

Tips for Teaching Kids to Pray

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Prayer habits that last a lifetime are most often formed in childhood. That's why it's so critical to teach young children how to pray. As with most spiritual disciplines, prayer is caught more than it's taught. As teachers model meaningful prayer lives, kids will learn how they, too, can talk to their Creator.

1. Help children talk to God.

Everyone—especially children—would find sitting down to prayer easier if we could find a way to forget our notions of “correct prayer methods” and just start talking. To do this, avoid focusing on form in prayer. Rather, model for your children an easy, comfortable way to simply talk to God as you'd talk to a friend. Urge children to talk to God just as they'd talk to anyone else. They can tell God about their day, express their fears, and even be a little mad if they want to.

2. There's nothing too big—or too small—for God.

It's true; God can help us face the hardest moments in our lives. God is also there to share in our smaller moments, too. He wants to know how our day went. He enjoys hearing that the rainbow we saw early in the morning made us smile, and that the bully on the playground scares us.

3. Anything is okay to talk to God about.

Don't discourage a child from including a song from *The Little Mermaid* in her prayer. Let her thank God for her favorite movie and share what's in her heart.

4. Making prayers relevant to children's lives enables them to grow in prayer.

Because kids have a strong tendency to view the world in terms of me, my, and mine, capitalize on this very normal stage of development by focusing prayer on kids' everyday concerns. For example, many adults make the mistake of asking young children to pray for church missionaries. Chances are kids don't understand what they're actually asking God for. As a result, God becomes more remote. A better idea would be to focus kids' prayer requests on asking God to heal Damon's chickenpox, giving thanks for Jasmine's new puppy, or asking for help for Alex, who may find it difficult to sit through class quietly.

5. God listens to ALL prayers.

God is always there, willing and eager to listen to what we have to say. But kids aren't always so sure; sometimes they need proof. So, give it to them. The best way to help children realize that God truly listens is to point out answered prayers. Did you ask for the quick recovery of Andi's cold? When she's feeling better, thank God for answering your prayers.

6. Make answered prayer visual

by creating a prayer wall where kids write their prayer requests on one side of a divider. When the prayer is answered, move the prayer request to the other side. Thank God for each answered prayer.

7. Help children understand that God may answer prayers in several ways.

God may answer exactly as children requested. But God may also answer in a different way, wait to answer, or say no. Help children see these answers to prayer also.

8. The right place is any place.

The Bible describes a variety of ways to pray kneeling, standing, lifting hands, and even lying on a bed. Encourage children to pray whenever-and wherever-they want to. Even if it means a quick "Please make Janie all right" on the playground when a friend is hit with a ball.

9. Prayer is never inappropriate.

Especially when it comes straight from the heart. In the end, that's all you really need to teach children to help them communicate with our God who's always listening.

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