

# St. Mary's Church Watton

## IDEAS FOR FAMILIES TO HELP YOUNG CHILDREN KNOW GOD

Dear God

Did you mean for giraffe to look like that or was it an accident?

Love and hugs, Laura

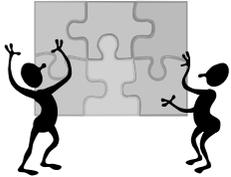
Children love to ask questions and, 'but why.....?' soon seems to become a favourite question! And isn't it hard sometimes to answer those questions ~ it's one thing when your child asks, 'How often do angels have to clean their teeth?' it's quite something else when they ask, 'Why did Granddad die?'

Sooner or later every child is bursting with questions ~

- ❖ big questions
- ❖ charming questions
- ❖ heartbreaking questions
- ❖ tough questions.

God gives parents the responsibility to answer the endless questions! But sometimes that's really hard.

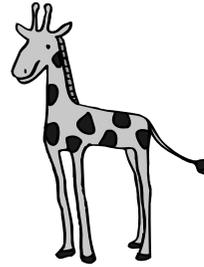
In baptism **we promise to help you** to help your child grow in faith ~ and we want to be here to help you with those tough questions ~ we want to work together with you.



And if you ever want to call upon the partnership, then we are always willing to support you. But then, when little Joe asks, 'Where is heaven?' ~ it's not enough to say, 'Ask the vicar!' or 'wait for an answer until Sunday'.

Because, the bottom line is, that it will be *you* who is there when those questions come, when the little lawyer in the back of the car interrogates you!! So,

- ❖ how can you help your child to grow in their faith?
- ❖ how can you help them to look to God for answers?
- ❖ how can you teach them about God so that they begin to put answers together for themselves?
- ❖ how can you help them to know God for themselves?



Of course in many ways, being able to answer such questions depends on what you believe ~ and we'd encourage you to keep learning more about Jesus for yourself. *One way you can do this is with your child.* As you learn to pray and read the Bible together, so it will become easier for your child to ask important questions, for you to answer them, and for you all to grow in the knowledge and love of Jesus.

## So where do you start, how do you pray together?



Every parent speaks to their child long before they can understand. In the same way, we'd encourage you to start to pray with your child from the beginning of life.

Each night at the end of the day, as you're getting them ready for bed, talk about things that you can thank God for.

- ☺ **THANK YOU** Begin with thank you prayers. It might be 'chips for tea' or 'granny coming'. The actual answer is not particularly important, as long as you can join in and pray with your child, '*Thank you God for chips today. Amen.*'
- ☺ **SHARE TOGETHER IN SAYING THANK YOU** Make sure you too share something that you have enjoyed about the day and say your own 'thank you' prayer, with your child. '*Thank you God for a phone call from Granny. Amen*' We all learn from one another, and your prayers will act as a model for your child.

As you build something like this into your daily bedtime routine, you teach your child to speak naturally about God and to God, together you give thanks to God for life, for everything good. You teach your child to receive life as a gift from our Father in heaven. It only takes a few minutes.

- ☺ **SAYING SORRY** It soon becomes natural to include sorry prayers from time to time. At the end of a particularly grim day it is tempting to ask, 'Can you think of anything you need to say sorry to God for tonight?' and then to offer a list! But you may easily find your child wanting to say sorry to Jesus, wanting to get rid of a sense of guilt at the end of the day.



- ☺ Jesus is always willing to forgive us when we turn away from the wrong things we do in life, children soon learn that saying sorry gives them a fresh start. A special hug at the end of such times can help your

child to receive God's love through you and will bind you together in this shared time with Jesus.

A few minutes each day can become very special and will help you bond with your child. Individual attention from you makes them feel special to God. Later on, if there's a problem at school, or a crisis in the family, you have a daily chance to catch up and talk. If you build it into the routine during good times ~ so it's there when life gets harder.

☺ **PLEASE GOD** Children very easily learn to ask God for help for themselves and for people they care for. It is good to be able to share these prayers and to look out for the ways in which God will answer your child's prayer.

Times shared in prayer with your child can really help in the tough times. When one of your parents dies (which happens to us all sooner or later), children ask questions for months. Their questions can easily make you cry.

But if you are used to thanking God together, for good things about the day, you can thank God together for good things about Granddad. The slot you build into their routine then helps you and them as you grieve together.

## Sharing Bible Stories together.....

As soon as bedtime stories begin, include a Bible story. There are some great children's Bibles and books of Bible stories with brilliant illustrations. Switch naturally between Thomas the Tank Engine ~ or whatever you normally read ~ and a Bible story. Enjoy the pictures together. Look for the babies, boats, animals, birds ~ or whatever your child loves! There are plenty of good stories to choose from. Move on from one story to the next, just as you do with the other books you read together.



In listening to Bible stories and encouraging your child to read the Bible for themselves, you are helping your child to have the building blocks for the Christian faith.

You are building a strong foundation for their lives and giving them all they need to make right choices about the way they live their lives.

They will certainly choose for themselves, one way or another, when the time comes. As a parent, God gives you the responsibility to help them to choose wisely.

## Resources to help you.....

**Bibles for children** ~ *The Lion First Bible* is great fun, with good pictures and simple short stories ~ a great introduction at any age. *The Lion Storyteller Bible* is the next stage and is also available on cassette. *The Children's Bible in 365 stories* retells a Bible story for each day in easily accessible language for both reader and hearer. *The Contemporary English Version (CEV)* of the bible (CEV) is great for reading aloud and is easier than some versions to understand.



**Bible reading notes** ~ sometimes making sense of the Bible can seem hard! Scripture Union publish notes to help you and your child read the bible. If your child likes puzzles and word games, questions and bits of extra information they may enjoy using notes like these. There are all sorts of different ones for different age groups, *Jump on*, *Join in* for 5-7 year olds or *Snapshots* for 8-10 year olds.

**Christian books** ~ there are all sorts of children's Christian books on the market. For example, *Pip and the Edge of Heaven* by Elizabeth Liddle is about a little boy who likes to ask really important questions about life and God and everything. *Garth the Giraffe* by Brian Ogden is a series of short stories, in which Garth discovers some of the important things in life, like the fact that everyone needs friends and sometimes we can't have our own way.

**Videos, CDs etc** ~ it doesn't have to be just books ~ there are some great videos out, including the series of *Veggie Tales* as well as films like *Miracle Maker*. There are also CDs of children's Christian songs that you can play in the car and sing together!



**Green Pastures in Dereham and the Christian Resources Centre in Norwich** stock children's books. If they haven't got what you want, or you're not sure what you want ~ then ask ~ they will be only too pleased to help.

- ☺ Helping your child to grow in their Christian faith is something that you can do.
- ☺ A short time each day, listening to God's word with you, and praying with you, is one of the greatest gifts you can give to your child.
- ☺ And don't forget ~ we are in partnership together ~ if there is any way we can help you, you only have to ask.