

What is spirituality?

The word spirituality comes from a word meaning "breath." Human beings are spiritual because the breath of God is within them. Spirituality is about **how we experience and relate to God.**

As adults, the most important thing we can do is listen to children and value what they tell us. We need to stop worrying over what we can teach children about spirituality. We should be wondering instead what children might teach us.

... you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children.

Luke 10:21

Why is spirituality important?

Spirituality is not an add-on extra. It is there already, as part of being human. Spirituality is a big piece in the jigsaw of life, and if we don't see it, the picture won't make sense.

What can I do to help my child grow spiritually?

You are probably doing a lot of the right things already. Nurturing a child's spiritual development means giving them:

- **Time** to think about themselves, other people and the world.
- **Space** to enjoy the new experiences
- **Security** so that they feel able to question and explore.
- **Affirmation** that their thoughts about God, life and the universe are interesting and important.

More than religious education

Religion and spirituality are related, but they are not the same thing.

Children's spirituality is not limited to talking about God, using special language, or going to church. Simple things, like the sight of snow, being cuddled, or gazing up into the night sky, can be spiritual events.

Everyday experiences, and concerns about other people and the planet, can lead naturally to the wonder and questioning which are doors to spirituality.

Practical things to do

- Focus on the five senses - sight, touch, hearing, taste and smell - and find ways of bringing them into your child's attention.
- Take time to sit for even 30 seconds and enjoy complete silence and stillness.
- Help your child to notice the shape of clouds, the phases of the moon, or how a tree changes through the seasons.
- Listen to and appreciate your child's enthusiasm about animals, plants, rocks.
- Help your child to listen to others, as well as to experience being listened to. Ask your child about their day, and tell them about yours.
- Talk about thoughts and feelings.
- Encourage your child to collect "treasures" like feathers or leaves.
- Make a prayer tree or net in your house or garden. Tie on a ribbon for each prayer.
- Go for an "eyes shut" walk, with one of you guiding and describing what you see.

- Imagine what life would have been like at the time of Jesus or one of the saints. What would you say to them, or ask them?
- Choose a special place where you keep a children's Bible, a cross or a religious picture. This could be a place where your child can go to be quiet or to say a prayer.
- As part of the bed time routine, bless your child with the sign of the cross or sing a special song.
- Let your child watch or listen when you pray silently or with words.
- When you go to church, give your child time to explore and make sure then can see what is happening.

Christian journeying with children

Why is it important to introduce your children to a specific religion?

Isn't it enough to teach them to be caring and sensitive to others and to the natural world?

One of the greatest needs of children is for relationship. Remember that spirituality is our encounter and

relationship with God. By introducing your children to the Christian religion you help them to draw close to a God who is love.

Children are capable of enjoying the presence of God, and of giving themselves to God's love in a very deep way. Their relationship with God will be unique. Within Christianity, it will be an experience of love without limits.

And finally

Remember; you don't need to be a saint, have a degree in theology, or have all the right answers, to help your child on their spiritual journey. Like your child, you have the breath of God within you. Like your child, you are growing up in Christ.

We must teach our children

To smell the earth
 To taste the rain
 To touch the wind
 To see things grow
 To hear the sunrise and nightfall
 To care.

Children and Spirituality