



Jared Patrick Boyd, author of *Imaginative Prayer: A Yearlong Guide for Your Child's Spiritual Formation*

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Jared Patrick Boyd is a pastor (Vineyard USA), spiritual director, and founder of The Order of Sustainable Faith, a missional monastic order for the twenty-first 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.

imaginativeprayer.com

Becoming Your Child's Spiritual Director

What gave you the idea to write a spiritual formation book for parents and their children?

Jared Patrick Boyd: After nearly a decade of thinking about spiritual formation and meeting with a spiritual director, I realized that I still felt a bit lost in how to connect my children to the story of Jesus. I knew that I didn't want to focus on Bible-verse memory or getting them to grasp the doctrine of salvation, for example. What I wanted was for them to *experience God*—to sense God's presence and be compelled by their rootedness in the love of God for them.

What do you hope to provide through *Imaginative Prayer*?

Jared: I think the particular need I'm addressing is that both parents and churches are looking for something deeper than just getting kids to believe a certain way or to behave a certain way—I think we are all looking for genuine invitation to a transformed life.

How does imaginative prayer work?

Jared: Your child and the children in your church have a built-in and often under-utilized tool for spiritual formation: the imagination. So much of our pedagogy tends to focus on information rather than transformation. Christian doctrine and traditional catechesis are important, but I tend to think these should come at a later stage when older kids are really wrestling through big ideas and concepts. *Imaginative Prayer*, rooted in Ignatian practices, leans on the imagination and playfulness of a child to help them form real experiences of connection with God. And, when good conversation follows, it can also create meaningful connections between a parent and a child. This book is meant to be a guide toward helping parents become their child's first spiritual director.

What do you hope parents understand through this book and these practices?

Jared:

- Parents are the most important person in the spiritual formation of their children.
- The *contemplative stream* of the Christian faith doesn't need to be something we reach for later in life. Children hold mystery much better than we do, and it seems we should introduce them to it earlier.
- Children need a deep connection with a spiritual guide in order to learn how to make sense of what it means to live our lives in the way of Jesus.
- A parent can journey alongside their child in formative ways. In other words, parents don't need to have it all figured out in order to lead their child into a deeper experience of God. Real connections can be formed when parents are willing to be vulnerable about their own desire to connect with God and their own journeys of faith or doubt.

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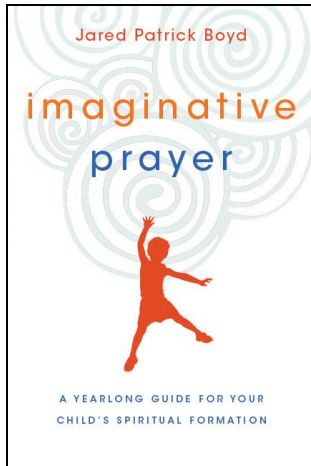


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An Invitation to Connect to Your Child's Spiritual Formation

This book is about connection. As a father of four girls one of my greatest desires is to pass on to them a deep understanding and awareness of the *experience* of God. My hope is that they would feel connected to God and the story God is unfolding in their lives and in the world around them.

Will they see themselves as part of God's story? Will they feel close and connected to God as they navigate decisions that come their way and pursue risks on the horizon? Will they say yes to all that God is inviting them into? This book is about *connection* because of the way Jesus asks us to imagine our life with him – he is the vine, his Father is the gardener, and we are *connected* to him. This is how we bear fruit. This is the image he gives us. This is what he asks us to imagine.

This book is also about formation. "Spiritual formation . . . is the intentional and God-ward reorientation and re-habituating of human experience." Or, more simply defined by M. Robert Mulholland Jr., spiritual formation is "the process of being formed in the image of Christ for the sake of others." Whenever we're intentionally doing something to shift our experience or understanding of God, we're involved in spiritual formation.

When we're working, in response to God's grace, to shift our thoughts, the patterns of our relationships, and our actions toward a greater alignment with the life and teachings of Jesus, we are doing the work of spiritual formation.

And when we help others in their journey of formation, we become connected to them and their story.

We share in their experience, and we too are formed by it.

This book is an invitation to connection with your child and to your child's spiritual formation.

– Taken from the introduction