

Praying Together

WITH OUR CHILDREN by Brenda Luscombe and Alasdair Kendrew

WHY?

As a parent, have you ever stopped to think about what you're aiming for? What would you like your children to be when they leave home? Hopefully, top of the list is having a great relationship with God, with prayer central to their lives. How will they learn and develop this? By you modelling it and making it part of the 'rhythm of your family'.

TIPS

1 Make prayer a natural part of every day

- Pray with your children as they leave for school.
- Pray before each meal.
- If your child is anxious or struggling—pray about it (and if something really good happens, pray about that too).
- Encourage children to talk to God throughout their day. Remind them they are simply talking to their friend.
- Make the most of bed times—reflect on the day, praying for the good things and bad.

2 Providing structure helps children feel confident when praying. Here are some models you can use to encourage prayer:

- Five finger prayer
 - Your *thumb* is nearest to you. Begin by praying for those who are closest to you.
 - The next finger is the *pointing finger*. Pray for those who teach, guide and heal, such as teachers, doctors and those working for Jesus.
 - The next finger is the *tallest finger*. Pray for those who lead, like the prime minister and councils. Also, those who keep the country safe, like police, the fire brigade, etc.
 - The fourth finger is the *ring finger*. This is the 'weakest' finger (because it doesn't stand alone easily). Pray for those who are sick and in trouble.
 - Lastly use the *little finger* to pray for yourself.
- Put letters of the alphabet on cards. Every member of the family picks a card and prays for all the things they can think of starting with that letter. This could be around topics for prayers of thanks, for instance, or people or places.
- P.A.C.T. prayers
 - *Praise*—what are things you like about God?
 - *Ask*—ask God to help people and situations.
 - *Confess*—tell God the things you shouldn't have done and did, and the things you should have done and didn't.
 - *Thanks*—say thank you to God.
- Use the newspaper or TV News to pray for those in need.
- Think about the last 24 hours:
 - What was I most thankful for?
 - When did I feel loved by someone?
 - When did I feel loved by God?
 - When did I act like Jesus?
 - When did I not act like Jesus?
- Pray for people you have come in contact with today (teachers, bus driver, shop assistants, family and friends).

3 The best antidote for endless wanting is thankfulness, so end each day with prayers of thanks.

- Help your children understand that many children do not have what we have:
 - family.
 - basic needs: food, shelter, clothing.
 - opportunities to learn: school, teachers.
 - luxuries: electricity, water, treats, toys, TV.
 - fun: friends, games, sports coaches, clubs.

4 Develop a weekly prayer chart

- There are lots of things you can pray for, so why not make a chart? Monday: parents; Tuesday: siblings; Wednesday: teachers; Thursday: friends, etc.
- Involve your children in creating the chart.
- Make your topics two-directional. For example, on Monday when they pray that their parents would help them to make wise decisions, children might also pray that they will be an obedient son or daughter; prayers for friends might be focused on those friends' needs, but also that the child would be a good friend too.

5 Pray for your children!

- Do you worry about your children? What they believe about themselves? Who their friends are and what influence they have? *Then pray!* 'Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.' (**Philippians 4:6**)
- Do you want to be a better parent? *Pray!* 'If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.' (**James 1:5**)
- If you don't pray for your children, who will?

RESOURCES

Books

- Stormy Omartian has written a series of fantastic books to help you pray, including *The Power of a Praying Parent* and *The Power of a Praying Kid*. (Harvest House)
- *Think Orange* by Reggie Joiner (David C. Cook)
- *New Ideas for Creative Prayers* by Judith Merrell (Scripture Union Publishing)