Preschool–Grade 6

Jesus Prays in Gethsemane

Sunday School Lesson for Preschool (Ages 3–5), 20–30 minutes

Main point: Jesus prayed. I can pray too.
Bible passage: Matthew 26:36–46. Read it yourself before class.
Memory verse: "Watch and pray" *Matthew 26:41 (KJV)*. The old word **watch** means stay awake and keep watch.
You need: a Bible, crayons, and one take-home sheet for each child.
Before class: put a bookmark in your Bible at Matthew 26. Clear a space on the floor so the kids can lie down.

1. Opening game: Wake Up and Watch! (5 minutes)

Everyone lies down and pretends to sleep. Snore softly together! Then say, "Wake up and watch!" Kids jump up, make "binoculars" with their hands around their eyes, and look all around. Say, "Sleep!" and they lie down again. Play a few times. Say: "Today we will hear a true story about Jesus' friends who could not stay awake."

2. Bible story (5 minutes)

Hold up your Bible open to Matthew 26. Say: "This story is true. It is in God's Word." Read each line slowly and do the motion. When you see **Say it with me**, the kids say the line back to you.

It was night. Jesus went to a garden called Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36). *(Walk in place.)*
Jesus took three friends with Him (26:37). *(Hold up three fingers.)*
Jesus was very sad (26:38). *(Make a sad face.)*
He said, "Watch with me" (26:38). *(Hands around your eyes.)*
Jesus went a little further and prayed (26:39). *(Fold your hands.)*
Say it with me: "Jesus prayed!"
Jesus came back. His friends were asleep (26:40). *(Lay your head on your hands.)*
Jesus said, "Watch and pray" (26:41). *(Hands around your eyes, then fold your hands.)*
Jesus prayed again. They fell asleep again (26:42–43). *(Fold hands, then lay your head down.)*
Jesus prayed three times (26:44). *(Hold up three fingers.)*
Jesus wanted what God wanted (26:42). *(Point up.)*
Say it with me: "I can pray too!"
Jesus said, "Rise, let us be going" (26:46). *(Stand up tall.)*

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3. Questions to ask (3 minutes)

1. What did Jesus do in the garden? *(He prayed, Matthew 26:39)*
2. What were His friends doing? *(Sleeping, 26:40)*
3. How many times did Jesus pray? *(Three times, 26:44)*

4. Memory verse (3 minutes)

Say: "Jesus said, 'Watch and pray.' Watch means stay awake and keep watch." Teach the motion: on "Watch," make binoculars around your eyes; on "pray," fold your hands. Say the verse with the motion three times: in a normal voice, in a whisper, and in a happy loud voice. Then say "Matthew 26:41" and clap three times.

5. What this means for us (3 minutes)

Say: "God loves you! Jesus prayed, and then He went to the cross for us. Everyone has done wrong things. That is called sin (Romans 3:23). Jesus is God. He came to earth as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). Jesus died for our sins. He was buried. Then He rose again (1 Corinthians 15:3–4)! The Bible tells us what to do (Acts 2:38). We repent: we tell God we are sorry, and we stop doing wrong. We are baptized in Jesus' name, down under the water, and our sins are washed away. And God gives us the Holy Ghost. That is God's own Spirit in us. When people are filled with the Holy Ghost, they speak in other tongues, words God gives them (Acts 2:4)."
Pray with the kids, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.

6. Activity: The Garden at Night (5–10 minutes)

Give each child a take-home sheet. In the drawing box, help them draw a garden at night with trees, and color the sky dark. While they color, ask: "What did Jesus do in the garden? Who fell asleep?" Kids who finish early can play Wake Up and Watch! again.

7. Prayer

Say each line, and the kids say it after you:
"Thank You, Jesus, for praying for us.
Help me watch and pray. In Jesus' name, amen."

Tips for little ones: keep it simple: Jesus was sad, Jesus prayed, His friends fell asleep. You don't need to tell what happened next in this lesson. Send the take-home sheet home so parents can tell the story again this week.

If a child asks why Jesus prayed: say, Jesus is God, and He came as a man. He prayed, and He shows us how to pray too (1 Timothy 3:16).

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