



Tips for Encouraging Children...

Prayer

This resource includes suggestions for praying with children.

Because we are made in God's image we are born with a natural affinity for sensing God. To begin with we can pray over our children, expressing to God in word or song our love or petitions for them and for God.

As children develop they can use help in knowing how to foster conversations and life with God. Establishing patterns of prayer including repetition is a good beginning. As children mature we can encourage them to use their own words, and remind them they can pray anytime, anywhere and say anything to God. This could include, our thanks, praise, needs, concerns, sorrow, anger, confusion, confession, hurt, joy, forgiveness, and equally important, our silence to both sense the abiding presence of God and listen for what God might have to say to us.



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10 ways to pray with children:

- **Pray by singing.** Instead of speaking a prayer, suggest singing a prayer to God.
- **Pray simply.** Prayer does not have to be long. It can simply be: “Lord bless or Lord help_____.” Kids “fill in the blank” with names that come to mind. Go slowly so they pray with intention. Do this together as a family, leaving a moment of silence between each prayer.
- **Pray short, memorized phrases.** Teach children a short psalm prayer. Repeating it each day when you are all together. For example, Psalm 18: “I love you Lord. You are my strength.” Or, Psalm 136: “Give thanks to God for he is good.”
- **Pray with a visual focus.** Take a nature walk. Thank God for what you see in creation.
- **Pray through art.** Ask children to draw a picture as a way of praying to God, giving thanks to God or asking God for help.
- **Go on a prayer walk.** Walk your street together and pray for your neighbors. Keep the prayers short and simple, and then move on.
- **Breath Prayer.** Breathe in – reminding children that every breath is a gift from God – breathe out, giving thanks for something or someone.
- **Pray in silence.** Encourage children to silently pray for ten seconds. Ask them to say “amen” aloud when they are done so everyone can join them in finishing their prayer. As children get older, increase the time, and encourage them to listen.
- **Pray an “imagination prayer”:** Children have active imaginations. In his book Prayer: The Great Conversation, Peter Kreeft suggests imagining Jesus right by your side, perhaps sitting on the couch beside you or in a chair in front of you and telling Jesus what comes to mind.
- **Prayer Sticks:** Use markers and large kraft sticks to write prayers of thanks, concerns, or names of those who need prayer. Write outcomes on the other side of the sticks. This may be a prayer of thanks or lament. For prayers of lament, children can write how they are feeling (sad, angry, hurt). Keep sticks in a jar on the table, and use them as part of your mealtime prayer.

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The Evangelical Covenant Church

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