

Helping your child to pray and to know God the Father

Things that motivate children to pray are the things that touch their hearts—friends, family, teachers, even pets. We often smile at the innocence of their prayers, some of them quite un-Biblical, but we want them to pray from their hearts, with simplicity. As they learn to approach their heavenly Father with their daily concerns and needs, (and see Him answer), children learn to trust Him as the One who can fight their battles and those of the people they love. They learn to look to Him to provide for them, protect them, and to intervene in the world in real and powerful ways.

And it's not only personal problems. Children as young as three and four years old can also be sensitive to poverty, hunger, crime, and divorce. Memorised prayers have their place in launching our children's prayer lives too. The Lord's Prayer is a Biblical framework to help children consider topics of prayer they might not otherwise think about. Children need to know the Name of the Lord is a strong tower; they can run into it and are safe (**Prov.18:10**). By praying these Scriptures, they can turn a feeling of powerlessness (very common for children) into confidence; that though they may be small, they can pray powerful, strong prayers in Jesus' Name and He will help them.

It is essential to introduce and lead your child to Christ as his/her personal Saviour. This will form the foundation of their prayer life. Keep on teaching and testifying to your child until he/she is ready to invite Christ into his/her life. (See 5 and 6 below)

Here are some additional practical ideas to help you to teach your child to pray, no matter how old (or how young) your children are:

1. **Invite your own children into your prayer time.** When they see you pouring out your heart honestly to God, it will encourage them to do the same. They will come to know that you know God personally, that He has saved you and washed you with His blood. What would a child learn from your prayer life?
2. **Create a time for family prayer.** It may be extended prayer at meals, at bedtime or a special weekly gathering. In this way, children learn to pray by listening, watching and participating.
3. **Allow children to be a part of corporate prayer times in your church.** Children need to see people of all ages in communication with God—and to hear about the answers to those prayers.
4. **Give kids visuals to help motivate their prayers** for issues outside of their own lives and relationships. Pictures (such as those from magazines or of children in need around the world) can show them real needs and evoke the kind of emotional response that is necessary to pray prayers from the heart. Ask for God's guidance that your child will not get frightened or discouraged because of the suffering of others.
5. **Help children get to know their heavenly Father.** This is the most crucial point of all. They need to realise that prayer is a relationship, not a religious activity, nor a 'magic formula'. It is important for children to understand that they are praying to their loving heavenly Father in the Name of Jesus Christ— teach them about the character of God, which will lead to an increase of their faith.
6. As soon as your child is ready, **lead him or her in a prayer to receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.** It's after all the most important heartfelt prayer he or she will ever pray!

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