

Bless One Another *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, one or both of the girls didn't want a blessing and would say so, and then we might give them a quick blessing anyway, or not. But more often, when we didn't stay long enough to give them a blessing, we would get called back in: "Mommy, Daddy, I need my blessing." For a

number of years, the night blessing came at the end of story time and a snuggle.

Our elder daughter is now 11 and getting ready to go into middle school in the fall. She gets a blessing every night. She says that she likes receiving a blessing every night and that it helps her calm down. Our younger daughter is now 9 and is happy to bless anyone who wishes for a blessing, including one of her favorite babysitters!

Our prayer is that both of them know how much we love them and how beloved they are by God. Our blessings have changed a bit over the years, and each of us offers a somewhat different blessing (see next page).



What materials are needed for this practice?

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 words were similar to what we had been using across the years of blessing but her own words. The words we have used over the years have 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.