

PrayKids!

ADVENTURES WITH JESUS IN PRAYER

The Word On...

Contemplative Prayer

Imagine that you want to tell one of your friends something important about yourself. Would you do it when your friend is talking about something else? Or would you rather say it when the two of you are both quiet? When you're quiet, right?

God has some really important things to tell you about Himself. And the best time to do that is when the two of you are quietly spending time together. That's what **contemplative prayer** is all about. It's reflecting deeply on God. It's thinking about Him intently.

The Bible says, "Be still, and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10).

Contemplative prayer is a great way to do that. Often it's in those quiet moments with God that He reveals Himself in a new way. ★

Going to the Next Level

By Kim Butts

If you like to play video games, you know that it's all about getting to the next level!

Prayer is like that too—only much better than any video game! Prayer doesn't depend on how fast or good you are, though. All that matters is that you want to know Jesus better.

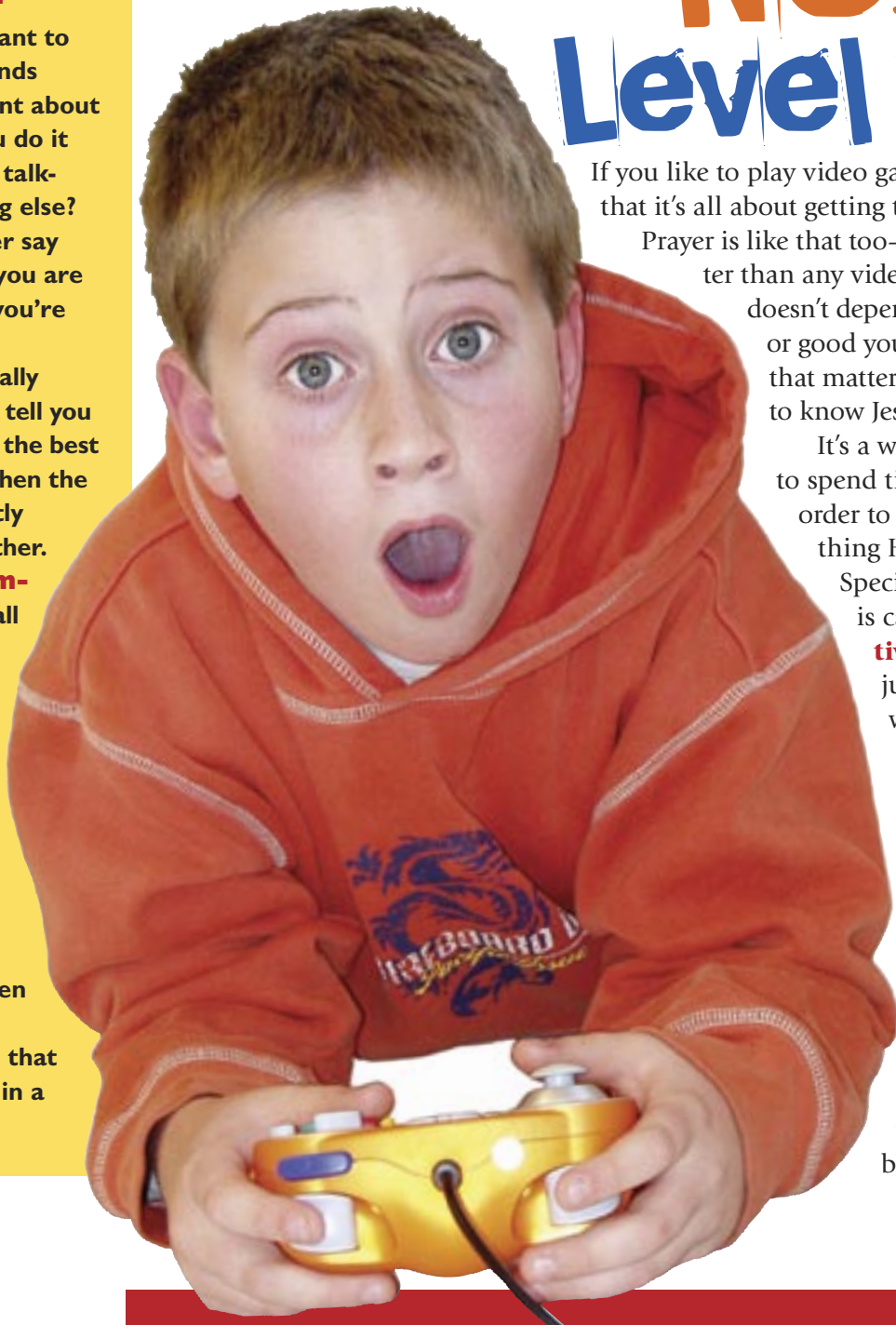
It's a wonderful thing to spend time with God in order to experience everything He is and does.

Special prayer like that is called **contemplative prayer**. It is just one of many ways to pray, but it's a way that will bring you close to God's heart.

When you **contemplate** God in prayer, it gets really exciting!

It's like always getting to "the next level." It's like the game that never ends, because there's

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When you give your full attention to God, it's a step toward the next level with Him!

(continued from page 1)

always something more you can experience with Jesus!

Moving to new levels in prayer isn't hard. First, remember that if Jesus is your Lord and Savior, He lives inside of you right now. He knows all about you, and He wants you to know all about Him, too! Sometimes, He wants you just to sit quietly and enjoy being with Him. Can you stop thinking about everything that's going on in your life for a little while? When you

give your full attention to God like that, it's a step toward the next level with Him!

Contemplative prayer is taking a "God-break" right in the middle of everything else. It is gazing at the beauty of the Lord like King David did. In fact, that was the "one thing" he wanted from the Lord: to spend time in His presence (Psalm 27:4).

Another way to practice **contemplative prayer** is always to be looking around for God's ways, wonders, miracles, and beauty. Have you ever stopped to think about how much God loves you? Wow! Do you ever look at the sky and the beautiful world around you and get amazed at how your heavenly Father made it all? God is huge and awesome! Look for Him in big and

small things around you. He is the Creator of everything you see every day!

Do you know the best part about always going to the next level with Jesus? You will begin to love what He loves, and think about what He thinks about. You will be connected to Him because you are always aware of Him. His voice will be clearer to you, and you will pray in new ways. You will find yourself becoming more like Jesus because you will understand what He is like.

Going to the next level with Jesus in **contemplative prayer** really can be more exciting than your favorite video game. Why not take a God-break right now and discover what's at the next level? ★

Kim Butts is author of *The Praying Family: Creative Ways of Praying Together*.

Welcome, God

A really good way to start any time of **contemplative prayer** is to greet God and invite Him to speak to you. Here's a sample prayer that you can put into your own words:

God, I'm really glad to be with You today. I want to hear everything You want to tell me about Yourself, Your ideas, Your plans, and Your world. So please help me not to be distracted by anything. Help me to focus on You, and only You, because I don't want to miss a single thing. I love being with You, God. In Jesus' name, amen.

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Mission Statement

The mission of PrayKids! is to teach, encourage, and equip children (ages 7 to 12) as they develop a deepening relationship with Christ through prayer, so that they might become more effective prayer warriors.

Grown-ups!

Sign up now for our NEW PrayKids! Online Newsletter

This is a free monthly newsletter including timely PrayKids! articles you may have missed, exclusive subscriber-only offers, and updates on newly released resources and tools. It's perfect for Sunday school teachers, children's workers, Christian school teachers, homeschool parents, and anyone else who has a heart to encourage kids in growing their prayer lives! Just go to www.praymag.com, look at the lower left under the newsletter sign-up section, check the box next to PrayKids! Online Newsletter, and click the SIGN-UP button!



By Joy Sutton
Age 8

Prayer Signs

Payer has always been a big part of my life, even before I was born. Lots of people prayed for me to be born safely after my mom had problems during her pregnancy with me. As soon as I began to speak, I began to pray.

My mom goes to prayer and missions conferences, and sometimes I get to go along with her. I make a sign that says "Prayer Chair." We put two chairs next to each other. People come and tell me what to pray for them, and then I pray. When I pray, I always ask God to give me the words to speak to them. Sometimes I get emails from people telling me how God answered the prayers that I prayed.

When my mother finally said I could get a kitten last summer, prayer was part of that too. I had prayed for a long time for God to show me the perfect kitten for me. I looked at two kitties at the shelter, but neither of them seemed right. We went to look at a kitty at someone's house, and in the car I prayed for God to give me a sign if this was the right kitty. When we got there, four kitties came, and I picked up one. I held her and thought she might be the kitty for me. Then my mother pointed to a hanging decorative sign exactly like one at our house. The sign had one word on it—PRAY! It made me feel really joyful and I knew that this was the kitten of my dreams. So if you ever pray and ask for a sign from God, He just might give you a literal sign! ★

How Divine!

A great way to **contemplate** the wonders, promises, and majesty of God is a centuries-old way of praying called *Lectio Divina*. *Lectio Divina* is Latin for "divine [heavenly] lesson." It's a special way to think about God. Here's how you can try it:

- **Read** a Scripture (Psalm 40:5 in this example).

- **Think** about what the passage means. God gives us many miracles: babies born, people healed, sunrises and sunsets.

These are wonderful ways to consider what God can do. He has wonderful things planned for our lives . . . too many to count!

- **Tell** God how awesome His creation is. Ask Him to help you to know Him better.

- **Contemplate:** Be still before God. Get a picture of a sunset in your mind . . . or something else He has made that amazes you. Wait quietly to let Him tell you about Himself.

Now **contemplate** God the Father, or Jesus, using *Lectio Divina* with these passages: Exodus 15:11; Psalm 145:13; Ephesians 1:18-23.

—By Kim Butts

What David Did When

David lay down on the fresh grass under the shade tree. He could see all his sheep happily munching patches of green blades in the meadow.

David knew the next hour was his to do what he wanted, as long as he kept an eye on the flock. This was his favorite time. No one was around to interrupt his thoughts or tease him about his harp playing (as his older brothers sometimes did). This was David's time to be alone with God.

Being the youngest, David was sent by his brothers to tend the sheep because it was the dirtiest job. They didn't realize how much he loved it.

David enjoyed being outside where he could

enjoy the beauty God created. He liked the gentle breeze blowing on his face, and he loved to explore the pastures and hills. He even loved those smelly sheep!

They knew he cared for them, too. They listened for his voice and followed everywhere he led.

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Yes, this was David's time just to enjoy being alone with God. David picked up his harp and began to strum the strings. As he did, his mind was filled with the wonder of God. Without thinking, he began to sing praises to God along with the music. He felt God right there with him, as he had many times before. David was filled with peace and joy.

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No One Watching

BY EVA JULIUSON

David sang, "Lord, you . . . know all about me! You know when I sit down and when I get up. You know my thoughts before I think them. Your knowledge is amazing to me; it is more than I can understand. God, your thoughts are precious to me. They are so many! If I could count them, they would be more than all the grains of sand."* David saw the Lord in the hills, the stars, the quiet waters, the green pastures.

But most of all, David felt God in his heart, and he grew to love God more each time he was alone with Him.

For the rest of David's life, he would continue to meditate on God's Word, wonders, beauty, and ways. Even later, when he became a great and busy king, David loved to spend quiet times contemplating God. He wrote many kinds of songs and prayers, some of which are recorded in the book of Psalms. But some of the loveliest are David's reflections on God and His glory. David enjoyed **contemplating** God so much that God called him "a man after His own heart" (1 Samuel 13:14).★

*Psalm 139:1-2,6, 17-18, New Century Version

Eva Juliuson is an author and school teacher. Her favorite book about prayer is the book of Psalms in the Bible, from which this story is based.



Chew on This!

Another word for **contemplate** is meditate. Some people define meditating as "chewing," like when a cow chews its cud. The word

shows up a lot in the book of Psalms, which David helped to write. Look up these verses for ideas about what David and other Bible writers thought about as they meditated on God.

Psalm 48:9 _____

Psalm 119:27 _____

Psalm 119:48 _____

Psalm 119:97 _____

Psalm 143:5 _____

When you're done, look for other verses that remind you of what God is like. Use them in your own times of **contemplative prayer**. ★



Let's Pray for People with Disabilities

Have you ever met a person with a disability? People whose bodies or minds limit their participation in major life activities have a disability. For example, if a person has one arm or leg, or has trouble moving his body, he has a physical disability. If someone has a hard time thinking or understanding new ideas, she may have a learning disability. Someone who has trouble processing thoughts and feelings may have a mental or emotional disability. People with disabilities have special needs. But they are like everyone else. They laugh, cry, and dream of having a purposeful life.



can't "catch" disabilities from others. Some people are born with a disability. Others become disabled as a child, teenager, or grown-up, through an illness or injury. People with disabilities may need special helps such as powerful eyeglasses, Braille writing, hearing aids, sign language, wheelchairs, medicine, and more. Most of all, they need our prayers.

God doesn't want you to be afraid of disabled people just because they look, think, or act differently from you. You

God can give people with disabilities full lives that tell beautiful stories. God can make a blind person hear well and play the piano. A person with no hearing may become a writer. Someone in a wheelchair can become a scientist. Someone who has trouble learning may become an artist.

God wants us to be kind to one another, including people with disabilities. You show God's love when you treat people with disabilities the way you would want to be treated and when you love them the way Jesus does. Ask a friend with a disability what he or she likes to do and do that with him or her. Many activities can be changed so everyone can participate. And don't forget to pray for purpose and joy in the lives of people with disabilities. ★

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LOVER THE GLOBE Prayers for People with Disabilities

1. Heavenly Father, You know each one of us even before we are born. Help people with disabilities to understand how special they are to You (Jeremiah 1:5).
2. God of all mercy, healing, and power, display Your work in the lives of people with disabilities (John 9:1-7).
3. Lord, help me find ways to include people with disabilities in my life so that You can bless both them and me (Luke 14:13-14).
4. All-powerful God, thank You for the special power that rests on people with disabilities. Thank You that each one can be strong in You (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).
5. Holy Father, teach us to respect people who have disabilities and to treat them the way we want to be treated (Matthew 22:39).



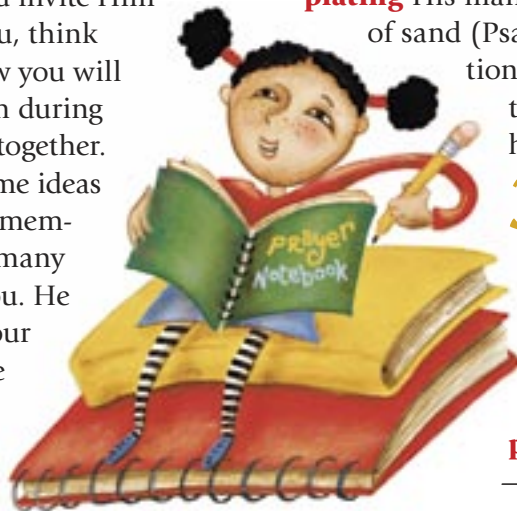
Spotlight on Jesus

You've chosen a quiet place. You're ready to put the spotlight on Jesus and **contem-plate** on Him. But wait! Before you invite Him to meet you, think about how you will enjoy Him during your time together.

Here are some ideas to try. And remember: God has many

ways He can reveal Himself to you. He may speak through any one of your five senses, as well as through the Holy Spirit.

1. Do you have a favorite worship CD? Now's a



perfect time to play it quietly in the background.

2. If you've picked a topic for your time with Jesus, find something to hold that will remind you of it. For instance, if you are **contem-plating** His many thoughts about you, hold a cup of sand (Psalm 139:17-18, New Living Translation). If you are thinking about His tender care, hold a strand of your hair (Matthew 10:30).

3. Keep a prayer notebook nearby to write down or draw the thoughts God gives you during prayer. It's fun to look back later to see what God has revealed to you when you put the spotlight on Him through **contemplative prayer**. ★

—By Angie Clark, Hazelwood, Missouri

Contemplate Your Creator with Clay

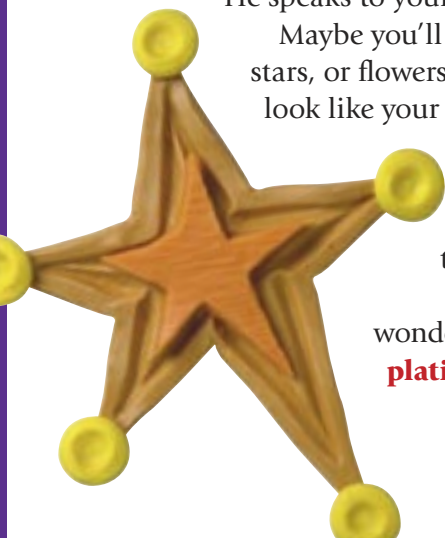
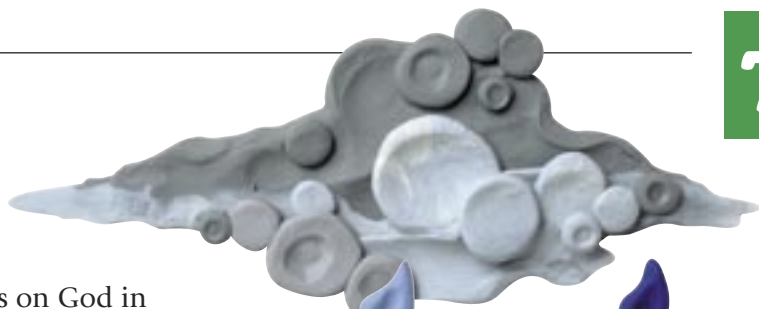
Here's a fun activity that will help you focus on God in **contemplative prayer**. As you create, think about God, the greatest Creator of all, and all that He means to you.

You'll need several small pieces of modeling clay, about one inch square each. Choose a variety of colors.

First, roll a piece of clay in your hands until it is easy to work with. As you do, think about God and all He has made. Listen to Him as He speaks to your mind and heart.

Maybe you'll shape the clay into mountains, waves, seashells, stars, or flowers. How about a bird, dog, cat, or even little people who look like your family? Remember the rainbow God showed to Noah in Genesis 9:12-17? You could make a clay rainbow as you think about God's mercy. How about the star that the wise men saw at Jesus' birth? Or the cross on which Jesus died for our sins?

Whatever you make, think about how wonderful God is as you do it. You are **contem-plating** your Creator! ★



Practicing the Presence of God

By Lani Carroll Hinkle

When Jesus was training His disciples, He said, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place" (Mark 6:31). As parents, we want to teach our kids to do that too. In the beginning, they'll need the quiet and isolation in order to focus on God's



presence. But as they grow, they can learn to maintain that sense of God's presence, even in the middle of daily activities.

Brother Lawrence was a 17th-century French monk who is best known for his example of the **contemplative** life. He practiced God's presence in every minute of his day while working as a monastery cook. The secrets of Brother Lawrence's devotion to God apparently lay in his hearty renunciation of anything that did not lead to God, his belief that God was the beginning and end of all his thoughts and desires, and his conviction that prayer was nothing more than the continuing sense of God's presence.

Brother Lawrence began his daily duties in the kitchen with this appeal: "Oh my God, I'm obeying now Your command to pay attention to what I'm doing here. Since I know You're with me, I ask You to please grant me grace to stay and continue in Your presence. Please help me. I give You the work of my hands

and the fruit of all my affections." When he finished working, if Brother Lawrence had done his duties well, he returned thanks to God. If not, he asked pardon and grace to continue on in God's presence. "By getting right back up after I fall," he said, "and by keeping my walk of faith and love fresh and alive, I've gotten to the place where it would be just as hard for me not to think of God as it was in the beginning to get used to the idea."

If Brother Lawrence had to practice—and sometimes fail—at living a life of **contemplation**, then so will we! Below are some ways you can help your family practice **contemplation** in your daily lives and activities.

1 Always begin with prayer. Use Brother Lawrence's prayer, the prayer in the on page 2, or simply invite Jesus into your **contemplation**. Read the Scripture passage for each activity before you begin.

2 Try doing the dinner dishes one evening in silence. Reflect on Jesus as the One who washes away our sins (Psalm 51:2,7; John 13:8; Acts 22:16).

3 Eat a meal without talking. **Contemplate** what it would have

been like to be at the Last Supper with Jesus (Matthew 26:17-30).

4 Take a walk together in silence. Imagine that you are the disciples, walking along the shores of the Sea of Galilee with Jesus (Matthew 4:18; John 21:1).

5 Go outside at night and look at the stars. Without speaking to each other, think about God, who created heaven and earth and numbered the stars (Genesis 1:16; Psalm 8:3-9, 147:4).

6 At the end of each activity, discuss what you thought about and what God revealed to you. Thank Him for who He is and for His presence with you. If the exercise was difficult, talk to God as a family about that. Then, following the example of Brother Lawrence, go on practicing the presence of God! ★

Editor's note: NavPress recently released a very readable, modern translation of Brother Lawrence's writings called Practicing God's Presence: Brother Lawrence for Today's Reader, updated and revised by Robert Elmer (NavPress, © 2005).

MEMORY VERSE

*My heart says of you,
"Seek his face!" Your
face, LORD, I will seek.*

Psalm 27:8

Free

LEADER'S GUIDE for Teachers and Parents

Did you know we have a **free** leader's guide with extra activities, questions, and prayer points to go along with each article in *PrayKids!*? Go to www.praykids.com and select "Parents and Teachers." Then select which issue you want and click on the article title. Download what you need so you can use *PrayKids!* with your child, or with a group of kids.

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