

Prayer Primer for Parents

Learn the richness of this daily discipline with your child

[Amanda Lamb](#)

Starting something new can be as difficult for parents as it is for children. Our busy lives often make creating a new discipline hard to imagine. But the richness of a daily prayer moment between you, your child, and God will create a new dimension, a peace in your life that helps to transcend all the chaos. It starts with one simple step—a commitment to do it every night. Once the pattern is established, you will be surprised by how much you and your child look forward to your prayer time. It becomes a focal point for the end of your day, and something you will always cherish, even as your child begins to develop his or her independent prayer life. Below are some simple guidelines to help you get started on the journey.

Easy Steps to Praying with Your Child

1. **Pick a Time:** Set aside a specific time to say a prayer with your child every night. Try to be consistent.
2. **Pick a Place:** Create a quiet, comfortable, peaceful atmosphere in which to pray with your child (in bed, low light, door closed).
3. **Plan the Prayer:** First discuss the purpose of prayer with your child. For example, thanking God, or asking for God's help. Give your child an example of a free-form prayer, especially if he or she is used to doing prayers by rote. Understand that speaking directly to God out loud, even if your mother or father is the only one in the room, can be intimidating to a young child.
4. **Create an Opening:** Come up with an opening together for the prayer. For example: "Dear God" or "Dear Jesus." This helps you signal to your child that it's time to settle down and begin. It also makes the process less intimidating for children because they have a familiar starting point every night.
5. **Give Your Child the Reins:** Let your child begin the prayer, but prompt him or her when necessary. For example: "Are there good things that happened today that you want to thank God for? Is there anyone in our life who is hurting and needs God's help that we should pray for?"
6. **Be Patient:** If your child gets stuck or frustrated, tell him or her that God doesn't have a specific plan people need to follow when they pray. Guide, don't push. Only step in when your child asks for help. Silent moments during the prayer should not be considered obstacles, but moments of quiet reflection.
7. **Thank God for Those You Love:** At the end of the prayer ask your child to think about the people in his or her life that he or she wants to specifically thank God for. It can be family, friends, pets—anyone within your child's circle of love.
8. **Create a Closing:** Come up with a closing together. For example: "Thank you for my family. Amen." This will help your child know prayer time is over and it's time to go to sleep. This can be especially useful when your child is tired and struggling and needs to be guided toward a conclusion.
9. **Document Your Prayer Life:** Keep a journal of the topics you and your child pray about for 30 days, and then review it to see how he or she is growing spiritually. Ask yourself: Is my child becoming more comfortable with the process? Is there anything I can do to make my child more comfortable?

10. Relax and Enjoy: Now that you have made prayer a regular part of your and your child's life, relax and enjoy the tradition you have created. Remember, it isn't about the length of the prayer, or whether or not it is profound or grammatically correct; it is about sharing your child's heart with God.

Prayer Starters

Sometimes figuring out how to begin a prayer is the most difficult part of the process. A Bible verse can be a helpful prompt for your child, giving him or her something to think about. First, read the verse to your child or have your child read the verse to you and ask what he or she thinks it means. Then discuss the possible meanings of the verse together. Ask your child to use the lesson as background or context for the prayer.

1. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." ([John 3:16](#))

Discuss: What does it mean to you that God gave us Jesus, that he sacrificed his Son for us?

Prayer: Let's thank God for everything he does for us, including giving us eternal life.

2. "But Jesus called the children to him and said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.'" ([Luke 18:16](#))

Discuss: Why do you think children are special to God?

Prayer: Let's thank God for putting his hands beneath children and keeping them safe.

3. "For he will deliver the needy who cry out, the afflicted who have no one to help." ([Psalm 72:12](#))

Discuss: Why is it so important to God that we help people in need?

Prayer: Are there people in your life or in the world in need that you want to ask God to help?

4. "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it." ([Psalm 24:1](#))

Discuss: Who does God love? People? Animals? Plants?

Prayer: Name some of the things in God's creation that you want to thank him for—for example, dogs, sunshine, your friends.

5. "Neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." ([Romans 8:39](#))

Discuss : How much do you love God? Why do you love God so much?

Prayer : Thank God for his love and ask him to work through you to help you love others more.

6. "God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble." ([Psalm 46:1](#))

Discuss : Think about times in your life, tough times, when you really need God.

Prayer: Thank God for being there in those difficult times, and ask him to continue to be there when life gets hard.

7. "The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear?" ([Psalm 27:1](#))

Discuss: Talk about things you are afraid of—for example, the dark, taking a test at school, making new friends.

Discuss how God can help take away our fears.

Prayer: Thank God for helping you to be strong and confident in your life every single day.

8. "This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it." ([Psalm 118:24](#))

Discuss : Why do you think it's important to have a positive attitude every day? Do you have one? What could you do to be more positive?

Prayer: Thank God for everything that makes our lives special and wonderful every day.

Excerpted from the book [I Love You to God and Back: A Mother and Child Can Find Faith and Love Through Bedtime Prayers](#) by Amanda Lamb. Used by permission of Thomas Nelson Publishers.