

The Power of Praying for Your Children

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The sobering news about raising children is that we really have no ultimate control over whether our child will choose the narrow gate that leads to life (Matthew 7:14) or the wide gate that leads to destruction. If other experiences in life have not humbled us and shown us how dependent we are on God, then parenting a preadolescent or teenager will.

Understanding our desperate need to depend on God is the good news. Once we give up the naive idea that we parents can dictate the choices our children will make and the spiritual gate they will walk through—narrow or broad—then we are ready to slip on the kneepads and get serious about prayer.

What have we learned about prayer for our children as they prepare for and enter adolescence?

Pray regularly. Bring every concern, dream, and desire about your child to God in fervent, persistent prayer. (Luke 18:1–8 contains a great parable on persistent prayer that must have been for parents of teenagers.)

Two of the best times to pray with your child are on the way to school (assuming you drive him) and at bedtime—regardless of age. We live about five miles from our school. Every morning we would pray about things most important to our children—tests, friends, teachers, activities. As the car topped the hill right before the school building, we always concluded with the same request: “And Lord, we ask that you would keep Rebecca, Deborah, and Laura from harm, evil, and temptation this day, that they would experience You at work in their lives and be used by You to influence others for Your Kingdom. Amen.” Now that our teenagers drive themselves to school, we use breakfast for this prayer time.

Bedtime prayers can be more personal for each child. Pray for his future mate, relationships, activities, challenges, temptations, and heart for God. Don’t assume that a teenager is too big for you to kneel beside his bed and stroke his face and pray.

Pray offensively. Before your child hits adolescence, pray for his peer group—that he will have at least one strong Christian buddy for the teenage years. Ask God to protect your child daily from others who would be an evil influence. Also consider asking God to help you spot your child doing things right so that you can encourage him in making right choices.

Pray defensively. On more than one occasion we have sought the Lord’s help in removing a friend of questionable character from our child’s life.

From time to time we have felt that one of our teens might be deceiving us, but we could never be absolutely certain. In those situations we have asked God to help us catch him if he's doing something wrong. God seems to feel sorry for parents who pray this prayer!

Pray intensely. One of the most misunderstood spiritual disciplines of the Christian life is prayer accompanied with fasting (the giving up of food for a prescribed period of time). Although fasting does not earn points with God, He nonetheless assumes in Scripture that we will fast and pray (see Matthew 6:16–18) and promises to reward us if we do it correctly. We know a couple who have set aside each Monday to fast, sunup until sundown, and pray for their struggling 14-year-old child.

Pray when God brings your child to mind. It may be at that very moment, your child is facing a circumstance of critical importance. Some friends of ours felt a strong and sudden need one night to pray for their daughter. At the very time they slipped out of bed and to their knees, a police car was driving by their daughter's car on a remote mountain road where she and a girlfriend had gone to look at the city lights, eat a sandwich, and talk. Unknown to them, an escaped prisoner was hiding underneath the car. The prisoner was apprehended, and the girls drove off unharmed.

Pray with your child. It's easy for prayer to become an exclusive dialogue—you and God. Why not do what one mom, Nina, did with her teenage daughter, Natalie, and become prayer partners? Natalie's teenage years were filled with special moments in which she and her mom knelt together and prayed over Natalie's struggles and challenges.

Pray together as a couple. For more than 26 years of marriage we have ended each day in prayer together as a couple. No spiritual discipline has protected our marriage and our family more than this daily time of communion together with God.

Three of our six children have made it through adolescence. With that behind us, you might think we are tempted to coast to the finish line. Hardly! We've been humbled so many times that we know how impossible it is for us to shape the hearts of our children on our own. We pray more than ever for our children—all of them.

God wants the same thing for you and your child. *Talk to Him.* James 5:16 tell us, "The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much."

Please note: The book [*While They Were Sleeping*](#) by Anne Arkins and Gary Harrell, is a great resource when you don't know what to pray for your child.

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