

heard the boy's voice and peeped through the bushes. He saw the young boy kneeling with folded hands, eyes closed, repeating the alphabet.

He interrupted the boy. *"What are you doing, my little one?"* he asked. The boy replied, *"I was praying sir."* The man seemed surprised and said, *"But why are you reciting the alphabet?"* The boy explained, *"I don't know any prayers, sir. But I want God to take care of me, and to help me care for my sheep. And so I thought, if I said all I knew, He could put the letters together into words, and He would know all that I want and should say!"*

The man smiled and said, *"Bless your heart, God will!"* And he went on to church knowing full well that he had heard the finest sermon he could possibly hear that day.

Maybe if we thought like little children and let God put together the letters, what we should want, and what we should say, things would probably work out a lot better than we planned!!!

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A SPECIAL PRAYER FOR YOUR CHILD

Thank You for this treasured child of mine. Although You have entrusted him/her to me, I know he belongs to You. Like Hannah offered Samuel, I dedicate my child to You, Lord. I recognize that he is always in Your care.

Help me as a parent, Lord, with my weaknesses and imperfections. Give me strength and Godly wisdom to raise this child after Your Holy Word. Please supply what I lack. Keep my child walking on the path that leads to eternal life. Help him to overcome the temptations in this world and the sin that would so easily entangle him.

Dear God, send Your Holy Spirit daily to lead and guide him. Ever assist him to grow in wisdom and stature, in grace and knowledge, in kindness, compassion and love. May he serve You faithfully with his whole heart devoted to You. May he discover the joy of Your presence through daily relationship with Your Son, Jesus.

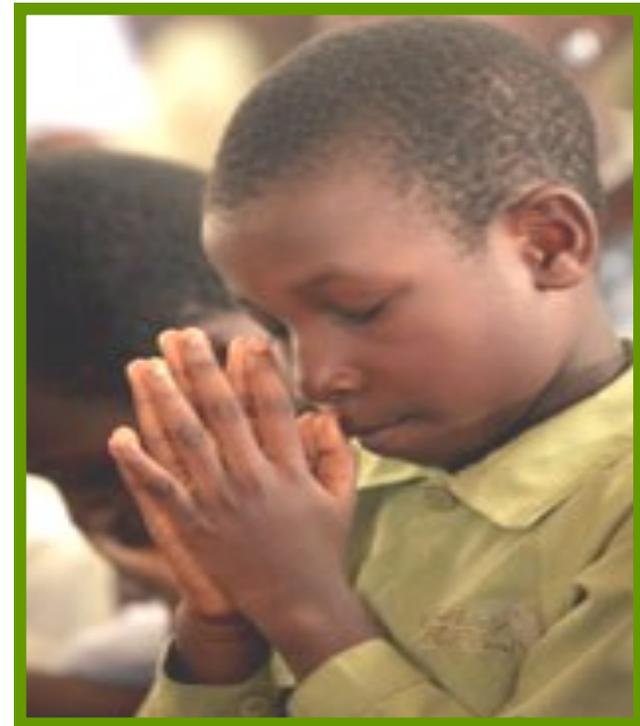
Help me never to hold on too tightly to this child, nor neglect my responsibilities before You as a parent. Lord, let my commitment to raise this child for the glory of Your name cause his life to forever testify of Your faithfulness.

In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

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A SIMPLE PRAYER AND THE ALPHABET PRAYER

(TWO INSPIRATIONAL STORIES)



***Direct your children onto the right path,
and when they are older,
they will not leave it.***

Proverbs 22:6

A Simple Prayer

by Peggy Porter

My son Gilbert was eight years old and had been in Cub Scouts only a short time. During one of his meetings he was handed a sheet of paper, a block of wood and four tires and told to return home and give all to "dad."

That was not an easy task for Gilbert to do. Dad was not receptive to doing things with his son. But Gilbert tried. Dad read the paper and scoffed at the idea of making a pine wood derby car with his young, eager son. The block of wood remained untouched as the weeks passed.

Finally, mom stepped in to see if I could figure this all out. The project began. Having no carpentry skills, I decided it would be best if I simply read the directions and let Gilbert do the work. And he did. I read aloud the measurements, the rules of what we could do and what we couldn't do. Within days his block of wood was turning into a pinewood derby car. A little lopsided, but looking great (at least through the eyes of mom).

Gilbert had not seen any of the other kids cars and was feeling pretty proud of his "Blue Lightning," the pride that comes with knowing you did something on your own.

Then the big night came. With his blue pinewood derby in his hand and pride in his heart we headed to the big race. Once there my little one's pride turned to humility. Gilbert's car was obviously the only car made entirely on his own. All the other cars were a father-son partnership, with cool paint jobs and sleek body styles made for speed.

A few of the boys giggled as they looked at Gilbert's, lopsided, wobbly, unattractive vehicle. To add to the humility Gilbert was the only boy without a man at his side. A couple of the boys who were from single parent homes at least had an uncle or grandfather by their side, Gilbert had "mom."

As the race began it was done in elimination fashion. You kept racing as long as you were the winner. One by one the cars raced down the finely sanded ramp. Finally it was between Gilbert and the sleekest, fastest looking car there. As the last race was about to begin, my wide eyed, shy eight year old asked if they could stop the race for a minute, because he wanted to pray.

The race stopped.

Gilbert hit his knees clutching his funny looking block of wood between his hands. With a wrinkled brow he set to converse with his Father. He prayed in earnest for a very long minute and a half. Then he stood, smile on his face and announced, "*Okay, I'm ready.*"

As the crowd cheered, a boy named Tommy stood with his father as their car sped down the ramp. Gilbert stood with his Father within his heart and watched his block of wood wobble down the ramp with surprisingly great speed and rushed over the finish line a fraction of a second before Tommy's car.

Gilbert leaped into the air with a loud "Thank you" as the crowd roared in approval. The Scout Master came up to Gilbert with microphone in hand and asked the obvious question, "*So you prayed to win, huh, Gilbert?*" To which my young son answered, "*Oh, no sir. That wouldn't be fair to ask God to help you beat someone else. I just asked Him to make it so I don't cry when I lose.*"

Children seem to have a wisdom far beyond us. Gilbert didn't ask God to win the race, he didn't ask God to fix the outcome, Gilbert asked God to give him strength in the outcome. When Gilbert first saw the other cars he didn't cry out to God, "No fair, they had a fathers help." No, he went to his Father for strength. Perhaps we spend too much of our prayer time asking God to rig the race, to make us number one, or too much time asking God to remove us from the struggle, when we should be seeking God's strength to get through the struggle. "I can do everything through Him who gives me strength."

Gilbert's simple prayer spoke volumes to those present that night. He never doubted that God would indeed answer his request. He didn't pray to win, thus hurt someone else, he prayed that God supply the grace to lose with dignity. Gilbert, by his stopping the race to speak to his Father also showed the crowd that he wasn't there without a "dad," but His Father was most definitely there with him. Yes, Gilbert walked away a winner that night, with his Father at his side.

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THE ALPHABET PRAYER

AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Every child comes with the message that God is not yet discouraged with man. Now the story goes, a little shepherd boy was watching his sheep one Sunday morning and he heard the bells of the church ringing. And watching the people walk along the pasture where he was, he happened to think to himself, "I would like to communicate with God! But, what can I say to God?"

He had never learned a prayer. So on bended knee, he began to recite the alphabet. Repeating this prayer several times, a man passing by,