning Mat shows us pictures of our Bible story. Let’s play a game to review our story. Stand up. I’ll tell you a riddle. When you know who or what the riddle is about, stand beside that picture on the Learning Mat. Then I’ll ask someone to tell the answer to the riddle.*

• Who was the man who’d always pray Every night and every day? (Daniel)
• Who was the guy who wore a crown And told the people they had to bow down? (King Darius)
• What evil men thought up a plan To get Daniel sent to the lions’ den? (The governors)
• What was the law the king arranged, And what did it say that couldn’t be changed? (That everyone had to pray to the king)
• Why did Daniel break that law, And why did he face the lion’s jaw? (Because he’d pray only to God no matter what.)
• When Daniel prayed inside the den, How did God answer? What happened then? (God sent an angel to close the lions’ mouths.)

Have the children sit down around the edge of the Learning Mat. Say: *Daniel was so thankful to God for saving his life! And King Darius was thankful that his friend Daniel had been saved. In fact, King Darius was so thankful, he made another new law. The new law said that all people were to honor and praise God. The new law said God lives forever, God saves people, and God does mighty miracles. The king read this new law to everyone. King Darius said thank you to God with his voice. Because God does mighty things and loves us so much, God wants us to pray and give thanks.*

Bring out the *crown*. Then pick up the basket or box and say: *I’ll call on someone to choose a card from this box. If it has a picture of praying hands, fold your hands, kneel on the picture of Daniel, and say, “Thank you, God, for…” Then tell something you’re thankful for. If the picture is a mouth, put on the crown, stand on the picture of King Darius, and say, “Thank you, God, for…” Then tell something you’re glad God gave you. If the card has a musical note on it, you may whistle or clap your hands and say, “Thank you, God, for…” Then tell one thing you’re grateful for.*
After each child has had a turn, set aside the box and the cards. Return the crown and the Learning Mat to the Learning Lab. Say: There are many things to thank God for. It’s important for us to remember that God wants us to pray and give thanks.

Do the Bible Story

SUPPLIES: white butcher paper, markers, tape

Before class, tape a large sheet of white butcher paper to the wall at children’s eye level.

Set out markers. Gather children in front of the paper. Say: We are going to create a wall mural that is full of things to thank God for. As we make our mural, we are going to review our Bible story about Daniel.

Draw a few simple stick figures on the paper and ask: Who can tell me why some evil men didn’t like Daniel? (They didn’t like Daniel because they were jealous of him; Daniel was different from them.)

Say: That’s right. The evil governors were jealous of Daniel. But Daniel didn’t hate them, even though they tricked him. Let’s tell God thank you that Daniel forgave them. Thanks, God, that Daniel forgave those men. Draw a smiley face as kids repeat after you.

God shut the lions’ mouths. Put a finger over your mouth, and have kids repeat the motion after you. Let’s thank God for that. Have a volunteer thank God.

Draw a crown on the paper. The king liked Daniel a lot. When he saw that Daniel’s God was real and powerful enough to save Daniel from the lions, he wrote a letter to everyone in the kingdom telling them that Daniel’s God is the one true God. Let’s thank God for that. Ask a volunteer to pray.

The king wrote a letter that said good things about God. Those are called praises. Let’s do the same. Point to a blank spot on the paper. Think of some more pictures we could draw that show our thanks to God. Each of you can draw your thanks on the paper. Encourage kids to use the markers to draw pictures of thanksgiving on the paper. Discuss the pictures. Then ask:

• Have you ever been worried or scared? Explain. (I was scared in a big storm; I fell down and had to go to the doctor.)

• What were you thankful about when the hard time was over? (I was thankful that my mom sat with me; I was glad that I didn’t hurt anymore.)

• What’s something you could thank God about right now? (For my new puppy; for my brother; for helping me not to be scared of getting a shot.)

Say: There are so many things we can thank God for! We all get in trouble or are scared sometimes. But God will always take care of us, just as he took care of Daniel. Let’s remember that God wants us to pray and give thanks, just like Daniel did.

Give children the opportunity to decorate the top and bottom borders of the mural with other things to thank God for. Set out the lion stamp and ink pad. Encourage children to write words, draw pictures, or stamp with the lion stamp. Congratulate children on creating a beautiful mural; then remind them to pray and give thanks to God this week.
**Closing**

### Attitude of Gratitude

**SUPPLIES:** orange slice from “Setting the Stage”

Bring out Pockets the Kangaroo, and go through the following script. After you finish the script, put Pockets away and out of sight.

---

**Teacher:** Hello, Pockets. It’s good to see you in class this week. How are you today?

**Pockets:** I’m upset with my friend Sarah. I made her a pretty necklace with macaroni noodles, and she didn’t even say thank you. How could she forget?

**Teacher:** Sometimes we forget to thank people for the special things they do. Sometimes we even forget to tell God thank you. We have something special for you, Pockets. Maybe this will cheer you up. *(Hand the orange slice to Pockets.)*

**Pockets:** *(Grabbing the orange slice)* I love oranges. They’re juicy and sweet and pretty and… ORANGE!

**Teacher:** *(Looking at the children)* Boys and girls, can you help Pockets remember what she forgot to say when we gave her the orange? *(Have the children remind Pockets she forgot to say thank you.)* Who can tell Pockets what we’ve been learning today about saying thank you to God? *(Call on a few children to share their ideas with Pockets.)*

**Pockets:** I guess saying thank you to God is one way to tell God we love him. Thank you, boys and girls, for helping me see how important it is to remember to say thank you to God.

**Teacher:** You’re welcome, Pockets. And you’re right—saying thank you to God is a good way to tell God we love him. And because God loves us, **God wants us to pray and give thanks.**

**Pockets:** Yes, and thank you for the delicious orange, boys and girls. I’ll see you next week!
Delivering Thanks

**SUPPLIES:** Bible, thank-you cards from Option 2, CD player

Gather children in a circle on the floor. Say: Daniel thanked God with his prayers. King Darius thanked God with his new law.

Ask: • **What are some ways we can say thank you to God?**
(With our prayers; with music; by telling God with our voices; by drawing a picture; by helping others.)

• **Why does God want us to thank him when we pray?** (Because it shows we love God; because it lets God know we’re happy with what he does for us.)

Say: **Find a partner, and we’ll share some thank-yous to God.**

Have children form pairs. Distribute the thank-you cards from Option 2. Have children open the envelopes and look at the pictures on the cards. Say: **Tell your partner about the picture on your card. What “thank-you” is on each card?** Allow children to tell their partners about the pictures.

Ask: • **How can you thank God for what’s pictured on your card?** (By telling him thank you; by singing a song; by obeying his Word.)

Say: **God wants us to pray and give thanks.** Open your Bible to 1 Thessalonians 5:17 and say: And remember that our Bible verse says, “Never stop praying.” Let’s sing a song to remind us that we can pray to God at all times.

Lead the children in singing “Pray About Everything” (track 12) to the tune of “Battle Hymn of the Republic.”

**SING**

Don’t worry about anything.
Don’t worry about anything.
Don’t worry about anything.
Instead, pray about everything.
(Repeat.)

Say: The pictures on our thank-you cards show us a few things we can thank God for. Let’s pray and thank God right now. Pray: Dear God, thank you for all the wonderful things you give us. Thank you for loving us and for giving us the Bible to help us learn more about you. In Jesus’ name, amen.
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: Bumblebee, Bumblebee**

Play Bumblebee, Bumblebee to help children notice little things that are often forgotten in thank-you prayers. Sit in a circle on the floor. Choose a child to think of something in the room that can be described with a color word. Have the child say the following rhyme:

*Bumblebee, bumblebee.
Thank you, God, for something I see.
And it’s— [color name].*

Have children guess. If no one has correctly guessed the item in three tries, the child gets another turn. The person who correctly answers will have the next turn. Remind children to thank God for the little things around them. Tell them that God wants us to pray and give thanks for all things.

**Make to Take: A Slice of Thanksgiving**

Scatter scissors, markers, and sheets of construction paper on a table. Hand each child a paper plate and a paper fastener. From construction paper, cut for each child a circle slightly smaller than the paper plate. Then, out of each circle cut a pie wedge that’s a quarter of the circle. Attach the circles to the paper plates with fasteners so the circles turn. In the pie-wedge spaces, have children each draw something he or she is thankful for. Show children how to dial the circle so a new space shows, and have them each draw another picture. Continue around the circles.

**Treat to Eat: Thanks a Bunch**

Set out red and green grapes, plastic toothpicks, plastic knives, and cheese. Form an assembly line, and let the children make thank-you snacks. Assign the following positions: Pluckers, Pokers, Cheesies, and Spearheads. Pluckers will pluck grapes from grape bunches. Pokers will poke two grapes on each toothpick. Cheesies will use plastic knives to cut small cubes of cheese. Spearheads will spear cheese cubes onto the toothpicks with the grapes.

Make a “bunch” of these little kabobs, and allow children to form small groups to share thank-you prayers and eat. Remind them that God wants us to pray and give thanks for food and for the friends and family we share it with.

**Story Picture: Daniel and King Darius Praise God**

Set out scissors, glue, markers or crayons, shiny streamers, and glitter glue. Hand each child a photocopy of the “Today I Learned…” handout. Let children color the picture. Have the children snip pieces of shiny streamers and glue them on Daniel’s robe. Then have children apply glitter glue dots to King Darius’ crown.
Today I learned...

Today your child learned that God wants us to pray and give thanks. Children learned that Daniel always thanked God. They talked about different ways to say thank you to God.

Verse to Learn

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

Ask Me...

- Why did King Darius praise and thank God?
- What are some ways you can say thank you to God?
- Why is it good when our family gives thanks to God?

Family Fun

Make praise cookies with your child. On tiny slips of paper, write words describing God. Slice circular pieces of chilled refrigerator cookie dough, and lay a slip of paper in the center of each circle. Fold the dough circles in half and lay them on a cookie sheet. Bake them until golden brown. Serve your praise cookies at dinner. Let each family member crack open a cookie and read the word of praise for God.

Daniel and the King Give Thanks (Daniel 6:25-27)
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