

ZION'S FAITH AT HOME MINISTRIES NEWSLETTER theParentLinkSM



July 2011

Help kids talk and listen to God

For Christians, prayer is a privilege. We have direct, 24/7 access to the God who created and saves us. But prayer isn't just for grown-ups. Jesus wants little children to come to him (Matthew 19:14) and to pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

Prayer is a powerful way to harness kids' love of words. Between the ages of 2 and 5, a child's vocabulary explodes from about 50 words to thousands. And who better to talk to than God? Yet even Jesus' disciples needed help learning how to pray (Luke 11:1). Keep these things in mind as you teach children to connect with God:

Prayer is an attitude. Praying constantly means we're always aware that God is here. We can sense God's presence with us no matter our circumstances. We can pray about anything and everything, including other people and their needs.

Prayer is a routine. Regular times with God help shape our prayer attitude. Help children establish "check in" times with God, not out of obligation but out of love.

Prayer is a first response. When troubles and tough decisions loom, we can turn to God before trying anything else. Prayer should be our first resort, not our last.



Prayer is listening to God. Prayer is a dialogue that involves letting God speak to us through everyday life. Because prayer is two-way communication, we also should practice listening to God.

Prayer is modeled. The best way to challenge your children to pray is by letting them see and hear you praying often. Regularly share with them how you see God at work through your prayers.

How Often Do You Pray?

In a survey, American adults reported praying:

- More than once a day—24%
- Every day—31%
- Several times a week—16%
- Several times a month—10%
- Several times a year—9%

(Lutheran Brotherhood/USA Today)

PowerSource



Ask God:

1. To help your family members stay in touch with God.
2. To show your children that prayer involves more than just making requests.
3. To keep your family members open to hearing God's voice.

Parenting Insights

Children's perceptions of communicating with God change as they grow:

Ages 2 to 3

Young children understand that Jesus is their friend. Say (or sing!) simple prayers that relate to children's lives.

Ages 4 to 6

Children this age become very aware of the world around them. Let kids know that God cares about everything that happens to them and other people.

Ages 7 to 9

These children feel a need for God's help and can verbally express thoughts. Help them look up Bible verses about prayer.

Ages 10 to 12

Preteens realize God is more personal. Let them understand that no prayers are insignificant to their heavenly Father.

OpenTheBook

**“Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you.”
Matthew 7:7**

God always hears and answers our prayers, though not always in the way we want or expect. Persistent prayer helps us build a deeper relationship with God, who longs to give us good gifts.

Teachable Moments

Mix It Up—Prayer is never inappropriate, so encourage children to pray whenever and wherever they want to. Try praying together in a variety of ways, including kneeling, standing, lying down, lifting your hands, and so on.

Echo Each Other—With young children, pray aloud one brief phrase at a time and teach them to echo you. As kids gain confidence, you can switch roles and they can lead.

Lighten Up—Show children it’s fun to talk to God. Allow prayer to be goofy at times. Try shouting or whispering a prayer. Use rhymes and motions to capture children’s attention. Let kids thank God for whatever is important to them—even if it’s a stuffed animal or video.



“So commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these words of mine. Tie them to your hands and wear them on your forehead as reminders. Teach them to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are **ON THE ROAD, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up.” Deuteronomy 11:18-19, NLT**

Start a discussion about the importance of talking and listening to God by asking children these questions:

Why do you think God wants us to pray to him? How often and how should we pray?

Does God hear and answer all your prayers? How do you know?

What does it mean to listen to God’s voice? In what ways does God speak to us today?

What things should we pray about together as a family? How can we add more prayer time to our daily lives?



Lutherhaven

July 10 – July 15

Zion will be sending 25 middle school youth and 3 very brave moms to camp this month! Please pray for our youth and moms while they are at Lutherhaven.

Dear Lord,

I pray for all the campers heading off to Lutherhaven. I pray especially for safe travels as our youth and their families journey to camp. I pray also for an openness of hearts and minds for all the campers and counselors, that they may experience all that You have to offer them at camp. I pray for our youth to experience all of the majesty of your creation, the joy of Christian fellowship and the encouragement of learning more about you, our Lord and Savior. I ask this in Your Most Holy Name. Amen

Communicate to stay connected to your teenagers

Last month's topic was helping your kids stay connected to God. This month, we turn to parent-teen communication, which is notorious for breaking down. But it doesn't have to be that way. With some insight, strategy, and patience, you can keep the lines of communication open with your teenagers, who need you now more than ever.

Most importantly, you must be willing to work hard at really communicating. Because language is always changing, what adults say and what kids hear—and vice versa—sometimes aren't close to the same thing. Be ready to hear things you aren't so sure you want to hear, and listen without getting ahead of yourself when you don't know how to respond.



Although it's a cliché, communication really is a two-way street. The more honest and transparent you are, the more your kids will open up. Maintain an "open door" policy about any and all topics. Instead of pushing for information, share fun activities together so your teenagers feel comfortable about opening up. And assure them that you'll keep what they say private.

Listening well to your teenagers shows that you respect their feelings and value their opinions, even if you don't agree with them. Read on for helpful ideas about keeping the lines of communication open.

Question-asking guru Les Christie offers these tips for strong communication:

1. **Start with nonthreatening, easy, open-ended questions.** Ask questions that have more than one right answer, not closed questions, which are leading or limiting.
2. **Remember that feelings aren't right or wrong; they just are.** Stifle the inclination to shut down, neutralize, or "solve" most negative feelings. Give kids the freedom to say things that may not make sense.
3. **Give kids enough time to respond.** Remember the advice in James 1:19 to be quick to listen and slow to speak. Don't be afraid of silence. Learn from it.
4. **Ask follow-up questions without evaluating.** Vary your response pattern, using reflection, summarizing, probing, and comparing and contrasting.
5. **Don't ask questions if you aren't ready to listen.** Resist the temptation to stop listening when you anticipate what kids are about to say. Listen with your eyes and your heart.
(Group Magazine)



Beach Day!

Middle School & Senior High Youth!

Where: Lake Meridian Private Beach

When: August 10th 11:00AM-1:30PM

What: Bring swimsuits, towels, permission forms and \$5

We will have lunch & fun in the sun!

Verse of the Month

"Live in harmony with each other. Don't be too proud to enjoy the company of ordinary people. And don't think you know it all!" (Romans 12:16)

God places people in families so they can nurture and support each other. One way we do this is by communicating our experiences, thoughts, and feelings. When family members feel free to express themselves and truly listen to one another, homes are more harmonious.

**It's not just here.
It's not just there.
Mission is Anywhere!
"Anywhere" is Igo, California!**

When? July 30th to August 6th
Who?

Luke 11:10 - Jesus tells his followers:
To ask God (we ask for your prayers),
To seek God Deut: 4:29 - but from there you will seek the Lord your God and you will find him, if you search after him with all your heart and with all your soul, (pray we and people of Igo, seek after God)
To knock and the gates will be open (doors open, hearts too!) in Igo and we truly begin a life long habit of praying continuously).

Going Deeper : Youth ministry veteran Jim Burns discusses strong communication at SimplyYouthMinistry.com:

The healthier the family, the more effective the communication. When communication fails, it usually isn't because of the content but rather the relationship. If we didn't grow up with good role models, we're at risk for passing poor communication skills to our kids. Use these strategies to build healthy communication and relationships.

Actively listen. Listening communicates value, significance, and worth. Good listening skills include giving someone your undivided attention, maintaining an accepting and open attitude, looking past words to notice tone and body language, using reflective and respectful questioning to clarify your understanding, and giving appropriate verbal responses to what's being communicated.

Learn and use love languages. In *The Five Love Languages*, Gary Chapman identifies ways people prefer to be loved: words of affirmation, quality time, receiving gifts, acts of service, and physical touch. Most of us have a primary love language, but they all can be important to good communication and relationships.

Communicate honesty and integrity. The parent who tries to come across as perfect is making a big mistake. Believe it or not, apologies improve communication. Let your kids know you're human. Admitting your mistakes promotes sharing and removes barriers to real communication.

Work through conflicts. Conflict can either block communication or be a path to greater understanding. A natural inclination is to get defensive when conflicts arise. The better approach is being open to learn and assuming responsibility. Working through conflict takes greater emotional involvement, but it's the loving way to care for yourself and your teenagers.



July 10th - 15th: Camp Lutherhaven for LivingWord students.

July 30th - August 6th: Mission Trip for Senior High students.

August 10th: Beach Day for Middle School & Senior High Youth.

September 11th: Rally Day 2011! (Fall Worship Hours resume)