

Everyday Prayer

“Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.” Deuteronomy 11: 18,19 (NIV)

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by Jane VanOsdol

When my nephew Cullan was a toddler, he had a favorite stuffed toy called Dubby. Dubby had a round head and soft, drapey flannel body. He went everywhere with Cullan and was comfortable and broken in from repeated washings. One day the unthinkable happened and Dubby turned up missing. Cullan was distraught without Dubby. My sister Carol, planning ahead for just such a catastrophe, had ordered an extra Dubby. So she presented him to Cullan as a temporary replacement until Dubby could be found. Cullan, however, was not happy. This new impostor didn't feel, look or smell anything like his Dubby. He even took to calling him "Fake Dubby."



In a way this story reminds me of the verses in Deuteronomy. God wants to be such an everyday part of our lives that we "take Him with us" wherever we go. We need to pass this on to our children, making God and prayer such a seamless part of their lives, that He is one of the first things they turn to when they have a problem or a joy to share. I think the idea here is that God should be so recognizable to them that they are able to sense any "impostors" that come into their lives as they get older.

One of the ways I tried to do this with my kids when they were little was by starting to pray with them as infants. I would pray over them every night. Then when they could speak, they started adding their own prayers at bedtime. We prayed before we ate our meals, the children taking turns as they could. Also, we started praying for other people too. For example, if we were out driving and heard sirens, we stopped and prayed for whomever might be hurt and for the policemen, firemen and ambulance drivers to be protected. It wasn't long before they were asking if we could pray for their friends. As much as we can make prayer a part of their everyday lives, our children will begin to respond in kind with God. They will know Him and turn to him.

And what of Cullan and Dubby? Happily, Dubby reappeared and "Fake Dubby" was put away.

Prayer: Dear Lord, help us to teach our children to pray at home when we are out on the road and when we lie down at night and get up in the mornings. Amen.

(Photo of Cullan with Dubby stretched on his head courtesy of Carol Jewell)

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