

The background is a vibrant gradient from dark purple at the top to light pink at the bottom. It is decorated with various colorful elements: a yellow teardrop shape at the top left, a light blue wavy line, a green horizontal bar at the top right, a pink four-petaled flower, a yellow teardrop on a dark blue circle on the right, a red heart and a blue heart on the left, a yellow square, a blue circle, a yellow teardrop on a dark blue circle at the bottom right, a green circle, a red horizontal bar, a yellow teardrop on a dark blue circle at the bottom left, and a yellow four-petaled flower at the bottom center.

minno
LIFE GUIDES

Prayer

**The Practice of
Talking to God**

Written by

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Letter from the Editor

I can remember a time when prayer felt transactional to me. Although I'd been praying since before I could read, even as an adult, prayer often felt like a one way conversation in which I asked God for this or that and then waited to see how He would respond.

And then I walked through a season of loss so deep it rattled my faith. I prayed but God seemed silent. *Why wouldn't He respond to my desperate plea?* I had laid my requests before Him, time and time again, just as Philippians 4:6 told me to do. And yet, I still felt empty. Alone.

I was raised by parents who loved God and prayed often. I can honestly say they encompassed the idea of praying without ceasing. Prayer was a deep part of our family life. *So why did my prayer life feel so stale?*

In the midst of my seemingly stagnant prayer life, illuminated by grief and pain, I eventually found comfort and new perspective in the words of Philip Yancey. In his book, *Prayer*, Yancey said, *"The main purpose of prayer is not to make life easier, nor to gain magical powers, but to know God."*

To pray is to know God.

Once my view of the purpose of prayer changed, so did my conversations with God. He eventually brought about the miracles for which I had once prayed, but not until after I learned to commune with Him—with honest words and ruthless trust.

I imagine this is the place we all hope our children come to someday. There is a personal journey between them and God but it starts right now, with us as their guide—to learn the practice of prayer and how it can lead us to know the God who loves us so personally and so deeply.

I pray this resource helps you guide your children into a vibrant life of prayer. It starts with small, daily habits that will grow into deep roots of dependence and communion. Open your heart as you read this guide and teach your children about prayer. You never know what God will do in your own prayer life!

Be sure to stay connected to gominno.com for more resources for your family.

Praying your family will come to know God in new and beautiful ways.



Editorial Director, Minno Life
gominno.com/blog

Introduction

God is great, God is good, let us thank Him for our food.

Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep.

Classic children's prayers call to mind bowing our heads before dinner or snuggling up sleepy-eyed before bed. These basic prayers form in our children a sense of liturgy, reminding them daily to stop and thank God.

And yet, prayer is a deep ocean, not bound by containers or categories. We play in its shallowest waters as kids, reciting prayers like nursery rhymes. As adults, we dive in deeper, challenged by the storms and waves of life. But prayer is a practice, which means we can study it, learn it, and improve our prayer lives—as adults, and as parents inviting our children into lives of prayer.

E.M. Bounds, a 19th century American theologian, wrote, "Prayer is the easiest and hardest of all things; the simplest and the sublimest; the weakest and the most powerful; its results lie outside the range of human possibilities—they are limited only by the omnipotence of God."

Prayer is one of the most incredible parts of faith, because it allows us to spend time with God, who loves us more than we could ever know. As you begin to teach your kids about prayer, start by praying for them: that God would reveal Himself to them through prayer and that He would strengthen their faith through the daily practice of prayer.

As you begin to teach your kids about prayer, start by praying for them.

Contents

This Minno Life Guide will open the door for your family to grow in the practice of prayer. It is broken down into 5 sections:

Part 1:
What is Prayer?

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How do we Pray?

Part 3:
What do we Pray?

Part 4:
Prayer in Scripture

Part 5:
Family Prayer Resources

PART 1

WHAT IS PRAYER?

*Some people pray to just pray,
and some people pray to know God.
Andrew Murray*

Prayer is **talking** to God.

I call upon you, for you will answer me, O God; incline your ear to me; hear my words. Psalm 17:6 (ESV)

Prayer is simply talking to God. When you are teaching your kids about prayer, the first building block is talking. Being comfortable talking to God provides the foundation for a life of prayer. It can be as easy as “Hi God, thank you for the sunshine today!” or as complicated as reciting an ancient prayer in its original language. No matter how you pray, you are talking to God!

God created prayer as a way for His people to speak to Him, to share with Him, and to hear from Him. Talking to the God who created us and loves us is a beautiful gift! And it is a gift God gave us because of how much He loves us.

Put it into Practice

Explain to your kids that prayer is talking to God. Ask your kids who they like to talk to and why. Then connect the “whys” to how we can talk to God through prayer. For example, if your child says they like to talk to you because you are a good listener, share that God is the best listener, and He loves listening to His people.

Prayer is a **conversation**.

And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him. 1 John 5:14-15 (ESV)

God doesn't just listen when we pray. He communes with us in prayer, which means He joins us when we pray. This can be a confusing concept for kids, because we can't see God, but we know He is always with us. As you read on through this guide, you'll see examples in Scripture of people who prayed and felt God's presence. You can also share some of your own experiences with your kids about times of prayer where you felt God's presence.

1 John 5:14 tells us that we can have confidence when we pray, because God hears us and responds to us. Prayer isn't like asking your kids to pick up their dirty clothes a thousand times, even though it might feel like it sometimes. When we pray, we know God hears us. He doesn't have “selective hearing” or forget what you say ten minutes after you say it. God loves to hear from you and respond to you.

God doesn't just listen when we pray. He joins us in prayer.

Put it into Practice

When you pray with your kids, ask them to imagine they are having a conversation with God. Ask them to imagine what God is saying back to them.

Say: *When you talk to a friend, can you tell when they are listening and when they aren't? How does it make you feel when someone listens to you? God is always listening to you when you talk to Him in prayer. When you are afraid, or sad, or happy, or confused, God is always there to listen to you.*



PART 2

HOW DO WE PRAY?

*Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
be acceptable in your sight,
O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.
Psalm 19:14 (ESV)*

In *The Sound of Music*, Maria sings “Let’s start at the very beginning, a very good place to start. When you read you begin with A-B-C, when you sing you begin with Do-Re-Mi,” as she teaches the Von Trapp children to sing.

The first prayers your kids are likely to learn are the simple, memorized ones like “Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep,” which are beautiful ways to develop the habit of daily prayer.

When teaching our kids to pray, we can follow a formula. As they grow, they will find more and more ways to express their own thoughts and feelings to God through prayer, but when they start out, begin with a salutation “Dear God,” and end with “In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

What goes in between?

One of the most tried-and-true methods of constructing a prayer follows the acronym ACTS:

Adoration
Confession
Thanksgiving
Supplication

1. Adoration:

Praise God! Give Him glory for creating the world, for loving you, for the beauty around you.

2. Confession:

Take a moment to confess your sin to God. He promises to forgive our sin when we confess it to Him.

3. Thanksgiving:

What do you want to thank God for? Spend a few minutes listing things you are grateful for.

4. Supplication:

This is where we ask God for our needs or the needs of others. One beautiful way to structure this type of prayer is by starting with your personal need, then moving out to your family, community (school, church, neighborhood), then your city or country, then around the world.

Put it into Practice

Use the ACTS prayer page at the back of this guide to practice praying this way with your young kids who are just learning to pray independently.

Teach kids to pray using ACTS:

Adoration
Confession
Thanksgiving
Supplication

Other Ways to Pray

One of the sweetest gifts of prayer is that it is not limited to verbal conversations with God. Especially for kids, prayer can take all shapes and forms. Here are a few creative ways your kids can express their prayers:

- Singing
- Dancing
- Art/Drawing
- Reciting Prayers from Scripture (like the Psalms or scripted, liturgical prayers such as prayers from the Book of Common Prayer)
- Journaling
- Poetry
- Writing Letters to God

Who Do We Pray With?

Throughout Scripture, we read of people praying by themselves, in small groups, and corporately (together in large groups). As children grow, they begin to move from praying with their parents to praying by themselves or in corporate church or school settings. This mirrors the development of how they pray, from listening, to reciting, to crafting their own prayers. As they grow, they will see how all of those forms of prayer work together to develop a robust prayer life.

Here are four specific prayer groups and settings you can explain to your kids:

1. We pray alone.

But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. Matthew 6:6 (ESV)

Communing with God alone in prayer is an important part of your prayer life, and a way to cultivate this practice in your kids is by encouraging them to pray alone when they are falling asleep at night. It's also important for your kids to see you pray alone. Model a life of prayer and your kids will be inspired to have one of their own. You can even invite your kids in while you are praying and encourage them to pray alongside you.

2. We pray as a family.

All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers. Acts 1:14 (ESV)

In Acts 1, the disciples and Jesus' family gathered after Jesus' ascension, and they prayed together. This story is a wonderful example to share

with your kids to teach them about families praying together. And this was Jesus' earthly family! Praying as a family is also a great time to introduce your kids to praying out loud in front of others. Some kids will naturally be more comfortable with this idea than others, but encourage your kids to pray out loud, even if it is just a few words.

3. We pray as a group with other believers.

When they were released, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them. And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, "Sovereign Lord, who made the heavens and the earth and the sea and everything in them" . . . And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness. Acts 4:23-24,31 (ESV)

This story from Acts shows the power of praying with a group of believers. After Peter and John were arrested for preaching the gospel, the rulers let them go. Peter, John, and the other believers prayed together, and they felt the Holy Spirit empower them to continue to teach the gospel. Scripture is filled with examples of God's people coming together to pray. The most likely place your child will experience this is at church. Whether your church prays together by bowing heads while someone prays, or together by reciting a prayer out loud, these are great opportunities for your kids to join the chorus of believers praying to God!

4. We pray with the Holy Spirit.

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. Romans 8:26 (ESV)

Throughout his letters, Paul talks about the power of joining with the Holy Spirit in prayer. In Romans 8, Paul explains that when we don't have the words to pray, the Spirit prays for us. In Ephesians 6, he notes that we should pray in the Spirit, a phrase that appears several times in Scripture. But what does it mean? For kids, the best way to explain it is that when we pray, the Holy Spirit brings power to our prayer. We don't pray on our own strength, like we have to convince God to do things, or that we always have to say the right words. The Holy Spirit is with us when we pray.

Put it into Practice

Ask your kids to name some people they pray with. Talk about how God hears prayers from us when we are alone and when we are with others.

Why Do We Pray?

In all circumstances . . . praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints. Ephesians 6:16-18 (ESV)

Scripture tells us to pray in all circumstances, and we should. But why do we pray? When kids, who are used to two-way conversations, are learning to pray but not hearing audible responses from God, it's helpful to teach them reasons why it is important to talk to God . . . and it's helpful for us adults to remember as well.

First, prayer helps us to build a relationship with God. By talking to Him daily, we develop deeper friendship with God. When you share this with your kids, ask them whether they talk to their friends a lot or a little. Developing a relationship with God is a lot like developing relationships with our friends: the more time you spend talking and sharing, the closer you feel. God desires to be in relationship with us, and prayer is one of the best ways to develop our connection with Him.

Second, prayer is a way to honor God, who is infinitely worthy of our honor and praise. In 1 Timothy 1:17 (NIV), Paul writes, "Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen." Paul lists some of God's attributes, which we can dwell on in prayer. Honoring God means showing Him respect and affection because of who He is and what He has done. When we pray with a spirit of honor, we reflect on who God is. This type of prayer is about praising God, not about asking Him for things. Prayer is so beautifully multi-faceted, and it allows us to experience different shades of our relationship with our Creator. When we pray to honor God, we enjoy His goodness.

Third, we pray to God to ask Him for things, which is called petition or supplication. This type of prayer is found all through Scripture. Hannah prays for a child (1 Samuel 1), Elisha prays for blindness and restoration of sight for the Aramean army (2 Kings 6), and Hezekiah prays for healing for himself (2 Kings 20). Jesus gives the example of praying for daily bread in the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9). Prayers of supplication may be a familiar concept for your kids, as you may pray for other people in your life who are sick or struggling.

But when we petition God, or ask Him for something, does He always answer? Scripture tells us that He always hears us, but sometimes we don't always understand His answers. You may have heard the old saying, "God answers prayers in 3 ways: yes, no, or not right now." But is it that clear?

We can always have confidence that God hears our prayer (1 John 5:14-15). But hearing and answering the way we hope are not necessarily the same thing. We know that God is always good and always sovereign, which means that the way He rules the world is because of His perfect

Prayer is so beautifully multi-faceted, and it allows us to experience different shades of our relationship with our Creator.

love for us and His perfect knowledge of all things. Romans 8:28 (NIV) says, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."

We trust that God will answer our prayers in the best way, because He loves us and His will is "good, pleasing, and perfect" (Romans 12:2).

Put it into Practice

When illustrating this to your kids, use an example from your own life. Ask your kids to think about what it feels like to ask you for something. Here's how the conversation could go:

You: God doesn't always answer our prayers the way we hope He will, but that doesn't mean He loves us any less. Sometimes, He answers our prayers differently than we hope because of how much He loves us, because He knows what is best for us. Think about it this way—do you trust Mom and Dad? Do you think we always love you and make the best decisions for you?

Child: Yes.

You: So if you asked us for a popsicle and we said no, would you be upset?

Child: Yes!

You: Well, what if we said no, because we planned to give you ice cream later, but you didn't know that.

Child: Oh, well that would be ok.

You: What if we said "no," even though we didn't plan to give you ice cream. Would you still be ok?

Child: Probably not.

You: But even if you were upset, would you know we still love you and always want what's best for you?

Child: Yes.

You: Sometimes, God says "yes" to our prayers, and we can enjoy the popsicle! Sometimes, He says no to what we ask for because He has something even better planned, something we don't know about yet. And sometimes, He just says no. We may not ever know why, but we do know that He always loves us. And so we trust Him.

What **Happens** When We Pray?

We've discussed why we pray, but the other side of that question is what happens when we pray? Prayer is transformative. We are changed by it. It is active, not passive; not just a task to complete, but a practice that alters our life. Here are 4 things to teach your kids that happen when we pray:

1. We grow closer to God.

The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth. Psalm 145:18. (NIV)

Prayer is talking to God, and as we share our hopes, fears, and thoughts with Him, we grow closer to Him. And He draws closer to us, like Psalm 145 says.

2. Our hearts are oriented toward His.

Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart. Jeremiah 29:12-13 (ESV)

When we pray, we not only grow closer to God, but we become more like Him. Our hearts are transformed by time spent with the Lord in prayer. We pray to become more like Him, to see the world as He sees it, and to love the way He loves.

When we pray, we not only grow closer to God, but we become more like Him.

3. He forgives our sin.

If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land. Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayer that is made in this place. 2 Chronicles 7:14-15 (ESV)

Scripture tells us that when we pray and ask God to forgive our sin, He does! This example from 2 Chronicles 7 shows just that. He hears us from heaven and forgives us. Even better, this tells us that God's eyes are opened, and His ears hear us when we pray. We can pray and ask God to forgive us regularly, even daily.

4. We learn to trust God.

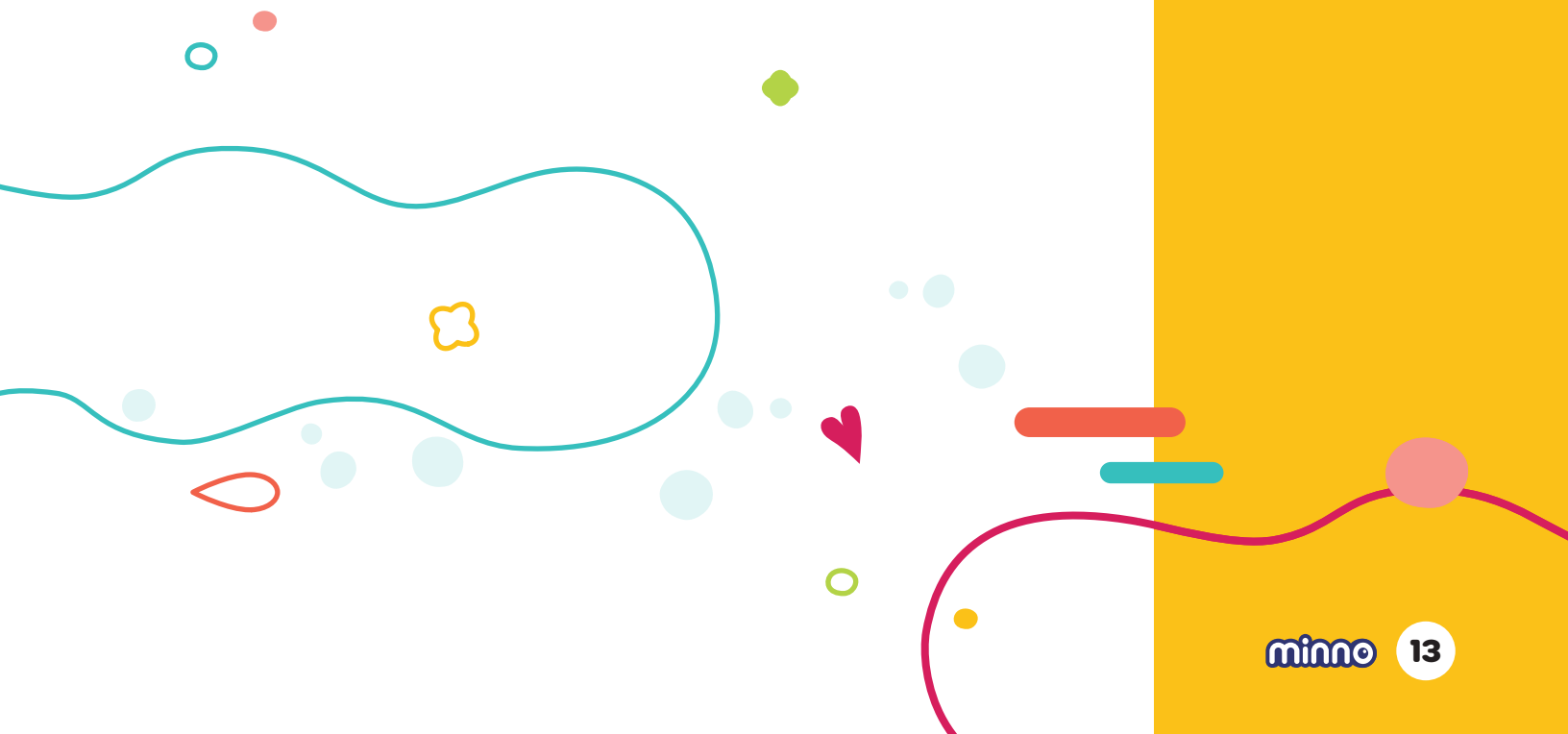
Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness! You have given me relief when I was in distress. Be gracious to me and hear my prayer! Psalm 4:1 (ESV)

Prayer allows us to develop a relationship with God that helps us trust

Him more deeply. As we express our love toward Him, we grow to love Him more. As we tell Him more about our lives and feel His presence, our faith is strengthened. As we see Him answer our prayers (in ways we want and also in ways we don't expect), we grow to trust Him more. The same way friendships are forged over time, experiences, struggles, and joy, so is our friendship with God. Nowhere is this more evident than through prayer!

Put it into Practice

Ask your kids why they think it is good to pray and how prayer changes us. Keep track of their answers now, and then a month, 3 months, 6 months, a year later, ask them how prayer has changed them.



PART 3

WHAT DO WE PRAY?

*This is the confidence we have in
approaching God: that if we ask anything
according to his will, he hears us.
1 John 5:14 (NIV)*

"But I don't have anything to say!"

"I don't know what to pray . . ."

Sound familiar? Maybe you have similar thoughts when it is time for you to pray, or maybe your kids start whining or feel like they don't have anything to say.

As your kids begin their own life of independent prayer, you can coach them with some broad categories of things to pray. Start simple. Ask them to share with God what they are thankful for each day. As they grow, here are some other ideas to inspire the practice of prayer:

1. We thank God.

Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. Colossians 4:2 (ESV)

Prayers of thanksgiving are a great way to start with kids! Ask them to thank God for people they love or for 2 or 3 things that happened during their day. Cultivating a spirit of gratitude in your kids will help them through all sorts of seasons in their lives, whether challenging or joyful. Learning they can always find things to thank God for will be a blessing to them!

2. We ask God.

Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. Matthew 7:7 (NIV)

After gratitude, presenting simple requests to God is a great next step for kids and prayer. Keep a list of people your family wants to pray for, and pray together, asking God for healing, provision, peace, safety, or whatever else is appropriate. The practice of praying for others is also incredibly beneficial for kids, teaching them empathy and helping them to see how God's love is for all people. Kids can be naturally self-centered, so the practice of praying for others is a helpful discipline.

3. We pray for protection.

Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. Matthew 26:41 (ESV)

Throughout Scripture, we see examples of people praying for protection. In Psalm 59, David prays for protection from Saul's army. In 2 Samuel 22, David recounts how he prayed for God's protection. In Isaiah 38, King Hezekiah prays for God to protect his life from disease. In Matthew 26, Jesus urges his disciples to pray for protection against temptation. Show your kids these examples and encourage them to begin to pray for protection physically and mentally, especially as they grow older.

The practice of praying for others teaches kids empathy and helps them to see that God's love is for all people.

4. We pray for and with our friends.

Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. James 5:16 (ESV)

James 5 shows the practice of praying for each other, especially with each other, as a way to grow together in faith. Praying together through times of temptation or sin, or in times of repentance, helps strengthen relationships between believers. As your kids grow in spiritual maturity, praying in a small group for accountability is a wonderful way to continue to grow in the practice of prayer.

5. We pray for our enemies.

But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. Matthew 5:44-45a (ESV)

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus urges His followers to pray for their enemies or those that persecute (or cause trouble for) them. This may feel counterintuitive, especially for kids who don't have enemies! Make this a kid-friendly concept by encouraging kids to pray for their siblings or friends after they fight. Encourage them to pray through conflict, and for a Godly, peaceful response when they get angry.

6. We pray for our leaders.

First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions. 1 Timothy 2:1-2a (ESV)

In his first letter to Timothy, Paul encourages his readers to pray for people in charge. This is a great practice to enter into with your kids! You can pray for the leaders in your immediate life (like your pastor, teachers, school principals), in your community (mayor, governor), and in your country (president, other governmental leaders).

7. We pray to celebrate!

Oh come, let us sing to the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise! Psalm 95:1-2 (ESV)

Prayers of celebration are such a joyful way to talk to God! Psalm 95 includes ways to pray and celebrate the good blessings of God. Encourage your kids to go to God in prayer when good things happen: when babies are born, birthdays are celebrated, good grades are achieved, or new things are accomplished, for example.

8. We pray to dedicate.

Now therefore may it please you to bless the house of your servant, so that it may continue forever before you. For you, O Lord God, have spoken, and with your blessing shall the house of your servant be blessed forever. 2 Samuel 7:29 (ESV)

To dedicate something means to set it apart for God. Prayers of dedication are often said for babies or young children, or for new houses or buildings, or other sacred places.

9. Prayers of the People

Prayers of the people are a specific kind of liturgical prayer offered in many churches. The prayers of the people are designed for the church to pray together in layers: for individuals, for their community, and for the whole world. Prayers of the people can be broad or have specific subjects. Some prayers of the people are recorded in prayer books, like the Book of Common Prayer, but others can be written by local church members. Your kids may participate in prayers of the people as they are read aloud in church services.

Put it into Practice

Review this list of what to pray and come up with more ideas to add to it. Keep the list tucked in your Bible or near where you pray as a family. Practice praying in different ways or for different things together to introduce your kids to a wide variety of prayers.



PART 4

PRAYER IN SCRIPTURE

This, then, is how you should pray . . .
Matthew 6:9a (NIV)

What Does **Jesus** Say About Prayer?

Narratives give kids pictures to hold onto when learning new or abstract concepts like prayer. In the gospels, Jesus teaches several different times about prayer. These stories are wonderful tools to show kids the power of prayer and God's design for our relationship with Him through prayer.

The gospels also give us examples of Jesus praying. At His baptism (Luke 3:21), the Holy Spirit descended while Jesus was praying. Jesus prayed after He fed the five thousand (Mark 6:46, Matthew 14:23), He prayed through the night before He chose His disciples (Luke 6:12), and He prayed throughout His ministry (Mark 1:35). Luke 5:16 says that Jesus would often go to the wilderness to pray. The night before His crucifixion, Jesus prayed in the garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36).

We learn so much from these stories of Jesus Himself praying, because Jesus had a vibrant prayer life that brought Him great strength. Tim Keller wrote in his book, *Prayer*, "Jesus Christ taught His disciples to pray, healed people with prayers, denounced the corruption of the temple worship (which, He said, should be a 'house of prayer'), and insisted that some demons could be cast out only through prayer. He prayed often and regularly with fervent cries and tears (Hebrews 5:7), and sometimes all night. The Holy Spirit came upon Him and anointed Him as He was praying (Luke 3:21-22), and He was transfigured with the divine glory as He prayed (Luke 9:29). When He faced His greatest crisis, He did so with prayer. We hear Him praying for His disciples and the church on the night before He died (John 17:1-26) and then petitioning God in agony in the Garden of Gethsemane. Finally, He died praying."

We learn about prayer through Jesus' example, but we also learn about the importance and effectiveness of prayer through His teaching. Here are two of the most significant teachings of Jesus on the subject of prayer—narratives that you can use to teach your kids about prayer.

The Persistent Widow

Luke 18:1-8

Jesus told this parable to teach His followers that "they should always pray and not give up" (Luke 18:1, NIV). In this parable, a poor widow regularly asks a judge (who is corrupt and unjust, or wicked) to help her resolve a problem. Eventually she wears the judge down, and he grants her request so that she won't bother him anymore.

Then Jesus compared the judge to God, and God's people to the widow—except He reminds us that God is always good and just. *If persistence eventually led a bad judge to help a widow, how much faster would our good and just God respond to our prayers?*

Put it into Practice

Tell your kids this story, then ask them to imagine they were the persistent widow or the mean judge. Ask them questions like, how is God like the judge? How is God unlike the judge? What do you think Jesus wants us to know about prayer based on this parable?

The Lord's Prayer

Matthew 6:5-15

During his sermon on the Mount, Jesus gave His followers an example prayer, which is perhaps the best tool we have to teach kids the basics of prayer. It is called The Lord's Prayer.

This, then, is how you should pray:

**“Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.”**

Matthew 6:9-13 (NIV)

The Lord's Prayer is a wonderful prayer for your kids to memorize. Even the youngest kids (who have memorized simple nursery rhymes and songs) can learn these special words. As your kids get older, work with them to understand the different elements of the Lord's Prayer, and help them personalize their own prayers based on the template Jesus gave.

The Lord's Prayer is also a good prayer to say regularly as a family, mixing it in with other more personalized prayers.

Here are some basic lessons from each section of the Lord's Prayer that you can teach to your kids:

Our Father in heaven,

Addressing God as Father reminds us of our close relationship to Him. He is our heavenly Father who loves us perfectly.

Hallowed be your name,

“Hallowed” means sacred and holy. We praise God and His holy name, which reminds us that He is above all things. The first phrase (our Father) reminds us of our personal relationship with Him, while this phrase reminds us of His holiness.

Your kingdom come,

Throughout the gospels, Jesus proclaims that He is bringing God's kingdom (Luke 8:1, Matthew 4:17, Matthew 9:35). When we pray for God's kingdom to come, we are reminded that Jesus will be king forever, and we are asking God to increase His power in the world.

Your will be done,

Praying for God's will to be done is similar to praying for His kingdom to grow. We are reminded in praying "Your will be done" that God is in charge, and He is good. We ask Him to do His will, because we trust that He is always good and always loves us.

On earth as it is in heaven.

In this part of the prayer, we ask for God's will to be done and His kingdom to reign on earth like He does in heaven. God cares deeply about His creation and His people, and this is a reminder that God is alive and active in our world. And we are part of His kingdom now through how we live on earth.

Give us today our daily bread,

This is our prayer for daily provision, that God would meet our basic needs. God promises to provide, but this prayer also encourages us to not worry about the future by only asking for what we need today. In *The Weight of Glory*, C.S. Lewis wrote about this concept: "It is only our daily bread that we are encouraged to ask for. The present is the only time in which any duty can be done or any grace received."

And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

"Debts" here (also translated as "trespasses") means our sin. God forgives our sins through the work of Jesus on the cross. By praying daily for the forgiveness of our sin, we are reminded of our need for Jesus, and the redemption from our sin that He provided through His death and resurrection. A couple of verses later in Matthew 6:14, Jesus goes on to say that we must also forgive those who sin against us.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

This part of the prayer focuses on our sin and acknowledges how we need daily protection and support from God to not sin. We can't avoid temptation on our own, but we need the power of God and the protection of the Holy Spirit.

For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, Amen.

This popular end to the Lord's Prayer was not in the original Scripture, but many churches and traditions have added it as a way to conclude. Amen means "so be it." Although simply saying "Amen" is a good and customary way to end a prayer, declaring God's power after we offer our words to Him acknowledges our submission to His authority and the honor He deserves.

Put it into Practice

Memorize the Lord's Prayer together as a family. Pray it together as part of your normal family prayer routine.

Conclusion

Prayer is a lifelong journey, a practice that we are called into by the God who created us and loves us so very much. And yet, because it is a practice, we have the opportunity to be always developing new skills and habits in prayer.

Young kids may be just on the edge of the ocean of prayer, dipping in their toes and learning what it means to talk to God. As your kids grow, you can walk alongside them and invite them to go deeper into types of prayer, ways to pray, and things to pray for.

But as you endeavor to help your kids develop a vibrant prayer life, the most important thing you can do is to pray for them. Ask God to draw near to them as they pray. Pray that they would fall more in love with God every day, that they would love prayer, and that they would enjoy a rich relationship with God for their whole life.

As you endeavor to help your kids develop a vibrant prayer life, the most important thing you can do is to pray for them.

PART 5

FAMILY PRAYER RESOURCES

- ▶ 7 Days of Family Prayer
- ▶ My ACTS Prayer Worksheet

7 Days of Family Prayer

Day 1:

Start off the week by praying The Lord's Prayer together. Use this family-friendly version.

**Our Father in heaven,
Help us to honor your name.
Come and set up your kingdom,
So that everyone on earth will obey you,
as you are obeyed in heaven.
Give us our food for today.
Forgive us for doing wrong,
as we forgive others.
Keep us from being tempted
and protect us from evil.**

Matthew 6:9-13 (CEV)

Day 2:

Pray for yourselves and each other.

Day 3:

Pray for your extended family and friends.

Day 4:

Pray for your church family.

Day 5:

Pray for your neighborhood and community.

Day 6:

Pray for your country.

Day 7:

Pray for the world.



My A.C.T.S. Prayer

Adoration

God, I praise You because . . .

Confession

God, I ask You to forgive me for . . .



Thanksgiving

God, I thank You for . . .

Supplication

God, I ask You for . . .



Resources

For Parents:

- Berndt, Jodi. *Praying the Scriptures for Your Children*. Zondervan, 2013.
- Keller, Tim. *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God*. Penguin Books, 2016.
- McKelvey, Douglas. *Every Moment Holy*. Rabbit Room Press, 2017.
- Smith, Traci. *Prayers for Faithful Families*. Beaming Books, 2020.
- Yancey, Philip. *Prayer: Does it Make any Difference?* Zondervan, 2016.

For Kids:

- MacBeth, Sybil. *Praying in Color Kids Edition*. Paraclete Press, 2009.
<https://prayingincolor.com/>
- Omartian, Stormie. *The Power of a Praying Kid (series)*. Harvest House.
- The Prayer Map for Girls. *Barbour Books*, 2018.
- The Prayer Map for Boys. *Barbour Books*, 2018.
- Vischer, Phil. *The Minno Laugh and Grow Bible for Kids*. Minno Kids, 2020.
- Vischer, Phil. *The Minno Laugh and Grow Bible for Little Ones*. Minno Kids, 2020.



Shows for Kids that Teach the Bible and Prayer:

- Minno 5 Minute Family Devotionals
- What's In The Bible?
- Theo
- Superbook
- Bibleman
- Owlegories

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