



**TODAY'S TOPIC:
Saintly Wisdom**

You are welcome to use this lesson to inspire spiritual conversation in your family or youth classroom. It is written for elementary age but could be adjusted as needed.

THINKING JOB: Ask a “thinking job question” to get everyone thinking about something pertinent to the lesson. This could be asked moments or hours before your conversation.

Are there different ways to pray?

Lesson

St. Teresa of Avila

Materials	Things to Prepare	Today's Goal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Images of the four waters prayer, a well, and St. Teresa (google search) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	Explore different types of prayer

ASK: Have you ever heard of a saint? Do you know what a saint is?

SHARE: A saint is someone who uses their connection with god to take care of others or the world in extraordinary ways. A good example is St. Francis of Assisi who is the patron saint of animals and nature. He spent his life advocating that every being on the earth be treated as equals including animals and plants and humans. He taught others to care for the animals and the world gently and to honor every living thing as a special creation of god.

SHARE: This is Saint Teresa of Avila. (show her image) St. Teresa was a Spanish nun that lived a long time ago. She spent her life working to share the power of prayer with others, especially those that were sick. She was best known for her spiritual writings and poems. One of her most notable writings is called the 4 waters of prayer where she talks about different ways to pray by presenting them as different ways to water a garden.

ASK: How many different ways can we think of to water a garden? (collect a few answers) Those are great options, I think most people probably use a hose now, but

when St. Teresa was alive hoses hadn't even been invented yet! What she had instead was a well.

ASK: Do you know what a well is?

SHARE: (show the image of the well) A well is a very deep hole dug into the ground that fills up with water from underground. People would use a long rope to lower a bucket down into the well until it reached the water and scooped some up, then they would pull the bucket back up out of the well so they could use the water. Imagine you had a garden that needed 5 buckets of water each day to keep growing. You would have to walk to the well, pull up a heavy bucket of water, and walk back to the garden 5 times! That's a lot of work! And what if you accidentally spilled one of the buckets before you got back to the garden? Then you would even have to do it a sixth time! The well is what St. Teresa named the first water of prayer. She said that sometimes prayer can feel difficult because you have to ignore distractions around you and pull prayers up from way down inside of you which can take a long time just like watering the garden with buckets of water from the well.

ASK: Have you ever felt like that before? Like prayer can be hard to do?

ASK: (show image of a water wheel) Have you ever seen something like this before? Can you tell me what it is? A water wheel! Water wheels make it much easier to fill buckets of water because you can fill more than one at a time. You see, as you turned the crank, the wheel would spin, dipping each bucket into the water to fill it up! The water wheel is St. Teresa's second water of prayer. She explained that sometimes it is easier to pray, especially for those who practice often, because the prayer is right there at the front of your mind and when prayer is right there in the front of your mind, it's easier to pray more frequently because it doesn't take as much effort or time. Sometimes I have that kind of prayer experience because of something going on around me, like a beautiful sunset that makes me feel so grateful to live on such a beautiful planet. How about you?

SHARE: St. Teresa's third water of prayer is a stream. (show image of stream) Sometimes to water a garden, people will create channels for water to travel through and then they just allow the flowing water to do the work. St. Teresa recognized this as a form of active prayer, where someone trusts so deeply in spirit

to nourish them with prayer that they begin to make special room for it in their daily life. This might look like having quiet time each morning before starting the day and choosing a virtue card or like saying grace before each meal. Do you have prayer rituals like this?

ASK: Can you think of a way for a garden to get watered without the gardener doing anything? Hmm.... (show image of rain) What about rain?

SHARE: The fourth water of prayer is rain. St. Teresa sometimes thought her life felt like a prayer, like she was one with God and everything she did was Spirit moving through her and using her to make the world a better place. This reminded her of the way the rain falls, she was living **as** the prayer and spreading it all around wherever she went.

ASK: Have you ever felt like you were being a prayer? Or maybe like something you were doing was a blessing? (Encourage sharing)

SHARE: There are so many ways to pray, which makes it easier to pray a little every day. Let's say our affirmation together.

AFFIRMATION – I can pray lots of ways! repeat 4X

Note: Printable affirmations and coloring sheets for this lesson are available at <https://www.milehichurch.org/youth-family/> .