



Prayers
of a Parent
for Teens



Kathleen Nielson

Praise for This Book

I wish I had had this collection of beautiful, thoughtful, tender prayers when our children were teenagers. They will greatly enrich and beautify the prayers of many a grateful parent.

—**Christopher Ash**, Writer in Residence, Tyndale House, Cambridge

Our love for our children makes our hearts feel as though they may burst. How fitting, then, for such overflowing love to be directed in God-centered and beautifully penned prayer to our heavenly Father. Nielson crafts into prayers the longings our hearts have for our teenagers. I found that the faith-filled prayers contained in this volume beget even more prayers! Who can estimate the precious value of a resource like this?

—**Gloria Furman**, Author, *Missional Motherhood: The Everyday Ministry of Motherhood in the Grand Plan of God* and *A Tale of Two Kings: God's Story of Redemption*

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 Teens

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 Teens*

Kathleen Nielson


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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!

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Introduction

How being a parent makes one keep praying! The prayers of this volume reach out to the Lord for our teen children. The years of adolescence and growth toward adulthood can be bumpy—and joyful! Certainly they are years in which we must persist in prayer. How amazing to think that Christian parents can keep reaching 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.

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. 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



Praise the LORD!

*For it is good to sing praises to our God;
for it is pleasant, and a song of praise is fitting.*

*The Lord builds up Jerusalem;
he gathers the outcasts of Israel.*

*He heals the brokenhearted
and binds up their wounds.*

*He determines the number of the stars;
he gives to all of them their names.*

*Great is our Lord, and abundant in power;
his understanding is beyond measure. (Ps. 147:1–5)*

A song of praise is fitting indeed. Before we begin to ask anything, how good to look up and see the Lord God who watches over his people with loving compassion, building us up and bearing our cares along the way—all through Jesus Christ his Son who died for us, bearing our sin, so that we could live with him eternally.

How good to look up and praise this Lord who put the stars in their places and who names them all. This is the Lord who gave us this child for whom we pray and who cares for this child more than we could ever know.

As we pray through these years of our child's growth toward adulthood, how good to praise the Lord who is abundant in power and whose understanding is beyond measure.

Of Praise

You are the ultimate Father, God,
who gathers your children,
draws every last outcast,
and builds them together
with brokenness mended
and every wound healed—
through Christ who was wounded for us.

I praise you, O Father, O sovereign God,
for your marvelous plan full of grace
that numbered the stars as you put them in place
and numbered the people you would create
and numbered the days that you would wait,
unfolding your promises faithfully,
till your Son would come to be born on this earth,
and to die, and to rise from the grave.

Great are you, Father, abundant in power;
you hold all the stars in your hand,
and you hold my child, and you know his name.
With thanks in my heart I lay him before you,
O Lord who from your throne in heaven
oversees each star and each human heart
with understanding that no one could measure.
I come before you with praise.

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. (1 Cor. 15:3–4)

The apostle Paul makes clear for the Corinthian believers exactly what is “of first importance.” Surely the teaching is the same for us believers, centuries later, as the Spirit speaks into our lives through these living and active words. And surely there could not be anything more important for us to pass on to our children than this gospel Paul articulates.

Life for teens brings an intensified jumble of activities . . . relationships . . . concerns . . . new and ever-changing contexts in which we parents get to teach and model the age-old gospel truths about Jesus. We want so many things for these growing teens. Let’s start by wanting and praying what the Bible reminds us is absolutely most important.

The Reconciler to himself of all things: see Colossians 1:20.

For Things of First Importance

O Lord, so many things I'd ask for her—
so many things I do pursue for her—
as now the quieter pace of childhood play
lurches ahead with seeming little warning,
pulling her and pulling me to keep abreast
with this and that assignment, this new friend,
or this most urgent thing . . .

Please let us pause, O Lord.
Help us—both my dear child and me—
help us give careful thought to all our ways
and most of all to you who gave your Son
to die for sinners, just as your Word says.
He died and conquered death for us;
he rose. What more important thing could be?

I would not seek an end to many things,
O Lord who made and sees it all;
I would not ask to empty but to shape our days
in light of you and in submission to your Word.
May Jesus fill my child's vision,
Lord of all, the Reconciler to himself
of all things everywhere
through his own blood upon that cross.
What more important thing could ever be?

So, for my growing child I pray
that you would make your Son
of first importance, now and always.

*In the way of your testimonies I delight
as much as in all riches. (Ps. 119:14)*

These are the years in which we pray especially for our children to read and listen well to God's Word for themselves. Certainly we do everything we can to keep teaching and speaking the Scriptures, and we pray (as we will in this volume) for other teachers and mentors and friends to come round our children as well. But, at the same time, we aim for a young person to read and delight in the Scriptures more and more for himself or herself—learning the personal privilege and pleasure of hearing and following God's voice.

We can't force it, of course. But, as we share our own growth and delight in the Scriptures day by day, we can pray that our children will experience that growth and delight themselves. We can do little things like provide a cozy, steaming mug of hot chocolate for a boy or girl who gets up a little early in the mornings to read the Bible and pray.

Most of all, we can pray.

The grass withers: see Isaiah 40:8. Your Word is living and active: see Hebrews 4:12.

For Delighting in God's Word

Your Word lays out a path, O Lord,
a light-filled road,
a way set forth with stepping-stones
that lead us in the footsteps of our Savior.
May all the roadside riches lose their glitter
as my child moves step by step
along the turnings of your path.

Your Word feeds us, O Lord,
full of the finest sort of bread
that deeply satisfies, so that a hungry soul
does not keep longing, grumbling, yearning.
May all the foolish, casual words that draw him
shriveled on inspection,
showing my child their impotence to fill.

Your Word proves true, O Lord,
breathed out by your own Spirit,
tried and trusted, book by book, unfailing,
never, like the grass and falling flower, passing away.
May all the untruths whispered by the world in my child's ear
fall to the ground, exposed by truth that stands.

Your Word is living and active, O Lord,
sharp with the power of life and death,
gentle with sentences of love and mercy,
piercing deep to clean a human soul.
May all the tempting words of mockery and unbelief
be banished, by the living Word who lights my child's way.

If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. (2 Cor. 5:17)

This is a complicated world in which young people search to find what we call “identity”—that most basic understanding of who I am as a human being. It’s been complicated ever since sin invaded and perverted this world at the beginning. Today, however, the voices and images of our fallen world are more accessible and more invasive than ever, presenting young people with ideals of what kind of person they must strive to be—whether physically attractive, or emotionally sensitive, or intellectually in tune, or morally upright, all in the ways defined by one group or another.

Not all of these voices are evil. Some are. But they are not where any of us should start—or stay—in understanding our identity. How we must pray that our children (and we) learn to start with and keep returning to the Bible’s truths of who God says we are, and who we become in Christ our Redeemer and our Lord.

We pray these things for the sake of our children and for the sake of all those for whom our children might be a light, as they help others find their true identities in Christ as well.