

Kids Who Pray

John E. Blake

The prayers of most children revolve around themselves. ‘Help me do good in school. Stop kids from making fun of me. Help us to help the tsunami victims.’ These are just a few prayers I heard this year. Every week we have city kids pray aloud, even if we have to help them. However, getting kids to pray is much different than kids who pray.

Have you noticed that we don’t expect much of our children when it comes to prayer? When they receive Christ as their savior they don’t receive a “junior version” of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the one who helps and guides them including when they pray.

A growing disciple of Christ, at any age, will desire putting God first in everything. And kids who pray have learned that prayer thrust them into God’s presence and it is He that they want and not the things that they used to ask for. I recall hundreds of city kids being challenged at Saturday morning Bible clubs, not only to call on Jesus for salvation, but to cry out for God -- that they would know Him, as in Philippians 3:10.

Everyday these kids experience the struggles of life -- poverty, crime, and fear. After being taught about prayer and challenged to pray they began to realize that more ‘bling-bling’ was not what they needed. It never lasts. And it never satisfies. They learned that Jesus was not just another good thing they needed. These city kids were told, ‘...enough is enough... if you know Christ as your Savior don’t keep coming to the altar asking someone to pray for you, but get on your knees and begin crying out to God.’

Mark 11:23-24 was used in guiding them to pray with faith and focus on God for the answers they receive. God had to be put first in their prayers and had to be what they were seeking. Acrostics were used to help guide the order of their prayers. These are simple and familiar to many like, A-C-T-S: A – Adoration, C – Confession, T – Thanksgiving, and S – Supplication or P-R-A-Y: P – Praise, R – Repent, A – Ask for others, Y – Ask for yourself.

They were asked to cry out to God for their families, neighborhoods, and schools. That drugs and other evil things would be taken out of their homes, community, and schools. Massaroite and Dalia prayed that their dads would stop getting drunk. Many of the boys prayed that their dads would come home or get out of jail. Amanda wanted to know God better and wished that she could see Jesus face just for a moment.

As Christians we need to realize we are in a battle. City kids, as well, must identify the boundaries of the battlefield. George Barna says: “Where is that battlefield today? Is it to be found in the fight for the rights of the unborn (or other evils of this world)? ... No, I believe the battlefield is found in the minds, hearts and souls of our children.”

When we invite kids to pray we are inviting them to:

- experience God’s power
- hear God’s voice
- become an important part of the body of Christ

Amazingly, in only a few weeks, children were flooding the altar area as they prayed alone, with friends, and even in groups kneeling and some lying on the floor. God moved in the lives of many of the kids. Ebony learned that prayer is simply living your faith in God. That faith pleases God. When she ceases to pray, she ceases to live. Faith and prayer moves God. These lessons became acutely real one January afternoon for Ebony. As she returned home from school gunshots rang out behind her empty apartment. A man was killed.

Ebony hid on the floor afraid to look outside. But she remembered about faith, prayer, and crying out to God. She did just that praying for God’s protection and helping others involved. She gained courage. Looked out. Saw the dead man and called 911. The next day men were arrested for the crime.

Ebony trusted in God’s great ability as she prayed with great faith. She was able to take action with great confidence in God. E. M. Bounds says, ‘There are two cardinal virtues,

which make men great in the eyes of God. Today, as much as at anytime, we need men of great faith and men who are great in prayer.' This was so in one city kid who prayed.

Faith increases when kids pray. Faith is nourished by the trials that city kids face. A ministry only focused on rescuing kids out of their troubles may be tampering with God's plan to nurture the child. Faith thrives in an atmosphere of prayer. Effective and real prayers of children are dependent upon their faith. These are the kids who pray.