

SHINE families learn



Happy New Year, Shine Families!

This month, our “growing faith at home” practice is “learning together.” For Christians, growing in faith means becoming more and more like Jesus. This is a lifelong process—we will never be done learning and growing. No matter how long we live, we will never be exactly like Jesus, but we *can* become more and more like him.

Here are three things this means for you and your children:

1. There is always grace for mistakes because we grow from mistakes.
2. Learning and growing means we will be changing—understanding this helps us to be patient with ourselves and with our children.
3. We really can become more like Jesus! We really do become more centered, more patient, and more loving the longer we love and follow Jesus. We really do become stronger and wiser.

Of all the Six Practices that Grow Faith at Home, this is the one that is mainly about how you will be a role model. Learning to be like Jesus requires commitment, curiosity, and a willingness to stretch yourself. Grown-ups who model these qualities will naturally create an atmosphere of learning and growing for children.

So, be a learner yourself, and your children will be learners too! Can it be that simple? I think it can!

Blessings to you and your family!

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Shine Everywhere Project Facilitator



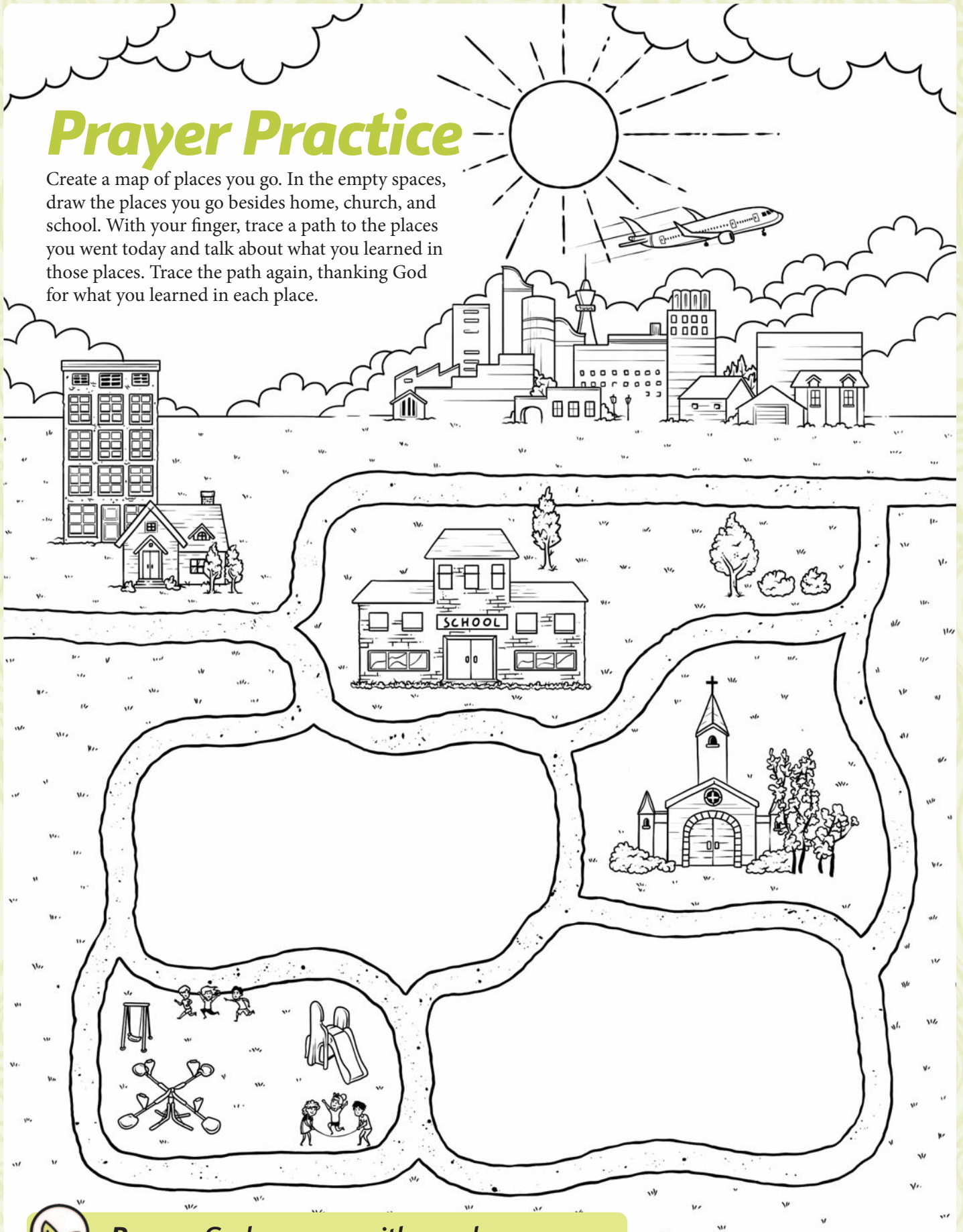
Illustrations by Elisa Chavarri

SHINE everywhere



Prayer Practice

Create a map of places you go. In the empty spaces, draw the places you go besides home, church, and school. With your finger, trace a path to the places you went today and talk about what you learned in those places. Trace the path again, thanking God for what you learned in each place.



Prayer: God, you are with us wherever we go, helping us become more like Jesus.



Connecting with the Story

Read Mark 2:1–12 aloud from the Bible or from pages 200–201 in *The Peace Table*.

I Wonder

Read the wondering statements below, pausing between each one to share your ideas. It's a fun way to use your imagination and talk together about the story. There aren't any wrong answers.








- I wonder what the five friends said to each other when they realized the house was too crowded to enter.
- I wonder how the man who was paralyzed felt when his friends began to lower him through the roof.
- I wonder what it was like to be inside the house when the roof started to come apart.
- I wonder why Jesus talked to the people who were quietly questioning him.
- I wonder how the man and his friends felt when he stood up and walked.
- I wonder what people in the neighborhood thought when they first saw the healed man walking.

Connecting with Each Other

Would You Rather?

Play a game of Would You Rather. The friends in the story used their strength and creative thinking to help their friend. At times, we all need help. Talk about your favorite ways to receive and give help.

Would you rather . . .

-  Rake leaves to help a friend or draw a picture to share?
-  Sing or play music for someone or help that person tidy?
-  Listen to a friend who is worried or take someone on a nature hike?
-  Pray quietly for people or help a friend with math homework?
-  Read a book aloud to a friend or look after a plant for someone?
-  Receive some flowers to enjoy or have someone play your favorite sport with you?
-  Be given a book of puzzles or be given concert tickets?

Now you can mix and match the options or take turns making up your own “would you rather” questions. Have fun learning about how you each like to give and receive help.



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Seen or Unseen

After Jesus healed the man in the story, he could walk. The change was clear to everybody.

God also works in ways we can't see. Can you think of times when you felt as though God's Spirit was present with you? Maybe you felt a change inside after prayer or worship. Maybe you were able to feel joy or forgive or be less afraid. Talk about these “God moments” together.

Just as the sun still shines even when clouds block it from our view, God is still with us even when we are distracted by other things.

Draw a picture of the sun with invisible ink.

You will need a plain white piece of paper, a small bowl, baking soda, water, a spoon, a cotton swab or small brush, and grape juice (or any dark-colored, acidic juice).

1. Stir together 3 T / 45 g of baking soda and 3 T / 45 ml of water. Make sure the baking soda is totally dissolved in the water.
2. Dip a cotton swab or small brush into the liquid. Shake off any extra liquid.
3. Use the swab or brush to draw a picture of the sun on a plain piece of white paper.
4. Let the paper dry for about 30 minutes.
5. Lightly paint over the paper with grape juice to reveal your secret drawing!

You can see a video of this activity by using the QR code on the first panel.

Connecting with God

Singing Our Support

The friends in the story trusted Jesus. They brought their friend to him. We can help each other by praying. Take turns saying one thing you would like to pray about.

Sing your prayers to the tune of “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star.” Fill in people’s names and their prayer requests below.

God, we bring _____ (name) to you.

Keep _____ (name or pronoun) in your loving care.

Give _____ (Share needs.)

Help _____ (name or pronoun) know you’re really there.

God, we bring _____ (name) to you,

and we know you love (name or pronoun) too.

Example: “God, we bring Sheyenne to you. Keep her in your loving care. Give her courage for her speech. Help her know you’re really there. God, we bring Sheyenne to you, and we know you love her too.”



Blanket Prayers

The friends used a mat to bring the man who couldn’t walk to Jesus. Lay out a small blanket or towel. You can write out or color prayers on small pieces of paper and put them on the blanket or you can just say your prayers out loud.

After you pray, fold up the blanket or towel to show that you are giving these prayers to God. This prayer can work well at bedtime.





Dear Parents and Caregivers,

What comes to mind when you read the word *learn*? A classroom with alphabet letters posted above a chalkboard? A teacher giving a test? Marks on a report card?

If these are our only images of learning, then thinking about your children's faith development may feel like a huge task. Parenting is a day-in, day-out job. When we're rushing out the door in the morning or driving our children to activities or sweeping up the kitchen floor (again!), it is easy to think that we can't squeeze in one more thing.

There is good news! Your children don't need you to have all the answers for them to grow in faith. Instead of standing apart from your children like a teacher at the front of a room, you get to be beside them as you learn and grow *together*.

Let's think of two different ways to learn about animals. In one case, a science teacher assigns readings and shows film clips about local habitat. In the other, a parent walks through the woods with her young children, hand in hand. She points out signs of wildlife, and they all explore. The mother and children return home inspired to look up more animal facts. Over hot chocolate, they plan their next outing. In the second example, the family learns together. Each person is free to be curious and to share ideas.

A study of families across four generations showed that close, warm, and respectful relationships between parents and children often resulted in the children sharing the parents' religious beliefs.

Growing in faith is a natural part of your family's life together, as simple as walking and talking or sharing a meal. Best of all, your consistent, caring presence as you follow Jesus is the most important ingredient in helping your children learn to know and love God.

We are cheering you on!

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