PRAYING WITH CHILDREN

Why we pray together in Sunday school

Now Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray."
LUKE 11:1

When we pray together we are…

- **Obeying God**
  - Jesus teaches us to pray "*Our* Father," not "my Father." Prayer is plural from the start.
  - We are told to pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17), and children are included in that command.
- **Learning the language of prayer**
  - Children learn to pray the way they learn to talk: by hearing it done.
  - Hearing adults pray shows them that we bring God praise, confession, thanks, and requests, not just a list of needs.
  - Written prayers, like the Lord's Prayer and the Psalms, give them words before they have their own.
- **Bearing one another's burdens**
  - When a child hears a classmate's request and prays for it, they learn that other people's troubles are theirs too (Galatians 6:2).
  - They also get to see God answer, and they remember.
  - A child's prayer isn't practice for real prayer later. Children's prayers are effectual.
- **Learning to wait and be still**
  - Silence in prayer is hard for children, and for adults. Practicing it together is formative (Psalm 46:10).
- **Practicing while it's still easy**
  - Praying out loud together is a public confession that we can't manage on our own (John 15:5). It's uncomfortable, and that discomfort is part of the point.
  - When we go around the room, every child gets a turn to pray out loud, even if it's one, very short sentence.
  - We often use a prayer chart to help children who are unsure what to pray chose one special thing to pray for.
  - Many young children don't yet feel self-conscious about praying in front of others. If they start now, praying aloud becomes normal before it has a chance to become frightening.
  - Many adults never pray aloud in a group because they didn't start until it felt too exposed. We want to spare our children that.
  - A child who has prayed "Thank you for my dog" in front of her class at six is more likely to pray for a friend in the hospital at sixteen, or share a deep request from her own needs as an adult.
  - We aren't teaching them to pray well in front of people (Matthew 6:5). We're teaching them that praying in front of people is nothing to fear and never about performance.