

Prayer Journaling

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Recently I was invited to attend the confirmation of a former student into the Anglican Church. My daughter and I arrived not really knowing what to expect. The service was long and different to any that we had ever attended before. However, it was during the statements given by the young people being confirmed that got me to thinking. One young lady stated that her favourite verse in the Bible was found in Psalm 55:17, "Morning, noon and night I am troubled and upset. But he will listen to me." She went on to say that for her praying was like sending an e-mail or a text message to her Heavenly Father. I thought what a cool concept. But let's back up

In past years we have always had a place on the board for prayer requests in our room. We would go through them every day, checking up on them, and adding/deleting as necessary. It became routine and nothing was changing in our room or in the students' relationship with Jesus or how they communicated with Him. I was the one who always prayed. Then about six months ago I decided that I would introduce them to something I was doing in my own devotion time and prayer life that made a difference. I introduced them to keeping a prayer journal. I purchased small notebooks (four for a dollar) from a local Dollar Store. On each one I place a label stating "Prayer Journal", their name, and a bible verse. On the following Monday morning, after worship, I handed them out and explained what we would be doing. After a few groans we began. It was difficult to get them to think of just what or who we should pray for. Finally I started out by saying that this week we would pray for the SDACC and its workers. Then someone suggested that we pray for the soldiers in Afghanistan that we have been writing too. Then there were a few others and we had prayer or rather I prayed again. The next morning after worship with the pastor, we did our journals again but this time I asked for someone else to pray. You could have heard a pin drop clear across the city. They were looking down, up, and all around but definitely not at me. During this time I told them that praying was just like talking to Jesus as if He was right there. Prayers didn't have to include fancy words or be long but they needed to come from your heart and true thoughts. Finally one grade five girl said that she would pray. It was a meaningful but rather short prayer. The next day the requests came faster and more varied. Volunteering for prayer was a little less stressful this day. Six months later our list has grown longer and the students are eager to pray.

So what made the difference? I believe there were three things to look at:

1. My attitude on prayer and praying for others. It was how I presented the need for the prayer list, how to track it, and make it more personal. They love these books and want to know what we will do when they are filled up. Can we get more they ask? It had to start with my attitude. I changed my way of view of prayer requests and prayer. I looked up verses on prayer before I started this with my students. John 15:7 is powerful in stating, "Remain in me and follow my teachings. If you do this, then you can ask for anything you want, and it will be given to you." I needed to ask for wisdom on how to present and make it real to them.

2. In this age of technology we need to engage the children where it is at. They get enough of the virtual world but connecting or making references to it as an example helps. As was stated at the beginning prayer is like e-mailing or text messaging Jesus, only FASTER!! How many times have you tried to send an e-mail or waited for that important text. We carry around our blackberries, cell phones, laptops, etc and are more concerned about where they are and who can reach us than maybe we are about our prayer lives and how Jesus can reach us. I have relayed, to the students, that accessing Jesus is faster than any other communication device. Maybe we should treat our prayer life and Bible with the same urgency that we do our “techies”.
3. Finally, making it very personal. That personal touch. We cannot reach out and touch Jesus, but we can communicate with Him, and He with us. Students need that. We as teachers and administrators need that. Our hearts and minds need to be in constant communication with our Heavenly Lord. “So let us come near to God with a sincere heart and a sure faith. We have been cleansed and made free from feelings of guilt. And our bodies have been washed with pure water.” Hebrews 10:22,23

So we e-mail and text message every day at least once, but what about our prayer life and praying for those around us. Prayer journals have made a difference in my classroom and in my personal life. Give it a try. It may help you and your students develop that special closer relationship with Jesus we all crave.

(All texts were taken from the International Children’s Bible)