

THE WAY YOUNG CHILDREN PRAY

Children pray for "lists" of things. These "lists" generally include the things that are most important to them. Example: Thank you, God for my . . . dog, toys, mom, dad, sister, brother, house, new shoes, etc. This is both age appropriate and spiritually valid. We need not become discouraged if our children's prayers rarely differ from this. Remember that these "things" are the "real and concrete" of every child's life.

However, it *is* a goal and desire to communicate and demonstrate that we can talk to God about many other things as well. This is done partly from discussion and asking questions (ex.: "What can we say to God about Rachel's cold?") and partly from role modeling (praying ourselves).

If we desire our children to ask for God's help in their lives, we must share with them what help we are asking from Him ourselves. Example: "I just can't find my self-control to stop eating so much candy, so I have to ask God to help me to find it or give it to me." If we want them to learn to pray for others, we must demonstrate this in our own prayers. Praying for each one of them during small group or praying for our class and the other teachers in our classroom is a good way to help them "catch" this idea. Asking them if there is anyone sad or hurt or sick in their families that we should pray for is also a good way to motivate them to pray for others. Asking them to pray for us, our families or our friends is also another strong motivation.

Always remember to thank God for answered prayer. This could be that God has helped a child go through a certain period of time without punching or hitting, helped a child let his parent leave the classroom in the morning without a fuss, or helped a family member or friend get over a cold. No matter how small an event seems to us, it demonstrates to a child that God is responsive to their words or feelings.

Role modeling is KEY!

THE PURPOSE OF PRAYER FOR PRESCHOOLERS

>>Praying with young children demonstrates to them the following:

1. God is their personal friend - we all want to talk to those we feel close to and can trust.
2. God always listens to us - we are important to Him and He likes to hear our thoughts and feelings.
3. God is available to us at all times - He is here for us when we feel happy, sad, lonely, scared, etc.
4. God is involved in our lives - He is a partner/parent to us; we can ask for and receive comfort and help from Him.

>>Listed above are some of the elements that describe to us God's "brand of friendship" with us. These are positive characteristics of God that will enable them to view God as a positive "Person" who is on their side and who is responsive to their needs.

>>We need to demonstrate through our own opportunities to pray with them that knowing God and talking with Him "counts" or, makes a difference, in our lives and can do so in their lives as well.

>>All of this knowledge and understanding will be fundamental to their overall view of God and can help in combatting misconceptions that they will be exposed to as they grow older.