



Children's prayer resource

Here are some ideas to help facilitate children praying for children at risk using the 'Together' prayer booklet. Feel free to use some or all of the suggestions and do email us at pray@viva.org to let us know how your prayer time goes.

Set up a room with 7 prayer stations to represent the areas of society mentioned in the prayer booklet. Have 7 dolls or pictures of 'children' to represent a child in each of these areas who is suffering in some way and refer to these 'children' as you lead the group through a journey to praying for children at risk. Let the children in the group choose a name for the 'children' with no name.



Prayer Station Two - Education

Make this space look like a classroom with as many things as you can find that represent learning to stimulate some thoughts in the children. Have a chalk board or white board available and let the children write down reasons why some children might miss out on school or learning. Some reasons might include – sickness, disability, war, natural disasters, the fact they may have been born a girl, poverty and the fact that they might have to work.

Story about the child:

(Use one of the dolls or picture to represent Sharma.)

Can you imagine never having a birthday party? What about not even *knowing* when your birthday is? Pretty hard to imagine, isn't it? Well, this is what life was like for Sharma, growing up in Sri Lanka. She lived in a very dangerous place, so her parents were too scared to go anywhere to register her birth. This didn't just mean not knowing when her birthday was. It also meant that, as far as the Sri Lankan government was concerned, she didn't even exist. People who aren't properly registered in Sri Lanka can't go to school, or get vital medicine that could save their lives. Sadly for Sharma, her parents died during the war in Sri Lanka, but thankfully a local children's home took her in and are now working at getting her officially registered so that she can attend school.

For discussion:

If you were Sharma, how would you feel not being able to celebrate your birthday or to go to school?

How do you think Sharma felt when she was taken in and looked after by the children's home?

How does this make you feel about the fact that you are able to attend school? Does it make you more thankful?

What kind of prayers could you pray for children like Sharma?

Prayer time:

Let the children pray their own prayers in response to Sharma's story.

Suggested wrap-up activity after first two stations :

Celebrate some of the people in your life that have helped you. Take a piece of paper and write a thank you card to a family member, friend or teacher who has helped you feel loved. Decorate the card and write a note to that person. Give the person your card and pray for that person to be able to help other children also.

Prayer Station One - Family

Make this a homely space with lots of cut out pictures or drawings of different homes and things you might find in homes scattered around. Introduce the imaginary child who is suffering at home and talk about what a home or family might look like for them.

Think of more reasons why a child might suffer in their families.

Some reasons might be because they are poor, their parents may be separated, their parents could be unwell or have died.

Look at some of the pictures lying around and consider if they would have these things.

Prayer time

- Praise God for placing the lonely in families (Psalm 68:6) and being the Perfect Father. Pray for children who suffer like the 'imaginary' child.
- Thank God for each loving person who has been a part of your life.
- Pray for families that are struggling to love each other to be overwhelmed by God's love that hearts will be softened and that love would flow.
- Pray for each others families, that homes would be a place of love, safety, health, and knowing about Jesus.



Prayer Station Three - Business

Make this into a pretend food shop with things for sale and pretend money. Let the children play at being shopkeepers or shoppers for 5 - 10 minutes. Buying and selling can be fun when things are good around you. There are many businesses that are helping children at risk today by donating the money they make to communities and children in need. Some of the reasons children might suffer are because they come from poor countries and have no money to buy food or clothing. Money is a BIG issue in this area. Food might cost too much money, the shop keepers and business people might be dishonest and want to use the children to help make more money themselves. Greedy people might take more than they need so there isn't any left.

Introduce the 'imaginary' child and explain that this child works in a factory making clothes and is paid much less than adults. The business the child is working for is selling the clothes to other countries for lots more money and using this child to make money but not giving the child what they deserve for the hard days work. The child isn't able to go to school because of needing to earn some money as even a small amount of money is important when you are so poor.

Prayer time

- Pray that businesses will act in good ways to help children and families
- Pray for children who have to work and do not go to school.
- Pray for more fairness in what people are paid.

Prayer Station Four - Government

Make this space look like a court room with a gavel and sound block to hand or something similar that could represent these.

If you can get hold of a judges wig all the better! Explain that governments around the world make the decisions as to what laws people should follow in their countries. What sort of laws or 'rules' do the children think would help children who suffer.

Some 'rules' might include things to protect children from harm or rules to protect families. Think about some of the ways children suffer and ask the children to think about what rules or laws they might make.

Story about the child:

(Use one of the dolls or a picture to represent Juan.)

Although he is only 13, Juan already has big plans for his country, El Salvador. He is a 'Peace Ambassador', and he and his friends are determined to rid the streets of their city of the violence that is all too common. So they've been telling lots of people about the ways that violence affects children. But sometimes, for real change to happen, it's the people in authority who need to be told – because they can make decisions that affect a whole country. So Juan's dreams came true when the Vice President of El Salvador met with the Peace Ambassadors, and agreed to commit himself and the whole government to making the streets a safer place for children.

For discussion:

Do you know what the government of your country is doing to protect children?

Is there anything you think the government should be doing better to help vulnerable children? How do you think they could improve?

Prayer time

- Praise God for being the perfect Ruler!
- Thank God for businesses that act responsibly towards society and governments that are ending destructive laws and policies that hinder families and children.
- Pray for government officials to boldly speak out for the children and their well-being and to vote for laws that will strengthen families and provide food and shelter to those in need.

Suggested wrap-up activity for prayer stations three and four:

Celebrate some of the businesses or government officials who are helping children and families. Design an award and give it to the person or business. Pray for that person or business to inspire others to do good deeds to help their community and country.



Prayer Station Six - Arts and entertainment

Have a raised 'stage' area if possible with spot lights and have lots of creative materials around. Encourage the children to work in groups or pairs and write a poem or song, draw a picture, sculpt from clay or do a creative project which communicates a message about helping children at risk or that raises awareness of what children suffer. When the children feel they have finished let them present their 'work' using the stage area.

Story about the child:

(Use the doll or a picture of a girl to represent Veng.)

Veng is 10 years old. She lives in a poor rural village in Cambodia. One day when she was out collecting wood alone a man came and attacked her, leaving her terrified and unable to talk about what had happened. But she started meeting with a therapist who helped her to express herself through drawing pictures. Veng's first picture was a little bird with all its wings broken. She started to cry after she had drawn it, saying, "the bird is so sad it feels like it can never fly again. Someone broke its wings. The bird dreams of living with their family but it is scared because bad things live in the trees so the little bird is not safe to go back home". Through her drawings and creativity, Veng was able to come to terms with her traumatic experience and get back to living a happy and hopeful life.

For discussion:

How does Veng's story make you feel?

What does it teach us about how art and creativity can help children? Singing, dancing and art are good things, but sometimes they are used in bad ways. Can you think of some of the bad ways that they are used? How could they affect children?

Prayer time:

- Praise God for all the creativity shown in the group!
- Pray that the arts and entertainment industries will feel compelled to speak up and address issues that have been ignored.
- Let the children pray their own prayers around this area.

Suggested wrap up activity for stations five and six:

Celebrate some of the media, arts and entertainment people and projects that are helping people understand some of the problems that face children. Create a song, dance, or piece of artwork that thanks them for their contribution to making a better world through social awareness.

Prayer Station Five - Media

Have some newspapers dotted around the area along with video's, dvd's and anything else that you can think of that would represent media. If the group has very young children then pre select an appropriate story which affects a child or children from one of the papers. Using the doll or the picture of a child help the children identify with what the child might be feeling. Encourage the children to design a front page of a new paper or magazine which draws adults attention to the needs of children in our world today.

If the children are older then pair them up appropriately to look through a newspaper and circle any of the headlines that relate to children or news that might affect children. Allow 5 – 10 minutes for this and then encourage them to share what they circled and why. Try and draw out the fact that the media is very powerful and can influence for good or bad. Alternatively you could use this space to show a dvd or video of children in difficult circumstances and allow the children to reflect on how they felt watching it and what they thought.

Prayer time

- Praise God for being the CREATOR!
- Thank God for media and celebrities that champion social issues and bring awareness through their unique skills and opportunities to speak.
- Pray for people making decisions about what will be produced to encounter true stories that touch them deeply and motivate them to help make a difference in the world.



Prayer Station Seven - Church

Set up a gazebo or tent like structure which could symbolize a safe place or covered space. Make it really homely with cushions, a simple cross in one corner, a bible, colourful flags of the world or whatever else you think might symbolize 'church'.

Talk about all the things that we have in common as Christians and how our beliefs should help us to love the world and help each other.

Story about the child:

(Use the doll or a picture of a girl to represent Belinda)

Sadly, in many countries around the world peoples' religious beliefs and superstitions mean that children are often accused of being 'witches' when something bad happens to their family. This happened to 12 year old Belinda in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo. After her aunt died, her own mother accused her of causing the death, and her uncle punished her painfully. She managed to escape and run away to a Christian project which is helping her to get better. Although lots of horrible things are done in the name of religion, lots of Christians and people of other faiths are doing amazing things to help suffering children.

For discussion:

Can you imagine how you would feel if someone in your family believed that you were a witch?

How does Belinda's story make you feel?

Can you think of some of the good and bad things that have been done in the name of religion? Why do you think bad things have been done in the name of a good God?

What kind of things could you pray for children like Belinda?

Prayer time:

- Praise God for being Love and allowing us to work with Him to bring God's love where it doesn't exist and hope to those who need it most!
- Thank God for organizations that have worked together in unity to accomplish great things in the name of Jesus to help those in need.
- Pray that organizations will gain the funding needed to do the works that meet the needs of those they minister to locally and around the world.
- Pray for God's love to be seen and felt in every project.

Suggested wrap-up activity for station seven:

Celebrate some of the contributions made by faith-based groups to be Christ's hands and feet to those in need. Take balloons and use permanent markers to draw a cross on each balloon. Blow up the balloons and pray that this coming year more organizations will become involved in showing God's love to the hurting children and families around the world.