



Talking to God, part 1 of 2—

Talking to God

Nursery Through Preschool

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During the first six years of life, little children can learn to ask God for help, to tell God their joys, to thank God for good things, to tell God what they like about Him, and to say “God, I’m sorry.” All the ways that young children talk with family and friends, they can learn to pray to God.

Pray in the Church Nursery

Look for ways to blend care with prayer. When you rock a baby, consider using a prayer chorus as a lullaby, such as “I Will Praise Him” Or “God Is So Good.” Just slow the tempo and lower the volume as you sing babies to sleep with prayer.

During diaper-changing times, take time to draw each baby’s attention to a nearby picture of Jesus. Tap the picture so the baby will look at it. Then to the tune of “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star,” sing “Jesus, Jesus, I love you, and I know you love me too.”

Nursery teachers can also blend prayer with teaching. For example, in a lesson about creation, a teacher might use an animal puppet or toy to get a baby’s attention with frisky movements and animal sounds. After offering the animal to the baby, the teacher might say, “Thank You, God, for making (dogs). (Dogs) make us happy.” The same

process could be used with a book or picture.

Pray with Toddlers And Twos

Continue to use the nursery prayer strategies with toddlers. Their higher activity level and growing understanding will also allow them to participate in some prayers. A toddler may begin singing a repeated word or two



from a song prayer, for example. Add other prayers too. If a toddler takes a tumble, apply prayer right along with the kiss and Band-Aid.

Toddlers can also help decide what to pray. If a lesson is about thanking God for food, lay play food or food pictures near the toddler(s). Say, “God gives us food. Let’s thank God for food. (Michael), choose a food. Thank You, God, for (food Michael

chose).” The child may also be able to name the food or to say “thank you.” Encourage him to say as much as he will. Always praise his efforts—even if he just looks at the picture you pass before him. Similar prayer interactions can be used with board books, posters, toys, and safe snacks.

Toddlers can also participate in action prayers. While the teacher says the prayer and does the action, the children watch and, with repetition, begin to do the actions too. Here’s a simple action prayer:

Thank You, God, for fingers.

(Wiggle fingers.)

Thank You, God, for toes.

(Reach down to touch shoes.)

Thank You for my tummy.

(Pat tummy.)

Thank You for my nose.

(Tap nose with forefinger.)

This kind of childlike prayer builds on toddlers’ ability to understand more than they can say. The gestures allow toddlers to use body language to express joyful feelings to God.

Preschool and Kindergarten Prayers

Children between 3 and 6 years old also need practice saying prayers in their own words. I-say-you-say prayers can help children begin to pray conversationally. In this kind of prayer the

teacher uses her own words to pray, and the children can repeat each part of the following prayer after the teacher, "I like grapes....Thank You, God, for making them so sweet....Amen."

Also watch for times to say conversational sentence prayers related to spontaneous moments of wonder or need. In the block

center you might pray, "Thank You, God, that Carl can build such a good ark." Invite the child to add a sentence prayer of his own. Give him the option to say *yes* or *no*. Eventually, he may begin to say *yes*.

If a child is sad, whisper a prayer in his ear. You might thank God for being with us when we're

sad and ask God to help make the child happy.

Kindergarten children may want to dictate a short prayer as you write on drawing paper. Invite them to decorate the written prayer and to display it somewhere at home.

Questions For Further Study—

1. When should prayer training begin for children?
2. List ways of teaching toddlers to pray or express praise to God.
3. List ways of teaching preschoolers and kindergartners to pray.