

*LearningCycles*

# **101 WAYS TO PRAY**

## **Pray Without Ceasing**

Written by Tracey E. Herzer



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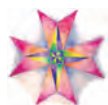
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# Table of Contents: Pray Without Ceasing

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## Introductory Materials

About LearningCycles

Recruiting Leaders – Job Descriptions for Volunteers

A General Schedule for Class Structure

## Cycle Materials

Theological Overview of this Cycle

Letter to Parents about this Cycle

Supplemental Information – Ways to Pray

Story for this Cycle

Suggested Resources for this Cycle

Activities Overview – Grid

## Cycle Lesson Plans

Art Workshop

Publishing Workshop

Drama Workshop

Movie Workshop

Story Workshop

Kitchen Workshop

Music Workshop



# About LearningCycles

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## What is LearningCycles?

LearningCycles is an innovative approach to faith formation. It takes seriously the spiritual development of children while providing creative and exciting activities that engage children in a whole new level of learning and retention. The rotation-style model means that children work on the same story or concept for several weeks, using different learning approaches in each workshop room they visit.

### ***Ideas for possible workshops:***

Art  
Storytelling  
Music  
Group Activities  
Cooking

Science Experiments  
Games  
Drama or Puppets  
Movies  
Geography or Map Excursions

## Easy to Adapt

You can use the activities in this resource for shorter learning center events, normal classroom use, intergenerational gatherings, and more. Adapt what you find here to best suit your faith formation situation.



# Recruiting LearningCycles Leaders

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*LearningCycles make it VERY easy to increase your number of volunteers, by dividing jobs into manageable parts. Here are some ways that parishioners of ALL ages can be involved:*

**CYCLE LEADERS** sign up as part of a team of 2 or 3 adults who will teach one 4-6 week cycle. Teachers remain in the same workshop room each week of the cycle and teach the same lesson plan to different classes each week. Workshop rooms may use skills in areas as music, dance, cooking, quilting, gardening or painting, but you don't have to have a special skill in order to help. Teachers can sign up to help read stories, turn on computers, make popcorn, hand out art supplies, etc.

**SHEPHERDS** commit for the entire school year, but they never have to prepare or teach a lesson! Shepherds work in teams and travel with their class through each of the different workshops. Shepherds are the essential relationship part of this program, learning the children's names, providing continuity of leadership and being a friendly, safe presence in the classroom each week.

**CYCLE COORDINATORS** are needed for each different cycle. These people manage the details of a cycle, contacting all the volunteer teachers for that cycle, distributing the lesson plans, making sure supplies are purchased, etc.

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## Some churches have also used:

**DECORATING TEAM** A resourceful group of people is needed to create and plan new and evolving learning spaces. These folks might be interior designers, or they may be people who are just addicted to home improvement shows or have a knack for decorating inexpensively! Churches who share space or don't have the budget for large-scale renovations will need a group of creative thinkers to come up with props or posters that can be used on Sunday, but safely stored away during the week.

**RESOURCE TEAM** This "big picture" group can be comprised of all your cycle coordinators, as well as interested parents. Together the group handles trouble-shooting, long-range plans and communication to the entire church. For churches that already have a catechist or formation team, that committee can provide the functions of a Resource Team.



# General Class Structure

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## 1. **OPENING ACTIVITY** (10-15 minutes, as children arrive)

Welcome students and make sure everyone has a nametag. Opening activities give early arrivers something to start on immediately and provide a warm, busy room for children to enter. The activity could be simply drawing or decorating your nametag. It could also be coloring sheets or simple games. Check the “Filler Activities” of your lesson plan for ideas or ask your Cycle Coordinator.

## 2. **INTRODUCTIONS** (approximately 10 minutes)

- Introduce yourself: Tell students about you – your family, how long you have been at this church, what kind of work you do, what your hobbies are, why you signed up to help teach, etc.
- Introduce the cycle story or theme: Ask children what they’ve been studying or have done in other rooms on other weeks. Talk about the basic theme or season (see the Overview p. 6 for some ideas). Read the story to children.
- Introduce your activity: Tell the children which part of the story your room is focusing on, and perhaps ask them to re-tell you that part of the story in their own words.

## 3. **WORKSHOP ACTIVITY AND REFLECTION** (approximately 25-30 minutes)

See attached lesson plans for specific instructions about the main activity. Supplies should be in your classroom, but if you need help, ask your cycle coordinator. If you run low on supplies, please tell your coordinator so they can plan accordingly.

If children finish early, you can use any of the “Filler Activities” provided in each lesson plan. In addition, you may use activity sheets (see “Suggested Resources for this Cycle”) as “quiet work” for the early finishers while they wait for everyone to complete the task.

Try to plan your time so that children finish the activity and still have a few minutes to process the class by journaling or drawing. Encourage them to take their work seriously, and try to foster a semi-quiet atmosphere that allows children to think about what they have heard, seen and experienced. Ask questions like “What did you learn today?” or “How did you feel while doing this activity?” Connect your activity back to the story. Studies show us that quiet reflection time is what helps move items from short-term memory into long-term memory so this piece is VERY important!

## 4. **CLEAN UP** (approximately 5 minutes)

Have children help clean up and make sure everyone has their papers, jackets, etc. If parents come to the classroom to pick up their children, this is a good time to praise children in front of their parents. This is also a good time to discuss any concerns or questions quietly with parents. Tell the children goodbye. Thank them for coming.





# Theological Overview of this Cycle

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At its most basic and profound level, prayer is nothing more than conversation with God. Sounds simple enough, right? However, many Christians find prayer to be one of the most difficult spiritual disciplines to master... not just learning to pray, but learning how to make prayer a regular part of your daily life.

Learning to pray can be especially daunting when we sit in our lovely churches and hear ministers with many years of experience offer spontaneous prayers that are both beautiful and heartfelt... or we read well written, thought-provoking prayers that have been compiled in a book designed for worship or meditation. We are exposed to many different kinds of prayer... prayers that have been around for thousands of years... prayers that have been lovingly crafted by poets and theologians... prayers that have been checked time and time again for correct spelling and grammar and contain no typographical errors ... prayers which don't include "ums" and "I don't know" and "I have no idea what I'm doing here..."

Learning to pray can be difficult, but it is important. Talking and spending time together is how you build and nurture any kind of relationship, so we need to learn how to spend time in conversation with God. True conversation is not just a one-sided monologue of all the things we want and need and worry about. Conversation isn't conversation when only one side is participating. We need to also find ways to "be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10) We need quiet times of meditation when we can step away from the hectic pace of our everyday lives and find ways to just rest in God's presence, bask in God's unique love for us, and be open to what we might hear.

During this unit we will experience many different ways to pray. In some ways, this unit may be one where the children become the teachers. Prayer is something that seems to come naturally to many children... they somehow instinctively understand the concept of talking to God and are often quite comfortable doing so. They are confident and funny and free, whereas many adults feel self-conscious or unsure. Give them lots of opportunities to be creative in the ways they express their thoughts and hopes and fears to their Creator... and be sure to give them enough space to find their own way.

This unit is a great time to work with your children on learning the words to the Lord's Prayer (or another prayer of your choosing). We practiced saying the Lord's Prayer together each week at the end of the opening story. Don't forget to go over unfamiliar words with the children and help them understand what the prayer means.

Like any other discipline, "practice makes perfect"... so follow the advice given in the first letter to the Thessalonians: *Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances.* May God be more and more known to you as you seek and as you pray.

Pray without ceasing –  
Tracey E. Herzer



# Letter to the Parents for this Cycle

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*(We suggest you mail this letter to all parents with a copy of the cycle story, plus the Theological Overview)*

Dear Parents,

We are beginning an important new unit called **Pray Without Ceasing: 101 Ways to Pray**. In this unit, children will learn about many different kinds of prayer. Even more importantly, they will have the opportunity to experiment with different kinds of prayer... prayers we memorize, prayers we create, prayers set to music, body prayers that use no words, spontaneous prayers and prayers that have been around for thousands of years.

This rotation will help your children become more familiar with different prayer traditions from our Christian heritage, as well as introduce them to prayer methods from other faith traditions that we have adapted for this Christian setting. For example, children might color mandalas of Christian symbols or experience yoga that focuses on the life-giving breath. We've even adapted the Tibetan Buddhist tradition of hanging prayer flags as a way to teach children the different types of prayer, based on the ACTS model: **A**doration, **C**onfession, **T**hanksgiving, and **S**upplication. We will also work together to create a "prayer wall" much like the Western Wall in Jerusalem, where children can write their prayers on slips of paper and leave them in the wall as an act of prayer.

Each of us has our own unique relationship with God and there are infinite ways to pray. Our hope is that children who are exposed to many different ways of praying will find one or more ways that resonate and will incorporate the practice of prayer into their everyday lives. Spend some time talking with your child about what prayer forms they are experiencing each week and what works or does not work for them.

Remember that parents are the primary faith educators in a child's life and the lessons learned and reinforced at home are more likely to take root than any lesson learned in a classroom or at Mass. During this unit, we hope you will spend some time talking with your child about the prayers that are meaningful to you and your family. More than that, we encourage you to spend some time praying WITH your child.

Family meal blessings or bedtime prayers are a wonderful way to start praying with your child, but so is going for a walk and asking your child to help you name the beautiful and/or interesting things in God's creation for which we are thankful. You may want to use this time to help your child learn the words of the Lord's Prayer or another prayer. Or you may want to help your child learn to pray using their own words. Remember that however you pray with your child, the words don't have to be perfect... just help your child get a glimpse of your own relationship with God and trust God's spirit to do the rest as your child learns to talk – and listen – to the God who made them and loves them beyond all measure.

Pray without Ceasing ~  
Tracey E. Herzer





# Supplemental Material for this Cycle

(additional information for teachers and coordinators)

## BIBLE REFERENCES ABOUT PRAYER

### **Bible stories**

Numbers 21:4-9	Moses prays for the Israelites
Esther 4:16	Esther asks the Jews to fast and pray for her
Psalms 61:1-8	The Psalmist cries out to God in prayer
Isaiah 56:7	God's house is a house of prayer for all people
Jeremiah 29:12	God hears us when we pray
Matthew 6:5-15	Jesus teaches the Disciples how to pray & "The Lord's Prayer"
Matthew 19:13	Children come to see Jesus and pray with him
Matthew 26: 36-44	Jesus prays in the Garden of Gethsemane
Luke 2:36-38	Baby Jesus is brought to the prophetess Anna who prays
Luke 9:28-36	Jesus, Peter, James and John go to the mountain to pray
Luke 11:1	The disciples ask Jesus: "Teach us to Pray"
Acts 10:9-18	Peter goes up to the roof to pray and sees a vision
Romans 8:26	When we don't have the words, God's spirit intercedes for us
I Corinthians 14:15	Pray with your spirit and with your mind

### **Jesus escapes the crowds to pray alone:**

Matthew 14:13  
Mark 6:46  
Luke 5:16  
Luke 6:12

### **Paul prays for the church**

II Corinthians 13:7-9  
Ephesians 1:17  
I Thessalonians 3:10  
Philemon 1:6  
James 5:13-14  
III John 1:2

### **Paul asks the church to pray for him:**

Ephesians 6:19-20  
Colossians 4:3  
I Thessalonians 5:25  
Hebrews 13:18



# Story: Pray Without Ceasing

To be read each week of the cycle

## Introduction

Prayer is how we build a relationship with God. Each person has their own unique relationship with God and so there are many, many different ways that people can pray. We can use our voices and words to talk to God, but we can also use artwork or our bodies. We can use music or reading or thinking or even silence to express our love for God and to receive God's love in return. There are probably as many ways to pray as there are people in the world, maybe even more.

It is important for us to remember that prayer is a conversation – a two-way street that needs to involve both talking and listening. It's easy to make our prayers just about asking God for all the things we need or the things we wish would happen... but that's not really a conversation. We also need to find ways to listen for God speaking to us, which can be hard. God doesn't always speak to us in a loud voice that we can hear with our ears. God can speak through other people, and sometimes God's voice is just a quiet voice inside your own head! God also speaks to us in silence and through our emotions, and sometimes God's voice comes in the form of the feeling that we are not alone.

Even when we don't hear God's voice, we remember that God loves us and longs to be with us. Love is the most important aspect of God's nature and God loves you with a perfect, unfailing love. Prayer is how we express our love for God and for the whole of creation. When we pray, we bring to God all the things we wonder about. We also bring the things we are afraid of, the things we don't understand, the things we find exciting or scary, the way we feel about our lives or the people around us... we bring all these things with us when we talk to God.

There are lots of ways to pray – there isn't one "right" way to pray and there is no "wrong" way to pray. Sometimes we pray by ourselves – kneeling in an empty church, alone in our bedroom, or even in the bathroom! Sometimes we pray with other people – singing or praying out loud in church. Sometimes we thank God for the good things in our life and sometimes we ask God to forgive us for the wrong things we do. Sometimes our prayers come in the form of just thinking about God as we walk through the woods with a friend or family member or enjoy God's creation in a special place where we feel God's presence. In those times, we might offer silent, wordless prayers.

Another way we can pray is by saying the words of familiar prayers. When the disciples asked Jesus how to pray, Jesus taught them by using an example which we now call the Lord's Prayer. Let's close by saying it now together...

*Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name. Thy kingdom come.  
Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil. For thine is the  
kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.*



# Suggested Resources for this Cycle

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## VIDEOS

In this cycle, we used our movie workshop to experience different ways people pray, including some fun illustrations of people who have no idea what they are doing, but plunge in anyway. We used short clips from the movie **Sister Act**.

You may also want to check out the various video options on our Prayer for Children page (<http://pastoral.center/prayer-children>). They include the excellent *Kids and Prayer* DVD with Brother Mickey McGrath, OSFS.

Another free option is this great music video from Saddleback Kids that sets the Lord's Prayer to music. This could be great for the music workshop! Find the video here at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=49N88RLJstA>. An alternative version with hand motions can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZqQMxMWXJ7E>, and a version with lyrics and images, here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ijPuAtrwHYM>.



SAMPLE - DO NOT REPRODUCE



# Activities Overview for this Cycle

WORKSHOP	SUMMARY OF CLASS PLANS	FOCUS
ART	Making Prayer Beads & Learning about Christian rosaries	How to help us focus our minds on prayer
PUBLISHING	Research Prayer Flags and make our own flags	Learning the ACTS model of prayer
DRAMA	Prayer Walks / Labyrinth Mandalas	Praying with our bodies
MOVIE	Movie clips from different movies, illustrating different ways to pray	Is there a wrong way to pray?
STORY	Yoga, Meditation & Icons	How can I get quiet enough to pray?
KITCHEN	Bake pretzels & learn their historical connection with prayer	Praying for other people
MUSIC	Hymns & Chanted Psalms Learning about collective prayer	How do we pray in church?
<b>** BONUS **</b> Knitting	Prayer Shawls and Practicing The Lord's Prayer	What happens when we pray?



# 101 Ways to Pray: Art Workshop

## Bible Reference for the Cycle:

Matthew 6:5-15 (Jesus teaches us how to pray) and I Thessalonians 5:17

*(Revised Standard Version of the Bible)*

## Main Verse for the Cycle:

“Pray without ceasing.” I Thessalonians 5:17

## Key Concepts and Life Application:

- Prayer is conversation with God – both talking and listening
- We can talk to God in any place at any time using any method. There are many, many different ways to pray... not just one “right” way
- The Lord’s Prayer and other well-known prayers give us examples of prayer
- The **ACTS** model gives us a way to remember what to pray for. **A**doration (what we love about God) **C**onfession (things we are sorry for) **T**hanksgiving (things we are thankful for) **S**upplication (things we ask God about – for ourselves and others)

## Summary of Class Plans:

Students will have the opportunity to create prayer beads (Grades 2-5) and/or a cross necklace (Grades K-1) that they can use as a reminder to pray

## Materials Needed:

- **For Grades K-1**
  - Plastic Beads– we suggest using “pony” beads with large holes that are easy to thread. Look for a large bag of multicolored beads to get the most reasonable price. You can usually find these at a local craft store like Michael’s or at a discount store like WalMart, but you can also find them online in places such as: <http://www.ssw.com/store/product/sku=BE888/cmc=CRS/>
  - Leather or suede cord or something equally thick and durable
- **For Grades 2-5**
  - Beads – with older children you can use different kinds of beads, but make sure the beads have big enough holes to work with, considering the size of the wire or string you use
  - Something for stringing the beads – we used clear filament that looked like fishing line, available at the craft store, usually in the same aisle as the beads
- Scissors
- Towels (optional, but recommended to cover tables and keep beads from rolling off)
- Divided paper plates or small cups-- something to separate and/or categorize beads
- Tape
- Glue – Elmer’s and/or SuperGlue

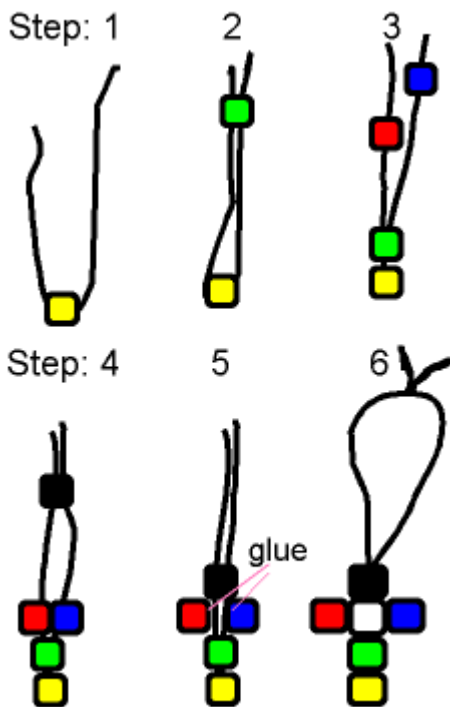




## Workshop Lesson Plans:

- **BEFORE CLASS** – Read through the craft options and decide how you want to do this project with your class. If you have time, you may wish to create a finished sample to show the class. Also, by doing this you will be more familiar with the steps and will know how to plan your class time accordingly.
- **BEFORE CLASS** – Lay out all your supplies. Cover the tables with large towels. This will help keep beads from rolling off the table and all over the floor.
- You can refer to “A General Schedule for Class Structure” (included in the Introductory Materials) for ideas on how to introduce yourself and the story, as well as how to plan your class time appropriately.
- Welcome children as they arrive. You may wish to have some music playing or some easy activity (such as coloring or puzzle sheets – see page 10 for ideas) for children to do as they arrive until it is time to begin your class.
- When it is time to begin, introduce yourself and have them do the same. Read the Cycle Story about prayer, and afterwards, ask the children questions like:
  - Where can you pray?
  - Where are some of your favorite places to think about or talk to God?
  - What do you think about the prayers you hear in church?
  - Have you ever seen or heard someone praying in a way that you’ve never tried? Have you ever visited a church where they used different prayers?
  - What are your favorite ways to pray?
  - Have you learned any new ways to pray during this unit?
- After some discussion, tell the children that today they are going to make prayer beads. If you have made a sample set of prayer beads (or if you have a rosary or other set of your own beads) show them to the class and see if anyone knows how prayer beads are used. Many children have likely seen rosaries used as a guide to prayer, but you can note that many different cultures have used variations of prayer beads throughout the ages. Some people say special prayers – one for each bead – but other traditions just keep beads in their pockets to keep their hands engaged in silent prayer or to remind us to pray.
  - **For Grades K-1:** Today we are going to make a simple cross necklace using six beads (See illustrations on next page)
    - **SUPPLIES:** Each child will need 6 beads (any colors can be used); thin cord or rawhide lace that will fit through the beads, clear glue.
    - **Step 1:** Cut your cord into a length of about 30”. Thread the yellow bead onto one end of the cord and slide until bead is in the center of the cord.
    - **Step 2:** Put the cord ends together and pull them both through the green bead. See illustration.
    - **Step 3:** Put the red bead onto one side of the cord, and the blue bead onto the other side. Pull them tight.





- Step 4: Put the cord ends together again and pull them through the black bead. See illustration.
- Step 5: Place a very small dot of clear drying glue onto the red and blue bead, at the center of the cross where they touch. Wedge your white bead between the red and blue bead so that the white bead's holes touch the sides of the red and blue bead where the glue was placed. Pull the string tightly and tie a knot against the top of the black bead.
- Step 6: Tie the ends of the cord. Wrap the cord ends around your finger, and loop it through the hole, pull tight.

- For Grades 2-5: Today we are going to make Christian Prayer beads that are also sometimes called Celtic Prayer Beads (similar to a rosary)



- SUPPLIES: Each student needs 28 small beads, 5 larger beads, 1 cross, 30-32" of beading thread or cord
- Thread your cross onto the cord and slide it to the middle of your cord.
- Take two of your larger beads and thread BOTH ends of the string through both of those beads.
- Then on each side, string 7 smaller beads, 1 larger bead, and then 7 smaller beads again. You will have used all but the last larger bead.
- Put both of the two strands together again, and add the last bead, then tie off with a knot
- Cut the string close to the knot and you're done.
- Looking at a picture of the beads as you string your own set might make these directions easier to follow.



- After the beads are finished, gather the class together again and have children show their beads. Explain some of the different ways they might use their beads:
  - **For Grades K-1** Children can use their beads to remind them of six different parts of prayer:
    - Thank you, God
    - Help me, God
    - Help others, God
    - I'm sorry, God
    - I love you, God
    - I'm listening, God – the middle one that keeps everything together 😊
  - **For Grades 2-5** Although traditional rosaries help the user pray a separate prayer for each bead, that's not the only way to use these beads. Children may use the ACTS model (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication) and use each 7-bead section for one of those 4 types of prayer – naming 7 things they are thankful for, 7 things they adore about God, etc. Another option is to use the four sections as Family, Friends, Myself, and the World (using the 7 beads to list the names of family or friends or things we pray for ourselves or for the world) and use the cross while we are listening to God.
- When you have about 15 minutes left in class, clean up your room and ask students to write a prayer or two in their journal that they might want to use with their beads.

#### **Filler Activities:**

- Children can use construction paper to make prayer booklets to take home and use with their new prayer beads.
- Another quick option is to give children a piece of 30" cord and have them tie knots in it, making the knots become the "beads". This would be a great quick way they can make a prayer rope that can be shared with their friends.
- Some students may need a little more time to complete their project. If you have a child who isn't quite finished, you may wish to allow them to take home a small amount of the decorative materials in a small bag and finish at home.



# 101 Ways to Pray: Kitchen Workshop

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## Bible Reference for the Cycle:

Matthew 6:5-15 (Jesus teaches us how to pray) and I Thessalonians 5:17

## Main Verse for the Cycle:

“Pray without ceasing.” I Thessalonians 5:17

*(Revised Standard Version of the Bible)*

## Key Concepts and Life Application:

- Prayer is conversation with God – both talking and listening
- We can talk to God in any place at any time using any method. There are many, many different ways to pray... not just one “right” way
- The Lord’s Prayer and other well-known prayers give us examples of prayer
- The **ACTS** model gives us a way to remember what to pray for. **A**doration (what we love about God) **C**onfession (things we are sorry for) **T**hanks-giving (things we are thankful for) **S**upplication (things we ask God about – for ourselves and others)

## Summary of Class Plans:

Children will learn how pretzels were originally connected with prayer and will then make pretzels, while they discuss how and why we pray for other people

## Materials Needed:

- Disposable tablecloths to protect tables
- Ingredients for Soft Pretzels
  - 1 stick of butter to grease baking sheets (or use butter-flavored cooking spray)
  - 1½ cups warm water
  - 1 package of yeast
  - 1 tsp. salt
  - 1 T. sugar
  - 4 cups flour
  - Wax paper for those who are squeamish about touching the dough
  - Beaten eggs for brushing the top of pretzels before baking
  - Melted butter
  - Kosher salt
  - Cinnamon/sugar mixture (preferably in a shaker)
- Mixing bowl
- Measuring cup
- Large spoon and/or rubber spatula
- Baking sheet(s)
- Oven mitts
- Paper plates & napkins – one for each child
- Drink for snack time, if you want to serve something with the pretzels
- Poster board, flip chart or chalkboard to write on
- Marker, chalk, etc. – something to write with for brainstorming



### For optional filler activities:

- Large bag of small pretzel twists
- Small baggies (not the zipper kind)
- Colored ribbons to tie baggies shut
- Small cards printed with the history of pretzels – these cards can be tied with the ribbons to small baggies of pretzels and shared with other people.

### **Workshop Lesson Plans:**

- **BEFORE CLASS** – If you are planning to use your church kitchen, make sure you clear it with the right people and are familiar with the policies for kitchen use.
- **BEFORE CLASS** – Teacher will need to arrive 15-20 minutes before class begins to get everything set out and ready.
  - Cover the tables with disposable tablecloths to keep the mess at a minimum
  - Set out all ingredients and supplies for easy access during class.
  - Just before class time, preheat oven to 425°
  - Be sure to wash your hands
- You can refer to “A General Schedule for Class Structure” (included in the Introductory Materials) for ideas on how to introduce yourself and the story, as well as how to plan your class time appropriately.
- Read the cycle story about prayer. After you have read the story, ask your class some questions, such as:
  - Do you think it is important to pray? Why or Why not?
  - Is prayer more for God or for us?
  - What are some ways you have tried praying?
  - Have you heard ideas during this unit for new ideas?
  - Where do you find it easiest to pray?
  - Would you rather read or memorize a prayer that someone else has written, or just use your own words?
  - Have you ever tried to memorize a prayer, perhaps the Lord’s Prayer?
  - Do you think learning to pray is easy or difficult?
- Explain how pretzels are connected to prayer by offering the following brief history lesson (in your own words):

*“You have probably eaten pretzels, but did you know pretzels were originally connected to prayer? Legend has it that in 610 AD, an Italian monk invented pretzels from leftover strips of bread dough. He folded the long strips into the traditional pretzel shape to resemble arms crossed in prayer because when the monks prayed, they crossed their arms over their chest, with each hand resting on the opposite shoulder – instead of bowing their heads and folding their hands. (Can you try that?) He called his new treats “prestiola” which means “little reward” and offered them to children who learned their prayers.*





*Today, some churches remember this tradition on “Pretzel Sunday” during Lent. They bake pretzels (which are similar to unleavened bread) and they remember the story of how pretzels came to be. Pretzels are also sometimes distributed to other people, in memory of how some churches gave hot pretzels to the poor in medieval times, much the way that some churches today offer soup or sandwiches to people who need a simple nourishing meal.”*

- Tell the class that they will be making pretzels today while we talk about prayer. They will get to shape their own pretzel and will be allowed to choose toppings of either salt or cinnamon sugar for their pretzel.
- Have everyone wash their hands. Adults grease baking sheet(s) with butter. Students can help measure out the ingredients.
- **Directions for making pretzels:**
  - Measure 1½ cups of warm water. Pour into mixing bowl
  - Sprinkle 1 package of yeast into the water
  - Add 1 tsp. salt, 1 T. sugar, and 4 cups flour
  - Mix and knead dough approximately 3 minutes
  - Give each child a small ball of dough on a piece of wax paper
  - Make sure each child has their name written on their piece of wax paper
  - Ask children to roll their dough into long strips and then help them fold the strips into the traditional pretzel shape by crossing each end to the middle
  - Lay finished pretzels on greased cookie sheets
  - Brush with beaten egg
  - Sprinkle with salt or leave plain if cinnamon/sugar pretzel is desired.
  - Bake at 425 degrees for approximately 12 minutes.
- While pretzels are baking, an adult will need to melt some butter and combine the cinnamon and sugar in a small bowl or shaker. (The shaker will work better to keep children from using huge amounts of cinnamon sugar on their pretzels.)
- While pretzels are baking, see how many different ways to pray your class can list. Talk about how we pray for ourselves and things we need or things we worry about, but we also can pray for others, or we can just tell God how we feel. There are many different kinds of prayers. See if your class can generate examples of prayers for each category listed below:
  - **For Younger Classes (Grades K-2)** – Six ways to pray:
    - Thank you, God
    - Help me, God
    - Help others, God
    - I’m sorry, God
    - I love you, God
    - I’m listening, God





- **For Older Classes (Grades 3-5)** – the ACTS model
  - Adoration
  - Confession
  - Thanksgiving
  - Supplication – make sure you talk about the meaning of this word (a humble, earnest request or prayer) and you might also talk about “intercession” (praying for someone else) as one kind of supplication
- After the pretzels are done baking, brush plain (non-salted) pretzels with melted butter, then sprinkle with cinnamon-sugar mixture. Serve pretzels and enjoy!
- As you eat your pretzels, talk with children about prayer:
  - Does the prayer position of the monks remind you of anything? It seems to me like it might have felt almost like a hug.
  - How do we pray for other people?
  - How does praying for someone show them you care?
  - When the ancient churches offered warm pretzels to people who needed food, how do you think those people felt?
  - What are other ways we can care for other people?
- After everyone has eaten their pretzel and cleaned up their mess, allow children a few minutes of quiet to write or draw in their journals. Ask them to think about how we care for others - as individuals and as a church. Ask them to think of specific things they can do to show someone they care. Invite students to choose someone they would like to pray for this week.

#### **Filler Activities:**

- If your church has a soup kitchen or sandwich distribution center, you may wish to have your class make up baggies of pretzels, tied with colored ribbons. If time allows, you may want to print out small cards with the history of the pretzel on one side and a blank space where children can color pictures or write words of caring on the other.
- Pretzel baggies can also be made up for children to give to someone at church or take home to share with someone else.
- Have students illustrate several different types of prayer they have talked about or thought about during today’s class.

