

WHAT IS SO GREAT ABOUT PRAYER?

Prayer for marriages and families

There is an immense onslaught on family life world-wide. There has probably never been a time in history when marriages and family life have been under such strain. Purposeful, systematic, intelligent and persevering prayer is necessary in this area. This week we focus on the family altar.

Prayer at the family altar

1. It is important that each family will pray together on a regular basis. Husbands and wives should pray together regularly, but there should be a certain time each day when the whole family prays together and studies the Bible.
2. Create an atmosphere for Bible study and prayer in the home. It should be possible to pray naturally for any matter in the home, be it a crisis or thanking the Lord for an answer to prayer.
3. There must be a specific time and place, when and where you can pray. There must be a place where the family can meet to have fellowship with God. There must be a specific time that suits everybody and everybody should be aware that this is the time the family spends together with God.
4. Use a book in which the family can write down their prayer requests and be sure to enter the answers regularly. It builds faith and teaches us to thank God for His answers. It also teaches children a lifestyle of prayer.
5. It is also meaningful to have, apart from the specific prayers concerning the family, a prayer schedule according to which you as a family can pray. For instance, you can pray for the authorities on a Monday. On Tuesdays you can pray for your minister/pastor and a missionary (one whom the family can "adopt" in prayer). On Wednesdays you can pray for unsaved people, etc. Each family can draw up their own programme.
6. Each member of the family must participate in prayer. Do not force anyone to pray, but find creative ways to encourage each one to pray.
7. Practise continued prayer. Each person prays for one item at a time and the others join him/her in silent prayer. Also, each member of the family can choose an item he/she wants to pray for on that occasion. The book by Rosalind Rinker, *Prayer: Conversing with God* is excellent and worth reading on this subject.
8. Share answers to prayer occurring throughout the day with each other at the family meeting. It builds faith and gives more confidence to each one to ask God for specific things.
9. Teach your family members to ask specific things of the Lord. When we pray for specific things we expect specific answers.
10. The family altar is not a substitute for your personal quiet time.
11. The following elements are important for family prayer:
 - Praise and worship.
 - Thanksgiving.
 - Personal requests from different members of the family.
 - Praying Scripture.

- Intercession for the outside world; for unsaved people and the poor.

There is an immense onslaught on family life. There has probably never been a time in history when marriage and family life have been under such strain. Purposeful, systematic, intelligent and persevering prayer is necessary in this area. This week we focus on prayer for fathers.

What to pray for in families

Pray for the father

- Pray that he will love his wife as Christ loved the church. *Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her ... husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies... he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church (Eph.5:25-32). Husbands love your wives and do not be harsh with them (Col.3:19). Husbands in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life so that nothing will hinder your prayers (1Pe.3:7).*
- Pray that the father will be the priest in the home by giving guidance and praying for his family.
- Pray that the father will exercise his authority given to him by God and not leave it to his wife.
- Pray that the husband will be reasonable towards his wife. Pray for the husband for patience with his wife and for self-control with regard to his family.
- Pray that he will be aware of his wife's need for love, safety and security, as well as all her other needs and that he will pay attention to them.
- Pray that he will exercise leadership (spiritually as well as socially) at home and that he will provide for his family.

Pray for the mother

- Pray that she will submit to her husband in everything as the church is submissive to Christ **(Eph.5:22-24)**. *Wives in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that if any of them do not believe the Word they may be won over without words by the behaviour of their wives when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. Your beauty should not come from outward adornment such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewellery and fine clothes (1Pe.3:1-3). ...the wife must respect her husband (Eph.5:33).*
- Pray for a quiet and gentle spirit and that she will know when to keep quiet. Pray for the wife to have patience with her husband.
- Pray that she will respect her husband and that she will not try to dominate or prescribe to him.
- Pray that she will not complain about her husband but will respect him and try to meet his needs.
- Pray that the wife will accept her husband's leadership.
- Pray that the wife will realise that her husband is a fellow sinner, that she will have patience with his faults and that she will allow him the freedom to be himself.
- Specifically pray against a domineering attitude in the wife (especially in cases where she is spiritually stronger than her husband), because this can cause untold harm to the children. Also pray against any form of manipulation on the part of the wife. Manipulation is always

negative.

What to pray for the children

- Pray for obedience and submissiveness to their parents.
- Pray for their salvation and for the spiritual growth of those already saved.
- Pray for their physical growth, health and good eating habits.
- Pray for their education and sports activities.
- Pray for their intellectual development and for them to grow in wisdom and knowledge.
- Pray for the figures of authority with whom they come into contact every day: teachers, sports coaches, parents, grandfathers, grandmothers, etc.
- Pray for their social development and for a pure walk in life, so that they may discern between right and wrong; that they will be able to resist temptation and that they will choose the right friends.
- Pray that they will resist the evil one who will try to destroy their lives.
- Even while they are still young, begin to pray for the right choice of career and marriage partner.
- Pray that they will love God and His Word and also pray for joy in their life.
- Pray for the right friends for them.

What to pray for families and children in general

- Pray against the spirit of divorce, lust and impurity.
- Pray especially against the following sins; that the Holy Spirit will convict people of these and that they will turn from them: homosexuality, co-habitation, adultery, child molesting, suicide and alcohol and drug abuse.
- Pray against the involvement of a third party in the marriage.
- Pray for open relationships and good communication in marriages.
- Pray for deep conviction of sin and that husbands and wives will walk together in the Light.
- Pray for a better understanding of one another's needs and also for the ability and willingness to meet those needs.
- Pray against every form of selfishness, self-indulgence and wilfulness in marriages.
- Pray that there will be no misunderstandings. The single biggest problem in marriages is misunderstanding.
- When there are specific problems in the marriage, e.g. jealousy, misuse of alcohol and extra-marital relationships, one must pray specifically for these matters.
- Pray for parents for unity in raising and disciplining their children.
- Pray for forgiveness; that marriage partners will forget the past and forgive one another for what happened in the past.
- Pray for widowers, widows and couples who are unable to have children. Also for children without parents and in orphanages.
- Pray for the single and lonely people who long for the security of a family.
- Pray for runaway children and for those whose friends have a bad influence on them.