

How2: Pray with Children

Looking for new approaches as your term of Sunday teaching or kids clubs get going? These practical ideas will encourage children and young people to pray together as part of a group.

Doughnut Prayer

Pray for each other in turn round the circle. Or simply pray round in turn.

Arrow prayer

For urgent prayers, fold hands, pointing upwards and shoot the prayers to God.

Traffic Light Prayers

STOP! Think about what to pray, think about what God is saying.

WAIT! Think about what needs to be prayed and what words to use.

GO! Go ahead and talk to God.

Teaspoon prayers

T: Thankyou

S: Sorry

P: Please

Washing line Prayers

Draw or write a prayer and peg it on the line.

Post It Prayers

Use post-it notes to write or draw a prayer. Collect the prayers on a wall or poster.

Chain Prayers

Use a sentence starter. Each child adds a word or phrase to build a chain of words and phrases.

How to involve children in praying

Drawing is an important medium for children and can provide a way for them to get an idea onto paper without the distraction of composing sentences.

With small children, working on the floor or on mats, "heads into the middle" is a really effective strategy for avoiding distraction. Lying on their fronts, in a circle, with heads close together helps the children to feel involved and stay attentive.

Sharing ideas can be a positive way of encouraging everyone to take part. For example, for a prayer that praises God as creator, ask each child in the group to think about an aspect of the world that they like and want to say thank you for. Then collect the ideas together and lift them to God at the end.

Jesus is a friend. By encouraging prayer we are helping children to develop their relationship with God. It is important to help them to understand that talking to God is like chatting with a friend. Children may want to talk to God about mundane, everyday things, before they are ready to go on to more serious subjects.

Making time to pray properly is vital. If it is always left to the end, it will not be quality time and will often get squeezed out. So think about prayer as an integral

part of your kids' programme.

Listening to God is as important as talking. The relationship needs to become two-way. Background music can help. Lying on the floor with eyes shut is an effective way of creating calm in amongst the noise of a busy meeting.

Stepping Out in Prayer Together

The following stages can help children to pray out loud confidently in small groups. The steps need not always be followed in a linear progression, but show how a leader can gauge the stage of a group and then help them to move on.

1. The group leader chooses the subject for prayer, prays and the group joins in the Amen. Subjects should be simple and familiar. This is an ideal way to model short prayers.
2. The group leader chooses the subject. The group repeat the prayer phrase by phrase. The group begin to hear their own voices talking to God.
3. The group suggests items for prayer. The leader prays and the group repeat the prayer, phrase by phrase. The group can slowly take responsibility for their own prayers.
4. The group suggests ideas and the leader suggests how they might pray. Individuals should be supported as they talk to God in their own words.
5. Each individual should be able to compose a prayer of their own and say it aloud.

A Prayer about Food

After the words "Lord Jesus" everybody joins in with "We thank you!"

For golden fish fingers and scrummy chips,
Lord Jesus
We thank you.

For crunchy carrots and bright red apples,
Lord Jesus
We thank you.

For cool yoghurts and piping hot pizzas,
Lord Jesus
We thank you.

For sticky toffee and sludgy peanut butter,
Lord Jesus
We thank you.

For runny soup and crispy roast potatoes,
Lord Jesus
We thank you.

For frosty ice cream and chewy corn-on-the-cob,
Lord Jesus
We thank you.

For all the different, fresh, tasty wonderful foods you give us,
Lord Jesus
We thank you. WE THANK YOU. AMEN

(from Bounce! Kathryn Copsey and Claire Derry, SU 1994)

Ideas were drawn from Children and the Holy Spirit by Chris Leach, Children's Ministry. Clare Gardner, Go Kids co-ordinator at St Mungos church, Balerno was also very helpful!

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