

Praying with Children

A guest post from Troy Cady, Children's Ministry Coordinator at Grace Covenant Church in Chicago.

There are so many ways to pray. Why not take some time this week to talk about and model prayer with children? Here are 10 ways you could experiment with them.

1. Pray by singing. I often take time to pray when I'm walking the dog (funny, I know!). The other day, however, I found I could not focus on the normal simple prayers I like to make. As I quieted myself, a song came to mind. So, I just hummed as I walked, using the simple melody to fix in my mind and heart these words: "You are my shepherd. I have no needs. You lead me by peaceful streams and you refresh my life." Songs are great ways to help kids bring their hearts to the Father.

2. Pray simply. Prayer does not have to be long! It can simply be: "Lord, bless _____." Your kids might enjoy "filling in the blank" with several names that come to mind. Encourage them to do it somewhat slowly so they pray with intention. Do this together as a family, leaving a second or two of silence between each simple prayer. Take just 1 minute and you'll be surprised how many people you can lift to God in prayer.

3. Pray short, memorized phrases. If you'd like to teach your children a short psalm prayer, start with the first phrase, repeating it each day at a certain time you are all together. I bet the children will have it memorized before the adults, even! One prayer we often make in our family at evening time is: "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?" What a powerful image to place in your child's mind and heart—even if they don't understand it yet!

4. Pray with a visual focus. How would kids respond if you put a picture in front of them and asked them to make a prayer about it?

5. Pray through art. Sometimes you could ask children to draw a picture as a way of praying to God, giving thanks to God. If needed, you could play a song and ask them to draw a picture about the song or how it makes them feel.

7. Go on a prayer walk. It wouldn't take much time to walk up your street together and say, "We're going to pray for our neighbors." Keep the prayers short and simple, then move on. Try starting with praying for just 5 of your neighbors.

8. Breathe. Everyone breathes (duh!) so why not ask kids to "breathe in" something good and "breathe out" something bad?

9. Pray in silence. Sometimes kids just like to be silent for ten seconds. Ask them to make a silent prayer for a short time and then ask them to say "Amen" aloud when they are done so everyone can join them in finishing their prayer.

10. Pray a “pretend prayer”: Children have active imaginations. One suggestion Peter Kreeft has made for adults (in his book *Prayer: The Great Conversation*) is to pray while imagining Jesus right by your side, perhaps sitting on the couch beside you or in a chair in front of you. “Jesus is there. Yes, really. You can talk to him and tell him whatever you want to say. Nothing is too silly or trivial. Just tell him what comes to mind.”

The main thing is: have fun and experiment. Find how your child best connects with God and encourage that any way you can.

I hope you find these ideas helpful. I’d love to know if any of them seem to connect with your child—or YOU!

Grace and peace,

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