

Praying with the Senses

By Beth Herrinton-Hodge

When families pray together, they help one another to talk and listen to God. Tap your imaginations for entering into God's presence by stimulating your senses. Smell the bread, taste the grape juice, listen to the sound of frying fish, experience the quiet of an outdoor garden.



For

Young Family

Season

Spring

Needed

Bible, supplies to correspond with the Scripture you choose in "Prepare in Advance." Optional: bread machine, bread mix

Prepare in Advance

Read the following scripture passages and select one to explore with your family:

- Matthew 26:17-20, 26-30: Jesus eats the Last Supper with his disciples. (Supplies: loaf of bread, pitcher of grape juice and cups, napkins)
- Matthew 26:36-39: Jesus prays in the Garden of Gethsemane. (Supplies: fresh flowers, spray bottle of water, small stones, blanket to sit on)
- John 21:4-14: Jesus serves breakfast. (Supplies: pieces of fish to fry, cooking utensils, plates, forks, loaf of bread)

Activity Plan

1. Gather in a comfortable space with the supplies for the Scripture you have chosen. Say this prayer aloud to begin.

God of life, you are everywhere: in the sky, in the wind, around our family table. Help us to see and touch and taste and know you through our prayers. Amen.

2. Invite family members to talk about God's presence, which is all around you. Ask: In what ways do we know that God is present with us? (When you pray or worship, you rest in God's presence, trusting that you are with God and God is with you. Another way to know God is present is through God's Word, the Bible. You can imagine that God is speaking to you through the stories in the Bible. Sometimes we sense God is present through the loving words and deeds we receive from other people.)
3. Open your Bible and read the selected Bible story aloud, or use the text given below. Follow the suggestions for involving your senses in a time of prayer after the story:

Matthew 26:17-20, 26-30:

- Place the bread, juice, and cups in front of the family. Option: Make bread in a bread machine, timing it to still be warm as you begin.
- Read the passage aloud, pausing before verse 26.
- Before reading verse 26, break the bread and invite each family member to smell its fragrance.

- Before reading verse 27, pour the juice from one cup to another. Ask family members to listen to the sound of the juice being poured. Let each person smell the fragrance of the juice.
- After the reading, hold a time of silence while each person drinks some juice and eats some bread.
- Invite each person to speak one word or one sentence to God. This is your prayer. Then let everyone say, "Amen."

Matthew 26:36-39:

- Move outdoors, if possible. If not, sit on a blanket on the floor. Pass around the fresh flowers so that each person can smell them and look at them.
- Before reading the scripture passage, take a moment to sit quietly and listen to the sounds of life around you.
- Invite each person to name something that he or she hears. Ask: How is God present in these sounds?
- Have each person say how he or she feels, sitting together as a family.
- Have family members close their eyes to listen to the Bible story as it is read aloud.
- Following the reading, have family members imagine that they are in the garden with Jesus while he is praying. Encourage them to imagine what they see and hear.
- Ask: What does Jesus say to you? What do you say to Jesus? This is your prayer. Then let everyone say, "Amen."

John 21:4-14:

- Read aloud the first part of the story, John 21:4-8.
- Gather around a cooking area to cook the fish, frying it if possible.
- Transfer the cooked fish to a serving plate and take it to the table and have everyone sit down. Place a loaf of bread on the table with the fish. Option: Make bread in a bread machine, timing it to still be warm as you begin.
- Read the rest of the story, John 22:9-14.
- Break the loaf of bread and pass it around, inviting each person to break off a piece.
- Pass the cooked fish, inviting each person to take some to eat.
- While eating, have family members close their eyes and enjoy the fragrance and the flavor of the food.
- As you savor the food, imagine you are sitting by the shore of the lake, eating this meal with Jesus. Ask: What does Jesus say to you? What do you say to Jesus? This is your prayer. Then let everyone say, "Amen."

4. Say this prayer aloud:

All-present God, in everything we hear and see and taste, we come closer to you. Remind us that you are with us in every sound we hear and in every move we make. Our very thoughts are prayers, O God. We pray in Jesus' name.

Let everyone say, "Amen."



The Last Supper

Matthew 26:17-20, 26-30

¹⁷ Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Where will you have us prepare for you to eat the Passover?" ¹⁸ He said, "Go into the city to a certain man and say to him, 'The Teacher says, My time is at hand. I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples.'" ¹⁹ And the disciples did as Jesus had directed them, and they prepared the Passover. ²⁰ When it was evening, he reclined at table with the twelve.

²⁶ Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." ²⁷ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, ²⁸ for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. ²⁹ I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

Jesus Prays in Gethsemane

Matthew 26:36-39

³⁶ Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, "Sit here, while I go over there and pray." ³⁷ And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled. ³⁸ Then he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me." ³⁹ And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will."

Jesus Serves Breakfast

John 21:4-14

⁴ Just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. ⁵ Jesus said to them, "Children, do you have any fish?" They answered him, "No." ⁶ He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in, because of the quantity of fish. ⁷ That disciple whom Jesus loved therefore said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment, for he was stripped for work, and threw himself into the sea. ⁸ The other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, but about a hundred yards off.

⁹ When they got out on land, they saw a charcoal fire in place, with fish laid out on it, and bread. ¹⁰ Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught." ¹¹ So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, 153 of them. And although there were so many, the net was not torn. ¹² Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." Now none of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. ¹³ Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and so with the fish. ¹⁴ This was now the third time that Jesus was revealed to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

