

Listening

Prayer Tool: How to Turn Parenting into Prayer

What?

Prayer can be simple. This prayer tool contains a simple meditation for parents and carers of small children.

Why?

“Always, everywhere God is present, and always He seeks to discover Himself to each one.” A. W. Tozer

Bible reference:

“My heart is not proud, Lord, my eyes are not haughty; I do not concern myself with great matters or things too wonderful for me. But I have calmed and quietened myself, I am like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child I am content.”
Psalm 131

A quick introduction to Parenting and Prayer

An exhausted mother attended a seminar about the Desert Fathers. She was looking for a few tips with her prayer life. Caring for her baby was exhausting and all-consuming and she'd been struggling to pray in any coherent, disciplined way.

Her old routines had gone out of the window since becoming a mother, and she was tired all the time. She felt like her relationship with God was at its worst at the very time when she should have been entering into some great mystical revelation of his Father heart.

As the speaker held forth about the extraordinary lives of these great prayer warriors who left everything to live as simple hermits for Jesus, this mum became more and more frustrated.

At the end she put up her hand to ask a question: ‘Tell me, did they have child care in the Egyptian desert?’

It's essential that we develop models of spirituality that work for ordinary busy people with kids, not just for those who have the privilege of slower, simpler lifestyles. This is because most people are busy, but also because God is in the busyness of life – not divorced from it.

One of the things that is so great about Celtic spirituality is how very earthy and ordinary it is. Here is a simple, powerful Celtic prayer:

'I make this bed in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.'

When Pete Greig was forced to become primary carer for two babies, he realised he could see it as a problem or an opportunity:

"On one occasion I took baby Daniel, who was just a few months old asleep in his carry cot, into the prayer room in the middle of the night. I was just as I was settling down to spend time with the Lord, he woke up and began screaming in need of a change. After an initial burst of frustration, I resolved to turn the process of changing and feeding him into an act of prayer, viewing the whole exercise not as a distraction from prayer and meditation, but as an expression of it."

Do it: How to turn Parenting into Prayer

Pete's prayer below may seem odd to some, but probably not to anyone who is caring for a baby. The same principles can be applied to many aspects of ordinary life - such as your journey to work, cooking a meal, time at the gym, or even taking a bath.

A mediation on changing and feeding a baby (3.30am)

Baby crying

Father, this is so often me. I don't even know why I'm crying. I can't make sense of the things I'm feeling. I'm totally helpless unless you help me. Totally dependent on you. Pick me up in your arms and comfort me. Jesus, it's almost incredible to think that you were once as vulnerable and helpless as this tiny baby. I bet you sometimes screamed the place down too. Holy Spirit, make sense of my screams. Fill me with peace.

Removing nappy as the baby continues to scream

Father, you know best. You only want the best for me. I so often complain at your attempt to clean my sin and stop me stinking.

Wiping clean

Father, I confess my sin: my self-produced, stinking filth. Forgive me. Thank you for cleansing me. (Name specifics as you wipe the baby clean).

Applying cream to nappy rash

Yes, my dirt makes me sore when I keep it too close. And I'm sure it bugs you like it bugs me. Heal my sin-sores. I don't know what the spiritual equivalent of this healing cream is, but anoint me with it now.

Applying nappy

Father, you forgive me, cleanse me, heal me, comfort me, and clothe me in the clean white righteousness of Jesus. Thank you that you see me at my best even when I'm at my worst.

Feeding

Lord, hold me close and safe. Feed me with milk. Fill me with your goodness. Sterilise away all impurities of understanding. Re-energise me. Nourish my soul. Speak to me – I'm all ears. I rest in your arms as this baby is resting in mine.

Winding

God I know you kind of like my greediness, but I also know that if I take your food too fast, too frantically, I get bloated. Carry me.

Rocking to sleep

"My heart is not proud, Lord, my eyes are not haughty; I do not concern myself with great matters or things too wonderful for me. But I have calmed and quietened myself, I am like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child I am content."
- Psalm 131

Books on parenting and prayer

- The Parenting Book – Nicky and Sila Lee
- The Practice of the Presence of God – Brother Lawrence