

Pray for them in the momentous decisions concerning matters such as their future career and possible marriage. Do not put off praying over these because they might be in the distant future. Consider, you may not be alive when they face these decisions.

3. It will lead you to a better understanding of them.

Fervent prayer, continuously offered for them, in which their special needs, as far as you know them, are spread before God, will be sure to lead to a greater watchfulness over them. It will lead to a closer study of their character and to more exact understanding of their traits and needs. You should know what motives most easily influence them and what temptations are most likely to lead them into wrongdoing. You should also be familiar with their sorrows and circumstances, knowing intimately each one's character. If you are praying for them you will be compelled to note these things.

4. It will increase your holy desires for them.

If we cannot pray, even for strangers, without learning to love them, surely the more we commend our children to God, the stronger will our love for their souls become. This steady increase of holy desires in your heart, with reference to you children, will prove an unspeakable blessing both to them and to you.

5. No other means will be so effectual in enabling you to overcome the difficulty you experience in talking with them on religious subjects.

Out of the abundance of your heart your mouth will speak. We are often too reserved when it comes to speaking of spiritual matters with our children, despite the scriptural command (Deut. 6:7). Nothing is so suited to remove this as earnest, persistent prayer, in which your child's needs are spread before God and specific requests are offered on his behalf.

6. You will thereby secure for them God's aid in the efforts they may make to yield you their obedience.

God requires of children submission to the parent's will and implicit obedience. Children need more than mere human assistance, even though that assistance may come from wise and affectionate parents. They can no more perform their duties as children without such help from God, than you, without such help, can perform your parental du-

ties. You are solemnly bound to think of the dependence of your children on God's help, and earnestly to pray that that help may be given them in their endeavours to honour and obey you.

7. Other parents seeing your example, may be led to imitate you.

Others may be challenged by your diligence and may be inspired to be more zealous in their parental duties.

8. They will often, should they continue in the world, have their times of need when the power of God alone can avail to help them.

Disappointments, sickness, losses, cares, in short, adversity in various forms, will be sure to overtake them sooner or later, and well will it be for them if you have anticipated these times of need by much prayer offered on their behalf. There will be times of temptation when they will be in fearful danger. The evil one will seek to lay snares for them and at such times earthly friends will be of no help. Ask the Saviour to defend them from the spite, power and wiles of evil spirits, the agents of Satan, who are constantly around them.

In closing, never approach the throne of grace with your own needs without remembering your children's, who are no less helpless and needy than you. Let us resolve that we will give ourselves more intently to the work of interceding for our children. Whether we pray for our offspring or not must decide what our distant decedents are to be, and what kind of influence they will exert. Surely our fervent prayers for God's blessing on our children would be offered without ceasing were we able to fully comprehend the far-reaching results of such prayers.

Based on "An Appeal to Parents to Pray Continually for the Welfare and Salvation of their Children" by William Scribner.

The original work by Scribner was published in 1873 and has been reissued by Naphtali Press of Dallas Texas, in "An Anthology of Presbyterian & Reformed Literature, Volume 4". This leaflet retains his headings and gives a brief summary of his arguments, prepared by Phil Roberts of Stoke-on-Trent, England.

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Praying For Your Children

by
William Scribner

Although praying for our children is clearly a biblical duty it is too frequently neglected. Often this arises from a secret unbelief in regard to the likelihood, or possibility, of conversion and real religion in childhood and early youth. This has arrested and prevented prayer and effort for this great blessing.

The early conversion of all the children of the Church should be intensely desired and incessantly prayed for. Many who are converted only as adults suffer from evil habits developed in their youth. Not only would these be prevented, but habits which none but a true Christian prizes — habits such as daily and systematic prayer, determined fighting with sin in its various forms, generosity, watchfulness over self, and others of a similar kind — are usually formed strongest when young.

In addition, we should expect the conversion of the children of believers as much as, if not more than, others who attend the church and who are not yet believers. The same means of grace have been enjoyed and the exhortations and warnings of the gospel are as understandable to a child as to an adult.

The biblical evidence that it is God's will that the children in the Church should be born again at an early age, is found in Matthew 19:14:

"Let the little children to come to Me."

Often children are not converted because parents leave their work to others. Valuable though Sunday school

teachers are, no parent can be released from the obligation of striving by his own personal efforts to lead his children to Christ. We are commanded to bring our children up “in the fear and nurture of the Lord.” In the case of the children of believers, parental training should be the first and usual means of their salvation. The work to be done by parents includes:

- a. Instructing them in the faith.
- b. Setting them a holy example.
- c. Restraining them.
- d. Praying for them.

It is this last aspect which is the focus here.

I. Praying for Your Children's Salvation

You should pray for your children's conversion because:

1. Their salvation is so great a prize that it is worth all the pains which your prayer to secure it for them may cost you.

The fact that their souls are precious beyond all thought, that the loss of their souls would be inconceivably dreadful, that eternal life would be an infinite gain to them, and that your prayers may be instrumental in saving them, should stir you up to offer constant requests on their behalf.

2. Few will pray for them if you do not.

Though we are commanded to intercede for all men (1 Tim. 2:1), few engage in this duty as they should. When it is done, those who are prayed for are often those who are considered important in the Church's or the world's estimation.

3. No one else can pray for them as you do.

The genuine love you have for your children, the tenderness you feel for them and your knowledge of their make-up, needs and problems, qualify you to plead with God on their behalf with an urgency and earnestness which can take no refusal. When God wants to convince us of his willingness to hear prayer, he bases his argument on his parental love:

“If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!” (Luke 11:13).

4. Your omitting to do so will be perilous to them and to you.

God notes our attempts to fulfill our parental obligations. It is not to unfaithful, prayerless parents that his exceeding great and precious promises are addressed:

“But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him, and His righteousness to children's children, to such as keep His covenant, and to those who remember His commandments to do them.” (Ps. 103:17-18)

Your children are surrounded by evil influences and they are fallen creatures. They need to be protected by the power of God, and no less do they need to be inwardly restrained, enlightened, controlled, purified, and guided by the Holy Spirit.

5. You will then find it easier to perform other parental duties on the performance of which God has conditioned their salvation.

God commended Abraham for being one who would fulfil his parental duties (Gen. 18:18-19):

“For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him.”

God's will for you as a parent is clear:

“And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. (Deut. 6:6-7) It is a great work, and nothing can sustain you under the burden like praying for your children, believingly, earnestly and perseveringly, in giving attention to instruction and discipline, do not neglect prayer! Some blessings seldom come except in answer to heartfelt prayer. One of these is the early conversion of our children.

6. Prayer alone can call into exercise that divine power in their behalf, which is absolutely necessary in order that the prayers which you may employ for their salvation may not be used in vain.

Only God's mighty power can effect the great change necessary, raising them to life from a state of spiritual death. Your child is absolutely dependent upon the influences of God's all-powerful Spirit. Though you persevere in the use of means, without the Spirit it will be in vain. Nothing but believing prayer can secure his power to effect the change.

7. By their salvation, granted in answer to your prayers, your Saviour will be glorified.

Not merely the salvation of your children, but the glory of your dear Saviour in their salvation, should impel you to pray for them. This motive should be stronger than any other which can influence you to seek their salvation.

8. You have a strong encouragement and incentive to do so in the explicit promise of God that, if you are faithful to your trust, he will be their God.

The words which God spoke to Abraham, when he entered into covenant with him and his seed, may be regarded as addressed to every believer individually, and therefore to you (cf. Gen. 17:7; also Isa. 59:21, Acts 2:38). God's promises to you take into account your responsibility as a parent. Because God loves his own people with a love which passes knowledge, they cannot earnestly plead for such a thing as the salvation of their children without having power with him. In addition to this, his love for them causes him to have tenderness for their children. They also are beloved by him and are dear to him for their parents' sake.

II. Praying for Your Children's Welfare

Do not consider only your children's salvation but pray also for your children's welfare because:

1. You may then expect, as a result of your prayers, that the power of God will counteract in some measure the evil you have done them.

Even the best of parents sometimes do their children harm. This may be as a result of undue severity in discipline, partiality or injustice, but equally by misguided tenderness and lack of conscientious in exercising authority. Unceasing prayer will enable you to avoid these sins. Thoughtful love for them, and an earnest desire for their real good, would replace mere fondness, and you would be led to avoid the extremes of harshness and hurtful indulgence.

2. There will be critical periods in their lives when without your incessant prayers, offered with reference to such times, they may be left to act most unwisely if not disastrously.