



## CCNL Prayer Prompt June 2021

### "Blessing the kids- the Kingdom's centre"

Mark 10:13-16 in the Message says: *"The people brought children to Jesus, hoping he might touch them. The disciples shooed them off. But Jesus was irate and let them know it: "Don't push these children away. Don't ever get between them and me. These children are at the very center of life in the kingdom. Mark this: Unless you accept God's kingdom in the simplicity of a child, you'll never get in." Then, gathering the children up in his arms, he laid his hands of blessing on them."* This month let's bring the children - babies, toddlers, elementary school-age, teenagers - all our kids to Jesus in prayer so that He might touch their lives. It has not been an easy sixteen months for children here in London, or around the world. Childhood and adolescence are such formative years physically, emotionally, mentally, intellectually and spiritually. No one yet knows what impact the upheavals of the last year will have on their future lives - not just because of COVID itself, but also the subsequent disruptions in education; distance from faith communities; abundance of racial justice upheavals; restricted social contacts; rising mental health challenges; deaths or separation from extended families; growing economic inequalities; the emerging lack of trust in leaders/authorities; the overwhelming amount of screen time and information...all these at the same time. God thankfully made children remarkably resilient - yet we realize that early experiences can carry forward to our adult journeys in significant ways.

May we, as a community of Christ-followers, ever so tenderly, gently, lovingly ask God to pour out His blessings on our children and youth. Count it both a precious privilege and a sacred obligation to do so. Jesus said in the verse above: ***These children are at the very center of life in the kingdom!*** We suggest this encouragement to you. Will you consider actually praying thru this prayer prompt three times this month?

1. First time for sure, pray for those children near and dear to your heart - your own children or grandchildren, your nieces and nephews, and those who seem like family. Picture them personally as you pray - pray for them by name.
2. Next, pick a group of kids near you in London, near maybe physically or emotionally. Pray the same things for those children - in your neighbourhood, your apartment building, in nearby elementary or high school, in foster care or group homes, or your church family.
3. Finally, one more time, pause and pray this through globally. Pick a country somewhere in the world, countries where children easily are lost or forgotten in the chaos of fear, crisis and fight for survival. There is

so much turmoil going on - wars, natural disasters, COVID, poverty - Myanmar, India, the whole Middle East, Brazil and many more - pray for the children of wherever the Spirit leads you.

## **Our God, we join together in June to ask your blessing on children:**

**Bless these children with safety, security.** Protect them from physical harm. May safe vaccines be developed that could provide a return of freedom to their daily interactions. May the adults in their lives provide watchful eyes and wise decision-making. Keep sexual predators away, those who would take advantage of them, both in person and online. Bless them with numerous trustworthy people in their lives who will praise them, who will teach them well, who will listen attentively to them, who will model respect, care and integrity, and who will love and nurture them, even in difficult times. Provide homes, food and medical care where needed.

**Bless these children with the joy of peer friendships** - people to hang out with, those like them and those who are different from them. Teach them how to be a good friend, to be kind to one another, to offer grace and forgiveness when stupidity happens because it will, to laugh together and to cry together. Create good memories of times with friends that will stay with them for a lifetime. In the stresses of this past year, many of us as adults have reconnected with childhood or college friends. May this generation of children develop those kinds of deep, deep friendships. Give them also great friends for a season - many friends who may come and go, but add to the richness and story of their lives through shared experiences. They have so much to learn from others and so much to contribute.

**Bless them with an abundance of spiritual experiences and faith conversations.** May caring adults in their lives - whether it be parents or grandparents, teachers, neighbours or friends - share their spiritual journeys freely and point the way to a relationship with Jesus. Let the Bible come alive not only in words, written and spoken, but be demonstrated often in purposeful action and winsome love. We as adults will need to recognize there will likely be big gaps in children's biblical knowledge and understanding without the benefit of children's church programs and camps, youth activities and bible studies, and cherished one on one conversations. Keep us from these assumptions. May we intentionally teach our children faithfully about the bigger story of God, about his faithfulness, about His people and about prayer - oh how precious are prayers and praise of children. Bless all those who teach in children's and youth ministries, in bible clubs, at summer day or away camps, explaining faith in meaningful ways that young minds can understand and invite questions as they plan for future months.

**Bless their intellectual development.** Many educators and parents are expressing grave concern about a school year fractured by COVID and the subsequent gaps or shortfalls in learning. God, You have made children's minds with amazing capacity to absorb information and process multiple ideas that are building block for future learning. Give these educators and parents discernment and patience to see and hear what is needed as they progress, especially for those in the later years of high school. Those teens graduating, known as "the class of COVID" have had such disruption as they head for further education or the workplace - they are anxious. We pray for those who already were struggling to learn - that additional appropriate help will be provided. We pray for not only for the many complex literacy, numeracy and technology skills, but also critical life skills development in children, skills like effective communication, organizational planning, critical thinking, collaboration and team building abilities, and tools for creative expression.

**Bless children's emotional and mental health.** Like many of us, kids are tired, worn out, frayed. It was difficult enough pre-COVID to navigate today's culture for many youth. Bullying, self esteem, anger management, heightened anxiety, drug use, gender identity, overwhelming social media, thoughts of suicide...studies show fear and anxiety is on the rise in our children. Give kids peaceful moments and spaces, much laughter and joyful senses of humour, healthy role models, purposeful contributions, determined resilient spirits, and courage to take measured risks without debilitating fear of failure. May parents, educators and community seek to provide greater supportive services that recognize the unique needs of our youth.

**Bless their families.** Children need to belong. They need to be cared for, loved, guided, taught, valued, protected daily. Many families are under great stresses. For too many families, economic inequality makes it hard to even provide their basic needs. Emotional capacity of parents, discord in marriages, health challenges, family histories at all economic levels are easily carried forward to the next generation. Busyness and daily demands of life can easily yet unintentionally overtake concern for children. God, help all of us to see these children as you do - welcome them with open arms, no matter what the age, no matter what the behaviours, no matter how strained the day has been. May it strengthen and encourage families to know their community cares and prays for them - may it be evident in our actions and choices.

**Bless their character formation, God.** We may joke about some children we know who are indeed "characters" already. Help us to focus more on the 'who' they are becoming not just on 'what' they will become. May they become people of integrity, people who desire to embrace goodness, kindness and compassion. May they want to learn about who you are God - why they were made, how much they are loved by you. May they learn early to understand that their decisions have consequences, not just for them but also for others. Give them courage to stand up for what's right instead of going along with what is wrong even though it is often easier. Give them a sense of humility balanced with healthy self-esteem. May they find joy in the work of their hands, mind and heart. Many youth have not had the opportunities in the past months for part-time work, responsibilities or volunteering that helps shape character. May we help provide those opportunities where we can.

**Bless their physical development and health.** This has been a hard year for children to remain active without sports programs, available spaces and stay-at-home orders. While many parents have tried hard to enjoy the outdoors, to appreciate hikes and bike rides, it has certainly not been easy in light of working from home, or online schooling or juggling multiple jobs or for those living in apartments or with multiple family members. All bodies need activity to grow healthy minds and bodies. May more areas and activities be opened up soon. Protect young children and youth from COVID - that is a lurking fear still for many of them with new variants, as well as for their parents. Medical personnel are concerned that some emerging health problems may have been overlooked in the intensity of this past year. Let us remember that some children already face great ongoing health challenges. Give them the care required and give their caregivers much ongoing wisdom and perseverance.

**Bless their future, generation after generation.** God, we are certain that you have plans for good for them, not to harm them. Let us speak hope into their lives often, for hope dispels fear. Help us to consider with you how to prepare these children now for whatever lies ahead: struggles, successes, joys, and sorrows. May we envision with them and with you God how they may contribute to a better society overflowing with Kingdom values. Help them see that they can make a difference in whatever sphere of influence they pursue in life - they are not powerless. Even

now, we pray for their future spouses, future families, future occupations that we or they cannot even begin to imagine. We place them in your faithful hands.

**We were reminded at the recent CCNL prayer breakfast that prayer needs to take action too, and we may be part of your answer to these prayers. It may be writing a note/email/text of encouragement. It may be volunteering alongside youth in programs at churches, in ministries, in the community as things get up and running again. It may be sponsoring a child in a day camp program, or supporting a youth worker financially. It may be contributing to organizations that help kids and families in need locally like Children's Aid, or Youth for Christ, or Youth Opportunities Unlimited or globally like Compassion or Hope Story. It may be reading a book to a child, or making a meal for a family that needs some respite care. Use us God as part of you blessing these children in the name of Jesus.**

### **Summary for June:**

1. Bless these children with safety, security
2. Bless these children with the joy of peer friendships
3. Bless them with many, many faith experiences and conversations
4. Bless their intellectual development
5. Bless their emotional and mental health
6. Bless their families
7. Bless their character
8. Bless their physical development and health.
9. Bless their future, generation after generation