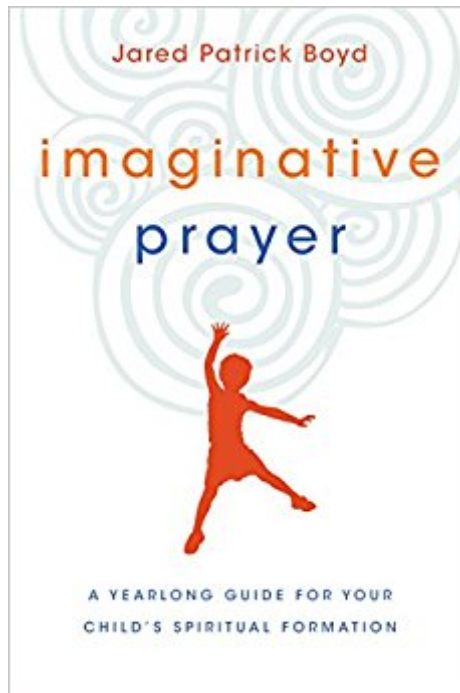




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Imaginative Prayer: A Yearlong Guide For Your Child's Spiritual Formation



Synopsis

How do we help our kids connect with God? Most parents want their kids to learn to love God. But most of us struggle to facilitate real spiritual experiences. It's hard enough to have a meaningful conversation with our kids about spiritual things, let alone help them experience true transformation in the presence of God. Jared Patrick Boyd discovered that children's spiritual formation is rooted in the imagination. When we lead our children through guided times of imaginative prayer, they can experience a connection with God that transcends mere Bible knowledge or doctrinal content. This unique resource provides six units of weekly guided imaginative prayer, themed around core topics: God's love, loving others, forgiveness, God as king, the good news of God, and the mission of God. Each unit has six sessions, providing a yearlong experience of spiritual formation for children ages five to thirteen. Through imaginative prayer, you can help your child connect with God. As you do so, you may find yourself connecting more closely with your child, and your own formation as a parent will deepen into greater awareness of God's work in your lives.

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Customer Reviews

"I loved this book! If only it were around thirty years ago, when our family was exploring devotions! This book is an imaginative game, a devotional guide, and a theology text all rolled into one. It will nurture your own spiritual formation as much as your child's. The guided prayers that form the core of this book are well constructed, creative, and simply delightful. Boyd is not afraid to introduce difficult questions, but he helps me as a parent talk about them with my children. Imaginative Prayer develops essential skills of Christian spiritual formation—skills that are often neglected in the

training of our children. I would recommend this book to parents, Christian education workers, and theology professors. We all need to imagine the gospel!" (Evan B. Howard, author of *Praying the Scriptures*, *A Guide to Christian Spiritual Formation*, and *The Brazos Introduction to Christian Spirituality*, and coauthor of *Discovering Lectio Divina*) "This is not a book for reading. It's a book for practicing. Jared Boyd graciously invites us to practice new ways of being present to God, ourselves, others, and creation, for and with the younger children (or childlike ones) in our lives. Not surprisingly, we are all transformed in the process. By gently making room and time for creative listening, imagination, and revelation of God's very good news of lavish love, children young and old together come to know God by experiencing this love that surpasses knowledge. From his experience as a parent, a pastor, and a beloved child of God, Jared sets forth practical, prayerful, and playful rhythms to tend the spiritual gardens of our children's lives. These habit-forming, love-shaping practices soften and seed the soil of their Christian imaginations, which the Holy Spirit tends, waters, and grows as he conforms them in love to the image of Jesus. Reminding us not to ask children (or anyone) to go where we are not willing to go ourselves, Jared vulnerably does the same, offering clear, creedal, formative structures with room for the dynamic relationship our children will have with God. Far from instilling knowledge about God into our children, Jared invites us to provide opportunities for our children to encounter and be transformed by God's triune love, faithfully embodying that life together with them as children of our heavenly Father." (Cherith Nordling, associate professor of theology, Northern Seminary) "In the age of social media, so many of us struggle to be present to those closest to us and to God, who is an ever-abiding presence with us. Jared Boyd's extraordinary book *Imaginative Prayer* introduces us to a way of learning to be present to those closest to us—our children—and together with them to learn to use our imaginations to become more attentive to God's presence with us. Read this book slowly and carefully, and experiment with it: you, your family, and your church will undoubtedly be transformed!" (C. Christopher Smith, founding editor, *The Englewood Review of Books*, coauthor of *Slow Church*) "As a pastor, I have regularly taught that parents are the most important spiritual influencers in their child's life. But how do we parents do that job well? I would highly recommend *Imaginative Prayer* to anyone who wants to help their children know and experience God. Jared Boyd engages not only the life of the mind, but also the life of the imagination through each session. His exercises help transform large theological themes like God's love, forgiveness, and the mission of God from the head to the heart, so that parents can be the spiritual influencers we want to be." (Rich Nathan, senior pastor, Vineyard Columbus) "In this book of depth and whimsy, Jared Boyd inspires the imagination with new ways of engaging children in the work of the Spirit. I will be using this book for

years to come, not only with the ministry leaders I teach, but with my own children! Jared's book speaks to a deep need felt within the church and within the lives of parents to help our children learn new and creative ways to engage with what the Holy Spirit is doing in their lives and in the world today. The result is a book that is practical and reflective: a deep reflection on a way of approaching the inner spiritual life of children." (Beth M. Stovell, assistant professor of Old Testament, Ambrose University, national catalyst, Vineyard Formation (Theological and Spiritual Formation), Vineyard Canada)

Jared Patrick Boyd is a pastor (Vineyard USA), spiritual director, and founder of The Order of Sustainable Faith, a missional monastic order for the 21st century. He is the author of *Invitations & Commitments: A Rule of Life*. He and his wife have four daughters, and are planting Franklinton Abbey, a new faith community on the west side of Columbus, Ohio.

Knowledge is one thing but experience is another and, when it comes to our children's spiritual well-being, real experiences with scripture and Jesus are paramount to passing on the precious gift of faith. In *Imaginative Prayer*, Jared Boyd has done all of the hard work to make it easy for parents to facilitate life-changing experiences with Jesus AND engage in conversations that matter and are memorable. Field-tested in the trenches with his own family and buoyed by his knowledge and experience as a pastor and spiritual director, Jared has given us a gift of a resource for use in families, churches, small groups, and devotionally. I love this book...and bonus, it tutors us cerebral adults in how to use our own God-given imagination to enhance our connection to God. I'm using it myself as well as buying it for and recommending it to every parent and children's ministry leader I know.

Imagination is a gift every child had once and it is one of the greatest gifts and tools God gave us to spend time with Him and to both grow together and partner in inventing and exploring together. Some of us keep exercising imagination but usually without God. And sadly most people lose their imaginations early in childhood and some so early they get robbed of being a child. We were never meant to lose our imaginations. And we were never meant to use the independent from relationship with God. My kids are as excited as I am to fit this into our week in a 30 minute time together. And then enjoy sharing with one another as we experience God's love and leading in new ways.

I highly recommend this book to any parents, mentors and people working with children who want to

help kids connect more deeply to God. My wife and I used a few of the exercises in this book on a very energetic and sometimes unruly group ranging from 5-12 years old. I was blown away by how focused the kids were during our times of prayer, the insights they received from God and how much they enjoyed it. In this book, Jared Boyd clearly lays out a method of prayer for kids that is truly incredible.

I've been using this with my kids to start our days with a time of prayer and also used it on a retreat that a friend and I led for our daughters. My kids love the prayers/exercises, which are based on scriptures. I grew up in a church culture where people were afraid of the imagination but I've come to see it as a God-given faculty that we can use to draw nearer to him. We are, after all, made in the IMAGE of a God who imagined all of creation into existence. I also love how each prayer builds a sentence of a creed - some foundational truths that the kids can memorize as we go through the book.

This book is a breath of fresh air. It has given my children and I a way to engage God TOGETHER in a way that is tangible to them. To have a tool that helps kids practice using their imagination to cultivate a relationship with Jesus is a gift. This book has all the resources for parents and children to learn that prayer is so much more than asking God to meet our needs and asking forgiveness, prayer is a dynamic relationship with him. Jared's exercises make this possible, enriching, and connecting for the whole family.

As children's ministries director and curriculum writer, I have reviewed dozens of resources for children's spiritual formation designed for family and church use, and Imaginative Prayer by Jared Patrick Boyd is one of the absolute best. Boyd crafts each prayer experience to foster an intentional formational connection between the child and God as well as the child and mentor (parent or church leader). Each of the 36 lessons connects with part of Boyd's overarching "Creedal Poem" and guides a 30-minute lesson includes an imagination-integrated prayer time, thoughtful meditative questions, engaging supplements, and a journaling prompt for written or drawn reflection. In my work at church, I meet many hurried children who constantly rush from one activity to the next throughout their school day and extra-curricular activities. While many of them are high-energy and easily distractible, they're also desperate to slow down and listen to themselves and to God. Often the most hyper-active and distractible children are the ones who find these types of meditation times most engaging, and I'm thrilled that Boyd has created such a phenomenal resource for families and

congregations that want to help facilitate this type of deep formation with children. If your kids think devotionals are cheesy, if you've found countless "family devotional" books that seem to have more rules than good theology, or if your kids seem to know a lot of memorized Bible knowledge without much heart transformation, I'd encourage you to explore using Imaginative Prayer in your church or home!

"Family Devotions"... the phrase that triggers shame in countless American Christian families. The idea is like high fiber diets, sounds really good for us... but is bland and hard to get down. This is not a family Bible study book. It is an invitation to cultivate our children's faith through their (and our) strongest asset, their imagination. Jared is not writing about theory, these are exercises and practices that he has spent years working out in the context of his family and local church. I believe this will become a perennial classic on spiritual formation along with Dallas Willard's "Spirit of the Disciplines" and Richard Foster's "Celebration of the Disciplines." I look forward to giving away two cases to the parents in our church!

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