

How to Effectively Speak Blessings Over Your Children

Of all the tools God gave you to raise a child, the most powerful is your tongue. Here's how to use it for good.

It is perhaps among the most humbling features of God's ways with humankind that He confers upon us a staggering degree of power (and responsibility) in the capacity of our words to cause things to happen. It is within the broad scope of this remarkable truth that the privilege and power of speaking blessings upon our children come into view.

From the opening words of the Bible, the power of the spoken word is in evidence. In essence, words are not only the means *by* which creation is made, but they are also the substance—the stuff—of which the tangible realm is shaped. “And God said” appears in the Genesis text; and the next thing, *what* God said appears in our world.

The power of words is not evident just when God uses them in creating. It is also evident in His ways that teach us how to live within that creation. All the Father's laws are essentially God's guidelines for making life “work” in the realm He has created for man's fruitfulness and fulfillment.

When obedience aligns with those laws, the power of God's divine order *advances* the beauty of His intended blessing, and the force of His words (laws) function *for* us—effectively releasing the divine intention for ever-expanding dimensions of human enrichment and joy.

In contrast, when disobedience refuses God's laws, the opposite of blessing ensues. The “curse”—that is, the penalty of disobedience—is not so much a direct action of God's punishment as it is the raw impact felt when sin invokes the *reversal* of God's order. It is as though the power of His

words runs backward *against* the divine design and shrinks the boundaries of God's intended blessing.

Thus, the power of words is seen in both our creation as beings, planned by our Creator, and our instruction as children, beloved by our Father. And it is in this light that the power of our words can best be understood.

Proverbs 18:21 teaches us, "Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit." The profundity of this truth is seen in all of life. Kind words breed warmth of relationship; harsh words breed tension and separation. True words build trust and confidence; lies break trust, and doubt and suspicion replace confidence. In fact, words are central to our most meaningful relationships. For example, we:

Confidently and readily do business with people whom we can affirm are ones who keep their word. People who don't do this dissolve the grounds for their own enduring success.

Build friendships with those who understand our *hearts* as well as our lips—who truly perceive what we mean when we say the words we say, and relate to us by fully grasping the spirit of our spoken words.

Establish our marriage covenants with an oath, which according to God's Word is to be an abiding commitment of truthfulness and fidelity and which, if broken, brings a frightening breakdown of the oath's power.

Teach our children what is right and with those words seek to relay the very principles of God's order so that His blessing will be *advanced* and not *reversed* as they grow from year to year.

In all these regards, *life* is transmitted, experienced and multiplied when the tongue speaks its truth and love, while *death* is inevitable otherwise—through shrinking,

withering, suffocating or killing what should or might have been.

You Have the Power!

Early in the Bible, the power of God's people to speak blessing upon one another is clearly shown. Noah blesses Shem and Japheth for their respect, rather than mockery, of his dignity as their father (see Gen. 9:26-27). Melchizedek blesses Abraham for honoring God for His protection and victory and for Abraham's tithing instead of conceding to the offers of the king of Sodom to take the goods for himself (see Gen. 14:18-24).

Repeatedly God tells Abraham that his offspring will be instruments of blessing to the whole world—both in their deeds as well as with their words (see Gen. 12:3; 18:18; 22:16-18).

From these early experiences, the understanding of the power of blessing began to develop, and we see it becoming a practice of parents toward their children.

Isaac evidences the depth and meaning of this practice in his attentiveness to purposefully minister such a blessing to his sons (see Gen. 27). Notwithstanding the twists the story takes, the underlying fact is that this practice of blessing was seen not only as something God would hear and enforce, but also as something very determinative in the child's life.

The principle is clear: God has given parents the privilege and power to speak blessing upon their children and, with that blessing, to advance life, health, growth, joy and self-confidence! We need to learn to steward this privilege as a dynamic aspect of raising our children and blessing them in every way we possibly can.

The Many Ways to Bless

The first order of blessing is reflected by the simplest

things we might do, which, though seemingly ordinary, carry an immense weight in telling children they are loved, cared for, valued and being “looked over” (rather than overlooked).

Remember those childhood experiences when you simply sensed the approval or care of a parent or loved one? We can learn from the ultimate Father by noting how He blesses us with His attentions in distinct ways that parallel our warmest memories as children when someone blessed us in simple yet affirming ways:

An arm over the shoulder or an embrace in a time of disappointment or fear (see Deut. 33:27)

A pat on the back or a firm steadying hand at a crucial moment (see Ps. 139:5)

A whisper in the ear, giving quiet assurance or secret instructions (see Is. 30:21)

A snug tucking in bed when surrounded by the darkness of night (see Ps. 127:2-3)

A kiss on the cheek or being dandled on a parent’s knee (see Ps. 103:13; “pities” is translated from the Hebrew word *rawcham*, which means “to tenderly love or caress”).

However, the most affirming are those blessings that come in *words*: (1) words that affirm and approve; (2) words that commend and compliment; (3) words that specifically speak love and affection; (4) words that invoke hope and self-confidence; and (5) words that answer pain and disappointment with support and faith.

The fountainhead blessing in the Bible is found in Numbers 6:24-26. This is the blessing God ordained that the priests of Israel use to speak blessing in His name over His own children, whom He called “the children” of Israel.

First, I call this the “fountainhead” blessing because this

blessing was transmitted to every succeeding generation for use and exercise by faith—right down to the present moment, as we speak it with privileged boldness.

The New Testament clearly reveals that every believer in Christ is not only *now* called holy—a saint in Christ (see Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:2)—but also *now* bestowed the office of a priest—a minister to God in worship and *for* God to others (see 1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:5-6). This is the Bible’s authoritative grounds for us to speak blessing, knowing that the power of God’s eternal Word and promise are backing up that blessing—that our Father stands fully ready to enforce and apply all its implications unto the full dimensions of their blessed intention.

Second, this blessing is a fountainhead because the ideas contained in it overflow with so much meaning that, if it is understood and not merely repeated, it becomes a warm and powerful invocation loaded with promise and power.

Repeat Numbers 6:24-26 with me, and then examine its depth: “The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.”

The rich dimension of this blessing deserves the understanding and conscious desire to commend its scope of goodness upon those over whom it is spoken. Consider the individual phrases:

The Lord bless you and keep you: The thrice-referenced *Lord* in whose name this blessing is offered is the God of the universe; He is *unlimited* in His capacity to prosper the efforts of those He *blesses*, and He is *unrestricted* in His power to protect those He *keeps*. (It is perfectly appropriate to add the name of your child after *you*: “The Lord bless you and keep you, Mary.”)

The Lord make His face shine upon you: His face, which shines “like the sun shining in its strength” (Rev. 1:16), radiates

with His glory—a glory that goes before us, defends from behind us and overspreads us with the excellence of His presence (see Is. 4:5; 58:8).

And be gracious to you: These words commend the one so blessed to receive the unmeasured bounty of God's *grace*, which is that quality of God's nature that bespeaks not only His will to show a forgiveness we do not deserve (see Eph. 2:8), but also His readiness to confer upon us the qualifying capability to receive daily power for living that we do not possess. This power sustains us "until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6-7).

The Lord lift up His countenance upon you: Again, the Lord—the one and only maker of heaven and earth, our Savior Redeemer and the King of the universe—is now invited to allow His smile of approval to surround the individual being blessed. His countenance shines with love upon His own and when directed against evil, scatters the power of the enemy's efforts to curse (see Prov. 16:15; 20:8).

And give you peace: God's peace is a guardian that preserves the soul in the same way a sentry stands watch at his post (see Phil. 4:6-7). Further, His peace describes that progressive infusion of His multidimensional wholeness of spirit, soul and body, thus affording that every aspect of an individual's being or personality may live within the security of God's peaceable kingdom (see Is. 32:18).

Speak These Blessings Often!

Have regular times when you lay your hands on your child's head. Speak (or whisper) the words with the quiet confidence that 1) you are privileged by the living God to declare this blessing, and 2) God Himself will attend to the word spoken because it is His Word you are speaking according to His will.

Avoid letting this practice become either a legalistic or ritualistic exercise. The formation of a habit of blessing is

not unworthy, but variety in conferring the blessing may be very desirable.

To assist in achieving variety, consider varying your blessing by invoking different compound names of the Lord and praying for Him to apply the power evident in each term to the need of the child. Listed below are the most commonly referenced compound names of Jehovah, the trait of His person to which each refers and a suggestion of how to use the name:

Jehovah-Jireh: The Lord Our Provider (see Gen. 22:14): Speak a blessing in the face of specific need, whatever realm the need may represent.

Jehovah-Raah: The Lord Our Shepherd (see Ps. 23:1): Speak a blessing with the reminder of God's never-forsaking presence and protection.

Jehovah-Shalom: The Lord Our Peace (see Judg. 6:24): Speak a blessing that will comfort in the midst of turmoil or upset.

Jehovah-Rapha: The Lord Our Healer (see Ex. 15:26): Speak a blessing that calls for God's grace of healing, knowing that He wants to heal the sick.

Jehovah-Nissi: The Lord Our Victory (see Ex. 17:15): Speak a blessing that reminds the child that the battle is not theirs but the Lord's.

Jehovah-Tsidkenu: The Lord Our Righteousness (see Ps. 23:3): Speak a blessing that declares how justice (righteousness) will come from God, even when unfair circumstances seem to be dominating.

Jehovah-Shammah: The Lord Is Present (see Ezek. 48:35): Speak a blessing that deepens the assurance of the Lord's attendant care and keeping presence.

As you bless, always see that your demeanor conveys the spirit and heart of our loving, living God. He not only wants to

bless that child, but He also has called you and me to accept the responsibility for directly *inviting* that blessing.

The *expression* on your face, the *tone* with which you speak, the *touch* of your hand placed upon the child's head or shoulder, and the *time* and *timing* of your conferral of the blessing all should be appropriate to the moment and contribute to the child's sense of being loved because they are being blessed.

Use this prayer of dedication (as often as you need to) as you bless and minister to children:

"Father, I am astounded that You would confer upon me the overwhelming privilege of being Your representative in both announcing and pronouncing Your blessing upon a child. As I receive this truth, I make this declaration:

"'You are my God, and it is Your almighty throne I honor in this action of blessing children.

"'I denounce any notion that my words are the source of the power in this blessing, but I also deny any idea that suggests my words are unimportant in this dramatic transaction.

"'The fact that You make me Your middle person, reaching to heaven—to Your throne and then to a child, who is Your created wonder and given to me to love and serve—is an awesome wonder in my sight.'

"And so I ask You to help me minister blessings always with the wisdom, faith and gentle grace that will cause the children in my life to know by that blessing how beloved they are by You and by me. Amen."

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founder of The Church On The Way in Van Nuys, Calif., and a prolific writer and musical composer. As someone who knows something about raising children, Jack and his wife, Anna, have four children, 11 grandchildren and a growing number of great-grandchildren. From Blessing Your Children, copyright © 2002, 2012 by Jack W. Hayford. Published by Regal Books, Ventura, Calif. Used by permission.

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