

## A DAILY BLESSING

Don't you love to give your children good gifts? A daily blessing is the best of gifts -- one that builds up and protects and encourages. It gives children a sense of security in a big and frightening world. And it's simple. Just choose words from scripture, personalize them by using your child's name, and repeat the words to the child as a daily prayer. Each time you pray this blessing, you remind your child (and yourself) that he is safe in his Father's hands.

I began saying daily blessings at bedtime when our three children were very young. For a long time, I used the same blessing for each of them. I would put my hand on their heads as a sign of covering and protection and pray this prayer from centuries past: "May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you. May the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you his peace. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen." Later, I chose a different blessing for each of them.

I've included below a few blessings you might use, just to get the wheels turning, but the possibilities are as many and as varied as is scripture. One friend sings her blessing each night to her children. Some parents hold their children in their arms as they bless them. Some parents even record the blessing so that their child can listen to it when they're away. Some say blessings at bedtime, while others choose morning or mealtime. Some say these blessings only when they are young, while others continue to them in private daily prayer long after their children are grown and gone. As long as you have love and consistency, the sky's the limit.

Like all things that God smiles on, these daily blessings have brought our family countless rewards. First, since it's virtually impossible for me to give a blessing while I'm holding a grudge, the daily blessings often forced me to deal with any end-of-the-day resentment or anger. The daily blessing also gave each child constant reassurance of my love and the Father's love. As my daughter said in her younger years, "It's like a security blanket." When our children reached their teen years and began the unsettling process of questioning their parents and their faith, the daily blessings were a way of reminding all of us that God is rock-solid. He never changes.

I've heard it said that children are like Chinese bamboo trees. The farmer plants the seed and then waters it faithfully for five years without seeing so much as a sprout -- until the fifth year, when the seed becomes a sixty-foot tree. In blessing our children each day, we're watering the seed, even when we don't see any sign of growth.

The idea of blessing children is good because it's God's. Remember when all the children crowded around Jesus and the disciples tried to shoo them away because they thought He had more important things to do? Jesus reprimanded the disciples and "took [the little children] in His arms and began blessing them, laying His hands on them." Mark 10:16. If He didn't have more important things to do, surely we don't.

My children are in their twenties now. Over the years, I've gone through long periods when I didn't say their blessings. I look back now and wonder what all those "more important" things were that kept me too busy for five minutes of prayer.

The good news is that it's never too late. I can start now blessing each of my children daily. And so can you. Whether your child is three or thirty.

## SUGGESTED BLESSINGS

1. May the God of all hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:13.

2. The Lord watches over you. The Lord is your shade at your right hand. The sun will not harm you by day nor the moon by night. The Lord will protect you from evil. The Lord will watch over your coming and going forever. Ps. 121:5-8.

3. May you be filled with all the fruits of the Spirit --- love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Gal. 5:22.

4. May you always act justly, love kindness, and walk humbly with your God. Micah 6:8.

5. May you be rooted and grounded in love. May you know how high and wide and long and deep is the love of Christ. And may you be filled with all the fullness of God. Eph. 4:17-19.

6. The Lord tends His flock like a shepherd. He holds you like a little sheep in His arms, and He carries you close to His heart. Is. 40:11.

7. May you rejoice in the Lord always. He is near. Don't be anxious about

anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will guard your heart and your mind in Christ Jesus. Phil. 4:5-7.

8. May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you. May the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you his peace. Num. 6:24-2