



**Prayers
of a Parent**
for Young Children



Kathleen Nielson

Praise for This Book

Any praying parent has times when she simply doesn't know how to pray for her child or when she finds it difficult to pray at all. On top of this, we are often pulled in multiple directions to care for the emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual development of our children. We rush to sports practice, then a music recital, then dinner and bedtime. It can be tough to pause and intentionally pray for our children prayers that align with the concerns of God laid out in his Word. This is where Kathleen's prayers come alongside us in our weariness, anxiety, and ambitions. These prayers are worth sitting with, chewing on, and praying. I will be using and sharing this resource for many years to come.

—**Quina Aragon**, Author, *Love Made: A Story of God's Overflowing*, *Creative Heart* and *Love Gave: A Story of God's Greatest Gift*

If you, like the Hugheses, have sometimes longed for words adequate to express your heart's prayers for your growing children—and wished for more—Kathleen Nielson's *Prayers of a Parent for Young Children* is for you. The book features thirty-one select Bible texts, each accompanied by an expository note that is then paired with an exquisite prayer-poem. And because poetic expression (with its “rhythms, sounds, and meanings”) naturally lodges in our minds and elevates our thoughts—especially when it is based on sacred Scripture—it enlarges our vocabulary for prayer. This book is a wonderful gift to both parent and child. Highly recommended!

—**Kent and Barbara Hughes**, Authors; Speakers; Longtime Pastor and Pastor's Wife

Praise for the Prayers of a Parent Series

We love how these beautiful, biblical prayers help us to “pray most earnestly” (1 Thess. 3:10), to “pray without ceasing”

(1 Thess. 5:17), and to pray specifically for our own children. Furthermore, pastors should encourage every member to pray for the children of the church and assist them in doing so. This book would be a huge help to that end, for often people are willing to pray but “do not know what to pray for” (Rom. 8:26). For those in congregations that take vows to assist parents in the Christian nurture of their children, we can’t imagine a better or more important way of fulfilling their vows than praying for those children from their youth onward.

—**Anne and Ligon Duncan**, Wife, Mother, Christian Educator; Chancellor and CEO, Reformed Theological Seminary

I know of no greater gift that a parent can give to their child than the gift of prayer centered on the gospel. That’s why I’m so excited about this project from Kathleen Nielson. Filled with faith, hope, and love, each prayer is accompanied by relevant Scripture and a focused exhortation to help any parent put into words what they long for in their hearts. Having prayed for and with our two daughters for the last two decades, my wife and I look forward to using it!

—**Julius J. Kim**, President, The Gospel Coalition

Kathleen Nielson has coupled scriptural truth with beautifully crafted poetic prayers that bring hope. As a mom, I am encouraged to consider afresh the many ways I must pray for my children. Kathleen helps me with the joyful task by lifting my eyes upward, creating a Word-focused mission of intercession. As a parent (whether natural or spiritual), you too will be challenged in the prayers you pray—prayers that are bound to change not only your children’s hearts but yours as well.

—**Blair Linne**, Author; Speaker; Spoken Word Artist

Kathleen Nielson understands the longings of our hearts for the spiritual flourishing of our children. She gives these

longings beautiful and Bible-shaped expression. A treasure for every Christian parent!

—**Dane C. Ortlund**, Author, *Gentle and Lowly: The Heart of Christ for Sinners and Sufferers*

There is no greater joy for Christian parents than to hear that their children are walking in the truth. But how do we pray toward that end, day in and day out, through every stage of their lives? I can think of no better guide than this series by Kathleen Nielson—a diligent student of God’s Word, a wonderful writer, and a praying mother (and now grandmother). Because these prayers are so Scripture saturated, you can have confidence that you are praying in accord with the will of our good and sovereign God. Take up and read, and pray, and by God’s grace you could change your world.

—**Justin Taylor**, Managing Editor, *ESV Study Bible*

Since as parents we have no ability whatsoever to change the hearts of our children, prayer for them is not a spiritual luxury; it is essential. It is an amazing grace to us that God welcomes, hears, and answers our prayers. I know of no other guide to parental prayer like Nielson’s tender, insightful, gospel-rich, and loving little book. Read it and you will find yourself praying for new things for your children in new ways than you have before, and as you do, you will grow in affection for your Father and in how you approach him in prayer.

—**Paul David Tripp**, Author, *New Morning Mercies: A Daily Gospel Devotional* and *Parenting: 14 Gospel Principles That Can Radically Change Your Family*

Parenting is important and hard. How do you pray through this complexity? What do you pray when you aren’t sure what to say or how to say it? Kathleen Nielson knows the parental spiritual roller-coaster. She’s lived it. And prayed through it.

This book will give you words to pray and encouragement to ponder as you navigate the issues and challenges of real-world parenting. It helped me. I think it will help you as well.

—**Mark Vroegop**, Lead Pastor, College Park Church, Indianapolis; Author, *Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy: Discovering the Grace of Lament*

Prayers of a Parent
for Young Children

Prayers of a Parent Series

KATHLEEN NIELSON

Prayers of a Parent for Young Children

Prayers of a Parent for Teens

Prayers of a Parent for Young Adults

Prayers of a Parent for Adult Children

Prayers of a Parent
for Young Children

Kathleen Nielson


P U B L I S H I N G
P.O. BOX 817 • PHILLIPSBURG • NEW JERSEY 08865-0817

© 2021 by Kathleen Nielson

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise—except for brief quotations for the purpose of review or comment, without the prior permission of the publisher, P&R Publishing Company, P.O. Box 817, Phillipsburg, New Jersey 08865-0817.

Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Italics within Scripture quotations indicate emphasis added.

Printed in the United States of America

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Nielson, Kathleen Buswell, author.

Title: Prayers of a parent for young children / Kathleen Nielson.

Description: Phillipsburg, New Jersey : P&R Publishing, [2021] | Series:

Prayers of a parent | Summary: "Poetic prayers address the spiritual well-being, physical needs, and character growth of a child from infancy to preteen years. They are accompanied by brief reflections and Scripture passages for meditation"-- Provided by publisher.

Identifiers: LCCN 2021008072 | ISBN 9781629958170 (paperback) | ISBN 9781629958187 (epub) | ISBN 9781629958194 (mobi)

Subjects: LCSH: Parents--Prayers and devotions. | Children--Prayers and devotions. | Children--Religious life. | Parent and child--Religious aspects--Christianity.

Classification: LCC BV4529 .N544 2021 | DDC 242/.645--dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2021008072>

For our three sons,
and their three beautiful wives, now like daughters,
and our grandchildren, eight so far—
what amazing gifts from God.
I love praying for you!

Contents

- Introduction 9
1. Of Worship to the Lord of Life 13
 2. Of Thanksgiving for the Gift of a Child 15
 3. For the Gift of Eternal Life 17
 4. For Love of God's Word 19
 5. For Joy in God's Creation 21
 6. For My Child's Body 23
 7. For Love of the Church 25
 8. For Sleep 27
 9. For Obedience 29
 10. For Friendships 31
 11. For a Heart to Pray 33
 12. For Generosity 35
 13. For Joy 37
 14. For Delight in Books and Learning 39

CONTENTS

15. For Finding Male and Female Very Good 41
 16. For a Healthy Sense of Home 43
 17. For a Heart That Stretches round the Globe 45
 18. For a Heart of Mercy 47
 19. For Love of Justice 49
 20. For a Fearful Child 51
 21. For a Child Who Asks about Heaven 53
 22. For a Child Grieving a Death 55
 23. For My Child in a World of Technology 57
 24. For Good Eating 59
 25. For the Joy of Making Things 61
 26. For Love of Beauty 63
 27. For Contentment 65
 28. For Honoring and Obeying 67
 29. For Humility 69
 30. For My Child to Think on Jesus 71
 31. For My Parent Heart 73
- Conclusion 75
- Prayers of a Parent 77

Introduction

How being a parent makes one pray! And how amazing to think that Christian parents can reach out in prayer to God our Father, who has shown his love to us in his own Son—and who gives us his Holy Spirit to help us pray, according to his Word.

These prayers have grown from my heart through years of praying for three sons—and now for their growing families. I know that you parents (and grandparents, and aunts and uncles, and spiritual mothers and fathers!) will surely pray for your children in your own words and with your own specific praises and petitions. My hope is that these prayers might mingle profitably with yours, as we all lift up the next generations to the Lord who knows and loves them perfectly.

These prayers grow out of the Scriptures; each is printed with a brief related Bible passage and reflects that passage in its content. What confidence, that when we don't know how to pray for our children, the Spirit and the Word guide and help us. Just as the Scriptures show us Jesus Christ at the very center, so these prayers aim to focus on Jesus—his love, his work of salvation on our behalf, his glory, his blessed rule in every area of our lives, his coming again.

INTRODUCTION

The prayers apply to sons and daughters both; they alternate, but any of them can easily be changed by switching the pronouns appropriately. Please note as well that the prayers are written in one parent's voice, although they can certainly be prayed by parents together.

This volume offers prayers for young children, from birth through the preteen years. Parents, please know that these prayers, as they focus on our children, inevitably focus often on us parents too. Prayer stretches our hearts in all kinds of ways.

Let us pray!

Kathleen Nielson



As you do not know the way the spirit comes to the bones in the womb of a woman with child, so you do not know the work of God who makes everything. (Eccl. 11:5)

Here is where we must begin, with eyes to see a child as a glorious creation of our God who made the world and everything in it.

It stretches our souls to imagine the Lord God in the beginning creating the heavens and the earth. And it stretches our souls to imagine the Lord God creating a new, unique human being within a woman's body.

We cannot understand, but we wonder at "the work of God who makes everything."

Second stanza (*O Jesus Christ our Lord*): see John 1:1-3, 14.

Of Worship to the Lord of Life

O Father God in heaven,
you are life within yourself;
all your creation holds together
only by your word.

O Jesus Christ our Lord,
the Word made flesh, the One
by whom and for whom all was made,
we worship at your feet.

O Spirit of the risen Christ,
the One who breathes the Word
and breathes life into bones,
we joy to feel your breath.

All praise to you, Lord God,
Creator of vast planets,
myriad stars, and a tiny child
within a woman's womb.

Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD. (Ps. 127:3)

A child is not something of our own or of our own doing; a child is a gift from the Lord—a “heritage” (an inheritance) given that we might know and pass on the treasures of his name, generation by generation.

Receiving this gift, we must first express our thanksgiving to the Giver. First and always, may we look up and thank our gracious God for such a gift.

Of Thanksgiving for the Gift of a Child

It is the ultimately humble prayer, O Lord,
I offer up to you,
I who can work and make so many things
but who cannot create a human life.

I bow before the One who makes
and gives and takes the gift of life,
with thankfulness I scarce know how to speak,
knowing the greatness and the mystery of the gift.

In steadfast love and faithfulness
from heaven long ago you planned this life,
designed it in your image
as a heritage from you,
given to carry on your name.

My gracious Father, let me not forget
to pour out lifelong thanks to you
the way I do this moment full
of wonder at the child
you've let me cradle in my arms.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

The church my family attended during my growing-up years had John 3:16 (in the beautiful old King James Version) engraved in large gilded letters framed in white and centered on the front wall of the sanctuary for all to see.

That verse is engraved on my childhood memories—and, by God's grace, on my heart. There it is, the universe-changing truth, the truth we pray will be engraved on our children's hearts: God so loved the world that he gave his Son.

All the rest of the prayers offered in this book build on this foundational prayer: that our sons and daughters might be reconciled to God through faith in Christ and become eternally part of God's family.

We cannot know the ways in which the Lord will answer. But we can know the goodness of this prayer, offered only for the glory of the Lord Jesus.

Like the invisible wind: see John 3:1–15.

For the Gift of Eternal Life

How you give the gift of life that never ends—
as Nicodemus learned—
is full of mystery,
like the invisible wind that blows
and bends the branches as it will.

For this child I pray your Spirit's breath
will bend his mind and heart toward you, Lord God,
that as he hears of Jesus and his love,
his death in our poor place,
his resurrection from the grave,
early this child may believe
that Jesus is the Christ,
your Son who died to save,
the risen Lord who lives to intercede
for him.

Many petitions I would make,
O loving Father;
this one remains all for now
and all for ever. Would you,
by your grace,
bend down to give my child
the gift of eternal life?

*Lead me in the path of your commandments,
for I delight in it. (Ps. 119:35)*

With a child, we have the amazing chance to share the Bible's living words not as rote truth to be transferred—but with delight, as we get to help them hear our heavenly Father's voice speaking to us.

With a child, we can be amazed all over again that Scripture's words are breathed out by God, that they are able to make us “wise for salvation,” that they are “profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:15–16).

We will speak so many words to our children day by day as they grow. Our own words will not be perfect; in fact, they will often seem inadequate. What a joy to know that we can give them God's Word—perfect, beautiful, and true.

While sitting in our house: see Deuteronomy 6:4–9. The Word made flesh: see John 1:1–14.