

Blessing Children in the Home *by David Gortner and Heather VanDeventer*

Why is this Faith Practice Important?

When our first daughter was a newborn we began the practice of blessing her at bedtime. Each night, one or both of us would give a blessing while making the sign of the cross on her little forehead. As she grew, and as our second daughter was born, the blessing we prayed at bedtime changed.

Occasionally, the girls didn't want a blessing. But more often, if we left without doing so, we would get called back in: "Mommy, Daddy, I need my blessing."

Our elder daughter is now 11. She gets a blessing every night. She says that she likes receiving a blessing and that it helps her calm down. Our younger daughter is now 9 and is happy to bless others, including her favorite babysitter!

Our prayer is that both of them know how much we love them and how beloved they are by God.

Materials Needed

None!

How to Do it

Start simple: Our first blessing was short and sweet: "I bless you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit" or, "I bless you in the name of the Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer."

Be creative: As the girls got wiggly and squiggly, we wove their bodies into the blessing: "I bless you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. From the top of your head to the tips of your wiggly toes. From the fingers on this hand to the fingers on this hand. And everywhere in between – on the inside, outside, and when you are upside down."

Give and receive: One night when our second daughter was about 3, she reached out to give us blessings as well. The phrase was similar, but in her own words. Over the years, our blessings have also changed to reflect the qualities each girl has, or ones we want them to cultivate.



Resources for this Practice

Blessings

Basic blessings

I bless you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

I bless you in the name of the Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer.

Aaronic blessing (Numbers 6:24-26)

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.

Wiggly squiggly blessing

I bless you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. From the top of your head to the tips of your wiggly toes. From the fingers on this hand to the fingers on this hand. And everywhere in between – on the inside, outside, and when you are upside down.

Heather's blessing

I love you and bless you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; the Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer; the God who knows and loves you, who watches over you and keeps you safe, growing strong, living, loving, and serving more and more. Amen.

David's blessing

I bless you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, this night and always. God give you good rest, and keep you growing stronger, wiser, kinder, and ready to serve – and always knowing how much you are loved. Amen.

About the Authors

Heather VanDeventer is the Associate Rector at Christ Church, Alexandria, VA. She is married to David Gortner, Director of the Doctor of Ministry programs and Professor of Evangelism and Congregational Leadership at Virginia Theological Seminary. Heather and David have two daughters, Cassie and Miriam.