

# Godly Parenting

## The Call to Prayer

Open in prayer

Have you ever heard the story of Henry Ford and Charlie Steinmetz? Steinmetz was a colleague of Fords who, although he was born with a deformity that impacted his growth and left him not super attractive, he had one of the greatest minds in the field of electricity that the world has ever known. Steinmetz built the huge generators that Henry Ford used in his first plant in Dearborn, Michigan back around 1903. As the story goes, one day those generators broke down and the plant came to a screeching halt. Ford brought in all the mechanics and helpers they could find but no one was able to get the generators going again. Every moment the plant was down they were losing money. So finally, Ford called Charlie Steinmetz. The genius came down to the plant, he puttered around for a few hours, then threw a switch and the Ford plant was back in operation.

A few days later Henry Ford received a bill from Steinmetz for \$10,000. An astronomical fee for that time when the average pay was \$5 a day at the plant, and the cars they were making sold for about \$850. Although Ford was a very rich man, he returned the bill with a note, "Charlie, isn't this bill just little high for a few hours of tinkering around on those motors?"

Steinmetz returned the bill to Ford. This time it read:

For tinkering around on the motors: \$10

For knowing where to tinker: \$9,990

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Total: \$10,000.

Henry Ford paid the bill.

The right kind of knowledge truly can be priceless.

Clearly parents believe this is true, because sources estimate that millennial moms spend \$231 million on parenting books every year and \$141 million on parenting apps. And if our kids were as predictable as electricity, we might be able to guarantee the

same outcome Charlie Steinmetz got. Unfortunately, our children are not robots and no parenting book, regardless of how good it is can guarantee us the outcome we want.

Last week we talked about the goal of godly parenting, that our children would proclaim the Lord their God is one. And they would love Him with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength. We talked about how the strategy for Godly parenting is to pursue their hearts by modeling your heart for Jesus and impressing upon their hearts the imprint of God. And finally, we learned that the steps to Godly parenting, are to create daily rhythms in your life that constantly and continually point to God.

This is Godly parenting. The hiccup is that just because you parent from a godly perspective, it does not necessarily guarantee the outcome you desire in the timeframe you desire it. Good parenting doesn't necessarily promise good kids. Adam and Eve parented their son Abel, who selflessly offered his first fruits to God in a manner that pleased Him, the same way they parented their son Cain who out of jealousy murdered his brother.

The good and the bad news of parenting is that as much as you influence your children, and you do greatly influence your children, you only control so much. At some point your kids will make their own decisions. This is good news when either your parenting or the parenting you received isn't rooted in God. Kids can make better choices than the way they were raised. Generational sin can absolutely be broken. That is the good side of this truth. And the downside is that, sometimes, no matter how Godly a parent you are, your kids rebel.

When my middle son, Nate, was a sophomore in high school he went to homecoming with a bunch of friends and since the kids weren't old enough to drive, the moms were there to play chauffeur and take pictures. Well at one point they were getting tired of the endless photos and one of the girls got a little snarky and in horror her mom corrected her using her full name - you know you're in trouble when mom pulls out the full name. To which the daughter replied, "You raised me, mother, everything that comes out of my mouth is a direct reflection of your parenting!"

And we all laughed because we knew both how true this was and how utterly ridiculous this was. How we raise our kids matters. We do have tremendous influence on them. That is why it is so important to have the right goal/strategy/steps. But ultimately, they are in charge of what comes out of their own mouths. We do everything we know to do. Then all we can do is pray.

We see examples of people praying for their kids all across Scripture from Old Testament to New Testament, from primeval history to the early church. From the righteous Job who, before his calamity ever struck, would intercede for his children on a regular basis through prayer and sacrifice, to Lois and Eunice who prayed for their son/grandson Timothy, who later became a leader in the Church of Ephesus and spiritual son to Paul. The Scriptures are full of examples of parents who prayed for and with their children. This morning we are going to look at a few of those examples and discover.

I. WHY We Pray for Our Children

II. HOW We Pray for Our Children

III. WHAT to Pray for Our Children

I. WHY We Pray for Our Children

This first point may seem obvious to you. Of course we pray for our children, we hardly need to talk about all the reasons why this is important. We have a running family joke when we don't know the answer to something that we should probably know the answer to, yet it's clear nobody does. The answer we jokingly point out is that we don't even need to mention the answer out loud, it's so obvious. "Everybody knows the 21st President of the United States, it's obvious really, we don't even need to mention his name."

So because I know how guilty my own family is of not being willing to admit it when we don't know things. And because, in full disclosure, even as I was preparing this message this week I was convicted over and over again of my own failure in this area. The number of times/days I have failed to pray for my kids was humbling. I feel like maybe we should just go ahead and mention out loud a few of the reasons it's important to pray for and with our kids. This list is by no means comprehensive, but a few that came to mind that I found personally convicting.

1. The primary reason we should pray for our kids is that Jesus modeled for us to pray for our children.

In Mark 10, people are bringing their children to Jesus - even infants - not because they're sick, in this passage of Scripture we are led to believe the kids are all perfectly healthy, the parents just wanted Jesus to touch their children. And when the disciples realize this, they rebuke the parents, "But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, 'Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.' And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them." Mark 10:14-16

Jesus took the children in His arms. The parents just wanted Jesus to touch them, but He scooped them up, held them close. He blessed them, and He laid hands on them in prayer. This is a beautiful model for Christian parents. The blessing of children was the act done by a father in Jewish life. And Jesus is demonstrating for all the watching dads and moms not only His love for children but the power of praying over and blessing them.

Notice that the scripture tells us, Jesus became indignant when He learned that the disciples were discouraging the parents from bringing the children to Him. This is the only time that the Gospel writers used this particular verb, which we translate as indignant, in reference to Jesus. We see him frustrated with the disciples' lack of faith or their understanding, He gets mad and turns over tables in the temple, He denounces unrepentant cities. But the only time He is indignant like this, is when someone is keeping the little children away from him. This holds me in check, the number of times I have done something that has potentially kept my kids from Jesus? I am confident Jesus will have equally harsh words for parents who keep their children away from Him as He did for His disciples. One of the easiest ways we bring our children to Jesus like those parents did two thousand years ago is by praying for them or with them.

And for those of you here today who don't have children I would just point out that these weren't Jesus' children. He was modeling for the parents, but He himself was not a parent. Still He embraced the children, He engaged with them, and he prayed over them. You may not be actively raising the next generation, but you can still have a role to play in praying over them.

2. Praying with our children is how we model and impress our faith upon them.

Last week we discovered the strategy for godly parenting is to pursue their hearts by modeling our heart for Jesus and impressing upon their hearts the imprint of God. We do this by creating daily rhythms with our kids that constantly and continually point

them to Jesus. One of the easiest and most beneficial of the daily rhythms we can instill in our kids is that of prayer. When we pray with our kids, we model our faith for them. We demonstrate our own intimacy with the Father, and we teach them how to have that intimacy in their own life.

When we pray with our kids, we have a front row seat to watching how God answers their prayers, and then we get to remind them of God's faithfulness with real life examples of all the times he has come through for them.

And as eating and drinking is to physical health so is prayer to our children's spiritual health. We feed our kids good food to help them grow physically. We hold them close when they are sad, wipe their tears when they cry, and we nurture them to help grow their emotional health. We also need to make sure we grow their spiritual health, and we do this by praying with them.

### 3. Praying for our children places them in the path of the Divine.

One of my favorite parenting books is *Spiritual Parenting* by Michele Anthony. This is the book we will be studying in the parenting class we will offer later this fall. You'll hear more about that in just a minute. I love the book because in it Michele gives credit where credit is due. The truth of the matter is we don't get to choose our kids faith for them. I wish we could, but we can't. And no matter how good our parenting is, even when we have the right goal, strategy, and steps some of our kids may not follow Jesus the way we raised them to. The Prodigal Son is one of my favorite parables in Scripture because it is something so many of us can relate to. Back in April of 2013 Pastor Jim did a mini-series on the Prodigal Son, it was when we were in the Gospel of Luke. It was fantastic and I highly encourage you to check it out, you can find it on our YouTube channel. Even if it's just to see a much younger Jim West, you should check it.

I do want to make sure you understand that whether or not you have a prodigal child is not necessarily a reflection of your parenting. It is the Holy Spirit who calls our children into relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ. The goal, strategy, and steps we talked about last week are all about placing our child in the path of the Divine - so that the Holy Spirit has the opportunity to call them to a saving faith in Jesus. When we have healthy rhythms in our life that constantly and continually place our children in the path of the divine, the Holy Spirit has more opportunities to work in our children's life. There is more opportunity for them to build a healthy and strong relationship with

Jesus, through the Holy Spirit. But sometimes they still wonder from the fold. When that happens, we can still pray FOR our children, even when we aren't able to pray with our children.

In praying with our kids we are putting them in the path of the divine. When we pray for our kids, we have the opportunity to intercede for them, to ask the Holy Spirit to do the work to bring our children into saving faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus tells us in John 14, "Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it." John 14:13-14. And while those of us who have prodigal children right now may have been praying for our kids for decades have yet to see God answer this prayer. We can hold fast to the knowledge that God is sovereign, He loves our children more than we do, and every time we pray for our children, regardless of where they are in their faith walk, we place them in the path of the divine and the Holy Spirit has the opportunity to work.

We pray for and with our kids because that is what Jesus modeled for us to do. We pray for and with our kids because that is how we will model and impress our faith upon their heart. And we pray for and with our kids because it places them in the path of the divine.

Grandparents, one of your primary roles, to pray for your kids and grandkids. Next week Dr. Ken Canfield will be hear speaking about Godly Grandparenting. He has an acronym that encompasses the HEART of Grandparenting. And in that acronym, he encourages grandparents to be like a guardian Angel for their grandkids, protecting and interceding on their behalf. Grandparents in the room, you won't want to miss next week.

So HOW should we pray for our kids?

## II. HOW We Pray for Our Children

Truth be told, there is no right or wrong way to pray for our kids. But the Scriptures do give us some helpful examples. For several weeks now God has been drawing me to the story of a mother whose daughter has been suffering and she is at a loss as to what to do. And even though this woman isn't an Israelite and doesn't technically

belong to the family of God, she's been hearing about this man named Jesus who has been performing miracles and setting people free. You can read about her story in Matthew 15 and also in Mark 7. The Matthew 15 account goes like this,

“And Jesus went away from there and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon.” But he did not answer her with a word. And his disciples came and begged him, saying, “Send her away, for she is crying out after us.” He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” But she came and knelt before him, saying, “Lord, help me.” And he answered, “It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.” She said, “Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table.” Then Jesus answered her, “O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire.” And her daughter was healed instantly.”

I think there are some valuable lessons here about HOW we are to pray for our children.

1. We are to fall at his feet in humility.

In this account the woman came and knelt before Him, in the gospel of Mark it reads, “... a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit heard of him and came and fell down at his feet.” Picture that in your mind. This woman is beside herself; she knows it is not within HER power to give her child what she so desperately needs. So she runs to this man named Jesus, and she falls at His feet. She calls him Lord, and she asks Him to do a miracle not for her, but for her daughter.

Can I get in your business for just a minute? When was the last time your knees were on the floor for your kids? When was the last time you were on your knees, face down, butt in the air for your kids? Kneeling is a way to express our humility and our reverence before the Lord. When was the last time you were willing to humble yourself before Jesus both in physical posture and in the posture of your heart that he might intercede in a mighty way for your kids.

I will confess there have been times in my life when all I could do fall down and lay myself and my kids at Jesus feet. And I will confess that in the writing of this message this week, I found myself there again. Our kids today may not be oppressed by demons the way this young girl was, but there are plenty of things in this world right now that

are trying to oppress this next generation. And if we are not willing to get on our knees and fight a spiritual battle for these kids then who will? Then who will?

2. The second thing we can learn from the momma in our passage is to Persevere like the nagging widow.

You all remember the story of the nagging widow, right? In Luke 18, Jesus told the parable “In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, ‘Give me justice against my adversary.’ For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, ‘Though I neither fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.’”

She gets her way strictly because she nagged her way to it. She persevered - that’s a much nicer term than nagging. I tell Erik, I’m NOT nagging honey - I’m persevering! We don’t know exactly how much the mom in our passage persisted, but we do know the disciples were fed up. They wanted Jesus to send her away because she kept crying out to them. Yet she persevered. Jesus originally rebuffed her, “I’m here for the house of Israel.” Yet she persevered. He rebuffed her a second time, “It’s not right to give to the dogs what was meant for the children.” Yet she persevered.

This momma humbled herself before the Lord, and she didn’t give up. She persevered until she got what she was asking for. Just like the nagging widow. When it comes to praying for our kids, persevere. Don’t give up when your prayer is not immediately answered. Don’t give up when you don’t immediately see fruit. Don’t give up when it feels like you’ve been praying for the same thing for 20 years. Persevere. Don’t ever weary of praying in the name of Jesus for your children.

3. And finally this momma teaches us to wait with patience and trust

Generally speaking when we are persevering, we are also waiting. This may seem like an odd lesson to pull out of this passage, considering this sweet mother did not have to wait nearly as long for a positive outcome as some of us have had to wait. But I do think that lesson is here.

I have been going through the book of Psalms in my own personal quiet time. And one of the commentaries I’ve been using talked about, often when we are calling out to



God, the things that most often drive us to our knees are centered around two essential questions.

1. “How long...”
2. “What if...”

How long, oh Lord, will my child suffer... How long, oh Lord, will we be in this season... How long, oh Lord, will we have to wait until... The answer God most often gives to this first question is “wait.” Wait, and then keep waiting, wait with patience. And oh, how I dislike this answer. On Wednesday evenings there is a group of ladies who are learning to teach the Bible together and just last week one of them in her teaching pointed out that in the passage we were going over Jesus told one person to go and one person to stay, and one person to wait. They were all given actions to do. One person’s “action” was just to wait. And I just sighed when I realized that waiting was indeed an action we are often told to do. That is my least favorite action - especially when it comes to my kids. Tell me what to do, how to fix, the words to say, the formula to follow. But don’t make me wait. But that is often exactly what God wants us to do; wait - and pray; pray and wait. The two go hand in hand.

In the grand scheme of things, the momma in our passage did not have to wait long, her answer came relatively quickly. But some of you have had to wait for decades, you’ve nearly become professional waiters you’ve been waiting for so long for. The problem with waiting is that you never know how long you are going to have to do it. One of the most important components to waiting is to trust.

The second essential question that drives us to our knees is “What if...” What if...my kids fall away from Jesus? What if ...my kids don’t ever come back to Jesus? What if he doesn’t...What if she does... The answer to this second question is most often “Trust.” “Trust in God, Trust also in me,” these are Jesus words in John 14:1 (NLT). One of the most important aspects of waiting is to trust in God. Trust that God loves your kids even more than you do. Trust that God’s plan for your kids is even better than your plan, because all His plans will be for His glory. Trust that God is bigger and stronger than the enemy who is battling for your child. Trust in God’s sovereignty. Wait with patience (how long) and trust (what if).

Pray by falling at his feet; pray with perseverance and pray with patience and trust. So what do we pray for?

### III. WHAT to Pray for Our Children -

The short answer is everything. Pray everything you can possibly think of for your children. Pray for their faith, pray for their friends, pray for their future spouse (even if that child is in your womb). Pray for their education and for fruit in their lives. Pray scripture over them, pray blessing over them, pray encouragement over them, and pray the things you hope to see some day into them. Just pray.

Much like point two, there is no list of right or wrong things to pray. My intent here is not to cover everything you could or should be praying for your kids - that is not possible. But I would like to suggest some things that maybe you haven't thought of on your own. The first three suggestions come from Michele Anthony in her book *Spiritual Parenting*, the final suggestion comes from Reggie Joiner former family pastor at Northpoint church in Atlanta, GA.

1. This first one is to pray that your kids would know and hear the voice of God, discerning it from all the others out there. Let's face it there is a LOT of noise in our world today. Our kids have a ton of voices clamoring for their attention. They are being told crazy and wicked lies. And if they don't know the voice of God, if they are not able to recognize it when they hear it and differentiate it from all the others out there. Our kids are going to have a really hard time glorifying Him.

When someone enters the banking world, they are taught how to spot a counterfeit, but thoroughly studying the original. They aren't taught all the vast array of fraudulent bills; they are just taught the one true authentic one. They are taught the authentic one so thoroughly and diligently that they can then easily spot a fraud. As parents we don't necessarily have to worry about knowing and training our kids against every voice or lie out there. That would be overwhelming! All we have to do is lead our children back to the original and authentic one over and over again. Pray that your kids would know and hear the voice of God, discerning it from all the other voices that are out there.

2. The second is that your kids would desire to obey Him when they hear Him. It is one thing to recognize the voice of God, it is an entirely different thing to follow it. Let's be honest, when your young, and even sometimes when your older it can feel like no fun to follow God. It can feel like God says no to everything. Pray your kids see how fun God is, how he wants the very best for them, and all the freedom they have in Him. (Genesis 3?) Pray that your kids will desire to obey him.

3. And then pray your kids Obedience would not come from their own power but through the power of the Holy Spirit in them

This goes back to our strategy. We aren't seeking behavior modification; we don't need them to just be good kids from their own power. We want them to have the Holy Spirit in them and then listen and follow the promptings of the Spirit.

4. And finally, pray another adult will enter their life, invest fully in them and tell them the same thing you would tell them when your kids stop listening to you.

I first heard this from Reggie Joiner back when my kids were itty bitty and thought Erik and I hung the moon. Then my kids became teenagers.

Reggie Joiner tells the story of a time when one of his kids, one of his boys was a teenager and something kind of big had happened with a girl and Reggie knew something had happened but he couldn't get his kid to talk about it. So he was talking to the lead pastor at church, frustrated that he couldn't get his kids to open up, mad at his kid for shutting him out. And finally Andy, the pastor looked at him and said, "Did YOU tell your parents everything when you were a kid?" Reggie not really thinking replied, "Of course not, they were my parents." Exactly. Kids won't always talk to their parents. Reggie went home and said to his kid. "I get you don't want to talk to me about this, so who will you talk to?" The kids named another adult Reggie knew, someone younger and cooler than he. And Reggie knew this adult would tell his son the exact same thing Reggie would.

When my daughter hit her wall as a senior in high school and I was mom and could get so far, there were several young moms here at Colonial who stepped in and spoke truth to her. Nate has had a young man investing in him since he was in the 6th grade.

When Nate and I came to blows one time, I called up Michael James and asked him to talk to my son. JT has a Christian coach that has been investing in him since elementary school.

Every kid needs an adult OTHER THAN their parents to invest in them. Parents pray for that person in your kid's life. And if you don't have kids, let me tell you that at SKC we have approximately 80 kids/infants -12th grade who need another adult in their life. At OP we have about 375 kids/infants through high school who need another adult in their life.

As I mentioned last week, Colonial wants to help be the godly parents you are called to be. And there are three tangible things you can do this week to move in that direction. Sign up and read the email that is sent each week both our children's ministry and our student ministries to get those emails contact our children's or student ministries directors

- OP Children's Ministry: Glenn Menke, [gmenke@colonialkc.org](mailto:gmenke@colonialkc.org)
- OP Student Ministries: Michael Otto, [motto@colonialkc.org](mailto:motto@colonialkc.org)
- SKC Children's Ministry: Cailin Renwick, [crenwick@colonialkc.org](mailto:crenwick@colonialkc.org)
- SKC Student Ministries: Greg Ealey, [gealey@colonialkc.org](mailto:gealey@colonialkc.org)

We've also created a resource list for you in conjunction with this sermon series. A list of websites and books that might help you navigate parenting in this generation. It is certainly not an exhaustive list, there are lots of great parenting books and resources out there, but it will hopefully give you some ideas. You can find it on our website under today's manuscript at [colonialkc.org/watch](http://colonialkc.org/watch). There will also be a link to it in eNews tomorrow.

And finally this fall, Colonial will be offering a parenting class called Spiritual Parenting based on the book I mentioned. You can actually sign up for that class starting now, we went ahead and opened registration based on your feedback. The cost is \$50 that covers the books and kids programming. There will be a limit to the number of kids we are able to accommodate so sign up now and if you have any other there will be large group time and small group time. It will be a great opportunity to really dig into God's instructions for parents and to discuss it with other people who desire to be Godly parents. Whether you have very young children, elementary age or are parenting through the teen years this is a great class. It will start Sunday Sept 10, 3:30-5:30