

Teaching Your Child To Pray



Children can start learning to pray even before they can speak in coherent sentences simply by allowing them to see you praying (more about this later) and by inviting them to pray with you as best they can. As with any good habit, you'll want to start reinforcing prayer as a regular part of life as early as possible. Once a child can communicate verbally, they can learn to pray on their own either out loud or silently.

The best way to begin educating your children about prayer is to pray in their presence. Look for opportunities to practice prayer in front of them, just as you would seek out instances to teach them about manners, good sportsmanship or humility. While praying in the morning or before bed is a common and valuable practice, God wants us to come to him with all things and at any time, so let kids see you praying throughout the day for a variety of needs.

When praying, try to keep the details and words appropriate to your child's age level, so younger kids won't be scared by serious situations.

Some children will feel shy about praying out loud at first, and will say they can't think of anything to pray about. If this happens, you can first pray for something, then have the child finish your prayer. For example, thank God for grandma and grandpa and then your child can thank God for specific things about the grandparents, whether that's grandma's yummy cookies or a productive fishing trip with grandpa.

Moving From Memorized Prayers to Praying In Their Own Words

Memorized prayers are great, but children should also begin to learn to pray in their own words and for things that are personal to them. Here are some ideas for helping them to grow in prayer:

As part of bedtime prayers, invite your child to name the people he or she would like to pray for. This can take the form of a simple litany, praying, "God bless . . ." as your child names family and friends. As your child grows older, you might offer a simple prayer for each person as you pray. For example, if a sibling is sick, you might ask for God's healing presence, praying, "God bless [name] and help her [him] feel better soon

Ask the child to thank God for one thing of their choosing and to ask for help with one thing that they need.