



Don't Burst My Bubble

A guide to nurturing
children's spirituality
and prayer.


— Diocese of —
Hereford

INTRODUCTION

Our research into children's spirituality has revealed that children do like to spend time reflecting or praying. The Faith in the Nexus¹ project has produced a video to help explain some of the recent findings into children's spiritual development. You can view it on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/fl-iXfQMqfE>



This is backed up by research by psychologist Lisa Miller² who has found that children have an innate sense of spirituality that can be nurtured or crushed. You can find a video of her research here: <https://youtu.be/EnmN7tFRFc>

In our own research, children told us that they prefer to be alone to find moments of stillness for prayer or reflection. Children like to have spiritual

time for reflection or prayer, but they prefer this to be on their own. Yet in school and in church we mostly model prayer and reflection as an activity together.

“We like to get into our own bubbles to reflect. It helps us to reflect and pray. But sometimes others distract us and try to burst our bubbles.”

In one church school, the children told us about the mental bubbles they get into at the end of their worship or assembly times. They explained that this helped them to avoid the distractions of a busy school hall. Hence the title of this booklet.

This guide is designed to help you to support your child and nurture their spirituality. To avoid bursting their bubble and provide meaningful ideas for prayer and/or reflection.

¹Faith in the Nexus report , <https://nicer.org.uk/faith-in-the-nexus>

²Miller, Lisa: 'The Spiritual Child: The New Science on Parenting for Health and Lifelong Thriving. May 2015 , St Martins Press



You can help your child create a physical space for their own personal prayer or reflection.

Involve them in helping create their reflective bubble space. Ask them if they have somewhere they like to go to reflect or pray.

Make a list of things that they think may help them to be peaceful and reflect. It helps if it's somewhere quiet and comfortable. You could try simple things that don't take up too much space such as a roll of paper on the back of their bedroom door for them to write prayers on. Or you can go more complicated and hang fairy lights in a corner of their room, or a special chair. Maybe

a blanket or some cushions would help. Some children like to light a battery-operated tealight/candle to help them reflect more, as they do at school. Other ideas include photos, a bible or other special book, and a journal (see later in this booklet).

Many children also value a quiet space outdoors, somewhere where they can go to pause and ponder.

There are some great ideas for creative prayer activities you can adapt for home from the Prayer Spaces in Schools website:

<https://prayerspacesinschools.com/>

Remember to make time as well as space for reflection.

Think about when they have time to reflect too.

What could you do as a family to help protect their time to reflect?



Keeping a journal (known as journaling) is the act of creating an extended diary where you reflect on your day.

It provides an opportunity to explore your understanding of yourself and your relationship with God. It can be an aid to reflection or an aid to prayer. Your child may be introduced to journaling at school using the following guidelines.

How to Journal

It is best to use an unlined notebook for a journal so you can choose whether to write, doodle or draw.

To write in a journal, find somewhere comfortable and quiet, and somewhere where you are unlikely to be disturbed.

Give yourself enough time – it is more difficult if you feel rushed or worried about other things.

Sit and think for a while, and reflect on the day. When you feel ready, you can write down your thoughts, prayers, or draw whatever comes to mind.

Journals can be created with words, but do not have to be. Examples of what you can put in your journal are:

Poetry

Prayer

Doodling

Drawing

Calligraphy

*Page decoration and
highlighting*

It might help to have a series of questions in mind when writing a journal.

Questions to consider when journaling include:

What has happened today?

**What good things have
taken place?**

**Was God present in these
things?**

**What has gone wrong
today? Was God there too?**

How did I feel today?

**What might I have done
differently?**

You might find that you write very personal thoughts which

you do not wish to share with anyone else – this is fine. Equally, you might choose to discuss what you have written with your parents or your teacher.

Some people are surprised by what they write – it allows them to discover their hopes, fears, and dreams!



Family Idea:

Maybe you could start a family journal for everyone.

See the Examen pages for more ideas to use with your journal.



CREATIVE PRAYER ACTIVITIES FOR HOME

PRAYING WITH STONES

A simple idea to help children prayer is to let them choose a prayer pebble. A small pebble that they can take anywhere with them in a pocket. This reminds them that they can prayer or reflect anywhere. And that prayer and God always goes with them.



They could decorate the pebble with a word to encourage or inspire them too. Top tip: use acrylic paint pens.



Your child may try some reflective activities using prayer pebbles at school too.

Maybe you could make a few and leave them out in the local community for people to find.



PRAYING FOR THE WORLD

Children are concerned about world events. So here is a simple way to encourage them to reflect and pray about world situations.

Find a world map and stick it up somewhere in your house.

Provide post-it notes so that anyone can write or draw a prayer or thought about world events that they find out about.

You may also like to put stickers or labels where you have family living to remind everyone to pray for them too.

You could also pray around the world, as you find out things about each country.

THANKSGIVING JARS

Decorate a jar to make it into a Thanksgiving Jar.

Start with each family member writing or drawing a thank you note once a week.



Arrange some time to meet as a family (after a few weeks) and empty the notes out.

Go through them and share what they share.

Maybe some of them will inspire you to pray a simple thank you prayer.

You could add battery led lights to it to make it even more special. This may also help everyone to use it in an evening too.



Sorry or confession prayers are important too.

Use a chalkboard or wipe board. Put it somewhere special for anyone to use.

When they want to reflect on a wrong choice, they can write or

draw it on the board.

Then spend time talking about it with each other to help you sort it out together.

You could also pray for forgiveness. Remember that the Bible says that if we tell God about wrong choices and are sorry he will forgive us (1 John 1:9).

Then rub it out, to remind you all of the fresh start that we can all have.



Pour a packet of Skittles or other colourful sweets into a bowl.

Decide on a theme for each colour and then as each person takes a sweet, they talk about that theme. You could use these to help you pray too.

GREEN - something you are thankful for.

YELLOW - a friend or neighbour who needs help.

RED - someone you love.

ORANGE - someone who is sick.

PURPLE - yourself. something you are sorry for, something that is worrying you, or something you need help with.

BLUE - something that makes you sad.

SPIRITUAL WALKS

Charles Darwin famously went for thinking walks. He would clear his mind out in the fresh air to help him be more creative and reflective.

Walks outside can be great times of spiritual refreshment too.

Next time you are going out for a walk as a family or even just to walk the dog, why not be refreshed spiritually too.

You could go for walk by a river and reflect upon the words of Psalm 1:1-3, see if you can spot



any trees flourishing next to the water.

Or use the excellent resources from Muddy Church <https://www.muddychurch.co.uk/> and print off an activity sheet to take with you to help you reflect and pray more, like the example below.

<p>Can you reach up high? Can you touch the ground?</p>	<p>moving</p> <p>What can you find that is moving?</p>
<p>Can you see things that are breathing? Can you see things that do not breathe?</p> <p>breathe</p>	<p>I wonder</p> <p>If God is moving?</p>



Examen for Younger Children

Here's an idea for exploring a daily rhythm for reflective prayer that you can try on the journey back from school or later at home. It is based on a prayer called the Examen.

1. Entering God's presence.

Start by saying "Let's pray about our day. God, you have been with us all day long, since the time we woke up until now; help us to remember our day, so we can bring it to you."

2. What happened today?

Review the events of the day, offering prompts as necessary.

"What happened in the morning when we woke up? What happened at school? When we got home? When were we angry? Sad? Happy? What was beautiful? What was amazing?"

You could jot these responses into your prayer journal.

3. How was God present, and how did we respond?

"How was God present to us today?" You will probably need to name this for your children at first, or supplement their responses with your own suggestions. It might be

obvious that God is present in moments of beauty and joy, but you can help your children see how God is also present during times of challenge and sadness. Ask, "How did we respond to God's presence? When were we loving? When weren't we loving?"

4. Pray the day.

Invite your children to think about what Jesus is saying to them through the events of the day. Ask guiding questions such as, "What do you think Jesus says about our day?" Invite them to pray in response: "What do we want to tell Jesus about what happened today?"

Encourage simple words of praise to God,, being thankful, being sorry, forgiveness, and petitions (asking) for the grace to draw closer to God in the coming day.

A simpler version...

A simple way to prepare young children for a lengthier, more involved Examen is to begin with a daily "highs and lows" check-in. The whole family can participate!

At the end of the day (perhaps over dinner, or else on the way back from school), have each person share their "highs" and "lows" for the day: What was the best thing that happened today? What was the worst? As each person shares his or her highs and lows, have another person offer a prayer for whatever that person mentioned.

Explain that we can give the events of our days back to God in prayer. We can give the "highs" back to God in the form of our joy and thanks, and we can give the lows back to God by "offering them up"—that is, uniting our suffering (no matter how small) with the suffering of Christ on the cross, so that God might take our suffering and turn it into something good, just as he did in the Resurrection.

Say a simple prayer such as the Lord's Prayer or a spontaneous prayer of your own, or sing a song, as a way of offering your highs and lows to God.

Adapted from
www.teachingcatholickids.com



Lectio for Families is a free app available for Android and Apple phones. It provides a simple recorded daily act of prayerful reflection based on a short Bible passage.

It's designed for you to listen to as a family. Find out more:

<https://www.24-7prayer.com/resource/lectioforfamilies/>



**Let us pray...
anywhere?**

The Diocese of Hereford Education Team has been awarded a research grant from the Growing Faith Foundation for an action research project to explore developing prayer resources for children.

The booklet has been produced to support families as part of the project exploring: 'How can we as churches and church schools encourage primary school children to develop a prayer life outside of the school setting?'

