**Tips on teaching Kids to Pray for Miracles**

*We want our kids to pray and trust God for answers, but when it comes to the really big prayers — the ones that need miracles — how do we pray with kids?*

Prayer is a primary force in our relationship with God; it oils the gears of faith and nourishes our souls. There’s perhaps no more direct line to God than through prayer. It’s no wonder, then, that when we take a child’s hand to guide him or her into a relationship with God, one of our primary focuses is to teach that child about the power of prayer.

By the same token, we know that life is a journey, one that can be fraught with the unexpected and life-altering — death, illness, strife, trials. As adults we traverse the rockier landscapes carrying our personal experiences and plenty of realism. We see situations that seem hopeless. Children get sick and die. Parents get divorced. Tragedies occur. Life is at times cruel. In these places we lean on God for strength and comfort, and we encourage kids to do the same. We tell children to put their faith in God, to set their worries at his feet. And we pray for healing, reconciliation…miracles. Even when we foresee an unhappy outcome, we pray for God’s divine intervention.

Prayer is Who we Are

It’s in our DNA as Christians. We praise God in times of joy and lean on him in times of pain. We pray without ceasing. And we teach children likewise.
But this creates an interesting tension in relation to how we teach — and model — faith and prayer to children. How do we guide kids to pray in situations when our experience and knowledge tell us a miracle won’t happen?

Is it right to pray with a child for healing for a family member while they are laying on a deathbed? Do you think it is ethical to pray with kids to be reunited with their mother, even though courts have legally separated them from her care as a protective manoeuvre? Is it wrong to sit beside a child and pray for something we believe is outside the realm of possibility? And what impact does it have on a child’s faith to pray these really “big” prayers — only to have the very worst inevitably happen?

On the other side of this tension is the alternative approach. If we cautiously pray, coaching kids to pray for the possible things what does that tell kids about our faith? Is it possible to have “faith that can move mountains” if, deep down, we’re afraid to pray for miracles? And at what cost do we model such a safe approach to prayer to kids?

Braving Miracles

As children’s ministers, we work diligently to teach kids about prayer. So often, though, the prayer of the week is, “Please pray for me to get a new puppy,” or “Please pray for my grandma’s broken toenail to quit bleeding.” Over the years numerous children’s ministers have confessed that these prayers feel so simplistic that they’re hard to take seriously. Yet when children bring the really big prayers, they stop us in our tracks. We often admit that we don’t know what to do.

*Please pray for my brother Dan to be healed. The doctor says he might only live another week. Dear God, please make my daddy stop drinking and being mean to my mummy.*We want kids to pray and trust God for answers. But when it comes to the really big prayers — the ones that need a miracle — how should we pray?

Big Prayers in the Bible

To answer, let’s start with a reality check. Consider some “big” prayers God answered in remarkable fashion.

* **Hezekiah** lay in his bed near death. He prayed for healing, and God restored his health and added 15 years to his life ([Isaiah 38:1-5](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah%2038:1-5&version=NLT)).
* **Jonah** prayed for his life to be spared from the bowels of the big fish, and God saved him ([Jonah 2](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jonah%202&version=NLT)).
* **Paul**, after praying, was able to heal Publius’ ailing father — and then other sick villagers, as well ([Acts 28:7-9](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%2028:7-9&version=NLT)).
* **Elijah**, “a human being, even as we are,” prayed in earnest that no rain would fall — and the result was a three-and-a-half-year drought. When he prayed for rain, “the heavens gave rain” ([James 5:13-18)](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=James%205:13-18)&version=NLT).

Regardless of the stark facts or reality of a situation, the Bible makes it clear that prayer is our first and best strategy.

“There’s no difference between the importance of prayer in the life of a child and that of an adult,” points out Adam Stadtmiller, author of [*Give Your Kids the Keys: Navigating Your Child to a Personal and Sustainable Faith*. “For Jesus](https://www.amazon.com/Give-Your-Kids-Keys-Sustainable/dp/0830757201/ref%3Dasap_bc?ie=UTF8), prayer was life and life was prayer; there was no separation. Prayer is the language of our life in Christ.”

Refining Focus

Adults who minister to children are often keenly aware of what they’re modelling to the kids in their charge. We demonstrate our personal faith each time we communicate with God in kids’ presence and in how we grapple with specific situations.

“Fear and lack of faith are the two biggest hurdles I see [when it comes to this modelling],” says Stadtmiller. “We’re afraid that if kids pray for a friend with cancer and that friend isn’t healed, then their faith might be shaken and they might doubt God. Sure, we need to protect kids from some of the disturbing details of certain prayer requests. But we never need to protect them from God. Overcoming doubt with faith is part of the full life in Christ. If you’re constantly trying to remove every opportunity for children to wrestle with their faith, to wrestle in prayer, you’ll be building a faith of straw that won’t stand the trials that might lie ahead.”

God is Capable of Miracles

Few Christians would argue that our God has limitations. We know that God is capable of all things, including the creation of our universe and authoring life itself. Yet we also know that while all prayer is answered, we typically don’t get those answers on our terms.

It’s from this perspective, caution experts, where we may stumble with kids. It’s human nature to focus on the *results* of a prayer — on our terms — rather than God’s *ability* in every circumstance. Because of this, we may mistakenly guide kids into wrong expectations. Teach kids to expect an answer to every prayer — but not to expect that the result or timing will be on their terms.

“The problem in praying for miracles with our kids comes only when we begin to direct their faith to the results of our prayers instead of the miracle worker who is God,” says Stadtmiller. “Believing, faith-filled prayer focuses on God’s *ability* — not God’s decision-making process…Adults who pray big prayers with kids believe in God to sustain their child’s faith no matter what the result. We don’t need to protect our kids from God. Recently my 3-year-old made this statement: ‘God can always heal, but sometimes he doesn’t.’ This is the essence of faith-filled prayer.”

Model Fearless Faith

No matter the circumstances, as an influencer in kids’ lives, you have the opportunity to model fearless, faith-filled prayer. As you pray for miracles, never forget to remind kids what the core purpose and benefit of prayer is.

“Prayer is the conversation of life,” says Stadtmiller. “Prayer is always available. It is always the answer. Every issue in our life finds its solution and answer in prayer. Prayer shifts the heavens and brings the kingdom of God to Earth.”