



KidsLife Families,

During this Lenten season, we will be focusing our hearts on prayer. Prayer is the furnace of the Christian life. We know we should pray, but we don't always know how, or we don't always make the time. Along with the disciples we ask, "Lord, teach us to pray."

One question I get asked is, "How can we nurture the spiritual development in our children?" The easiest way is to teach them to pray. Prayer is about having a conversation with God that comes from the heart. It's a time to get personal and connect with God.

Prayer habits that last a lifetime are most often formed in childhood. In order to prepare our children to live for Christ in the world today, we need to equip them with the wisdom and power to be found in prayer. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding; think about Him in all our ways, and He will guide you on the right paths" (Proverbs 3:5-6). Keep in mind that prayer is caught more than it's taught. Model it, your kids are watching.

4 Effective Ways to Teach your Children to Pray

- 1) Start early** – Even as your children are in the womb, pray over them. As they grow, teach them prayer is a conversation with the God who created them and wants to hear from them daily. Tell Him what happened today!
- 2) Include them when you pray** – Your children can listen at first and then chime in when they are ready. Eventually they may volunteer on their own to pray for the family!
- 3) Pray whenever you have the chance** – As you teach your children to pray, consistency is key. They will quickly fall in line with what is modeled.

Examples of when to pray: Before meals, before bedtimes, before embarking on a trip, before a big presentation/test, when a special need for someone or something arises, when they get a hurt.

- 4) Make prayer your immediate reaction** – "Don't be anxious about anything. Instead pray about everything." Phil 4:6. It should be our immediate reaction to go to God in prayer—in good times and bad times. Teach your children that you can provide them comfort but it's best to also go to the source of 'true comfort.' God wants us to come to Him with ALL things and at any time.

During the Lenten series, “Lord, Teach us to Pray,” our LOFT kids will be exploring what prayer is, different ways to pray, different types of prayer, and different prayer positions. We want to challenge your family to have these same discussions and explore prayer together as we prepare our hearts for the Easter Celebration.

Family Prayer Challenges – Pick one, two, or all!

- Hang the completed Prayer Calendar in a place your family gathers daily and take the challenge each day to pray for the items listed.
- Take the blank Prayer Calendar and together, as a family, fill in the blanks and pray.
 - Brainstorm names of people in your lives (relatives, teachers, pastors, friends, pets, mailman, etc) that you want to lift up in prayer this month. Fill the calendar with a name a day.
 - Take a week for each letter of A.C.T.S. and fill in the calendar daily with specific things.
 - Adoration – What do you adore about God?
 - Confession – What do you need to confess and ask for forgiveness?
 - Thanksgiving – What things/people are you thankful for?
 - Supplication – What do you need to ask God for yourselves and for others?
- Read and collect Bible verses and stories about prayer.
- Discuss ‘Highs and Lows’ from your day, then lift up in prayer the praises and requests
- Pray the 5-Finger Prayer (Thumb-Pray for Others, Index-Pray for Teachers, Middle-Pray for Leaders, Ring-Pray for the weak, Pinky-Pray for yourself)

Things to Keep in Mind:

- If your children are too shy to pray aloud as a family, keep reminding them it’s just a conversation with God, there’s no right way or wrong way. Continue modeling, try having them repeat your words, but then see if they can repeat your prayer conversation in their own words. Thanking God for a family member then having the child thank God for a specific thing they like about that family member could help get the conversation going.
- Sometimes kids need proof, sometimes we need proof. They may not be sure that God is always there, listening to our feelings and thoughts and that He’s eager to hear what we have to say. So, prove it. Keep a prayer journal or use the calendar to look back on in a month, a few months, or even a year later to point out how and where God showed up through those prayers...and then thank Him. Point out that God may not have answered the prayer in the way we asked, or, it hasn’t happened yet, or, He may have a different plan, so it will seem He didn’t answer it at all. God answers in His own way, in His own timing. He is the ultimate Creator of all, and He sees the bigger picture. Even if our prayers don’t seem to be answered, we should always continue to trust in Him...and continue to ask. Don’t give up.