

Daily Prayer at Home:

1) Introduction:

- ◆ These two spiritual practices of Morning and Evening prayer are meant to help you and your children to frame the day with awareness of God's presence. They are simple practices that don't need to take very long, but they have potential to grow with you into deep and meaningful practices of prayer.
- ◆ The Morning Prayer is designed to remind you of the essential truths of life with Jesus, that God is a loving Father and you are his beloved children, that Jesus calls us to long for and work toward a world that lives God's way, that God can take care of your needs, that Jesus invites us into reconciled and restored relationships with ourselves, with others and with God, and that God can preserve us in the midst of temptation and help us to live a life of love. Additionally, it begins the day with a recognition that the day is a gift from God, and with an invitation to live that day with the intentionality of life in the Kingdom of God as you go in the power of the Spirit—God's presence with and in you. It invites you to frame your day with trust in God, to walk with the Spirit into the mission he has given you and to face any challenge that comes knowing that God is with you.
- ◆ The Evening Prayer is designed to provide opportunity to rest with God at the end of the day and to reflect on what you experienced during the day. It is drawn from an ancient practice called the Prayer of Examen, a way of acknowledging feelings called consolation and desolation—consolation being what brings peace and life and joy and gratitude, and desolation being what takes away peace and life and joy and gratitude. By learning to recognize consolation and desolation we learn to recognize God's presence with us in our day. We learn to recognize the way God has shaped us to live, and the kinds of things that bring an increased sense of God's joy and peace. As we learn to recognize God in our day, we learn to give him the parts of our day that were difficult or life-taking. The Evening Prayers are designed to increase our sense of gratitude, to help us learn to discern what God is saying to us and how to respond to the Spirit's promptings.

2) Morning Prayer:

- ◆ Say the Our Father (The Lord's Prayer) together every morning. Choose a version/translation that works best for your family. Here is a good one based on the New International Version of the Bible (Matthew 6:9-13).

* Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
Lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one,
for yours is the kingdom,
and the power,
and the glory forever. Amen.

◆ An additional practice that my family has found helpful is to add a simple Trinitarian prayer at the end that acknowledges the day as a gift and an invitation into the shared love of the Trinity. We have become so used to it that there are times we are praying the *Our Father* in other settings and keep going with the Trinitarian prayer after everyone else has ended! Here is what we use:

* In the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit,
we receive our day. Amen

3) Evening Prayer:

◆ Begin with a quieting exercise. This can be as simple as taking a deep breath or as active as going for a silent walk. The goal is to learn to pay attention to God's presence and receive God's unconditional love. The length of time spent on this can be short or long depending on what works best for your family, but it is meant to prepare you for the Prayer of Examen. There are examples of quieting exercises at the end of this resource.

◆ Ask two simple questions.¹ Allow people time to reflect and share their responses with one another.

* Ask God to show you a moment from today for which you are most grateful.

* Ask God to show you a moment from today for which you are least grateful.

◆ You may end Evening Prayer in whatever way works best for your family. I suggest a simple prayer like the following:

* Thank-you, God, for today.

Thank-you for being with us in the good things
and the hard things.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,

and the love of God,

and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all forevermore. Amen.

(2 Corinthians 13:14)

* OR (the Gloria Patri)

Glory be to the Father,

and to the Son,

and to the Holy Spirit.

As it was in the beginning,

is now, and will be forever.

Amen.

¹ This practice is adapted from Dennis Linn, et. al, *Sleeping With Bread: Holding What Gives You Life* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1995).

❖ Quieting Exercises:

- * Light a candle to represent God's presence with you. Learn to quiet your mind and body as you focus on the flicker of the flame.
- * Try the Quiet Game: use wondering questions (I wonder...) to gradually quiet and focus your attention from what is going on outside, to what is going on around you, to what is going on in your body, mind and heart, to noticing God's presence with you. (I wonder if you can hear God?)
- * Use body poses to be still and focused. Yoga can be very helpful for this. Focus on God's presence in the stillness.
- * Do a breathing exercise: get in a comfortable position and slowly take five breaths in and five breaths out. Along the way use wondering questions to explore how your breath feels, where you can feel it, hear it, etc. I wonder if you can sense God's breath in you?
- * Go for a silent walk. Pay attention to what is around you. Share it quietly with one another when the walk is finished.
- * More examples of exercises can be found at <https://www.heysigmund.com/mindfulness-for-children-fun-effective-ways-to-strengthen-mind-body-spirit/>, or by searching for mindfulness exercises. The important thing is to use these exercises to learn to pay attention to what is going on inside yourself and to become more aware of God's presence.

❖ Bibliography:

- Bunge, Marcia J. "Biblical and Theological Perspectives on Children, Parents, and 'Best Practices' for Faith Formation: Resources for Child, Youth, and Family Ministry Today." *Dialog* 47, no. 4 (2008): 348-60. doi:10.1111/j.1540-6385.2008.00414.x (accessed June 27, 2018).
- Linn, Dennis, Sheila Fabricant Linn & Matthew Linn. *Sleeping With Bread: Holding What Gives You Life*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1995. Kindle Edition.