

Teaching Children to Be Intercessors

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. Philippians 4:6

Talking Together

In twos and threes talk about a time when you were a child or teenager, and you prayed for someone else. What happened and how did this influence your faith and prayer life?

Thinking About Intercession

Why is it important for us to pray for other people?

How has praying for other people contributed to your own spiritual journey and helped to increase your faith?

What are some of the challenges that face us when children pray for other people?

How do we help children to understand that God might answer their prayers in a different way than they hoped?

What would you say were some of the important things to bear in mind when teaching children about praying for other people?

Activities

1. Paper chain prayers

Needs: a pack of pre-pasted paper chain strips; or strips of coloured paper the width of a sheet of copier paper and about 1" wide; Heart-shaped pieces of thin poster board; glue-sticks and marker pens.

- Take a selection of different coloured paper strips.
- Choose a person you would like to pray for.
- Write their name on one of the hearts.
- Write sentence prayers for the person on the different strips of paper, using the following outline:
 - Thank God for the person
 - List their special gifts and praise God for them
 - Pray for their needs
 - Ask God to help you know how to show His love for the person.
- Link the prayers together to make a chain, threading each strip through the one before and then sticking the ends together to form neat loops.
- Stick the heart with the person's name at one end of the chain and a heart with the name of God on the other end of the prayer chain.
- Hang the chains where you will be reminded to pray for the person. Add more links if you need to.

2. Healing leaves

Needs: a bunch of plain twigs in a sturdy vase; various leaf shapes cut from green construction paper; hole punch; raffia or twine cut into 6" lengths (or use a large sheet of paper with a bare tree sketched onto it and a pack of leaf-shaped Post-it notes); pink and white flowers cut from tissue, foam or stiff paper; glue stick; marker pens.

- Take a leaf and punch a hole in one end.
- Write on the leaf the name of a person who is ill, and write a short sentence prayer for their healing.
- Tie the leaf to a branch, using the raffia or twine.
- Read the prayers on the other leaves and pray for healing for those people, too.
- When a prayer has been answered and someone has been healed or is better again, stick a pink or white blossom shape onto their leaf prayer.
- Thank God for healing your friends.
- This can create a semi-permanent display in your classroom, so that children can add leaves and flowers over several months.

3. Button prayers

Needs: a bag of different buttons; from cheap variety stores or craft stores.

- Choose a button that reminds you of someone you want to pray for. Tell someone else in your group why the button reminds you of the person you want to pray for. Hold the button in your hand as you pray for that person. You can pray silently or aloud. Ask God to help you know what to pray.
- Take the button you choose. Keep it to remind you to pray for your friend, and especially to pray that they will stay connected to Jesus.
- My mom has a button that reminds her of me, and she has stitched it into the pocket of her apron so she can pray for me when she works in the kitchen!

4. The world ball

Needs: an inflatable globe from a good quality educational store.

- This prayer helps you to pray for different places in our world.
- Stand in a circle and start by praying, with your eyes open, 'Dear God we want to praise you for making the whole world. We want to thank you for loving everybody, everywhere and today we want to pray for the people in... (name a place you have found on the globe.)
- Throw the globe to someone in the circle.
- Ask them to turn the globe in their hands until they find a place they want to pray for, then let them say 'and we also want to pray for the people in...(name of their chosen place).
- Continue passing the ball around the circle until everyone has had at least one turn at choosing a place, or two turns if you only have a small group.
- Even if you don't know anything about the place, or the work being done there, you can still pray that God will help the people there to learn about His love.
- Is God asking you to pray regularly for this place and His work there?
- Is there a way you could help the people in that place to know God better?

5. Praying for our friends who don't know Jesus yet

Needs: a piece of thin card with the word Jesus printed on it – try using WordArt to create a rainbow coloured word; tie-on price tags in various colours and sizes; marker pens; hole punch.

- Punch a row of holes along the bottom edge of the 'Jesus' card.
- Think of some friends who don't know Jesus yet.
- Write their names on the price tags and tie them to the Jesus card.
- As you tie the tags on, pray for your friends, and ask God what you can do to show them His love, and to help them become connected to Jesus.

6. The seeds prayer

Needs: a small bag of dried corn or sunflower seeds

- Read about the Parable of the Sower in Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23.
- Who are you witnessing to and praying for? God's love in their heart is like a seed the Sower is sowing.
- Ask God to protect the seeds and to guide you to know the best ways to help them grow.
- Take a seed and put it in your pocket. Each time you feel the seed, pray for the person and pray that God's love will grow in their hearts.
- Pray that the seeds you are sowing will bear fruit.
- If you have a seed that will grow, plant it in a pot and pray for the person each time you take care of the plant. Decorate a planter and write the person's name on the pot.

7. Flower prayer

Needs: a bunch of pretty flowers, preferable fairly sturdy flowers without thorns; or a bunch of attractive, good quality, artificial flowers.

- Using a flower can help you to pray for other people
- Choose a flower and hold it in your hands.
- Look at the different parts very carefully and use them to remind you of some of the different people you want to pray for:
- Stem – supports the flowers - Pray for those who support you in different ways. Ask God how you can help those who need your support.
- Leaves - leaves are for healing - Pray for those you know who are ill. How can you encourage and comfort them?
- Flower - Bright, beautiful and fragrant - Pray for those who brighten your life with their love.
- Thank God for your friends and find some ways to let them know how much you appreciate them.

8. Prayer bags

Needs: small paper or cloth gift bags

- Invite the children to make a list of people they would like to pray for. Encourage them to think of a wide range of people, including people that they might not usually pray for, or even people they don't like.
- Encourage the children to find an object that will remind them to pray for each person on their list, and to put it in their bag.
- When they pray they can choose several objects from the bag and pray for the people that the objects represent.

9. Prayer cards

Needs: an assortment of purchased blank greeting cards and envelopes; marker pens; adhesive; stickers; silk flowers; ribbons and lace; rubber stamps and inks; decorative punches and scissors; computer with graphics program and colour printer

- Make special hand-made cards to let people know that you are praying for them.
- Stick a simple, attractive design onto the front of the card and write your prayer for them inside the card.
- Computer greeting card programs can also be used to create cards, or print messages, or provide you with encouraging words to use in your own cards.
- Stick a miniature teddy bear on the front of a card and send a tiny hug to someone who needs a prayer for comfort or encouragement.
- Stick a Band Aid onto a card with a prayer for healing.
- Send a lace-trimmed handkerchief with your prayer for someone who may be sad.

10. Newspaper prayer

Needs: a current local newspaper; a marker pen.

- Give each child or group of children a local paper, a marker pen and the following instructions:
- As you read through your local paper, draw circles around news items about people and situations that you believe the Holy Spirit is asking you to pray for.
- Look for the good news and thank God for those things.
- Look at the family notices and pray for the families who have new babies, as well as those who have been bereaved.
- Look for information on those who are suffering, and pray for them.
- Pray for those who have hurt others, too, that they may learn to care for others instead.
- Ask God to guide you as you pray. Is He asking you to respond to the people and situations in a practical way? What else could you do to help?

11. Map prayer

Needs: a map of your local community; a large sheet of quality paper; pencil and eraser; marker pens

- Lay the large piece of paper on a flat surface.
- Use the pencil to draw a simple map of your community on the paper.
- Mark on the map the places that are significant to you and your family, such as your home, your friends' homes, school, church, the hospital, workplaces, the mall, the roads you use, etc.

- Draw outlines of these places on the map, big enough to take a plain index card.
- Now finish the map with the marker pens, drawing in the main roads, landmarks, parks, etc., to make a colourful map of your area.
- For each significant place on the map take an index card and write your prayer concerns on the front of the card.
- Use removable adhesive putty to stick the index cards onto the significant places on the map. Change and update the cards when necessary.
- Use this map to help you pray for your community and the people you know.
- Pray for safety as you travel along the roads between the places.
- Add other cards from time to time, to pray for special concerns and challenges in your community, such as victims of violence, factory closures, etc. Thank God for answering your prayers, too.

12. Handy prayer

Needs: a hand

- Use the fingers on your hand to remind you to pray for different people:
- Thumb – sticks out, away from other fingers – pray for those who are away from you, or overseas.
- Index finger – points the way – pray for those who point you in the right direction – parents, teachers, pastors etc.
- Middle finger – tall – pray for those who lead the church and the country
- Ring finger – pray for those you love, in your family, or your friends
- Little finger – pray for those who are weak, sick or little

What ideas do you have for helping children learn to pray for others?

Write some of them here:

**Check out more ideas in Karen's book:
'100 Creative Prayer Ideas for Kids (and grown-ups too!)'
Pacific Press, 2003, isbn 0-8163-1968-5**