



Help kids talk and listen to God

For Christians, prayer is a privilege. We have direct, 24/7 access to the God who created and saves us. But prayer isn't just for grown-ups. Jesus wants little children to come to him (Matthew 19:14) and to pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

Prayer is a powerful way to harness kids' love of words. Between the ages of 2 and 5, a child's vocabulary explodes from about 50 words to thousands. And who better to talk to than God? Yet even Jesus' disciples needed help learning how to pray (Luke 11:1). Keep these things in mind as you teach children to connect with God:

Prayer is an attitude. Praying constantly means we're always aware that God is here. We can sense God's presence with us no matter our circumstances. We can pray about anything and everything, including other people and their needs.

Prayer is a routine. Regular times with God help shape our prayer attitude. Help children establish "check in" times with God, not out of obligation but out of love.

Prayer is a first response. When troubles and tough decisions loom, we can turn to God before trying anything else. Prayer should be our first resort, not our last.

Prayer is listening to God. Prayer is a dialogue that involves letting God speak to us through everyday life. Because prayer is two-way communication, we also should practice listening to God.

Prayer is modeled. The best way to challenge your children to pray is by letting them see and hear you praying often. Regularly share with them how you see God at work through your prayers.



How Often Do You Pray?

In a survey, American adults reported praying:

- More than once a day—24%
- Every day—31%
- Several times a week—16%
- Several times a month—10%
- Several times a year—9%

(Lutheran Brotherhood/USA Today)

PowerSource

Ask God:

1. To help your family members stay in touch with God.
2. To show your children that prayer involves more than just making requests.
3. To keep your family members open to hearing God's voice.

Parenting Insights

Children's perceptions of communicating with God change as they grow:

Ages 2 to 3

Young children understand that Jesus is their friend. Say (or sing!) simple prayers that relate to children's lives.

Ages 4 to 6

Children this age become very aware of the world around them. Let kids know that God cares about everything that happens to them and other people.

Ages 7 to 9

These children feel a need for God's help and can verbally express thoughts. Help them look up Bible verses about prayer.

Ages 10 to 12

Preteens realize God is more personal. Let them understand that no prayers are insignificant to their heavenly Father.

OpenTheBook

**"Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you."
Matthew 7:7**

God always hears and answers our prayers, though not always in the way we want or expect. Persistent prayer helps us build a deeper relationship with God, who longs to give us good gifts.

Teachable Moments

1. **Mix It Up**—Prayer is never inappropriate, so encourage children to pray whenever and wherever they want to. Try praying together in a variety of ways, including kneeling, standing, lying down, lifting your hands, and so on.



2. **Echo Each Other**—With young children, pray aloud one brief phrase at a time and teach them to echo you. As kids gain confidence, you can switch roles and they can lead.
3. **Lighten Up**—Show children it's fun to talk to God. Allow prayer to be goofy at times. Try shouting or whispering a prayer. Use rhymes and motions to capture children's attention. Let kids thank God for whatever is important to them—even if it's a stuffed animal or video.



"So commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these words of mine. Tie them to your hands and wear them on your forehead as reminders. Teach them to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are ON THE ROAD, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up." Deuteronomy 11:18-19, NLT

Start a discussion about the importance of talking and listening to God by asking children these questions:

1. Why do you think God wants us to pray to him? How often and how should we pray?
2. Does God hear and answer all your prayers? How do you know?
3. What does it mean to listen to God's voice? In what ways does God speak to us today?
4. What things should we pray about together as a family? How can we add more prayer time to our daily lives?

Family Experience: Prayer Prompts

Use these prayer-related activities to help children become more comfortable with praying to God and hearing his answers.

- **On Target**—Using markers, have children draw a target with six circles. Then have them use pencils to fill in people and places to pray for. In the outer circle, they can write a country. In the next circle, they can write a family in their neighborhood. The rest of the circles can represent a friend, teacher, or family member. In the center, have children write something they'd like to pray for themselves. After a week, erase those requests and fill in new ones.
- **Rewind and Fast Forward**—Practice a prayer routine by having kids think back to the beginning of their day. Say: "Pantomime in fast motion all the things you did to get ready this morning. When I say 'freeze,' stand still and think about what was on your mind then." Repeat the game, asking kids to act out what they'll do to get ready for bed tonight. Say: "This time when I call 'freeze,' pray about something that happened today." Encourage family members to talk to God about their day every morning and night.
- **Still Waters**—Have family members spread out and silently read Psalm 23. (Assist younger children.) Say: "Choose one verse to talk to God about. Then ask God a question and wait silently for him to speak. He may speak just one word or give you an image in your mind." After five minutes, share what you each heard. Remind everyone that listening to God isn't magical and takes practice.





What's Playing at the Movies

Movie: *Ramona and Beezus* (July 23)

Genre: Family comedy

Rating: G

Cast: Joey King, Selena Gomez, John Corbett

Synopsis: Ramona Quimby is the rambunctious third-grade protagonist from Beverly Cleary's beloved children's books. Ramona, known for her accident-prone antics, constantly defies other people's expectations. Big sister Beezus admires Ramona for being her own person and for not caring what other people think.

Discussion Questions: What kind of relationship do you have with your siblings? How are you alike or different? How do you get on each other's nerves? If you're an only child, what do you like or dislike about that? Read Colossians 3: 12-14. How do you cope with other people's faults? How do you cope with your own faults? How can families live in unity?



What Music Is Releasing

Artist: Miley Cyrus

Album: *Can't Be Tamed*

Artist Info: Cyrus is the pop star who gained fame as Hannah Montana on the Disney Channel. Now 17, Cyrus is aiming for an adult image, with more provocative lyrics and outfits.

Summary: *Can't Be Tamed*, Cyrus' third studio album, contains a lot of dance-pop music influenced by Lady Gaga and Britney Spears. Cyrus says the first single, "Can't Be Tamed," is about being trapped in a cage, having to act a certain way for others but wanting to be your real self.

Discussion Questions: What makes you feel trapped? What pressures or expectations would you like to shed, and why? Read 2 Timothy 1: 7-8. Where can you find courage and strength to go against the flow? What might make you feel "caged" as a Christian, and how can you go free?



What Games Are Out

Title	Content	Rating & Platform
<i>LEGO Harry Potter: Years 1-4</i>	In the most detailed LEGO game location ever built, players navigate through Harry's first four years at Hogwarts.	E10+; Wii, PS3, PSP, Xbox 360, Nintendo DS
<i>City Builder</i>	Players solve puzzles and overcome funny obstacles to build cities across a planet's four continents.	E; Wii
<i>Snoopy: Flying Ace</i>	<i>Peanuts</i> characters star as World War I pilots who engage in aerial combat. Contains cartoon violence.	E10+; Xbox Live

RATINGS: EC=Early Childhood, E=Everyone (ages 6+), E10+ (ages 10+), T=Teen (ages 13+)



What's happening right now that may affect your children and family:

- Togetherville.com wants to introduce children to safe social networking. The free site is intended to be used with parents.
- The race is on to name the next generation, even though they're still in grade school. Ideas include Generation Z, Generation Net, iGen, and Homelanders.

Quick Stats

- A whopping 99% of parents reported that their children prefer playing with electronics to playing outside. (Colorado State University)



- Boredom is healthy for kids. Author Kim John Payne says one-third of a child's life should be busy; one-third, creative time; and one-third, downtime. (Simplicity Parenting)

- Forty-three percent of parents favor year-round schools. (Parenting.com)