

LESSON 19: Ways of Prayer

AIM


Learners will understand prayer as a basic human activity and a means of living out their faith. (4.1.6, 4.1.7, 4.2.5, 4.4.5)

OUTCOME

Learners demonstrate appreciation for prayer.


Learners are aware of various forms of prayer.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- 1 **Prayer Questionnaire:** Ask the learners to complete the worksheet, if possible, a few days before the lesson. 
⇒ This will give you an opportunity to decide which of the following material to concentrate on in the lesson.
- 2 **Communicating with Others:** Discuss the different means and ways that exist of communicating with others.
 - We communicate thoughts and feelings by talking directly, writing letters or e-mails, sending cards on special occasions, giving gifts at special times, making a phone call to let the other know you are thinking of them.
 - We also communicate feelings and emotions in other ways, such as dance and song, writing poems or essays.
 - We communicate empathy or sympathy in moments of adversity by being present for the other person. We accompany people in sorrow and sadness just by being at their side. Our help and assistance lets people know that we care and want to serve them in some or other way.
- 3 **Communicating with God:** Invite learners to mention the different ways of prayer they know of and jot their answers on the board. Point out that the two most important ingredients in communication with others are talking and listening. Explain that to experience God as a friend we need to spend time with her, becoming aware of her presence, letting her into our lives.
- 4 **Attitudes to Prayer:** Invite learners to discuss their attitudes to prayer and reflect on where, when, how and why they choose to pray - for example when in trouble, in sickness, for help, to intercede for someone. Everyone prays at some time or another. Some religions call people to regular prayer, like the Muslims who are summoned to prayer every morning and evening by their muezzin. Others pray in moments of great need and distress. Sometimes people pray on their own in amongst all the noise of traffic or the people around them. Others like to pray in groups in word, song or dance. Sometimes people prefer to use the prayers they know by heart or to use their own words asking God for their needs and concerns. There are many ways of praying as there are places and opportunities for prayer.
- 5 **Forms of prayer:** Some of these may have come up in LEARNING ACTIVITY 3. This is an opportunity to elaborate on them or to introduce some new ideas.



WHAT YOU NEED

- *  Copies of the worksheet (1) ⇒
- * Texts of some traditional prayers (5)
- * Collection of prayer-related objects (5)
- * Book of saints (7)
- * Rosaries (8) ⇒
- * Pictures or statues of Hindu deities (9)

TRADITIONAL VOCAL PRAYERS are an important part of our Catholic heritage. They are memorised and said in community or individually. These prayers express our beliefs in essence. They help us direct our thoughts and words to God. The most widely known are: Our Father (The Lord's Prayer), Hail Mary, Glory Be, the Creed, Act of Sorrow, Grace at Meal Time, Prayer to St Francis, Acts of Faith, Hope and Love.

SPONTANEOUS PRAYER is prayer that comes from the heart in response to what is happening in our lives. This can take on many forms - prayer of thanksgiving, prayer of intercession, prayer of forgiveness and sorrow.

PRAYER IN ACTIONS express our reverence, respect, humility and joy to God. Some of them are the Sign of the Cross, kneeling, genuflecting, hands uplifted, offertory and Gospel liturgical dances, and processions. (See GRADE 5 LESSON 28)

AFFECTIVE PRAYER or guided meditations which involve our feelings and imagination, as we have experienced in the previous lesson.

CONTEMPLATION is being in God's presence without thinking of any particular thing, just being with God in the silence or our hearts, as we shall see in the following lesson.

PRAYER IN SONG AND MUSIC helps us to lift our minds and hearts to God, to celebrate God's presence in a joyful way. Liturgical singing is the best example of this form of prayer.

OBJECTS AND SYMBOLS help us to focus ourselves in God.

- Candles remind people of the presence of God among them.
- A Crucifix is a symbol that expresses our belief of Jesus' death and resurrection, his sacrifice of love. Pictures and icons bring to mind a person or special action or event in the life of the person depicted which give an example or inspire the person at prayer.
- Incense honours the person or object that is incensed, and symbolises the ascent of prayer to God.

All these objects are called Sacramentals. Invite learners to talk about the objects mentioned or any other objects they might have seen or used and to say what the meaning or message of the object is.

PRAYING TO DIFFERENT PERSONS OR THROUGH A PERSON as Catholics do is an aspect of faith sometimes misunderstood by people of other religions or denominations. In professing the communion of saints, we believe that all members of the Church, past, present and future are in communion through the eternal Spirit of Christ, just as the parts of a body are. When we speak of praying to Mary, Joseph, the guardian angel, or any other saintly person, what we mean is twofold.

- We focus on the special aspects in the lives of these saints, or divine beings that gave greater glory to God. By remembering them we learn to live our faith.
- We ask them for help to follow their example, to help us do God's will.

These people have tried their best to do God's will and to be followers of Jesus. Their lives inspire us to learn how to live as God wants us to, and to love God. Catholics pray to Mary for her intercession as Jesus' mother.

- 6 **Conclude the lesson** by inviting learners to use one of the above mentioned forms of prayer. Otherwise, divide them in groups and each group chooses one form of prayer, preferably spontaneous prayer or prayer by song or dance.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

7 **Patron Saints:** Explain that all people need the help of others. In the Catholic Church, we pray to the saints and ask them to help us. Saints are people who have tried their best to follow Jesus. The Church honours these men and women and tells us that they are with God in heaven. A special day is sometimes set aside for remembering them. People in the Church often choose a saint to be their patron or patroness. These are some of them:

- St Cecilia is the patron saint of musicians.
- St Thomas Aquinas is the patron saint of schools.
- St Aloysius Gonzaga is the patron saint of young people.
- St Joseph is the patron saint of workers.
- St Camillus is the patron saint of nurses.
- Our Lady, Queen Assumed into Heaven is the patroness of South Africa.

By praying to them we ask for their help in becoming better Christians. Their example inspires us to love and serve God better.

8 **Mary and the Rosary:** One of the Marian prayers Many Catholics say is the Rosary. The string of beads called a rosary is a sacramental, as we have mentioned before. The prayer helps us remember the lives of Mary and Jesus. While we are praying the rosary, we think of events that took place in their lives. These are called the Mysteries of the Rosary. In the Joyful Mysteries we think of the happy times in the lives of Jesus and Mary.

Sometimes we think of the sorrowful events in their lives. We also remember the glorious times. A list is given below. ⇒ We always end the rosary by praying a very special prayer to Mary, the Hail Holy Queen.

9 **Hindu's pray** to and worship different deities, which are aspects of the one Supreme Being. They believe that the Supreme Being is so great that it is difficult to worship such a being; therefore they have deities that are different ways of thinking about the Supreme Being. They are ways to experience or worship God. Here are a few examples:

- Lord Ganesha is the elephant-headed deity who removes obstacles.
- Mother Durga is depicted riding a tiger to show that she can overpower and tame anything, even as strong and fearful as a tiger.
- Lakshmi is the mother, the preserving force and provider of wealth.
- Saraswati is the power of knowledge.

10 **The Ninety-Nine Names of Allah:** Muslims also believe that the mystery of God cannot be effectively captured in words, and they describe him in many ways. Here are some of them:

Allah is the Merciful, the Compassionate, the Forgiver, the Forgiving, the Clement, the Generous, the Affectionate, the Kind.

MATERIALS

MYSTERIES OF THE ROSARY

JOYFUL MYSTERIES

- 1 The Annunciation
- 2 The Visitation
- 3 The Nativity of Jesus
- 4 The presentation of Jesus in the Temple
- 5 The Finding of Jesus in the Temple

SORROWFUL MYSTERIES

- 1 The Agony in the Garden
- 2 The Scourging at the Pillar
- 3 The Crowning with Thorns
- 4 The Carrying of the Cross
- 5 The Crucifixion

GLORIOUS MYSTERIES

- 1 The Resurrection
- 2 The Ascension
- 3 The Descent of the Holy Spirit
- 4 The Assumption of Mary
- 5 The Coronation of Mary

Prayer Questionnaire

NAME

CLASS

AGE years months

RELIGION

1 Do you like to pray?

.....

2 Why do people pray?

.....

3 Where do people pray?

.....

4 Which set prayers are you familiar with?

.....

.....

5 Do you know about prayers in the Bible or scriptures of other religions? Where will you find them?

.....

6 What kinds of prayer do you know about?

.....

7 Why do people use the following objects in prayer?

(i) pictures and carvings?

.....

(ii) candles?

.....

(iii) flowers?.....

(iv) incense?.....

8 Do you think it is good to pray? Why?

.....

(Idea from a lesson by Marjorie Wallace. 2000. Marian College. Johannesburg)

LESSON 20: Being Present to God


AIM

To help learners understand what it means to be present to God through the experience of silent prayer and solitary meditation (3.4.6, 4.2.7, 4.4.4)

OUTCOME


Learners experience forms of contemplation and meditation.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- 1 **Communing in Silence:** In the previous lesson we dealt with different forms of prayer as means of communication. Communication enriches friendship but there are times when friendship is nourished in silence, another, and sometimes more powerful, form of communication than words. Just to be with one another in the stillness of being is a means of finding each other. Invite learners to share moments like these in their lives and how they felt when they were being silent with each other.
- 2 **Presence:** When we talk about someone being present we often mean that he or she is there physically. There are times when we speak of presence that do not refer only to this physical presence, saying something like, “He filled the room with his presence.” Being in someone’s thoughts is also being present to them. A person becomes present to you as you read their letters: you can almost see and hear them. Their image comes to mind quite vividly.
- 3 **God is present in our lives:** Ask the learners to name some invisible things whose presence they are convinced of. They might name the air, radio waves, thoughts, and feelings. There are many ways in and through which we know that God is present in our lives. There are signs that point to God’s presence that we have learnt to recognise. The fact that we do not see God as we see each other doesn’t change the fact that she is as present to us as we are to each other. God’s presence among us is most clearly seen in Jesus Christ, Emmanuel, God-With-Us. Invite the learners to look up and read John 14:8-9. Philip said to Jesus: “Lord, let us see the Father” to which Jesus replied, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still don’t know me? To have seen me is to have seen the Father”.
- 4 **Footprints in the Sand:** Play some soft, reflective music. Ask the learners to quieten themselves. Hand out copies of the worksheet.  ⇒ Ask them to read the text slowly and meditatively. How does God show his presence in their lives? What footprints do they see?
- 5 **Being Present to God:** Explain that when we practice contemplation or silent prayer we become present to God. This is not an easy task as distractions will come our way. But the more we do it the easier it becomes. Draw the learners’ attention to the fact that we live in a world filled with noise and we need to learn to push it aside in our minds if we are to pray in the silence of our hearts and become present for God.
- 6 **Contemplation Exercise:** Ask learners to follow these steps together with you to learn to become quiet and still.



WHAT YOU NEED

- * Bibles (3)(8)
- *  Copies of the worksheet (4) ⇒

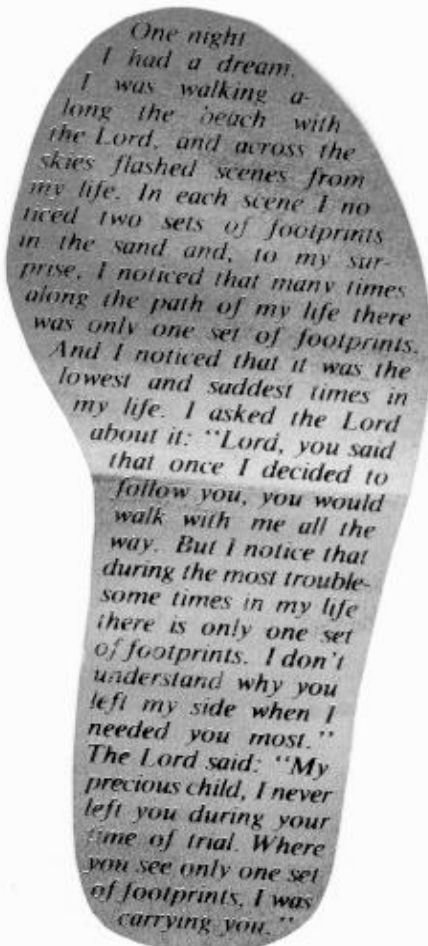
- Sit comfortably and become aware of your breathing.
- Breathe slowly and deeply.
- Close your eyes and listen to the different sounds outside. Sounds only bother you when you fight them in your mind.
- Continue to listen until a calm mood sets in.
- Begin your silent prayer time.
- If thoughts emerge, use a mantra to quiet yourself down. You may say something like: 'Help me to listen to the sound of your voice in my heart.' Repeat the mantra, shorten it until you achieve stillness.
- It is a good idea to concentrate on an object and gaze at it for a long time allowing the experience to enter your mind. Gazing upon a crucifix as a symbol of Jesus' love will enable you to experience his love for you in a new and personal way.
- Contemplation is experiencing something in a way that moves us deeply and profoundly. It is becoming aware of God's presence and love for us. Silence is an essential part in this kind of prayer. Being open and present to God.
- After a few minutes stop your contemplation gently and slowly and bring yourself back to the present moment.
- Breathe deeply and slowly once again.

(Based on 'God is off my beat' in Mark Link SJ. 1980. *Breakaway*, p 14)

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

- 7 **Buddhist Prayer:** To 'warm-up' for meditation Buddhists chant in order to quieten their minds and hearts, keeping them from thinking about other things. The other prayer practice is to sit cross-legged on a round cushion facing the wall, breathing rhythmically slowly and deeply alone with themselves hour after hour, watching thoughts arise and fade away. They use this practice to understand themselves.
- 8 **Silence and solitude** [Matthew 6:6]: Ask learners to read the scripture passage above and invite them to experience this form of prayer on their own and in their own time. Tell them to find a quiet place somewhere, to sit quietly and spend a few minutes in complete silence with their eyes closed. This could be done at school in the church or chapel, in their own room at home, in a quiet place in the backyard or garden at home, or in a quiet place in the school playground. Ask them to share their experience with the class in the next lesson.
- 9 For further **solitude prayers**, they could start concentrating on themselves, becoming aware of the tensions in their body, to release them through breathing slowly and deeply until stillness has been achieved, and then to remain there for as long as they'd like to or are comfortable.
- 10 Invite the learners to **write a prayer**, imagining they are one of the following characters approaching the crib, becoming present to God in the infant Jesus - Joseph, Mary, a shepherd, a wise man.

Footprints in the Sand



One night I had a dream. I was walking along the beach with the Lord, and across the skies flashed scenes from my life. In each scene I noticed two sets of footprints in the sand and, to my surprise, I noticed that many times along the path of my life there was only one set of footprints. And I noticed that it was the lowest and saddest times in my life. I asked the Lord about it: "Lord, you said that once I decided to follow you, you would walk with me all the way. But I notice that during the most troublesome times in my life there is only one set of footprints. I don't understand why you left my side when I needed you most." The Lord said: "My precious child, I never left you during your time of trial. Where you see only one set of footprints, I was carrying you."

One night I had a dream. I dreamed I was walking along the beach with the Lord. Across the sky flashed scenes from my life. For each scene, I noticed two sets of footprints in the sand; one belonging to me, and the other to the Lord.

When the last scene of my life flashed before me, I looked back at the footprints in the sand. I noticed that many times along the path of my life there was only one set of footprints. I also noticed that it happened at the very lowest and saddest times in my life.

This really bothered me and I questioned the Lord about it. "Lord, you said that once I decided to follow you, you'd walk with me all the way. But I have noticed that during the most troublesome times in my life, there is only one set of footprints. I don't understand why when I needed you most you would leave me."

The Lord replied, "My precious, precious child, I love you, and I would never leave you. During your times of trials and suffering, when you see only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you."

(Author unknown)

LESSON 21: Getting in Touch

AIM


Learners will get in touch with their inner selves through a simple meditation practice. (3.4.10)

OUTCOME

Learners experience forms of contemplation and meditation.



WHAT YOU NEED

- * Soft meditative music (1)
- *  Copies of the worksheet (3) ⇨

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

1 Meditation: Jesus, help my self doubt

Ask learners to clear their tables or desks, or take them to a place where they can sit comfortably and at a certain distance from each other. Read the following slowly. Soft background music could be played while you lead them in the meditation.

Sit comfortably, but do not cross your legs. Rest your hands on your laps. Listen to the sounds around you, outside or in the street. Listen and let them become like background noise. Listen and let them go. Be aware of your body sitting on the chair (carpet, floor). Be aware of your breathing. Listen to it as you inhale and exhale. Breathe slowly. Listen to your breathing and close your eyes.

Self-esteem, self-respect and self-love begins with knowing that you are a person in your own right, and that you can make a difference in other people's lives. Learning to love yourself is not an easy task. It involves learning who you really are and accepting yourself as such.

Unless you really love yourself with all your limitations, failures and successes, you won't be able to love others - including Jesus. Jesus is within you and if you don't love what is inside you, then you cannot experience love fully.

You may never know fully who you are, but you can love what you do know if you get in touch with yourself and God in prayer.

Jesus was not just the 30 year old man as we usually met him in pictures and statues. He went through the whole process of growing up just like you. He grew to understand what it means to be human, just as you struggle to understand and accept yourself. Jesus has a special love for those who have trouble loving who they are: he understands your needs and feelings. Jesus knows, loves and respects you and wants you to reach your full potential if you only let him into your heart.

Say the following words in your mind and heart very slowly, "Thank you for my life". As you breathe say again and again, "Thank you for my life."


Think of the things you want to trust Jesus with - your fears, insecurities, and self-doubt - and place them into his hands, asking him to bless these ways of learning to love yourself. Spend some time in his presence, allowing his love to flow through you. Slowly stop your prayer and be silent. Silence is part of prayer.

Now, breathe in deeply, and as you breathe out open your eyes and become aware of the place where you are.

GRADE 6

You can always go back to this sanctuary of prayer within you in the same way we did today. Find a quiet place, sit up straight and go through the steps leading you to get in tune with God.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

- 2 **Journalling:** Invite the learners to write their thoughts and feelings down after the meditation.
- 3 **How close am I to God?** The learners use the worksheet to reflect on this question. 
⇒

How Close Am I to God?

Reflect on the following answers to the above question. If none of them exactly applies to you, then write your own response in the space provided below.

I am not as close to God as I could be because:

1. I don't take time to think about the mysteries of life: who I am, where I fit in the world, what happens after death, what is really right and wrong.
2. I think about these things, but I don't relate the answers to God.
3. I want to be my own God. I don't want to have to be responsible to anyone but myself for what I do with my life.
4. I am afraid of facing God. He might not like me, or he might find fault with the way I am living my life. He might ask me to change something I don't want to change.
5. I have too many mixed up ideas about God. The God I experience doesn't fit in with God as I learn about him.
6. I don't need God. I can take care of myself.

7.
.....
.....

(Adapted from Kieran Sawyer. 1978. *Developing Faith*. Notre Dame, Illinois: Ave Maria Press, p 21)

LESSON 22: Fasting and Silence

AIM

To lead the children towards an understanding of the benefits of silence and fasting for spiritual and personal growth. (3.3.6)

OUTCOME

Learners appreciate the value of spiritual disciplines.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Preparation:** Prepare the room so that the children can lie down or sit comfortably on the carpet. If your classroom is not suitable for this, find a place in the school where there will be enough room for the whole class to be comfortable - maybe the school hall, or assembly place, if it is in a quiet part of the school. Put up a DO NOT DISTURB sign on the door. Ask the office not to call you out of class no matter what. Explain the nature of the lesson to them.

Ask three learners to prepare a short **5-minute presentation** on fasting as practised in Judaism, in Catholic Christianity, and in Islam. So much the better if there are representatives of these three communities in the class. Make sure that you, the teacher, has also prepared for this.

- Presentation:** Those who have prepared a presentation are allowed time to speak for a maximum of five minutes each. No discussion is entered into at this stage. There will be an opportunity later in the lesson.
- Prayer in silence:** Ask the children to sit comfortably on the carpet, or to relax in a comfortable sitting posture in their desks. Encourage them to keep their backs straight, without tension. Slouching leads to drowsiness. Some well-chosen, softly-played taped music will help to create the right atmosphere for this exercise.

STEP 1: Do some slow, rhythmic breathing exercises to help the children to calm themselves.

STEP 2: Once the class is quiet and attentive, suggest that the learners in their silence take a short prayer (called a mantra in the Hindu tradition) to repeat in their silence. Give some suggestions:

- *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, have mercy on me (The Jesus Prayer).* (Give this a phrase at a time.)
- *Be it done to me according to your word.*
- *Your will be done.*
- *Lord, increase my faith.*
- *Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.*

Learners who are not Christian should be encouraged to choose a prayer from their tradition.

STEP3: Be very still yourself. Use a voice that is as gentle as possible. Do not move about unless it is absolutely necessary. Give the children about 5 minutes of completely silent time.




WHAT YOU NEED

- * Three learners prepared (1)
- * Examples of short prayers or mantras (3)
- * Recorded music (3)
- * Meditation exercise (7) ⇨

STEP 4: Slowly bring the learners back to a normal state of consciousness in an unhurried way.

- 4 Allow the learners time for **discussion** of their varied reactions to the quiet time. As a new experience the silence might have been bewildering to some and not others.
- 5 Challenge the learners with the following **riddle**: What do fasting and silence have in common? Let them talk about it for two minutes in small buzz groups, before calling for a response. Both fasting and silence have to do with the mouth. In fasting, nothing goes in; in silence, nothing goes out.
- 6 This is the time to explain **why we need silence and fasting** in our daily life. Silence gives us the opportunity to hear our own thoughts, even to hear what God might be saying to us at different points in our lives, to collect our thoughts and give ourselves time to use our creative energy. Silence can also be compared to fasting, instead of food we give up the use of words and our voices to allow God's words and voice to enter our minds and souls. Jesus says, "One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God." [Matthew 4:4]

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

- 7 Give the children another opportunity to experience **meditation**. This time use a guided meditation for the children to follow. An example is provided.  ⇒
- 8 As an ongoing process, get the children to try finding time for silence in their own lives at home or at school. Let them keep a **journal** of their quiet time experiences. The journal is private and should not be collected or read by the teacher, unless freely offered by the learner.

Affirming My Body

Relax your body. Tense your muscles and relax them. Begin with your feet and tense and relax all the way to your face.

When you are relaxed - open to your body and to the Spirit of God in you - get in touch with how you are experiencing your body right now. How do you feel about your body? Make a mental tour of your body from top to bottom, and when you are finished write down your feelings in any order.

Are you feeling better, more alive, now that you have spent this time meditating on your body? If so, in what ways do you feel better?

Is there an aspect of your body that causes you discomfort or embarrassment so that you dislike it? If possible, examine this part of your body, directly or by using a mirror. What is it that most disturbs you about this body part? What experiences have caused you to feel the way you do?

Next, write a dialogue between you and the body part that most annoys you. At first you may feel silly doing this exercise, but give it a chance. Say what you want to the part and ask it questions. Then, let the part speak back to you. You might just make some new discoveries in the dialogue process.

When you and your body part have finished exchanging views, read over the dialogue. Did you learn anything about your body image or your behaviour towards your body?

Spend some time talking to the Creator about your interaction with the part of you that has become a source of disturbance.

Conclude the meditation with the *Serenity Prayer*:

God, grant me
serenity to accept
the things I cannot change,
courage to change the things I can,
and wisdom to know the difference.

(Adapted from *Created in God's Image: Meditating on Our Body*, Carl Koch & Joyce Heil, St Mary's Press, Winona, MN, 1991)

LESSON 23: Guided Meditation

AIM

To foster learners' understanding of meditation through an experience of guided meditation. (3.3.5 3.4.9)

OUTCOME


The learners experience forms of contemplation and meditation.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- 1 **For you, the teacher:** Meditations are the most interesting prayer experience and the most difficult. They are enjoyable, but challenging, and require seriousness and discipline. In guided meditation we provide learners with 'God experiences' - opportunities to encounter God in a very special way. We help consolidate knowledge about God into something like a 'hands-on' experience. As Betsy Caprio says in her book *Experiments in Prayer*: "Meditations are attempts to create a setting where all allow themselves to be quieted in body and soul, consciously trying to place themselves in the presence of God and be open to him." (Page 111)
- 2 **Meditation:** Ask learners to say what they know about meditation. After they've shared explain that normally people think that to meditate upon something is to think about it, to analyse the issue and to draw specific conclusions or ways of action.
- 3 **Encounters with God:** Explain to the learners that meditations are short encounters with God of another kind. Learners have probably experienced meditations in previous years but it is good to help them have a good understanding of meditation. They will have had a foretaste in LESSON 21.
- 4 **Guided Meditation:** This kind of prayer teaches children to create a place in their imagination where they can meet Jesus at any time or place; where they can be lead to their own experience of Jesus in their hearts and minds. To prepare the children for meditation you'll need to follow these steps:
 - Make sure that the children are comfortably seated, either at their desks that have been cleared prior to the exercise, or seated on the floor preferably on a carpeted area.
 - Help them relax by breathing deeply and slowly a few times. Ask them to become aware of their breathing, in and out through their noses.
 - Make sure that a certain amount of space is kept between one other to avoid the possibility of disruption.
 - Try to remain in the same place from beginning to end. Your movement might distract them.
 - Use a clear, calm tone of voice. Read as if you were speaking. Pause between sentences. Use an expressive tone of voice without being dramatic.
 - State directions in a simple way.
 - Play gentle music softly in the background.



WHAT YOU NEED

- * A tape recorder with meditative music (4)
- *  Worksheet 'The Meeting Place' (5) ⇨
- * Bible (6)

GRADE 6

Study the group. If they cannot keep the discipline required make the session shorter but do not change the structure. Use the following series of instructions:

- a) Sit comfortably.
- b) Concentrate on your breathing.
- c) Become aware of the outside noises.
- d) Allow yourselves to imagine what is suggested.
- e) Speak to God in your heart.
- f) Come back to the room by breathing deeply and slowly a few times.
- g) Share your experience (optional).

5 **Example:** If it is difficult for you to make up your own theme for meditation, try this example with your learners: 'The Meeting Place'. 📖 ⇨

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

6 **Resources:** There are very good books that can assist you in this form of prayer:

- *In my Heart Room* by Sr Marie Terese Donze.
- *Experiments in Prayer* by Betsy Caprio.
- *Guided Meditations for Children*. by Sydney Ann Merrit

The Meeting Place

A MEDITATION EXPERIENCE

Introduction

Sometimes I get so busy I don't take time to listen for Jesus' voice. This is not good for me. I have learned my life seems to go much better when I remember to say, "Good morning, Jesus" and to thank Jesus just before I go to sleep. Sometimes, at night, I just try to listen for his voice. Have you ever tried this? Sometimes Jesus speaks to people like me and you through a tiny voice called a conscience. At times I find it difficult to talk to Jesus because I cannot see him. Do you have that problem? (Allow time for discussion.)

There is a way we can see Jesus. It is called our imagination. Do you ever use your imagination when you are playing? Imagining people, places, and things? Is there a special place that you like to go to in your imagination? Where would you like to go to in your imagination? Where would you like to meet Jesus? (Allow time for discussion.) Maybe we could try something right now.

Invite children to sit comfortably at their desks or on the carpet. Ask them to open their imagination and close their eyes. This is their private time to talk to Jesus and to listen to Jesus in their hearts. Take time to relax them with your voice, getting them to breathe deeply and slowly and to relax their bodies. Play soft, gentle music in the background.

Meditation

Close your eyes... Shrug your shoulders... take a deep breath... let it out slowly... whisper "Jesus"... relax...

Imagine that you are walking down a dusty path on a warm spring day and you pass by a tall man with long hair... In the background you can hear water washing against the sandy shore... the man turns to speak to you... can you see him?... It is Jesus!... "Where are you going, Lord?" you ask... Jesus smiles... He takes your hand in his... Feel his gentle touch... "Come follow me", he answers... You and Jesus walk hand in hand toward the water... Jesus sits on the ground with his back resting against an olive tree... Look into his eyes... Jesus looks toward the blue-green lake... He stands, inviting you to walk with him to the water's edge... Be careful going down the sloping earth... "Don't fall," Jesus says... Jesus dips his hand into the cool water, forms a cup with his hand, and then offers you a drink... Taste the fresh cold water... Jesus dips his hand into the water once again... Playfully, he splashes cold droplets of water on your bare feet. Shiver with the cold... You and Jesus laugh... Splash Jesus back... Isn't it nice to laugh with Jesus?

Taking Jesus by the hand, lead him to your favourite place...

Tall trees line the path, reaching their arms to the heavens... birds fly from branch to branch... Take a deep breath... The air smells sweet of fresh grass and rose blossoms... Look up at the sky... Clouds slowly drift across the face of the sun... A warm breeze blows Jesus' hair... You are now at your special place... It may be at home, in a park, high in the mountains, or on a sandy beach... You can be with Jesus wherever you want to be... Invite Jesus to sit down... Sit beside him or perhaps on his lap... no one will see you... Feel the safety of his strong arms folding around you... Feel his love... You are alone with Jesus in your favourite place.

I am going to give you a few moments to be alone with Jesus... Speak to him quietly in your heart... Ask him anything you want... Talk to him... Tell him all the things that are bothering you... (Pause for a minute or two or until the children grow restless.) Look up at Jesus, telling him, "Here I am, Lord, I am listening"... Now, listen to him speak... As you listen, feel the warmth of the sun on your face... (Pause for half a minute or until children grow restless.)

Jesus, thank you for coming to my special place. I love you. I will come back to visit you often.

It is time for you to leave... Jesus wraps his arms around you and gives you a warm hug... "Goodbye for now", he says... Turn and walk away... Wave goodbye to Jesus... Breathe in and out deeply and slowly... Open your eyes and return to this room.

(Adapted from Sydney Ann Merrit. 1995. *Guided Meditations for Children*. San Jose, California: Resource Publications)