

Blessed is the Kingdom: An Orthodox Church School Curriculum



Lesson 7

3rd-5th grades

Worship

Objective: Through prayer and the Liturgy, students will learn how we worship God both personally and together as a congregation.

Lesson Introduction

5 min

Begin by setting the scene, **set up** an icon, a candle, burn incense, and then have students stand prepared to pray together. **Recite** the opening prayer together. Then **ask**:

What did we just do? (pray) To whom? (God) Prayer is a form of worship. By saying our opening prayer, we worshipped God. Why do you think we worship or pray to God? (Because we love Him, and we need Him) God does not NEED us to worship Him. Worship is designed for us to help us. We have been talking about our goal to be Christ-like or have a renewed communion with God. Prayer or worship helps us to do that. Is worship something that only involves our head or our mind?

Take answers, then guide them to look at the little icon corner you set up with a candle, incense, and an icon. Then **say**:

Look at the space we set up. What about this candle? The incense? The icon? They involve our eyes and our nose. It is using our senses. What happens when I say: in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit?

Cross yourself, and have students do so as well. Then **continue**:

Worship is physical as well—we use our bodies and our minds. But we are also expressing love. What do we use to express love? (our hearts) So prayer and worship is an activity that uses all of us—our mind, body, and heart.



Opening Prayer

O Heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth who art everywhere and fillest all things. Treasury of Blessings, and Giver of Life: Come and abide in us, and cleanse us from every impurity, and save our souls, O Good one.

Liturgy Link

Come, Let us Worship

<https://www.oca.org/media/video/20th-aac-thursday-morning-divine-liturgy>

Skip to 29:14-30:50 for this portion

Supplies Needed

- Icon
- Censor with incense
- Candle



Lesson—25 min

Supplies Needed

- Banana (one for the teacher)
- Printed Jesus Prayer coloring page on vellum (vellum allows it to look like stained glass)
- Permanent markers
- Prayer rope

Teacher Resources

OCA Essential Orthodox Christian Beliefs: A Manual for Adult Instruction

<https://www.oca.org/cdn/PDFs/2023-0609-EOCB.pdf>

Chapter 4 Worship

Prayer

<https://www.oca.org/orthodoxy/the-orthodox-faith/worship/the-daily-cycles-of-prayer/prayer>

The Sign of the Cross

<https://www.oca.org/orthodoxy/the-orthodox-faith/worship/the-church-building/sign-of-the-cross>

Prayer of the Heart

<https://www.oca.org/reflections/fr.-john-breck/from-the-prayer-of-jesus-to-prayer-of-the-heart>



Start by **saying**:

To worship God we have to put Him first. How are some ways we can do this? (Pray, attend church, read Bible, help others)

Take answers, and then **continue**:

All of these things take time, and sometimes we choose to spend our time in ways that don't put God first. Let's use this banana as an example.

Hold up the banana to show, and then **say**:

This banana is going to represent the time we have in a day. What is something you enjoy doing? (Play on iPad, watch tv, play a sport, go outside)

Take answers, and after each one, take a bite of the banana. Continue taking a bite each time an item or activity is mentioned until only the peel is left. Then **say**:

Wow! That day flew by. Let's see what we have left for God.

Hold up the peel for all to see, and then **continue**:

Oh! We only have the peel or the scraps left. That is not putting God first. We want to be careful to set aside time each day to worship God. There is one prayer that is super easy to remember, and that we can say anywhere. It's called the Jesus Prayer. Do any of you know the Jesus Prayer?

If a student knows the prayer, help them recite it. If not, **recite** it for them.

O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner.

Repeat it as a class once or twice, and then **ask**:

What is a sinner?

Remind them of last week, and how during the game they learned that sinning means missing the mark. Then **ask**:

What is mercy? (Forgiveness; being slow to anger; always loving even when upset or hurt)

We also make the sign of the cross when praying this prayer. Can you show me how you make the sign of the cross?

Lesson Continued

5 Minute Bonus

Go on a prayer walk. Walk through the halls of your church or around the grounds of your parish. Stop periodically to marvel at God's world and creation. Each time you stop have a student lead the group in saying the Jesus Prayer and crossing themselves.

Supplemental Ideas

Church Visit

Visit the church nave. Remind students that this is supposed to represent heaven on earth. Look around the church for ways to help us focus on worship. This could include candles, a censor, all the icons pictured. Discuss how these help to keep you from getting distracted.

Teach them to pray Activity

Encourage students to teach others about their newly learned Jesus prayer. Discuss who they could share this information with, such as a parent, godparent, or sibling. Send them out as ambassadors to teach one person before next week what they have learned. Follow up next week to see who they told and how it went.

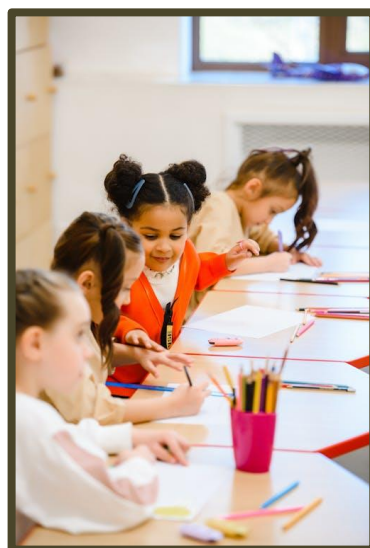
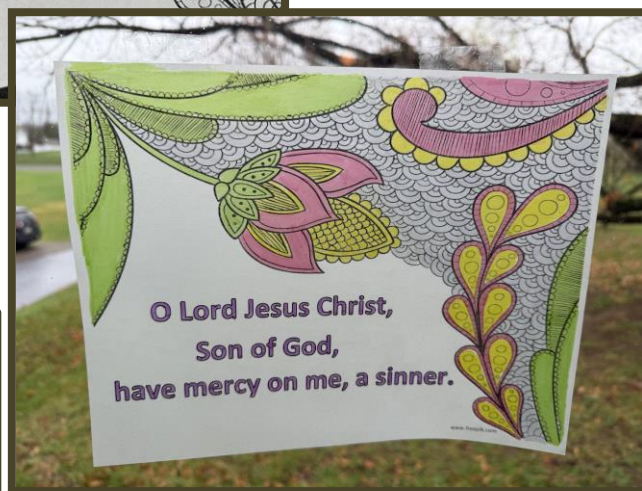
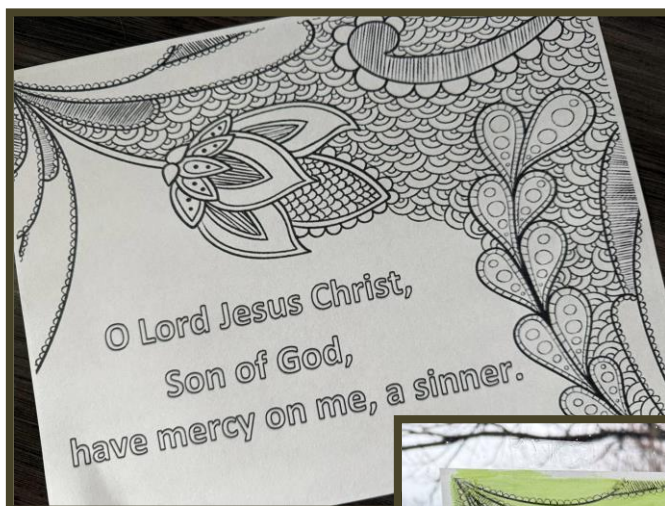
Demonstrate while explaining:

Place your first two fingers and thumb together to form a sign of the Trinity--Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Then bring those fingers to your forehead to your chest, then from your right shoulder to your left shoulder.

Show the prayer rope you brought in. **Explain** how each bead is one recitation of the Jesus Prayer. **Practice** saying the Jesus prayer and crossing yourself a few more times. **Demonstrate** how you move your finger along each bead with your left hand.

Have each student lead the group in this prayer passing your prayer rope around the group as they pray and cross themselves.

Hand out The Jesus Prayer coloring page, and permanent markers. Have students color their prayer page to hang in a window at home.



Lesson Activities

Bead Prayer Rope—10 min

Supplies needed: plastic pony beads, stretchy elastic cord, cross bead

Say: *Sometimes people use a prayer rope when praying or worshipping to help them focus. As they touch each knot or in our case bead, they repeat the Jesus prayer.*

Cut a piece of elastic cord long enough for each student's wrist. Have them string beads onto the cord with a cross bead in the middle. Tie the cords to create a bracelet.

Have students practice using their prayer bracelets to recite the Jesus prayer.



Distraction Game—10 min

Supplies needed: 10 of the same smaller items (such as ping pong balls, golf balls, bean bags, or paper clips); a variety of 30+ items that would successfully cover, hide, or get in the way of collecting the smaller items (such as balloons, stuffed animals, pillows, playground balls)

Say: *Today we talked about worshipping God and putting Him first. We learned some ways to help us focus while doing that and how important it is to focus on God. We are going to play a game to help us understand how much harder it is to focus on God when the world tries to distract us.*

Throw the 10 items on the floor. Have a student or all of the students collect them. Ask them how hard this task was. Next throw the 10 items on the floor again, but add in the 30+ other items. Have a student or all of the students collect the 10 items again. Discuss if it was harder or easier this time and why. Have students try again, but this time have their classmates be super quiet or loud and chatty. Did the noise make it harder? Talk about how this relates to prayer and worship, and how it is important to not have distractions.

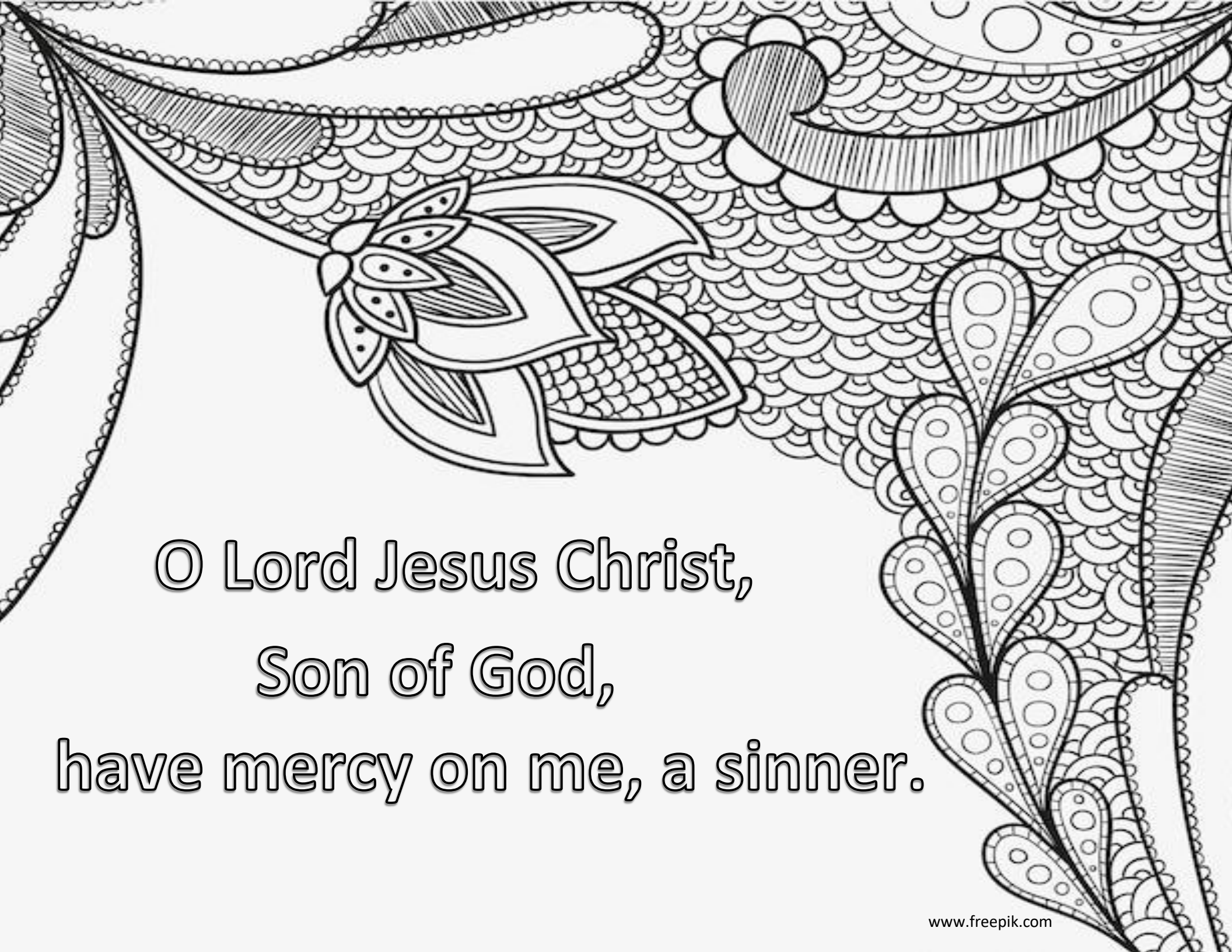


Closing Thoughts— 5 min

Before leaving, have the students stand before your icon in the classroom. Using their prayer rope, practice saying the Jesus prayer one more time before ending with the closing prayer.

Closing Prayer

It is truly meet to bless you, O Theotokos, ever-blessed and most pure, and the Mother of our God. More honorable than the Cherubim, and more glorious beyond compare than the Seraphim, without defilement you gave birth to God the Word. True Theotokos we magnify you!



© Lord Jesus Christ,
Son of God,
have mercy on me, a sinner.