

catalystKIDS

*Parent Tools*

# PRAYER



cat · a · lyst  
kad(ə)ləst

*noun*

that which evokes a transformative process

kid  
/kid/

*noun*

a child or young person

cat · a · lyst kid  
kad(ə)ləst /kid/

*noun*

a biblically anchored, big dreaming, world-changing child or young person who evokes a transformative process in those around them



## A Few Things to Consider

Before we get started, here are just a few suggestions to help prepare yourself for these conversations.

First, use this resource for what it is: a *guide*. There is no “one size fits all” approach to talking about these subjects with children, because there is no “one size fits all” child. You know your child best. ***You know how to best communicate with your child.*** Remember, God chose you and He did so for a reason. Be confident in that truth when talking with your children.

*Focus on the relationship behind the rule... love will motivate in ways a law never could*

Next, try to avoid saying things like “The Bible says...” when talking about scripture. Instead, say something like “God tells us in His word...”. This may seem like splitting hairs, but phrases like “the Bible tells us...” removes God from the focal point and can set the Bible up as a rulebook in the minds of our children. The most important thing to focus on when communicating scripture to your children is *the motivation behind the commandment*. Always remember, relationships are more important than rules. Sure we need rules, but ***love will motivate behaviors and beliefs in ways a law never could.***

Finally, ***be the example.*** Talking with your kids about prayer? Let them hear when you are praying. Talking to them about the Bible? Let them “catch” you studying God’s word. It can be difficult if we let it be, but ***the more they see these disciplines in us, the more they will begin to show up in them.***

*Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.*

# prayer

/prer/

*noun*

a conversation with God



# What Is Prayer

As indicated in the definition, prayer is a conversation with God. Some kids won't struggle to grasp this concept at all. To others it can seem awkward, perhaps, because they are used to having conversations with someone they can see (yes, I realize that we don't see people when we talk with them over the phone, but I think you get my point).

*Then you will call on  
me and come and  
pray to me, and I will  
listen to you.*

*Jeremiah 29:12*

To a kid it may seem like they are just talking to themselves. Think for a moment about a kid's typical experience with one aspect of prayer, **asking for something**, say help with their homework. They ask mom or dad for help, and mom or dad sits down to help them with their homework. Now put this in the context of prayer. "*Jesus, please help me with my math test*" doesn't have the same immediate, tangible result as "*Mom, please help me with my homework,*" does it? Of course, we have faith that God hears that request for help and responds, but the kid doesn't see Jesus sit down next to them and guide them through long division.

Not only is this aspect of the conversation different, it also takes a completely different method of *listening*. Note how I did not state that prayer is "talking to" God, but is rather a "conversation with" God. Talking *to* God is a one-way approach to prayer, while a conversation *with* God involves both talking and listening.

*Before they call I will  
answer; while they are  
still speaking I will  
hear.*

*Isaiah 65:24*

God decides to speak to us in a variety of different ways throughout the day, all of which are supported by Biblical precedent, including hearing an audible voice. Short of hearing an audible voice, listening to God can be a difficult step for kids to take during prayer. We'll get into this a bit more when we look at how we should pray.

## Why Do We Pray?

We want to have conversations with those who matter to us. God created people for relationship, and one of the most foundational



aspects of a healthy relationship with someone is having conversations with them.

To put it in other words, if your child never spoke to their best friend, how good would their friendship be? Prayer is an important part of how we stay connected with God and choose to voluntarily love Him with all our hearts, our minds, our souls and our strength.

*Love the Lord your God  
with all your heart and  
with all your soul and  
with all your mind and  
with all your strength.*

*Mark 12:30*

## *How Do We Pray?*

*"This then is how you  
should pray..."*

*Matthew 6:9a*

Jesus gives us an example of how we should pray in Matthew 6:5-13 in what is commonly referred to as The Lord's Prayer. Most believe Jesus was giving us a pattern to follow, which is how we will approach it in this resource. However, Jesus begins with informing us of a few things prayer is *not*.

## *Prayer Is Not About Showing Off To Others*

Jesus tells us we should not make a *show* out of praying, not telling us never to pray in public. We see in the Bible many instances of Jesus praying publicly, so the fact that a prayer may be said in public does not make it wrong. It is the motivation behind the public prayer.

*And when you pray, do not be  
like the hypocrites, for they love  
to pray...to be seen by  
others... But when you pray, go  
into your room, close the door  
and pray to your Father...*

*Matthew 5:5-6*

The hypocrites Jesus refers to were the Pharisees, who made a public show of prayer so that others would see how righteous they believed themselves to be. Their motive was not to connect with God in prayer, rather to show off for anyone around them.



# Prayer Is Not About The “Right” Words

*... do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words.*

*Matthew 6:7*

A common obstacle to prayer is thinking that you don't have the *correct* words to say, or you don't even know what to say. In Matthew 6:7, Jesus lets us know that praying isn't about the words we should use, how well we speak, or how long our prayer is. There is no “proper” language to be used in prayer, and a prayer doesn't

need to be long to be heard by God. God hears our prayers regardless of how long or short they may be, or how “churchy” our words are when we pray.

## Prayer Is To Be Honest

God knows everything there is to know about us. In fact, God knows us better than we think we know ourselves. We can't hide anything from God, so when we pray, we should be honest about what we are feeling, what we are thinking and what it is we are wanting God to do in our lives.

*...for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.*

*Matthew 6:8b*

God is big enough to handle whatever we may say in prayer, including temper tantrums we may throw and any doubts or questions we may have! Open honesty with God when we pray only helps strengthen the relationship we share.

## Prayer Is To Honor Our Father

When we pray, we can address God as our personal Father, because that is exactly what He is. Often when Jesus addressed God in prayer, the words He used are translated into the English language as *Father*, but were actually much more intimate. Jesus used words more like *Dad*, or *Daddy* when He prayed.

*Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,...*

*Matthew 6:9b*

Although we can address God personally and intimately, we must also honor Him in our prayers. God is still the sovereign, ferocious, powerful Creator of the universe. God is to be respected, honored, glorified and loved in our prayers.

## Prayer Reminds Us Of Who We Are, And Who God Is

When we pray, we need to recognize that God is God and we *are not*. When we pray for God to have His way (your will be done), we are just recognizing the fact that God is in control. We can try to pray for our will to be done, but it probably isn't going to work out very well.

*your kingdom come,  
your will be done, on  
earth as it is in heaven.*

*Matthew 6:10*

That being said, we *can* boldly ask for anything in prayer. God works miracles, and it is perfectly within our rights as children of God to ask Him for the miraculous, we just have to be careful not to be too presumptuous on the results. Just because we ask for anything does not mean that God will do everything we ask. Regardless of how much faith we have, or how often or how loudly we call on the name of Jesus in our prayers, God alone decides how to answer our prayers. Sometimes His answer is *yes*, sometimes *no*, sometimes it is *wait*.

## Prayer Is Not A God-Sized Vending Machine

*Give us today  
our daily bread.*

*Matthew 6:11*

Though we can boldly ask God for anything, we shouldn't view prayer as a *vending machine*, thinking that all we need to do is put in a prayer, make a selection and receive whatever we want. Jesus prayed for enough food for that day, not a fully stocked pantry. Our motives in asking God for provision shouldn't be selfish, rather we should maintain a position of trusting God's faithfulness to provide what is needed, when it is needed.

## Prayer Helps Us To Forgive And Be Forgiven



One of the things we teach our kids is to apologize when they have done something wrong, or to forgive someone that has wronged them. Prayer is the way we do that



when we have sinned against God.

This may seem like an over simplified approach to it, but that really is it. We know God forgives our sins through the sacrifice of Jesus, but when we pray we have the opportunity to say we're sorry. Speaking those words can be helpful to us in forgiving *ourselves* for any wrongdoing we have done. Seeking God's forgiveness also provides the reminder that we are to forgive those who harm us. This is often easier said than done so I'll provide a thought that may help in those difficult times where forgiveness may seem impossible.

*And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.*

*Matthew 6:12*

*Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.*

*Colossians 3:13*

We often hear the expression “forgive and forget”. A wonderful concept—and one that I believe God has mastered—however it isn't nearly as easy for us to accomplish. It is possible, and sometimes even *preferable*, to forgive and *not* forget. To explain: forgiveness is defined as *no longer holding resentment or anger towards an offender*. No where in that definition is a requirement for a continued relationship. If someone significantly or systematically harms us, forgiveness is mandated by God, however, we are under no obligation to maintain the *same level* of relationship with them, and at times separation is the healthiest approach for ourselves and our families. Altering the nature of the relationship based on this approach can be a healthy choice, however, doing so based on unresolved anger indicates a lack of forgiveness.

## *Prayer Is How We Ask God to Help and Protect Us*

*And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.*

*Matthew 6:13*

Finally, prayer is how we go to God with our fears and concerns, to be strengthened and encouraged by Him. This final part of the pattern shows us that we can ask God to protect us from the temptation to sin, as well as protecting us from those who want to do

harm to us, especially Satan.

At times, we minimize the trials that our kids are going through, comparing them to the pressures we face as adults on a daily basis. What they are describing can seem so trivial in comparison to what we endure as adults, but it is not trivial to *them*. Listen to your kids when they describe these struggles and resist the urge to minimize it. Rather, try to find a way to relate their story to an experience you had as a child. Help them see that their world isn't ending because of it, and point them to God as the one who ultimately helps them process and overcome anything they face in life.

*Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.*

*Ephesians 6:4*

*Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.*

*Philippians 4:6*



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## Why Provide These Tools?

We are providing these tools because we believe in you and because we need you.

God sovereignly chose **you** as the parent of your kid. **God believes in you, so we believe in you.** By equipping you with some simple resources you can use in the difficult discussions that come up, we want you to feel confident in your role as the primary spiritual influence in your kids lives.

It is easy to think of the Kid's Pastor, or some other Kid's Leader as the person with the most spiritual influence in your kids lives, but those people are only around your kids for a couple hours every week. You are the ones that are doing life with your kids and **you have more impact on their spiritual development than anyone else ever could.** We want to partner with you in raising a generation of CATALYST KIDS!

*... so that you, your children and their children after them may fear the LORD your God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands...Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.*

Deuteronomy 6:1-7



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