

PRAYER FAMILY GUIDE



**a family of faith
in a world of sight**



Passion Creek
CHURCH

**Prayer Family Guide:
a family of faith in a world of sight**

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WHAT IS PRAYER?

“Devote yourselves to prayer with an alert mind and a thankful heart.” Colossians 4:2 (NLT)

When most of us think about prayer, we often think about closing our eyes and asking God for things. And while this certainly is a part of prayer, Jesus teaches us that prayer is about so much more. Prayer is simply talking to God.

Specifically, prayer is the sacred practice of praising and thanking God, listening to God, asking Him for help, and asking Him to help others.

Why is it important to teach our kids to pray?

The Bible says, “Train up a child in the way he should go [teaching him to seek God’s wisdom and will for his abilities and talents], Even when he is old he will not depart from it.” Proverbs 22:6 (AMP)

The Bible also says, “Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done.” Philippians 4:6 (NLT)

If we are to train up our children in the way they should go, then that means teaching them the importance of prayer.

Most of us know how to pray, at least basically, but how do we teach our children to pray?

Our hope is that this guide will serve as a tool in your parenting toolbelt, no matter what ages and stages your children are in. It has a variety of activities designed to help you start conversations about prayer with your children and give you some simple ways that you can teach them how to practice praying in their daily lives, no matter how young they are.

HOW TO USE THIS FAMILY GUIDE

Weekly Rhythm: We want to encourage you to set aside one day every week to go over this guide with your family. Read the introduction and the Bible Example aloud and then start the Family Practice together. This should only take 5-10 minutes of your time, but will be so helpful to teaching them about prayer.

Daily Rhythm: After you have started your weekly rhythm, establish a “daily” rhythm of prayer. For older children, this should be a regular time every day (i.e. at the dinner table or right before bedtime) where the family gathers together to pray in a way that follows the prayer theme of the week. If you have very small children, you might choose to pray at the start of a specific meal or spread out your family prayer to every other day. Either way, this daily rhythm does not have to be long or complicated, but it is important to establish some sort of rhythm to the family prayer, so that children recognize its power and importance in our daily lives.

The guide will be broken up into four sections: Praising and Thanking God, Listening to God, Asking for Help, and Praying for Others.

Each section will cover a specific type of prayer for you and your family to focus on for the week. Read through each section out loud with your kids. As you do, consider pausing every time there’s a question to allow your kids to give a response.

Each section will be organized as follows:

- 1. Introduction:** This section will introduce a type of prayer and explain why it is important.
- 2. The Lord's Prayer:** This section will focus on a few lines of the Lord's Prayer from Matthew 6:9-13 (NIV). Try to work on memorizing this prayer with your kids every day of the practice. One helpful way to do this is to recite it with them at least once every day and then you can work with them on chunks of it throughout the weeks.
- 3. Bible Example:** This section will introduce the children to a person in the Bible. It will tell how they prayed and what we can learn from them. For older children, you can read the entire scripture passage, but for younger children, you can just focus on the brief synopsis that has been provided.
- 4. Family Practice:** This is a practice that will reflect the type of prayer you are learning about. It is good for the whole family and should take 5-10 minutes to complete. This practice should be a part of your daily rhythm.
- 5. Individual Practice:** This practice is geared towards children 8 & up. It also emphasizes the type of prayer for the week, but encourages older children to form independent daily rhythms as they learn how to really spend time with God. As you encourage your children in these practices, make sure to talk with them about what is going on in their prayer lives and don't be afraid to share some things you are learning as you complete the prayer guide for adults.
- 6. Bonus Practice:** This is an extra practice that you can choose to

do with your family. It is generally designed to be more fun and to encourage your children to think about prayer throughout their whole days.

- 7. Journal It!** Some kids struggle to sit still as they are learning. This book contains a blank page at the end of each section where children can respond to what they have learned through a picture or through writing. For kids who want more space to reflect, encourage them to make their own prayer journal by stapling several sheets of paper together and reflecting weekly on the things they learn.

WEEK 1: PRAISING AND THANKING GOD

INTRODUCTION

Say, “What is prayer?”

Simply put, prayer is talking to God. God loves you and He cares about you, and He wants us to talk to Him just like we would talk to our friends and family who also care about us. Just like all our relationships, it is important for us to pray every day so that we can grow closer to God.”

THE LORD'S PRAYER: Memorize Matthew 6:9

Say, “The Bible tells us that Jesus prayed a lot. His disciples asked Him to teach them how to pray. (Luke 11:1) Jesus taught them to pray like this:

“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.” (Matthew 6:9-13, NIV)

This is a very important prayer that Jesus taught to His disciples. Over the next four weeks, we are going to learn this prayer by memorizing it together, a little bit at a time.”

Say, “Today, we are going to focus on the first part of this prayer:

“Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed be your name”

Do you know what ‘hallowed’ means? ‘Hallowed’ means ‘holy’. This part of the prayer tells us that we are to praise God’s name and remember that He is holy.”

Think about something that you really love. Is it a sport, a food, a person, a pet or maybe a toy? Think about how you act when you are passionate about something. Do you think about it a lot? Do you talk about it a lot? When we are passionate about something, that means we really, really like it. And when we really, really like something, we want to spend a lot of our time learning about that thing and telling others about that thing. God wants us to be so excited about Him that we spend time talking about how much we love Him. God wants us to praise Him and thank Him every day for who He is and the things that He has done for us.

King David is a person in the Bible who loved praising and thanking God. All throughout the Psalms, David wrote beautiful songs and poetry expressing how wonderful God’s creation is and how amazing He is. King David can help us learn how to praise God as we pray to Him. Now, listen as we learn more about David and his thankful heart.”

BIBLE EXAMPLE: David, Psalm 145

Say, “King David was the second king of Israel. He was a shepherd and a man after God’s own heart who was anointed by a prophet named Samuel to fulfill the will of God. (1 Samuel 13:14). King David was powerful and brave, and he had lots of wealth. But throughout the scriptures we see that he spends a lot of time talking to God. In the book of Psalms, David poured his heart out to God no matter what His feelings were. In Psalm 145, we see him praising God and thanking Him for all the wonderful things He has done.

David says that he will “praise God’s name forever” (verse 1). He says that God is “merciful and compassionate” (verse 8), “He is good to everyone” (verse 9), “He always keeps His promises” (verse 13), and “He helps people who are struggling with hard things” (verse 14). David focuses on all of the amazing and wonderful things about God and thanks Him over and over for them in this chapter.

The Bible says, “Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!” Philippians 4:4 (NIV). Just like David, God wants us to be happy in Him and to rejoice in Him every day. We can do this by thanking Him for all the wonderful blessings He has given to us and praising Him for being a loving and merciful God.”

FAMILY PRACTICE: Prayers of Gratitude and Praise

- **Younger Kids:** As a family, have each person share something they are thankful for. Then pray for all the things that were mentioned.
- **Older Kids (8 & up):** Invite each family member to share something that they are thankful for. If it is hard for the children to think of ideas, have them reflect on the things that happened in their day they are thankful for or read Psalm 145 together and pray lines from that verse. For example, the beginning of Psalm 145:8 says “The Lord is merciful and compassionate”, so you can pray, “Thank you Lord that you are merciful and compassionate to me.”

INDIVIDUAL PRACTICE (8 & UP): Invite older children to keep a list of things that they are thankful for and to add to that list each day.

- Encourage them to pick a consistent time each day this week and a place in the house where they can be alone.
- Encourage them to spend 3-5 minutes of each day reflecting on 2 or 3 blessings on the list and thanking God for them.
- Encourage them by asking them daily to share their experiences and what they are learning.
- Make sure to share some things that you are learning about prayer in your daily practices.
- Children imitate what they see, so even the most reluctant child will participate better if they see that their parents are participating.

BONUS PRACTICE: Thankful Walk.

- Go on a walk or a hike as a family.
- As you walk, encourage everyone to take turns pointing out things they are thankful for.
- Some examples, “Look at that pretty flower on that cactus. I’m glad God made that flower.” Or “Thank you, God, for beautiful sunsets.”

JOURNAL IT! Invite the children to use the pages in this book (or have them create their own notebook).

- Have them write or draw one thing that they have learned about praising and thanking God.

WEEK 2: LISTENING TO GOD

INTRODUCTION

Say, “As we learned in the first week, praying can be about praising and thanking God, but praying is also about listening to God. Listening to God does not mean that we will hear His voice out loud, but when we listen to Him, we are asking Him for His will to be done. We are also asking that our prayer time with Him can be used to shape us into people who will obey Him and to live the lives He desires for us.”

THE LORD'S PRAYER: Memorize Matthew 6:10

“Your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.” (NIV)

BIBLE EXAMPLE: Elijah, 1 Kings 19:9-18

Say, “Elijah was a faithful prophet of God. He served in Israel at the time of an evil king named Ahab. Ahab didn't love God. He worshiped false gods and would not listen to Elijah when he tried to get him to turn from his evil ways and back to the one true God. Now, because King Ahab was so evil, he killed almost all of God's prophets. At this point of the story, the evil king is angry at Elijah and hunting for him to kill him. Elijah runs away to hide in a cave. (1 Kings 18:22, 19:3,9). Elijah is very sad and very

scared for his life, but God does not leave him all alone.

God asks Elijah, 'What are you doing?' and Elijah says, 'The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left and now they are trying to kill me too,' (1 Kings 19: 9-10). Then, God speaks to him in a gentle whisper and Elijah hides his face in awe. When Elijah cries out to Him again, God tells him what to do. He sends him away to find more people who love and trust Him, showing Elijah that he is not alone. He tells Elijah where to find new kings for the land that do not hate God. He also sends Elijah to find a helper, a new prophet of God named Elisha.

In Elijah's time of need, God speaks to him. He reminds Him that He is there for him and sends other believers to help him (1 Kings 19:11-18). Throughout this whole story, Elijah keeps obeying God, talking to God and listening to God. Even when nothing seems to be going right, God is there for Elijah. He reminds him with a gentle whisper that He is there, and He boldly brings up mighty leaders to kill King Ahab and conquer Elijah's enemies. God is always there for us to talk to.

He wants to hear when we are mad or sad or happy or scared. He will help us, but we must be able to quiet down our thoughts and hearts and listen to Him. Proverbs 3:6 says, 'Seek His will in all you do, and He will show you which path to take.'” (NLT)

FAMILY PRACTICE: Daily Review Questions

Say, “This week, we’re going to practice reflecting on our day to see when we might have missed God whispering to us.”

The following practice is best done at the end of your day, either at the dinner table or before bedtime.

- **Younger Kids:** As a family, take turns reflecting on your day by answering 3 questions and then praying about it as a family. Have each person say one thing that was good about their day, then one thing that was hard about their day, and then one way that they saw God working in their day. You can help younger ones with the last question by asking, “Can you tell me something good that happened today that we can thank Jesus for?”
- **Older Kids (8 & up):** Have the older kids answer the questions above, but encourage them to conclude by each saying a prayer about their day.

INDIVIDUAL PRACTICE (8 & UP): Invite older children to pray through the Prayer of Examen.

Have them pick a consistent time near the end of each day this week and a place in the house where they can be alone. Encourage them to take 5-10 minutes to pray through each step in the Prayer of Examen.

Have them journal anything that they want to remember or reflect on:

- **Reflect.** Think about your interactions of the day- at school, at home with family or with friends. Think about the happy moments and the hard moments that you experienced.
- **Review.** Think about times in your day where you saw God working.
- **Repent.** Confess any sins to God and ask for His forgiveness.
- **Rejoice.** Pray for something that you are thankful for.

JOURNAL IT! Invite the children to use the pages in this book (or have them create their own notebook).

- Have them write or draw one thing that they have learned about listening to God.

WEEK 3: ASKING FOR HELP

INTRODUCTION

Say, “This week we are going to focus on asking God for help. The Bible says, “Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need and thank him for all he has done.” (Philippians 4:6). When we ask God for help, the Bible says we can trust that God hears us.”

THE LORD’S PRAYER: Memorize Matthew 6:11-12

“Give us today our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts
as we forgive our debtors.” (NIV)

BIBLE EXAMPLE: Hannah, 1 Samuel 1:1-20

Say, “Have you ever heard the story of Hannah? She was a woman in the Bible who really, really wanted a baby. She wanted a baby for a long, long time, but she didn’t have one and she was very sad. But even though she was sad, she did not give up hope. She continued to trust in God by asking Him for a child.

In 1 Samuel 1, the Bible says that she prayed, ‘Oh Lord of Heaven’s Armies, if you will look upon my sorrow and answer my prayer and give me a son, then I will give him back to you.’ How did God respond? He answered her prayers!

God heard Hannah and gave her a baby named Samuel. Samuel went to live in God's house and served Him for many years. He became a man of God who anointed and helped King Saul and King David, the first two kings of Israel.

One thing we can learn from the story of Hannah is that it is important for us to pray to God and tell Him our needs and even our wants.

He cares about you, whether you are sad or mad or scared, and He wants to hear from you. He may not always give us exactly what we want, but He will always give us help and peace when we ask for it.

The Bible says, 'Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.'" 1 Peter 5:7 (NIV)

FAMILY PRACTICE: Praying for Help

- **Younger Kids:** Ask each child to tell you something that they want to ask God for or something that they are worried/scared about. After you listen to each child, tell them that you are going to pray to God about it. Have them bow their heads and close their eyes. Aloud, say a quick prayer to God about your child's concerns. For example, "Dear Jesus, thank you for [child's name]. Sometimes at night, he/she is scared of the dark. Please help them not be scared of the dark and give them good, peaceful dreams. In Jesus' name. Amen."
- **Older Kids (8 & up):** Invite each child to pray about something they want to ask God for or about something that they are feeling uneasy or nervous about. Practice leading by example by praying for something that you need. If your children are too nervous to pray aloud, encourage them to share their requests and then pray for them.

INDIVIDUAL PRACTICE (8 & UP):

Say, "It can be hard to put into words what we want to pray for ourselves, but that's okay! When we don't know what to pray, one helpful thing we can do is pray scripture."

Invite each child to pick a scripture to pray for themselves. Have them pick a specific time each day where they can go off by themselves, pray the scripture, and reflect on it.

Encourage them by asking them daily to share their experiences and what they are learning. Continue to share some of your own prayer experiences with them as you embark on your own prayer journey. Here are some examples of how to pray scripture:

- “Thank you, Lord, that you are my shepherd. Thank you that you give me everything that I need.” Psalm 23: 1
- “Thank you, Lord, that you are with me. I do not need to be afraid.” Isaiah 41:10
- Pray for the fruit of the spirit. Pick one or a few to focus on or pray through the list. “Lord, help me be loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful, gentle, self-controlled.” Galatians 5:22

JOURNAL IT! Invite the children to use the pages in this book (or have them create their own notebook).

- Have them write or draw one thing that they have learned about asking God for help.

WEEK 4: PRAYING FOR OTHERS

INTRODUCTION

Say, “So far we have learned about praising and thanking God, listening to God, and asking God for help. Today we are going to focus on praying for others. The Bible tells us to pray for all people, to thank God for them, and to even pray for people in authority over us. (1 Timothy 2:1-2).”

THE LORD'S PRAYER: Memorize Matthew 6:13

“And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from the evil one.” (NIV)

BIBLE EXAMPLE: Jesus, John 17:17-23, Luke 23:34

Say, “The best example of prayer in the Bible is Jesus, Himself. Jesus was the son of God. He knew everything that would happen, and God knew everything Jesus was thinking, but Jesus spent a lot of time in prayer anyway.

He prayed for help, He prayed for his friends, He prayed for people who didn't know Him, and He even prayed for His enemies. Before He ascended up to heaven, Jesus prayed for the disciples that He was leaving behind. He prayed that God would protect them, that He would give them wisdom and holiness, that they would know the truth and follow it, and that they

would come together in unity to help each other as they spread the gospel all over the world. (John 17:11-23). He even prayed that the people who didn't believe in Him yet would be saved. (John 17:20).

But Jesus didn't stop there.

In Luke 23:34, when He was dying on the cross for our sins, the Bible says that Jesus prayed for his enemies, the bad people that had him killed. He said, "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing." (NLT).

Jesus wants us to pray like He did. He wants us to pray for people that we get along with, people that are mean to us, people that don't know Him and for people who are in charge over us, like our teachers, our mayors and the President of the United States. He wants us to pray for their protection, for their healing (if they are sick), for their encouragement and that they become followers of Jesus.

We can do this by asking people we know to share their prayer requests with us or we can pray quietly for things we know people need.

Praying for others is a beautiful way for us to love people and for us to become more like Jesus."

FAMILY PRACTICE: Praying for Others

- **Younger Kids:** Make a list of 5-7 people your family would like to pray for over the next week. Each day, focus on a different person. You can either have each child pray for that person, or just have one parent pray aloud as everyone else listens. In order to get the kids to connect better with this practice, write out the list and post it somewhere your whole family can read it. If you want something more creative than a piece of paper, writing it with a whiteboard marker on the sliding glass door can be a great solution.
- **Older Kids (8 & up):** Do the activity that is listed above. Have your children help you make a list and encourage each one to pray each day. When you gather to pray, you can focus on one specific person or have each child pray for a person that fits into the category you selected. You can choose from the following list of suggestions or choose your own:
 - Leaders of the Country
 - Pastors at Passion Creek Church
 - Friends at Church
 - Friends who don't know Jesus
 - Friends who are sick or sad
 - Family members
 - Missionaries Around the World

INDIVIDUAL PRACTICE (8 & UP)

Say, “Do you remember when you practiced praying scripture over yourself? This week we are going to focus on praying scripture over others.”

Invite each child to pick a scripture to pray for others, whether one specific person or a category of people (i.e. friends at school). Have them pick a specific time each day where they can go off by themselves, pray the scripture and reflect on it. Encourage them by asking them daily to share their experiences and what they are learning. Continue to share some of your own prayer experiences with them as you embark on your own prayer journey. Here are some examples:

- “Jesus, please flood their hearts with the light of confident hope that they have in you.” (Ephesians 1:18)
- “Lord, please make their love overflow for each other. Let them love each other well like you love us.” (1 Thessalonians 3:12)
- “Lord Jesus, let those who are weary come to you and find hope and healing. Please give them rest from their burdens.” (Matthew 11:28)
- “Lord, be with those that are in trouble. Let them call on you in their pain. Rescue and honor them. Bless them with a long life and with salvation.” (Psalm 91:14-16).

JOURNAL IT! Invite the children to use the pages in this book (or have them create their own notebook).

- Have them write or draw one thing that they have learned about praying for others.

BONUS RESOURCES

BOOKS

- “Raising Prayerful Kids” by Stephanie Thurling and Sarah Holmstrom
- “Any Time, Any Place, Any Prayer” by Laura Wifler
- “Praying the Scriptures for Your Children” by Jodie Berndt

BREATH PRAYERS

A Breath Prayer is a short phrase that can be repeated throughout the day. Breath prayers are an easy and calming way to reset focus on Jesus throughout our day. Here are a few good examples:

- Jesus, help me to obey
- Father, help me to forgive
- Jesus, you are with me
- This is hard, but You are with me

Some of these breath prayers were taken from the book, “Raising Prayerful Kids” by Stephanie Thurling and Sarah Holstrom on page 158. You can find more detailed examples of breath prayers and how to practice them with your children in this book.

