

31 Ways to Pray for Your Children

By Bob Hostetler

For years, like any responsible Christian parent, I prayed daily for my two children, Aubrey and Aaron. I prayed for God's blessing and protection throughout their days. I prayed for them to be happy. I asked God to help them through difficult times and to help them make wise choices. My prayers were regular, heartfelt, and--for the most part--pedestrian and repetitive.

I wanted more than that, however. I wanted so much for my children, but when I knelt in prayer, I invariably found the same tired words rolling from my lips, like an adult whose table grace never progressed beyond "God is great, God is good, now we thank him for this food..."

Then one day, Nancy, our pastor's wife, shared a testimony during a morning worship service that changed this parent's prayer life. She told how her concern that her children develop strong Christian morals and the fruits of the Spirit had prompted her to develop a unique prayer list, that included reminders to pray for her children's salvation and growth in grace, as well as other concerns (such as that they would "be leaders, not followers").

That day I decided to follow Nancy's example, and develop a "parent's prayer program" of my own, a simple practice that has revolutionized the way I pray for my children. Each day of the month, in addition to my prayers for their safety and for the concerns of that day, I also pray for a specific character trait, virtue, or fruit of the Spirit to be planted and nurtured in my children, through my efforts (and my wife's), through the influence of others, and through Aubrey and Aaron's own actions and decisions. At the end of each month, I begin praying through the list again, combining traits when the month is shorter than thirty-one days.

Following is the list I have developed, complete with brief suggestions for prayer from Scripture. Feel free to duplicate it--or improve upon it--to help you pray specifically and purposefully for your children to experience and evidence:

1 salvation "Lord, let salvation spring up within my children, that they may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory" (Isaiah 45:8, 2 Timothy 2:10).

2 growth in grace "I pray that they may 'grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ'" (2 Peter 3:18).

3 love "Grant, Lord, that my children may learn to 'live a life of love,' through the Spirit who dwells in them" (Ephesians 5:2, Galatians 5:22).

4 honesty and integrity " May integrity and honesty be their virtue and their protection" (Psalm 25:21, NLT).

5 self-control " Father, help my children not to be like many others around them, but let them be 'alert and self-controlled' in all they do" (1 Thessalonians 5:6)

6 a love for God's Word " May my children grow to find your Word 'more precious than gold, than much pure gold; [and] sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb'" (Psalm 19:10).

7 justice " God, help my children to love justice as you do and to 'act justly' in all they do" (Psalm 11:7, Micah 6:8).

8 mercy " May my children always 'be merciful, as [their] Father is merciful'" (Luke 6:36).

9 respect (for self, others, authority) " Father, grant that my children may 'show proper respect to everyone,' as your Word commands" (1 Peter 2:17a).

10 strong, Biblical self-esteem " Help my children develop a strong self-esteem that is rooted in the realization that they are 'God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus'" (Ephesians 2:10).

11 faithfulness "' Let love and faithfulness never leave [my children],' but bind these twin virtues around their necks and write them on the tablet of their hearts" (Proverbs 3:3).

12 courage "May my children always 'Be strong and courageous' in their character and in their actions" (Deuteronomy 31:6).

13 purity "'Create in [them] a pure heart, O God,' and let their purity of heart be shown in their actions" (Psalm 51:10).

14 kindness "Lord, may my children 'always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else'" (1 Thessalonians 5:15).

15 generosity "Grant that my children may 'be generous and willing to share [and so] lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age'" (1 Timothy 6:18-19).

16 peace, peaceability "Father, let my children 'make every effort to do what leads to peace'" (Romans 14:19).

17 joy " May my children be filled 'with the joy given by the Holy Spirit'" (1 Thessalonians 1:6).

18 perseverance " Lord, teach my children perseverance in all they do, and help them especially to 'run with perseverance the race marked out for [them]'" (Hebrews 12:1).

19 humility " God, please cultivate in my children the ability to 'show true humility toward all'" (Titus 3:2).

20 compassion " Lord, please clothe my children with the virtue of compassion" (Colossians 3:12).

21 responsibility " Grant that my children may learn responsibility, 'for each one should carry his own load'" (Galatians 6:5).

22 contentment " Father, teach my children 'the secret of being content in any and every situation. . . . through him who gives [them] strength'" (Philippians 4:12-13).

23 faith " I pray that faith will find root and grow in my children's hearts, that by faith they may gain what has been promised to them" (Luke 17:5-6, Hebrews 11:1-40).

24 a servant heart " God, please help my children develop servant hearts, that they may serve wholeheartedly, 'as to the Lord, and not to men'" (Ephesians 6:7, KJV).

25 hope " May the God of hope grant that my children may overflow with hope and hopefulness by the power of the Holy Spirit" (Romans 15:13).

26 the willingness and ability to work hard " Teach my children, Lord, to value work and to work hard at everything they do, 'as working for the Lord, not for men'" (Colossians 3:23).

27 a passion for God " Lord, please instill in my children a soul that "followeth hard after thee," a heart that clings passionately to you (Psalm 63:8, KJV).

28 self-discipline " Father, I pray that my children may develop self-discipline, that they may acquire 'a disciplined and prudent life, doing what is right and just and fair'" (Proverbs 1:3).

29 prayerfulness " Grant, Lord, that my children's lives may be marked by prayerfulness, that they may learn to 'pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests" (Ephesians 6:18).

30 gratitude " Help my children to live lives that are always 'overflowing with thankfulness,' 'always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ'" (Colossians 2:7, Ephesians 5:20).

31 a heart for missions " Lord, please help my children to develop a heart for missions, a desire to see your glory declared among the nations, your marvelous deeds among all peoples" (Psalm 96:3).

After several weeks of praying through the above list for my children, I discovered an additional benefit to my prayer program; as I prayed with my children each night, the Lord brought to mind the subject I'd prayed for that morning, and I would repeat my request in Aubrey and Aaron's hearing. Before long, they began to echo my praying, and pour out their own hearts in prayer for the very virtues and qualities I desired to see in them. Thus, my simple prayer program not only changed how I prayed, but also how my children pray. . . and, by God's grace, how they live as well.

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