**Children’s Class Book 3A**

**Theme: Maintaining a Prayerful Attitude**

**Lesson: 3- How to Pray**

**Modified slightly from the Ruhi Grade 2 materials**

**4-4:10**

**Opening Prayers:**

We always start our class with prayers because it is important to make mention of God and to ask for His help and guidance. I will start with a prayer learned by heart, and then we will have 2 prayer sharers for each week.

Say prayer by memory

Two children offer prayers by memory

Practice prayer- sing together: NEXT WEEK WILL LEARN A NEW PRAYER

**“O Lord! I am a child; enable me to grow beneath the shadow of Thy loving-kindness. I am a tender plant; cause me to be nurtured through the outpourings of the clouds of Thy bounty. I am a sapling of the garden of love; make me into a fruitful tree. Thou art the Mighty and the Powerful, and Thou art the All-Loving, the All-Knowing, the All-Seeing.”**

Review quote from last week: **“It is the greatest longing of every soul who is attracted to the Kingdom of God to find time to turn with entire devotion to his Beloved, so as to seek His bounty and blessing and immerse himself in the ocean of communion, entreaty and supplication.”**

How did it go with praying each morning and evening? Was it easy or hard to remember? What effects did you feel and see? Remember that part of having a prayerful attitude is trusting in God’s wisdom and having confidence that He will do what is best for us!

**4:10-4:18**

**Intro. to Lesson**

In our last two lessons, we have learned about the nature of prayer- that prayer is conversation with God and that we can actually live in a state of prayer if we have our heart open to God’s love and guidance and do beautiful actions of service to others in our lives each day. We learned about the importance of saying outloud- intoning the verses of God and how that effects the hearts of the people of the world. We also talked about how prayer is like food for the soul, it strengthens us in our efforts to live a life of service to God and to humanity. Prayer is also a habit. We need to get into the habit of praying each morning and evening.

Today we are going to be talking together about HOW to pray. When we pray, we must always remember that we are in the presence of God, the Almighty, and show HUMILITY before Him. In prayer we express our deep love and respect for God and act with reverence. We sit quietly in a prayerful posture and take a few moments before beginning to pray, in order to cleanse our minds of the things of this world. Some people like to fold their arms or clasp their hands together. Many people close their eyes so that they are not distracted by things around them. If you look around at the POSTERS around the room, you will see ways that people of different faiths and traditions show reverence while they are praying.

I like to think of this calm beginning of prayers like when you want a beautiful butterfly to come land on you. If you are running around and wild, will the butterfly come to you? (No) What do you need to do for it to come? (be calm and still)- that is kind of like the spirit that visits us in prayer. <3

The prayers that we recite every day can be chosen from those we know by heart or from those we find in prayer books. Once we have finished reciting a prayer, we remain still and silent, reflecting on its words. When another person is praying, we feel as though we are praying ourselves. We listen closely to the words the other is saying and maintain a reverent attitude.

Abdu’l-Baha encouraged the Bahais to keep their thoughts centered solely on God when praying. He urged them to forget the things of this world, what is going on around them, and even their own selves. To those who saw Abdu’l-Baha in prayer, it seemed as if He had been carried away to another world. He was free of distractions, completely absorbed in conversation with God. As we focus our thoughts on God and pray to Him with reverence, we , too, feel our hearts overflow with His love.

**4:18-4:25**

**Memorization:**

To help us remember how we conduct ourselves during prayer, let us memorize the following words of Baha’ullah:

**“O Son of Light! Forget all save Me and commune with My spirit. This is of the essence of My command, therefore turn unto it.”**

Here Baha’u’llah is referring to us as sons and daughters of Light. Wow! What does He say to forget? All save Me. Who is Me? God. And then what? We should commune with His spirit.

Let’s talk about what COMMUNE means. I will read to you two sentences and then you tell me what you think it means.

1. Being in the countryside makes Jessica feel at one with nature. When she is in the countryside, Jessica communes with nature.
2. When Hugo prays, he feels close to God. Through prayer, Hugo communes with God.

Okay- so what does commune mean?

Here it says that we are able to commune with the Spirit of God in prayer- wow!

Then Baha’u’llah says that “this is the essence of My command”

Let’s learn what ESSENCE means.

1. At the beginning of the school year, the principal spoke to all of the students in the school and reminded them that they should pay attention in class, do their homework, and read as much as possible. The essence of her advice was that they should study hard.
2. Ethan always thought about how to serve others and dedicated himself to helping people. Service was the essence of Ethan’s life.

What is essence? Here we are told that forgetting all save God and communing with His spirit is the essence of God’s command for this day, and so we should turn to it.

**SING QUOTE**

**4:25-4:40**

**Game and Drama (BRING TIMER AND PRAYER BOOK)**

**Game:** We are going to play a game called the 40 second handshake. Everyone must shake hands with and say hello and their name to everybody else within 40 seconds! I am going to put on the timer and see if we can do it!

Now we are going to try moving between normal and slow motion movement and speech. We will start out with normal movement but when I say SLOW DOWN! Then you go into slow movement and slow speech until I say BACK TO NORMAL! ☺

**Drama:**

So we are going to start with some skill building activities first-

Please stand in your imaginary squares. Walk along the border of your imaginary square so that they are clearly defined. You should be able to stretch your hands out and have freedom of space. Okay- raise up your arms, stretching them to the sky and then relax. Do this a few more times.

For the next exercise, you will move out of your imaginary squares. You are going to walk randomly, making sure not to bump into each other. While you are walking, I will call out commands that you should instantly obey. The commands are as follows:

FREEZE- when you hear that you must stop all movement instantly and stand perfectly still.

TURN FREEZE- Turn half way around and then freeze instantly

JUMP FREEZE- Jump in the air, turning half way around and then freeze

TWIST FREEZE- Jump in the air, turning around in a full circle and then freeze

Once you are frozen, you should hold your positions until I give you the signal to move again. So, we are going to practice each of these four commands in your imaginary squares and then we will begin.

Then have them walk around and call out the commands as many times as you wish, in any order.

Now we are going to do a drama activity about how we pray. (HAVE A PRAYER BOOK) We will be doing a series of exercises which will help you understand what it means to treat a special object with reverence. We show reverence in the way that we position our bodies, in the way that we move, and in the way we use our voices.

Please return to your imaginary squares and STAND in a reverent position. After a few moments, have them move into a reverent SITTING position.

Now imagine that you are holding a baby bird in your hands. Show that you are handling the bird gently and carefully.

Now imagine that you are servants standing before the throne of a mighty king. Show me how you would bow down before the king with respect and obedience.

See this prayer book (HOLD PRAYER BOOK UP). Do you know why this object is special? This object is special because it contains the Word of God revealed by His Manifestation, that we can read when turning to Him in love and devotion. Each of you will have the chance to hold a prayer book, which you need to handle with GENTLENESS and REVERENCE. Stand up in your squares. Okay- I am going to hand this to one of the you and then you are going to pass it to the next child, who will pass it to the next, and so on. As you pass it, you should say “It is your turn to hold this special book. After handing the book over, every child should return to his or her imaginary square and sit in STILLNESS and SILENCE with your eyes closed. The last child standing is going to return the book to me and then also sit.

After a few minutes, gently thank the children for handling the prayer book with reverence. When you feel a tap on yoru should and hear the words, thank you, you may stand up and then gently tap another child and say thank you. Then you can move inside quietly for a story. The last child to be tapped may say thank you everyone as he or she joins the rest of the class.

Start by tapping one child and softly saying thank you.

**4:40-4:50**

**Story:**

During His travels in America, Abdu’l-Baha once accepted to teach a very devoted Bahai how to pray. He told him to come to His residence at daybreak the next day. The believer’s heart was filled with joy. He rose at dawn and rushed to the residence of Abdu’l-Baha. When he entered the room of Abdu’l-Baha, he found Him already in prayer. Realizaing that he could not ask Abdu’l-Baha any questions, he decided to do the same. So, he knelt on the floor and began to pray. He prayed silently for his relatives, for his friends and for himself. When he finished, he looked up and saw that Abdu’l-Baha was still deep in prayer. So he decided to pray some more. He repeated all the prayers he knew over and over. Still there was no movement from Abdu’l-Baha.

Now the believer noticed that one of his knees was beginning to ache and that his back was feeling uncomfortable. Next he heard the birds singing outside. Glancing around the room, he observed a large crack in the wall. Then he looked at Abdu’l-Baha again and, all of a sudden, the expression on Abdu’l-Baha’s face created in him a strong desire to pray. He forgot everything else. The only desire in his heart was to be close to God and to converse with Him. He began to pray in a way he had never prayed before. Abdu’l-Baha had taught him how to pray!

At that very moment, Abdu’l-Baha arose, approached him with a smile, and said, “When you pray, you must not think of your aching body, nor of the birds outside the window, nor of the cracks in the wall! When you wish to pray you must first know that you are standing in the presence of the Almighty!”

**4:50-5:10**

**Drawing:** You are going to draw a picture that reminds you of this lesson- perhaps a baby bird being held, a face with eyes closed in prayer, or something from the story.

(Can also choose to do the PRAYER ROCK craft- see pictures)

**5:10-5:27**

**Review and Songs:**

Our review quotations today are about HUMILITY and DETACHMENT.

Who remembers what HUMILITY is?

**Humility** is helping and serving others, seeing other people’s needs as important, learning from mistakes and asking for help, doing our best without expecting too much attention for ourselves. Humility helps us to realize that everyone is a human being- each one different, but still a person. We don’t waste time trying to figure out who is more important or comparing ourselves to others. Instead, we just try to do our best and remember that it is only through God’s help that we can do all things. When we do wonderful things, humility helps us to be thankful instead of being boastful and bragging about it. Humility also helps us to realize that everyone makes mistakes, and that we are all still learning, no matter how much we know!

**“O Son of Man! Humble thyself before Me, that I may graciously visit thee.”**

**HUMILITY SONGS:**

**-Humble thyself before Me**

**-Be like the earth**

The virtue of detachment is really about attaching our hearts to God and His qualities, and detaching from some of the feelings that lead us to do things that are not worthy- not good. It is choosing how you will act in a situation rather than just reacting.  Feelings like sadness, jealousy, disappointment, frustration, anger - are natural. Everyone has them. It’s okay to feel what you feel, but you don’t have to act on the feelings unless you want to. Detachment is a way to use your thinking and feeling together so that you don't let your feelings run away with you. I might feel jealous that you got something that I didn’t. I might feel like taking it, but I have to think- is this what God would want me to do? I have to let my soul shine through!

**Why practice it?** Detachment is very important for a spiritual being.  It allows you to choose the way you are going to act no matter how you feel.   It permits you to be kind to people you do not like, or do a very hard thing because it is the right thing to do.

**How Do You Practice It?**

You can practice detachment whenever you have a feeling about something or someone.  First, you recognize the feeling - how can you be detached if you do not know what you are detached from?  Stop and look at your feelings and thoughts.  Ask yourself two questions:

* What am I feeling about this?
* What do I want to do?

Then you might say a prayer and think about what Jesus, or Krishna, or Buddha or Baha’u’llah, or any of the Messengers of God would want you to do?

Remember, each of these great Teachers mirrored forth God’s spiritual qualities. You can ask yourself...

* Is it good for me?
* Will it help someone else?
* Is it right?
* Is it the best I can do?

If the answer to any of these questions is no, then choose to do something else instead.

Look.  Choose.  Act.

None of us are perfect, but we have to strive to daily become better and more attached to the Kingdom of God, to the virtues of the spirit and detached from things that pass away. (I really want this cookie- later, that craving is gone.- if I have shown a spiritual quality then I will feel happy.)

“Man is in reality a spiritual being and only when he lives in the spirit is he truly happy.”

God is always with us, and if we call on His power to help us- He will give us the strength we need to do the right thing. He loves us so much and cares for us more than anyone, because He created us!

**“Know that thy true adornment consisteth in the love of God and in thy detachment from all save Him.”**

**DETACHMENT SONGS:**

**-Thy true adornment**

**5:27-5:30**

**Closing Prayer: Blessed is the Spot**