**Wow, Sorry, Thanks, Please: Four Simple Words to Lead Your Child in Prayer**

*This is a resource by Jeannie Cunnion, originally published [here](https://www.thebettermom.com/blog/2015/5/4/four-simple-words-to-lead-your-child-in-prayer" \t "_blank).*

Prayer is a window into our children’s hearts. I learn more about what is stirring in the hearts of my three boys from our nightly prayer time when they are all nestled into their beds than I do during our conversations gathered around the kitchen table.

Let me assure you that not all of our nights conclude with a meaningful prayer time. Sometimes it takes everything in me just to collapse into their beds, exhausted of patience, and muster up just enough strength to mumble, “Lord thank you for loving us. We love you too.”

One of my favorite ways to pray with our boys is by using the A.C.T.S. model of prayer. However, I quickly learned that the words (A) adoration, (C) confession, (T) thanksgiving, and (S) supplication didn’t resonate with our boys, so we began to simplify with “Wow, Sorry, Thanks, and Please.”

During one of our recent prayer times, I asked Owen to start us off. As the youngest, he happily agreed to the assigned position as leader.

We closed our eyes and waited for Owen to begin. And we waited some more.

“Go ahead, baby” I assured him. “Start with ‘wow.’ You can never say the wrong thing in prayer. Jesus loves when we talk to Him. Think about what Jesus means to you and when you’re ready, tell Him.”

After a few more moments of silence, Owen smiled and then spoke softly.

“Jesus, you are my hero.”

Oh my stars.

(You can imagine what Owen’s words did to my mama heart in that moment, but as I reflect on this story now, I am struck by what Owen’s words must have done to the heart of Jesus.)

Brennan and Cal followed with more beautiful truth. “Jesus you are awesome.” “Jesus you are forgiving.”

We continued to take turns praying through “sorry, thanks, and please”- confessing our sins and receiving His forgiveness, thanking Him for everything He has done for us on the cross and everything He has given us for daily life, and presenting our needs and worries and fears and hopes for ourselves and others before Him.

I never fail to be amazed by what I learn through those four simple words – “Wow, Sorry, Thanks and Please.”

What a gift we can give our kids by teaching them what prayer is (and isn’t!) and then modeling how to incorporate prayer into their daily lives.

Prayer is not telling Jesus what we think He wants to hear, nor is it telling Him anything He doesn’t already know.

Prayer is getting real with Jesus. Prayer is about growing in our friendship with Jesus, where we learn to trust Him more, listen for His Spirit leading us, and surrender to His heart aligning our desires with His.

And yes, on many nights, when the day has been long and the patience has run dry, prayer is simply “help.” And based on what we read in James 1:5, I think Jesus loves that prayer too.

“If you don’t know what you’re doing, pray to the Father. He loves to help. You’ll get his help, and won’t be condescended to when you ask for it. Ask boldly, believingly, without a second thought.” (James 1:5 MSG)

As we teach our children that there is no request too big, no feeling too bad, no shame too great, and no feeling too unworthy to express to God in prayer, they will experience a God who eagerly receives them with open arms.

**About the Author**

Jeannie Cunnion is a Jesus lover and a grace clinger. She is the author of Parenting the Wholehearted Child, and her passion is encouraging moms to live in the very real freedom of God's unwavering love (a message her own heart needs to hear daily!) and equipping moms to lead their children in it! Jeannie has a Master’s degree in Social Work and she serves on the board of Raising Boys Ministries. You're most likely to find Jeannie alongside her husband, Mike, cheering on their three older boys at one of their sporting events while holding their newborn son in her arms. Jeannie would love to connect with you on her website at [www.jeanniecunnion.com](https://www.jeanniecunnion.com/).