



If you truly want the best for your children and want to equip them well for life, don't miss out on one of life's most important life skills – prayer.

By Rick Osborne

## Give Your Children a Head Start in Life:

**T**oday, sending our children to school to learn the basics is just a beginning. We want the best for our children, so we make sure we do all we can for them. We teach our children to ride bikes, skate, swim, and ski. You may offer your children the musical arts: piano, violin, voice lessons, guitar, and, if they must, drums. Also, if you or your children are so inclined, there is dance, ballet and gymnastics. You can enroll your children in acting, stage, performance classes, and even modeling. And afterward you can find them an agent.

As parents, we hire tutors for extra help, take our children to second-language schools after their regular schooling, and enroll them in weekend courses. We don't do this because our children are behind; we want to help them get ahead.

It may seem funny to see it all listed like this, yet the time spent driving, enrolling children in lessons, attending concerts, practices, games, recitals, and auditions is serious, valuable time. **We want our**

**children to develop fully their talents, abilities, and character.** We can buy books that will help us teach our children manners, values, virtues, and assertiveness. There are books to teach them how to handle finances, get better grades, discover their personality types, learn business basics, conquer public speaking, and be politicians. (Well, I haven't seen that one yet, but I'm sure it won't be long.)

So, why do we do it? Because we love our children and want the best for them. This is as it should be.

### Giving the Very Best: Prayer

**As important as all these skills and experiences are, there is something far more important –**

something that is foundational for all of life, something that will truly equip our children for whatever their futures hold. This something is prayer.

Teaching our children to pray will truly prepare them for life and equip them to face everything life has to offer. By teaching them to pray, we will be teaching our children to

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communicate with the One who is their Creator, Father, Teacher, and Guide – the One who loves them more than we can imagine.

Jesus once scolded the religious leaders because even though they were careful to give exactly 10 percent of their spices to the temple, they were not treating people very well. He wasn't saying they shouldn't give a portion of their spices to God; He was drawing a contrast that highlighted their lack of proper focus. In a similar way, all these things we teach our children are important, and the activities and tasks can better prepare them for life, but, in comparison to the importance and benefit of teaching our children to pray, they are like giving 10 percent of our spices.

**Teaching our children to pray will put them in**

among royalty. Childhood stories from *Rumpelstiltskin* to *The Prince and the Pauper* to Disney's recent adaptations of *Beauty and the Beast*, *The Little Mermaid*, and *Aladdin* all carry this familiar theme.

This is closer to reality than you might think for we have an invitation from the King of all kings for our children to go to heaven – the ultimate palace. Here all can receive status as part of the royal family of God. But this invitation to heaven is not simply to attend. **It's an invitation to sit, talk with, and get to know the One who is all-powerful and in charge of everything.** It's an invitation for our children to become permanent members of that family and enjoy its benefits. And membership with its benefits begins before their arrival in heaven; it begins right here on earth.

# Teach Them to Pray!

**touch with the Father who not only wants the best for them but who knows what that best is and has the power and resources to deliver.** Jesus compared our ability to give to our children to God's ability when He said, "If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!" (Matthew 7:11).

A recent Gallup survey published in *Parenting* magazine revealed that about 65 percent of parents pray with their children before bed and at mealtimes. This suggests that as parents we have a heart for prayer and acknowledge prayer's importance. But, although bedtime and mealtime are great places to start, teaching a child to pray must go beyond those times.

Every parent wants to see the success and promotion of their children. As an audience, we constantly rejoice over Cinderella stories. The low, humble but beautiful, and often sweet-spirited child is whisked away from trouble in Plainville and given a place

God's offer to all – children and adults – to enter His kingdom includes knowing and experiencing God's presence. When we teach our children not only to pray but to have prayer as part of the *foundation* of their lives and who they are, we give them the ultimate gifts, benefits, and blessings that life has to offer: an audience with and the friendship of God. 🙏

## Unlocking the Secret

If I said to you, "I have the secret that will help you raise children who are at peace inside, are always growing personally, are courageous, have a strong character, stay out of trouble, and steer clear of evil," would you want to know that secret?

If this secret also gave your children a solid sense of direction and purpose, and would make them honoured and thought highly of by their friends and peers, would you want to know it?

The secret is simple: Teach them to pray.



# PRAYER

## AN ESSENTIAL LIFE SKILL

We equip our children with all kinds of skills because we want them to have a head start in life. Consider then, the advantages prayer gives them – a head start in every arena of life.

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When my wife, Elaine, and I enrolled our daughters in violin, we considered the benefits first:

- Learning music basics while young seemed easier for them, and the learning would become natural;
- The classes would be fun and rewarding and would give our daughters an appreciation for music;
- The lessons would help them to learn the discipline that regular practice brings.

Let's consider prayer in a way similar to how we consider music lessons. What advantages does a regular and healthy prayer life bring to our children? Many! The advantages flow out of that relationship with God. The Bible, God's Word, clearly describes several of these benefits:

### 1 A BETTER INNER LIFE

When we teach our children to pray, they learn about the joy and peace that are available to them. That joy and peace exceed anything we can personally offer them, for God, unlike us, is always there to hear and to help. There is the promise of perfect peace (Isaiah 26:3), joy of God's presence that chases away fear (Psalm 21:6-7), and a reason to have joyful hearts (Psalm 105:3).

### 2 PERSONAL GROWTH

All parents desire personal growth for their children. We want our sons and daughters to grow in understanding, wisdom, and the fullness of God. Through prayer, our children can have such growth (Proverbs 2:3-6, Ephesians 3:19).

### 5 PURPOSE, GUIDANCE, AND DIRECTION FOR THEIR LIVES

God desires that we and our children call upon Him for guidance and direction in our lives. He has a purpose for each of us, and He promises to fulfill His purpose when we ask: I cry out to God Most High, to God, who fulfills his purpose for me (Psalm 57:2, Proverbs 3:4-6 and James 1:5).

### 6 PROVISION

Our children pray to a loving Father, who has both the desire and power to grant them all that they (and we) need. All they need to do is ask for His provision (Matthew 7:9-11, Romans 8:32).

## PRAYER IS NOT THE GOAL

Now, in case you're wondering, I am not saying that prayer is an end in itself or something that we just add into the mix of our children's lives to give them yet another advantage among advantages. In fact, I'm saying the opposite. Prayer is not an addition to their lives. Prayer is part of the very foundation of their lives. It is one of the most important things our children need to learn.

Also, the long list of advantages we've considered doesn't just happen because we teach our children to spend a certain amount of time on their knees repeating prayers or giving God today's shopping list. Although extended time and multiple requests sometimes are part of our prayers, those times in themselves are not prayer. Teaching our children to pray is teaching them

## 3 STRENGTH AND COURAGE

Our children's fears may seem silly at times, but they are real. And as our children grow into teens and adults, the fears do not go away; they merely change in type. By giving our children the resource of prayer, we provide them with the strength, even courage, to face their world. The Scriptures describe the answers that come through prayer (Psalm 34:4-5, Psalm 138:3).

## 4 PROTECTION AND RESCUE FROM HARM AND EVIL

Many issues threaten our children today, ranging from violent crime to drug abuse. There is also the threat of evil influence. Through our prayers and theirs come protection and deliverance from harm's way (Psalm 34:17, Psalm 22:4 and Matthew 6:13).



## 7 FULFILLMENT OF DESIRES

Another benefit of prayer is that God fulfills our desires. Through prayer and a deepening relationship we learn to delight in Him and He begins to fulfill the desires of our hearts (Psalm 37:4, Psalm 21:2 and Proverbs 10:24).

## 8 HELP AND ENCOURAGEMENT

Through their prayers, our children can find help and encouragement for their everyday activities. As a Father, God listens, comforts, and sheds grace upon our children as they pray to Him (Hebrews 4:16, Psalm 10:17).

## 9 PROMOTION AND HONOUR

Finally, God exalts and honours those who honour Him (Psalm 75:6-7, 1 Samuel 2:7, James 4:10).

## REFLECTIONS

- What are some aspirations you have for your children? How can teaching them about prayer help them in their life endeavours?
- What role does prayer play in your family life? What are some things – such as a busy schedule, misplaced priorities, or financial concerns – that get in the way of your family's prayer life? Consider ways in which you can give prayer a more central role in your family's life.
- Take time to set these things before God in prayer and ask Him to help you incorporate more time for prayer into your personal and family routine.
- Ask God to help you give your children the best by making spiritual teaching and training a priority in your home.

to communicate and grow in a relationship with God as they seek Him and His will. It's a life of prayer or growing with God that yields these benefits. Prayer is not an end in itself. Nor should it be a way of merely accessing these benefits. Prayer is the gateway to God's love. 🌿

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