

Plan for year N1 lesson 1

[based on PE1 = lesson 1 of Enlighten Pre-Kinder book.]

The aims of this lesson are to make students more aware of

- a) the need for daily prayer
- b) how we know God is there for praying to.

The objectives are that, *after fully participating in both the lesson and the homework*, the student should be able to:

- a) say a few words of a prayer from memory
- b) have some idea of how to pray
- c) know that prayer is talking to God and is obligatory daily
- d) realise that we cannot know God, but we can know what He has created.

Although this lesson is in year N1, the plan was prepared with the thought that it will probably be used as part of a 3-year rolling programme, so there are likely to be students aged 2,3 and 4 together. Thus the aims and objectives need to be suitable for a 4-year-old, and will only partly be achieved by a 2-year-old in one lesson. The activities are numbered, for ease of identification by the teacher, and the maximum number has been suggested (i.e. 14 for new topic + the standard ones for every lesson, with the virtue taken in 2 parts for very young students = 21 altogether; if you have 105 minutes, as guessed in the introduction, they will average 5 minutes each). You may well find that you can't fit everything in; that's fine, it probably means that you don't have any hyperactive students and they are learning to concentrate on one thing for longer at a time, just save some activities for next time (but try to get the worksheet and homework in!)

Materials needed.

Small foam ball, colourful prayer books, bag of toys, 'Stories For Children' or PE1 or page with words, plain white paper, crayons, drawings of signs & objects, flowered scent spray, bottle of sugar-water, teaspoons, CD/cassette player with song & sounds (or things to make sounds).

Optional extras: enlarged pictures (8 on 4 pages in separate file) blanket if no carpet on floor, "conch" – shell or any suitable object to pass round if you want to use that method, other things for prayer corner if you want to make it special e.g. Persian cloth, picture of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, candle with holder & matches, flowers; worksheet (start of prayer & signs to join to objects).

Preparation of room.

Clear a sitting space in one corner and put blanket down if needed.

Get the prayer corner ready in another corner of the room.

Put bag of toys in 3rd corner, on table or floor.

Have chairs round 2 tables, one with paper and crayons on it, the other with the signs of God on it.

Make sure there is a table near the door for them to put their files on as they come in, (you could also have the worksheets, in an envelope, on that table.)

1. Introduction. *This will ideally be done sitting on the floor in a circle.*

If the room is not carpeted, take a blanket to sit on.

Game. Have a small ball, it could be foam, wool, (or anything that will not hurt if it hits you!) Explain that when they get the ball, they have to call someone's name and then throw the ball to them; for new students, tell them your name and say that they can throw to you until they learn other names (maybe call "teacher" if they forget your name).

Start by throwing the ball to an older student and see how it goes.

If one student is continuously left out, maybe the others don't know the name yet, so call out "what about giving ____ a turn?", point to the student while saying the name.

If students are sitting on floor, and some are very young, it might be better to roll the ball along the floor to another student, rather than throw it.

2.News.*(still sitting on the floor in a circle.)*

Ask if anyone has any news they would like to share. Try to limit the length of contributions if they all want a turn, so that this takes no more than 5 minutes. If they all try to talk at once, and don't respond well to the idea of putting hands up and waiting to be asked, try passing the "conch"; the rule is:- you may only speak when holding a specific object which teacher has chosen (see "Lord of the Flies" by William Golding), this object is normally passed round the circle in order.

3.Mark homework.*(go to a table for this)*

(if none, spend longer on revision, or have some sort of movement activity just before sitting down for the new topic: Prayer.)

4.Revision.*(could also be at table, might need to look in files to see what done before, especially if a new teacher taking this class for the first time)*

Ask what they know about _____ (topic studied last time, even if before Summer break). If no-one was present when it was done, they might have learnt it at home or somewhere else. If no response, suggest a specific thing about that topic which they might know. If still no response, tell them what you were expecting, and ask them to repeat it.

5.Prayer.*(back to sitting on the floor in a circle.)*

Tell them "we're going to say a prayer together", (mention, if you like, that we don't normally say prayers like this, but it's OK in a lesson to learn it) and ask "would anyone like to say one on their own first?" If not, say "that's fine, we're here for you to learn how to do it", and continue lesson.

[but if any indicate yes, let them try one at a time; whatever the result, say "that's nice" ; if anyone says the one below, say "that's good, you thought of the same one as me", and (if not all had a turn yet) "did anyone else think of that one?", and (if anyone says yes) "would you like to try it?", then (after the try, if there is one, but in any case stop taking turns at saying one on their own) "now you can help me teach the others"; if no-one says the one below, compliment them on knowing one already and say "now we're going to learn a new one".]

Ask them to repeat after you, "O God", then "guide me", then "protect me". Do this several times.

When you judge they are ready, try the whole lot together several times. Don't expect them all to know it all yet, put it on the homework sheet for parents to help with the learning process.

This prayer is set to music on the tape "We are Bahá'ís". Listen to this and sing along to the part learnt.

Ask them what we are doing when we say prayers.

If no answer, rephrase it. e.g. you could ask "If I say a prayer at home, am I saying it for someone to listen to?" and "Who do you think will listen?" Tell them we are talking to God, then ask the first question again, until you get the answer "talking to God".

Ask whether they know that someone prays every day at home. If answer "yes" then tell them that Bahá'u'lláh said we must do that. If answer "no" then explain that it is a law of Bahá'u'lláh that we pray every day, but when we are old enough we should say one prayer each day on our own; Bahá'í mums and dads might say a prayer each day with their children as well, but they certainly should say a special sort on their own, when children might not know about it.

6. Virtue. Prayerfulness. [N.B. if they are restless while saying the prayer in 5., you could switch to this activity and then maybe go back to finish 5. after.] *(go to a "prayer corner" you set up earlier, it could be as simple as a picture of 'Abdu'l-Bahá on a table, or maybe a Persian cloth on a table with a candle at the centre and colourful prayer books round it – maybe flowers at the back, real or artificial)*

Tell them to stand still, for respect. Arms can be folded, if they like, or straight down at sides, or clasped behind back. Eyes can either be shut or concentrating on one of the objects in the prayer corner. When all ready, ask them to say the prayer just learnt once, altogether, with you. Don't worry about how many join in this time, the emphasis is on how they stand while it is being said. Also, depending on the capability of the students, you might be able to get them to stay still, in silence, thinking about what has been said, for a short time after the prayer has finished; this is a brief introduction to meditation.

7.Playtime. This is intended to be a break from the learning situation, which is often required by very young ones. Here is a suggested place (2 more later), but use it whenever they are not really concentrating. Have one or more things in a bag which they can play with, e.g. Lego Duplo, Dinky cars etc., bring out one at a time and see what happens. Of course, if any unsatisfactory behaviour results, e.g. 2 wanting the same thing and fighting over it instead of taking turns, they must be told quietly but firmly that this is not acceptable (e.g. any repeat means end of this activity!)

8.Story. “Hidden Treasure” *Stories for children – page 9.*

You can ask them to sit on chairs round a table, since the next activity will be there, or back on floor if you prefer. (If you haven't got the book, it's in PE1; or follow the link for the words, but no picture.) After reading the story, get them to tell you what was in it; prompt if necessary, with words &/or picture. If possible, get someone to answer a question to show that they understand the message in the story.

9.Art. Give them a blank piece of paper each and put some crayons in the centre of the table for them to share. (or if you prefer felt-tips, make sure they are washable at this age!) Ask them to draw a picture, of one of the things in the story (raindrops on window, moonlight sparkling on sea, flowers in a garden, etc.) Make sure they share nicely, anyone who snatches crayon from another, has it taken away, they must wait their turn for that colour! (Quickly suggest a different colour for another part of the picture.)

10.Discussion. Start this as soon as one student finishes their picture, others may continue as long as they listen to you and don't talk. (if rules not obeyed, all move to circle on floor.) Say “you have all created a picture, if I mix them up, will you know which is yours?” (answer probably ‘yes’, but if ‘no’ then let them put names on pictures.) Say “but does the picture know you?” (expect ‘no’ but be aware that some other answers might occur, or none at all, which you will have to deal with – if none, could ask “can you see your picture?” and then “can your picture see you?” etc.) Ask who has a grandmother living fairly near (if that fails, try uncle etc.). When you have found out that X has Y nearby, say to X: “suppose you would like your Y to have the picture, and you call at the house on the way home, but no-one's in, so you just leave the picture. Then after you get home, there's a phone call from Y, who says ‘you were at my house’.” To all the students: “How did Y know that X had been there?”, pause for answer, if not forthcoming, tell them: “because X had left a sign, which was the picture.”

[If everything has gone according to plan, and your break occurs after 50 minutes, it will be here, otherwise a move around will be required, so see that the following is set up on a different table. Make sure you have a watch or clock so that you know when the break is imminent and can choose an appropriate activity just before – i.e. one which can easily be interrupted.]

11-14.The Signs of God. In the book “Key Lessons”, also a copy in PE1. (pictures of signs and objects in worksheet, enlarge if possible and cut them out for first activity)

(11.) 1. Show pictures or drawings of “signs” one at a time, asking what they are signs of, then producing picture of that object, e.g. paw print in mud could have been made by a dog, a feather found in park means a bird has been there, etc. Repeat after each item “if we don't see the ----, how do we know it's been there?” expect answer “by its sign” (you give it, if they don't)

(12.) 2. Ask students to sit and close their eyes, then spray some flowered scent into the air. Say “imagine you just came into the room and you smell something, as you do now, what do you think the smell is a sign of?” (answer could be ‘flowers’ or ‘mummy’ etc. but your continuation is the same) “our nose tells us that something was here, although we can't see it; the smell is a sign that ----- had been here” (if you have a clever one who says the smell is a sign that someone squirted an aerosol, or similar, your response can be: “yes, but what was used to make the smell which came out of the aerosol?” ; if reply of ‘flowers’ not forthcoming, you tell them “flowers were used”, then say “Flowers is what the smell is a sign of.”)

(13.) 3. Still got the students' attention? (If they're restless, move to another part of the room, maybe have some music on tape for them to dance round to.)

Ask them to listen to something, then tell you what that sound is a sign of. (knock on wood, someone at door; other examples in PE1, or record some sounds of your own on a tape and play them one at a time)

(14.) 4. Produce a bottle of sugar water. Ask what they think is in the bottle. Expect answer 'water'. Tell them that there is a sign of something in the water, although they can't see it. Ask if they would like to taste the water (have as many spoons as students in the class, in case they all would). See if they know what you've put in the water. (If you don't want to go to the trouble of making sugar water, or want a more interesting taste for them, buy a bottle of "Perfectly Clear", which comes in various flavours, and pour some into an unmarked bottle to take to the class.)

15. Animal actions. (use the poem in PE1 if you like, or make up your own)

Now it's time to move about the room. Say "we're going to pretend to be animals, I'll choose first, let's be -----s". Walk, run or hop round the room, making any suitable sounds and/or arm actions to suit the animal you've chosen. After a while, stop and say "now we'll be something different, who'd like to choose?" If no-one does, have another ready for them. Repeat the question 2 or 3 more times, then it will be time to sit down! Ask who made the animals. If they don't know, tell them God did.

16. worksheet and revision of this lesson.

(sitting on chairs round table for this, crayons having previously been removed & pictures, with names on, are near door ready for taking home; this could likely have been done at break time)

Give each student a sheet with a few things on. The part-prayer to learn will be one.

Little pictures of signs and their objects can be another. Maybe also short statements such as "We know God is there because He created all these things", & "we must pray to God every day" &/or a note for parents to help student practise Prayerfulness.

Ask them to say the prayer again altogether with you; point at the words on somebody's worksheet while the prayer is being said (it should be large, e.g. size 48 font). After saying the prayer a few times, ask what we have been doing, lead them to the "talking to God" answer. Ask them one at a time to point to a sign, say what it is, then point to the object it is a sign of, and say what that is. Ask them who created all these things. Ask how we know God is there. Tell them what the other writing is on their worksheet. Read it to them. (Don't try to point at each word this time, since size should be much smaller for parents, just point once to the whole thing as you start to read it.) Ask "why must we pray every day?" (Answer expected: "because Bahá'u'lláh said so"). Tell them answer if they don't say it, then ask them to repeat it.

17. Playtime. (as above)

18. Singing. [as a general guide to this item, for any lesson: Sing along to something appropriate for the topic and virtue, as on a CD or cassette. If you have several available, they could choose which one. Accept that there might not be much singing if they haven't heard it before.] There's probably already enough in this lesson, so could just repeat singing the prayer at this point. If you haven't got the tape with the prayer on, use something else without trying to teach them the song, leave that to a later lesson.

19. Virtue. Prayerfulness. (continued)

See if they remember what to do, if not you must remind them.

20. Playtime. (as above)

21. Homework. Ask them what they have learnt today. If no response you must tell them. Put the worksheet in front of them and ask what they are to do at home. Again if no response you must tell them. Something might be optional, e.g. to colour the little pictures, if so make this clear.