

LESSON 4

PRAY WITH FAITH

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: God Hears Our Prayers

SCRIPTURE: James 5; 1 Thessalonians 5

GOD'S BIG STORY: As the apostles James and Paul encourage us, we are to pray continually with great faith, believing that God hears and answers our prayers.

WORD OF WONDER: God listens to me and hears my prayers. I can praise Him. —from Psalm 66:19–20

CURIOSITY

BELIEF

FAITH

- Curiosity Activity: Bubbles and Phones
- Puppet Intro and Curiosity Questions
- Declaring God's Wonder
- Prayer of Invitation and Worship
- God's Big Story
- Connecting the Wonder Truth
- Word of Wonder: From Psalm 66:19–20
- Prayer and Blessing





LESSON 4 FOR LEADERS

INVITATION

We invite you to pause, listen, and shift your gaze toward the Father ...

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WORD OF WONDER: From Psalm 66:19–20

Pause now to read James 5:13–18.

When I first heard the term, *divine expectation*, I immediately fell in love with it.

The friend who used it was describing a tough situation. His wife was seriously ill and slowly growing weaker. And though he was juggling kids, a career, and serving as a part-time caregiver, he never left home without pausing to kiss his wife and then checking to see that her jogging shoes were by the door.

“We used to run every day,” he said. “I’m praying she recovers, and when that happens, I want to be sure her jogging shoes are where she can find them.”

That’s a guy who prayed with faith. He had faith that God is, that God was listening, and that God loved his wife. He trusted God wanted the best for his wife, and, as far as my friend was concerned, that best would include one day again lacing up those shoes.

This isn’t a miraculous healing story. His wife eventually died, and my friend eventually placed her shoes in a box he carried to a secondhand store so someone else could use them.

Praying with faith doesn’t necessarily mean God will say “yes” to your every request. But it does mean you trust He hears you and will respond. And it means you look for and praise Him in whatever response He gives you.

How will you faithfully pray with *divine expectation* today?

—**Mikal Keefer**

Children’s Ministry Volunteer

Contributor to Wonder Ink

DID YOU KNOW?

FOUNDATION BUILDING BLOCKS

WHO?

First Thessalonians was written by Paul to the church in Thessalonica, and from early Christian history, James, the brother of Jesus, has been understood to be the author of the letter of James (Galatians 1:19). Both authors emphasize the need for faithful, consistent prayer.

WHAT?

These letters are very different in structure and purpose. First Thessalonians addresses the specific situation of believers who were concerned that Jesus would not return. James is a letter of general wisdom meant to circulate among different churches.

WHERE?

The letter of James is addressed to the “12 tribes scattered among the nations” (James 1:1), which may refer to all the Gentiles who believe in Jesus. Thessalonica, however, is located in northern Greece.

WHEN?

Some people think that 1 Thessalonians is the earliest written document in the New Testament, perhaps written in the late 40s or early 50s. James died around the year 62, and many scholars think his letter was written a few years earlier.

CONNECTING TO GOD'S BIG STORY

Jesus first taught His disciples to “always pray and not give up” (Luke 18:1). Both Paul and James thus draw upon the teachings of Jesus in their statements about prayer.

LESSON 4 **EARLY CHILDHOOD**

Spark curiosity, encourage exploration, and get kids thinking about the wonder of God.

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: God Hears Our Prayers

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WORD OF WONDER: From Psalm 66:19–20

Puppet Intro and Curiosity Questions

Introduce the kids to Tac, the curious cat.

Tac the Cat: (Yelling as loudly as he can) Hey! Hello! Hey! Are you there?

Leader: (Interrupting Tac) Hey there, Tac! What's going on? Why are you yelling?

Tac the Cat: Oh, hi! I didn't see you there. Sorry, I was just trying to get God's attention. I need to talk to Him. (Tac goes back to yelling.) Hey! Hello! Yoo-hoo! God, are You there?

Leader: Tac! Wait, listen! You don't have to yell to talk to God!

Tac the Cat: I don't? Then how do I talk to Him?

Leader: You can pray! You can pray and talk to Him in your normal voice. Or you can even pray silently in your head and talk to God.

Tac the Cat: But if I do that, how will God hear me?

Leader: God hears our prayers! It doesn't matter how or when or where you talk to Him. He hears you!

Tac the Cat: Really? So I can talk to God when I'm taking a walk outside?

Leader: Yes!

Tac the Cat: How about when I'm playing with my toys?

Leader: Yes! You can talk with Him then too.

Tac the Cat: Wow! Well, I really need to talk to God, so I'm going to go pray right now. See you later!

Leader: See you later, Tac!

"Have you ever been curious about something? Let's take a moment and think: Have you ever wondered how God hears our prayers? Allow the kids to respond. Have you ever wondered if God wants you to talk with Him? Allow the kids to respond. We all see and hear things that make us curious. Did you ever stop to think about how God hears our prayers?"

SLIDE: WONDER TRUTH

Today's Wonder Truth is **GOD HEARS OUR PRAYERS**. Today we'll discover more about how God hears our prayers!"

Declaring God's Wonder

SLIDE: DECLARATION

Encourage the kids to say it with you and do the motions.

Thank You, God, that You made me! (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Make prayer hands, then point up to God and to yourself.

And I am Your kid! (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Put your hands on your hips.

Jesus loves me so much; (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Spread your arms out wide to your side one at a time, then pull them in for a hug around your chest.

His love for me is big. (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Hold your arms up high and wide above your head.

The Holy Spirit leads me, (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Bring your arms down from the sky, making a path in front of you.

And I can follow You. (Kids repeat words and motions.)

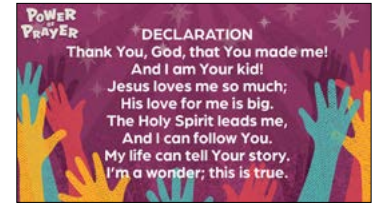
March like you're following the leader.

My life can tell Your story. (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Hold your hands in front of you like an open book.

I'm a wonder; this is true. (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Put your hands up, shaking your fingers, celebrating ("praise hands").



Prayer of Invitation

Before entering into God's big story, lead kids in a prayer of invitation. Use your own words, with these as a guide if needed: **Father God, we know that You always hear our prayers. Help us hear from You today. As we worship You and hear Your Word today, help us remember that You hear us and want to spend time with us. In Jesus' name, Amen.**

Worship

"Today we'll learn about how Jesus teaches us to pray. Let's sing and praise God for hearing us!"

WORSHIP VIDEOS: PRAISE, THIS LITTLE LIGHT OF MINE

God's Big Story

SUPPLIES: Bible

Hold up a Bible and show the kids. "**Our God's big story today is from two letters written to the early Christians. The letters were written by two Jesus followers named James and Paul.**"

Encourage the kids to say, "James" and "Paul."

Bible Time Rhyme

Say the Bible time rhyme (with motions) each week before the Bible story to remind kids that what they're about to hear is part of God's big story.

I open my Bible and what do I see? (Hands together then opening palms up, like opening a book.)

God's big story, waiting for me! (Point to yourself.)

"Let's watch part of God's big story!"

VIDEO: GOD'S BIG STORY

GOD'S BIG STORY SCRIPT

SUPPLIES: Bible, scissors (prep only), paper clips (1 per kid), tape

RESOURCES: Prayer Story Chain Sheet (2 sheets per class, plus 1 extra)

Leader Tip: If you have a younger group who may struggle with making the paper chains, you could make the chains ahead of time and have the kids find the correct pictures on the chain as you tell the story.



Before kids arrive, print the Prayer Story Chain Sheet. Cut each of the strips on the dotted lines and set aside for when you tell the story. Set out tape nearby.

"Today we're learning that God hears our prayers! We are going to make a prayer chain that reminds us how we can pray. Invite 4 kids who are sitting still and listening to come up to the stage with you. Give each child a strip in random order, instructing them to hold the strips so their friends can see. Keep one group of strips for yourself.

What kind of things do you talk with God about? Allow the kids to respond. **Prayer is talking and listening to God. Some people pray at certain times of the day. Some people pray when big things are happening in their lives. Some people don't pray very often.**

Jesus and His followers believed in the importance and power of prayer. Let's find the first piece of our prayer chain. Hold up the "We can pray to God!" paper. **Can you find the paper you have that matches mine?** Give kids time to find the volunteer with the correct paper, then show them how to roll the paper into a circle and help them secure it with tape to make the first link of the prayer chain.

The Bible tells Jesus followers to pray for those who are in trouble and to praise God when they experience joy. The Bible also says that people who are sick should ask others in their church to pray with faith for them, and God will heal them. God will also forgive them of any wrong things they have done. Even though God does not always choose to heal our sicknesses and injuries, we can still ask God for big things. God loves us, sees us, and hears our prayers.

It's time to add the second piece to our chain. Hold up the "We can pray about everything!" paper. Give kids time to find the correct paper. Then show them how to thread the paper through the first loop before securing it with tape in the shape of another circle to make the second chain link.

God wants us to pray for big things, and He also wants us to pray all the time. The Bible tells us we should never stop praying. We can pray about anything and everything in our lives—no matter how big or small. And we know that God always answers us in the way that is best—even when the answer may not be what we want. The Bible teaches us to be thankful no matter what happens.

Let's add another link to our prayer chain! Hold up the "We can pray all the time!" paper. Give kids time to find the correct paper and have the volunteers add it to the chain.



God may not always answer every prayer the way we want Him to. But that's not a reason to stop praying or pray only for small things. God invites us to pray big prayers and trust that He hears us! We can pray about everything. God hears and cares about all of our prayers.

Let's add the last paper to our chain! Hold up the "God hears our prayers!" paper. Give kids time to find the correct strip and have the volunteers add it to the chain.

You can take your chains home to remind you that we can pray to God about everything, all the time, and that God hears our prayers!"

Connecting the Wonder Truth

Ask the following question to kids to help them connect the Wonder Truth to God's big story:

SLIDE: WONDER TRUTH

"Our Wonder Truth today is **GOD HEARS OUR PRAYERS. Where did you see our Wonder Truth happen in the story?** Allow kids to answer freely.

Jesus taught His disciples to "always pray and not give up" (Luke 18:1). Later, as Paul and James wrote letters to encourage the church, they remembered Jesus' teachings as they taught other Jesus followers about prayer."

Prayer and Blessing

Pray over kids, thanking God for hearing our prayers. Use your own words, with these as a guide if needed:

God, thank You for hearing our Prayers. Help us to always remember to pray and talk with You! In Jesus' name, Amen.

Encourage the kids to hold their hands out in front of them, with palms up, as if their hands were open to receive something. Tell them to listen and receive a blessing as you speak it over them. Use your own words, with these as a guide if needed:

Blessing: **May you always remember that you can pray anywhere, anytime. May you remember that you can pray no matter how you are feeling or what is going on. May you always remember that God hears our prayers!**