

SUGGESTIONS TO HELP CHILDREN ENGAGE IN CORPORATE PRAYER

I. INTRODUCTION

One of our main callings as families joined together at TDA is to cultivate a life of prayer, both personally and in corporate settings. There are a growing number of prayer rooms and prayer ministries in our city that we love to partner with. Some of these include IHOP-KC, Youth With A Mission, The Boiler Room, Eagle's Gate, Wisdom's House and more. One large prayer room that families attend is the Global Prayer Room at IHOP-KC, at their Red Bridge Center. (They also have an All Nation's prayer room at IHOPU and a Malachi 4:6 prayer room on Blue Ridge Blvd. The Malachi 4:6 prayer room is especially set up for children and families. See ihopkc.org to find times it is open).

We have written this document so that you as a family can maximize your time in the prayer together and teach your children along the way (Deut. 11:19).

II. BRIEFING

- A. Prepare your children before you attend the prayer room. What should they expect to see? How do you expect them to behave? How can they prepare their hearts? Also plan to be de-brief with your children after your time in the prayer room. These times of communication are so important to answer questions your child may have, to correct or encourage their behavior and to pray with them.
 1. It will help to go over the apostolic prayers with your children, even one each week. These are available in the IHOP-KC foyer.
 2. Each 2 hour set in the IHOP-KC prayer room is either focused on Worship with the Word (more devotional) or Intercession (more interactive). Families should attend both types of sets and see which is best for your family in this season. Let your children know what the focus is going to be each time you are in the prayer room.
- B. Explain prayer room protocol to your children. We don't carry on conversations in the prayer room as we want to keep a sacred atmosphere and maintain a culture of prayer and worship. Our primary communication in the house of prayer is with the Lord, whereas at other places and times, we also communicate with our friends, family and classmates. If we have to ask our parents a question, when parents are instructing us, or if we pray or read a Bible verse together, we whisper.

III. WHILE IN THE PRAYER ROOM

- A. While in the prayer room, explain to your children what Scriptures are being sung or prayed. Help your children to find those Scriptures in their Bibles.
- B. Encourage your children regularly and often while in the prayer room, with a glance, a touch or a kind word. Your affection and tenderness will help them associate prayer time with love and affirmation.
- C. Encourage your children to worship with their bodies in the house of prayer in appropriate ways, like kneeling, arms raised, heads bowed, standing or pacing (for older children).
- D. Explain what people are doing when they pace. If your young children want to pace, go with them, holding their hand. Pacing is to walk *and* pray.

- E. Teach your children what is happening when the room erupts in dancing, for example, so that they can also learn sensitivity to the Holy Spirit. Show them in the Scripture different ways of worshipping and practice those ways at home.
- F. Help your child participate in any small group prayer that is announced by the prayer leader. You can stand and help facilitate praying together, even praying for family and friends.
- G. Help your child participate in praying for those who need healing, if healing prayer is ever announced by the prayer leader. You can go with them to pray for the person who has asked for prayer, often by raising his/her hand. Let the children see and hear you as you pray. Pray simply so that your children can understand. Remind them to only place their hands on a person's arms or shoulders with a gentle touch.
- H. Teach your children about spontaneous prayer, when we "lift our voices" to the Lord. Tell them to sing phrases of adoration, telling God how they love Him. You might help your children to find a Psalm to sing through. Practice at home, especially teaching them to sing Scripture spontaneously.
- I. Explain why people may shout or cry when they pray. Explain the passion some people feel. Explain that the Lord has made us all individuals and it is equally valid to whisper or speak in a non emotional way as it is to shout or cry.
- J. Engaging in prayer:
 - a. Sometimes pray **with your children** and not just on your own with God.
 - b. Also pray on your own while you let your children engage on their own with God, depending on their age.
 - c. At times parents may have to disengage from what they are experiencing in God in order to help and encourage their children to engage with the Lord or when they are being touched by the Lord in a way that is new to them.

IV. MEDITATING, JOURNALING AND BIBLE CLASS HOMEWORK

- A. In General, encourage your children to hear from God in the prayer room and to journal what they hear, by word or picture. By journaling we mean that your child simply records what he/she saw, heard or felt from the Lord.
- B. Equip them with a "prayer room" journal or notebook, colored pencils and crayons in addition to their Daniel Academy Bible class homework.
- C. Encourage your children to write and/or picture their prayers. They can draw what they hear from God using words or pictures. *When you debrief later on, be interested in what they have heard, and encourage them if you think they have heard from God. Saying things like, "This is wonderful!" or "What did the Lord say to you when you drew this?"*
- D. Sometimes when the children just draw something and aren't sure why, your discernment can help. "I wonder if the Lord is saying through your picture?" is an example.
- E. You may choose a verse and write it on the top of a page. Have your child then use the empty space to draw what they think the verse means.

V. BREAKS AND DEBRIEFING

- A. Take breaks from being in the prayer room, according to your children's attention spans. These breaks can be 5 min, 10 min or 15 min, and can be a good time to:-
 1. Discuss what they feel.
 2. Discuss what their struggles are.
 3. Talk about what they don't understand.
 4. Have a look at their pictures or what they have written in their journal and encourage them.
 5. Respond to their needs, i.e. restroom or snack break.
 6. Answer any questions they may have about the prayer room or even "when are we going home".
 7. Teach your children, especially giving an age appropriate explanation if there is an important prayer focus which they may not understand.
 8. You could stretch out the time spent in the prayer room each week and lessen the number of breaks if you would like your child to be able to spend first an hour at a time and then two hours in the prayer room, depending on their age.

- B. Expect your children to develop burdens for nations, people groups, or situations of injustice. Walk with them through these things, teaching them both how to carry a burden in prayer and how to lay a burden at the cross.

- C. Tell the children stories of King David and his worshippers and musicians in the temple. Explain about King David's house of prayer and also the context for our house of prayer, using Jesus' own words when he quoted Isaiah 56:7:

Then He taught, saying to them, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations'? Mark 11:17

- D. It will help to teach your children about repentance, especially during or after a time of corporate repentance. Give them a context for phrases like "Have mercy, Lord". Let them see you as parents in repentance. It will help to make repentance and forgiveness a regular part of your family life. Though sometimes we repent in private it is healthy for our children to see us repent publically, and it is imperative if we have wronged them.

- E. Take home with you what happened in the prayer room and always be open to discussion with your children.
 1. Our children may not *automatically* value or find everything the Lord has for them in a corporate prayer setting. They will need our help to fully engage with and benefit from what is going on. They will also need our help and encouragement to grow in personal and corporate worship and intercession as they grow older.

 2. We must contend for our children. Carry your children in prayer without ceasing. We have a God-ordained responsibility to nurture and mentor them in the faith. The IHOP-KC and other prayer rooms in our city are a precious and wonderful resource if we use them well. They can be a place for our children to truly find the knowledge of the Holy.

V. PRACTICAL HELPS

What to Take to the Prayer Room

Make sure your children take a journal, a prayer list, their Bible Meditation homework, a bottle of water, a pencil, eraser, crayons or colored pencils, and a backpack in which to carry everything.

What to do in the Prayer Room

Take these ideas and break them into 15 min segments to take you and your child through to the end of a 2-hour prayer meeting. Feel free to add your own ideas, change the order of prayer room activities, and share with other families.

A. For children up to Grade 2, consider starting with a ideas below:

10-10:15

- If this is your child's first time, enter the prayer room, unpack, take your child by the hand and walk her around, quietly explaining what goes on at the various stations, (map on back wall, communion table, side rooms, tables, chairs).
- Sit down with your child; if she can read, open both your Bibles to the Psalms and quietly read a Psalm together. Make sure your child whispers quietly.
- If your child can't read, very quietly read a Psalm to him/her.

If your child has been to the prayer room before, this can be a time to get their heart right, to ask Holy Spirit to remind them of unrepented of sin and to then repent and ask the Lord's forgiveness. Then take communion with your child, praying with him/her.

10:15-10:30

- Tell your children this is a time for connecting with the Lord as though they were a plug and He was the socket.
- Encourage them to listen to the worship and join in even with a phrase that is being sung over and over. Also encourage your children to sing to the Lord, simple songs, such as "I love you Jesus".
- **Check on your child over and over; do not turn away from him to focus on the Lord.** Your time for worship and practicing intimacy with God will mostly be when your child is not with you.
- Encourage and affirm your child often.

10:30-10:45

- Take a short break; encourage your child especially if he/she tried to engage with what was going on.
- Use the restroom, go to the coffee shop or have a snack, look around the bookstore, or go for a short walk around the building.
- Explain the prayer wall in the hallway; talk about the welcome desk, the TV screen, the information section.
- Explain what the worship leaders do so that when you re-enter the prayer room your child can have a greater understanding of what is going on.
- Have your child take some time to read the Bible, if he/she can read.

10:45-11:00

- Return to the prayer room and have your child do some of his Bible meditation homework. You will have gone over this at home so your child is familiar with the verse and with how to do the meditation.
- Once again, check every few minutes to see how your child is doing and if he is staying on task.
- Bless and encourage your child when he/she is finished.

11:00-11:15

- Have your child take out their prayer list. This is an ongoing project you have begun and are working on at home. It contains maps, pictures and lists of family members, nations your child has a heart for, issues of injustice, names of those who need healing or salvation.
- Encourage your child to do one or more of the following:
 - a) Quietly speak verbal prayers for the people or concerning the issues on one part of her prayer list. At home you will have given your child some Biblical prayers to pray so she will know what to say.
 - b) Draw his/her prayers in picture form.
 - c) Write out his/her prayers.
 - d) Pray in the spirit.
 - e) Sing his/her prayers.

Don't just leave your child to do the above activities on their own. Engage with them.

11:15 - 11:30

- Take a final break with your child.
- Go for a walk and talk about what the Lord is doing and what you both are feeling.

11:45 – 12:00

Together, return to the prayer room, choose from the following:

- Have your child read a Bible passage you have selected or one that he has chosen to read at this time.
- Have your child do a final time of listening to the Holy Spirit and making a final drawing.
- Have your child finish up his Bible Meditation homework.
- Pray with your child; ask the Lord to come to your child and touch him.
- Take your child to the microphone to join in if there is a rapid fire prayer session going on. Make sure your child knows what to pray beforehand.
- Pack up and prepare to leave together.

B. Children Grade 3-6

As above with the following amendments:

- The Bible reading time can be longer. Your child can read his/her Bible for at least 10 minutes.
- You child could take 20-30 minutes to do the meditation homework.
- You may want to accompany your child to the microphone to join in if there is a rapid fire prayer session going on.
- Parents can leave your children for 5-10 minutes at a time to do some of the above activities on their own. See how they do. Talk with them and watch to see how they are doing.
- Parents may choose to allow their older child to walk up and down the prayer room aisles. Explain that this is not walking and disconnecting time, rather it is a *prayer-walking* time. Show them how to do it at home. Practice at home with younger students.
- Grade 3-4 children may still need two breaks; with Grade 5-6 children, see how they do with one 20 min break right in the middle of their 2-hour slot.

C. A General Rule

Parents of elementary and junior high students should not drop their children off at prayer rooms and pick them up 2 hours later. Your role is of the utmost importance as you mentor and coach your children in waiting on the Lord, agreeing with His heart, adoring Him, meditating on His word in prayer and joining in with times of corporate intercession.