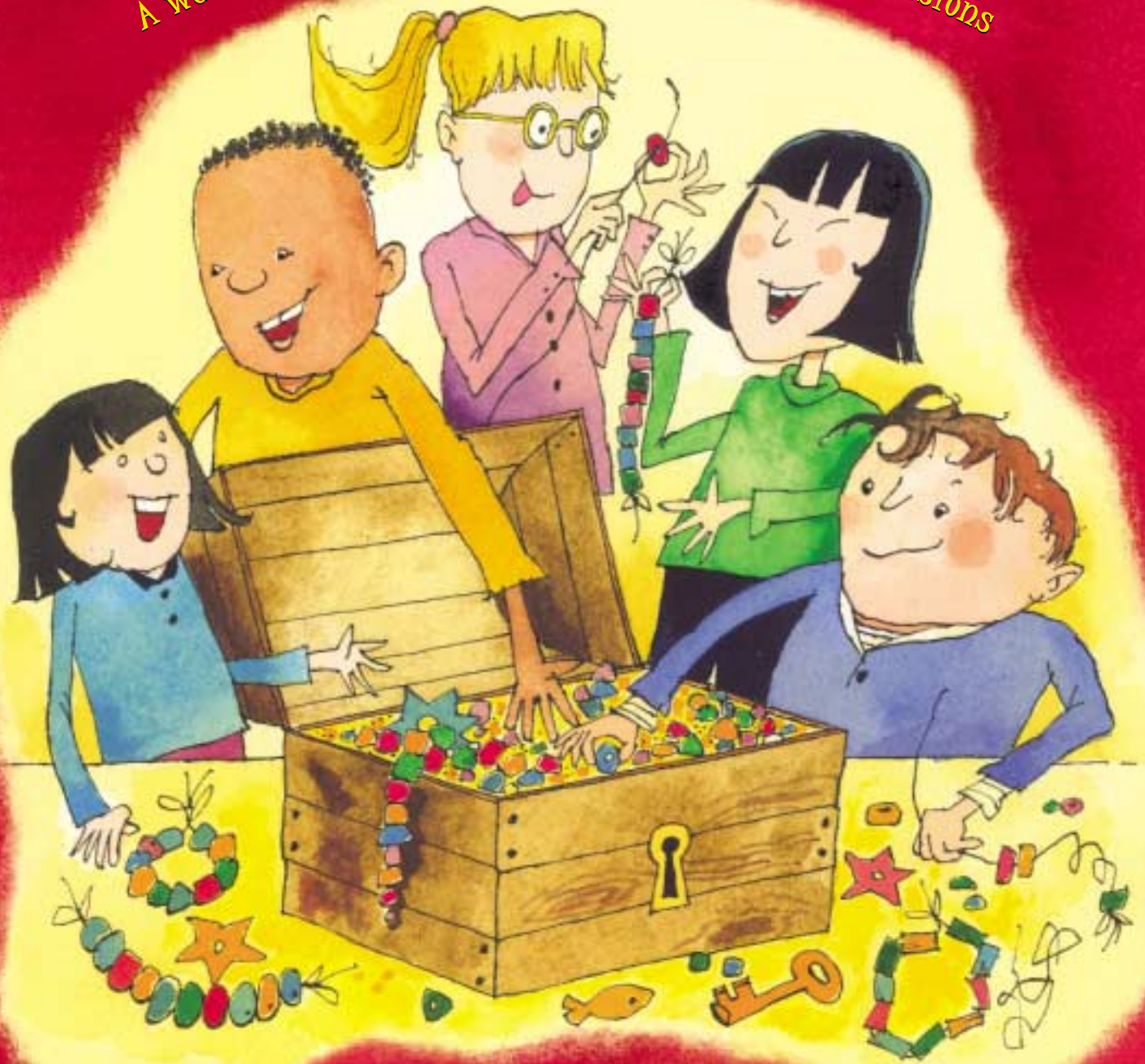


The Lord's Prayer unplugged

IDEAL
FOR 7-11s

A wealth of ideas opening up the prayer in ten sessions



Lucy Moore

* Includes photocopy permission *

Introduction

The Lord's Prayer has to be the ultimate in all-age worship—simple, straight from the Lord, easy to learn, full of down-to-earth requests with huge theological echoes; as valid if we take it at face value as when we try to wrap our minds round the massive kingdom vision that shines out in every phrase.

And it's all about relationships. It comes from Jesus and his friends talking together, and gives us a form of words to talk with our dear Father God together—because it is a 'together' prayer: '*Our Father... give us...*'. Adults and children, new Christians and old, Christians from all traditions, Christians down the centuries who are now with the Lord and those of us alive on earth today, we can all pray this prayer together with sincerity and integrity.

When we pray Jesus' prayer, we can look through Jesus' eyes for a moment. It gives us Jesus' snapshot of God the Father, the loving holy parent who longs to provide us with what we need, to help us in good times and bad and to work with us to bring his kingdom of justice, peace and love to every corner of the world.

It gives us Jesus' snapshot of the people he knows we can be—loving, grateful, living in a community of generosity, forgiveness and trust, working together with God and each other to bring about this kingdom of justice, peace and love.

Fewer and fewer schools are praying this prayer regularly. Fewer and fewer children are growing up knowing it by heart. We've got to pass this prayer on to the next generation. Some of them will pray it regularly and come to own it as it becomes part of who they are. Others may need it as a first aid kit, because when they feel lost and lonely in a dark world, or when their hearts are bursting with joy, they may need a form, a set of holy words rich with the resonance of goodness and wholeness, to express what this world gives them no words for. Just as soldiers in the World Wars prayed the Lord's Prayer as a default setting when they were too exhausted to find their own words, so we need to

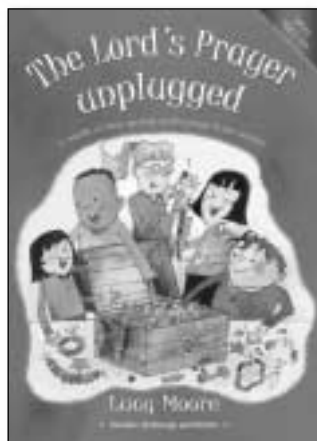
give our children this fall-back prayer for all seasons.

Interestingly, a good proportion of the children I ask about the prayer prefer the 'old-fashioned words' to the modern ones. Reasons given include 'I know it better', 'I like the words better', 'They're proper old words from the Bible from the old days', and 'It's got better punctuation'. I halted my enquiries at this point. As long as the language helps communication, let's face it, does it really matter which form is used?

This book aims to help children explore the Lord's Prayer and to own it for themselves. On the way, there may be times of fun, of noise and creative chaos, of quiet and stillness, of sights, sounds, smells and tastes as we meet with God through all our senses, our intellects and our hearts. We should be opening up as many questions as we answer, as the aim is to turn the prayer from a parroted meaningless series of words into a never-ending box of delights that grows as we grow.

It's written for KS2 children—the 7 to 11 age group—but will stretch happily either way a few years. There are oodles of different activities at different levels, so it could be used as a church group course or in school RE or assemblies. As the emphasis is on learning through fun, it would also be a good basis for a holiday club.

Using The Lord's Prayer unplugged



The Lord's Prayer breaks up into ten phrases, so this book gives you ten sessions. In each session there are activities to help children explore what that phrase means. And rather than getting too theological about the inner meanings of the last word of the prayer,

the final chapter not only looks briefly at what 'Amen' means but gives lots of suggestions for looking at the Lord's Prayer as a whole. You might want to glance at this session first so that you can use some of the ideas on the way.

In each session you'll find a variety of suggestions for ways of digging deeper into the Lord's Prayer.

There is a *Quiet space* in each session (see below for details). This could be a whole session in itself: it concentrates firmly on one phrase of the prayer and invites the children to spend time wondering about it in order to go deeper into it.

There are also plenty of suggestions for groups who prefer a more activity-based approach, with ideas for ice-breaker games, making Bible connections, praying, making and drawing.

As I am the ultimate in lazy leaders, I've tried to include plenty of ideas that take very little preparation and don't require you to assemble thousands of obscure ingredients each week.

Don't try to do everything in each session unless you are SuperTeacher of SuperGroup, and even then... You may not want to do an activity from every section every week: that's fine. A group may well enjoy simply doing the *Quiet space* wondering or just a craft, or maybe there will only be time for a prayer. Choose with care and prayer the ideas that suit your children and your space,

time and budget limits. Enjoy time to talk with and listen to the children in your group, rather than bombarding them with never-ending busyness. *No* thunderbolts will fall if you don't get through the whole whack. Trust me on this.

What's in each session?

Get your bearings

This part is for you, the leader/facilitator/teacher/pressganged 'you need only do it for a week, honest' volunteer. It summarizes a little of what that week's section of the prayer is about and gives a bit of background.

Why not decorate your space...

Colour and visuals are important for all of us, especially children. You might want to set the scene by decorating your space in a different colour each session, and this section gives you some ideas of what to use. These colours are then picked up in the final chapter, in the *Godly Play* Lord's Prayer. Of course we won't be wallpapering the room a different colour every week, but it doesn't take long to throw in a few objects which help create an atmosphere and give children something to talk about. If you're from certain church traditions, it can also help to introduce the way liturgical colours are used in church. And it's fun.

Quiet space

You may want to use one or two of these questions just to open or close the session, but the *Quiet space* could be a whole session on its own, based

on Jerome Berryman's *Godly Play* scheme. If you're using it as the whole session, set out art and craft materials and equipment in advance so that they are readily available to the children. You might like to put out a selection of coloured and white paper, card, paint, brushes, crayons, pencils, felt-tips, modelling clay, playdough and so on, with appropriate means of keeping surfaces clean—newspaper or plastic sheets, with wiping-up cloths at the ready.

Lay out some or all of the objects suggested on an attractive cloth or low table that helps the group to see them as 'set apart', and sit the group around the objects in a circle.

Spend some time with the group looking at the objects and talking about what is there. Then use the objects to open up the phrase of the Lord's Prayer by asking some of the wondering questions. Try not to impose your own ideas on the group, but listen actively to their insights. Welcome silence—a lot can be happening inside that doesn't surface in noise or talk.

After the wondering questions, ask the children what work they would like to do. Encourage them to use the art materials you have set out, in whatever way is right for them. Bring the group back together after their work time. This would be a good time to say the Lord's Prayer together, share something to eat or show what has been created.

Ice-breakers



These are games, activities, quizzes—enjoyable ways to set the scene and introduce the theme of the session.

Puppets



There's a short puppet sketch outline in each session which could be a good link through the weeks. There are no scripts to learn, just a 'plot' description. It picks up on a situation in which children might find themselves. Practise it beforehand with a glove puppet and a sympathetic audience (I find the dog is perfect), so that you can manage confidently without notes.

Bible exploring



The Lord's Prayer has echoes all through the Bible. In *Bible exploring* we pick up on the theme of the day both in the Lord's Prayer itself and in other stories or passages elsewhere in the Bible. There's a mixture of activities from challenging dramatic scripts for older children to act out to easy-to-understand storytelling suitable for any age.

Extra ideas



Little nuggets of activities for those fill-in moments, and interesting facts.

Prayer



Here you'll find different ways of praying on the theme of the session, again ranging from word-based prayers to action prayers, from shouting praise to stillness and reflection.

Songs



Some suggestions for songs on the theme. You should find them in books such as *Mission Praise* (MP), *Junior Praise* (JP), *Songs and Hymns of Fellowship* (SHF) and on CDs such as Kingsway's *Lovely Jubby*.

Craft and art



Different levels of craft activity from the dead simple no-preparation-needed to the complex—but mostly dead simple.

Ongoing wall display

At the back of this book you'll find templates for each session, which you can photocopy, enlarge or simply cut out for the group to decorate to build up a wall display of the Lord's Prayer.

Our Father in heaven



Get your bearings

Jesus opens his famous prayer by telling us how to relate to God. ‘Abba’ is what a child would have called her father. ‘Hello, Daddy’ is the level of familiarity Jesus uses. Perhaps for adults ‘Dear Father’ gets across the implication of both intimacy and respect. Jesus invites us to chat to God in complete trust and openness, knowing that he’s delighted to listen to whatever we have to say. He also asks us to say it together—‘our Father...’. From the very start we are together with God and with each other.

These days, for too many children, the image of a father is an unhelpful one or even something completely foreign to their own experience. It is tempting to shy away from the image completely.

But should we assume that all the fathers Jesus knew in Nazareth were paragons of virtue? Did all the families in Nazareth have two parents? It’s likely that Jesus knew what it was like to lose a dear father, as Joseph probably died before Jesus did. For those children who have what we might consider a good father figure, is even that person always a perfect role model? Of course not! All human parents inevitably fall short of God’s perfect parenting. And shouldn’t we be showing God the Father as the great parent that many children have been denied? For these reasons, and because Jesus wasn’t afraid to tell us to call God ‘Dad’, we should explore the image sensitively but confidently.

The Bible has many more images that show God as a caring, nurturing source of life and security, including maternal images.

Why not decorate your space... GREEN?

Green is a colour of growth and life, which fits in with the idea of God as a parent who gives life to and brings up his children. Another image relating to nurture and guidance that Jesus uses to describe God is that of a shepherd—and green is the colour of grassy fields where sheep are safe and well fed.

You could roll out fake grass on the floor and use green balloons, cushions, pot plants, leafy branches or vases of flowers. Camouflage nets or football nets are often green and make an instantly effective backdrop.

Quiet space

Possible objects and pictures for focus:

- A variety of pictures of fathers, mothers, grandparents, prime carers
- A football
- A recipe book
- A shepherd and sheep
- A hen and chicks
- A baby
- Squares of coloured felt
- A light
- A globe
- A heart
- A cross

Lay out the objects and pictures for focus.

Say, 'Today we're thinking about the start of Jesus' special prayer—Our Father in heaven.'

Select some wondering questions from the list below. Ask the questions slowly and meaningfully, leaving space for reflection.

- * I wonder which colour felt you would choose for 'Our Father in heaven'?
- * I wonder which object or picture you would choose to go with 'Our Father in heaven'?
- * I wonder what picture is in your mind when you pray this part of the Lord's Prayer?

- * I wonder what words you choose to start your prayers with?
- * I wonder why Jesus put this into the Lord's Prayer?
- * I wonder if it reminds you of any people Jesus met?
- * I wonder how God feels when we call him 'Father'?
- * I wonder which object or picture he would choose to go with us?
- * I wonder if we could leave out this part of the Lord's Prayer and still have all the prayer we need?
- * I wonder what you like best about this part of the Lord's Prayer?
- * I wonder how you would pray this part of the Lord's Prayer with just your hands?

Spend a moment thinking about how we talk to God our Father in our hearts, or out loud, or with our hands.

Take the square(s) of felt that the children have chosen and the pictures or objects they chose and place them on display for the rest of the session.

Either choose from the activities below or give the group the opportunity to do their own work to explore this part of the prayer based on the wondering questions. Supply art and craft materials if you choose the second option.

Ice-breakers

Father Abraham



Sing the action song 'Father Abraham has many sons' as an energetic warm-up. The words of the verse are:

*Father Abraham has many sons
Many sons has Father Abraham.
I am one of them and so are you.
So let's all praise the Lord!*

Then, at the end of each verse, everyone calls out one of the phrases in the order below and, during

the next verse, waves, swings or shakes that limb. The actions are added on verse by verse until everyone is waving both arms, both legs, nodding their head, and turning around: the final 'sit down' comes as something of a relief!

Right arm / Left arm / Right leg / Left leg / Nod your head / Turn around / SIT DOWN!

As everyone collapses, say that today you're thinking about the idea of all Christians having one father—that we're a family together with not only Abraham as our great-great-great-great- (and so on) grandfather, but also with God as our great father in heaven.

(If the girls complain that they're not sons but daughters, you can either say that 'daughters' doesn't scan, or you could explain that in Abraham's time it was the sons who inherited everything from their father and, in that way, we're all more like sons than daughters. Or you could say, 'Glad you noticed. Let's sing "daughters" every other verse.')

Names

You'll need a family tree or a multi-generation photograph of your family.

Talk about the people in the photo or family tree and what relationship they all have to each other. For example, I'm married to Paul. My children are Arthur and Judith. My parents are Les and Jen. Jen's parents are Eric and Mary.

Then ask what these people might call each other. For example, what would I call Les? What would Judith call Paul? What would Arthur call me? What would Jen call Eric? Suggest very formal names like 'Papa' until the children agree that you would call your father something like Dad or Daddy.

Say that Jesus says we can call God, our heavenly father, just the same thing that we call our dads.

Puppets

You will need a glove puppet.



Have a chat with your glove puppet. The gist of the situation is that you tell the children you're very upset because your puppet is hiding, won't speak to you, won't even look at you. You (with the children's help) manage to persuade him to tell you what the matter is: he's scared of talking to you as he's found out you're such an important person because... (find a reason why you might be important—your job, your role in the church, the fact that you're a grown-up, so big...) He's worried he might have to make an appointment to see you, or fill in a form, or that you won't think he's worth bothering with.

You reassure the puppet (with the children's help) that you really want him to chat to you, because you love him very much. You love spending time with him—just like God loves us to spend time chatting to him, as Jesus tells us in the start of the

Father Abraham

Composer: Unknown

♩ G G G C G/D D D D D7 [End] G Repeat as necessary D.S.

Lord's Prayer. He even tells us to call God 'Daddy'!

Your puppet ends up happily chatting in your ear, snuggled up to you.

Bible exploring

Passages about *Our Father in heaven*



- The prodigal son (Luke 15:11–32)
Jesus' story shows how loving and forgiving God our Father is, whatever we do.

- Jesus' teaching on prayer (Matthew 7:7–12)
We think about what it means to ask a loving parent for what we need, not a machine or a committee.
- One family (Ephesians 3:14–15)
Paul writes about the whole Christian family being joined together under God the Father, and we think about the character of that heavenly father.

The prodigal son

LUKE 15:11–32

As we wonder what sort of a father God is, we can look at Jesus' story of the prodigal (meaning 'recklessly wasteful') son. You could ask the group to decide, as they hear the story, whether it is more about the son or the father.

The version below is clearly based on Jesus' original, but as you tell it, the group needs to fill in the details for you to make it their own version: these opportunities are shown in the text in bold.



Everybody loved Super Sausage! Super Sausage was the lovable cartoon hero of a whole range of books, TV programmes, computer games... **Anything else?**

There was all sorts of Super Sausage merchandise. There were Super Sausage lunchboxes, Super Sausage duvet covers, Super Sausage pencil cases... **What else was there?** All in all, the Super Sausage empire was making lots and lots of money.

Now the man behind Super Sausage was not only the richest man in the world, but he was also the kindest, nicest, most generous person you could ever meet. Think of the nicest person you know... **Who is it?** Well, if it's possible, this man was even nicer than that! He loved Super Sausage, he loved his



work, but more than anything he loved his two children, Sam and Sidney. He used to show them round the factory and say, 'One day, my sons, all this will be yours.'

Both boys worked for their dad. But the boys were very different from each other. Sam was a very hardworking lad... **What time do you think he got to work in the morning?** That's right! **And did he stop for a coffee break? A lunch break? A tea break?** That's right! **And what time did he work till at night?** Yes, you're right—Sam worked really, really hard.

But Sidney was a different kettle of fish. Sidney was a complete slob... **What time did Sidney get up in the morning?** Yup. **And how long was his coffee break? His lunch break?**

The Lord's Prayer unplugged

A wealth of ideas opening up the prayer in ten sessions



The Lord's Prayer unplugged provides a unique opportunity to explore the biblical breadth and depth encapsulated in Jesus' famous prayer. The material can be used as a complete teaching programme over the course of ten weeks.

Alternatively, each unit stands alone so that the phrases can be studied separately and linked into the teaching of a Bible passage springing from the phrase. An index of Bible passages is included at the end of the book.

Each phrase of the prayer is explored through creative ideas, offering a wealth of thematic gems for teachers to pick and choose to suit their situation. Each unit includes:

- * Get your bearings
- * Why not decorate your space...
- * Quiet space
- * Icebreakers
- * Puppets
- * Bible exploring
- * Extra ideas
- * Prayer
- * Songs
- * Craft and art
- * Ongoing wall display

Lucy Moore is a professional actor and storyteller. She works for BRF as part of the Barnabas Ministry team. A published writer, performer and creative arts director with a background in teaching languages, she makes use of lively original poetry, mime, storytelling, and a variety of drama workshop activities. Her work with BRF includes sharing the Bible with children through Barnabas Live and The Bible unplugged. Lucy is author of The Gospels unplugged and Topsy Turvy Christmas (both published by BRF).

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Illustration: Francis Blake

Design: Louise Belcher

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