



The Encircling Stage

The **Encircling Stage** (ages 4–8) is a season of wonder and growth where children begin exploring the world beyond your immediate reach. Though they are stepping out in new ways, they still look to you for safety, comfort, and guidance. This is a crucial time when your love and consistency help shape how your child will come to understand God’s presence and care.

In this stage, your steady support models God’s abiding love and begins to root their faith. As they engage with daily rhythms and relationships, they learn to see beyond themselves and build meaningful connections with others. Your consistent presence lays the foundation for lifelong faith.

“Abide in me, and I in you.”

John 15:4

Tips for Caregivers

- Consider how your nurturing presence reflects God’s love.
- Don’t underestimate the power of your consistency and steadiness for your child.
- Help your child move from self-focus to caring for others.
- Show your child how time and routine work through daily schedules.

Growth Model



Plant

Your child is beginning to experience life beyond your direct care. They may even notice how others pray and interact with God.



Root

Your child may start to imitate what they see, seeking to pray at meals and bedtime.



Growth

With encouragement, your child may begin to pray on their own, building confidence in talking to God.



Fruit

Over time, your child will start initiating prayer in different settings—thanking God for his/her day, a toy, and/or praying for a friend.

Activity: Learning to Pray

STEP 1 (The Why)

This activity invites your child to participate in mealtime, morning, and bedtime prayers while learning why we pray.

STEP 2 (Activity Directions)

This week try some of the prayers below to help your child prime his/her heart for prayer.

A few notes along the way:

- Use short, simple prayers with clear purpose.
- For instance, consider thanking God for something, asking God for help, or expressing a concern.
- Be consistent. Children learn through routine and repetition.
- Some children will be eager to pray while others may be hesitant. Know that both expressions are normal.
- For continued growth, try using a short children's devotional at bedtime, like *God, You Are: 20 Promises from the Psalms for Kids*, which offers gentle truths about God's character to lead into prayer.

Sample Prayers

Mealtime Prayer

Thank you, God, for the food we eat, and the people we love around our seat. Help us be kind to those we meet, and serve with joy when we are able.



Morning Prayer: The Lord's Prayer (ICB Version)

Our Father in heaven, we pray that your name will always be kept holy. We pray that your kingdom will come. We pray that what you want will be done—here on earth as it is in heaven. Give us the food we need for each day. Forgive the sins we have done, just as we have forgiven those who did wrong to us. And do not cause us to be tested, but save us from the Evil One. The kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours forever. Amen.

Bedtime Prayer

Caregiver: *Dear God, thank you for this day. Thank you for the gift of (child's name).*
Child: *The best part of my day was... (child shares).*
Caregiver: *The thing you're looking forward to tomorrow is... (child responds).*
Together: *Thank you for loving me, Jesus. Amen.*

Encouragement

Don't worry about getting every word perfect. Your example, your presence, and your faithful rhythms will shape your child's understanding of prayer and the love of God. Keep showing up, keep praying, and keep inviting them into the conversation.