

Praying With Your Baby:
A Spiritual Journey



Spiritual Support from
First Steps Spirituality Center

Rev. Leanne Hadley

A gift for you.

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But as for me, my prayer is to you, O Lord
(Psalm 69:13)

Your baby is a gift from God. I don't need to tell you that. You hold your baby, look into his or her eyes, and know that this child is a miracle. A miracle that is now your responsibility. You want to be the perfect parent, provide the proper guidance and wisdom, and to make the choices that will be best for your baby. While these feelings are great they can also become overwhelming. Remember, you are never alone! God loves your baby as much as you do, in fact, more than you do, and God will be with you every step of your parenting journey. That is why praying with your baby is so important. During the prayer time, you and your baby will, through prayer, simply spend time in the holiness of God's love, assurance, and light.

Sometimes we make prayer much harder than it is. We believe that we have to find and say the perfect words and then God will listen to our prayers and watch over us. But in reality, this experience with your new baby is so joyful, so overwhelming, so hard physically and

emotionally that you might find yourself trying to pray and lacking the words you seek. This experience is so profound that there are often not words to express it. Prayer does not have to be words at all. Sometimes prayer is simply being still and listening to the quiet breaths that your baby breathes. Sometimes prayer is walking and soothing your baby when he or she cries. Sometimes prayer is reciting scripture. Sometimes it is counting your blessings.

No matter what “form” you use to pray, words or not, walking, saying scripture, or simply being with your baby, the heart of prayer is beyond “form.” It is even beyond the content of what is being done or said or hoped for. Prayer is simply being in the holy presence of God and realizing that God is always near, that God’s strength is always available to you, and that God’s love always surrounds you and your baby. God will never leave this job of parenting up to you alone. Your child is being raised by you and God, together in a bond of common love and good will for your baby.

This book contains ideas for you to use while praying with your baby. Many people would insist that you pray “for” your baby instead of “with” your baby. But I believe that, while praying for your baby is important, praying with your baby brings the three of you closer together—you, your baby, and God. These prayers are designed to help you spend time with God and to

Suggested scripture:
My prayer is to you, Lord. (Psalm 69:13)
You formed my inward parts: I am wonderfully made. (Psalm 139:13-14)
Let the children come to me. (Matthew 19:13)
My peace I give to you. (John 14:27)

As you continue regular prayer time with your baby, you will begin to create your own prayers. Don’t let the ideas in this booklet confine you. Don’t let your preconceived notions about the “right way to pray” stop you either. You and your baby were created by God and your spirits cry out to feel connected to God. Prayer is the cord that holds you together with God. Whatever ways you discover to communicate with and to feel the goodness of God, these are your prayers. Stop worrying about whether your prayer is “correct” and instead, simply enjoy being there with God and with your baby.

May the light, love and holiness of God surround you and your baby. May it guide you, protect you, and strengthen you, now and always. Amen.

the circles bigger and bigger and bigger. Lower the hands down and do the same with the feet. While you are making circles reflect about the people and places your baby will experience. Allowing the circle to be your “words” ask God to travel with your baby as his/her world expands.

End by saying, *God I cannot always be with my baby, but you can. I ask you to journey with my baby as he/she meets new people, experiences new things, and explores the world around her/him. I trust your love and care and I thank you for being with my baby. Amen.*

Scripture Walking Prayer

This is a great way to pray especially when your baby is crying or grumpy and you need to walk and try and settle her/him down. It can also be done anywhere.

Begin by wrapping your baby in the Prayer Blanket and then hold him/her in a comfortable walking position. Find a scripture, poem, or prayer that you like and begin quietly saying one line from it over and over. I listed some ideas below but feel free to use your own. Keep saying the scripture over and over and over. Try to fit the words with the foot steps you are taking. Soon you will find yourself walking and saying the scripture in a sort of rhythm. Allow the movement and words to become a prayer for you. Relax and feel the support and care of God walking beside you. Thank God for always walking with you.

share that holiness with your baby. There is no right or wrong way to pray. I am sure you will discover many ways to pray with your baby that are not in this book. I hope you do. This is only the beginning; suggestions and a starting place.

Sometimes new parents feel silly praying with their babies. After all, the baby doesn't “understand” what is being said. They aren't old enough to understand concepts like “God” and “spirituality.” Because of these feelings, many parents put off starting to pray with their children until they acquire verbal skills so that they can memorize a prayer or make sentences themselves as prayers. Personally I disagree with this. I believe that babies, toddlers, and children are very much aware of the holiness of God. I believe in many ways they are more open to experiencing God because they don't have the capacity to reason it away, and the doubt to interfere with God being present. What babies, toddlers, and children often lack is the language skills to express to the adults around them the experiences they do have with God. Because they don't have the skills to tell us, we assume they aren't having them. I believe that when you pray with your baby, they will, as you will, have an awareness of God's light and holiness. They, like you, will feel love, support, strength, and protection. What they won't have is the language to tell you. So pray. Begin now to experience God with your baby. I think you will be amazed at how precious the time will become for both of

you. And I believe your baby will help you focus on the holiness of God and will guide you into a spiritual awareness of God that you never imagined. You laugh with your baby, sing with your baby, play with your baby every day. I invite you to pray with your baby. Many wonders await both of you.

I have listed several prayers for you to try with your baby and encourage you to try each of them several times. Some will immediately feel like prayer, others will seem less so. Over time, you will discover the ones that help you and your baby most closely connect with God. And you will probably discover some on your own once you start praying regularly. It doesn't matter which prayers you use most, or if you leave some of these prayers out. What matters most is that you pray together and find the peace it will bring.

Try to pray at least once a day with your baby. For some people it is helpful to set aside the same time each day for prayer time. For others, it more spontaneous. I found it helpful to set time aside and, to pray spontaneously each day when my children were babies. It is up to you how and when you pray. Remember the important thing is that you do it often and regularly enough that it becomes very comfortable for you. The more comfortable you feel while praying, the easier it will be to open your soul up to God and to receive God's peace and love during your prayer time.

Heart Beat Prayer

This prayer is very similar to the breath prayer. Lie on your back and place the baby, wrapped in the Prayer Blanket, on top of your chest. Lie very still and feel your babies breath going in and out and eventually you will be able to feel your own heart beat and your babies heart beat beating together. Focus your awareness on God's heart, who both you and your baby are very near! Let the rhythm of your hearts relax you and continue resting in God's peace. When you are finished, say, *Amen*.

Circle Prayer Using Arms and Legs

*Before you begin this time of prayer, take a sheet of paper and draw three circles on it. A small one with two larger ones surrounding it. In the center circle write the names of those people closest to your baby. In the next largest circle, write the names of the people or places your child will meet in the next year or so. Perhaps a nursery worker, day care provider, play mates, etc. Then in the largest circle write names of places or people that are yet to come into your babies life in later years. Examples are school teachers, new friends, a boy or girl friend.

Place your baby, lying on his/her back on the blanket. Take a moment to look at your baby and realize that he/she will grow up quicker than you can ever imagine. Extend the baby's arms up and while holding his/her hands, gently begin making very small circles with them, then make

Fingers and Toes Blessing Prayer

*Before you begin this prayer take a few moments and make a list of ten things that are a blessing to your child. Things like “having a mommy who loves her/him” or “having a home” or “being loved” or “having a sibling” (if they do).

Lay the baby on the blanket and face your baby. For the prayer, simply kiss a finger or toe of the baby and give thanks for something on the list. Continue until the list is finished. Don't worry about sticking to only ten blessings. Maybe you have thirty things on the list - that is okay. It just means more kisses for your baby. End by saying,

Thank you God for blessing my baby with so many wonderful things and people. May he/she grow up feeling grateful for all things and may I find gratitude in all I do. Amen.

Breath Prayer

This is the simplest form of prayer and it is my personal favorite. Begin by wrapping your baby in the Prayer Blanket. You might want to use the “Blanket Prayer” from above. Then hold your baby close to you, sit and breathe. You may prefer to lie down next to your baby. Do nothing except breathe evenly in and out. Experience God's light and holiness and receive the assurance that God is surrounding you both. Sit and enjoy. Try not to pray anything specific. Just let God hold you and allow you to rest for a while. Don't rush and just enjoy! Finish by saying, *Amen*.

I have included a baby blanket with this booklet. It can be used as a sacred space for your prayer time. I suggest that you begin by blessing the blanket (included below) and then use this blanket exclusively for your prayer time. By getting the blanket out, finding a place to lay it, and placing your baby on it, you will begin to settle your mind and spirit and shift your energy towards holiness.

BEGINNING...

When we bless an object or place or person, we say special words asking God to be especially present. Without a blessing, God would still be present but as we bless something, we increase our awareness that God is there. By blessing this blanket, you will be committing yourself to praying with your baby and asking God to make God's self known in those times of prayer.

Begin by unfolding the blanket and laying it out flat on a bed or the floor or a table. Then say the following prayer while touching it and feeling the weave of the blanket.

God, I ask your blessing to rest upon this blanket. I ask you to weave yourself into the lives of myself and my baby. As the weave of this blanket is closely woven, intricately designed to make a beautiful pattern, I ask that you weave yourself tightly with us. Make of our lives something beautiful, warm, and full of peace.

Bless this blanket and the time my baby and I will spend praying together. Amen.

(Then sit quietly and stroke the blanket. Simply let the light, love, and warmth of God surround you, much as a blanket surrounds a new baby. When you are finished, fold the blanket and place it in a special area ready to be used in prayer with your baby.)

PRAYING:

The Prayer Blanket Prayer

Lay your prayer blanket (or any blanket) on a bed or the floor and stretch it out to prepare to wrap your baby in it. Place your baby in the center of it and as you wrap the baby say the following prayer:

(As the baby lies in the center of the blanket)

God, I ask you to support, surround, and protect my baby with your love and care.

May your angels from all corners of the earth be near my baby. (Slowly swaddle the baby in the blanket, being aware that God and the angels hear your prayer and are surrounding your baby). (Sit in silence holding your baby and focus attention towards God's love and light. Enjoy being in the presence of God with your baby. Sit as long as you want to.)

Thank you, Amen.

Massage Prayer

Lay your baby on the prayer blanket in a comfortable place. You may want to sit next to your baby, kneel over your baby, or lie next to your baby. Begin by gently massaging each part of your baby and saying or thinking the following prayer:

(Massage the hands) *Lord, may these little hands always do the work of your love in the world.*

(Massage the arms) *Lord, may these arms embrace everything good in the world.*

(Massage the chest and stomach) *Lord, may my child be filled with your light and love and share it with others.*

(Massage the legs) *Lord, may these legs be strong and able to carry my child confidently into the future, whatever it may hold.*

(Massage the feet) *Lord, may these little feet walk in your light and follow the path you set before them.*

(Massage the head) *Lord, may this little head make good choices and be full of wisdom.*

(Turn the baby over and gently massage up and down the spine) *Lord, may my child always be able to stand tall and walk confidently throughout his/her life.*

(Continue massaging your baby and as you do be aware that God is shaping this child with love, light, and gentleness. Be assured that God is helping your baby to grow and thrive.) *Amen.*