



A 30-DAY DEVOTIONAL

PRAYERS FOR PARENTS

DAY 1

Plugging In

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7

When building something complex like a house, you wouldn't choose only hand tools that depend on your muscles to do the job. You'd also choose power tools that plug into an electrical power supply. Then you could do the work effectively and efficiently.

Is there anything more complex than parenting? And is God not our power source? With His help we can parent much more effectively than we ever could on our own. One of the greatest ways to plug into God's power is through prayer. Through faithful and consistent prayer, we can find wisdom and guidance for parenting and achieve far greater results in the lives of our children than any words we might speak or lessons we might teach.

Commit to praying daily for your needs as a parent, and for your children.

Prayers for parents

- Thank God for the gift of prayer.
- Pray that God will use these prayer times to draw you closer to Him and to guide you in your parenting.
- Pray that God will make your children responsive to your love and guidance, and that He will keep you sensitive to their needs.

DAY 2

Your Home Matters

“Let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.”

1 JOHN 3:18

There isn't much loving parents won't do for their children to make them feel loved, safe, and secure—providing safe shelter, good food, quality education, and so on. But did you know one of the best things you can do for their emotional well-being is to love your spouse? It's true. Children find their sense of security in knowing their parents not only love them, but they love each other. A happy, loving marriage encourages happy, secure children.

But where does this leave single parents, blended families, and other nontraditional homes?

Your home matters. Happy, secure children grow in a variety of environments, but they thrive in a home that prioritizes healthy relationships. Whether that is with your spouse, your own parents, extended family, or close friends, are you modeling what healthy relationships look like? Children who feel loved, safe, and secure are those who witness what it means to love in “deed and truth.”

Prayers for parents

- Thank God for the gift of family.
- If you are married, pray for God to help you prioritize your marriage, even in busy seasons.
- Ask God to expose any unhealthy ways you may relate to those in your home. Seek forgiveness for ways you have been unloving.
- Pray for healthy relationships within your home and that your children would be secure in knowing they are loved and cared for.

DAY 3

Gifts From God

“Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD,
the fruit of the womb a reward.”

P S A L M 1 2 7 : 3

Every child is a reward and a blessing (Genesis 33:5). God gives us children for the purpose of raising up a godly generation, to draw us closer to Him, to enrich our lives, and to help us grow in Christian character.

Let your children know that you see them as blessings. Tell them often that God has a specific purpose and plan for their lives. Encourage your children in their gifts, speak value to them, and teach them about God and His word. And when your children test your patience and you have difficult days, thank God for the gift of children, and use those opportunities to discover what He may be teaching you through the challenges you're facing as a parent.

Prayers for parents

- Thank God for each of your children and for entrusting them to your care.
- Ask God to help you care for their souls well and to help you provide a home that is spiritually, emotionally, and relationally healthy.
- Ask God to give you the faith to see and receive each child as a gift, even on challenging days.
- Thank God for the patience and love He shows to His children every day.

DAY 4

We All Have Gaps

“But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’”

2 CORINTHIANS 12:9

In the movie, *Rocky*, the character Paulie was trying to understand the connection between his sister and the boxer. He asks, “What’s the attraction?” “I dunno,” Rocky replies. “She’s got gaps, I got gaps, together we fill gaps.”

As parents, we too have gaps. Parenting is one of those jobs for which none of us are fully prepared or qualified. But God knows what our gaps are, and He has the ability to fill them. Scripture includes many examples of men and women who felt inadequate when called by God to a specific responsibility, yet in every case, He used them—through their dependence on His ability instead of their own.

As a parent, God is with you just as He was with Moses, David, Esther, and many others (see Isaiah 41:10). Depend on Him completely. Pray about everything. And watch Him fill your gaps.

Prayers for parents

- Thank God that He is with you, that He will strengthen you, and will help you fulfill your role as a parent.
- Pray that you will consistently rely on His power and abilities and not on your own.
- Ask God to give you the wisdom to acknowledge Him in all your ways so that He will direct your paths for your good, for your children’s good, and for His glory.
- Pray that your home will be marked with patience and understanding.

DAY 5

Recruiting Help

“Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.”

PROVERBS 27:17

Almost every occupation requires education or training. But for parenting, arguably the most important job in the world, there is no such prerequisite. And children don't come with instructions! As a result, parents can feel overwhelmingly inadequate and at a loss for how to do the job well.

If that describes your feelings about parenting, take courage. There are several trusted sources that you can look to for help, including mentors—wise, godly men and women who have been where you are and have years of experience. Mentors are great listeners, encouragers, and advisors who can offer support, guidance, and invaluable insight based on their own successes and mistakes.

Potential mentors are all around you. In fact, they may be your own parents or grandparents. Or perhaps they're friends who have children older than your own. Or an empty nest couple in your neighborhood or church. Identify a couple, or person, whose parenting style you admire. Connect with them. Share your concerns and your fears, ask questions, listen, learn from their experience, put their wise advice into practice, and begin to feel more confident as a parent than ever before.

Prayers for parents

- Ask God to help you identify the right couple, or person, to come alongside you.
- Pray that God would prepare them to agree to a mentoring relationship with you.
- Pray that God would help you to honor your commitment to the mentoring relationship by being open and honest and willing to learn.

DAY 6

Not So Innocent

“Folly is bound up in the heart of a child.”

PROVERBS 22:15

When a child is born, we typically think of him or her as sweet and innocent—blameless, sinless, not yet stained by the evils of this world. And while babies are certainly sweet, the Bible makes it clear that they are not so innocent. According to Proverbs 22:15, the love of mischief and the tendency toward rebelliousness and disobedience are already present in the heart of a child at birth. We are all born into this world with a sinful nature and in need of redemption.

As parents, we want our children to be obedient, to do the right things, and to make the right choices. We endeavor to teach them all the right values and to build character in their lives. And while no one wants their child to make choices that contradict the values they’ve been taught, inevitably they will, because their hearts are filled with foolishness.

Knowing this, as parents we have to anticipate foolishness from our children. They will do things from time to time that will hurt and disappoint us. Just like we, as God’s children, sometimes disappoint Him. We have to allow our children to make mistakes, just as we make mistakes. And when they do, we can imitate our Heavenly Father and respond with unconditional love, forgiveness, and correction—continually pointing them to Christ, the one who can redeem them and use their mistakes to grow and refine them into all He created them to be.

Prayers for parents

- Thank God that He is always with you, even when your child makes foolish mistakes, and will give you the peace, wisdom, and strength you’ll need in those times.
- Pray that God would help you anticipate foolishness from your child so that you will be better prepared when those times come.
- Ask God to help you respond to your child’s sin with grace, love, forgiveness, and correction, as He does when His children make mistakes.
- Pray that God would draw your child to Himself; that he or she would make a decision to give their heart to Christ and trust Him to save them from their sin, and that they would love and serve Him as Lord of their life.

DAY 7

The Power of Love

“If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.”

1 CORINTHIANS 13:1-3

Children need to know they are loved; it makes them feel safe, secure, valued, and truly cared for. Loving your child well enables you to train them to love God and others, to be compassionate, and to care for others. Growing up in a loving environment helps build good character and gives children a healthy outlook on life.

It's true that children are not always lovable. But following our Heavenly Father's example, it's important for children to know that no matter what, their parents' love for them is constant and unchanging. This gives a strong sense of security and well-being, and a clear picture and understanding of God's love.

Even when your child's behavior is less than desirable, you can choose to love without conditions, just as God loves us when we sin and disappoint Him. Love is a powerful response that can help draw your child back to you and closer to God, and it can strengthen your ability to influence their spiritual and personal growth.

Prayers for parents

- Ask Him to help you love your children the way He loves you, sacrificially and unconditionally, no matter what. If you're in an adoptive or blended family, ask God to help you to genuinely love your adoptive children or stepchildren the way He loves you and to take every opportunity to express that love, even when you are unsure of your relationship.
- Pray that God will give you daily opportunities and creative ways to make your children feel loved, safe, secure, valued, and cared for.
- Ask God to help you encourage your child to love Him and others, as you build a loving relationship with them and provide a loving environment in your home. Almighty ... what a privilege we have to experience His presence, love, and forgiveness as we face uncertain days.

DAY 8

Monkey See, Monkey Do

“Be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”

EPHESIANS 5:1-2

James Baldwin, an American playwright and novelist, said this about the power of a parent’s example: “Children have never been very good at listening to their elders, but they have never failed to imitate them.” The truth his words communicate is that what we do as parents will have a greater influence on our children than what we say.

As God’s children, we will increasingly reflect His character as we follow Christ and grow in Him. Similarly, our children look to us for cues on how to live, love, interact with others, navigate life’s challenges, and more. By living a life surrendered to God, our actions will train them to live according to God’s standards and help them understand how His Word governs our lives.

But you won’t do this perfectly. It’s okay for your children to see that you’re human, and that you make mistakes. Let them see your humility in your complete dependence on God and on His willingness to forgive you and help you overcome life’s challenges.

Prayers for parents

- Thank God for giving you the opportunity to represent Him to your children.
- Pray that your children will naturally witness your love for God and obedience to His Word as you study the Bible, pray, serve, give, make wise decisions, and more.
- Pray that as you model genuine godliness in your life and home, your children will follow your example.
- Pray that other parental role models and family members (co-parents, grandparents, stepparents, etc.) will also model genuine godliness when influencing your child.

DAY 9

Not Good Enough

“We are all infected and impure with sin. When we display our righteous deeds, they are nothing but filthy rags.”

ISAIAH 64:6 (NLT)

Every parent wants their child to be a good person. It's an admirable desire, and for many, it's an essential parenting goal. And though we may teach our children good values and manners, the Bible makes it clear that being a good person is not enough.

Having good character is of no eternal value apart from a growing relationship with Christ. Without Him, even our righteousness is described as “filthy rags.” This is why we desperately need Christ, who saves us from our sin and exchanges our sin nature for His righteousness (see 2 Corinthians 5:21). One of our most important responsibilities as parents is to help our children understand how they can know God and have a growing relationship with Christ.

There are many ways to help your children grow spiritually. You can pray with them, read the Bible together, memorize Scripture together, talk about God and His Word, attend church together, and establish a regular time of family devotions. As your children grow spiritually, they will also grow in godly character. Real character development is a by-product of spiritual development.

Prayers for Parents

- Thank God for saving us from our sin and exchanging our sin nature for His righteousness, making it possible for us to grow to be more like Him.
- Pray that God would give you the wisdom and intentionality to make your children's spiritual development a priority.
- Ask God to give you creative ways to teach your children about Him and His Word and daily opportunities to help each child cultivate a personal relationship with Christ.
- Pray that as your children grow spiritually, they will begin to exemplify godly character in their everyday life.

DAY 10

Godly, Not Perfect

“Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.”

PROVERBS 22:6

From the time a child enters the world, parents have a vision for what type of person they want him or her to be. For many, that vision may be of the perfect child—one who will embrace all the right values, make all the right choices, excel at all the right things, and who will affirm their success as a parent.

But raising perfect children is an impossible goal. It's impossible because children are being raised by imperfect people, and they, like their parents, are sinful beings from birth. The Bible says, “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:23–24). Instead, the goal should be to raise godly children—children who will come to know and love God, grow in Christian character, and leverage their lives for the advancement of God's kingdom for His glory and not their own.

Prayers for parents

- Ask God to help you resist holding unrealistic expectations for yourself as a parent or for your children, keeping in mind that there are no perfect parents and no perfect children.
- Pray that God would help you to constantly point your children toward Him—the perfect Savior.
- Pray that God would help you model godly living and humility.
- Thank God for the gift of forgiveness and redemption, and for helping His children live righteously.
- So that's the question for moms and dads: Do you really believe God is big enough? Followers of Christ today stand on the same rock that believers have trusted for over 2,000 years. No matter what is happening in the world, that rock is Jesus Christ.

DAY 11

Discipline = Love

“For the LORD reproofs him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights.”

PROVERBS 3:12

When we disobey God, there are consequences. These consequences, no matter how painful, are part of God’s grace-based discipline for the children He loves. His discipline helps us to grow and mature; it also corrects our behavior and restores our joy. If God didn’t discipline us, it would communicate that He doesn’t care about us. Can you imagine what life would be like without His discipline?

Just as God disciplines His children because He loves us and wants the best for us, we should discipline our children with the same purpose. We want them to be safe, to learn from their mistakes, to grow, mature, and make right choices—to live a life that honors God. To fail to discipline is to fall short in love.

But it’s not only the “why” of discipline that’s important, but also the “how.” Follow God’s lead, and let your discipline bring a measured amount of pain, delivered with love and grace for the purpose of correction, rather than with anger or retaliation. Then you can say to your child with confidence and truth, “I discipline you because I love you.”

Prayers for parents

- Thank God for loving you enough to discipline you and lead you back to Him when you have disobeyed Him.
- Pray for the wisdom and courage to follow God’s example to discipline your children out of love when they have disobeyed you.
- Ask God to help you discipline your child in a way that is effective for correction, but that is seasoned with love and grace.
- Pray that even in times when your child’s disobedience brings you to the point of anger, you will handle anger honorably, administering discipline in love and giving the blessing of forgiveness.

DAY 12

No Two Alike

“For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.”

PSALM 139:13-14

Children are wonderfully unique. No two are alike, not even identical twins. Each child has their own personality, emotional needs, spiritual needs, physical needs, educational needs, sensitivities, and more. Because of these differences, there are times when we simply cannot treat our children the same, nor should we expect them to act or respond in the same way.

It is true, that as parents, we should require all of our children to adhere to the same value system and follow the same (age appropriate) rules. For instance, we should expect each child to treat others with kindness and respect. But the way we communicate, nurture, and discipline each child should be tailored to what we know to be true about each child and what is the best approach to reach and meet each one at their individual needs.

Isn’t this how God relates with His children, as unique individuals? He deals with each one according to the truth that each of us is “fearfully and wonderfully made.” No two are alike. Get to know, relate, and interact with each of your children as a unique individual, and increase your ability to help each one become his or her best self.

Prayers for parents

- Thank God for making each of your children wonderfully unique—each one His own masterpiece.
- Ask God to help you to love your children the same, but to know when and when not—according to their unique personalities, needs, and sensitivities—to treat them the same.
- Pray that God would give you the wisdom to know how to communicate, nurture, discipline, and interact with each child, in order to help each one grow to become his or her best self.
- If you are in an adoptive or blended family, ask God to help you get to know and embrace your adoptive child or stepchild’s unique personality, needs, and sensitivities, and to resist expecting him or her to be, act, or respond like your biological child or other children in the family.

DAY 13

Stay Within The Lines

“Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”

EPHESIANS 6:4

Several years ago, an automobile manufacturer ran a commercial that opened with a group of young students coloring at a table; their teacher looked on, instructing them to “stay within the lines.” The students recited this instruction, adding, “The lines are our friends.”

Children need boundaries. They need their parents to create and uphold a safe environment for them—an environment where they can be heard and their feelings validated, but where they are encouraged to follow rules and practice patience, obedience, and cooperation. Boundaries, when set and kept in loving ways, help children feel safe and secure. Naturally, children are disappointed when they don’t get their own way, but even when they push the boundaries and become upset when you uphold them, ultimately they will still feel a sense of security.

Without boundaries, children can become anxious, rebellious, and self-centered. They may even feel anger and resentment toward their parents for a lack of boundaries. Remember, boundary setting is a part of discipline, and discipline communicates love.

Prayers for parents

- Thank God for giving us boundaries that are designed to keep us safe and secure.
- Ask God to help you (and the other household, in the case of co-parenting) set the right boundaries for your children—rules that will teach them how to practice patience, obedience, and respect for authority, and that those boundaries will keep them safe.
- Pray that God will give you the courage and strength to uphold the boundaries you set, especially when your children push against them, and the wisdom to know when to be flexible.
- If you are in an adoptive or blended family, ask God to help you get to know and embrace your adoptive child or stepchild’s unique personality, needs, and sensitivities, and to resist expecting him or her to be, act, or respond like your biological child or other children in the family.

DAY 14

Kids Will Be Kids

“When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways.”

1 CORINTHIANS 13:11

There’s a little immaturity in all of us. You could even say that underneath the surface of every adult, you will find a child. That child might be scared, angry, bad-tempered, poorly behaved, or just plain playful. On the other hand, it’s also safe to say that underneath the surface of every child, you will not find an adult. Children have not yet grown to maturity, and therefore cannot be expected to think, act, or respond like grown-ups.

For instance, if your child makes a mess in the kitchen by blowing bubbles in his glass of milk and spills it on the table and floor, you could lovingly let them know why that wasn’t such a good idea. Rather than banishing the child from the kitchen and sending them to their room, you could take the opportunity to teach your child how to clean up the mess. This training helps the child to grow and to take responsibility for their actions.

The truth is, children shouldn’t be disciplined for being children. That’s why it’s so important for parents to know the difference between childishness and defiance, so they are able to respond appropriately.

Prayers for parents

- Thank God for the childhood years, even though they are messy, challenging, and exhausting at times, they are also precious and meaningful.
- Ask God to help you discern the difference between childishness and defiance and to give you wisdom and patience to respond appropriately.
- Pray that you would occasionally allow your inner child to have fun and make light of the messy times when your child is simply being a child. (This is the stuff that makes for great relationships and special memories.)

DAY 15

To Spank or Not to Spank

“For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”

HEBREWS 12:11

Spanking is one of the most hotly debated topics in today’s parenting culture. Some believe spanking is taboo, that it teaches children to hit or causes them to have emotional issues later in life. Others believe, when administered properly, it’s an effective form of discipline that helps to modify attitudes and behavior.

If you choose spanking as a form of discipline, the best approach is to be balanced (stern but loving), sensible, and controlled. It is not delivered out of anger, frustration, or violence, but out of love and concern for the child’s well-being, safety, and guidance. It is administered calmly and with a measured amount of pain, and is bookended with expressions of love (see 1 Corinthians 16:14). The goal is not that our children will fear us, but that our children will respect and obey us as we train them to live righteously.

Whatever forms of discipline you choose for your children, and there are many, remember that discipline—administered with love and grace—is for their safety and well-being because you love them.

Prayers for parents

- Ask God to give you wisdom for determining the best forms of discipline for your children.
- If you are married, pray together that God would help you to come to an agreement about the forms of discipline that you will use in your home. Also, ask Him to help you operate as a team and to be consistent.
- If you are a newly adoptive parent, foster parent, or stepparent just beginning to develop a relationship with your child, ask God to show you other ways that you can effectively correct and discipline your child (as spanking is not advisable in these situations).
- Ask God to help you consistently administer discipline with love and grace, no matter what form or method you use.

DAY 16

Without Conditions

“Give thanks to the God of gods, for his steadfast love endures forever.”

PSALM 136:2

Nothing changes God’s love for His children. His love is unconditional. Even when we are disobedient or stray far from Him, He continues to love us (see Romans 5:8). We need only to respond to His love and forgiveness. This true love is described in 1 Corinthians 13:7 (NLT) where it says, “Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.”

Following our Heavenly Father’s example, it’s important to let our children know that no matter what, our love for them is constant and unchanging, even when they disobey. This gives them a strong sense of security and a clear picture of what God’s love looks like.

It’s true that dealing with disobedience, poor behavior, or intense sibling rivalry can be exhausting, but waywardness also presents a great opportunity to demonstrate God’s love after the manner set forth in Ephesians 4:2—“with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love.” In these times, you can assure your child that even though they’ve made some mistakes, you love them. Expressing unconditional love gives you the opportunity to effectively guide them at a time when they might otherwise withdraw and move toward further trouble.

Prayers for parents

- Thank God that nothing changes His love for you, even when you have disobeyed or strayed far from Him.
- Ask God to help you follow His example of loving without conditions when your child has disobeyed you.
- Pray that God will give you the wisdom and strength to demonstrate His love to your child, especially in the times when their disobedience has caused you disappointment.
- Pray that when you are dealing with disobedience, your love and forgiveness, coupled with discipline, will draw your child back to you and closer to God.

DAY 17

Relationship Matters

“And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works.”

HEBREWS 10:24

How can we truly love our children, build character into their lives, teach them how to live for the Lord, and discipline them effectively without relationship? Having a strong, healthy relationship with our children is critical to effective parenting. When you have a good relationship with your children, they will know from experience that you love them, that you care about them, and that they can trust you to lead them in the right way. Relationship builds trust, intimacy, and connection. Additionally, a healthy relationship with you will teach them how to have healthy relationships with others.

Strong relationships with our children don't just happen. It takes intentionality. It necessitates spending one-on-one time with each individual child; getting to know their unique needs, personality, gifts, abilities, hopes, and dreams; and learning what motivates and demotivates them. It involves caring for them in good times and bad, encouraging them, supporting them, cheering them on, and keeping the lines of meaningful communication open at all times.

Maintaining a good relationship requires loving your child without conditions and praying with and for them faithfully. It also involves demonstrating kindness, understanding, grace, and loyalty so there is no doubt that you are there for them and have their best interests at heart.

Prayers for parents

- Thank God that Jesus has made it possible for you to have a relationship with Him, and for the many blessings that come with that relationship.
- Ask God to help you to be intentional about building a healthy relationship with your child.
- Pray that as you make spending time with your child a priority, God will help you to get to know them intimately and grow in your understanding of who they are.
- If you are in a newly adoptive or blended family, ask God to give you creative ways to build a healthy relationship with each child, make special memories, and honor old family traditions while building new ones that are unique to your newly formed family.

DAY 18

War of the Siblings

“Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.”

ROMANS 12:10

“That’s mine! Give it back!” “He has more than I do!” “She pulled my hair!” “Mom! Tell her to get out of my room!”

Ever feel like a referee in your own home? If you have more than one child, you can relate. Or you soon will. Sibling rivalry is normal. Competition between siblings for just about everything, including your attention, will happen throughout childhood and into the teen years. But believe it or not, this competition can be minimized and balanced with love.

One of the best ways to minimize sibling rivalry is to help your children forge strong, loving relationships with one another. You can do this by making sure that they spend quality time together. Guide them in shared activities and help them find common interests. Play family games. Take them on family outings and help them make special memories together. At mealtimes, encourage them to engage in meaningful conversation. Make this kind of face-to-face interaction a family habit.

What’s more, show them how to serve and do special things for one another from time to time. This will teach your children to put their siblings above themselves and to care about one another’s interests and not just their own (see Philippians 2:3-4). As their relationship strengthens, the rivalry between them will become less frequent and intense. But understand that no siblings will have a perfect relationship, which is why it’s important to make sure that in your home love, grace, and forgiveness abound.

Prayers for parents

- Thank God that He has chosen your children to be siblings. Ask Him to make them close, to remove their selfish pride, and to give them a deep love for each other.
- Pray that God would help you to handle sibling rivalry in ways that will teach your children how to respect one another and how to communicate and resolve conflict well.
- Ask God to give you fun ways to help your children enjoy one another’s company and to make special memories together.
- If you are in a newly adoptive or blended family, ask God for creative ways to help the new siblings grow to accept, love, and support one another, and to forge strong relationships over time.

DAY 19

Survive or Thrive

“Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

ISAIAH 41:10

For better or for worse, family is an essential part of who you are and who you will become. But family can never be perfect. It can be healthy, loving, and supportive; unhealthy, cold, and dysfunctional; or anywhere in between. It can be a traditional family, a single parent family, a blended family, or an adoptive family. Family is where you're encouraged to thrive, or learn just to survive. Whatever description fits your family, take courage. With God's help, you can intentionally build a family that thrives spiritually, emotionally, and relationally.

A spiritually healthy family is bound together by their shared relationship with God and commitment to grow in that relationship by reading and studying God's Word together, praying together, and through active involvement in a local church.

An emotionally healthy family loves one another unconditionally (see 1 Corinthians 13:4-8) and accepts one another completely—faults and all. Let your home be a place where family members can be themselves without fear of judgment, can cry without being ridiculed, and are free to make mistakes without condemnation (see Romans 8:1).

Finally, a relationally healthy family is committed to one another. This is demonstrated by their love, support, and loyalty to one another and the strong relationships that they form. Make regular plans for your family to have fun together, make great memories, and share lots of laughter.

Prayers for parents

- Thank God for the family that He has given you and for adopting you into His own family, where you have been given every spiritual blessing.
- Thank Him that no matter what the health of your family is currently, He can heal your family and make all things new.
- Pray that God would help you to be intentional about the spiritual, emotional, and relational health of your family; and pray that He would give you creative ways to make progress in each area every day.
- Ask God to help you make your home a place where family members feel safe to be themselves—where they feel loved, accepted, and encouraged.

DAY 20

Own It

“Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed.”

JAMES 5:16

Parents are people, which means they make mistakes. Sometimes the mistakes are due to negligence and other times are simply unintentional blunders. Some mistakes bring about serious and hurtful consequences while others are easily brushed off. Have you ever yelled at your child out of frustration or fatigue? Have you ever said something mean or hurtful because you were having a bad day? Or missed a school function because you forgot? You are not alone.

The important thing to do when you make a mistake is to own it. Not only is it the right thing to do, it's also a great opportunity to model what apology, confession, and repentance looks like for your child. Younger children are quick to forgive and to express love. Older children may respond more slowly. Give them room to deal with anger or pain; even so, keep assuring them of your love. “Love covers a multitude of sins” (1 Peter 4:8).

Prayers for parents

- Ask God to give you the courage to own your mistakes and to sincerely and lovingly say, “I’m sorry” to your children.
- Pray that God would help you to resist placing blame on others for your wrongdoing.
- Ask God to give you the wisdom to recognize your child’s feelings as you ask for their forgiveness, and assure them of your unconditional love.
- If you have hurt your adopted child or stepchild, ask God to help you allow time for the child to deal with anger or pain, even after you’ve apologized, acknowledged their feelings, and asked for their forgiveness.

DAY 21

Choose Forgiveness

“Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.”

COLOSSIANS 3:13 (NIV)

Every parent needs grace and forgiveness, because every parent makes mistakes. Have you been hurt by one or both of your parents? Are you still experiencing pain from those past hurts? Perhaps the wrong done to you was so serious that you believe your relationship with them is irreparable. Whatever your situation, there is something you can do to get on the path to healing ... forgive.

Ephesians 4:32 says, “Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.” Forgiving a parent who has hurt you could be one of the greatest challenges you ever face. But it could also be the most freeing, leading to the healing and wholeness you so need and want. Refusing to forgive is generally more of a burden to the one who has been hurt than to the one who caused the pain, because unforgiveness often leads to self-destructive behaviors. Additionally, holding on to bitterness and resentment toward your parent(s) may negatively affect the way you parent your own children. Choose to forgive, and begin to find hope and healing in your life and relationships.

Prayers for parents

- Thank God for the grace and forgiveness He has given you when you’ve made mistakes with your children.
- Pray that you will extend that same grace to your parents who made mistakes in their humanness and may have hurt you. Ask God to help you forgive even what may have been unforgivable, and thank Him for forgiving the unforgivable in you.
- Ask God to help you find hope and healing from past hurts, and that He would, in His way and in His timing, soften hearts and provide the way for restoration and reconciliation of your relationship with your parent(s).
- Pray that God would help you resist allowing past hurts to affect the way you are parenting your own children.

DAY 22

Divinely Defined

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”

GENESIS 1:27

In response to the rising tide of “fake news,” one news station ran an ad campaign that featured an apple against a white background. The voice-over said, “This is an apple. Some people might try to tell you that it’s a banana. They might scream banana, banana, banana, over and over again. You might even start to believe it’s a banana. But it’s not. This is an apple.” The point being made was that facts are facts, whether we like them or not.

In the midst of great confusion about gender, the fact is God created male and female distinctly different—anatomically, physiologically, and genetically. Whether one may want to see himself or herself as something different, or even feel that they are different, their gender, as determined by God, is in their DNA and was established before they were born.

What if your child doesn’t love the body they’re in and wishes God had made them the other gender? This may be because they don’t resonate with the rigid gender stereotypes that society ascribes to men and women. Consider Esau and Jacob (see Genesis 25:27). Esau was a rugged outdoorsman, and Jacob was quiet, gentle, and preferred the indoors. The Bible never questions Jacob’s masculinity. In fact, God honored him by making him a patriarch of Israel. As parents, we should help our children accept and embrace their bodies biologically, but also embrace who God made them to be as unique individuals.

Prayers for parents

- Ask God to help you speak the truth in love to your child regarding gender identity and to help you resist forcing rigid gender stereotypes on him or her.
- Pray that God would help you embrace who He has made your child to be as a unique individual, even if he or she isn’t fitting gender stereotypes.
- Ask God to give you much wisdom and guidance in navigating this issue with a child who refuses to accept his or her gender.
- Thank God that He loves your child unconditionally, even if he or she may struggle with embracing his or her gender identity.

A New Identity

“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

GALATIANS 2:20

People find their identity in many things: physical appearance, intelligence, talent, social status, material possessions, or family prominence, to name a few. The problem is, those things could change and are only temporal. What happens to the man who found his identity in his job, and then gets laid off? Or the teen who finds her identity in her talent as a ballerina, until one day she suffers an injury and is told she can never dance again? They may feel completely lost, as if their lives have fallen apart.

The truth is, identity is rooted in so much more than how we look, what we do, or what we have. It's more than who we think we are, or who the world says we are. True identity is rooted in who God, our Creator, says we are. He says we are created in His image (Genesis 1:27) and that we have all sinned and are in desperate need of the Savior (Romans 3:23-24). But He made a way to justify us and give us a new identity in Christ (v. 24). Second Corinthians 5:17 says, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”

In Ephesians 1:3-13, the Bible tells us about our new identity—those who are in Christ are blessed “with every spiritual blessing” (v. 3), chosen (v. 4), predestined and adopted (v. 5), have redemption through His blood and forgiveness for sins (v. 7), have wisdom and insight (v. 8), are knowledgeable about His will (v. 9), have been given an inheritance (v. 11), and are sealed in Him by the Holy Spirit (v. 13). Nothing can change who we are or take away from what we have in Christ. Our identity in Him is eternal. Help your child find their true identity in Christ so that life won't fall apart even when things go wrong.

Prayers for parents

- Thank God that the moment you placed your faith in Christ, He gave you a new identity in Him—an identity that is solid, secure, complete with abundant blessings, and can never change or be taken away.
- Pray that God would help you guide your children in finding their identity in Christ rather than in family, friends, grades, talent, material possessions, or anything else earthly or temporal.
- Ask God to help you nurture your child's identity in Christ by taking every opportunity to teach him or her who they are and what they have in Him.

DAY 24

Make Disciples

“And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”

DEUTERONOMY 6:6-9

We are familiar with Christ’s instruction in the Great Commission to “make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19-20). Did you know that as parents, we are to be disciple-makers first and foremost at home? One of our primary assignments is to diligently teach our children about God and about His Word.

No matter your children’s ages, you can talk to them about God, teach them the Bible, help them memorize Scripture, and pray with them. Look for opportunities throughout every day to talk to your children about God and the Bible. Here are some opportune times: when they wake up in the morning, on the way to school, while you’re traveling, while gathered around the table for meals, after watching a movie or television show, and before they go to bed. Additionally, encourage your children to be partakers of truth on their own, by encouraging them to read and study the Bible, read good Christian books about godly living, church history, heroes of the faith, and so on.

Gathering together as a family, at a designated daily or weekly time, for family devotions is a great way to build into your children spiritually and to grow closer together. Most importantly, you can encourage them—by your own words and actions—to come to know and love God, surrender their lives to Him, and own their faith.

Prayers for parents

- Thank God for the blessed opportunity to share the good news of the Gospel with your children and to be the greatest influence in their spiritual growth.
- Pray that you would be intentional about making faith an integral part of your parenting and family life.
- Ask God to give you creative ways to help each child cultivate a growing relationship with Him and that your children would make faith their own as they grow and mature in Christ.

DAY 25

Valuing All People

“By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

JOHN 13:35

A story circulated on social media about a little girl who picked out a new doll with a skin color different from her own. The cashier at the toy store questioned the child's choice and asked if she was sure that was the doll she wanted. The little girl responded with an emphatic “yes!” The cashier, obviously troubled, protested, “But she doesn't look like you.” Without much thought, the little girl retorted, “Yes, she does! She's a doctor; I'm a doctor! She's a pretty girl, and I'm a pretty girl.”

Most children do not regard outward appearances the way adults do or give credence to stereotypes. Generally speaking, children accept people who are different from themselves. But even if they don't, they can be taught to value the dignity of all people. In “Children Learn What They Live,” poet Dorothy Law Nolte wrote, “If children live with acceptance, they learn to love.” Likewise, if children live with bigotry, they learn to hate.

As parents, we should think carefully about what we are teaching our children about valuing all people, about how we are—or aren't—modeling an attitude of love and respect toward all God's image bearers. God has a diverse family by design and for His glory. We can model for our children what it looks like to dwell together in unity (see Psalm 133:1). And we can show them by example how we, as God's diverse family, can value one another, pray for one another, encourage one another, and above all, love one another.

Prayers for parents

- Thank God for creating all people in His image and for sending His Son, Jesus, to give His life for us all.
- Ask God to help you reject bigotry of any kind and love others as God loves you, without conditions or partiality.
- Pray that you will model for your children understanding, respect, and love toward all of God's image bearers.
- Ask God to expand your family's circle of friends to include people who may be different from you so that your children will be encouraged to do the same, and pray they will learn from you what it looks like to “have love for one another.”

Birds of a Feather

“Don’t be teamed with those who do not love the Lord, for what do the people of God have in common with the people of sin? How can light live with darkness?”

2 CORINTHIANS 6:14 (TLB)

You’ve probably heard the expression, “Birds of a feather flock together.” (This proverb dates back to the mid-16th century.) Robins flock with robins, crows with crows, cranes with cranes, and so on. When applied to people, the phrase implies that those with similar values and interests tend to be drawn to each other and influence each other in both positive and negative ways.

Choosing friends is among the most important choices we will make. Because of the close connection between people in friendship, friends often become like each other. Friends can help you grow to become a better person, or they can bring you down. They can influence you to grow in your relationship with Christ, or they can pull you toward sin. Friends can encourage you to make right choices, or they can influence you to do wrong.

God knows how important and how influential friendship is. That’s why He gave us some definite guidelines for choosing friends wisely. In 1 Corinthians 15:33, He warns us about spending time with the wrong kind of people: “Bad company ruins good morals.” Teach your children how to choose friends that share their values and love for the Lord—friends who have good character traits, make wise choices, are respectful to adults, and who challenge others to do what’s right. Encourage them to surround themselves with people who will be a positive influence in their lives and who they in turn can influence in positive ways. “As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another” (Proverbs 27:17 NIV)

Prayers for parents

- Thank God for creating in us a longing for friends and for bringing special people into our lives to help us grow.
- Ask God to help you teach your children, not just with words, but also with actions, how to choose friends who love the Lord, have good character, and who will influence them to make right choices.
- Pray that your child will not only make true friends, but will also be a true friend who will set a godly example, and share their faith and God’s love with others.
- Ask God to give your child a heart of love and compassion to befriend those who may be considered different or unpopular.

DAY 27

The Power of Influence

“Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.”

PROVERBS 4:23 (NIV)

There are so many voices coming at today’s children from every direction: family, friends, broadcast media, social media, TV, music, celebrities, teachers, pastors, and others. These voices are powerful and can influence how children view themselves, how they relate to others, the choices they make, how they view God and faith, what they should do with their lives, and more. It’s important that children know which voices to listen to.

As parents, we want to surround our children with the right influences, and we want to ensure that our voices will be the most influential in their lives. One of the ways to do this is by building strong, healthy relationships with your children. This is critical for your convictions and faith to be heard and embraced. Also, spending quality time with your children and having lots of meaningful conversations assures them that they can talk to you about anything.

Regarding outside influences, help them choose the right friends, make wise entertainment choices, and be especially careful about what they’re exposed to. Surround them with people who share your values and faith, such as a spiritually growing church family, a trusted children’s or youth pastor, and educators who know you and what you believe and expect as they interact with your children. Most importantly, make it a priority to help your children cultivate a growing relationship with Christ, teaching them to know and submit to the authority of God’s Word as the voice that prevails over all others.

Prayers for parents

- Ask God to help you understand the power of influence in your children’s lives and to help you be intentional about being the godly influence they need.
- If you are in an adoptive or blended family, ask God to give you favor with your adopted child or stepchild so that you can be a positive influence in their life.
- Pray that God would protect your children from negative influences and that He would provide guidance in surrounding them with the right friends, relationships, and mentors.
- Ask God to help you make wise choices regarding the influences you allow them to be exposed to, including the right choices of music, movies, TV shows, video games, online access, social media usage, and more.
- Pray that you will take advantage of every opportunity to surround your children with influences that help them grow in godly character and equip them to be godly influencers among their peers.

DAY 28

On a Mission

“And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”

COLOSSIANS 3:17

From the time a child is born, parents begin to dream about what their child will become. Some have dreams of their child becoming a doctor, a professional athlete, an accomplished musician, a famous actor, or the next president of the United States. Even when children are very young, parents invest a lot of money in music or drama lessons, sport's equipment, tutoring, or special programs for various interests. The tendency is to steer children toward fulfilling those dreams, even if the child resists.

Parents should have dreams for their children, but those dreams should be centered on their growing to become the man or woman God created them to be and to fulfill His purpose for their life. Psalm 139:16 (TLB) says, “You saw me before I was born and scheduled each day of my life before I began to breathe. Every day was recorded in your book!”

How exciting to know that God has a plan and purpose for each of our children's lives. As parents, we can steer our children toward fulfilling their mission by helping them cultivate a growing relationship with Christ and learning how to follow His leading and direction. We can teach them to make a difference in this world and in their scope of influence by using their unique gifts to serve God and help others. Whether that's as a doctor, a teacher, a musician, or as a missionary in a far off corner of the world. What a dream come true to watch our children live their lives “on mission” for the glory of God.

Prayers for parents

- Thank God for choosing your child to fulfill a unique purpose and mission and for giving your child specific gifts and abilities to fulfill that mission.
- Ask God to help you embrace His plan for your child's life and to help you resist steering your child toward pursuits that aren't centered on Him.
- Pray that God will help you encourage your child to be others-centered and to use their gifts, skills, and abilities to serve Him.
- Ask God for the courage to give your child the freedom and the support to accept God's call on their lives, even if that means it's different from your own dreams.

When Things Go Wrong

“The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.
Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all.”

One of the most difficult things you can face as a parent is when a child breaks your heart. And yet, every parent has had or will have his or her heart broken by a child at some point. It may be an isolated incident, such as intense sibling rivalry, hurtful words, lying, or disobedience. Or it may be ongoing disappointment such as rebellion or a strained parent-child relationship. When your child moves away from what you've hoped for and begins to make choices that contradict what you've built into their life, you can be deeply hurt.

One of the first temptations is to become bogged down with regrets and “if only” thinking: if only I had done this, or if only I had said that, things would be different. Another temptation is to feel that you have failed as a parent. You may think, I've covered all the bases, did everything right. How could it have gone so wrong? Remember, making wrong choices and foolish mistakes is not unusual for a child (see Proverbs 22:15). Children will do things from time to time that will break our hearts.

That's why children need the love, discipline, and spiritual guidance of their parents in order to become wise, mature men and women. And through it all, even through the heartbreak, God promises to be with you and to give you everything you need. What's more, nothing is lost on God. He redeems everything—even a child's poor choices and foolish mistakes—to help that child learn and grow and to accomplish His good purposes. Trust His plan for your child's life. His plan is a good plan.

Prayers for parents

- Thank God for the promises He has made to the brokenhearted. Pray that in times when your child has broken your heart you will rely on those promises to comfort and strengthen your spirit, and heal your broken heart.
- Pray that God will help you resist distancing yourself from your child during these challenging times and that He will give you the strength to assure your child that even though they've made some mistakes, you still love them.
- Ask God to draw you and your child closer to Him and to each other through the blessing of forgiveness.
- Pray that no matter how painful or hopeless the situation may seem, you will trust God, His plan for your child's life, and His faithfulness and ability to fulfill that plan.

DAY 30

What You Leave Behind

“The LORD knows the days of the blameless, and their heritage will remain forever.”

PSALM 37:18

Everyone leaves a legacy—something they will be remembered by. It could be the things a person did, or the places they went. It could be a person’s successes or failures, or it could be how they gave of their time, talent, or resources. Legacy is what a person leaves behind as an example for others to either follow or avoid. Legacies are necessary for future generations to know what to do and what not to do as they learn from the successes and failures of those who have gone before them.

Whether they realize it or not, parents leave legacies and memories that will be passed down to future generations. For instance, some will leave their children the legacy of a family business, a trust fund, or a philanthropic heart. Some will leave a legacy of love as a devoted spouse and parent. Others will leave a legacy of fear, insecurity, or pain and suffering because of negligence or abuse in their marriage or parenting. What about you? What kind of legacy will you leave?

Did you know that you are in the process of creating your legacy every day? Whether it’s the great stories you tell at bedtime, the way you wake them in the morning with a song, your strong business acumen, or your humility when you succeed or make mistakes. Those memories will be part of your legacy. But the greatest legacy you can leave is a godly legacy. What could be greater than being known by your children, and your children’s children, as someone who loved the Lord and lived to please Him, and who encouraged and equipped your children to do the same? Now that’s a legacy with eternal value—a legacy to remember.

Prayers for parents

- Thank God for the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts and lives of your children and that He uses you to influence them spiritually.
- Pray that God would help you make faith the cornerstone of your personal life and family life.
- Ask God to help you be a godly example for your children in ways that they will remember long after you’re gone and talk about with their children and their children’s children.
- Pray that God will help you (and the parents in your child’s other home, in the case of co-parenting) to be intentional about building a godly legacy that will have an eternal impact for generations to come.