

Praying God's Character into Your Children

By Kim Butts

As Christian parents, it is not difficult to discern whom we wish our children to be like. We desire for them to be like Christ, and our greatest hope is that others will be able to see Him in them. However, it is not enough just to “wish” that our children will emulate Jesus. We must be godly examples of Christ to them. And, we must pray His character into their lives.

It is a joyful task to discover the character of God in His Word. Whenever I see what God is like, I want to prayerfully ask Him to place that characteristic in me, and in my children. He is the standard by which all of my behavior and that of my children should be measured. Do people see Jesus in you, in your spouse, in your family? There is no greater act of worship than to be like Christ, for we were created in His image for fellowship with our Creator.

To pray God's character into the lives of our children is simply a matter of studying His Word and praying that specific characteristics will be manifest in us! Let's look at one short passage that gives four distinct characteristics of God: “The LORD is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love” (Psalm 145:8). We know that God has many more characteristics; however these particular ones are repeated over and over in Scripture. Here are just a few examples: “But you are a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love” (Nehemiah 9:17). “But you, O Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness” (Psalm 86:15). “The LORD

is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love" (Psalm 103:8). "For he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love" (Joel 2:13).

Now, take these four very important characteristics of the Sovereign Lord's person, and pray that your children will be:

- Gracious
- Compassionate
- Slow to Anger
- Rich in Love

I will give you many examples for each of these characteristics that you can pray for your children. Begin with these, and then begin to pray other characteristics into their lives (and into your own). If you begin with only one of these four character traits at a time, begin with "love." There are more references to "love" in the New Testament than any other characteristic. Do you think the Lord wishes us to be loving? Absolutely!

In the following examples, I have also allowed the first Scripture to reflect how Jesus either displayed the characteristic of His Father, or what He had to say about that particular characteristic. Since Christ lives in us, and since we desire to be Christlike—it is important to know that the characteristics of God also describe the characteristics of His Son. So, when we pray for our children to display the characteristics of God in their lives, we are praying that they will be like Christ, who showed us the very character of God as He walked on this earth.

Pray for Your Child to Be Gracious (Filled With Grace)

The Graciousness of Jesus:

"All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. 'Isn't this Joseph's son?' they asked" (Luke 4:22).

Prayer: Father, Your Son spoke gracious words and people spoke well of Him. Would you help my child to speak gracious words that minister to others and point them to You?

“Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone” (Colossians 4:6).

Prayer: Lord, help all of my child’s conversations to be filled with grace and seasoned with salt, so that he/she may always know how to answer everyone.

“He mocks proud mockers but gives grace to the humble” (Proverbs 3:34).

Prayer: Help my child to walk in humility rather than in pride, so that You may fill him/her with Your grace.

“For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace” (Romans 6:14).

Prayer: Thank You, Father, that my child is under grace, and that sin will not be his/her master!

“And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work”(2 Corinthians 9:8).

Prayer: Help my child to be filled with Your grace, so that in all things at all times, he/she will have all that he/she needs and will abound in every good work.

“You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 2:1). Prayer: May my child be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus!

“Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms” (1 Peter 4:10).

Prayer: May my child use the gifts you have given to him/her so that he/she may administer Your grace to others.

“Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge

of God and of Jesus our Lord” (2 Peter 1:2).

Prayer: May my child have full knowledge of You, Father, and of Jesus Christ our Lord so that grace and peace might belong to him/her in abundance.

Pray for Your Child to Be Compassionate

The Compassion of Jesus

“When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick” (Matthew 14:14).

Prayer: Father, build compassion into the character of my child so that he/she sees every person just as Jesus would.

“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you” (Ephesians 4:32).

Prayer: Holy Lord, show me how to demonstrate to my child how to be kind and compassionate to others. Help me to be a forgiving person so that he/she will forgive others just as Jesus has forgiven us. Place the compassionate heart of Christ in my child so that others will be drawn to You.

“Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble” (1 Peter 3:8).

Prayer: Father, help my child to get along with everyone he/she comes into contact with. May he/she be a compassionate, humble tool that you can use to bring unity into the body of Christ.

Pray for Your Child to Be Slow to Anger

Jesus on Anger

“But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment” (Matthew 5:22).

Prayer: Lord, Jesus taught that we should not be angry with anyone. May my child have the strength to be the kind of person Jesus was when He walked this earth—with a heart of

forgiveness rather than a heart that desires to harbor anger.

“Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. ‘In your anger do not sin’: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold” (Ephesians 4:25-26).

Prayer: Father, when my child is angry, help him/her to keep his/her anger in check so that he/she is not drawn into sin by the schemes of the enemy. May he/she never allow the sun to go down on his/her anger. Show him/her how to become a peacemaker. Help him/her to be determined not to give the devil a foothold in this area.

“I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing” (1 Timothy 2:8).

Prayer: May my child continually lift up holy hands to You, Father, because You have delivered him/her from having an angry heart towards others.

“My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man’s anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires” (James 1:19-20).

Prayer: Father, help my child to be quick to listen and slow to become angry so that he/she can live the righteous life that You desire.

Pray for Your Child to be Rich in Love

The Love of Jesus

“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I d you” (John 15:9-12).

Prayer: Lord, Jesus loved us as You loved Him. That’s a

powerful love! Help my child to remain in Christ's love all of his/her life. Give him/her the strength to obey Your commands so that he/she can remain in Your love just as Jesus did, because remaining in Your love brings complete joy. Help my child to love others just as You love him/her.

“‘The most important one,’ answered Jesus, ‘is this: “Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.” The second is this: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” There is no commandment greater than these’” (Mark 12:29-31).

Prayer: Father, You have given us two commandments that You consider to be the greatest of all of Your commandments. Give my child a burning desire to love You with all of his/her heart and soul and mind and strength. May he/she always love his/her neighbor as much as he/she loves him/herself.

“But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked”(Luke 6:35).

Prayer: Lord, it's hard for kids to love their enemies. Give my child Your supernatural love so that he/she can “do good” to those who are unkind or hurtful to him/her, and so that he/she can become a son/daughter of Yours, Most High God!

“Love must be sincere. what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves” (Romans 12:9-10).

Prayer: Most High God, help my child to love out of a sincere heart that clings only to what is good. May he/she be continually devoted to others in brotherly love, honoring others above him/herself.

“But the man who loves God is known by God” (1 Corinthians 8:3).

Prayer: Lord, may my child be known by You because he/she

truly loves You all the days of his/her life!

“Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 John 2:15). “If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth” (1 John 3:17-18).

Prayer: Loving God, I pray that my child will never learn to love this world or to love the material possessions it has to offer. May he/she instead take pity on those in need and respond. May he/she love with actions and in truth rather than with just words. Help him/her to have Your love within him/her.

These last two prayers lend themselves to wonderful blessing prayer! The first passage, you will have an example of how to slightly change the pronouns so that the Scripture applies in a very direct way to your child. The second prayer will for you, an actual blessing straight from the Scripture. You can lay hands on your child and pray these prayers over him/her. Actually, you can do this with any of these prayers. Let your children know that you are praying specifically for them to develop the character traits of God.

“And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God” (Philippians 1:9-11).

Prayer: Lord, this is my prayer for my child: that his/her love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that he/she may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ – to Your glory and praise!

“I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God” (Ephesians 3:16-19).

Prayer: I pray that out of God’s glorious riches, He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your heart(s) through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Perhaps there are other specific character traits of God that your child needs at this time. Ask God to reveal these to you, if you are not already aware of them. One good additional example is to pray that your child will demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit in his or her life: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law” (Galatians 5:22-23). Pray them one at a time, as you feel led, keeping in mind those things your child needs in his or her life most right now. Praying the Word of God is powerful, and because it is His Word, such prayers are ALWAYS in His perfect will! And, as you begin to faithfully and expectantly pray for God’s character to be shown in your child, He will be faithful to answer.

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