

Women-2-Pray: Teaching your children to pray

You do not teach a child to pray in one day. It will take times of discussion with them, demonstrations, and practice – letting them do it themselves. Most of all, they learn to pray by hearing you pray. Children do what they see others do. The following are some ideas on how to encourage a lifestyle of prayer in the lives of your children. Teach them to speak to God as if He is real (which He in fact is), and they will be speaking to Him a lot!

1. **Be honest in prayer:** We can teach children to say 'thank you', 'sorry' and 'please' to God in the same way that we teach them to say these things to us. We can help them to learn how to forgive others and very importantly, themselves. It is not always that easy, but it is important for children to know they can be honest with God and tell Him what they find difficult. In this way they learn to ask God to help them *want* to forgive.
2. **Praying in the family:** Family prayer times can be times of stress or joy. Know you will pass through these phases, and do not become discouraged. Pray before meals. Make sure you pray together as a family – all members included – at least once a week. Give everyone a turn to pray, no matter how simple their prayers.
3. **Praying all the time:** When they come to you with a problem, listen carefully. Ask them questions on how they think the situation can be changed for the better. Guide them if they struggle with this. Give them a moment and then tell them to ask God right there and then. It is important that you say a prayer as an example, but it is equally important to let them pray themselves. This way they learn how to pray themselves when facing trouble or difficult situations.
4. **Praying in sickness:** Children believe anything is possible until doubting adults explain to them that it is not! There are no better prayer warriors for the sick than children. Jesus said that we have to come to Him like children. Whenever a member of the household is not feeling well, make a special effort to pray also for one another, so that prayer for the sick will become part of their lifestyle.
5. **Praying can be singing:** Children love to sing. Singing to God is a very important part of prayer. It teaches them to worship God for who He is, and not only for what He can do for them. Make sure you sing a lot to God in the house, whether you sing known worship songs or just spontaneous singing about who God is. It will teach them to sing to God themselves.
6. **Praying while reading:** All small children love books. Ask God how you can capture their attention with the Bible. Make sure you read from the Bible to them on a regular basis. Also take care not to read to them only from children's Bibles, but sometimes from your own Bible. Try to make it applicable to practical situations and then ask them to pray about it.
7. **Do your homework:** See if you can join up with other mothers and form a group of children getting together once a week or from time to time. Take turns to work out a prayer theme for each week, something the children can do together. There are a lot of resources with ideas to teach children on prayer. Make sure you make a special effort to invest in your children's lives.
8. **Pray the Word:** Help them proclaim and pray Scripture over everyday issues. It will work for you too! Here are a few suggestions:

When God feels far away: *Draw near to God and He will draw near to you (Jas.4:8).*

When they struggle to believe God: *Lord, I believe; help me overcome my unbelief! (Mk.9:24).*

When they are afraid: *For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind (2 Tim.1:7).*

When they feel discouraged: *Why are you downcast, O my soul? ...Put your hope in God (Ps.42:5).*