

EDITION 15 - PRAYER AND PANCAKES

FAMILIES ON THE EDGE



Maslenitsa, Boris
Kustodiev, 1919

PRAYER

God does not want us to pray mechanically like robots. He wants us to pray heartfelt prayers. He wants us to talk with Him, telling Him our desires, our fears, our hopes, and He wants us to sing songs of joy to Him.

Praying before meals and bedtime is good, but He wants to be involved in every part of our lives, to comfort us when we are sad, give us courage when we are scared and laugh with us when we are happy. We need to make Him part of our lives throughout the day by reading His Word, the Bible and praying in every situation.

Game: Human Robots

One of the parents will be the human robot. Inform the kids that the object of this exercise is to get the robot to make a peanut butter sandwich.

The robot cannot do anything on its own. The robot must get every instruction from the kids. To be successful, the children must give very specific instructions to the robot.

For example, a specific command may be, "robot, pick up and hold the jar of peanut butter with your left hand. Grasp the lid of the peanut butter jar with your right hand and twist the lid counter clockwise. Let go of the lid with your right hand. Pick up the knife with your right hand and put it into the peanut butter in the peanut butter jar."

Vague commands such as "make a peanut butter sandwich" will not work. The robot will look confused and shrug its shoulders. Vague commands such as "put the peanut butter on the bread" may cause the robot to put the jar of peanut butter on top of the bread. If too many kids talk at once, the robot will get confused.

What did we learn?

God does not want us to be like human robots. When we pray, He wants us to pray from deep within our hearts and talk to Him as our father, telling Him everything. We are not just to repeat prayers we have heard, as a robot would do. We can love God and talk to Him every day!

PANCAKES!

In Ukraine and Russia, pancakes are a popular food, and part of the culture.

Russian pancakes, called blini (blee nee) are not thick like American pancakes - they are very thin, like crepes. Ukrainians like to eat pancakes with sour cream and ikra (caviar), or with jams, honey, or meat.

Maslenitsa - Pancake Week

Maslenitsa (Mas len eet sa) is a national pancake holiday in Ukraine and Russia.

For one week, families and friends meet together in homes or on the street to eat pancakes! Maslenitsa comes from a mixture of pagan and Orthodox traditions. According to Slavic tradition, Maslenitsa is a sun festival, celebrating the end of winter and beginning of spring. Blini (pancakes) are round and gold - like the sun.

In Orthodox tradition, Maslenitsa is the last week before the beginning of Lent - a time where meat, fish, eggs and dairy products are not eaten. Maslenitsa is a last chance to eat rich and yummy pancakes and have parties before a time of fasting. During Maslenitsa people go sledding, or visit family, and there are many festivals on the city streets. (On the right you see pictures of a Maslenitsa celebration that included babuskas (old women) singing traditional Ukrainian songs and the burning of kostroma "lady maslenitsa" to celebrate the end of winter).



Blini Recipe

Ingredients: 4 1/4 cups milk - 2 cups flour - 2 eggs -
1 teaspoon sugar - A pinch of salt

Instructions: Mix all the ingredients together in a large mixing bowl using a wire whisk. Heat a round, flat skillet with a bit of vegetable oil spread on it (medium heat). Pour a ladle of batter onto the pan and spread it around evenly. When bubbles begin to appear, flip it over and bake the other side.

You can stack pancakes on a flat plate with a little butter in between. (Don't worry if the first one doesn't turn out right - this usually happens!) Eat them with sour cream, jam or honey.

DISCUSSION:

READ ACTS 2:42-43

The early church spent a lot of time praying and eating together. Why do you think it is important to eat together? To pray together?

ACTIVITY:

For the whole family:

Make blini (pancakes) together as a family. Spend time together eating and talking to each other.

Afterwards, take some time as a family to pray together.

CHALLENGE:

Make your own pancake week! Invite friends or family to come and celebrate with you.

As always, remember the Ukrainian churches in your prayers.