

Creative Family Prayer Times

Creative Family Prayer Times

52 Fun Ways to Pray Together

Mike and Amy Nappa

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To our dear friends
Rick and Ellen Frandsen
with whom we've shared many prayers
and many adventures



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Introduction

We hate to admit but it, but sometimes we get bored by prayer.

Don't get us wrong—prayer *is* one of the most powerful means of communication God has granted us. And it's certainly not God's fault if our minds wander when we're praying. While nothing should be more appealing than spending intimate, personal time with the Lord in prayer, the problem remains that we still can get distracted. And we'll bet that, on occasion, you and your family do, too.

It happens all too often, whether you're praying alone or with others. Your head is bowed and you're ready to pray. Perhaps someone is praying aloud. Then . . .

You think about work. You think about the last song you heard on the radio. You think about the dog barking in the backyard and whether the mail will come early or late. You wonder whether you returned your library book in time to avoid a fine, if you'll be able to get in a few good spikes during the next volleyball game, and on and on. You've forgotten God is listening as you make a mental list of what you must do in the next few hours, days, or weeks.

We know, because we've been there. We find ourselves saying, "Well, we *have* to go pray," instead of "Wow! We *get* to go pray!" And

this attitude carries over into our family prayer time. We quickly ramble through our requests as if reading a shopping list. Our time of thanks before a meal is a race to see if the prayer can be finished before someone starts to eat anyway.

But instead of assuming that boredom during prayer must be endured, we decided to do something about it. The results were this book—and an answer to prayer.

In *Creative Family Prayer Times*, you'll find a collection of innovative ideas to help you focus your family devotions and add meaning to the words you say. These ideas aren't meant to replace what you already do during family prayer time, but instead are designed to bring a change of pace in a hands-on, involving way to your existing prayer life.

Since we can talk to God anytime and anyplace, we've included a wide variety of prayer activities. Some are to be shared at dinner or just before bedtime; others are to be experienced on a Saturday morning or during a family outing. Some activities can be done alone, while others include everyone.

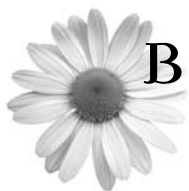
As you read through the ideas in this book, you'll notice some involve daily participation and others involve projects that last for a week, a month, or even a year. Remember, you don't have to use these ideas all at once. Pick and choose the ones that will work best for your family, or modify others to your liking.

We want prayer to be an exciting part of our everyday lives, and we hope this book will help do the same for your family life.



Prayer Activities





Breaking Through

Focus: Obstacles to prayer

For this prayer activity you'll need a sheet of blank newsprint or wrapping paper that will cover a doorway in your home. You'll also need a marker and tape.

Gather your family for a time of prayer. Read James 5:13–16 aloud, and discuss why God wants us to talk to Him. Then ask, “What things keep you from praying?”

As family members give their answers, write them on the large sheet of paper. Share your own reasons as well. Then ask family members what obstacles there are to your family taking time to pray together; write them down too.

When everyone has responded and all answers are written, tape the sheet of paper over an open doorway. Then ask your family members to join with you in breaking through these barriers to prayer. (Let younger children break through the paper first.) When everyone has gone through the doorway, gather on the other side for a time of prayer. Pray that God will help your family overcome these obstacles so that individually and together you can grow closer to God by communicating with Him.

You may also want to take this time to plan a regular time to pray

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as a group. Many families pray together at meals, in the morning, or at bedtime. If you already pray at these times, we encourage you to continue. But you may also want to set aside a short period of time one day a week, such as fifteen minutes every Sunday night or following dinner on Mondays, when everyone can come together to share and pray.



*What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them
the way the LORD our God is near us whenever we pray to
him?*

DEUTERONOMY 4:7



ABCs of Adoration Book

Focus: Adoration of God

Get twenty-six sheets of paper and write one letter of the alphabet on the top of each one. Starting with the page labeled “A,” have your family work together to list all of the things they admire about God that begin with that letter.

For example, on the “A” page, you might list

- awesome power,
- affectionate love, and
- activity in my life.

The “B” page might include

- beautiful creation,
- blessings, and
- the Bible that tells me about God.

Once your family has thought of at least one thing to write on each page (good luck with “Q” and “X”!), put the pages in a notebook or simply staple them together. Then use this book as a guide for family prayers.

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Open to one of the alphabet pages, and begin your family's prayer by saying, "Lord, You are worthy to be adored. We know because of these things . . ." and read to God the list for that letter. Let family members take turns choosing a page from your book to pray through. As you and your family pray, explain why the items you listed are qualities you admire about God.

Keep this book in a convenient place. Encourage everyone to add new attributes as they think of them.



David praised the LORD in the presence of the whole assembly, saying, "Praise be to you, O LORD, God of our father Israel, from everlasting to everlasting."

I CHRONICLES 29:10



Coins in a Fountain

Focus: Forgiveness

Collect a handful of coins (pennies, nickels, dimes, or quarters), and place them in a small cup or similar container. Take this cup and go with your family to a fountain for a time of prayer. (Check the local mall, library, or a city building to find a fountain, but make sure the fountain doesn't have fish in it.)

As you stand or sit together in front of the fountain, pass the container of coins and have each person select one. Explain to them that this is a time for each person to tell God that he or she is sorry for any sins committed that week.

Each person should pray, "Lord, in this past week I know I've disappointed you in this way . . ." and finish by confessing to God one way he or she has fallen short spiritually. Then, toss the coin into the water. If anyone is too embarrassed to share a confession aloud, allow him or her to pray silently before tossing a coin.

Repeat this confessing and coin-tossing process as many times as you like. When everyone is done, ask family members to dip their hands in the fountain's water for a quick washing.

Then close your family prayer with "Thank you, God, for the promise of Your forgiveness that buries our sins as this fountain has

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‘buried’ our coins, and that washes our hearts as this water has washed our hands. In Jesus’ name, amen.”



But I pray to you, O LORD, in the time of your favor; in your great love, O God, answer me with your sure salvation.

PSALM 69:13



m&m Prayers

Focus: Praying for others

Pass around a bag or bowl of M&Ms the next time your family is gathered for prayer. Let each person take a handful, but don't let anyone eat the candies yet. Explain that the color of the candies will indicate the direction of the family's prayers. Lead them in prayer using this guide and stopping for prayer after explaining each color. Say:

- “For every green M&M you chose, pray for your spouse (present or future) or some other significant person in your life.” This is a great way to get kids thinking about what qualities they want to find in a future mate. Encourage them to pray for this person's safety, spiritual and physical growth, and so on.
- “For every red M&M you chose, pray for a member of your family by name (a parent, son, daughter, brother, sister, grandchild, niece, nephew).”
- “For every orange M&M you chose, pray for a teacher in your life (a coworker, a professor, a pastor, a Bible study leader, a school teacher, a mentor).”
- “For every yellow M&M you chose, pray for one of your neighbors (near your home, an office mate, a person whose desk is near yours at school).”

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- “For every dark brown M&M you chose, pray for a leader in your life (a politician, a local businessperson, a celebrity, a member of your church’s staff, the president).”
- “For every light brown M&M you chose, pray for Christians in other countries.”

This might be best used as an *after*-dinner prayer time. Repeat this process as often as your family’s calorie intake allows.



Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you.

JEREMIAH 29:12