



Teach your kids to pray FIRST

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Teach your kids to pray FIRST
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When we plan out our services at Lawson Alliance, and I'm listening to God to know what to preach on, usually the sermons aren't just a one-off. Usually, I preach in a series. Meaning that I have one overarching theme. Like this month I have, "How to Do Everything for your Kids." It's kind of a parenting series. But it's not just for parents, there are huge implications for grandparents, and aunts and uncles. And this series has 4 Sundays worth of messages based on that theme.

But with summer, this is the season when many of you are kinda hit and miss, as far as Sunday in concerned. And we do hope you to take the time while the sun is hot and the days are longer to get away and get refreshed. But what that means that when you're away from us, that you will miss one or more of the messages of the series. So, can I encourage you to find the time to listen to the sermons that ya miss online? For instance, if you have an iphone you can search for Lawson Heights Alliance Church on the Podcasts app or the itunes app.

If you have an android phone you can connect to us through TuneIn Radio or Soundcloud. Or you can connect with us on Facebook or through our website and you can listen there. There's lots of ways to connect. And please leave a like and a review.

Alright. So far these are the two topics we've dealt with in our series...

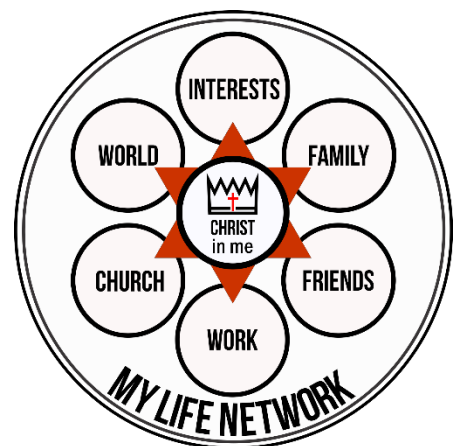
Centering in on what's most important for your kids. Influencing your kid's Influencers.

Today's topic is... **Teach them to Pray First**

See, your parenting journey is not complete, if by the time they leave your nest, they don't know how to pray. Prayer is central to our relationship with God right? And yet, most people confess to not having a regular, fulfilling prayer life. And what's worse, is that one of the core tenants of discipleship is that you can't teach what you don't know. So, many parent don't teach their kids to really connect with God because they themselves don't know how to pray. So, let's change that today.

Today, I'm gonna build on what we've talked about so far, but today is gonna be the practical. The sermon notes are gonna be a bit different, but you have to have a copy, so if you didn't any notes, get up and go back to the ushers and get a copy. Notice the main emphasis on the notes is **My Life Network....**

Cause if you've been here each week, I've emphasized that in order to help your kids know how to center in on what's most important. And you as the parent needs to know how to be in Christ. In order for you to influence the influencers in your kid's life, you yourself need to be able to influence your kids toward a faith worth following.



Our kids have their own life network too right. When they're young, it's quite small. But every day they live in a world of many influencers, and *My Life Network* is a great way to teach them how to pray for them, and in some cases wage war against them. Right.

So, let's begin at the beginning of prayer...

1. Help your kids know that prayer that connects with God is always Christ-Centered.

We talked alot about that in message 1 right? What does that look like? Point them to the center of their Life Network.

Last week, we looked at a moment Jesus had with His disciples. He was telling them that He was leaving them and going back to the Father. They get a bit freaked out. They don't know how they're gonna be able to carry on without Him being with them. And they're not sure they know how to get to where Jesus is going. And so Jesus tries to calm them.

John 14:9-13 NIV

6 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. 7 If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him." 8 Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us." 9 Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

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10 Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. 11 Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves. 12 I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. 13 And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. 14 You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.

Did ya hear that?

Jesus said that He lived His life, and did what He did, because He was "in the Father and the Father was in Him." And then Jesus tells His fretting disciples, that the way they're going to continue on when He leaves, is to keep living and doing His work "in His name." Notice.... "And I will do whatever you ask in my name... [REPEATS] You may ask me for anything in my name and I will do it."

"Asking in Jesus' name." What does that mean? Well, let me tell you what it's not... It's not just a phrase that we have to tack on to the end of our prayers... like... "in Jesus name - amen." It's not a magical phrase that you need to say or else your prayers go unanswered. No, it's a statement of where your ability to pray at all comes from.

Remember, in the first message, two weeks ago, I asked you to answer this one question: “What’s the point of being a Christian?”

The point of being a Christian is not that we get to go to heaven. The point is not that we get a God to help us with stuff when we pray. The point of being a Christian is to be ‘in Christ.’ It’s a statement of how we get to be related to the Father, because of Christ. Jesus was related to the Father in that He was the direct Son of God. We’re related to the Father in that we are “in Christ.” Without Christ, we’d have no access to the Father, because we’d still be in our sins.

Hebrews 4:14-16 NIV

14 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet was without sin. 16 Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Jesus is the means by which you and I have access to the Father. And when we pray, it is **in** “Jesus’ name”

Colossians 3:1-4 NIV

3 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. 3 For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

If you’re gonna pray, if you’re gonna teach your kids to pray, you gotta teach them to appreciate that this relationship they have with Jesus isn’t just contractual, it is also deeply spiritual. Listen to this next Bible passage. It’s probably a little beyond your kids, but you need to eventually teach it...

2 Peter 1:4 NIV

He [Jesus] has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world.

Somehow, being hidden in Christ, allows us to participate in the divine nature of Christ, so that when the Father looks at us, He sees Christ.

When you enter into a relationship with Jesus, by God’s power, you become to God the Father, what God the Son is. The Apostle Paul says it this way in Romans 6, that you are united with Christ in His death and resurrection, and that makes you acceptable to the Father. So, Jesus is both the goal and the means to living the Christian life.

Likewise, Jesus is both the goal and the means by which we pray. That’s why so many don’t have a very satisfying prayer life. Cause they don’t get that. They don’t get the point of being a Christian is to be ‘in Christ.’ to participate in the divine nature, and so they diminish prayer to a mere ask, when it is so much more.

Prayer isn't just asking for stuff. It's meant to be the way you explore this relationship you have with God. It's the way you help your kids explore how they're related to God too. All of that is really mind blowing. It's beyond my puny mind to grasp it all. And that's why we pray.

- To understand what it means to be 'in Christ.'
- To wrestle with it.
- To affirm it.
- To learn to own it and believe it.
- To enjoy it.

For sure you want your kids to learn that they can go to Jesus for anything and at any time. But you do need to have a concentrated time, where you can teach them what qualifies someone to be able to pray in the first place. So, how do we teach our kids this? Slowly and intentionally and visually.

You know when my kids were young, they figured out who and how they were related to family by Bonnie and I explaining it to them. Because we lived far away from most of our family, we put pictures up on the wall so that they could see who they were related to. Kids are visual learners. They learn easier with pictures.

So, use *My Life Network* to teach them to center in on what's most important in their life. And when you pray with your kids, use this image to help reinforce the relationship they can have with the Father. I wish I had thought of this design when my kids were little. Cause this is how I pray now.

If I was starting over with my kids, I'd make a **Super BIG prayer journal** with each kid. And when we sat down with them at night for prayer and Bible reading, I'd use that journal and this *My Life Network* graphic to help them understand how they're related to God. And I'd make one for myself too. In fact, I do have one.... [SHOW] You don't have to be an artist.



Here's what you need...

Get a BIG blank Journal. I went to Michael's to find mine. It's a spiral bound Canson art pad. There's many different sizes, with difference types of paper. I like the really thick paper, because sometimes I draw & write on my lap. That way I don't need a table.

This would be especially helpful for a kid's journals because they often have their quiet time in their beds.

Buy a good mechanical pencil. Most come with .07mm lead, but I like .09mm sharper lines.

You'll need an eraser.

Buy some good pencil crayons and/or markers.

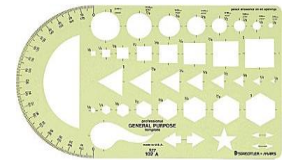
And buy a template. Mine just has circles on it, but you can special order one at Staples with multiple shapes.

I happen to like Staedtler and Sharpie products.

I've put all this on our website. Just look for the section on PRAYER and follow the menu,



Then on page one, because this is where ya wanna start. At the center of *My Life Network* is **Christ in me**. Here's what my journal has in it.



And then you might wanna reinforce that imagery with what the Bible says about you now that you are IN CHRIST.

This is what I do...

Each day of the week I have two passages that I *center in on* that affirm for me who I am in Christ and what it means for me.

In Christ I am....						
SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
Jn 1:12 I am a child of God	Eph 2:18 I have full access to God	Col 1:14 I am redeemed and forgiven	Rom 8:35-39 I cannot be separated from the love of God	2Tim 1:7 I have been given the Spirit of God, not a spirit of fear	2Cor 1:21-22 I am established, anointed, and sealed	Phil 3:20 I am a citizen of heaven
Jn 15:15 I am Christ's friend	Heb 4:16 I can approach the throne of grace confidently	Eph 2:5 I have been made alive in Christ	Eph 2:8 I have been saved by grace through faith	Gal 3:14 I am redeemed to spread Abraham's blessing and have receive the Spirit	Col 3:3 I am hidden in Christ in God	Eph 6:20; 2Cor 5:20 I am an ambassador of reconciliation for Christ

I read through the Bible using a chronological Bible, but just about every day, for years now, I use these few Scriptures to remind me of what's most important. And I read them, not just for information, but I rehearse them. I say them out loud. I declare them. I affirm that this is me now. This is my life. And when you sit down with your kids to teach them to pray get them to declaring with you! Grandparent, aunties and uncles, when you get a chance, try to pass this along these truths. Whisper them in their ears.

This is what I'm planning for with my grandkids... they're called "Did you knows?"

Did you know that

The Bible says that - *You are a child of God?*

The Bible says that - *You have full access to God?*

If your grandkids don't know Jesus yet, you just modify that to, "When you accept Jesus as your Saviour, you become a child of God!" When you accept Jesus as your Saviour, you can go to God any time!" And when you pray through your Life Network, you pray for those little ones will one day accept Jesus as their Saviour and Lord and that they will understand what the Bible says about them, *that they are a children of God?*

That they have full access to God?

See how simple that is to pray. And you're praying in Jesus name, and that's His will for those little ones. So you can be confident that Jesus will answer those prayers. Amen!? Help your kids know that prayer that connects with God is always Christ-Centered.

Ok, where do I go from here?

Well, the best part about centering in on being 'in Christ,' is that it has changed the image I have of my heavenly Father. Because I am in Christ, my relationship with the Father is familial not formal.

2. Help kids know God their ABBA, FATHER

My kids have a unique relationship with me and Bonnie. It's not like any relationship they have with anyone else. They call us mom and dad. Now, lots of people have people they call mom and dad, but to my kids only Bonnie and I are mom and dad. Except. Now that my boys are married, they have in-laws that that they can call 'mom and dad.' And the only reason they can do that, or would even think to do that, is because of how they are now related to the parents of their wives. And likewise, their wives are now able to call us 'mom and dad.'

But we have special names for people we're specially related to. *Grandma* and *grandpa*.... *nana* and *papa*... *oma* and *opa*... Auntie and uncle...

When Jesus taught His disciples to pray...

Matthew 6:9-13 KJV

Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory. For ever and ever. Amen.

That "*our Father*" is the English rendering of the Greek word *patéros*. That title does tell us that the relationship we have with God is different now, but it does sound pretty formal. My kids don't call me 'Father.' That's too formal. And that's wasn't usually how Jesus talk to His Father. When Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane, anticipating the Cross, Jesus' prayer shows us a more intimate side of their relationship.

Mark 14:36 NIV

"Abba, Father," he said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."

"**Abba**," is the Aramaic form of the word *Father*, but it's more like saying, '*papa*' or '*daddy*.' Remember, because you are "in Christ," you become to God the Father, what God the Son is. You are a child of God.

The Apostle Paul explains it this way....

Romans 8:15 NIV

15 The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father."

Galatians 4:6 NIV

Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father."

I wonder, if so many don't have a satisfying prayer life, because '*God the Father*' has NOT become '*Abba Father*.' I'm not saying calling God *Abba* is mandatory. I'm only suggesting that many aren't able to make that change of relationship feel closer

because they can't or won't relate to God differently than they did before they accepted Christ.

For instance, my daughter-in-laws are not my birth children. They've married in, and now I am their 'father-in-law.' There's a formality to our relationship. Of course, it's hard to call me 'dad,' **and** I'll never be 'daddy.' Because that title is reserved for only one 'daddy' in their hearts. As it should be. But when they get to know me better, the formality will change. Now, I would never think to call Bonnie's dad 'Ed.' Because I know him better, now it's 'dad.' So, why not try adopting '*Abba Father*' into your family's name for the Father. Maybe use Jesus' name for the Father to help your kids, and maybe you, be more familial, more intimate with their heavenly Father.

Use that first '*In Christ*' passage with '*Abba.*' Declare it!
"*John 1:12 says that — in Christ, I am now Abba's child.*"

3. Help kids learn to pray FIRST.

1 John 5:13-15 NIV

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life. 14 This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. 15 And if we know that he hears us — whatever we ask — we know that we have what we asked of him.

John Wesley: the famous English evangelist of the 1700's once said, *"God does nothing except in response to believing prayer."*

That sounds cool, but it's not completely true. God is an all knowing, all-powerful, everywhere present sovereign God. I would hope that God is not bound by our prayerfulness. I would hope when Jesus says, "My Father is always working, and so am I." I would hope that that is not dependent on our prayers, otherwise the universe would collapse. But I like what I think it's trying to say. We need to learn, and we need to teach our kids, to pray continually and to pray first.

A better quote might be...

Oswald Chambers: "We tend to use prayer as a last resort, but God wants it to be our first line of defense."

He explains himself when he continues to say is, *"We pray when there's nothing else we can do, but God wants us to pray before we do anything at all."*

In our Alliance family of church in Canada and around the world, our denomination adopted a motto to "**PRAY FIRST: We will do nothing until we have first prayed.**" It sets a priority doesn't it. That prayer is important. That connecting with Abba it essential to living life and participating in and getting the Gospel out.

So, why not adopt a priority of praying first?

Before you do anything else — before you start the day... before your meals... before you make a decision... before you spend money... before you plan a trip... before you meet people in your Life Network...

PRAY FIRST: "We will do nothing until we have prayed."

It teaches you and your kids to live in expectation that God is in every part of your Life Network and that no matter where you go, who you meet and what you do is a reflection of your relationship with Abba and Jesus and the Holy Spirit. It teach you and your kids to live in anticipation that Abba will do something miraculous. Wouldn't it be cool if your kids learn to anticipate that miracles were a normal part of every day?

4. Teach your kids to be strategic in prayer

Ephesians 6:18 NIV

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and **always** keep on praying for all the saints.

Does that sound like your prayer life?

Why does Paul tell us to pray like this? Because earlier in verse 10 he tells us that there is a very real Devil, and an army of supernatural enemies that are scheming to short-circuit the work of God in you and your kid's lives. They're scheming to stop the advance of the Gospel. They're scheming every minute of the day to stop the people in your Life Network from accepting Christ as their Saviour and Lord. Did you know that?

That's why we need to be strategic in prayer. Because the enemy the Devil is strategic.

Ephesians 6:11 NIV

Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.

The full armour is another word picture for being in Christ...

Ephesians 6:14-18 NIV

...with the belt of truth buckled around your waist,
...with the breastplate of righteousness in place,
...with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace,
...with the shield of faith,
...with the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

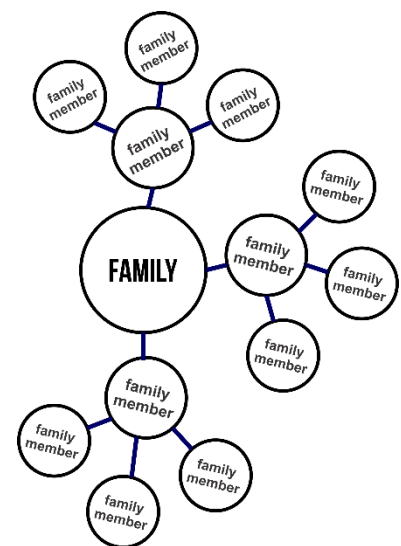
So, how do you pray strategically for your kids?

MindMap My Life Network

Mindmapping is a fairly new way to think through and breakdown complex ideas to bite-sized pieces. It's a perfect way to strategically visualize and pray through all the activities and relationships that make up your Life Network. I don't know about you, but early in the morning my mind wanders, but mindmapping helps me stay focused and move from one thought and prayer need easily.

In your Journal, map out the various networks of activity and relationship that you have.

Help your kids do that in their journals. It's a great way to teach your genealogical tree to your kids.



The power of using this diagram in training your kids, grandkids and nieces and nephews to pray, is that it visually puts into perspective the enormous amount of activities, decisions, and people they will meet in a day. It helps them to see that there day is going to be filled with a lot of unknowns. All of those activities and relationships are going to need God's wisdom.

Walk them through their day in prayer before it happens. Walk through each circle. Use their Journal. Or blow up My Life Network, draw it out real big, or like here, I've used a free mindmapping app called **Simplemind** to draw it out. And then you can fasten it to the wall or fridge and then before everyone leaves in the morning, huddle up around it and each one pray for one part... Interests/hobbies - Family - Friends - Work - Church - World.

When I pray in the mornings I have my calendar with me. I want Jesus to be Lord of my day. I want to learn to do His will in the moments, in the activity, in the relationships I will be having that day. I want to learn, and this is what I want my kids to learn, CHRIST IN ME throughout my day. See that CROWN that signifies His lordship over my world.

Or maybe there isn't enough time in the mornings for this, then the night before, help your kids anticipate their tomorrow, walking through their Journal. Have a different page in the Journal for each part of My Life Network... Interests/hobbies - Family - Friends - Work - Church - World.

Help them get centered 'in Christ' and invite and anticipate Christ being with them through the day. Declare Christ Lord of the day together. Say your child is anticipating going to school that day, instead of WORK, they could have school as their *Life Network Journal*. And then help them map out WHO is in that sphere of activity. fellow students, teachers, principal. Who's their best friend? Who are they having a hard time relating to? See, what you're doing? You're showing them how to invite Jesus to be in those moments when your kids are with them, but you also get the inside scoop. What do you do with, "I don't want to pray for Joey Davidson, I hate him." You get to help them learn to respond to them like Jesus wants. And not just the people, but Journal and draw out the activities... write those in their *Life Network Journal*. Math, science, recess. Put it all down.

You're helping your kids...

- **know that prayer that connects with God is always Christ-Centered.**
- **You're helping your kids know God their ABBA, FATHER**
- **You're helping your kids learn to pray FIRST.**
- **You're helping your kids be strategic in prayer.**

This is how you *DO everything for your kids*.

I hope that is helpful and I how you have fun learning to pray with your kids. Remember, this is all on our website and I've posted this sermon as an e-book on our website and sermon page.