

Bodily Prayers

Christianity is rich with traditions that involve the body: from pilgrimages to chants to the sign of the cross, the body is used in different ways. Yet, for most children, “Fold your hands and bow your head,” is the only instruction given with regard to a prayer posture. There are many prayer positions seen in the Bible and elsewhere: kneeling, lying flat on the ground, lying with one’s forehead to the ground, praying with hands to the sky. Children are naturally drawn to a variety of different postures and are often quite receptive to experimenting with their bodies in prayer. This activity is playful, and it allows children to experiment with different ways of talking to God.

Designed for Ages 2–8

Materials: None

Time Investment: 5 minutes

How To

1. Tell children, *“Sometimes when we pray, we are quiet with our heads bowed and our fingers clasped, but, sometimes, we can pray while we move around. We can reach to the sky or curl in a tiny ball or kneel or lay flat on the ground.”*
2. Say, *“Let’s practice it! Who has a prayer?”*
3. Ask children for a short (one sentence) prayer. (Example: “I pray grandma is better,” or, “Thank you, God, for this day.”)

4. Take the suggestions and practice praying in a variety of postures: first “traditionally,” then reaching up to the sky, then curled in a tiny ball, then lying flat on the ground.
5. Ask, *“Which did you like the best?”* and, *“Which did you like the least?”*
6. Repeat with each person’s prayers.

Notes

- Be prepared with a few prayer suggestions in case a child doesn’t have one.
- Allow children to laugh and smile and be silly during these moving prayers. God loves and accepts them for who they are as children, and prayer isn’t always a solemn occasion.

Variations

- Instead of going through all of the postures for each prayer, pick one of the postures and try everyone’s prayer in that way, changing the posture each day. (For example, use the traditional way on Monday, reaching to the sky on Tuesday, etc.)
- Allow children to make up their own prayer postures (for example, skipping, standing on one leg, etc.).
- Invite children to invent prayer postures for a familiar prayer such as the Lord’s Prayer.