

Practical Ways To Encourage Children To Pray

By Kim Butts (edited)

As adults, we must accept one very important fact: the prayers of young children are not practice prayers for the future. When children pray, it is not "cute" --it is powerful! Here are some specific ways to encourage your own children, or the children in your sphere of influence, to live a life of prayer.

1. Be a good example of a praying person. If children have good models to follow, they are more likely to develop good prayer habits.
2. Moms and dads--if you don't already, consider making a habit of praying together as husband and wife. Watch God bless your family.
3. Give your child a variety of opportunities to experience prayer at home, at church and in other settings. The more you incorporate prayer into every aspect of everyday life, the more likely a child will be to consider talking to our Heavenly Father as natural as breathing.
4. Sing praise songs together in the car as you are running errands or at home. This will help to remind your children that God is part of your entire life and not someone you only sing praise to, visit or worship on Sundays.
5. Teach your children to thank God for the blessing in their life. Learn to point out God's blessings to one another.
6. Help children to be aware of answered prayer. So often, we don't give the Lord credit or thanks for His answers. It is important to teach children to look for God's answers in their lives so they can see how much He cares about everything they do. Tell them when God answers your prayers and encourage them to tell you when He answers theirs. Answered prayer testimonies are powerful faith-builders!
7. Help children to see the beauty of God's creation--"Isn't that a beautiful sunset?" Or, "Look at these colorful flowers that the Lord made for us to enjoy," etc. You'll be surprised how quickly they begin to point out God's wonderful creations when they have an awareness. In addition, it reminds them that we are called to respect and care for God's creation.

8. Have at least one night of the week set aside for Family Night. Do something fun together, then have a time of devotion. Have each person in the family express why they are thankful to God for the other members of the family. Pray for one another's needs.
9. Bless your children before they go to sleep at night. We use the blessing from Numbers 6:24-26 at our house: "The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn His face toward you and give you peace." There is something very special for children and parents in the praying of and the receiving of blessing.
10. Whenever you come across someone in need, such as a homeless person, or people who have been in an accident, take some time to pray for those involved. Encourage your children to pray too. Ask God to show you if you can be the answer to your own prayers by helping in some way.
11. Assure your children of God's presence by praying for their protection, and sharing with them the promises God gives to us through His word. A good example for children who may be afraid is Psalm 91, especially verse 11: "For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways."
12. Have special prayer times that are wrapped in family traditions. By doing so, you will help your children to see prayer as a natural part of everything your family does together. For example, place the person having a birthday in a chair in the center of the room. Lay hands upon that one and pray for him or her. This can be done at anniversaries, graduations, etc. On holidays, take time to bless one another, or to express to God why you are thankful, etc.
13. Give your children opportunity to pray for you and your needs. Let them know that you would appreciate their prayers. Ask them how you can be praying for them as well.
14. Pray together before important tests, sports events in which your children are participating, etc. Teach them to ask for wisdom, courage, sportsmanship, etc.

15. Pray with your children about school, teachers, friends, and other issues that concern them.
16. Go on prayer walks together around your neighborhood. Pray for families, businesses, schools, etc. as you pass.
17. Pray over family decisions together. Involve your children in prayer decisions such as wisdom to buy a new car, when and where to go on vacation, ways to help others, etc.
18. Make a Family Prayer Notebook. Include pictures of family members, friends, missionaries, pastors, and others you are praying for together. Make sure to have a section for answered prayers!
19. Practice fasting together. With very young children you may choose to fast one meal together and spend the time praying. You may also choose to fast from things such as television, or other activities in order to spend time in prayer together. Take time to learn together about the importance of prayer and fasting.
20. Pray for your nation and its leaders. Teach your children that it is more important to pray for them than to criticize them.