

FOR LEADERS OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH MINISTRY

In this Year of Spirituality . . . focus on Praying with Children and Youth

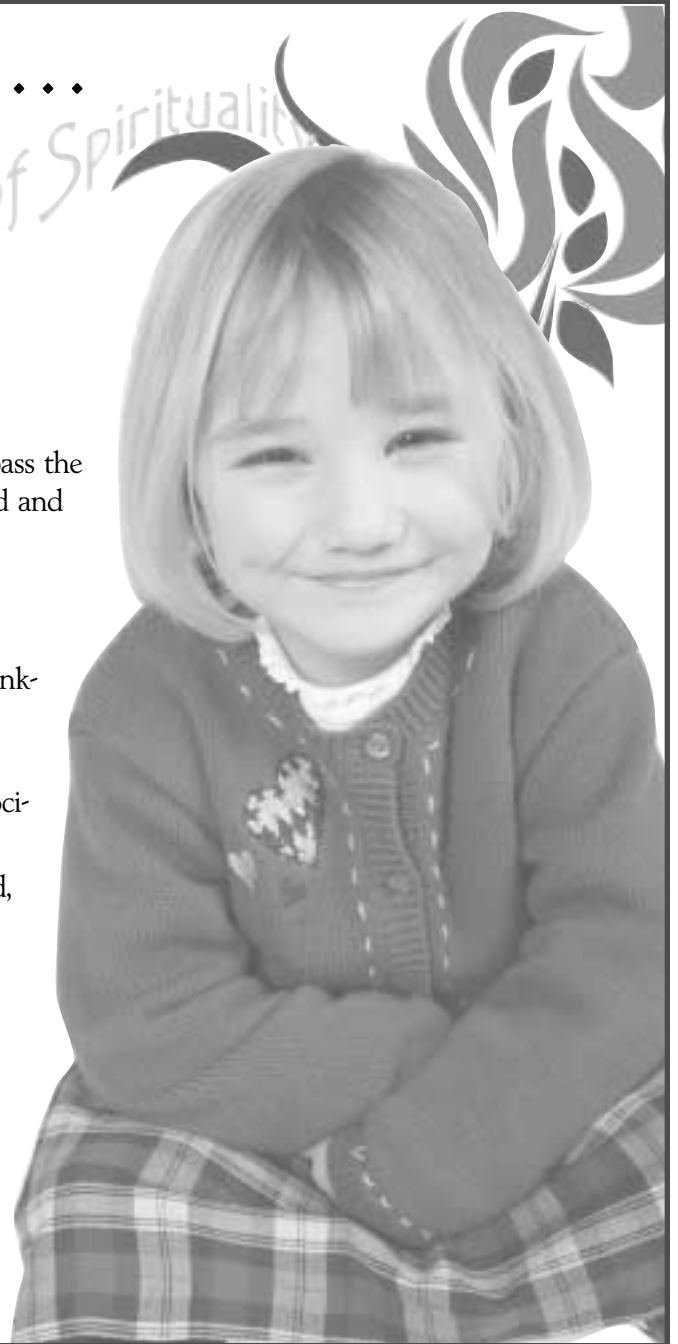
Praying with pre-schoolers

At Home

- Sing hymns to your infant, toddler or preschooler.
- Hang a cross near the front door of your home. As you pass the cross, entering or leaving the house, pause, with your child and say, "God be with you."
- Pray with your child before meals and snacks.
- Pray with your child at bedtime.
- Invite your child to think of things for which they are thankful that can be included in a prayer.
- When you are holding your child, repeat a word like "peace," as you tenderly pat your child so he/she will associate calmness, gentleness and love with God.
- Encourage an attitude of wonder—listening to waves, wind, thunder, birds, feeling breeze or sunshine on your skin, looking at the beauty of a fall leaf or flower.

At Church

- Encourage children to draw a prayer for God.
- Use modeling clay to make a prayer for God.
- Find a prayer that is suitable and use it regularly and often in church school and worship.
- Train leaders in the Children and Worship program where children learn to pray naturally, easily and often.



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February/2004

A newsletter produced in cooperation with the Covenant Community with Children and Youth
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Praying with Children Ages 6-12

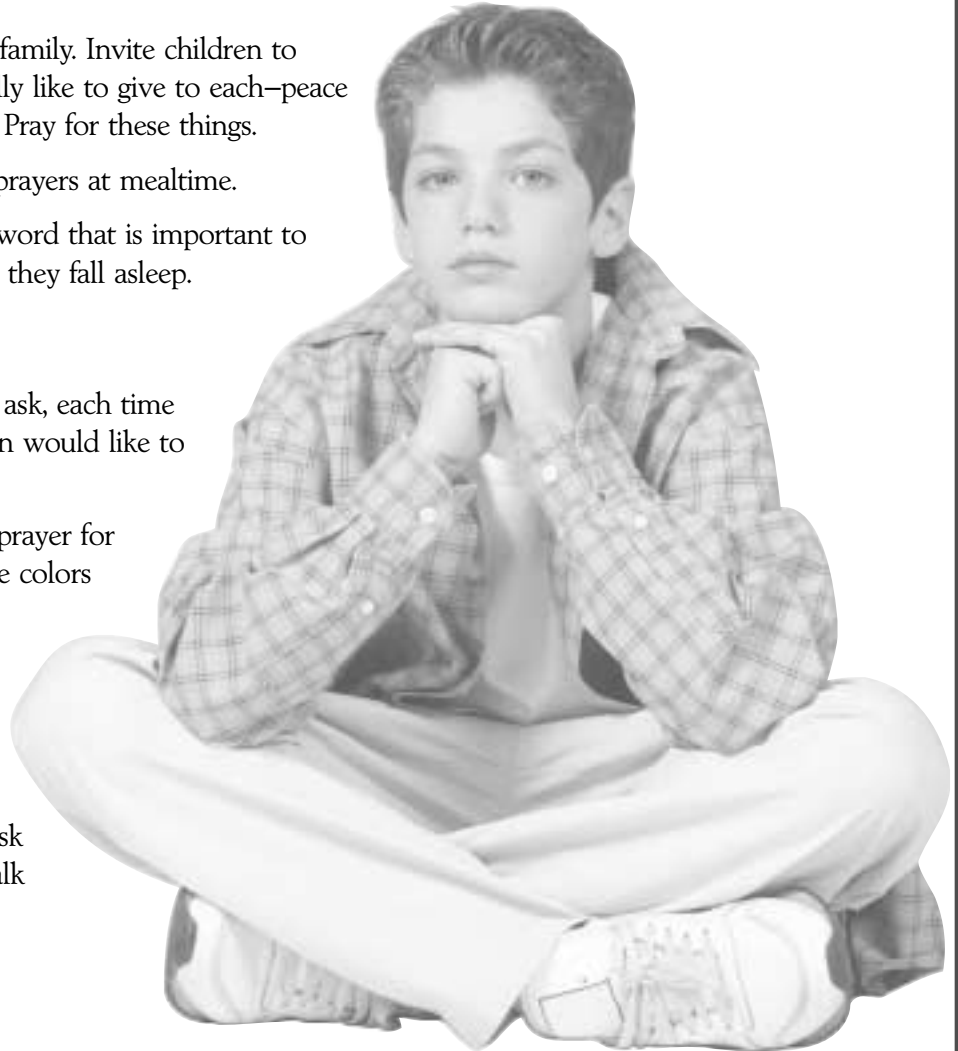
Build on the above ideas by adding some of these:

At Home

- Think of people who are important to your child—family, friends, teachers, minister, neighbours. Write each name on a slip of paper. Put in a paper bag or box. Each day, pull out a name and say a special prayer for that person.
- Post a picture of members of the family. Invite children to think about what they would really like to give to each—peace of mind, courage, healing, energy. Pray for these things.
- Invite children to "ad lib" family prayers at mealtime.
- Invite children to identify a holy word that is important to them and to repeat it mentally as they fall asleep.

At Church

- In worship and in church school, ask, each time you gather what concerns children would like to include in a community prayer.
- Invite children to draw a picture prayer for God. Talk with children about the colors they chose.
- Invite children to make something for God. Place this object on a classroom prayer table.
- Make a list of questions for God. Each Sunday pick a question to ask God. Ask the other children to talk about how God might answer.



Praying with Teens

Build on the above ideas by adding some of these:

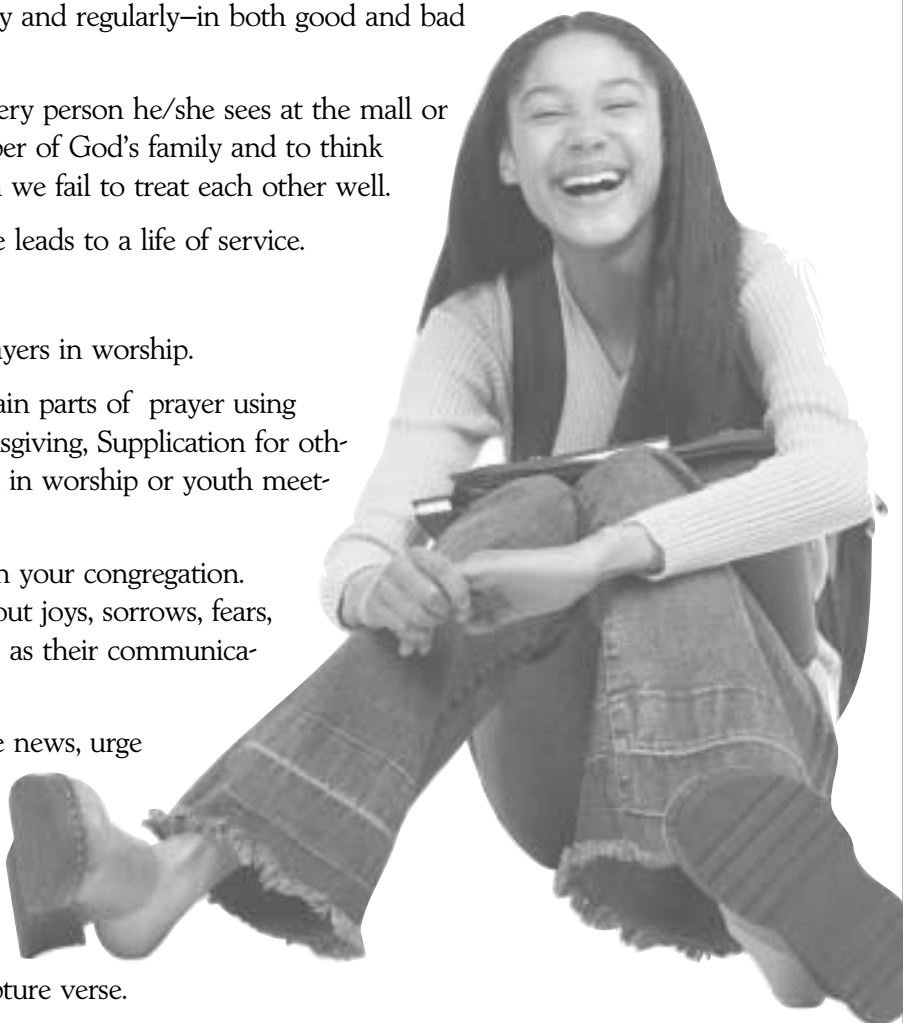
At Home

- Be a good example about using God's name. Do not tolerate your teen's use of God or Jesus' name in a sloppy or profane manner.
- Continue to pray with your teen—silently or aloud.
- Let your teen know that you pray for him/her daily.
- Encourage your teen to continue to participate in the communal prayers of the church. Ask his/her opinion on prayers they hear at worship. You don't have to agree; just listen.
- Encourage your teen to ask questions about God, prayer, doubts. Share your own questions and convictions about God with your teen...but keep it brief and simple.

- Let your teen see you praying honestly and regularly—in both good and bad times.
- Invite your teen to remember that every person he/she sees at the mall or in the school halls is a beloved member of God's family and to think about how disappointed God is when we fail to treat each other well.
- Let your teen see how your prayer life leads to a life of service.

At Church

- Encourage teens to write and lead prayers in worship.
- Do a "mini-workshop" on the four main parts of prayer using ACTS—Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication for others. Write a prayer which can be used in worship or youth meetings.
- Purchase a blank book for the teens in your congregation. Encourage them to write honestly about joys, sorrows, fears, questions. Invite them to think of this as their communication book with God.
- When you hear about an event in the news, urge teens to think about the people involved and pray for them.
- Give teens a special verse of scripture and ask them to memorize it. When they think of God during the day, they can silently repeat their scripture verse.
- Write/send a special prayer for teens when they are in transition times—a birthday, getting their driver's license, going into a new grade, reception of an award, scholarship or championship, graduation. Do this also at times of difficulty—death of a loved one, death of a pet, terminal illness or catastrophic injury, unwanted move or local or national tragedies.



Things Children Worry about.... In Canada

- Am I adopted?
- Death
- Going to the dentist/doctor
- Disasters—accidents or big storms
- Will my parents divorce?
- Someone dying in their school; will I die?
- First day of school
- Moving to a new home
- New baby in the family
- Having to be away from parents

Things Teens Worry about.... In Canada

- Death
- Drugs and alcohol
- Sexuality
- HIV/AIDS
- Money and work
- Prejudice
- Their appearance
- Fitting in with peers
- Risk taking and failure
- War
- Their future—education, getting a job

Hint: A great list around which to build a program or prayers.

Note: I apologize! I copied this list recently from a source which I cannot now identify. Despite this, I found it helpful...and hope you do, too. When I find the source, I'll include it in a future publication. (D.H)