



a renew.org resource

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP BLUEPRINT:

A YEAR-BY-YEAR GUIDE
TO FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

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Family Discipleship Blueprint

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INTRODUCTION

There has been a wealth of information presented about faith and family in the past few years. A clear plan is emerging for churches and families to impart faith to this generation. Christians are uniting to become a part of a larger community whose goal is to pass down faith with purpose and intentionality. Churches and families are realizing more than ever that they need more than a few ideas to succeed in imparting faith to this generation. We need a plan.

It is with this in mind that I would like to offer a simple “what do I do, and how do I do it” plan. This resource calls Christians to become deeply involved in a practical solution that can change families, individuals, and culture. I firmly believe that together we can change the momentum of our nation where faith is on the decline to a nation where faith is growing once again.

How can we change the direction of this faithless generation? It starts with families. Passing down your faith to your children is not rocket science; but, if we think that having a few family devotionals a year will change everything, we are mistaken. It is when parents have a heart for God, love spending time with their family, and have a biblical plan to impart their faith that this generation will be transformed.

This book will show a clear step-by-step plan for parents to pass down faith to their children. In addition, because many children are without believing parents, it is essential for Christians across our nation to get serious about imparting faith to children and teens who don't have the influences that they need.

WHY IS FAITH ON THE DECLINE?

The statistics are not encouraging when it comes to Christian faith and the next generation. Let's consider the following trends:

As of 2018, it was becoming clear that atheism was doubling among Gen Z (born between 1999 and 2015).¹

As of 2019, "Nearly two-thirds of U.S. 18–29-year-olds who grew up in church tell Barna they have withdrawn from church involvement as an adult after having been active as a child or teen."²

As of 2021, 44.4% of Gen Z are considered "nones," having no religious affiliation.³

Bring those trends alongside this earlier observation by longtime church trend researcher George Barna:

"We discovered that in a typical week, fewer than 10 percent of parents who regularly attend church with their kids read the Bible together, pray together (other than at meal times) or participate in an act of service as a family unit. Even fewer families—1 out of every 20—have any type of worship experience together with their kids, other than while they are at church during a typical month."⁴

Think there might be a connection?

THE REASON

I want to suggest that there is a connection between the two thirds of Christian teens and college students who are walking away from their faith and the large percentage of Christian parents that don't talk regularly about faith with their families. God never intended the church to be the only place that Christians hear or talk about their faith. God intended Christian families to be the primary source by which faith is shared. Unfortunately, many families aren't doing much together. Some families are missing the closeness with their kids, the time spent at home, and the opportunity to share their belief in God.

¹Barna Group, "Atheism Doubles Among Generation Z," January 24, 2018, <https://www.barna.com/research/atheism-doubles-among-generation-z/> (accessed March 29, 2023).

²Barna Group, "Church Dropouts Have Risen to 64%—But What About Those Who Stay?" September 4, 2019, <https://www.barna.com/research/resilient-disciples/> (accessed March 29, 2023).

³Ryan P. Burge, "Generation Z and Religion—The Most Recent Data," July 19, 2021, Religion in Public, <https://religioninpublic.blog/2021/07/19/generation-z-and-religion-the-most-recent-data/> (accessed March 29, 2023).

⁴George Barna, *Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2003), 78.

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Mark Holmen, author of *Church + Home*, observed, “Many 18- to 29-year-olds believe Christianity is hypocritical because the version of Christianity they experienced was something that was ‘done’ at church and not at home.”⁵ Given what is at stake, the salvation of their kids, why are so many parents choosing not to talk about faith to their kids? After polling a few parents, I learned that there are several things that prevent families from talking about faith:

- the exhaustion that comes with being a parent
- a feeling of awkwardness when discussing faith with family
- an expectation that their kids will be resistant to faith discussions
- an impression that talking about faith isn’t normal anymore
- thinking the church will do the “faith thing” for them
- feeling spiritually inadequate
- living a hypocritical Christian life
- busyness of life

For most parents, it is a combination of a few of these reasons that keep them from talking about faith or doing faith activities with their children. All of these reasons are genuine barriers, but none of them are beyond God’s ability to overcome. It isn’t just a matter of families doing this on their own. *God* is working within each of us to set in motion the transformation that is happening within us and within our children. When we understand the bigger picture of what God is trying to do within the lives of our families, these barriers to passing down faith no longer hold up.

This means that families must overcome an overwhelming feeling of exhaustion or awkwardness. This means facing the resistance that your children may have to faith activities. This means that as a parent you have to face your own spiritual shortcomings. This may require your family to stop some other activities in order to have time for faith activities. Facing all of those barriers will be worth it if it means that your family will have a stronger faith in God.

No one has more potential to influence a child’s relationship with God than parents. A minister, teacher, coach, or friend, as important as these can be in a child’s faith development, is far more limited in imparting faith when compared to parents, because no one has the time to be there for children as much as parents. “The average church only has 40 hours in a given year to influence a life. . . . The average parent has 3,000 hours per year to influence a life.”⁶ Some churches work hard to get 200–300 hours of influence a year, but even still it is unlikely to have the same influence as parents can have.

⁵ Mark Holmen, *Church + Home* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2010), 29.

⁶ Reggie Joiner, *Think Orange*, 87–88.

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Most parents know the profound influence they have over their children. This is evident in the fear that parents have that they might “mess up” their children. A problem arises when parents feel like they are not qualified to teach their kids about faith. Yet it is really not much different from what a parent would do to help children with schoolwork or assist them when they are sick. “No parent is going to say, ‘I can’t help you with your homework; I didn’t get an education degree,’ or, ‘I can’t make sure you take your medicine; I’m not a doctor.’”⁷

Even though parents may not feel qualified, they still provide the most spiritual influence to their children. A group of 7–12th graders were asked to list the top five people who have had the most spiritual influence in their life. Of those who responded, 72–85 percent listed their moms and 49–64 percent listed their dads as one of the most important spiritual influences in their life.⁸ No single person or organization even comes close to matching the influence parents have over the spiritual lives of their children.

God has designed families for a reason. Family is the best place for children to learn about God. The home is the best practice field for faith. If a child makes a mistake, a parent is there to provide guidance in the right direction. If a child does something well, a parent is there to offer encouragement. If a teachable moment occurs, a parent is available to give instruction. The decline of faith in our nation is in part a result of not taking the opportunity to practice faith at home. Many parents expect the church to be the practice field for faith during its one or two hours each week. Yet the church doesn’t have the time, the opportunity, or the proximity to help each child and teen practice faith in the way that they need.

CRISIS POINT

When teens and college students begin to have the freedom to make their own choices about life, they tend to consider what has been real and authentic in their lives. Teens crave real and authentic, and they despise what is false and hypocritical. Therefore, if faith existed only at church and not in their day-to-day lives, they will judge it to be inauthentic and reject it. However, if they see faith throughout the lives of their family and see authentic faith within the church and its members, then they will likely accept it wholeheartedly. Teens will gladly trade the shallow trends of their culture in favor of something that is real and meaningful. They will seldom trade the life our culture is promoting for an inauthentic faith.

NO OTHER CHOICE

We must face the fact that our churches haven’t done enough to equip families to impart faith within their homes. Moreover, the majority of Christian families haven’t been consistently imparting faith to their children.

⁷ Reggie Joiner, *Think Orange*, 91.

⁸ Mark Holmen, *Church + Home*, 31.

For thousands of years faith in God has been primarily passed down in a singular fashion . . . through family. It was passed from father to son, mother to daughter, grandparents to grandchildren, uncles to nieces and nephews: Faith was advanced through family. Even within ancient Hebrew culture, followers were not primarily made at the temple, synagogues, or at the hands of any other organization. Families banded together as a unit to instruct and model what was most important, namely, God.

Today many parents have taken a more casual approach to faith development. This casual approach may look something like bringing children to church once or twice a month, talking about faith if it ever comes up, and if the family gets really serious, homeschooling them or enrolling them in a Christian school. A casual approach to imparting faith may have worked in years past, but it is not working in this culture. This culture is relentlessly promoting its lifestyle, and a casual plug for a different way of life will be too small to be noticed among the barrage of distorted thinking that is entering the lives of children and teens.

We cannot afford to keep doing what we have been doing and expect our children, teens, and young adults to carry on faith in the one true God. If families and churches don't change, we will lose the essence of the faith in this generation. We must have the vision to see beyond the current method of imparting faith to create something better.

GOD'S THREE COMMANDS FOR IMPARTING FAITH

God's words and plans are timeless. It is not a reinvention of imparting faith, but rather a rediscovery of His plans for building faith that we must seek. The basics of what God expected from us is outlined in one simple paragraph in Deuteronomy. In this paragraph God gives three clear commands regarding faith and family.

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. 8 Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates." (Deut. 6:4-9, NIV)

Not many people like the word *commands*, but that is what God gives us in Deuteronomy 6. We are commanded first to acknowledge that (1) God is one. It doesn't seem like a command, it seems more like a fact, but in ancient polytheistic culture it was a clear command. God wanted His people to know He is the only one who should be worshipped and treated as God. The second command given is to (2) love God with all of our heart, soul, and strength. Many of us have listened to this command so often we almost don't hear its meaning anymore. We are to

love God without limit. We are to love Him without spiritual limit, without physical limit, and His love is to pervade us wholly as a part of our identity. (3) Third, out of that love for God we are to pass down the first two commands to our children consistently in everyday life.

The way God issues these commands is interesting. God engages our heart first. He says that He desires our full attention and all of our effort. Yet we keep trying to capture the heart of today's youth by externals. We have sought new programs, new excitement, better friends, and even just keeping them busy and out of trouble. We have tried it all. Today's youth can see through externals so quickly. They need your heart. They need to experience your relationship with God and the love you have for Him. They need to see you treat Him as the one, true God. They need to see you love Him with all your heart, soul, and strength. If you do that successfully, they will understand what kind of faith they should have, and they will live for God.

WHAT IS THE “FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP BLUEPRINT”?

In construction, a blueprint is a carefully drawn-out plan for a builder to follow. A builder then will study the overall plan and build according to the plan. For the majority of the project, the blueprint is followed; however, when needed, the builder makes changes in order for the house to fit its unique lot and better fit its owners.

We want to give you the best blueprint possible to help faith grow in your family; however, no family is the same and we hope you will take this blueprint and make it work for your family. The more unique the family situation, the more changes you will might to make. Yet it is important that you don't water this plan down out of a fear that it won't work. Please don't be afraid to try things that you assume might not work for your family. Many families have been surprised by how well faith activities have been received even when they were certain they would face resistance. Just try, learn, adapt, and try again.

There are four steps that consistently promote a healthy faith in children and teens.

1. RECAPTURE YOUR HEART FOR GOD.

Passing down your faith starts with your relationship with God. Are you saying yes to God and no to the surrounding culture when the two conflict? Are you living out God's vision for your life? Are you slowing down to enjoy time with family?

2. IMPLEMENT ONE NEW FAITH ACTIVITY EACH YEAR.

Consistently participating in various faith activities as a family is vital in the spiritual development of children and teens.

3. GET INVOLVED IN CHURCH AS A FAMILY.

Seeking true involvement in God's church rather than mere church attendance relays the importance of God and His mission to your family.

4. IMPART FAITH TO OTHERS AS A FAMILY.

Sharing your faith with others as a whole family teaches children the importance of faith in their own life. In addition, families have incredible potential to reach others for Christ and can serve as supportive faith influences in a way that individuals alone cannot.

1. RECAPTURE YOUR HEART FOR GOD.

No one will pass down faith unless they are passionate about it. Take a few minutes and ask yourself these questions to help you evaluate your heart for God and family: What threatens your relationship with God? What is your relationship with God like? What is your relationship with your family like? What threatens your relationship with your family?

a. Recapturing your heart from culture

Seeing past the traps that can come with contemporary Western culture is an important part of recapturing your heart for God. Families will not pass down faith successfully as long as their faith in God takes a backseat to other things. It is not that Christians today don't love God. It is that they love many things with the same strength with which they love God. It is as if many Christians today think they can live wholly for God and wholly for the world. Many are saying, "I will love God with all my heart, soul, and strength," but are placing too much importance on success, material possessions, achievement, activities, sports, and money. You can give God your all, or you can pursue your own desires; many Christian people are trying to do both, and it simply does not work.

Many Christian individuals are seeking a worldly culture. Christian parents are exposing their families to secular ideas and entertainment and are teaching less about God. Many Christian families are no longer gaining wisdom, insight, and perspective from God and His Word; they are turning to the culture of this generation to be merely entertained. It is no longer God that is feeding families; it is culture. It is no longer God's Word that children are learning from families when they are young; it is the words of American culture. It is no longer God's wisdom that is guiding teens through the tough identity years; instead, American culture is dominating the landscape. Changing the way you see culture and the way it affects your family is the first step to recapturing your heart for God. Make a commitment as a family to pursue God and not to pursue worldly things. Make a decision to fill family life with God's message rather than the message of American culture.

b. Living God's Vision

God already has a vision for what our lives should be. We don't have to invent a way to revolutionize the way people live, which is such a relief! Jesus lived it, and it was written down for us to follow. The life that God has in mind for you and your family is a life that is rooted in a simple relationship with Him. It is a pursuit of Him and His commands that give us a life drenched in goodness, righteousness, contentment, and meaning.

In Genesis we get a unique picture of what perfection looks like for God and mankind.

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. (Genesis 3:8 NIV)

For God, perfection is an enjoyable walk with us. That is why He created the garden. That is why He created a cool of the day. That is why He made mankind. That is why He placed Adam and Eve in the middle of a perfect place. That is why He walked in the garden regularly. This one verse captures both God's desire and our purpose. Our life is meant to have a regular walk with God, and for it to be a journey with Him that we enjoy. Do you have a relationship with God that you enjoy? What will it take for you to return to the simple vision God has for your life?

Have you ever wondered why Jesus chose the disciples He did? Was it because they were exceptionally smart, trained, or gifted? No. It was because they were willing to immediately empty their lives to follow Jesus. In fact, everyone who followed Jesus was obligated to empty their life before they followed Him. (Read Matthew 4:17-18; Luke 5:27; Luke 9:57-62; Luke 18:18-23.) It is not that we must add a magic ingredient to our lives to take hold of the life that God wants for us. In fact, if there is a magic ingredient, it is in emptying our lives so that God can fill it. We have filled our lives with so many things that have been sold to us as exciting, important, or meaningful that we are missing the better life that God wants for us.

c. Recapturing your heart for family

A common misconception is that the one with the most time to relax is the happiest. Usually the faster you get things done, the more time you will have for yourself. Our world tells us relaxing and doing nothing is the ultimate dream. This commercial comes with a hammock. What if rather than just getting things done quickly, we actually enjoyed doing it? We may want to mow the lawn in two minutes or less, but we shouldn't want to raise our kids in two minutes. It is the time spent with kids that makes life good, not sitting in our hammock all alone without them. We must learn to enjoy the journey.

Imparting faith to children is one of the most rewarding experiences we can have. God never sees us as annoying children demanding His time when He is trying to do something else. Where do we inherit that trait? God craves intimacy with us and we should crave the same intimacy with our families. Sharing our faith should not feel like a hassle. One of the biggest joys that life has to offer is talking to our kids about the God that we love.

Many families are so consumed with their children having every opportunity and experience that many kids are missing the opportunity to relax and experience a closeness with their parents. Children today need more unscheduled time and undivided attention. Just talk. Ask questions for the purpose of learning more about who they are becoming. This is especially difficult and important for parents of teens. Teens will let you in if you listen. If parents are able to slow down, listen, and show that they care by giving their attention without any ulterior motives, they will find themselves with an amazing opportunity to impart faith.

2. IMPLEMENT ONE NEW FAITH ACTIVITY EACH YEAR.

God commands families in Deut. 6:7-9 to invite Him into everyday life. This can be a little overwhelming and can leave families paralyzed within the chaos of everyday life. The Family Discipleship Blueprint is a plan with a wide variety of faith activities that are developmentally appropriate from infancy through 12th grade. These are written to complement the way children and teens naturally grow spiritually. It is especially within the teen years that developmentally appropriate activities are important. The chapters that follow will be dedicated to walking you through the specific faith activities for each age group.

3. GET YOUR FAMILY INVOLVED IN CHURCH.

Depending on your family and the church you attend, getting involved in church can prove to be difficult. In this step, it is of utmost importance that your family fall in love with the bride of Christ, the church, and see its mission. This means being more involved than only attending Sunday morning worship. If your children see that your commitment to God's church and mission comes ahead of everything else, then they will also be committed to His church and mission. Talk to the staff of the church about what may be the best way to get your family more involved. This will look different depending on your family and your church. You may find teaching child or adult classes is a good fit for you. This could mean you build something with your hands for an event that is coming up. No matter what you choose, invite your family along in the process and get connected to other people and families within your church.

4. IMPART FAITH TO OTHERS AS A FAMILY.

Families have more potential than any other group to make disciples. This may seem strange at first, but families can provide support to others evangelistically that those without families cannot. When unchurched youth develop just one significant relationship with a family, they become much more likely to stay involved in church and retain their faith. Why? Many unchurched youth are looking for stable relationships. Most adults assume that young people are only interested in making friends with their peers; however, children, teens, and college students are not typically capable of forming reliable and supportive relationships unless they are anchored by a family. The adolescent years are turbulent; this is often a phase of life that is too selfish to show unconditional support for others. Many teens love to spend time with each other, but when things get difficult they will turn to the relationships that are steady before turning to their peers for help. This is where families have an incredible opportunity.

How can families be this kind of support for young people? Show an interest in children, teens, and college students who are acquainted with your family. Ask them about their classes, sports, and other things they get excited about. Invite them out to lunch with your family. Get them a small birthday gift or Christmas gift. Invite them over for Thanksgiving or for special occasions. Call or text them to offer encouragement as you get to know them better. Be there for them no matter what, without expecting much or forcing them to follow your agenda. Become a stable force in their lives and you will find that as a family you will have a unique opportunity to impart faith to them.

ADD AS YOU GO:

Many times, it can become overwhelming for families to think of all of the faith activities that their children need to learn. It is important to teach your children these faith activities, yet research shows that just consistently doing something faith-related can make a huge difference in their spiritual lives. Within the Family Discipleship Blueprint, your children will focus on one activity for a year, get comfortable with it, and move on to the next faith activity. It may be beneficial to continue some of the previous habits that were formed. Each family is different and will need to decide for themselves how frequently they can continue the previous faith activities while focusing on the new ones. Example: When your child is in 1st grade, it is time to focus on prayer. The next year your family will work on family devotionals. It will be important, however, to still have prayer time together. If your child is in 3rd grade, and you have been doing service activities once a month, it most likely will not be practical to keep doing these monthly while your child is in 4th grade. Some families may be interested in doing one or two activities throughout the year.

FAMILY CHALLENGES

You may be thinking that your family doesn't look typical. You may think that Imparting Faith only works with families with two believing parents and divorced or blended families can't do this. You may think that your family is too out-of-control, or that your husband/wife won't go along with it. You may think that your kids won't sit still long enough to do some of the activities that we are suggesting. Be assured that the Family Discipleship Blueprint can work in any situation, and it is too important not to do. You must fight the feeling that your family doesn't need this. You will find suggestions under the family challenges section on pages 45-48 for many of the difficult situations that you may be facing.

INTENTIONALITY

I talked to a family shortly after they read the Family Discipleship Blueprint. They shared with me how they had been doing devotionals with their child. I encouraged them and told them how great that was. After a long conversation though, they said something like, "We really like what you are doing for our families, but it doesn't really change much about what we are doing, because we already do devotions occasionally." I asked a few more questions, one of which was, "When do you do devotionals?" They replied, "Whenever our child wants them." They were excited and told me that she asked to have devotionals. I thought that was great and asked "What would happen if she never asked to do one again?" They paused and replied, "I guess we wouldn't have them anymore." It was at that point that it clicked for them. They had not quite understood up to this point that imparting faith was not something you could feel your way through, but that it was a deliberate decision. It could no longer be casual and based upon the initiation of their child. It would involve planning and talking to each other about when, where, and how this was going to happen. It was the idea of consistency and intentionality that really made the difference for them.

WELL-ROUNDED FAITH

Over the years it has been interesting to watch as children and teens grow their faith in different ways. Some grow through devotionals, yet others want nothing to do with them, but do want to serve others any chance they get. If you have looked at the various faith activities, you may really like the idea of participating in some of them; yet may feel the urge to completely skip over others. Participating in a wide variety of faith activities is important. Finding something that young people enjoy about their faith can make the difference in a faith that lasts and one that fades over time. You never know what your children and teens will connect with, even if it is something that you are not excited about.

BEYOND PARENTS

Although parents are certainly the primary source by which faith is passed down, they must not be the only source. There is not one earthly source by which anyone can receive all of their spiritual needs. In years past, many churches and parents depended on youth groups to be the sole source by which children and teens received their faith. Now that many churches realize this has not been working, some are scratching youth ministry completely. Eliminating any support system for teens will not help. In order for faith to be passed down, there must be consistency from multiple sources. It is up to parents, youth groups, peers, grandparents, aunts, uncles, youth ministers, cousins, siblings, friends, the church, and mentors to assist families in imparting faith to this generation. Some parents have tried to isolate their kids and develop them spiritually apart from the world. This approach nearly always falls apart in the teen years when a teen naturally searches other influences in order to grow. It is only together, from a variety of relationships and perspectives, that we can successfully impart faith to this generation. Unfortunately, not every child has Christian parents and some hypocritical Christian parents can do more damage than good. This is why it is necessary for everyone to contribute toward a supportive network that overcomes the lack of spiritual influence from parents. This generation will listen to authentic sources no matter whom it comes from, and they will likely not take spiritual counsel from hypocritical sources, even if it is their parents.

HOW CAN WE ALL IMPART FAITH TOGETHER?

Psychology can nearly predict the emotional and mental health of children and teenagers by determining the presence of protective factors and risk factors in a child's life. It is simple; protective factors positively contribute to healthy child development, and risk factors have a negative impact.

The percentages of alcohol abuse, sexual activity, violence, drug use, and school success rise and fall based upon the number of protective factors and risk factors that a child or teen has in life. The majority of today's youth are reluctant to accept faith because they are surrounded by too many risk factors from their families, friends, neighborhoods, and churches. It is not usually because a rational argument has been presented to them from science against faith. They are turning away from their faith because they want nothing to do with the faith of parents or stepparents who verbally abuse them or with a church that disagrees and argues most of the time. Our youth culture is not willing to give up its party culture in exchange for a hypocritical faith. Can you blame them?

ONE TEEN WROTE THIS ABOUT THE WAY FAITH WAS PASSED TO HER

“My parents raised me to be Christian, but many times I saw in them the opposite of how a Christian should act. The example that I saw from them was inconsistent, and I learned from them to rationalize partying and drinking with my friends and then going to church the next day. It wasn’t just with alcohol though; it was them emphasizing to me how important church was and expecting me to be a part of every youth activity when the only time they went to church was on Sunday morning. The best way to describe my home growing up was a ‘do as I say, not as I do’ mentality. After a while, I was just so fed up with the hypocrisy. If it wasn’t for the outside influences in my life, I don’t believe I would be a Christian today. My youth minister and his wife were the people I confided in, and I saw true consistency and realness from them in their Christian lives. There were also other role models in my life from church that encouraged me to be better and who guided me to find what true Christianity is all about. My family was never truly bad, but if they had lived out what they said they wanted for me they would have had a bigger part in my faith today. It is crucial for families to emphasize the importance of practicing what you are preaching and being consistent and stable in your faith. If you want your children to feel the desire to be involved in church, show them that you enjoy being involved. If you want them to put God first in everything, make sure you show that God is first in your life. For non-parents, I encourage you to be the influence to someone that my youth minister was to me. You’ll never truly know the impact you could make on a young person by just listening and being a Godly example.”⁹

SIMPLE ADDITION

What is clear beyond a shadow of a doubt is that when mothers, fathers, and grandparents work together to build regular faith practices in the family, the chances of children and teens being faithful believers throughout their lives dramatically increase. The family’s relationship with the church serves as a link between your child and other faith influences. Families that are deeply involved in church find positive friends for their children, adopted grandparents who are interested in leaving a legacy of faith, and mentors who have the potential to offer a great amount of spiritual guidance. Imagine if each of these significant faith influences were a positive part of your child’s life. The positive spiritual influences and protective factors add up very quickly. What impact would that have on their faith?

Everyone has natural opportunities to become a significant spiritual influence in the lives of others. Most of us are one or more of the following: brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, grandmothers, grandfathers, or friends. Everyone must look for opportunities within their existing relationships to encourage extended families and friends in their faith in God.

⁹ Anonymous quote.

GRANDPARENTS

Grandparents often feel they would like to be involved but don't want to impose on the lives of their children and grandchildren. Many times, they remain very loving yet somewhat distant and not typically active agents of spiritual influence within the lives of their grandchildren. There are many exceptions to this, but even the grandparents who are active in the lives of their grandchildren don't necessarily have the type of relationship where conversations about God and faith are natural. Here are a few tips for creating the kind of environment to have this spiritual influence.

1. **START YOUNG:** It is much easier to talk to a 4-year-old about God than it is to talk to a 16-year-old about God. Start early by helping them understand when they hang out with grandma and grandpa they are often going to talk about God. As they get older, it won't be as difficult to continue these conversations.

2. **BE NOSY:** It is not a good idea to be nosy in your son/daughter's marital relationship; however, when it comes to your grandchildren, get into their lives as often as possible. Call them, ask questions, spoil them, play with them, take them on trips, and do things they like to do. Through it all, look for opportunities to shape their view of God and share how amazing He is.

3. **CHALLENGES IN GRANDPARENTING TEENS:** If you are starting this with a teenaged grandchild, it can be challenging to move your relationship in a spiritual direction. It is okay to force some of these moments, but don't do this too often. Take advantage of some natural desires that teens have to break away from Mom and Dad. Sometimes they will do anything to get away from normal family life. This creates a unique opportunity by offering grandchildren a break from their parents and siblings, yet it can be one that strengthens your relationship with them.

4. **ENCOURAGING FAMILY:** Don't assume that faith activities are taking place in your grandchild's home because it is what you did with your children in years past. Everyone needs a little encouragement at times and a nudge in the right direction. Gently encourage your adult children to begin this process.

SIBLINGS

Whether your siblings are young or old, whether you are 10 years old or 85 years old, you have an opportunity to talk to your brothers and sisters about faith. Share some recent lessons you have heard or verses you have read that stuck out to you. If you and your siblings have young children, share your Imparting Faith experiences with them. If you are a teen and have younger siblings, you may not realize how much your younger siblings look up to you, but your spiritual example is very influential.

MENTORS

The goal of a mentor is to care about the child, have fun, yet become an additional spiritual support especially as the child-parent relationship is strained in the teen years. See page 34 for more information on mentors.

1. CASUAL MENTORS:

A young person needs multiple mentors and several positive influences in their life. A casual mentor is someone who strives to develop positive relationships with the children and teens in their congregation. A casual mentor takes time to keep up with how the children and teens are doing and spends time with them at church or at other family or church-related activities. If the idea of being a mentor is new to you, and you do not have any existing relationships with a family, start by helping teach a Bible class or inviting a family you want to get to know better out to lunch. DO NOT simply go up to a family you don't know and say, "Can I be a mentor to your child?"

2. DEDICATED MENTORS:

A teen or child can also benefit from a more intense mentor relationship. Although a child can have many casual mentors, he/she should only have one, or at most, two dedicated mentors. A dedicated mentor should ONLY be set up by the parents. Parents should approach an individual only when an existing, trusting relationship is established between a mentor and a family. A dedicated mentor provides an additional family-type relationship with someone who is not a part of the everyday family routine.

FRIENDSHIPS

Friendships are some of the most significant influences in our lives. Friends can often be afraid of being spiritually influential because they don't want to offend by pushing their beliefs. However, everyone needs to be challenged spiritually. It is especially true that while undertaking new endeavors like imparting faith, true friends can provide accountability, spark creativity, and become a catalyst for spiritual growth. Open yourself up to becoming that friend for someone else and allow someone into your life to encourage you spiritually. Many of us have friendships that are ready for this step. Don't be afraid to talk about faith and grow together.

ENCOURAGING DEVELOPMENT

Children have a natural tendency when they are very young to be curious about life. Find ways to encourage this and to dive deeper into their curiosity. As your kids get a little older, they will have a desire to explore, think, and ask a lot of questions. They may ask about God and what He has done, what He is like, and who He is. As they become teenagers, they will want to become independent and pursue God in their own way. It is so important at each step of the way to shift with them into their new way of looking at things. If you can look ahead and shift your approach to helping them explore who God is, they will allow you to guide their faith until they have a faith that is fully their own.

SHARE THIS BOOK

If you want to share these ideas with your family, other parents, or your church, simply share this book with them. It is the best non-threatening way to go about sharing all of these ideas.

INFANTS

FOUNDATION

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT:

The birth of a child is an important time for commitment. With most important moments in life there are verbal commitments. For example, a wedding day or baptism always has a verbal devotion. But there isn't always a verbal commitment when it comes to the birth of a child. It doesn't need to be a formal occasion, but it is an important time for you to commit to your family, to God, or to whomever you choose that you will do your best to raise your child in faith. This is also an important time when your family, your friends, or your church will commit to help you raise your child in faith.

WHAT YOU NEED TO DO:

Spend some time in prayer about raising your newborn in faith. You will be overwhelmed, but establishing a regular time to pray for your newborn and the decisions that you will make as a parent is very important. Even though bringing your newborn to church on Sunday may seem like a hassle, getting into the habit is very important and a big part of laying a foundation of support for you and your family.

WHAT TO EXPECT:

If your church is willing, on the first Sunday you are at church with your newborn, introduce your baby to the whole congregation. If this is not something your church does, have a small gathering of family and friends. Make a commitment to raise your child in faith to the best of your ability. Ask for a commitment from your family, friends, or church to help you raise your child in faith to the best of their ability. If asking for a commitment is uncomfortable for you, then say a prayer or have someone else pray to tell God how important it is to you, your family, and your friends that your newborn grows to believe in Him. Ask God to help everyone strive to teach and model Christianity to your child as he/she grows and becomes ready to learn.

OBSTACLES:

This whole process may make you incredibly nervous. That's okay; that is normal. This time with family and friends will be so important to set a foundation of love and support for your family and specifically for your newborn as he or she begins life's journey.

SCRIPTURE TO SHARE:

“Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.” (Proverbs 22:6, NIV)

2'S & 3'S

BLESSINGS

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT:

It is important that we instill in our children a sense of value that comes only from God. A blessing serves as an outlet to pass on special value to our children and to show them that God loves them. It demonstrates that their parents think enough of them to want to bless them in the most important areas of life. This is really about passing on a blessing from God to children through their parents.

WHAT YOU NEED TO DO:

This could be part of a nighttime routine to accompany singing a song together and prayer. A biblical blessing often includes parents placing their hands on the child and saying encouraging words to them. This can be as simple as saying, "We love you just as you are. God loves you just as you are. He made you special." It can become something lengthier as the children get older. Even if they do not fully grasp who God is, or what love is, it is still important to lay a foundation for spiritual upbringing.

Numbers 6:24-26 is a blessing God commanded to be spoken over God's people.

Psalm 139:13-16 is a great passage showing how we were made with care. It is easy to change this to a blessing by changing a few of the pronouns so that you can say it to your child instead of yourself. (You might want to write it down in blessing format.) If you want a little more variety, try doing this with other parts of Psalm 139. Keep your blessings short enough for you to remember. Repetition is the key.

OBSTACLES:

Starting any new routine takes consistency. There are many things in life that can get in the way or interrupt a nighttime routine. If we view blessings as an important aspect of raising our children in the Lord, we will make time to add this to our often too busy routine.

STORY TO SHARE:

My friend Matt Dabbs described his family's early experience with blessings: "When my wife and I first started saying a blessing to our son before we put him to bed at night, she did it first. She recited 'The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face to shine upon you and give you peace' (NIV). Well, the next night it was my turn. I accidentally switched out the last word *peace* with the word *rest*. Our son picked up on the difference immediately. He said, 'Mommy says peace.' I thought that was pretty good for a two-year-old! Our children are watching and listening. It is up to us to raise them in the Lord. No one else is going to do it for us. Where will our son be in five years? I can rest assured that if we keep him focused on God, things will be better than if we don't."¹⁰

CREATIVE IDEAS:

Make up your own blessing for your children. Think about what you really want your children to know. It may be a good idea to start with a short blessing, and as they get older, add to it when you know they may need blessings for different things as well as additional encouragement. This may be the time for you to develop a habit for bedtime stories. They don't always have to be biblical stories, but this develops the expectation for a quality fun time with family.

¹⁰ Matt Dabbs, Matt's Message, Bulletin for the Northwest Church of Christ (November, 2011).

4'S AND 5'S

STORIES

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT:

Stories help bring the Bible to life in a way that your child will know the people and events are real.

WHAT YOU NEED TO DO:

Find a good book; children this age like to hear good stories over and over. Find Bible storybooks that peak your child's interest and imagination. Books with illustrations help keep a child's attention. An illustrated children's Bible is a great place to start. Use special voices to read stories, use visuals, act out the story, sing a song about the story, or have your child tell the story.

Once you have read a book or Bible story, summarize the lesson in a very simple way by making one point for each story. During the week, if you notice your child displaying one of the positive aspects of the story, try to recognize this by verbally praising the behavior.

WHAT TO EXPECT:

Young children love it when parents read to them. Most children will ask questions about the story, opening an opportunity for you to share more of the Bible's details. Always have a Bible nearby and talk about God's Word. You'll want to be clear that these events are real and not fairy tales.

OBSTACLES:

Some children have trouble sitting still. Keep the stories age-and-stage appropriate. Identify the time of day that your child is most receptive to story time. If your child's favorite book is about superheroes or princesses, take advantage of those interests by selecting stories about the super heroes of the Bible, both men and women, young and old, that followed God's commands.

EXAMPLE:

Show your child the story of creation in your Bible, Genesis 1:1–2:3. Summarize the story, stopping to emphasize all of the parts where it is clear that God really cares about us (primarily 1:26–31). After summarizing the story, ask your child a few questions with easy answers. Yes and no questions work well with this age group.

Did God create the world in three days? No

Did God make Adam and Eve? Yes

Did God spend a lot of time making you and me? Yes

Did God rest on the last day? Yes

When the answer is false, ask for the correct answer to see if your children know it.

If they don't know the correct answer, be sure not to be negative. Simply go back and tell that part of the story again.

Go outside and enjoy the beauty of God's creation. Point out all the things God made and what day He made them.

Read the story again on the following day. Ask your child to tell you the story.

STORY IDEAS:

Stories to share: Creation, Adam and Eve, Noah, Moses and the Exodus (lots of story ideas there), David and Goliath, Esther, Samuel, Joshua and the spies. There are many great stories to tell in the Old Testament. Jesus' action stories are great to share also. For example, you could share about when Jesus healed, had compassion on someone, and performed miracles. If you are looking for some additional simple action stories, read the Gospel of Mark.

RESOURCES:

The company Big Idea, who produces *Veggie Tales*, does a great job of telling a few of these stories, too. It would be great family time to watch one of their movies together and repeat the primary point of the story. It may be helpful to tell the story again and explain which parts of the story are real and which parts are fantasy.

100 Bible Stories, 100 Bible Songs, by Stephen Elkins

Veggie Tales Bible Storybook: With Scripture from the NlrV (Big Idea Books), by Cindy Kenney

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Bedtime Bible Story Book: 365 Read-aloud Stories from the Bible, by Daniel Partner and Kathy Arbuckle

Bible Stories for Children, by Geoffrey Horn

The Beginner's Bible for Toddlers, by Mission City Press Inc. and Kelly Pulley

KINDERGARTEN

TALK ABOUT CHURCH

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT:

Talking about church serves to connect church and home. Discussing later in the week what was talked about in class or worship service can really help to reinforce the lesson. Talking about church in your home makes faith something that isn't only at church, but that is also lived out in your life.

WHAT YOU NEED TO DO:

Just talk! Make a point to have lunch together after church. Talking relatively soon after church assures that their memory is as fresh as possible. Depending on the child, they may share all the details about class or none. Keep asking. Avoid questions that can be answered with "yes" or "no." Use the materials they brought home as conversation starters. If they did not bring anything home, you may want to ask your child's teacher what was learned in class or Bible hour. Discuss how this lesson applies to your child and your family.

OBSTACLES:

Finding time to do this regularly is always a challenge. If Sunday lunch does not work, you could choose one or more of these often underused times to speak with your child about God and Jesus: car time, snack time, bedtime, mealtime, special-treat time, and one-on-one time. Find ways to make simple things like eating ice cream into a special moment for your family. You are guaranteed to have distractions (and even other things that your kids will want to do) while you talk about church. By establishing a routine, your child will come to expect this special family time, and you will have made it a priority.

IDEAS AND EXAMPLES:

After church, ask about the lesson from your child's Bible class. Pull out the handouts your child received in class. See if looking at the handout prompts your child to share. Your child can either summarize the story or you can.

If the story was from John 11:1-45, Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead, talk about how this miracle helped people believe in Jesus. Talk about the amazing things Jesus did and still does

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for us. The handout will usually provide some family conversation starters and a summary of the story. These can be utilized to discuss the story today and to revisit during the week. Later in the week, pull out the family Bible and read the story together. It is also important to talk and ask questions about your children's thoughts on the worship service or Bible hour, a video shown, a song, a Scripture, communion, giving, etc. Select a small part about worship or class and have a talk about it. Ask things like: Why do we sing songs? Do you like singing to God? Why? What is your favorite song that we sing? What do you think is God's favorite song? This way, they begin to think about church and what it is about.

1ST GRADE PRAYER

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT:

Prayer time may be the most important time that you spend with your child. If done consistently and well, they will likely cherish it for the rest of their lives. Once this foundation is built, it will continue with ease into their teen years and grow over time.

WHAT YOU NEED TO DO:

Find the time to pray. If your family is in the habit of tucking the kids into bed, this nightly ritual can be a great time to talk about friends, family, and teachers, as well as pray for them. Help the children understand that God helps us through everything we experience and He likes us to share with Him about our needs. This is an important time to teach this to your children. For example, no matter what happens at school, they can talk to God about it right away and He will help them. Explain how God answers every prayer, but in His way and not always instantly. Your children may not fully grasp this concept yet, but they need to know God is not like a wizard granting anything they wish.

OBSTACLES:

There will be times when you don't want to leave your relaxing seat or the project that needs to be done by the next day to tuck the children into bed. You may have just sent your child to bed after he/she spent the entire day not listening to you or having a bad day in general. Just remember how important this time is for your children's faith development as they learn to rely on God. In spite of a bad day, you can use this time to re-engage in a positive way by assuring them how much you and God love them regardless of what they do. This time can also be discouraging if your child doesn't want to talk or isn't the talkative type. Find something about prayer time that they will like. For example, scratch your child's back while you talk or ask them to tell you something funny that happened that day. You could remind them that they either have to go to sleep right now or they can stay up a few more minutes if they talk and pray with you.

¹¹ Anonymous quote.

STORIES TO SHARE:

“In my family, talking with my mom and dad every night before bed is the thing that I remember the most. They came in nearly every night to give me a back massage, to talk about the day, and to say a prayer. I loved that time every night! We laughed; I cried sometimes, and we talked to God about it all. I wouldn’t trade that time for any other memory.”¹¹

2ND GRADE

FAMILY DEVOTIONALS

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT:

At this age most children are ready to move from story time to devotional time. They are ready to start reading God's Word and learning more details about it.

WHAT YOU NEED TO DO:

Establish a time for your family to gather and devote time to studying God's Word together. Establishing a routine is again critical to making this process a success. Your children need to see that you view this time as important. Decide what resources you need for this time of devotion to be valuable to all family members. Keep the devotionals relatively short (i.e., 15 minutes or less), basic, and age-appropriate. If your children are enjoying themselves, then adding more time may be a good idea. At this age, your children will enjoy activities that are interactive and hands on. This will also support the learning process. Keep the activity fun for everyone involved. If your child has visiting friends, involve them in the devotional as well.

OBSTACLES:

Finding time to plan can be difficult. Use a book that already has the devotions created for you. Decide how often you will have family devotions and stick to the schedule. Display the commitment to putting God first. You may also encounter competing interests, like playing games, swimming, TV, or computer. Piggyback these activities onto your devotional time, doing them together once the devotional is completed.

CREATIVE IDEAS:

Changing the scenery can really make this experience more memorable. Try doing a devotional at the beach, in the backyard under the stars, on a nature trail, during a picnic, or while backyard camping. A few devotional books written for children include *Did You Know Devotions For Kids*, *The Amazing Bible Fact Book For Kids*, *365 Trivia Twist Devotions*.

DEVO: OBEYING GOD AND PARENTS

Read or retell the story of Jonah. If you choose to read the story, make sure you have a children's Bible or a very simple version. One of the fun things about the Jonah story is making the storm noise, then being completely silent when Jonah is thrown overboard. After you tell/read the story ask: (1) What did God ask Jonah to do? (2) What did Jonah do instead? (3) What happened to Jonah? (4) What did Jonah do to get out of the belly of the great fish? (5) What should Jonah have done instead of running away? (6) Does God want us to obey Him? Does God want us to obey our parents (Eph. 6:1)? When we obey our parents, God is happy with us and that is important.

3RD GRADE

FAMILY SERVE

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT:

Our Western culture is increasingly egocentric, meaning that we want to do things that help ourselves and sometimes find no motivation to serve others. This focus on self is something that is taught by our society and is not how God made us. A parent who focuses on serving others will help teach children that this world is not all about them.

WHAT YOU NEED TO DO:

Plan a service activity once a month with your third grader. This might be challenging, but there are plenty of things to do. You could visit a church shut-in who would love some company, especially from a cute child. Have your child think of some questions to ask the person before you get there. Other suggestions: Pick up trash in a park. Make food for a family who is having a difficult time and include your child in the process. Write a letter to someone who needs encouragement. Donate old clothes to someone you know, someone who needs them, or Goodwill. Make a holiday basket for those who might need a little extra during the holidays. Buy a Christmas present for an underprivileged child or for an organization like Toys for Tots.

WHAT TO EXPECT:

You can expect to feel a little out of your comfort zone on some of these projects. That is okay; it will be a great growing opportunity for you too! Your child will love doing things for others if you explain why you are doing these acts of service. Make sure you include your children in the process by asking for their ideas and offering them different options to select. For example, if you are writing a letter together, have them pick out the stationery.

OBSTACLES:

Make sure you choose something that is realistic and based on the amount of time that you have. It is easy for these service projects to turn into good intentions that are never accomplished. Avoid this by not getting too ambitious if you know you don't have the time. You may find yourself struggling to come up with ideas that a 3rd grader can do. Ask around and get ideas from other people, but keep in mind that doing something is better than having good intentions and not doing anything. Even if it is something simple, it will be remembered and will have an impact on

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your child. Avoid just sending money or doing things where your children can't really be involved. Remember, the goal is for them to give time to someone else to make a difference.

4TH GRADE

WORSHIP & GIVING

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT:

Worship is the most important thing we do as Christians. It is about letting God know how much we love Him and appreciate Him. It is about a vertical relationship between us and God that isn't first and foremost about our wants or our self-improvement. It is all about glorifying God.

WHAT YOU NEED TO DO:

Talk about worship and what it is. It is important that your child knows what it is and how to do it. Singing is one way. If your family can carry a tune, then singing a few songs together can be a special time. If you are not a singing family, then you may want to consider purchasing some CD's and singing along. It is also important to tell your children that everything we do is worship to God. Romans 12 talks about our bodies being living sacrifices. This means our lives themselves are worship to God. Our choices, the way we treat others, and how we spend our time are worship. Once they understand this idea, share with them how you worshipped God today with your choices and actions and allow them to do the same. Communicate with them what worship at church is all about, how it is important, holy, sacred, and is essentially us coming into the presence of God.

OBSTACLES:

This may be a difficult thing to teach. Your child may not understand at first. Repetition is the important method here. Repeat this idea and allow it to sink in. Remember, being consistent in what you teach and how you act is incredibly important. If you are teaching your children to worship God in all their actions, then you must be worshipping God in your actions as well, or they will be misled by your example. There is room for mistakes. If you notice you are having a tough week, use this as a moment to teach your fourth grader that God forgives us. Christians mess up. Confessing this to God is also a part of worship. We honor Him by acknowledging our weaknesses and His strength.

GIVING:

Giving is another part of worship. Luke 12:34 (NIV) says, "for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." You may want to look at your own giving first and make sure your heart

matches your giving. All of us agree that God is the most important thing in our lives; but, if we take an honest look at where our money is going, our treasure may not agree with us. The rule of 10 percent is a good place to start; 10 percent was the expected percentage given to God in the Old Testament and is still a good rule to follow today. Not every family will be able to give 10 percent, but the point is to take a hard look at your finances and stretch yourself to give. Once you have done that, teach your children about giving by sharing how you give to the church. If they earn any money or get an allowance, teach them to give 10 percent of that to God. Share how you give your time to the church and how this is worship to God. Being generous with our time and money is the attitude of worship that we want to pass along to our children.

5TH GRADE

MENTORS & GOD TALK

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT:

Faith isn't something that should be discussed only at church. Faith is something to be lived out, studied, and talked about among our friends and in our homes. Talking about faith outside of church is one of the best and most natural ways for children to know that faith is real and something to experience in a family environment. Fifth grade is the best time to find a non-family member to commit to being a part of your child's life. There will be a time in the near future when your children will be less likely to want to share things with you. They will also have a harder time listening to you. For some, this has already begun. If they have another spiritual adult influence in their life who has a strong relationship with them now, they will seek help from that person when they need advice throughout their teen years and do not want to talk to a parent about concerns. They can get healthy feedback from a mentor instead of only sharing their lives with their less experienced and often immature friends.

WHAT YOU NEED TO DO:

1. FIND A TIME TO DISCUSS SPIRITUAL THINGS WITH YOUR 5TH GRADER. Sunday after church during lunch is usually a good time. While you are eating, talk about Bible class and what you learned at church. Make this casual, and ask questions that may get your family thinking about faith, worship, and what pleases God.

2. TALK TO SOMEONE ABOUT BEING A MENTOR TO YOUR CHILD. Explain what the purpose of mentoring is and ask him/her to commit to helping you raise your child in faith. It is important for mentors to have some quality/fun time with your child. The mentor will just be a friend who listens, hangs out, and helps encourage spiritual development. The mentor is not to be a disciplinarian or someone that tells you every detail of the conversations with your child. However, you must trust this mentor to inform you of any concerns about what your child shares. Get the mentor involved in the faith-talk process. This will be a great way to take the mentor's influence to the next level.

3. FIFTH GRADE IS ALSO A GOOD TIME FOR YOU TO TALK WITH YOUR CHILD ABOUT SEX. It is okay to keep it basic. Don't be under the false impression that your children don't know anything about it. They will need much more information in time, especially about romantic

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relationships and how to set appropriate boundaries. Also, many school systems talk about sex during 5th grade, so the perfect time to talk to your children might be when you know they are studying that subject in their school.

6TH GRADE

FAITH BASICS

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT:

One of the most important things about Christianity is knowing who Christ is and the basics about how He lived. Most of the time we assume that kids will absorb the basics if we just get them to church. This assumption is false. Oftentimes, many teens who grew up in Christian families must be taught the basics about Jesus and the Christian faith once they get to youth group age.

WHAT YOU NEED TO DO:

Define, discuss, and study. Help your 6th grader learn basic faith elements: faith, grace, baptism, salvation, God's love, sin, forgiveness, church, repentance, discipleship, worship, and service.

READ THESE TOGETHER:

1. Gospel of Mark: The most important part of being a Christian is following Christ. You cannot follow Christ unless you know who He is. You cannot think about what Jesus would do in your tough situations unless you have really studied what Jesus did in His tough situations. Discover who Jesus is together. Allow your children to ask questions. Allow yourself to ask questions even if you don't know the answers.

2. Sermon on Mount (Matthew 5-7): This is one of the most challenging sections of Scripture. Let it challenge you and your child together. Take your time and really examine it. Was Jesus serious when He said these things? How does your life need to change if He was serious?

VERSES TO GET YOU STARTED ON DIFFERENT TOPICS:

- Faith: Hebrews 11:1; John 20:24-29; Matthew 17:20; 1 Peter 1:7
- Baptism: Acts 2; Romans 6; Acts 8:26-36
- Gospel: Literally means good news. What good news is it referencing? See Romans 1:16-17.
- God's Love: John 3:16; 1 John 3
- Sin: Romans 6:23; 1 John 3:4; 1 John 3:9
- Forgiveness: Acts 13:38; Acts 26:18; Luke 3:3; Ephesians 1:7
- Repentance: Acts 2:38; Acts 3:19
- Discipleship: John 15:10-16

- Worship: Revelation 4 gives a very clear picture of worship in the New Testament. See also John 4:21.

HOW TO GET STARTED:

The best thing to do is set a weekly time to discuss faith. This can be a really special time. Make this an enjoyable time by combining it with something your child likes to do. Read your chapter for the week then go get some ice cream or a smoothie and talk about what you read. Let your 6th grader choose the activity or place. If your child likes sports, take a tennis ball or a football and throw it while you talk. It is amazing how much more relaxed and enjoyable this time can become if it doesn't feel like school or forced in any way.

Start with the topics. Pick one night of the week you want to talk about faith. Just cover one topic a week. When you finish with those, read the Gospel of Mark next. Try to cover a chapter a week, but cover more or less if you get ambitious or want to slow down a little. Talk about the Sermon on the Mount last. It is the most intense and requires the most explanation.

LET YOUR 6TH GRADE TALK: Discuss together what these things mean. This is an exciting time for the faith development of your child. Your child's ability to understand abstract concepts like faith and grace should be quite strong at this point, which should open up more stimulating conversations and critical thinking about what you read together.

OBSTACLES:

Sometimes reading level can be a challenge for 6th graders. In my experience, the New Living Translation is the best and easiest for early adolescents to read. It uses simple language and gets straight to the point. As reading levels progress, consider more advanced translations.

You might feel that you don't know enough about these books or subjects. Two helpful books to consider are *Mark for Everyone* or *Matthew for Everyone*, both by N.T. Wright. Both of these are easy to read and provide some accurate and useful information for you to study before reading through these biblical books and passages with your 6th grader.

"Even though two out of three parents of children under the age of eighteen attend religious services at least once a month, the majority of parents do not spend any time during a typical week discussing spiritual issues."¹²

~Reggie Joiner

¹² Reggie Joiner, *Think Orange*, 86.

7TH GRADE

IMPARTING FAITH TO TEENS

The odds are that if you have young children, you are excited about the possibility of sharing faith with them as they grow up. Odds are that if you have teens instead of young children . . . you are a little less excited. The fact is that teens naturally begin to separate from their parents in their teen years. It is a normal part of growing up. Somewhere between 12 and 14-years-old, teens begin to seek more control over their lives. They will have friends that they want to spend time with that you have never met; this is normal. Some of their pursuit of control is healthy; however, some of it needs to be delayed a few years. As teens take more control over their social life, school success, relationships, and extracurricular clubs/sports/activities, it is the parents' job to help them take more control over their own spiritual life. They may be more resistant to doing faith activities as a family in the later teen years. It is important to continue to do faith activities, but to pull back and give them more room to grow in their own relationship with God. Parents who recognize the change in their teens and allow them to take responsibility of their own spiritual life are the ones who are going to be successful in continuing faith activities throughout the teen years.

HOW DO YOU ADJUST?

Take a minute to look ahead at the faith activities for 7th–12th graders. In 7th grade, most teens are still completely dependent on parents. This is a great time to talk about dating and boundaries. For most teens, it is in 8th and 9th grades that the biggest change in parenting occurs. This is why it is a great opportunity to teach 8th graders how to be a Christian on their own. This activity is still very much controlled by parents, but it should be casual by allowing 8th graders to joke, ask questions, or take the conversation off track. It is in 9th and 10th grades where parents must take their first full step back. For most 9th and 10th graders, having a regular prayer time is not too invasive. It should be brief and casual and it shouldn't invade their space or much of their time. Allowing them to choose when, where, and how prayer time happens is important. For parents of 9th and 10th graders, it is also important to set an expectation for them to read their Bible and pray on their own. Hopefully you have been modeling this for them, but if not, it is not too late to start. Teens need to know what Christians do when they are not seen in public. By 11th and 12th grades, they should have gained most of the control over their lives and should know how to be Christians without the supervision of their family. Many 11th and 12th graders love to be challenged by new and exciting things. Challenging them and yourself with spiritual disciplines is one of the best ways for them to continue to grow while allowing them to retain much of the control over their own spiritual lives.

LISTEN & UNDERSTAND

The best advice in parenting teens is to listen and to try to understand. Teens are very reactive and typically don't communicate very well. If they are resistant to something on a regular basis, that usually means you crossed a boundary line. Ask them how you can do faith things in a better way. Let them take ownership in your faith activities and conversations. Give them choices and listen to them when they speak. Teens change so rapidly that if you don't spend most of your time listening, they will feel like you don't understand them anymore. If they sense you imposing your agenda on them, or they expect criticism, they will not be open with you. This is not a time for lectures; this is a time of listening and growing together with God as the ultimate authority over your lives.

DATING & BOUNDARIES

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT:

It is extremely important to set expectations for your teen in dating, such as setting limitations for expressing physical affection and in communicating that sexual gratification is only appropriate in marriage. Understanding how to have a healthy relationship beyond friendship is an important and exciting part of growing up. If you don't talk with teens about this, then the world, television, and their friends will set the expectations for dating and sex. The dating relationship that your teen has in high school can significantly affect the rest of his/her life. Sometimes a Christian teen brings a non-Christian teen to God, and even after they break up, the new Christian teen remains faithful. Unfortunately, far too many Christian teens are drawn away by their high school relationships and never return to faith. Oftentimes teens become too serious too soon and their lives become very complicated because of the decisions they make in their middle or high school relationships.

WHAT YOU NEED TO DO:

Talk with teens about relationships. Share stories about the mistakes that you made and what you learned. Don't forget to share the funny stories, too. This can bring you closer together. Say a prayer with them regularly for their future spouse. Ask them to think of the top five qualities they hope for in their future spouse. Have them write these down to compare the relationship they are in to what they hope to have in their marriage. Talk with them about boundaries (for example: physical and sexual limits, expectations for themselves and their girlfriend/boyfriend, time together, not sacrificing personal values for the sake of the relationship, or losing who you are in order to feel loved). Help them keep their boundaries by restricting the amount of time alone that they spend with their girlfriend/boyfriend.

It is easy for teens to become obsessive about their dating relationships. Keep a close eye on this. Allow them more freedom as they show more responsibility. Keep an interest in their relationships. If you notice your teen spending all of his/her free time with a boyfriend/girlfriend to the exclusion of other friends, they are too close. If they break up, your teen will likely have a harder time dealing with it because of the loss of friend support prior to the relationship. Your teen may rush into another relationship to avoid feeling lonely. Let your teens know you want to hear about their lives and you will try your best not to judge or criticize. Dads especially tend to say things like "You aren't allowed to date until you're 30." Although it is an obvious joke, this communicates to teens that they must keep their dating lives secret. Highlight the good choices

they have made in their relationships before making any correcting comments. Continue these conversations as they mature in their dating relationships through middle and high school.

OTHER IDEAS: Read a book together about dating and boundaries. They might not want to, but simply tell them that they aren't allowed to date until they finish the book with you. That will motivate them! Check out *The Ten Commandments of Dating: Student Edition*, by Ben Young and Dr. Samuel Adams.

8TH GRADE

DEVOTIONS 2.0

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT:

This may be one of the last consistent and dedicated times you have with your teens. Starting in 8th grade, your teens will begin to have a life apart from you as they are drawn to spend more time with friends and want to be involved in sports or other activities away from home. This is tough for a lot of parents. It is a natural time for teens to begin to break away and become more independent, but it is hard to have to compete for your teen's time when you brought them into this world and raised them since birth. At some point you want your teen to move on and gain independence in a responsible way. Defining the path for teenagers to properly gain more freedom will be an important conversation for you to have. Since your teens are becoming more independent and will be out on their own more, it is important to start talking together about practical Christian living: the character and actions of Christians when no one else is looking and when they encounter difficult decisions in the face of increasing peer pressure and personal pressure to fit in and feel accepted.

WHAT YOU NEED TO DO:

Set a time to have a short devotional with your teen each week. Some families may want to do this together; others may prefer one-on-one time with their teen. Decide what works for your situation. Keep the lessons short (15 minutes or less). You don't want your teens to dread this time. Try to pick a time when they aren't going to want to do other things. Before bedtime might be the most natural time unless your teen typically works on homework up until bedtime. Set limits with your teen that this time should not include texting or calls from friends.

SUGGESTED THINGS TO STUDY:

- Galatians 5:13-22: This Scripture talks about the contrast between a sinful life and a Spirit-filled life.
- James: James is probably the most practical book on Christian living.
- John or Mark: If your teen is more interested in the teachings of Jesus, the Gospel of John is ideal. Mark is the easiest to read and is more action packed.
- Philippians: It is a short, encouraging book you can read in one night, but you can also spend more time talking about it with your teen.

OTHER IDEAS:

You may consider picking a Christian book to read. This can be a good way for questions and discussion to come up naturally. Make sure you choose one that is easy to read and related to the things your teen may want to talk about. You could go to a bookstore together or look online for books. Your teens will be more interested if they are part of this decision.

9TH - 10TH GRADE

PRAYER 2.0

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT:

Our prayers should change as we get older. Childlike prayers are some of the sweetest things, but it is important for teens to know how to pray as adults. It shows growth and maturity in their faith. It is important for them to know how to talk to God about their lives, both the good and the bad. The best way for them to experience real prayer is to experience prayer with someone who opens up to God.

WHAT YOU NEED TO DO:

Have a prayer time with your teen a few times a week. Set regular days, but be flexible if necessary. Come to the prayer time with praise, thanks, personal prayers, and prayers for people you know. Set the expectation that your teen will do the same. The goal here is to pray about life and its struggles and obstacles. It may take a little while for you to get there with your teen. Prayers of thanks and praise may be a good start until teenagers are ready to open up a little more. They may be reluctant to share and that's okay. Pray for each other. Keep it relatively short. Don't set a time limit; just finish when it feels like you have expressed what you both needed to say to God. As the parent, you are modeling how to talk to God. If this does not come naturally to you, you may want to talk with your spouse or a trusted adult about how to become more comfortable with the process. Also, ask God to help you be a positive example to your teen.

OBSTACLES:

You can expect to have many obstacles along the way. The simple facts that teens are hormonal and their lives are becoming more and more complicated don't help. If they don't want to share, don't make them. Just patiently share with them, encourage them, and stay consistent even if the time is discouraging to you. Listen well! This is the time to share with God. Don't go into lecture mode during this time if your teen isn't doing something you like. Save those necessary lectures for another time.

Are you or your teen not comfortable praying aloud? That's okay for a while; just share what you want to share with God to each other first and then pray silently together. Give your teen time to get comfortable with this for a few months, and then set the expectation that you want

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to be able to pray with each other aloud. Compliment him/her for any genuine efforts, whether it is sharing prayer requests or the prayer itself.

11TH - 12TH GRADE
SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT:

Spiritual discipline sounds like someone is getting a spanking, but the simplest definition of spiritual disciplines is that we are practicing being like Jesus. No one should expect to be the world's best football player the first time they step on the field. Likewise, no one can expect to be the greatest trumpet player with only a few hours of practice a week. Why is it that we expect to act just like Jesus in His great inspirational moments when we don't do the things that He did in His quiet moments? Sometimes we want the wisdom of Jesus without the work. Spiritual disciplines are practices that connect us with God and make us stronger spiritually.¹³ Here is a list

Solitude	Spend time alone apart from distractions. Set aside a certain amount of undisturbed time. Whether it is 15 minutes or an hour, place yourself in an environment where you cannot be distracted. Try to empty your mind of all of the "to do's" and invite God into your alone time. Pray to Him if you want or just slow down and let your thoughts dwell on godly things.
Silence	Don't speak for a certain amount of time each week. Try to stay silent for at least an hour. Make sure you choose to do this at home or a place where people know that you have made a weekly commitment to silence.
Fasting & Prayer	Abstain from food or anything else that occupies your time in order to spend time in devotion to God. By not eating, you will feel the weakness of your body and realize how you are reliant on God. Fast and pray once or twice a month in order to give God your devotion.
Frugality	Use your money for purposes outside your own needs for a specified period of time. For a month don't spend your money selfishly. Don't buy music, rent movies, eat out, or take any trips to the mall. Use the money that you would normally use for yourself and give it to others.
Sacrifice	Give up something you want for the sake of the needs of another or for God. For a month, look for opportunities daily to give up something for another. If nothing comes up on a daily basis then think ahead about someone whom you can sacrifice for.

¹³ Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines* (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991), 3-4.

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Study	There are several different ways you can practice the discipline of study. 1. Memorize 2 Scriptures a week. 2. Read a commentary. 3. Spend some time slowly reading and thinking about a book of the Bible.
Worship	Focus on your whole life being worship. Think about how daily actions promote your worship to God or take away from it. Read Romans 12.
Celebration	Practice being grateful and thankful. Express encouragement and thankfulness to others. Each day before you go to sleep write down or tell someone what you were thankful for that day, and what things you should have been thankful for.
Service	Give your time to the church, service organizations, the elderly, or others you know. There are many things your local church might need. There are also many nonprofit organizations that are in desperate need of volunteers.
Prayer	Take deliberate steps to pray regularly and with purpose. If you struggle finding the words, start by praying the Psalms until you find words of your own. It helps to get started with someone else's thoughts so we can express our thoughts better.
Bible Reading	Make a commitment to read the Bible in a year. This is a big commitment. If you choose this one, feel free not to strain yourself by adding other disciplines throughout the year. If you read three chapters a day on Monday through Saturday, and then five chapters on Saturday, you will finish the Bible in a year. There are many strategies to reading the Bible in a year that you can follow. Just search online for the one that you like the most.

My recommendation would be to pick one of these disciplines to focus on for a month or two. Have your teen do the same. Talk weekly about how it is going. Ask questions such as: Is it going well? What is working best for you? What is hard about it? Does it help you focus spiritually? Why? This faith activity is a little different from the others. You are, in some ways, cutting some of the dependence that your teenagers have on you spiritually by allowing them to grow on their own, while you grow too. In this stage of their spiritual life, you will be more of a supporter by checking in and talking about how it is going very casually when it seems like they are open to conversation. Every few months pick new disciplines to focus on together.

RESOURCES

Want to know more about the disciplines? There are two fantastic books on this: *The Spirit of the Disciplines* by Dallas Willard and *Celebration of Discipline* by Richard Foster. Your 11th or

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12th grader may be too busy or unwilling to read these books. Reading these is not required to be successful in practicing the spiritual disciplines. You may want to read parts of these books and highlight portions that you find interesting to share with your teen. A good process would be to read at least the first few chapters of *The Spirit of the Disciplines* and treat *Celebration of the Discipline* as a reference book to explore the details as you practice a particular discipline.

There are many other disciplines. Most of them are mentioned in *Celebration of Discipline*. Make sure that you stay committed to your disciplines of choice for the amount of time that you designate. If you start strong and fade out, then your teen will also. Make sure that you keep up with your discipline even if your teen is struggling to keep up with his/hers. Don't guilt your teen into doing it, but continue to share what rewards you are gaining from your focused time.

FAMILY CHALLENGES

We understand that no two families are the same. Many families have one parent, two parents, no parents, or grandparents as primary caregivers, just to name a few. There are families with divorced parents, widowed parents, and remarried parents with blended stepchildren. Some families have healthy relationships while others have dysfunctional relationships. There are families with multiple faiths in the home. There are families with one child and families with more than eight children. Everyone's family will face a different obstacle when imparting faith.

The information in this section covers some of the broad challenges that many families face today and offers some suggestions on how to overcome these challenges. It is by no means exhaustive. If you find that these faith activities are more complicated than you thought and have become a burden, please seek the advice of a minister, Christian friend, or other families in your situation to find some encouragement and additional suggestions. When you are doing faith activities, you are in essence presenting who God is and what Christianity is about.

Although no parents are perfect when offering spiritual guidance in their families, realize that the presence of verbal, emotional, physical, sexual, or substance abuse in the home will greatly distort a child's view of God. If abuse occurs for a long time, it can cause significant damage to the spiritual and emotional life of a child. This can make children want nothing to do with God or Christianity because of the negative associations between their abusive parent and faith. A child has a hard time understanding the love of Christ as a father if their own parent hurt them over and over again. If you find yourself in one of these situations, and you or your spouse are not in control of your/their behavior, it is imperative that you seek professional assistance from a counselor or minister.

ONE UNBELIEVING PARENT

It can be difficult to implement these faith activities without the support of your spouse. This can be a big source of conflict between spouses. Talk with your spouse and share how important doing these faith activities is to you. Invite your spouse to participate, but make it clear that this is something that is too important not to do. Don't let their unbelief discourage you. Find someone to hold you accountable and to encourage you when you feel like sharing your faith with your family is becoming too difficult. The unbelieving parent may get jealous of the positive time you spend with your children or away from him/her. Make sure this parent has positive time with the children and with you.

ONE UNMOTIVATED PARENT

Many times, there are two believing parents, but one is unmotivated to do anything to share their faith. This can be difficult to overcome. It is important to talk about, but if you have tried that and haven't made any headway, it is important to implement the faith activities even if your spouse would rather not participate. Remember not to guilt your spouse or be pushy about it. Have open conversations about it and share some of the special moments that you have shared with your child. Be patient. Your spouse may join in the activities over time.

SINGLE PARENT

Being a single parent is difficult. The weight of responsibility that is typically spread over two adults rests on the shoulders of one. When it comes to everyday tasks like laundry and grocery shopping, there are few opportunities to share these responsibilities with friends and family. When it comes to faith development, however, it will be crucial to allow other adults to help you as your child matures. For instance, if you are a single mom, it will be necessary for you to make sure your son has a positive male role model. Sons will begin to emulate the men with whom they spend the most time, and you want to make sure those influences are positive and spiritual. If you have a daughter, it is also important for her to observe families with positive fathers as she begins to understand God as her own father and as she begins to think about qualities she would like in her future husband. Single fathers, this is equally important. Daughters will need an older female friend with whom they feel they can talk and with whom they feel comfortable to help them through some of those difficult times when a female confidant is required. It is important for your sons to know how to treat women. If this is not modeled by you, they will learn how to treat women from their friends, media, and other male influences that may not be healthy.

DIVORCED FAMILIES

There is a lot that you cannot control when it comes to being a divorced parent. You may not have full custody of your children and only get to see them once a week or less; on the other hand, if your children live with you most of the time and visit their other parent, you likely have no control over what occurs when they are visiting their mother/father. Ideally, parents after a divorce will try to co-parent their children in a manner that includes open communication about how they are parenting in different households with similar rules and discipline in each. Unfortunately, whether both parents have a belief in God or not, co-parenting can be a big challenge that often comes with a lot of conflict and ends in each parent trying to parent as they see fit; this is usually vastly different from each other. Communication between former spouses can be difficult, limited, or nonexistent, and the children are left in the middle, feeling divided between the two.

If both parents have a faith in God, then it will be important for each of you to work on the faith development of your child together. If you and your former spouse have good communication or can speak in a civil manner, then make it a point to speak on a regular basis about the faith

activities that are occurring each week. Let each other know what is going on and encourage your children to participate not only with you but also with their other parent. It is possible, for many reasons, that your child may be more comfortable doing these activities with one parent over the other. If you notice this happens, don't get discouraged or feel threatened. Try to resist the urge to "out-do" the other parent to win the favor of your child. Avoid criticizing the other parent to make your child think you are the better one; this will not help you provide a positive, Christ-centered example. Instead, it will confuse your children and make them feel they must not tell you about any positive moments they have with their other parent.

If your former spouse is not agreeable to discussing faith activities or implementing them in his/her household, stay focused on imparting faith with your children based on the amount of time you spend with them. Share with them the importance of your faith in God. If your child has a special time with you each week, it will serve not only as consistent spiritual guidance, but also as a protective factor against some of the emotional difficulties that can come with divorce.

BLENDED FAMILIES

It can be very tough to implement faith activities as a whole family within blended families. Many times, the child or teen will resent the stepparent and not want to receive any discipline or authority from him/her. Because of this, the biological parents should lead the faith activities until it is clear that the child is ready to receive spiritual direction from the stepparent. In some cases, it will be necessary for the biological parent to have faith time with the son/daughter first, apart from the stepparent, and later decide when or if the child is ready to have faith time with the stepparent or the whole family. It takes time for a stepchild to develop a relationship with their stepparents. Stepparents, be patient and positive and realize that the stepchild's faith is more important than your inclusion in this process.

CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES AND SPECIAL NEEDS

You may need to adjust activities to the abilities of your child. An activity listed as 4's and 5's in this booklet may work well with your second grader. Nobody knows your child better than you do. You know that your child may cover his/her ears when there are loud noises, won't transition quickly from one activity to the next, will not want to read in class, or will fidget the entire class time or while sitting in worship, etc. Even though your child has fidgeted or talked the entire class time, he/she has learned that God loves him; and, even though your child has colored the entire worship service, he/she has been absorbing the lyrics. You also know that he/she is surrounded by brothers and sisters who love your child. You know what works for your child. Adjust activities to meet his/her needs. Shorten story time. Use more visuals. Go with what works. Teach your child about the Bible and God's Word at a level that works for your child. Pray for guidance. There will always be individuals who are not familiar with your child's needs. Communicate with teachers

and your church family. Let them know what to expect and what works. Ask for help from your brothers and sisters in Christ and church leadership when needed.

CLOSE AGE

If you have two children close in age, you may want to consider putting them on the same track of faith activities to make doing these faith activities as a whole family easier, especially if you have more than two children. It is important to make sure that you don't neglect the important faith-related one-on-one time with them either.

LARGE AGE GAPS

When you have a large age gap between children, it is often difficult to find activities that will work for the entire family because of the different levels of spiritual development of each child. It can also be affected by the fact that a teenager's activities often become separate from the family's activities. Becoming involved with the youth group, going on youth group trips, and driving to church in another vehicle are some of the changes that will prevent your younger child from interacting as much with your older child. One way to make the most of this situation is to have your older child be a role model or mentor for your younger child. He/she can lead the dinner prayer. As often as schedules permit, sit down to dinner together. Use this time to ask about the day's activities. It is a great time to teach what the Bible says about the world. The older child can often respond to situations that are affecting your younger child, such as bullying, and can incorporate what the Bible teaches. When your older child goes on a youth group trip, talk about where they went and the purpose of their trip. Keep the spiritual journey of your entire family intertwined on a daily basis. Creative ideas include asking "Would you rather" questions, or having the older child read (or tell) a Bible story to the younger.

LARGE FAMILIES

When you have a large family, there will be certain challenges and sacrifices to make on behalf of your children that will not always be easy. Prayer is vital to your peace and effectiveness as a parent, but there is also strength in numbers. As your oldest children become older, they can actually become significant contributors to the faith of your younger children. Take advantage of this natural leadership that will develop in the older siblings. It is important to cultivate and encourage your individual children's identities, but it is very helpful to cultivate your "family identity" as well. Find something specific and spiritually meaningful that your family enjoys and can do well together. Put yourselves into it wholeheartedly. This can be service projects, volunteer work, visiting shut-ins, musical collaboration, drama, or anything else that you can use in God's service. Review the sections on "Close age" and "Large Age Gaps" if these apply to you as well.

RESISTANCE

If you are experiencing resistance from your 6th grader or younger child, do it anyway. It may be beneficial to take breaks from activities from time to time, but it is important to be consistent. Kids don't know better than you do about what is best for them. This is an area where opinions and approaches will vary greatly. It is a time for prayer to seek God's guidance. The method for overcoming will vary from child to child. With young children, "I Don't Wanna" is often a response caused by tiredness or a resistance to structure. Changing the time of the activity may be a simple solution. Selecting activities that are interactive and fun may also help. If possible, include a friend. Some children thrive on routine and as your faith activities become part of your regular routine, the resistance will fade. Here's an example: If a child asks what happens on Sundays, you could say, "We go to church on Sundays; we're going to go praise God." You could make it a habit to get your things (i.e., Bible, church clothing) ready for Sunday morning on Saturday night.

However, sometimes forcing teens to do faith activities can cause more damage than good. Many times, teens simply want to be heard! Talk with them and listen to their reasons for resistance. Be clear that you will have faith activities, but be flexible about when and how these are to happen. Provide them the opportunity to decide what they want to do and possibly lead the activity itself. This way the faith development is on their terms and not being forced upon them. Simply giving them choices instead of only offering one option is the key to overcoming resistance to these activities.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Here are some additional resources, both books and websites, I encourage you to check out:

Real Life Theology Conversations: A Guide to Essential Questions and Answers for Family Discipleship, by Jason Houser, Nicole Stine, and Daniel McCoy

When They Turn Away: Drawing Your Adult Child Back to Christ, by Rob Rienow

Parenting Beyond Your Capacity: Connect Your Family to a Wider Community (The Orange Series), by Reggie Joiner and Carey Nieuwhof

Building the Christian Family You Never Had: A Practical Guide for Pioneer Parents, by Mary E. DeMuth

Revolutionary Parenting: Raising Your Kids to Become Spiritual Champions, by George Barna

www.visionaryfam.com

www.familylife.com

www.faithathome.com

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