

A NOTE TO PARENTS

In one of those conversations where a bunch of parents start repeating all the clever things their children have said, a mother reported that her five-year-old had been trying to figure out the idea of God, and had finally decided that God was “magic air.” The mother was impressed, and remarked that at the same age she had imagined God as an old man in the sky, with a long white beard. We Christians tend to be embarrassed by the accusation that we teach a naive and childish faith, where the Son of God comes down from heaven, goes down to hell, and goes back to heaven to sit in a fancy chair at the right hand of his bearded Father. My daughter at three told me that God has brown hair and wears pants. I would have been more impressed if she had said God was “magic air.”

Now and then, especially in the Gospel of John, Jesus is depicted as correcting someone’s naive or over-literal concepts. But much, much more often, Jesus seems utterly untroubled by such thinking: indeed, he positively encourages it. He teaches in stories, where God is a shepherd, a master, a king, bridegroom, or judge ... or a Father. For centuries, the God of Israel had had no name but “the LORD.” Jesus gave him a new one: Father. Jesus was much more interested in our *relationship* with God than our *ideas* about him.

We can’t think about God without images. If we are apologetic about “crude” or naive ones like father, shepherd, savior, creator, light, water, wind, dove, we will find ourselves instead using philosophical or technological ones like “force” or “dynamo,” “perfect Mind” or “the Ground of our Being.” We may think of these as advanced, because they come less easily to children, and use more “modern” ideas or language. But they are still picture-thinking. They are merely more difficult—and do less than the “crude” or naive images to help us know, love, and obey God. And if the child who thinks God is “magic air” never learns to love him, she will be far less advanced in faith than the child (or adult) who imagines a heavenly king and father, prays to him, and tries to do his will.

(The version of the Lord’s Prayer on the reverse of this page is in the “contemporary” translation that is easier for children to understand. If your church uses the traditional “who art in heaven” phrasing, you may wish to use this version at home.)

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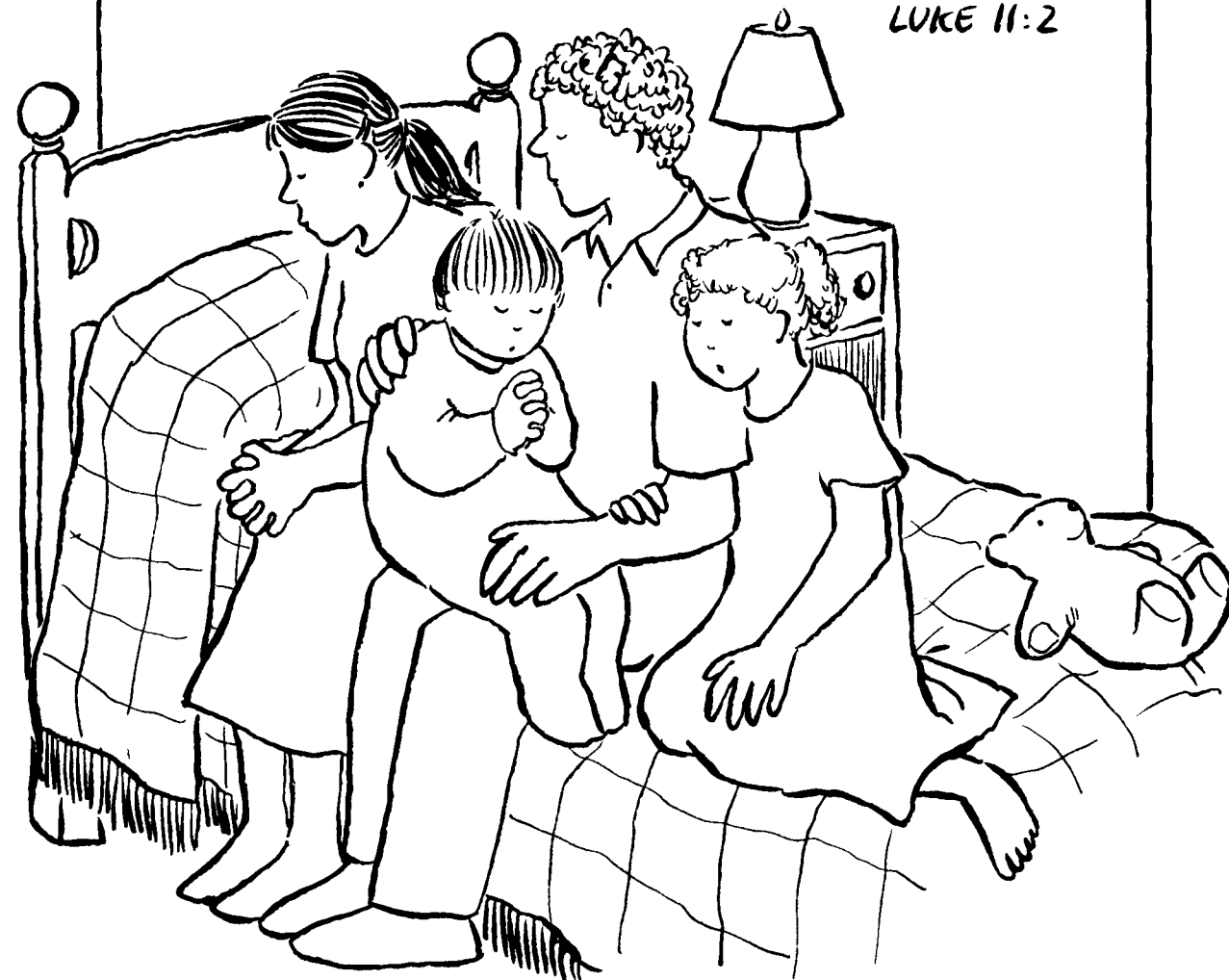


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Year C
PROPER 12
TRACKS 1 and 2

Jesus said, “When you pray,
this is what you should say:
‘Our Father in heaven ...’”

LUKE 11:2



Jesus's friends saw how much he loved God. They said, "Master, teach us to pray."

Jesus said, "You can call God your Father. You can talk to him. He knows how to listen."



"If you knocked at a friend's door at night, because you needed something..."

... or would he get up and help you? - He'd help you, of course!



... would your friend say, 'Shut up and go away!'...



It's the same way with God. So go ahead and ask."

People have sometimes felt that God is hard to know, hard to understand, far away, or scary. But Jesus came to show us that God knows us and loves us. We can talk to him, and he will hear us. When we pray, we learn to know and love God more and more.

Jesus taught us a special prayer. We call it THE LORD'S PRAYER, because Jesus is our Lord.

OUR FATHER in heaven,
hallowed be your Name,
your Kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those
who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial,
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours,
now and for ever. **AMEN.**

Decorate the Lord's Prayer. Ask a grownup to tell you more about it.