

FAMILY PRAYER



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Anglican Fellowship of Prayer (Canada)

FAMILY PRAYER

A Way of Beginning a Family Prayer Life

Family prayers can begin during the commitment of those who choose to live together in loving harmony and choose to pray with their families and friends.

In the Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage it says;

- ✠ *“May their lives together be a sacrament of your love to this broken world, so that unity may overcome estrangement, forgiveness heal guilt, and joy overcome despair.*
- ✠ *may they so live together that the strength of their love may enrich our common life and become a sign of your faithfulness.*
- ✠ *may they receive the gift and heritage of children and the grace to bring them up to know and love you.*
- ✠ *may their home be a place of truth, security, and love; and their lives an example of concern for others.”*

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The newly committed couple can begin a habit of prayer together which will enrich their lives in a manner not found in any other way. Some of us may not have lived out this way of relating spiritually to our spouses, but we can begin now. However, the earlier we consciously bring God into our family life, the more enriched that life becomes.

Praying Together

Praying together need not be complicated. There are no hard and fast rules. A couple may simply share their experiences and concerns before God in their own language.

Beginning a prayer life together within your committed life can lead to extraordinary richness and a distinct awareness of God's presence and guidance in your lives.

Family prayers are a daily commitment for good times as well as in times of trouble. Praying together allows you to share your true selves in an intimacy not found elsewhere and leads to better understanding and experiencing of each other before God.

Shared prayer deepens your union and family unity and hastens reconciliation because members of the family choose to share, be open, and listen to each other and to God.

Including Children

During a pregnancy, include your unborn child in your prayers. Praying for yourselves and your developing baby will lead the way into peacefulness. Any anxiety will give way to the sensing of God's presence. Your trust in God's wisdom and blessings will grow.

It has been revealed that the child in the womb gets to know the mother's voice long before your child takes that first breath. What better words can an infant hear than those of your relationship with Jesus! The child will hear that relationship and care affirmed when audible prayers are offered over them long before they can say their first words of prayer.

Learning to pray is not a study, but an attitude and way of life. It is passed on by example and little else. **If you want your children to pray, you need to be a person of prayer yourself or learn along with them.** They may have much to teach you! It will be a mutual journey.



Practice of Prayer

Let your children know that you have a prayer space where you sit, kneel or stand to pray. Call it what it is and let your children see you pray. Invite them to respect your prayer time. Invite them to join with you, i.e. light the candle, sit in silence, join in reading and/or praying aloud.

Attitude of Prayer

Show prayer as a familiar attitude in your family life. Engage in various forms of prayer that are appropriate to the occasion. One observation is that we are very good at asking for things, but spend much less time being thankful. Thankfulness is the attitude of prayer in the Old Testament; it is the recognition of blessing, it is praise and thanksgiving. How might we bring this into our daily lives and our daily prayer lives?

Learning to Pray with Children - and Adults too!

Talking to God in a familiar way takes time. Listening to God in a familiar way takes a lifetime!

There are three basic ways of talking with God:

- ✠ using our own words;
- ✠ using another's words;
- ✠ using no words, as in Romans 8: 26-28 "*with sighs too deep for words*".

A way of beginning with children is to start a conversation about:

- ✠ the things for which each one of you is thankful in the day
- ✠ that for which each one of you is sorry and ask for God's forgiveness
- ✠ ask for God's blessings for family, friends and events
- ✠ how you would like God to help you for tomorrow

This is highly individual and personal. It is found that the children soon bring in the wider needs of their world and the larger world in which we live.

Bible Reading Can be Added to Your Daily Devotions

Each one could share in the reading of the Bible at a mutually agreed upon time of the day. You could begin with, '*Lord, open our eyes and ears and hearts that we may see and hear and feel the wonderful things out of your word. Amen*'.

After the reading, invite each one to reflect, out loud or in silence, upon the chosen story. A member of the family could begin and end the reading with a prayer, i.e. a Collect, the Lord's Prayer, or a prayer in your own words.

Invite Guests to Join in Family Prayers

Give your guests the opportunity to join your family prayers. Tell them the format so that they might pray with you.

The presence of other Christians and people of other faiths at prayer time can greatly influence children. Their stories about God moving in their lives and other people's lives can grow their own Christian faith. They not only hear the experiences, they learn that other people have a regular prayer life too.

The habit and benefit of family prayers cannot be measured.

Teaching children early in life to participate in a regular pray life opens them to receive the grace and power of our Lord into their lives in a natural and spontaneous way. They develop a lifetime habit which will surely enrich their lives and those of others.

Prayer Suggestions

Teaching some 'touchstone' prayers is important. Children will develop a memory bank of prayers which come from your 'home prayers', the worship with which they are familiar and from books, i.e. The Lord's Prayer, Glory to God , table blessings, morning and bedtime prayers. It would be helpful to have books of prayers available around the house.

Perhaps you could create or purchase a book of prayers for each child.

Some suggested table blessings:

- † *Come Lord Jesus, be our guest,
may this food to us be blest.
Amen*
- † *God is great, God is good.
Let us thank God for our
food. Amen*
- † *God, we thank you for
this food,
for rest and home and all things good,
for wind and rain and sun above,
and most of all for those we love. Amen*



- *For food in a world where many walk in hunger
for faith in a world where many walk in fear
for friends in a world where many walk alone,
we give you thanks, O Lord. Amen*

Suggested Devotionals with Children

Morning:

Upon rising, the young child might say:

*Thank you Jesus for a new day, in which to grow and love and
play. Amen*

A school-age child might say:

*Father God, we thank You for the night
And for the pleasant morning light
For health and food and loving care
And all that makes the world so fair. Amen*

or

*Jesus, my Shepherd;
As I walk through today,
may I see you with my eyes,
listen to you with my ears,
praise you with my lips,
keep you in my mind,
and follow you with my whole heart. Amen.*

For an infant, ask a blessing for your child and that the child be a blessing.



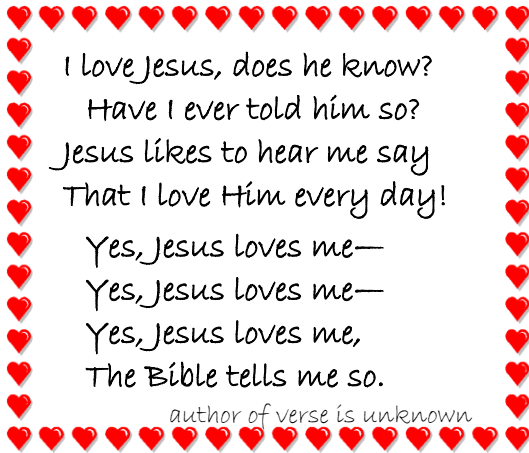
At Bedtime:

You might like to read daily from a book with a Christian theme that is geared to the child's age. Perhaps you might chat about the story. Ask about the child's day. Ask, 'Where did you see God today?' Comment with praise and thanksgiving. Then, offer any thanksgivings to Jesus, confession for anything for which you are sorry, blessings upon friends, family and events, plus prayer requests for others and your family's needs.

Encourage, at first, a one word or one sentence prayer.

Then add a learned prayer such as:

*Now I lay me down to sleep
I pray the Lord my soul to keep
Thy love be with me through the night
And wake me with the morning light. Amen*



I love Jesus, does he know?
Have I ever told him so?
Jesus likes to hear me say
That I love Him every day!
Yes, Jesus loves me—
Yes, Jesus loves me—
Yes, Jesus loves me,
The Bible tells me so.

author of verse is unknown

Original words and tune: #123 in the Red Hymn Book



For further information or pamphlets please contact your Diocesan Prayer representative or the Resources representative for A.F.P. Canada.
Internet Web Site: www.anglicanprayer.org



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