



A Child's First Prayer

**should be like learning to read or ride a bike
...something he never forgets.**

It is the one thing most likely to open his/her heart and soul to...the reality of God...to connect him to his family, his church and God for life.

Making the most of a first prayer: A good foundation for any age child is to memorize "The Lord's Prayer". Taking turns with a parent, one phrase at a time is a great way of learning. The key is repetition, two or three times a day, one phrase at a time, until both parent and child can make it through the entire prayer. The average time for most 5-8 year olds is one week.

A good second step is praying with a parent. If possible begin when a child is age five or six. Being late however is no reason not to start. A good question for teens and preteens who resist is. "Don't you think it is important to know if God is real? Don't you think it is the most important thing of all? Do you know of a better way of finding out than asking Him? I would not be doing my job as a parent if I did not help you ask yourself important questions. I am supposed to help you stick with it until you know for sure...one way or the other. You have to know for sure." Still... it is best to start a habit of praying with others at as young an age as possible.

A little notebook for each child can help your beginning prayers stay organized, something small they can keep in a drawer. Personally I like starting a child's first prayers with "Abba" or "Abba Father. Every prayer needs a beginning. The "Abba Father" also helps a child to understand that there is someone on the other end of the prayer line ...someone who always picks up. Start with a one sentence prayer for yourself. Possible subjects for your prayer are (1) feelings, (2) health, (3)being a better Christian, or (4) a problem that is bigger than you. If possible include questions in your prayer. Getting answers is the best faith builder of all. Write down your one sentence prayer ...leaving a space underneath for the answer. Then ask your child if he would like to pray for himself and record his prayer in his book. Next day get out your notebooks

Your Child's First Prayer (continued)

Check your prayer first. If you feel it was answered write the answer underneath. If you do not then join hands with your child and pray again...something like: "Father we know that some prayers take time. We know that our job is to keep asking. Help us to do that. Help us also to sense your presence and your comfort while we are waiting...Amen." Explain that the "Amen" is not the end of the prayer. It is the middle. It means I know you heard and I know you will answer. I don't know when or how but I know you will answer and we will stick with this prayer until that answer comes.. Other important words to learn are faith and patience. Then ask your child if his/her prayer was answered. If not pray the prayer a second time reminding your child to ask God for his comfort and presence while he/she is waiting.

Continue praying with the child each day until he/she feels the prayer has been answered. If necessary involve family members, Sunday school teachers, the pastor even the whole church. *A child's first answered prayer is a hallmark in his life, one of the foundations of all future prayer and growth, the one thing most likely to connect him to God and to a church for life.* Stick with this first prayer...as long as it takes. Your child will learn a lot about God and so will you.

The final step, once a child is comfortable praying with you is to ask if he has someone else who could be a prayer partner for him...his/her first step to forming a Christian support group. The idea is that in times of trouble prayer and prayer partners (his church) will be your child's first thought not his last. After praying for a week or two at a time with other people help him make a list of prayer partners: Two adults you trust and two peers. Help him revise the list once a year.

Talk with your child's Sunday School teachers. She may help find good prayer partners or she may wish to involve the whole class by assigning prayer partners a month at a time...requiring that the children phone each other once a week And pray for just two minutes. **This bulletin insert and many other prayer resources are free at www.teachustoprayer.com.**