

CHRISTIAN HEADS, HEARTS, AND HANDS

ARTICLES TO FORM US AS FOLLOWERS OF "THE WAY"

17 Things to Pray for Church Children

by Paul Levy

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Pray that our children will:

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2. grow up knowing God as their Heavenly Father, Christ as their Savior, the Holy Spirit as their encourager
3. love God with all their hearts
4. honor their Father and Mother, and that God would bless their families
5. repent, believe and be baptized into Christ Jesus (slightly modified)
6. love Christ's Church
7. choose the right kind of friends
8. know spiritual stability in tough times
9. know God's protection in their lives
10. be given wisdom and discernment
11. love God's Word
12. learn to pray
13. have concern for others
14. have integrity in all areas of their life
15. have courage to do what is right
16. look for ways to serve the Lord
17. work hard in whatever they do

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Aging Doesn't Make You Faithful. Jesus Does.

by Glenna Marshall

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I believed in Jesus, but my faith was fragile and malnourished. I had this notion that later in life, when I was older and wiser, I would be more spiritually mature. I figured that time itself would make me steadfast and faithful. I expected to be much more committed to Jesus in twenty years, somehow. But at the time, Bible study wasn't really for me. Prayer was a bit boring and difficult. “I'll get there when I'm older,” I thought.

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When I was in my early 20's I did not have any regular habits of Bible-reading or prayer. None. That hadn't always been the case, but somewhere around the time I graduated from college, I allowed busyness and other pursuits to rule my time. I had every excuse: *I was working a lot, I was newly married and wanted to hang with my husband, I enjoyed sleeping in, we had just discovered Netflix (back when it was mail-in discs!), I got a new novel from the bookstore.* I filled my hours with anything besides spending time with the Lord. A couple of years into my marriage, we moved to another state where I became "the pastor's wife," but still, I did not build my life around personal disciplines. I was fed regularly from corporate worship and preaching, but that was the extent of my relationship with Christ at the time. There were plenty of stops and starts, but nothing substantial. I could tell you why I didn't crack open my Bible regularly—it was *hard, I didn't understand it, I didn't get anything out of it, I was tired.* But truthfully, I was lazy. I did not see the long-term value of spiritual disciplines as a means of growth. I didn't understand that to love the Lord, I had to know Him. And He has ordained ways of knowing Him.

I believed in Jesus, but my faith was fragile and malnourished. I had this notion that later in life, when I was older and wiser, I would be more spiritually mature. I figured that time itself would make me steadfast and faithful. I expected to be much more committed to Jesus in twenty years, somehow. But at the time, Bible study wasn't really for me. Prayer was a bit boring and difficult. "I'll get there when I'm older," I thought.

But here I am, on the cusp of turning forty, and I can tell you with absolute certainty that aging itself doesn't make you more faithful to Jesus. The mere passage of time doesn't make you spiritually mature. Walking with Jesus as you age produces faithfulness in your life. Jesus makes you faithful. Exposing your heart and mind to *His* heart and mind through regular Scripture intake cultivates growth and wisdom in your life. Drawing near to Him in prayer each day produces the fruit of patience, kindness, love, joy, self-control, peace, faithfulness. Knowing Christ through the teachings and exhortations of the church stirs up our affections for Him and carries us when we're struggling with grief or apathy.

It is folly to expect to wake up more faithful to Christ twenty years from now if we're not feeding our faithfulness today with the means of grace God has ordained for our growth. God has invited us into the process of spiritual growth. He's given us His Word, the church, and access to Him in prayer as vital means to grow in grace and faith. If we're not holding fast to Him now through those means of faithfulness He's given us, how can we be sure we'll be holding fast to Him ten years from now? Twenty years?

The seasoned saints in Christ we long to emulate aren't spiritually mature simply because they've aged. They're faithful and steadfast because they've spent a lot of ordinary days knowing Christ and enjoying Him. Over time, He has shaped them to look more and more like Him. It never happens overnight. Enduring faithfulness is the culmination of unremarkable days, weeks, months, and years of plodding on when everything in us fights against such perseverance. It doesn't happen magically with the passage of time. It happens through the sustaining work of the Spirit in the passage of time spent knowing and loving the Lord through His ordained means of grace.

As someone who long neglected her faithfulness but has been drawn near by the grace of God through trials and suffering, I can tell you that the time spent knowing Him through His Word, prayer, and the body is never wasted. It is for your endurance and patience with joy that you get to know and love Him through His prescribed means of growth (see Col. 1: 11, Heb. 10:19-25). Were it not for the kindness of the Lord in bringing me to the beauty and sustenance of Scripture and prayer, I might still be hoping for a far-off, future faithfulness. I would have missed years of nearness to Christ as I learned of His faithful character through the pages of Scripture and hours of intercession.

If I could turn back the clock and speak to the twenty-year-old version of myself, I would tell her this: *Don't expect to wake up spontaneously faithful twenty years from now. Know Jesus today, love Him today. He is everything you will long for over the next two decades. Don't waste another day hoping for future faithfulness without investing in it. Take hold of the gifts of prayer and Scripture that He has provided and never let go. Spend time with the One who makes you faithful. Aging doesn't make you faithful. Jesus does.*