

The Luke 11:1 Way to Impart a Legacy of Prayer to Your Children

A new level of prayer the Lord was inviting me and my family into began with a praying mantis perched on our suburban Toronto doorstep every morning for three weeks. *Odd*, I thought. Praying mantises (green insects with little “hands” clasped in prayer) may be found in farmers’ fields but do not normally come into the city and particularly do not arrive at the same door for three weeks in a row.

After some inquiring of the Lord, I realized He was trying to get a point across—it was time to learn to pray at a whole new level. Making a long-term story short, within a few months, my husband and I began to give our mornings to the Lord in intensive prayer; we launched a house of prayer and later helped build numerous other houses of prayer worldwide. Along the way, we realized we couldn’t “do” house of prayer until we and our family, including our six children, had become a house of prayer.

Little eyes are watching and little ears are listening as mothers and fathers either reflect (or fail to reflect) the will of the Lord. Jesus’ disciples were also watching and listening to Him as He prayed, impelling them to ask, “Teach us to pray” (Luke 11:1b). As Jesus taught and modeled to His disciples a lifestyle of prayer, so must we as parents teach and model to our main disciples—our children—a life of prayer. One of the most touching statements I’ve heard one of our daughters make was about the way God inspired her to pray after she came down the stairs in the quiet of early mornings and saw her parents in prayer before the Lord. If we are going to teach it, we must actually do it.

Even babies sitting in a high chair can learn prayer as a parent clasps little hands in theirs to pray over the meal. Taking turns having family members pray at the table, at night before bed or before having a time of family home group is an easy way to initiate kids in praying out loud. When our children were old enough to read and write, we commissioned them to have personal prayer, time in the Word and journal time (listening to the voice of God) first thing in the morning. Sometimes it worked better for a child to have that time in the privacy of their bedroom right after waking, and others wanted their "God time" after breakfast in a comfortable chair in the living room. Either way, we established the daily habit of personal prayer for our kids at around age 5. Years ago, after I reminded my youngest daughter to have her God time, she said to me, "Mom, you don't need to remind me anymore. It's in me." What a delight to know the habit of prayer was instilled.

In addition to prayer, we have encouraged our children to practice what we call decrees or proclamations in agreement with the Scriptures. Often, they will begin their prayer time by praying and personalizing a Scripture such as Jude 24: "Now to Him who is able to keep [me] from falling and to present [me] blameless before the presence of His glory with rejoicing." They may also decree something specific to a particular need.

When one of our daughters (we have one son and five daughters) lamented that she didn't have many good friends, we sat her down to pray about it together. Then we encouraged her to begin to daily decree, "God is bringing me good, godly friends." It was short and simple and also effective. Within weeks, one girl moved into our city and started attending our church, another girl who had been more of a distant acquaintance to our daughter expressed interest in befriending her and a third moved into our neighborhood. Suddenly, our daughter had three new friends!

Our son greatly desired a godly wife and began to pray and decree, "The Lord is sending me my wife who loves God and is saving herself for me." About a year later, our son met and married a lovely woman of God, who did save herself for him, and they have three beautiful children together.

Teaching our children to fast is also important. It can begin with fasting things like ice cream, chocolate or a movie at younger ages and progress to a lifestyle of fasting. One of our daughters fasted movies for a year at age 16. That was a challenge, but she came out of that year a woman of great passion for Jesus, which has never abated to this day.

The Lord impressed on me years ago that in addition to love, one of the greatest things I can do for my children is pray for them and teach them to pray. This leaves a legacy of walking with and talking to the Spirit, which is essential to abiding in Christ and bearing fruit in all areas of life. Our children, to this day, are actively involved in pursuing a life in Christ, most within the prayer movement. {eo}

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