

PRAYER ADVENTURES

20 Family Prayer Practices & Experiences with Your Teen

Introduction and Explanation:

Prayer is such an important part of our lives as Christians. It also should be an important part of our families, especially during the pre-teen and teenage years of spiritual development. Often, however, during these years, we as parents assume that the work of teaching our children to pray is over. We might feel less comfortable or feel like praying with our children is treating them like they are younger.

These years are still very important years of mental, emotional, social and spiritual development, preparing them for their college and career years. Even more so, during these final years in our home, we need to continue to be actively praying with our children. Here are 20 family prayer practices and experiences that can continue to unite our family and grow our children:

PRACTICES

1. Travel Times & Vacations

As a family, when going someplace, whether it be just around town, sitting in traffic, or going on those long drives on vacation, make a choice to take some time to pray. You are trapped in the car and together anyway, so why not take a few minutes to use some of that time to be intentional with your child? Instead of just having the radio on or devices out, get in the practice of asking everyone to take a couple minute break to talk about what is going on everyone's personal life and the world around them. After everyone has shared something take turns praying for each other.

2. Love Your Neighbor

Instead of just staying to yourself as a family in your neighborhood, make an effort to get to know the people who live on either side of you and across the street. As you get to know them and maybe even some of their problems and struggles, instead of gossiping about them in your home, pray for them. It is so easy to fall into a gossip trap, talking about the people who live in your neighborhood, instead get in the practice of stopping and praying for them. Even take it a step further and ask your neighbors how you can pray for them!

3. Pastors & Church Staff

As your family attends your local church, make it a practice to make a list of everyone who serves on staff both pastors and support people and pray for them. Create a rotation of weeks and pray for that person and their family for an entire week. If you are comfortable, ask or email the person and ask them for specific requests. If you have a photo directory or there is a picture on your church's website print out the person's picture and post it on the refrigerator as a reminder to pray for them.

4. News and World Events

As your children get older, take the opportunity to watch the news together. Talk openly and honestly about the issues that are going on in the world. Allow them to ask questions or your

opinion on things, but also allow them to express their own opinions and thoughts on topics as well. Most importantly, make it a family practice to pray for the leaders, issues, and tragedies in our world.

5. Waiter/Waitress/Servers

Instead of leaving a gospel pamphlet or tract, make it a practice when you go out to eat as a family, before praying for your food, to ask your server for a prayer request. They will be sure to be surprised and you will be amazed at what they might share. At the end of the meal, of course, make sure to leave a generous tip. If it is someplace that your family goes often, your family can follow up with your server to see how things are going with that request.

6. Hospital/Nursing Home Visits

When visiting friends or family members in the hospital or at a nursing home. Make it a practice to stop by a couple rooms, with the hospital's/nursing home's permission, to pray. If you are willing, find out what patients haven't had many visitors, stop in their room to visit and pray for some of them.

7. Holidays

Thanksgiving is the usual family holiday we think about when it comes having a family prayer time, but what about the rest of the holidays we often celebrate as families? Make it a practice to make prayer a part of family holidays. Get in the practice of doing more than a quick prayer before the meal, but include a time of prayer during the meal time or celebration. Think about as a family why you are celebrating the holiday and take some time to pray in ways that are specific. Here are a few examples:

- New Year's: new beginning, getting rid of old habits
- Valentine's Day: love, friendship
- Easter: the cross, the resurrection
- Memorial Day: protection, people serving in the military
- 4th of July: freedom
- Labor Day: jobs, careers, things that God provides though having a job
- Christmas: birth of Christ, gifts and provision

8. Sports Teams

Sports are overtaking your family's life and your children's time. Often with game schedules and practices, families are being forced to make a choice between sports and church attendance. Why not create a spiritual practice as a family of praying for games, players, coaches, and even the opposing teams? Sports can be a powerful witness as our children make a choice about their sportsmanship on the field, and also how we, as parents, choose to act on the sidelines. Taking time on the way to the game or even taking a moment at the game creates a spiritual practice of dedicating our time and talent to God.

9. Prom/Date Night

When your child takes the big step of beginning to date or has the first special date night (prom, dance, school sponsored date-dinner...), make it a spiritual practice to pray for and with your child. We talk to our children about sexuality and purity, but also follow it up with prayer. Having a moment with your child or with your child and their date will surely change the mindset and mood of these big relational steps.

10. Future Spouse

It is never too early to start talking to your child about marriage, relationships and a future spouse. It also is never too early to pray for and with your child about who they will eventually marry. With divorces rates continuing to rise and young adults waiting longer to finally get married, make it a practice to both talk and pray about a future spouse. Choose times that fit with your family's spiritual

conversations and culture to naturally include prayers for future wisdom, blessing and guidance.

11. Friendships/Peer Relationships

Second only to our influence as parents is the influence of peers, both positive and negative. We must get in the practice of praying with our children about their relationships and specifically for individuals in their life. When our children come to us about a conflict or a peer struggle make it a practice in your home to stop and take it to God in prayer. Even in the instances of bullying or negative relationships, follow the Biblical instruction to pray for your “enemies” or “those who persecute you”.

12. Emergency Vehicles

Whenever you are driving as a family somewhere and you see an accident or an emergency vehicle, make it a practice to take time to have a quick family prayer time. More often than not, if there is an accident your family is sitting in traffic anyway. Make those moments sacred family moments by taking time to pray specifically for the victim and also the hard working firemen, paramedics, and policemen.

EXPERIENCES

13. Family Hike

Find a park or nature trail to take a family hike. Instead of only hiking make it a “holy hike” by spending the time in pray, praise, and worship. Take time throughout the hike to think of or look for things that you can praise God about. While you hike, come up with some praise and worship songs that you can sing as prayers of praise.

14. First Job

A first job, whether big or small, is a big deal for young teens, so consider making it a prayer experience. From searching, interviewing, waiting to be hired and accepting the job make the whole experience a time to consider God’s best. A first job can be a prayer time of considering wise stewardship not only of the money made and spent, but also of how our child will steward their time and abilities.

15. Driver’s License

A prayer experience can accompany this new freedom and responsibility that comes with getting a driver’s license. Similar to a first job, there is a process that can also be a prayer time as a family. Receiving a permit, taking the written test and road test, and receiving the license can all be times of prayer as family and with your child. Take time to talk and pray over this new big step in their life, for safety and discernment.

16. Adopt a Block

As a family prayer experience and family service day, get some rubber gloves, a box of garbage bags, and choose a block of your town that needs some clean up. Spend time picking up trash and also praying for the people in that area. Look for opportunities to meet people who live there and ask them how you as a family can pray for them.

17. Grown Up Trick or Treat

As your children get older and start to “outgrow” dressing up and going out trick or treating for candy consider a new service and prayer experience. Consider a “trick or treat so others can eat” project as a family. Find a local food pantry, ministry or even a family in need. Change the usual trick or treat process by collecting food instead of candy. A week before your area’s usual trick or treating night, create small flyers or notes explaining that you are collecting food and who you are collecting it for. Give out the flyers or place the flyers in the doors of homes you plan on visiting.

The night of trick or treat, as a family choose whether you want to dress up or not, but either way go around and collect the food. Make it a special time as a family to pray for the people you are collecting the food for and also consider writing some prayers of encouragement to be added to the food you are donating.

18. Teacher Appreciation

At the beginning or end of the year, or even during May, National Teacher Appreciation month, think of creative ways to help and honor teachers at your local school. If you are homeschooled, pick the nearest school to your home. Have your family write personal notes of encouragement and prayers to all the teachers, including the principals and assistants. If you are allowed before, after, or over a weekend go to the school to pray over the school, teachers, and students.

19. Bottled Water

As a summer time service/ministry project set up a prayer and ice cold water stand downtown or somewhere in a busy section of town. Beforehand write encouraging Bible verses and notes of prayer on all of the bottles. Have fun as a family by decorating and making signs. When people stop by for a drink have a jar for prayer requests. Collect a prayer request for every drink given out. Make sure over the next week or two to make time to pray as a family for each of the requests.

20. Rake and Request

In the fall, go out as a family with rakes and bags to rake up your neighbor's yards, go to another neighborhood, or drive around as a family looking for a yard in need of raking. Instead of accepting money, accept only prayer requests before you start. As you rake, take time as family to pray for the request.