



Free Guide to Teaching Catholic Kids How to Pray with Scripture

by Caroline Harvey

The prayers of children can be the most beautiful, heartfelt, and tender prayers expressed. Listening to how children address God, thank him, or ask him for things reminds us of how we should be approaching God—with childlike simplicity and trust. Whether your child already has an established routine of praying or is just getting starting, adding prayer with Sacred Scripture can be a very fruitful and enriching experience for both their faith lives and yours.

Praying with Scripture should be an active and daily part of prayer for everyone, whether that entails praying with the readings from the Mass, reflecting on the mysteries of the Rosary, praying the Liturgy of the Hours, [lectio divina](#), or any other kind of meditative prayer. There is no age requirement to begin praying with the Scriptures, so it is important to introduce children to this beautiful form of prayer as early as possible.

If this task seems daunting or you are unsure of where to start, this guide is for you! Teaching your child to pray with Scripture will be easier than you may have first thought, and this step-by-step guide will show you the way.

1. Become familiar with the story of the Bible

Children are delightfully curious and want to know all about how the world works and why things are what they are. You may find yourself explaining things that had become so routine or obvious to you that it was no longer something you had to actively process or ponder—like why pot holders are necessary, that milk spoils if left out of the fridge all day, or that the sun rises every morning.

Perhaps the overarching story of the Bible has become that familiar or routine to you. You have heard the Gospel stories hundreds of times at Mass or perhaps have even studied the letters of St. Paul or books of the Old Testament. But, whether this is the case or not, can you answer a child's favorite question to ask, "why?" Why did David kill Goliath? Why was Jonah swallowed by the whale? Why did Jesus have to die?

While you do not have to become a Scripture scholar, it will be helpful for you to have a general idea of the story of salvation history. The best way to measure if you have mastered something is to try to teach it to someone else; so, give it try! But, don't worry if you do not have all the answers or even many of the answers. Use your child's curiosity, and now your own, as an opportunity to spend more time getting to know the richness and beauty of the Bible. If time allows, you may even want to pick up a study Bible or find online materials that can walk you through the ins and outs of the books of the Bible and the [story of salvation history](#).



2. Pray with Scripture

Children learn best by example. If you are regularly making time to pray with Scripture, then your child will have a better idea of what this sort of [prayer](#) looks like. Make it a point to explain to your child what you are doing and why, explaining that you are reading the Word of God and listening to him in your heart plants the seed that you are doing something different than reading the news or a novel. If you use imaginative prayer with Scripture, explain how you imagine the scene, the sights and sounds, the people, and the interaction with [Jesus](#).

If you pray with the readings from Mass or the Liturgy of the Hours, invite your child to read along with you. Just becoming familiar with reading Scripture and silent reflection will help the child develop a prayerful disposition with the Bible, rather one of study or play.

3. Make family time to reflect on Scripture together

Similar to making personal time for prayer, praying together as a family is a very enriching and spiritually healthy practice. Granted, it may be difficult to wrangle everyone together for an extended period of time, but even a few minutes of prayer and reflection together can make all the difference. Spend time reflecting on stories from the gospels, asking your children to describe the scene, or why Jesus said or did what he did in that passage. Conclude by asking everyone to make a short prayer of petition or thanksgiving to God based on what you all have reflected upon together.

4. Give your child prayer suggestions

During your child's prayer time, whether that be quiet time in their room or praying in a designated spot in the house, give your child suggestions for praying with Scripture. For younger children, you could suggest drawing or coloring a scene from the Bible that you have just read to them. Or, they can be encouraged to spend time with a picture Bible or other Bible storybook to get more familiar with the stories. Older children can be encouraged to use imaginative prayer and either draw or write about their prayer experience with a Scripture passage. You can encourage your child to write a psalm, pray a Scriptural Rosary, or write a letter back to God after reading a passage in the [Bible](#).

5. Make a monthly plan

After your child has become familiar with what praying with Scripture looks like and various ways it can be done, set a monthly plan for the whole family. You can plan on praying with the Sunday readings each week, setting goals for reading through the Gospels, or planning out reviewing the major events in the Old Testament (think of Noah and the Flood, David and Goliath, and familiar stories like that). Also, plan out certain days when your family will come together to pray with Scripture or spend time sharing how their prayer has been. Preparing a special family meal or a game-night along with the reflection will help keep the children become engaged and excited for these family gatherings.

Remember, with any plan for prayer, God is always the one who leads and guides the progress. If you or your child are hitting roadblocks or things are not going the way that you would like, be patient and trust that God understands and is not disappointed. He is pleased with any effort made to spend time with him and grow more in love with him. If from all of your efforts, your children only learn that God loves them dearly and the Bible expresses that love, then you have taught them well.