

## Prayers for Parents of Youth

*"I'll love you forever,  
I'll like you for always,  
As long as I'm living  
my baby you'll be."*

*—Robert Munsch*

*"Love is much more demanding than law." —Archbishop Desmond Tutu*

*The days of hearing bedtime stories and prayers are long gone.* Count yourself blessed if your youth is home to enjoy a table blessing or two a week. And yet you still care deeply about every part of your child's life. As you, perhaps regretfully, transition from a certain sense of control to a hopeful spirit of communication, prayers with your young person are likely to be few and far between – but don't give up on prayer. Here are a few suggestions for praying for your youth, the people around them, and yourself, as well as one easy and practical suggestion for when you do have time to share as a family.

### New Start

*God of New Creations,*

We are about to embark on a new year of school. Thank you for a summer rich in recreation and relationships. This time of year always comes with mixed feelings - regret that the lazy days are over, yet a sense that we have been getting on each other's nerves and it is time for a fresh adventure and time apart. Fill this new year with everything good for the future - with necessary skills and knowledge both in the classroom and out. May there be great and sensitive teachers, fun friends, and challenging opportunities. Keep us talking to each other and to you, Holy One. We ask with great expectations and growing faithfulness, *Amen.*

### Decisions! Decisions!

*Wise and timeless God,*

My child is about to make a choice that could affect the rest of their life. I have given my advice, but I am not sure I've been heard. Nor am I confident that I really know what is best. Lord, guide their choices. Point us to people and information that might help. Remind both of us that you will be with them no matter what they choose, and that your love is big enough to shelter us through mistakes, too. Remind me to withhold my "I told you so," and that sometimes the most valuable lessons are learned from mistakes. May they know that you and I will always be here no matter what, *Amen.*

### G r-r-r-r

*Dear Patient Parenting God,*

I've just about had it! They are mad at me again. They really know how to push my buttons and there is just enough truth in what they say to make me doubt myself. Lord, being their parent is one of the most important things in my life and I don't want to blow it. But I don't like them much right now either. I want their love and respect, but even more I want them to love you and to know you love them. I want them to be not just happy and healthy, but full of creativity and passion and purpose – like you, in whose image they were created. I am doing my best to guide them and open up a world of opportunities, but sometimes I just get scared and have to put on the brakes. Help me choose my battles wisely; I don't want a house at war. Give me a sense of humor to lighten the tension between us. When I am wrong, show me, and give me the grace to apologize.

And, when I really have to play the bad guy, comfort me as I suffer their anger and estrangement. Remind me that only you have a child who didn't make mistakes. And for centuries you have suffered as we, your children, refuse your advice and push back at the rules given to protect us. Fill me with your patience, wisdom, love, and grace, *Amen*.

## Out In The World

*Creating God,*

What a world you have made and what a mess we have made complicating it. I want my child out there in the midst of this fascinating culture, experiencing diversity and changing the world for the better, but I know it is also a scary place. Yet I believe what seems impossible: that you love them even more than I do. Protect them in every way possible. Surround them with wise and honest role models and friends. Draw them to make good friends who will enjoy life with them in healthy ways. Keep them in the church that they would know deep inside that the fellowship of other Christians is always there for them wherever they go. And calm my quaking heart, for I know that yours is not a spirit of fear and anxiety, but of power and love and a mind of reason. Give me your peace which surpasses all human imagination and understanding, I pray, *Amen*.

## Ouch!

O God, is there anything more painful than watching your child suffer? You know all about that, Lord. Teach me how to bear it - How to ease their pain or help them learn from it. I just can't protect them from the bumps and bruises of life: a friend's betrayal, mean gossip, not making the team, no date for the prom, breakups. If I could bear the pain for them I would. Please give me eyes for the teachable moments, words that don't irritate the wound, and ideas to move them beyond this. Send them others who can comfort them and help them put this all into perspective. Remind them that they are a child of God and that you love them just the way they are. Continue to comfort me, as I comfort them, *Amen*.

## Too Tired!

*Refreshing Spirit,*

I am exhausted and weary. How do you do it, parenting all of us all of the time?! Do you ever wish for just 24 hours when you weren't responsible for so much? But there always seems to be so much at stake and they seem to live on the edge and at full speed all the time. When they aren't, I can be sure the quiet means something is wrong. It wears me out and then I know I am not doing my best. Give me that peace that passes understanding, Lord. Remind me to take care of myself, that my health and happiness are important – important to you and important to the future of my family. Help them to see my needs and encourage me. I don't like what I am teaching when I don't put myself on my list of things to do. When I lay my head on my pillow tonight turn off my worry channel and give me thoughts of you and your love and infinite care for all of us. In desperate confidence I pray, *Amen*.

## Test Taking

*God of the Future,*

It's test time again and they may or may not be ready. It is what it is. I hate that so much seems to depend on this brief piece of their life! Thank you that you hold the future and have a good plan for my child. It may not be what we have planned, but we can be sure it is full of love and purpose. But right now, Lord, could you calm them down? It's not fair to ask you to put things into their head that they haven't learned, but could you bring to their mind the things that are there? Don't let nerves get in the way of proving what they really know. And deep in their spirit make sure they know that no matter how this test turns out, they are a beloved child, and you and I are going to love them just the way they are, *Amen*.

# For Love of God

## *Dearest Holy Friend,*

You know how much I love you. I am absolutely dependent on your love and presence in my life. It is my greatest comfort that I am yours and my child is yours, too. Confirm the faith I proclaimed at their baptism. Integrate yourself into their life through me, the church, Christian friends, experiences and role models. I want to be an example, but not a pest, so help me walk that walk and not talk too much. Above all, let them feel your loving presence and become as committed to you as I am. There is nothing better I could give them for life, but it is not mine to give. You have given it already; open their eyes and mind and heart to see it. And, let them hold it tight forever, *Amen*.

If you can find time even once a week to sit down together as a family, consider the ancient spiritual practice of EXAMEN. It is simple and powerful and can lead to really knowing where each family member is spiritually. Then you really can pray powerfully and specifically for your youth. Try lighting a candle to represent the presence of Christ among you. Take turns sharing the moment when you felt most blessed, the most joy, the most like the person God created you to be, during the last week (or day, etc.). Then share the moment when each of you felt most discouraged, lonely, disappointed, or generally out of sync with God's grace. Together, thank God for the blessings and ask to learn from the worst moment. What you will discover is that patterns will begin to appear that will allow you to pray for your child's strengths and challenges. Consider presenting the candle holder as a gift when your youth moves away after graduation to encourage Examen on their own.

### **Here's another tool that might help you pray as you add your body to the experience:**

Begin prayer with clenched fists and say, "God, I hold so many strings and reins in my hand pretending that I am in control..."

Open your hands, palms up and ready to yield and receive and say, "I hand them all over to you, at least for these moments of prayer. Free me from the worry that goes with them and open me to what you have to say."

Now listen and enjoy or pour out your heart. Then fold your hands together at your heart and say, "Into my heart, Amen."

### **If adding body movement is helpful to you try this:**

BEHOLD —place hands gently on cheeks beneath your eyes and think of all the ways God has been around you and your family,

BE PATIENT—open hands palms up close to your body and think about all the things you and God are still working on together. Listen and ask.

BE GENEROUS—extend your open hands outward and think about what God is asking you to do for others as a partner in faith.

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