

Your Most Important Conversation MESSAGE 5

How to pray for the Important Children In Your Life

Well it's good to be with you this morning, as we continue our series on prayer called your most important conversation! I appreciate Pastor Jim sharing from the Word last week on prayer! My wife and I were watching our Grandson for several days up in Pullman Washington while my daughter and son-in-law were attending a meeting in Philadelphia. Interesting we learned very quickly why it is that we have our children in our 20's and not in our 50's! You get tired real fast but it's a good tired! Well speaking of Grandchildren – I know a lot of you have children and grandchildren – even great grandchildren! I know that a lot of you have a deep burden for these children! You should! There are a lot of things out there that want to trip them up in their spiritual lives and every other area of their lives! There are temptations and distractions in our world that many of us did not have growing up! Some of you ask – is there anything we can do for these children? The answer –yes! You can become your children and grand children and great grandchildren's greatest prayer warrior – standing in the gap and holding them up and interceding for them!

One of my favorite stories that I have shared with you before appeared in Steve Farrar's book point man! It's a story about a man named George McCluskey. To my knowledge, no biographies have been written about his life. McCluskey was a man who decided to make a shrewd investment. As he married and started a family, he decided to invest one hour a day in prayer. He was concerned that his kids might follow Christ and establish their own homes where Christ was honored. After a time, he decided to expand his prayers to include not only his children, but their children and the children after them. Every day between 11 A.M. and noon, he would pray for the next three generations. Well its interesting how God moved!

As the years went by, his two daughters committed their lives to Christ and married men who went into full-time ministry. The two couples produced five grandchildren - four girls and one boy. Each of the girls married a minister and the boy became a pastor. The first two children – the great grandchildren born to this generation were both boys. Upon graduation from high school, these two boys - two cousins chose the same college and became roommates. During their sophomore year, one of the boys decided to go into the ministry as well. The other one didn't. He knew the family

history and undoubtedly felt some pressure to continue the family legacy by going into the ministry himself, but he chose not to. In a manner of speaking, this young man became the black sheep of the family. He was the first one in four generations not to go into full-time Christian ministry.

He decided to pursue his interest in psychology and, over the years, met with success. After earning his doctorate, he wrote a book to parents that became a best-seller. He then wrote another and another, all best-sellers. Eventually he started a radio program called Focus ON The Family that is now heard on more than a thousand stations each day. The black sheep's name? James Dobson, without a doubt a man who even still today was and still is one of the most influential and significant Christian leaders in America. His ministry is the direct result of the prayers of a man who lived four generations ago.

When I have shared that story before, but I never get tired of hearing it! Because years ago as my children were getting older and I was having less and less of an influence on them as they got older, God showed me I could have a much greater impact on their lives as their prayer warrior.

Something that greatly influenced me was this story! I found out that if you will come up with a prayer plan, you can pray

for 15 minutes, half an hour, 45 minutes, an hour or longer for your children and grandchildren if you really take the time to hold them up and the specific details of your life. I have found if I will hold my children and their children before the Lord and bathe them in prayer then I am inviting God do not just good things but even great things in their lives. I have seen God answer a number of those prayers and others I am continuing to pray and hold up before His throne! You don't give up!

Even if you're not a parent or grandparent this topic applies to you. Someday you may have children or perhaps you're an AWANA leader or have neighbor kids you influence or you may have nieces or nephews! So let's talk today about how to pray for the important children in your life!

1. SALVATION!

Particularly if you have young children and grand children - ask God to work in their hearts that they come to know Christ as Savior early in life – start praying for those children while they are still in the womb! On the night before the cross – In John 17:3 – Jesus prayed

John 17:3 (KJV)

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

Pray for a child's salvation – especially that he/she will know Jesus Christ at an early age! People say – well can young children really understand their need to come to Christ and be saved? Yes they can! Just talk to Keith and Barbra Herber and others who work with Child Evangelism fellowship or AWANA! Even young children can come to Jesus! Maybe they won't understand all the details but they can understand that Jesus loves them and wants to be their friend and Lord!

In my life I did not come to Christ until I was 19! That is when I made a serious commitment to the Lord. But you know if I had come to the Lord at an earlier age, God could have done so much more in my life.

So parents, others when you pray for a child – pray that he/she comes to Christ early in life! Along those same lines pray too – that as the child grows older **he or she will really take ownership of that faith** and begin walking with God on his/her own power! Often somewhere between the ages of 12 and 23 youths will decide if they have grown up in Christian homes whether or not to keep walking with the

Lord or to go their own way. They come to cross roads where they have to decide to really embrace Christ as **their** savior and take ownership of **their** faith and live for God on their own. Their faith has to make that critical transition from a child's faith to an adult faith! That's where your prayers come in! If you have grown children who have walked away from the Lord – pray that God will nudge their hearts and bring them back to Himself. God not only can but He often does that!

2. GROW IN THE LORD!

2 Peter 3:18 (NASB)

but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him *be* the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

Now an important principle about prayer is this:

Prayer becomes powerful as it become specific, consistent and ongoing!

General prayers tend to get general results. Specific prayers get specific results. Prayer needs to be specific, consistent and ongoing – Jesus said keep on asking, keep on seeking keep on knocking! You keep praying until God answers prayer or makes it very clear that He has other plans! Consequently let me encourage you to pray for three specific

spiritual growth areas you should ask God to instill in a child's life.

a. A LOVE FOR HIS WORD!

King David tells us in the Psalms 19:10 that the teachings of the Bible

Psalm 19:10 (NLT)

**They are more desirable than gold, even the finest gold.
They are sweeter than honey,
even honey dripping from the comb.**

I have found that children naturally have a curiosity and love for the Bible. You don't have to ask most children – do you want to hear a Bible story! They generally do! In fact – if you get a good Bible story book for a child or grandchild and start reading to them – those children often won't let you put it down - especially if you make it exciting! Their little hearts just soak God's Word and they'll take as much as you can give them! We got our 2 year old Grandson little Jaxton just a simple Bible story book. As we read it to him, he paid attention to hear just simple Bible stories! You know when it was, done it seemed like he had a little glow just from listening and interacting with God's Word! My kids growing up loved The Picture Bible! It really does a great job of

bringing Scripture to life with pictures and stories that are very accurate!

As children get older into teen age years, – the Bible does not become any less important to their lives – its just that other voices begin to have more influence. That's where you keep praying "God give my children a hunger for your Word". Maybe it means taking them out and helping them select a Bible they can use. See as children grow older their hearts still need the Word of God though they may not admit it! Back when I was doing youth work – I discovered that youth actually liked learning the Bible in depth. But you know how I found that out? A year or two after high school graduation, several came back and told me! They said you know Pastor Mike – I acted like I didn't really care about hearing the Bible in youth group - but I was still listening! So pray, "God give my child a hunger for your Word and you might add, "God give them no hunger for the lies and deceptions of the world." Often when my kids were in high school and college I would pray Lord when they hear a lie – a worldly deception that sounds nice but is not true – God just sound an alarm in their hearts so that they quickly can see the error of what is being told to them! Don't allow them

to ever get comfortable with the lies and deceptions of the world!

B. Learns the value of prayer. Pray your child will learn to pray! The best way you parents or grandparents can teach children to learn to pray is let them hear you praying for them! Often the best time to pray with children is bedtime!

That's a great time for a child not only to hear you pray but also hear your heart's desire for them before the Lord! You parents with little children still at home, as children hear you pray – they often copy the prayers you pray for them and start praying those same prayers for themselves. They also learn to value the things they hear you praying for them!

When my son was very young, one of the things I would pray with him at bedtime was Father grow Christopher into a man of God, A man of the Word and prayer, who loves you, delights to do your will, who hates all sin and loves all people! I know he was listening to that because after a while not only did he start praying that same prayer for himself - but he even began adding to that his own prayers.

C. Have a whole hearted determination to follow Jesus Christ! In other words - sold out completely for Jesus! In the Old Testament – Joshua's prayer and resolve for his family was this:

Joshua 24:15c (KJV)

... but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.

So pray God may you be first and foremost in everything my son or daughter or grandson or daughter says and does and thinks!

3. Hatred for sin.**Psalm 97:10 (NLT)**

You who love the LORD, hate evil! He protects the lives of his Godly people and rescues them from the power of the wicked.

Hebrews 3:13 (Living)

Speak to each other about these things every day while there is still time so that none of you will become hardened against God, being blinded by the glamour (deceitfulness) of sin.

The Greek word their means delusion. Don't be deluded by the beauty and glamour or deception of sin! Do sin and temptation look attractive? Sure they do - at least in the

beginning! Sin is attractive! It looks nice, it tastes nice, it appeals to our senses – it's only after it runs its course that it turns to bitterness and consequences!

Often what attracts us to sin is the glamorous side of it! Someone said that **“Sin is choosing to believe the lie about what you're doing”**

This is one of the Devils favorite tactics especially with children and youth – make sin look so glamorous and exciting that what is right and good seems dull by comparison! That is where your prayers as parents come in. You pray Father – turn the light of truth on in my child's heart – help my child see the ugliness and consequences of sin BEFORE he/she commits it!

Paul says in

Ephes. 5:11 (NIV)

Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them

Pray that God will expose the lie behind the sin to a child when he or she is faced with temptation

I like the story about a young girl who had great desire to join the church. The Pastor asked her if she had come to Christ and experienced a change of heart. She answered "Yes." He said "Were you a sinner before?" you were a Christian?

She said "Yes." "Are you a sinner now?" Again she answered, "Yes – she still struggled with sin" Pastor said - "Well then, what's the difference?" After a brief moment of thought she said,

"Before I came to Christ, I was a sinner running after sin; now, I am a sinner running away from sin."

That's our prayer – Father expose the lie behind the glamour of sin – teach them to run from not towards sin!

4. That a child will be caught when guilty.

Psalm 119:71 (KJV)

It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.

Psalm 119:71 (NLT)

The suffering you sent was good for me, for it taught me to pay attention to your principles.

David is saying – I'm glad that when I sinned I got caught because it taught me God about your principles and that your ways are best! Parents – sometimes the best thing you can pray for a child is this last part of

Numbers 32:23 (NLT) where Moses told the people –
.... **be sure that your sin will find you out.**

You pray God – if my child is doing something wrong let him/her get caught! Let that child learn that sin has consequences! I read a story about a thief who had stolen a purse! Police were chasing after him and as he was trying to get away he ran by a church and thought I'll just duck into this church – and no one will think of looking for me there! So he ran in the front door and just inside he spied a rope hanging down. So he got this brilliant idea – he grabbed the rope and started climbing up as furiously as he could only to discover when it was too late that the rope was attached to what? The church bell - which started ringing out his location for everyone to hear! So pray God – when my child sins – sound the alarm – don't let them learn to get away with it! Let them learn the valuable lesson of personal responsibility and that sin has consequences!

Someone said

“If you have a society where no one is responsible for their actions then you'll have a society where no one lives responsibly”

Along those same lines

5. Pray that they will respect those in authority over them.

And maybe add,

“that as parents (you, they) will wisely and responsibly use the authority God has given in their lives!”

"Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God established. The authorities that exist have been established by God." Romans 13:1

I had a girl in my youth group years ago who had a terrible time getting along with people. She butted heads with her teachers, couldn't keep a job, often couldn't get along with other youth or leaders in group! Why was that? She had not learned a healthy respect for authority - that God has set up certain people and institutions in life that have authority over our lives. Why, because early in her life, she had a passive Dad and an over nurturing Mom who (I got the impression) never really told her no! Consequently this young woman didn't learn that healthy respect for authority and that word NO! It had all kinds of consequences for her!

So pray – Father teach my child a healthy respect for good authority and add help you (or his/ her parents) to be a good

model of that! See if children won't respect human authority – why should they respect God's authority?

6. Pray that they will be protected from the evil one.

“John 17:15 (NIV)

My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.

It's interesting that the night before Jesus went to the cross – even with all the stress of knowing He was about to be arrested, beaten and killed, Jesus made it a priority to get away alone in the garden and pray for each one of us! His last big act before his arrest was to pray – and pray specifically for you and me. One of the things He prayed was right here – Not that we as Christian would be locked up safe and secure away from the World – God wants us in the world as salt and light influencing our world and those around us for Christ. Instead Jesus prayed Father protect them from the evil one - from the devils influence, schemes and wickedness.

If it was important enough for Jesus to pray that for His church – then its important for us to pray that for our wives, husbands, children and families. Paul writes:

Ephes. 6:13-18 (NIV)

Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

14Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, 15and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. 16In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

I've heard of parents as they get children ready in the morning silently praying the armor of God on each of their children, using this prayer here in Ephesians as a model. "Lord protect their minds (the helmet of salvation) –keep your salvation always in their mind – remind them that they are a Christian. Protect their hearts from evil by focusing them on what is good and righteous – breastplate of righteousness. Protect them by the truth of your Word from deception and – the belt of truth & the sword of the spirit. Guide their feet where ever they go they may be a light of Christ! Paul prayed:

1 Thessalonians 5:23 (NLT)

²³ Now may the God of peace make you holy in every way, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ comes again.

7. That they will have a responsible attitude and Godly behavior in all their interpersonal relationships.

1 Cor. 15:33 (NASB)

Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good morals."

A. Pray for the friends that a child keeps. Praying that a child will be hedged in so they cannot find their way to wrong people or wrong places and that the wrong people cannot find their way to them. One day the Devil came to God in the book of Job and:

Job 1:8-10 (NIV)

Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil."

9"Does Job fear God for nothing?" Satan replied.

10"Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land.

God had His hedge of protection and blessing around Job. Why not pray that for our families and children! Pray your children will be hedged in so they cannot find their way to wrong people or wrong places and that the wrong people cannot find their way to them.

Probably the most important Human relationship you should

B. Pray for a child's future mate! Pray God will keep them from a wrong potential mate and guide them to a Godly, spiritually, mature person. It's much less stressful to pray early on that your son or daughter will meet the right person, a strong Godly Christian, than later in panic to pray – God break up that relationship that my daughter or son has with that person that none of us like who doesn't know You! Along those lines pray children will pursue moral purity and holiness in their relationships. You can actually pray:

1 Cor. 6:18-20 (NIV)

Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. ¹⁹Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; ²⁰you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

Last as we close Number 8 –

8. Grow to Spiritual Maturity!

There are two important Scriptures I encourage you to pray every day for children and grand children.

^{1st}: Luke 2:52. It says that as Jesus grew to adulthood

Luke 2:52 (NASB)

⁵² And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

Years ago I read this and thought if that is how Jesus grew then that's how I want my children to grow. I took that one little verse and broke it down into six parts and began praying that for each of my children and now my grand children. Lord help them grow and excel in Godly wisdom with you – to have (proverbs 1:7) the fear or (reverence) of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom – and knowledge

of the Holy one which is understanding! God grow them in wisdom with man – their fellow Christians, those in authority over them, their peers. Grow them God in Stature with You and People! Raise them up as Godly leaders in your eyes and the eyes of those around them. Grow them in favor with you Lord God – help them to love you with all their heart, soul mind and strength and their neighbor as themselves! Help them have favor with man – their fellows Christians, their teachers and employers and the important people in their lives!

Then a second prayer I pray is

Galatians 5:22-23 (NIV)

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

I ask the Lord to grow and cause my children to abound in the fruit of the Spirit! Grow my children in Love - Love For you God and for their fellow man! Cause them to abound in joy and peace. Help them to be kind, to live good lives that honor you Jesus and radiate your goodness! Make them faithful to you in each area of their lives! Grow them in gentleness. Give them self control and I name areas where

they may struggle with self control area and ask God to give them strength!

This is basically praying Scripture for your children but God Honors His Word and it works very powerfully! You ask the Lord to grow and mature your kids.

See prayer is timeless and your prayers for Children and grandchildren God can still honor 10 years, 20 years, 200 years after you are gone! As parents we spend thousands, even hundreds of thousands of dollars in our children's lives. This morning, I want to challenge you – invest time every day 10, minutes, 20 minutes an hour praying for your kids and grandkids! It's an investment you will never regret!

PRAY: