

FOCUS[®]
ON THE FAMILY

Bedtime Blessings[®]

VOLUME 1

100 *Bedtime Stories & Activities
for Blessing Your Child*

John Trent, Ph.D.



Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois

Bedtime Blessings, Volume 1

Copyright © 2000 by John Trent

All rights reserved. International copyright secured.

ISBN-13: 978-1-58997-551-4

ISBN-10: 1-58997-551-0

A Focus on the Family book published by

Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188

Focus on the Family and the accompanying logo and design are trademarks of Focus on the Family, Colorado Springs, CO 80995.

TYNDALE and Tyndale's quill logo are registered trademarks of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Reader's Version®. Copyright © 1996, 1998, by International Bible Society. All rights reserved throughout the world. Used by permission of International Bible Society. Scripture quotations marked (NIV) are taken from the *Holy Bible, New International Version*®. NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved. Those identified as NASB are taken from the *New American Standard Bible*®. Copyright The Lockman Foundation 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995. Used by permission. (www.Lockman.org).

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise—without prior written permission of Focus on the Family.

Editor: Jane Vogel

Interior illustrations: by Arden von Haeger

Cover design by: Jessie McGrath

Cover illustrations by: Jessie McGrath, copyright © 2008 by Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. All rights reserved.

Published in association with the literary agency of Alive Communications Inc., 7680 Goddard Street, Suite 200, Colorado Springs, CO 80920, www.alivecommunications.com.

Printed in the United States of America

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 / 14 13 12 11 10 09 08

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
The Blessings Box	5
Let's Play a Game: Fat Cat	7
Let's Talk about Feelings: Feeling Sad	8
Let's Talk about the Future: When I Grow Up	10
Let's Talk about the Day: Good Day/Bad Day	12
Let's Sing a Song: Jesus Loves Me	14
Let's Do an Experiment: Step Through a Card	16
Let's Play a Game: Tongue Twisters	19
Let's Write a Letter to God: Getting in Trouble	20
Let's Hear a Story: Me-First Mouse	22
Let's Read the Funnies: Favorite Funnies	24
Let's Talk about When I Was Your Age: Parent Picture	25
Let's Do a Puzzle: Puppy Puzzle	26
Let's Do an Experiment: Blowing Bubbles	28
Let's Look in the Bible: The Lord Is My Shepherd	30
Let's Look at Nature: Night Sky	32
Let's Do an Experiment: Bean Seeds	34
Let's Plant a Seed: Obey Your Parents	36
Let's Do an Experiment: Magnificent Magnification	38
Let's Write a Song: Sing a New Song	40
Let's Talk about the Future: Future Family	42
Let's Talk about the Day: Sundown Smoothing	44
Let's Sing a Song: Jesus Loves the Little Children	46
Let's Play a Game: Twenty Questions	47

Let's Write a Letter to Someone You Love:	
Thanks for You!	48
Let's Hear a Story: Jungle Journey—Part 1	50
Let's Hear a Story: Jungle Journey—Part 2	52
Let's Hear a Story: Jungle Journey—Part 3	54
Let's Hear a Story: Jungle Journey—Part 4	56
Let's Do an Experiment: Salt of the Earth	58
Let's Look at Nature: Fancy Flowers	61
Let's Do a Puzzle: Squares, Squares Everywhere	62
Let's Learn a New Word: Grace	64
Let's Read the Funnies: Coloring the Comics	66
Let's Look in the Bible: Rainbow Colors	68
Let's Do a Puzzle: Toothpick Teaser	70
Let's Be Thankful: Great Gifts	74
Let's Have a Riddle: Little Riddles	76
Let's Talk about When I Was Your Age:	
Favorite Toys	78
Let's Do an Experiment: Hole in a Hand	80
Let's Plant a Seed: Honor Your Father and Mother	82
Let's Talk about the Future: Career Choices	84
Let's Do an Experiment: Water Trombone	86
Let's Talk about the Day: Encouragement/ Discouragement	88
Let's Sing a Song: Swing Low, Sweet Chariot	90
Let's Write a Poem: At the Zoo	92
Let's Look at Nature: Nutty Friends	94
Let's Play a Game: Concentration	98
Let's Be Thankful: Ouchies	100

Let's Play a Game: Hot and Cold	102
Let's Do a Puzzle: Mystery Doodles	104
Let's Do an Experiment: Crystal Garden	106
Let's Play a Game: Build a Beetle	108
Let's Talk about Feelings: Growing Pains.	110
Let's Plant a Seed: God So Loved the World	112
Let's Play a Game: Simon Says	114
Let's Talk about the Day: Thinking about God	116
Let's Plant a Seed: Becoming Like Jesus	118
Let's Look at Nature: Hair	121
Let's Play a Game: Boxes.	122
Let's Write a Letter to God: Doing the Best I Can . . .	124
Let's Hear a Story: Poodle Pride	126
Let's Look at Nature: Talking Without Words	128
Let's Do an Experiment: Soap Chase	130
Let's Play a Game: Squiggles.	132
Let's Make Something: W.W.J.D. Bracelet.	134
Let's Talk about the Day: W.W.J.D. Today?	136
Let's Look in the Bible: The Most Important Commandment	138
Let's Plant a Seed: Love the Lord	139
Let's Play a Game: Lost in Bed	140
Let's Pretend: Scary Shadows	142
Let's Talk about the Day: Something New	144
Let's Do an Experiment: Little Lightning.	146
Let's Pretend: Storm Tracking.	148
Let's Write a Letter to God: I Wonder	150
Let's Hear a Story: A Mad, Mean Meal.	152

Let's Plant a Seed: Give Thanks No Matter What . . .	156
Let's Do an Experiment: "Seeing" the Wind	158
Let's Play a Game: Sailboat	160
Let's Talk about the Day: What If.	162
Let's Write a Song: Food Fun	164
Let's Talk about Feelings: Fun with Faces	166
Let's Play a Game: Chewable Checkers	168
Let's Pray for Others: Praying for People We Love. . .	170
Let's Pray for Others: Praying for People We Have a Hard Time Loving	172
Let's Do an Experiment: Paper Airplanes.	174
Let's Plant a Seed: Light for the Path	176
Let's Play a Game: Categories.	178
Let's Talk about the Future: A New Room	179
Let's Do an Experiment: Taste Test.	180
Let's Pretend: Pig Pens	182
Let's Talk about Feelings: Scabs	184
Let's Look at Nature: Honeycomb.	186
Let's Do an Experiment: Floating Finger	188
Let's Do an Experiment: Ticklish Toes.	190
Let's Talk about Feelings: Popping with Anger	192
Let's Pretend: Mirrors	194
Let's Write a Poem: Name Acrostic	196
Let's Tell a Story: Once Upon a Time.	198
Let's Hear a Story: Guardian Angels	200
Let's Look in the Bible: Jesus Is the Way	202
Answer Pages	204

Introduction

As far back as Old Testament times, parents were giving a blessing to their children, and those children longed to receive it. (Read Genesis 27 and the story of Jacob and Esau to see the immense joy of receiving a parent's blessing, and the heartbroken sobs from one who missed it.) This collection of bedtime blessings is designed to create special moments between you and your child, something like a goodnight kiss before turning out the light. It is a mix of stories, activities, and games, each ending with a short prayer you can pray aloud before tucking your child in bed.

These prayers are purposely short for little attention spans. But feel free to make up your own prayer, to make the prayers longer, or to have your child pray along with you. Whatever you do, be sure to personalize the prayer as suggested in each one, by using your child's name and perhaps including something you and your child talked about during the story or activity.

Your prayer can become a little blessing ceremony, giving you the chance to affirm your child in a special way. Try one or more of these ideas to set off the prayer time:

- Just before you pray, say something like, "It's time for your blessing prayer!" That can help set apart your prayer time as one when you lift your child before the Heavenly Father for His blessing. Watch how quickly

Bedtime Blessings

your child will pick up on your setting apart this time. Soon you'll be able to ask, "What time is it?" when you finish the story or activity, and your child will respond, "It's time for my blessing prayer!" Having your child ask for a blessing prayer warms your heart as well as your child's.

- Don't forget the power of meaningful touch. Praying as you hold hands or hug your child is a wonderful way to grow even closer and send him or her off to sleep.
- Consider concluding your prayer with a blessing straight from God's Word. Numbers 6:24 offers a beautiful blessing that you can personalize for your child: "May the Lord bless you and take good care of you. May the Lord smile on you and be gracious to you. May the Lord look on you with favor, _____ [*your child's name*], and give you His peace." Children like to listen to things over and over (have you noticed how they'll play a song or tape again and again?). Hearing God's Word applied to their lives for 100 nights can be a special blessing in and of itself!

Some of the blessing activities and prayers in this book are designed to show that you care about the details of your child's life, with your concern being reinforced by *meaningful touch*. Others are designed to communicate a *spoken message* of love. Still others include words that help them see their *high value* to God and to you. Still

Bedtime Blessings

others show the *special future* and *genuine commitment* you and the Lord have for your child.

Let's look at each of those blessing ingredients.

Meaningful touch. You can communicate affirmation without saying a word. Meaningful touch could include having your child sit right next to you when you read the blessing, playing with your child's hair, holding hands when you pray, hugging your child before you tuck him or her into bed. All these small things communicate your blessing.

Spoken words. Biblically, a blessing was given when it was spoken. Your words—when you are speaking your child's name, reading together, saying, "I love you," and praying for your child—can etch a deep sense of being loved into your child's memory.

Attaching high value. The word for *blessing* in the Scriptures means to "bow the knee." We bow before someone who is very valuable. When we bless the Lord, we're saying, "Lord, You're so valuable, I bow my heart before You." When we bless our children, we're attaching high value to them through our words, appropriate touch, and genuine commitment.

Special future. When children hear words from a parent, grandparent, or other loved one that picture a special future for them, they rise to those words. Helping your children see that God has a special future for them

Bedtime Blessings

(Jeremiah 29:11), and that you appreciate their unique character traits and talents, can fill up their hearts with your blessing.

Genuine commitment. In a world full of insecurity, knowing that a loving parent or grandparent will be there for them gives children a tangible sense of stability. Helping children understand that their Heavenly Father will always be there for them builds their lives on the Rock.

Meaningful touch, spoken words, attaching high value, picturing a special future, and genuine commitment*—those five elements of this powerful, biblical tool are stitched together in the blessings that follow. Over the course of 100 evenings, you'll create a quilt of memories—memories of moments when you talked together, laughed together, played together, and prayed together.

They'll be memories that can provide warmth and comfort for a lifetime—for both of you.

John Trent, Ph.D.
President, Encouraging Words and
Strongfamilies.com

* If you'd like to look more closely at the biblical practice of blessing children and how it can shape young lives, please see *Pictures the Heart Remembers* (John Trent, WaterBrook Press) and *The Gift of the Blessing* (Gary Smalley and John Trent, Thomas Nelson Publishers).

The Blessings Box

Some of the blessings that follow require certain materials—mostly easy-to-find household items. These are listed at the start of each activity so you can gather them ahead of time. A complete list of all the supplies is provided here. If you wish, gather the supplies in a “blessings box” so you’ll have them ready whenever you need them.

index cards
blunt scissors
pencils
the cartoon section of your newspaper—a Sunday section, if possible
black-and-white cartoon page from your newspaper
plastic drinking straws
plastic cup
bubble mix with a bubble ring or wand
flashlight
construction paper
photo of yourself as a child
package of bean seeds
small flowerpot or cup
potting soil
magnifying glass
stationery
envelope
postage stamp
paring knife
crayons

Bedtime Blessings

four toothpicks
childhood toys of yours, if you have them
cardboard tube from a roll of paper towels
empty soda bottle
nut in its shell—the kind you can easily open
 (or a small treat in a box)
deck of cards (“Old Maid,” “Go Fish,” etc.)
charcoal briquettes (not the self-starting kind)
¼ cup of salt
¼ cup of laundry bluing
1 tablespoon of ammonia
disposable pie pan
one die
paper
pepper
liquid soap
apple
slice of lemon
flower
two fat rubber bands
bottle cap
checker board
two kinds of food to use as checkers (small cookies, crackers,
 candies, fruit, or vegetables)
tissues
waxed paper
watch with a second hand
adhesive bandages
popped popcorn

Bedtime Blessings

LET'S PLAY A GAME

Fat Cat

Tonight's game is "Fat Cat." Fat Cats are word pairs that rhyme, like "fat cat" or "funny bunny."

Here's how you play. One person thinks of a Fat Cat, and then gives a clue so the other person can guess what it is. For example, the clue I might give for "funny bunny" could be "laughable rabbit." For "fat cat," I could say, "chubby kitty."

I'll start.

[Here are a few to get you started: rude dude; old cold; tan man; dragon wagon; snake cake; silly lily; ants' pants. When you and your child have each had a few turns and you're ready to quit, close with the appropriate choice from the following pairs, which translate "fun son" and "pearl girl."]

I have one last Fat Cat, and it's about you! You are an "enjoyable boy"/"jewel daughter."

Dear Father in heaven,

Thank You for all the fun You give us. And thank You for a "fun son"/"pearl girl" like _____ [your child's name] to share it with.

Amen.

LET'S TALK ABOUT FEELINGS

Feeling Sad

There's a little book called *Misery* by Suzanne Heller (Paul S. Eriksson, 1967) that tells about some of the very sad things that sometimes happen to us. *Misery* is another word for *sadness*. Here are a few of the miserable things the book lists:

"Misery is when you've told your best friend personal things and you find out she's not your best friend anymore."

"Misery is when you've got your birthday and the measles on the same day."

"Misery is when your baby sister goes into *your* room and eats *your* finger paints and *you* get the blame."

The last entry in the book reads, "Misery is when grownups don't realize how miserable kids can feel."

I don't want to be a grownup who doesn't understand when you feel miserable. I want to know what makes you miserable and sad. Can you think of some of them? I'll start the sentence, and you finish it.

Bedtime Blessings

I feel sad when _____.

I feel sad when _____.

I feel sad when _____.

Did you know that God cares about what makes you sad, too? Let's talk to God about that.

Dear God,

Thank You that You care when _____ [*your child's name*] is sad, or lonely, or tired, or upset. Thank You, too, for my precious _____ [*your child's name*]. When things like _____

happen [*list here the things your child mentioned that make him or her sad*], You still care for him/her, Lord, and so do I.

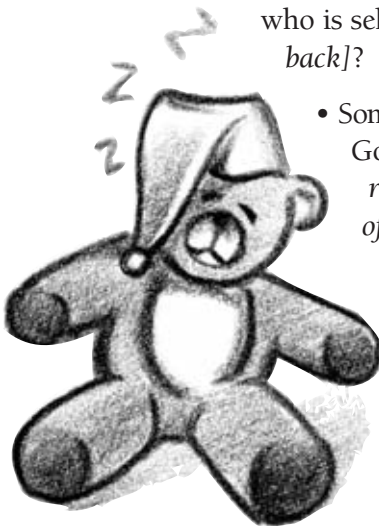
Amen.



LET'S TALK ABOUT THE FUTURE
When I Grow Up

Let's pretend you're grown up—say, my age. What kind of person would you like to be? Do you want to be ...

- Someone who frowns a lot [*make a mad face*] or smiles a lot [*smile at your child*]?
- Someone who is kind to animals [*pretend to pet an animal*] or who makes animals run away and hide [*make scared yipping-type noises*]?
- Someone who is kind to others [*hand your child a teddy bear, pillow, or other handy object*] or someone who is selfish [*grab the object back*]?



- Someone who praises God [*fold your hands or raise them in an attitude of praise*] or who praises only him/herself [*pantomime a proud attitude by pointing your thumb to your chest, posing like a muscle-man, or something similar*]?

Bedtime Blessings

What else do you want to be like?

[Allow your child time for open-ended response.]

How do you think you can grow up to be that kind of person?

[Affirm any ideas your child suggests, like being kind to others now, sharing toys with a sibling, going to church or Sunday school.]

One very important way to grow up to be a good and kind grown-up is to ask God to help you. Let's do that right now.

Dear God,

Please help this special child of mine to grow up to be kind, and cheerful, and loving, and _____
[list any additional responses your child made]. Especially help _____ *[your child's name]* to love and praise You.

Amen.

LET'S TALK ABOUT THE DAY
Good Day/Bad Day

[Before you begin this blessing, decide on a form of meaningful touch that you can give to your child and then your child can give to you. Some ideas include:

- *Lightly brush your fingertips up and down your child's arm;*
- *Rub your child's back or shoulders;*
- *Smooth your child's hair.]*

Let's talk about each other's day. While you talk, I'll lightly brush my fingertips up and down your arm *[or whatever form of touch you've chosen]*. When you're finished, I'll tell you about my day, and you can brush your fingertips up and down my arm.

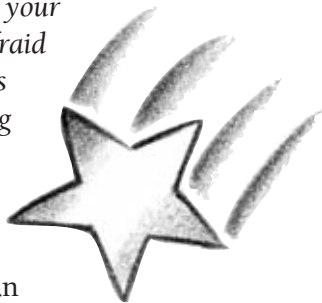
So tell me. How was your day? Was it a good day, a bad day, or just an okay day?

[Talk about your child's response. What made the day good (or bad or okay)? What was the best part? What does your child hope will go better tomorrow?]

Now I'll tell you about my day.

Bedtime Blessings

[Share some of the highlights of your day with your child. Don't be afraid to share some of your challenges and how you faced them, as long as you don't burden your child with adult problems.]



Do you know who else we can share our day with? We can share it with God. He already knows what was bad and good, but He's glad when we tell Him about it in our prayers, too.

Dear God,

Thank You for the good things that happened today.

Thank You for _____ [*name some of the positive things your child and you mentioned*].

Thank You for helping us get through the not-so-good things that happened today, like _____

[*name some of the negative events you and your child mentioned*]. Please give _____ [*your child's name*]

a really great day tomorrow!

Amen.

LET'S SING A SONG
Jesus Loves Me

Let's sing a song together!

Jesus loves me, this I know,
For the Bible tells me so.
Little ones to Him belong.
They are weak but He is strong.
Yes, Jesus loves me.
Yes, Jesus loves me.
Yes, Jesus loves me.
The Bible tells me so.

Do you like that song? Why?

Jesus loves all people, but especially He loves children.
Why do you think that is?

There is an interesting passage in the Bible that tells how dear you are to Him. Let me read it to you. It's found in Matthew 18:1-5.

At that time the disciples came to Jesus. They asked him, "Who is the most important person in the kingdom of heaven?"

Jesus called a little child over to him. He had the child stand among them. Jesus said, "What I'm about to tell you is true. You need to change and become like little

Bedtime Blessings



children. If you don't you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Anyone who becomes as free of pride as this child is the most important in the kingdom of heaven.

“Anyone who welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me.”

Let's thank Jesus for how much He loves you.

Dear Jesus,
Thank you for how much You love _____
[*your child's name*]. And thank You for giving us the Bible that tells us so.

Amen.

About the Author



Dr. John Trent is president of the Center for StrongFamilies and StrongFamilies.com, an organization that trains leaders to launch and lead marriage and family programs in their churches and communities. John speaks at conferences across the country and has authored or co-authored more than a dozen award-winning

and best-selling books, including *The 2 Degree Difference* and the million-selling parenting classic *The Blessing* with Gary Smalley. His books, of which there are more than two million in print, have been translated into 11 languages.

John has also been a featured guest on radio and television programs like *Focus on the Family*, *The 700 Club*, and CNN's *Sonya Live*. John and his wife, Cindy, have been married 28 years and have two grown daughters.