

## AN INVITATION TO PRAYER

Talk, talk, talk. Your two-year-old child is at the age where they are communicating with you and others. At this age communication is a relative term. You may have a child who is just beginning to speak and has a handful of words they use. Some of you may have a kid who never stops talking. Wherever your little chatterbox is, you are realizing how important it is to be able to connect with them. Making prayer a daily part of life is the easiest way to make it a priority for your family. It's not too early to teach your children to make prayer a priority. Children form habits very early, so our hope is that if you understand the basics of prayer, it will be simple to place the knowledge and desire to pray in your kids. You are opening the door to your child's prayer life with God and sharing it right alongside of them. How exciting and special to be able to pray together as a family!

### Why?

It's wonderful to be able to talk with your child. While you are teaching your child how to "use their words", it is crucial not to leave out the most important conversations we have: prayer. It is not too early to teach your children to make prayer a priority. Prayers don't have to be elaborate and formal. God hears them all. It makes sense that we teach children to pray in terms that they understand. No matter what, all our words can be directed toward God. After all, He is the most worthy of our words.

### How?

There is a quote that says, "Be the change you wish to see in the world". A great way for your child to see the importance of prayer in their life is to see it as a priority in yours. If you believe it's important, they will too. Through these activities we will learn what prayer is all about and why we do it. The Birthday Faith Experience, will help you **create a prayer specifically for your child**.

When they turned a year old, we helped you create a Birthday Blessing for them. If you haven't done this, don't worry, it isn't too late. A Birthday Blessing is a letter to your child communicating your wishes for their life. What kind of person do you pray they become? What characteristics would you like them to possess?

Choose attributes that your child was blessed with and base your prayer off of them. Your prayer should be short and uncomplicated. If your child possesses a loving heart and is, "Dear God, may John be a good friend and love others as You love us." Repeating this prayer in your child's life reinforces your wish for their character and teaches them to pray daily. As they grow older, they have heard these words spoken over them many times and it is familiar.

This is a prayer they can pray for themselves and qualities they can continue to strive toward.

## Share Your Hopes for the Coming Year

Our hope for you and your two year old is that they would begin to see how important prayer is and that it would be something that shapes their future from here on out, but make sure you share with your child what *your* hopes for your child are. As their parent, you know them best. You know the areas in which they need encouragement, encourage them by sharing your hopes and prayers for them in their second year of life.

### Activity 1: What is prayer?

Prayer is simply communication with God. Have you ever had a one-sided conversation, ever known someone who talks so much you can't get a word in edgewise? Are you ever THAT person to God? Yes, communication is supposed to be one sided, so, technically, prayer is talking and LISTENING to God.

**In Matthew 6:5-8 Jesus tells us what He thinks about prayer:**

*"And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. **6** But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. **7** And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. **8** Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him."*

The two big ideas Jesus shares with us is that he doesn't like us to pray for show or use meaningless words. Process that for a minute. What does it mean to pray just for show? What would it sound like if someone was using meaningless words when they prayed?

So the opposite of this is that Jesus wants prayer to be personal and intimate, and He wants us to be genuine and honest with what we say. The best way to learn about prayer is to START and start with privately talking with God about what's really going on in your life.

## Activity 2: Why do we pray?

God isn't just sitting in heaven on His throne waiting to hear what we want so that He can drop things from the sky for us. Prayer isn't a time to get what we want from God. It's a time for God to give us what He wants for us.

King David is called "a man after God's own heart." If you read Psalms you see evidence of David's constant seeking to know God's heart. David often inquired of the Lord, and, therefore, knew God's heart. The main goal of prayer is to build our personal relationship with God. We get to know His heart through prayer.

### John 15:4-5

*"4 A abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine neither can you, unless you abide in me. 5 I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing."*

When you look at these verses in John you can see that John was communicating to those of us who'd read this that the only way can accomplish anything of any significance is by abiding in Jesus, living life IN Him. The only way to do this is to know Him and the only way to know Him is to communicate with Him. We pray to be close to God. If you find yourself feeling distant from God, reconnect through prayer. In order to teach our children to pray we need to know what prayer is and why we should do it.

## Activity 3: What do we pray for our child?

We can pray LOTS of things for our children. We want to help you figure out a couple things that you specifically pray for your child so that he/she knows exactly what you're praying because they hear it over and over again. We can all easily get off track and off focus on our call to help our children know the love of God. Let's face it, it's easy to let life get in the way. Our desire is that this helping develop a prayer for your child will provide direction and focus as you parent.

Let's take a look at the sweet words Luke uses to describe Jesus in **Luke 2:52**, *"And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man."*

This is a simple verse that illustrates the simplicity we should seek as we write a prayer for our child's life. It's what He was known for as He did ministry on Earth.

As you get ready to formulate a prayer for your child that you'll consistently pray over your child, take some time to consider what's most important to pray for. There are tons of options, but you know your child. You know how God has created him/her. You know their personality traits and what makes them tick. Process a few of these things as you consider a simple prayer that illustrates this.

## Birthday Faith Experience

It's a beautiful thing to hear the words I love you from your child. Equally as beautiful is hearing your child pray to God. We go through lots of prayers with our kids; mealtime prayers, bedtime prayers, etc. This Birthday Faith Experience is designed to help you write a life prayer for your child. A prayer that you'll begin praying out loud on a daily basis with your child. A prayer that your child will hear so often that he/she knows exactly what you want for him/her.

If you participated in the Birthday Blessing, from age one, then you've identified a couple of personality traits that you want for your child. Maybe you were unable to participate in the Birthday Blessing. Regardless, the first step in completing the Invitation to Prayer Birthday Faith Experience is to **identify exactly what you want for your child**. Be specific, identify a couple of characteristics you want for your child to exhibit as he/she grows up.

Next **formulate this into a simple prayer that includes words your child will understand**. For example, if you want your child to be compassionate, your prayer may change the wording to "kind to others." You want the words you choose to be understandable to your two-year-old. As they get older you can use the larger words, but make sure you can explain what your words mean to your child.

Make the prayer a simple 1 or 2 sentence one, one that can be easily repeated, and one that your child will eventually be able to repeat. Begin praying this with your child every night at bedtime. Imagine the significance of praying this prayer over the life of your child as they hear you say your dreams for him/her.

It would be great to make a piece of artwork that includes this prayer that you can put in your child's room. You can consider painted canvas, etched wood, embossed fabric, engraved metal, printed paper, etc.

The point is to build the repetition and rhythm of this prayer into your family's life. It will be one that will be prayed repeatedly so make sure it encompasses what you really want for your child.

## Sample Prayers

*Dear God,  
Give Katelyn the bravery to be a risk taker and help her to see others and love them like do. -Amen*

*Dear God,  
Help David's compassionate heart be one that helps him change the world so others will know You and the hope You alone can bring. -Amen*

*Dear God,  
Thank you for Tristen's tender heart. Help him to be an encourager and a great friend. -Amen*

*Dear God,  
Anthony is a warrior. Help him fight for things in life that are worth fighting for. -Amen*

*Dear God,  
You have given Madison an amazing mind. Help her use this gift to point other to You and help her give you the credit. -Amen*

*Dear God,  
Thank you for making Sam so unique. We pray that she would know that is a gift from you. Show her how to help others who are different see they, too, are wonderfully made. - Amen*

## WHAT'S GOING ON WITH MY 2-YEAR-OLD?

Hopefully this guide will give you a map into the body, mind, and soul of your new two-year-old and as they continue their development.

### PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Around this age, children are old enough to understand simple things in the Bible such as the theme God's Creation. Take your children for walks and look at different things in nature and talk about them.

Start out with **Genesis 1:1** and while walking look at all the things in nature. Then ask your child questions like; *Who made that tree? Did daddy make the tree? No. God made the tree. He is the creator. He is the only one who has power to make things live and who can make the world.*

Then sing songs relating to what you are talking about such as, In the Beginning God Made the Earth.

### PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

**Gross Motor - Movement and Coordination:** Show coordination skills while moving around and engaging in play activities. Fling a ball in an attempt to throw it towards target; pushes friend on riding toy; climb steps of slide; walk on broad balance beam or edge of walkway; imitate a variety of movements (runs, walks, gallops, jumps); jump with both feet.

**Fine Motor:** Demonstrate eye-hand coordination while manipulation and exploring objects. Poke, pound and build with play dough and other sculpting materials; scribble with a variety of instruments beginning to use thumb and fingertips grasp; use wrist rotation to fit puzzle piece into puzzle; unscrew lids to pour from one container to another; pull apart pop beads or connecting blocks with ease; use thumb and forefinger to pick and hold small objects.

### SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

**Self-Concept:** Show an emerging sense of self. Has growing sense of separateness; seek and find pride in developing skills that encourage independence (washing own hands, putting on own coat); realize reflection in the mirror is his.

**Self-Control:** Demonstrate increased skill in identifying and expressing feelings. Verbally state wants and needs ("I want that", "mine", "I'm thirsty"); begin to understand behaviors that hurt self or others (exclaims "no" when another child attempts to hit or bite).

**Cooperation:** Begin to gain a sense of mastery and achievement. Try new experiences; repeat a newly gained skill and seek positive response for achievements from adult (looks at caregiver after completion of task to see response).