



Some ideas for creative prayer...

Thank you, sorry, please (TSP) - teaspoon prayers.

Perhaps the simplest way of structuring a prayer is to use the three words thank you, sorry and please. Have a short time of chat and discussion focusing on what the children might want to say to God using these three words. It can be helpful to give younger children a teaspoon to hold to remind them of these three basic TSP categories for prayer.



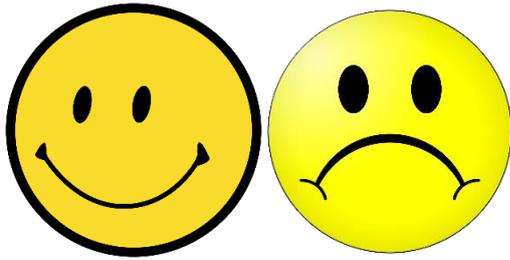
Three envelopes - Some children start out by being rather shy about praying out loud. In this case why not pin up three envelopes labelled 'Thank you, sorry and please' and let children write their prayers on slips of paper and put them in the appropriate envelope. Don't forget to check the envelopes from time to time to let everyone share in the joy of the thank you prayers and to find out how the please prayers have been answered. Adults or older children can scribe for younger ones.

Prayer paper chains - Give each member of the family a strip of coloured paper and encourage them to write a one-line/one- word thank you prayer. Fasten all the strips together to make a family prayer paper chain that you can hang across your room. You might want to give each person two or three strips of paper or add to the chain week by week. The prayer paper chain is particularly effective on special occasions like Easter, Christmas and when experiencing difficult times.

Easter Eggs - Cut out enough egg shapes for everyone to have one, or make some templates and let every member of the family make their own egg. Invite everyone to write one-line prayers thanking God. Decorate them, create a hole in the top of each one and attach a piece of ribbon so that they can be hung up. These could be made into stars at Christmas.

Hand prayers - Give each member of your family a piece of paper and ask them to draw around and cut out the shape of their own hand. On the four fingers they should write: something they are happy for, something they are thankful for, something for which they would like help with, and something they would like to say sorry about. Family members can fold down the fingers on their paper hand if they wish to keep their prayers secret. This leaves the hand in the thumbs up shape, a reminder that God has heard our prayers.

Fold a prayer! - Give everyone a piece of paper and ask them to write a one-line prayer request at the top of the page, when they have done this they should fold over the paper. Then pass the paper to the left. Each person should now have a different piece of paper on which they can write another one-line prayer and fold it over again. If they wish, they can write the same prayer again. The paper should be passed on several more times until five or six prayers are on the page. Then everyone should stop, unfold and read their paper. Invite everyone to spend a few moments silently offering these prayers to God. If there is time, the prayers can be put in a pile and everyone offered the opportunity to take and read a new set of prayers.



Happy and sad times - You will need a large face that looks happy one way up and sad the other way up. Show the happy face first and ask what events have made people happy during the last week and make a list of them. Pray about the list or say a one-line thank you prayer for each one. Then turn the face upside down and ask if anything sad or worrying has happened in the past week and make a list of them too. Perhaps there are people who are ill who need praying for. Pray for this list. Finish by thanking God that he always knows how we feel, whether we are happy or sad, and thanking him for being just as close to us in the good times as in the bad. Perhaps everyone could have a happy/sad face as a memory jogger during prayer time.

Thank you for animals - Give out circles of paper and invite everyone to write a prayer about animals on it. Stick the prayer circles onto a large piece of card to look like a caterpillar and stick a smiley face with antennae on the front. You might want to add feet to the circle.



Family Tree - Give each member of your family a simple outline of a person (a gingerbread man shape is ideal). Thread a piece of wool through a hole in the top of each figure. On one side of the figure invite people to write the names of all the people in their family. On the other side they could write a simple prayer, including any special needs and asking God to bless their family. Arrange a few branches in a vase and invite people to come up and hang their figure on the family tree. When everyone has done this someone might like to say a final prayer, offering all these family prayers to God.

Pebble People - Families come in all shapes and sizes. Think of a child and family known to you - Pick up a stone and place it on the mat, saying "This is a child" - Pick up another stone and say "This is the child's mother (or carer)" - Pick up another stone and say "This is the child's father" - Pick up two more and say "This is the child's family" - Pick up two more and say "These are the child's friends" - Look at your pile of stones, and quietly think of all the people involved in a family.

Planting a Seed - In order to grow to be strong and healthy, seeds need good soil, feeding and watering. In the same way we need comfort and love in order to develop into the people God made us to be. As we plant seeds we pray that we will have all we need to grow: - Take one of the seeds in your hand, look at it and think of people you are close to - Put some soil in a cup and place your seed deep inside it. Hold the cup with the seed in it and ask God to help you and any children you know to grow into the people he wants us all to be.