

FABULOUS FUN FAMILY DEVOTIONS

Natalia Venter

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to my three superheros Alejandro the “great”, Zachariah the “strong” and Alegra the “joyful”.

You are the inspiration in me writing this book! I am so proud of the people you are growing into. You are going to be world changers and I am eagerly watching this space to see what God does through each of your lives! Thank you for being such great kids and for all the laughter and joy you add to my life! It is a privilege and delight being your mom!

Welcome

Welcome to Fun, fabulous Devotions for busy families!

I pray that this resource will bless your family and inspire many interesting conversations and memories which will benefit you and your children for years to come!

These family devotions have a monthly theme which is relatable to everyday life!

This book will cover 12 different themes over a course of a year and every month is divided into four weekly devotions.

Themes that will be explored in a one-year period include:

- Faith
- Family relationships
- Gods' grace
- Growing in God
- What we say
- What we see
- Friendships
- Romantic relationships
- Learning/education
- Church life
- Obedience
- Your future

I recommend setting aside a specific time each week to work through the weekly devotion. E.g., Every Wednesday after dinner or Saturday after breakfast.

The devotions have been designed to share God's word as well as your personal life testimony in a fun and interactive way using our unique TRAIN method:

"Train up your children in the way they should go, so that when they are older they will not depart from it" Proverbs 22:6

T Together do something

Each card has a suggested activity to do together as a family to create a time of unity. Feel free to adapt the suggested activity accordingly to suit your family. The main idea is to create a moment of connection and to add a fun surprise element to the devotion. Some suggestions include doing devotions with a dessert or in a different location in the house or wearing a specific item of clothing.

We suggest you allow the kids to read this activity and to allow 5 minutes for the family to get ready with the "together idea suggestion."

R Relate your life story

What makes these devotions so special is that it allows a time of sharing your personal testimony/childhood stories which can be related to the theme of the month as well as to scripture. Because it is your story you can adapt it according to the ages of your children.

We suggest each parent takes 5 minutes to share their story. We recommend that you read this weekly suggestion ahead of time so that you can mentally prepare what you would like to share. Pray about it and allow the Lord to guide you in sharing elements of your story that would be beneficial for your kids to know. We recommend that you be honest and go deep allowing God to transform your life experiences into teachable moments for them.

Sometimes you might be asked to share difficult/negative experiences. We encourage you to remember that “God uses it all” and that we can learn something from every situation even the negative ones. So do your best to share authentically and trust the Lord with the rest!

Recommended time allocation: 5-10 minutes (5 minutes per parent sharing)

A Apply scripture

Every month includes a monthly scripture! We encourage you to challenge every member of the family to memorize this scripture & to reward those who have it memorized by the month’s end. Rewards can include extra tv/game time, a sweet, or whatever would be considered a treat in your family! Remember that if there is anything worth motivating our children to learn, it’s God’s word so do your best to keep them motivated in memorizing it!

Besides the monthly scripture, there are often other scriptures that are related to the theme which are to be read & discussed as a family. We recommend you ask the children the following questions before the adults answer:

What do you think this scripture means?

How can we apply this to our daily lives at school/home?

Can you think of an example of when this past week where this scripture was applicable?

Allowing the children to give input before answering will start teaching them the very valuable skill of reading God's word & applying it to their personal lives. Recommended time allocation: 5 minutes per parent sharing

I Interact

This is a time of interaction whereby children are to participate in giving their input into the theme. Sometimes a game is suggested or an activity. Be flexible and adjust according to what suits your family. If you or your children come up with a better activity than the one suggested simply replace it with your one. Remember your goal is to get your children to interact, give input, ask questions, explore the theme at their level of understanding. Remember to be flexible and to keep this time fun!

Recommended time allocation: 10 minutes

N Now pray!

An important part of this devotional is to teach our children to pray! We include prayer prompts at the end of each devotion for kids to learn how to pray in the different areas of their lives. Allow every family member to pray out loud or silently. As always feel free to add other prayer requests and encourage children to make their prayers personal to the Lord.

Recommended time allocation: 5 minutes

Start any time of the year!

We have deliberately kept dates off the devotionals to allow flexibility for families to start anytime. However, we do suggest starting at the beginning of the month! You can also choose any theme/color to start with. You can let your kids choose a random color or topic or simply follow the order of the book. In general, some good suggestions to start with is the topic of FAITH which is a great way to open these family discussions or the theme of God's grace.

Introduction

As a pastor who has been in ministry for over 15 years, it's safe to say I have come across a lot of excellent Christian resources. However, when it comes to family devotionals I struggled to find something that gripped my kids' attention and made them excited about devotional time.

I realized that I wanted to teach them scripture and bible stories, but my children were more interested in learning about me and my husband's real-life stories and childhood experiences.

I wanted to pray and have deep revelatory moments with my kids, but they wanted to play games, ask questions, and interact. After a few hits and misses, I quickly discovered that if I were to make family devotion time a good, pleasant memory in the lives of my children we would need to incorporate all these elements and more.

Family devotions needed to be fun, engaging, relevant, incorporating scripture as well as our personal testimonies.

Having children that were of different age ranges meant I also needed a family devotional that I could adapt according to my various kids' ages, stages, and levels of understanding.

Furthermore, I also saw the need for a certain topic to be "massaged in" and simmered during the week rather than rushing through a daily devotional which was both over saturation for these little minds and also hard to stick to with our busy family schedule.

So out of sheer determination to meet all these above requirements, this book of family devotions was birthed. These weekly devotions have been tried, tested, adapted, and re-tested and I am so happy to say they were given the stamp of approval by a gregarious bunch of blessings aged 7-13.

Our family devotional time has gone from being a chore to being the high-light of our week!

Whether you are a Christian family having raised your children in church or a family that is new to faith; I want to encourage you to Go for it!

Put in the time and energy to make this precious time an unforgettable memory in the lives of your children. Get them talking, see what is on their hearts and minds. Engage in interesting and yes sometimes hard discussions. Make bible time fun by incorporating a game or activity, share your childhood stories, and finally, spend time in prayer together.

I pray that God would use this resource to richly bless your family time together and inspire you to teach scripture and your testimony in a way that is both powerful and memorable.

Remember that you are a great parent and that God specifically chose YOU to parent the children he has given you! You have what it takes, you were born to do this and you're doing great!

Blessings

Natalia Venter

(Pastor, Childrens ministry co-ordinator, happy wife & mom of three SUPER-HEROES)

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Faith

*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the
evidence of things not seen.*

Hebrews 11:1

Teaching your child about Faith

There are many ways to go about teaching your children about faith. While you can try and convince your children that a life with God is more fulfilling, I believe it's always more impactful to lead by example. My husband and I strive to teach our children faith by living out our faith before them and admitting and apologizing when we fail to do that. We aim to teach them that even though my husband and I are pastors, we are not perfect and, just like them, are on a journey of faith and becoming more like CHRIST.

It's not always easy, but when faith forms the framework for the family, and parents genuinely strive to live out their faith and are willing to admit and repent when they fail to do so, then faith is—not so much taught—as caught by children.

Faith is so contagious that faith caught by a child can inspire a parent to even greater confidence.

Here are ten practical suggestions for helping your kids catch your faith.

Faith is best modeled in a blanket of love and authenticity

Children seldom reject faith; however, they often reject religion, especially a religion that they see is not lived out in an impactful way. But love is rarely denied.

The essential ingredients of love and truth to teach a child about faith, you must have their trust that your words are trustworthy and your love for them is real.

Then they can trust what you say about God's Word and His love for them if they trust YOU. When your child sincerely believes that you love them, care for them, and have their best interest at heart, they will be more likely to listen to you and eventually follow your faith.

I. Practice unconditional love, both your and God's love

Wait for those special divine moments when they need Jesus so severely and in those times, gently mention what helps you most: faith in God and His love. Over the years, I have grown more dependent upon the leading of the Holy Spirit in my parenting of when to discipline to teach and build

character and when to show grace and mercy to reflect the nature of Father God. A question that has helped me that I have asked myself over the years when I catch my child doing something they shouldn't is, "how would Father God respond to me in this situation if I were my child?" One of our highest goals should be to parent our children the same way God fathers us.

2. Teach them faith in the right things

Jesus didn't just come to earth so that we could be saved. He also came and healed and loved, sacrificed Himself, and rose from the dead.

It takes some faith to believe He still lives and can live in us, but the evidence of Christ is in every person on Earth unless they have slowly for years covered it over. Christ is found in the beauty of creation and living creatures, everything that grows, the incredible intricacies of the human body, and the very miracle of life. It would take far more faith to believe there is no God than to believe there is, especially for children.

3. Get honest about faith

This next-generation can spot fake faith. Children can sense when someone is trying to manipulate or sell them on believing something, especially the older they get! They may go with it initially, but as soon as they don't get what they expected, they become discouraged, and doubts creep in, leading to rebellion. The older our kids become, the more "raw and real" our faith needs to evolve. The answer we might give our 5-year-old when they ask hard questions about faith, and life needs to be answered differently when they ask the same question at 15. The older they become, the deeper we need to go with them. I encourage you to share your faith with them at a level that they are at, despite how uncomfortable it might sometimes be for yourself. Let them know that they are safe to share their wrestle and doubts with faith with you at any time.

Also, if a child feels that a parent values how religious they appear to others more than they love the child or are most concerned about the child reflecting poorly on the parent, the child is likely to rebel against faith. Likewise, a child can recognize truth and a parent's sincere concern for the

child's best interest regarding their feelings. That realization, for the child, helps them feel loved and forges trust in the parent.

4. Don't force it; instead, trust in God's timing

My husband and I have never pressured our children to display faith even though they are pastors' kids. We love them as best we can, repent when we fail, show them the natural consequences of sin (not to punish them but to help them), and let them see the joy of a faith-filled life. We also show them the same things in others' lives when circumstances allow it. When children rebel against faith, it is often because someone tells them to believe something they don't live.

5. Share faith scriptures and stories whenever you can

The Bible is full of great scriptures on faith. The amount of faith you have doesn't matter, according to Scripture. Faith can be a mighty force even if it's "as small as a mustard seed." In these monthly devotionals, we focus on teaching scripture to our children. One of the most excellent tools we can give our children to prepare for life is to "write God's word on their hearts" the Bible says that his word is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our paths. Let us teach them how to use this lamp as life has dark patches, and they will need it to navigate life!

For teens, Hebrews 1:1–39 paints a detailed picture of faith with the lead-in: "Now faith is the confidence in what we hope for, and assurance about what we do not see."

The Bible is also full of heroes of faith. Read about them together and talk about them.

6. Teach them faith in the right things

Jesus didn't just come to earth so that we could be saved. He also came and healed and loved, sacrificed Himself, and rose from the dead.

It takes some faith to believe He still lives and can live in us, but the evidence of Christ is in every person on Earth unless they have slowly for

years covered it over. Christ is found in the beauty of creation and living creatures, everything that grows, the incredible intricacies of the human body, and the very miracle of life. It would take far more faith to believe there is no God than to believe there is, especially for children.

7. Turn their hearts to the truth

The truth of God's Word helps us grow a stronger faith. We never try to convince our children to believe anything that doesn't add up to God's Word.

We do our best to teach our children the truth of God's Word and encourage them to have faith in God's Word for themselves. But faith teaches itself in its reality and fruit, compared to the lack of truth and fruit without faith.

We teach them to love because God's Word says so. We teach them to forgive even after being hurt because God's Word says so. We show them examples and let them see for themselves how faith works.

8. Teach through your testimony

I believe we teach faith and overcome doubt with the words of our testimonies. This devotional place is a high priority for sharing your testimony/real-life stories with your children. My kids know by heart the story of how God helped my husband turn away from a life of drugs, addiction, and pain to follow Christ and the peace and joy that comes with it!

They know my personal story of salvation and when God became real to me during a dark time in my teenage years. We have shared and keep sharing our story with them and others so that they know why we believe what we believe.

9. Show them faith over feelings

We teach our kids that faith trusts God's Word is more reliable than their feelings, and we strive to show them by living it. We share with them the times we do the wrong things and our repentance when we miss the mark.

Faith in obedience to God's Word is perhaps the most difficult to teach because that usually involves a battle between what we feel and what He says. Following our feelings is easier. I try to teach our kids always to check their feelings against God's Word and if they don't line up, always go with God's Word.

10. Help their faith come alive

Teach bold, audacious faith. We often share prayer concerns within our church community with our children. I remember when our eldership and intercessors prayed and trusted God for a 10-month-old baby in the ICU for a heart condition. She needed open-heart surgery, and the doctors had given a bleak prognosis, but as a church community, we trusted God for a miracle. I felt led to include my children in our prayer times where we would intercede for this baby during the week despite the odds. Within a few days, there was a turnaround in baby Hosanna's body, and she was able to go home and was back at church just a few weeks later. My kids still remember this story, and I realize they just saw faith in action right in front of their eyes. When our children see others' real and raw emotions, they experience faith in action and its excellent results.



Devotional - Faith

WEEK 1

- T** Together idea
Share dessert / sweet treat
- R** Relate to your life prompts
Parents, share your salvation story. When and how did you come to know Jesus?
- A** Apply Scripture ideas
Go around the group, Discuss the meaning of this month's scripture :
"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."
Hebrews 11:1
- I** Interact idea
Play a game of Pictionary of things that you believe in but cannot see.
- N** Now pray prompts
Pray and ask God to reveal himself more to you. Through time with him in prayer, his word, through people and experiences.



Devotional - Faith

WEEK 2

- T** Together idea
Share a hot/cold drink
- R** Relate to your life prompts
Share experiences in your own life where God answered prayer/revealed himself/miracles.
- A** Apply Scripture ideas
Read scripture & discuss *“For we live by faith, not by sight.” 2 Corinthians 5:7*
- I** Interact idea
Play the game “walk of faith” OR discuss stories of who has experienced a miracle/radical answer to prayer either themselves or someone they know.
- N** Now pray prompts
Pray for God to give you the GIFT of faith. To help you believe in God more even though we cannot see him.



Devotional - Faith

WEEK 3

- T** Together idea
Everyone put on the same clothing accessory. E.g. tie or scarf
- R** Relate to your life prompts
Discuss other theories that people believe. What is evolution/Big Bang? Share if there was ever a time in your life when you doubted if God was real or believed something different. What caused/lead you to believe in God?
- A** Apply Scripture ideas
Read scripture & discuss. Thomas replied, *“My Lord and my God!”* Jesus said to him, *“Because you have seen Me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”* John 20:29.
- I** Interact idea
Play game of charades “Actions that require FAITH or watch episode 2 of the alpha series on YouTube. (older kids).
- N** Now pray prompts
Pray for God to increase your faith in him and to help you with any doubts/questions that you may have.



Devotional - Faith

WEEK 4

- T** **Together idea**
Everyone sits together in an unusual place in the house. E.g. on the kitchen floor, the whole family squeezes onto the parent's bed, sits in the attic or out-doors.
- R** **Relate to your life prompts**
Discuss, Why do some people not believe/struggle in God? Thomas and his journey to believing that Jesus is the messiah. That it's ok to ask questions.
- A** **Apply Scripture ideas**
Read scripture & discuss. Jesus answered, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. John 14:6
- I** **Interact idea**
Write down names of those friends & families that are not Christians yet. Place these names on your fridge or prayer wall.
- N** **Now pray prompts**
Pray for the salvation of those who you wrote down their names.

Game & Discussion Instructions

Week 1 - Game suggestion

Play a game of Pictionary with things you cannot see.

Cut out or write out these cards and place them in a bowl. Play rounds until all cards are done.

- Wind
- Love
- Sounds
- Sadness
- Confusion
- Heat
- Gravity
- Time
- Anger
- Emotions

Week 2- Game suggestion

Play walk of faith game blindfolded

Players are put into groups of two or three with the middle person blindfolded. The three players must stay in a line in front and behind the blindfolded person. The people in front and back must guide the blind person through an obstacle course or through rooms in a house.

When the players get back to where they started, the blindfolded player must follow the same path alone trying to remember all their turns and footsteps while blindfolded.

If the blindfolded play is successful and makes it to the end of the course/room the team wins. If not the players come back to the start and another player is selected to be blindfolded and give it a try. Repeat until all players have a turn.

Week 3 - Game suggestion

Play game of Charades – Actions that require faith

A word game, charades, emphasize how nearly every action relies on faith and can show children how they take their actions for granted. Have a child act out one of these sentences.

This game gives children an insight into the diversity of actions that require faith.

Cut/write these out and place them in a bowl for kids to pick out and act. Set timer for 1 minute.

- Study for a test
- Ride a bike
- Go skiing
- Horse riding
- Go swimming in the ocean
- Switch on the light
- Bake cake in the oven
- Open the tap

Week 3 - Discussion suggestion

Evidence Jesus:

1. The Christian writings

The assumed time frame of Jesus's life, starting at year zero, was not a period considerable in communication. Without the technology to print books and not have no phones or computers or the Internet, it took a long to communicate information. Despite these challenges, a few decades following Jesus's supposed lifetime, mentions of him started to arise in the writings of Jewish and Roman historians and dozens of texts by Christians.

The letters of the apostle Paul are the earliest texts mentioning Jesus and the doctrines of Christianity. They also contained practical instructions for the increasing number of Christians living according to their faith.

2. The eyewitnesses

As mentioned previously, the first Christian writings on Jesus come from the epistles of Paul. The first of these was within 25 years of Jesus's death (around AD 50-60). On the other hand, biographical accounts of Jesus in the New Testament date from around 40 years after Jesus's death. Still, these periods mean that reports of Jesus's life were written down by people who would have been alive to know him or knew him personally.

3. The relics

A few relics have been associated with Jesus, but none have been proven to be undoubtedly authentic. These include the infamous Shroud of Turin in Italy, which is supposed to be of a man who was allegedly Jesus Christ.

Another famous relic of unproven authenticity is The True Cross. There are numerous fragments of wood claimed by different people throughout history as being from the cross used in the Crucifixion of Jesus. Many of these fragments are dispersed in multiple European Churches

Week 4

Prayer cards activity

Write names of non-Christian friends & family on paper/cards.

Place these cards on your fridge or prayer wall to help you remember to pray for these people.

Praying for your child - Faith

Father God, I lift my child (add name) to You, asking that You give them a desire to know You, love You, and want to serve You. By Your grace and mercy, grow in them a faith that rests only on Your great power and not on any wisdom of this current world. I ask that my children be marked by righteousness, living by faith in all they do. Help them trust and know You more and more each day. Prove Your goodness and faithfulness to them in every step, season, and situation of their lives. I pray for real, radical, and tangible experiences with you that will shape their faith in you for the rest of their lives!

Father God, I pray for my child to be well guarded, grounded in their faith, strong and courageous, doing everything in love as your word commands. I pray that You would give them wisdom and revelation so they may come to know You better. May the eyes of their hearts be focused on the glorious inheritance You have in store for those who believe (Ephesians 1:17-19). May their faith be broadened, unbridled, deepened immeasurably, and heightened insurmountably as You display your great power in their lives. In Jesus' name.

Amen



Family

Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen.

1 John 4:20

Teaching your child the importance of family

We are created in the image of God, and the triune God is FAMILY. The Bible introduces us to this concept as he represents himself as a family of God's Father, Son, and Spirit. Families are at the center of God's plan for His children. They are the vital building block of strong communities and societies. Families are the source of where we can feel love and learn how to love and respect others. Life is challenging, and we need people we can lean on. Home is supposed to be a haven where we can get love, advice, and support.

God is our Heavenly Father

Our family here on Earth is designed after our heavenly family. In the same way, we go to our parents for advice; our Father in heaven is always there to give us help. The bible teaches us that when we pray, He listens and answers.

God loves us so much, even when we make mistakes, and just like the image of the Father to the prodigal son, He always invites us with open arms to return to Him. We glimpse our Heavenly Father's perfect love for us in many parents' profound love for their children. We can all experience Heavenly Father's love as we grow closer to Him and share that love with our families.

Even Jesus was born into a family. "God in the flesh" submitted to an earthly mother and father to demonstrate what it means to honor parents and benefit from their loving counsel and direction. Within the care of His earthly biological family, "*Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men*" (Luke 2:52).

As parents, we teach our kids that God has a particular purpose for placing them within our family.

Summary of the Key Points to teach them about family:

- The family model is a masterpiece of God's Creation.
- Marriage and parenthood reveal God's nature and character.
- God put children into families to experience His love and learn how to love and live well with others



Devotional - Family

WEEK 1

- T** Together idea
Bring pictures of extended family/photo album
- R** Relate to your life prompts
Briefly go through your family tree. Describe your relationships with your parents & siblings.
- A** Apply Scripture ideas
Read & remember the scripture of the month; *“Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen.”*
1 John 4:20
- I** Interact idea
Play a game of charades using family (and extended) members.
- N** Now pray prompts
Pray for your extended family members. Pray for their needs, their protection, and blessing upon their lives.



Devotional - Family

WEEK 2

- T** Together idea
Everyone to bring one item that represents a memory from their childhood. (A Toy or picture etc)
- R** Relate to your life prompts
Share positive experiences, fun memories, traditions from your upbringing. Share what you enjoyed and would like to carry forward into your own family.
- A** Apply Scripture ideas
Read & discuss; *“Children are a gift from the Lord; they are a reward from him.” Psalm 127:3*
- I** Interact idea
Write down your family highlights. Share your favorite memories, traditions, trips, hobbies, etc.
- N** Now pray prompts
Thank God for family & fun times together. Ask him to help you create more good experiences together. Ask him for help with appreciating each other.



Devotional - Family

WEEK 3

- T** Together idea
Everyone to bring crayons/pencils.
- R** Relate to your life prompts
Share some of the negative experiences in your upbringing. What did you learn from this? What do you want to do differently in your own family?
- A** Apply Scripture ideas
Read & discuss; *“Make allowance for each other’s faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you.” Colossians 3:13*
- I** Interact idea
Discuss what are the guidelines/rules for treating each other in your family. Why? Talk about how this scripture can be applied to everyday life. Allow time for others to ask forgiveness for something they did that hurt someone else.
- N** Now pray prompts
Ask God to help you forgive if there’s someone that caused you pain in your family. Ask for His help in treating each other in a loving way.



Devotional - Family

WEEK 4

- T** Together idea
Everyone to bring 3 x clothing items. Eg 3 sets of shoes.
- R** Relate to your life prompts
Share what you hope for your children in this area when they are adults. how would you like your relationship with them as adults to be? What are you looking forward to in the future?
- A** Apply Scripture ideas
Read & remember the scripture of the month 1 John 4:20. Reward those who have it memorized
- I** Interact idea
Discuss how the trinity of God is like a family. Discuss the role of the Father. Holy Spirit who is the comforter. Jesus, as the Son. Explain how they are all God and how we can relate what is unique with them all.
- N** Now pray prompts
Ask God to help you know Him more as a good father. Ask the Holy Spirit to be your helper and to teach you more about him. Ask Jesus to help you to know him more as a brother to who you can relate.

Game Instructions

Week 1 - Game suggestion

Play a game of charades using the names of family (and extended) members.

Write out names of extended family members and cut them out, place them in a bowl. Allow everyone to act out the family member while others guess who it is.

Praying for your child - Family

Heavenly Father, I pray that the radiance of Your light shines into the lives of each member of my family and that we may grow ever closer to each other and You. I pray that we work to overcome the challenges and difficulties of everyday living, which can often arise as a barrier and hindrance in our relationship with You. I pray that you strengthen the relational bonds that hold us together as a family and fill each one of us with the unconditional love of Jesus, for it is only as we grow closer to You in love that we will be transformed by the power of Your Spirit to reach out to each other in the spirit of love and unity.

Lord, it was by Your great plan and purpose that we were born into this family. You were the one that chose us to be a part of this particular family, and You desire that each one of us are also a member of the broader body of Christ. Please bind us together in love and forgive us all for how we have not shown love and grace to each other.

Help us be kind, patient, and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ, God forgave each of us. In Jesus' name, I pray.

Amen.





Growing in God

Like newborn babies hungry for milk, you should want the pure teaching that feeds your spirit. With it, you can grow up and be saved.

1 Peter 2:2

Teaching children about Growing in God

Spiritual disciplines are vital components of a healthy Christian life. Hardly anything significant in our lives is ever accomplished if these disciplines are ignored. These Spiritual disciplines can be described as those behaviors that fuel our spiritual growth and enable us to grow in our relationship with God. Without them, we cannot grow and stay weak in our faith. If it is true for us, it is valid for our children.

Reading scripture

The first and most crucial spiritual discipline is reading, studying, memorizing, and meditating on the Word of God. This cannot be neglected. No other profession can enable us to grow into strong Christians. It is the foundation. We must teach our children to read, love, and embrace the Word of God as a lamp to their feet and a light to their path at early ages. I remember having small kids; the only time I would get time for myself and an unhurried moment to open my bible was when they were sleeping! However, as they grew older, I felt a prompting by the Holy Spirit to read my bible when they were awake and could see me!

My “quiet” times were no longer that quiet and, most often, shorter than I wanted, but I knew that despite these minor sacrifices, it was important my children saw me spending set apart time with God not because I had to but because I wanted to. Most often, what we do shouts louder than what we say.

Prayer

The second most important and critical spiritual discipline for Christians is prayer. We must seriously begin teaching our young children that worship is more than a two-sentence memorized slogan that we quote before our meals and at bedtime. In worship, kids will:

Encounter the presence of God. They will learn to hear His voice and speak out what they hear. That is called being prophetic. Thus, God becomes natural to them, and their relationship with Him grows and deepens

As we teach them to take scriptures and embed them in their prayers, they begin to develop a much-needed biblical worldview through which they will see the world as God sees it. They will learn to love what God loves and hate what God hates.

When you look at everything that can be accomplished and experienced in prayer, not to mention God answering our prayers, why would we not take prayer more seriously in the discipleship of children, both in our churches and our homes?

Fasting

Scripture teaches us that fasting is abstaining from food for spiritual purposes. Typically, fasting can include abstaining from all food, solid or liquid, but not water. On occasion, we find what has been called an “absolute fast.” or abstaining from both food and water. When dealing with children, I want us to consider a partial fast or a restriction of one’s diet or activities but not a total abstention from food. Daniel talks a little about this in the book of Daniel, chapter ten.

Some practical ways to fast with kids:

1. **Make different choices.** For a period, choose healthy foods for snacking. Instead of cookies, choose carrots; instead of soda, select water. Instead of fast food, choose nutritious meals.
2. **Fasting on sweets and sugar.** Lead kids to not eat sugar-based foods (candy, cake, pastries) for a designated time.
3. **A digital or technology fast.** As a family, we decided to fast from technology and digital devices. This could be as simple as not watching television to complete abstinence for a few weeks..

Be intentional about helping kids understand the reasons why you’re fasting:

Fasting should center on God. If you fast for any reason other than to focus on Him, His will, and His desire, it will be in vain.

Fasting helps us remember that God is our provider of every good and perfect gift. Help teach kids this reality.

Fasting helps us focus on a particular issue, need, decision, or desire. Determine the reason and be very intentional to share and help kids understand why you are fasting—for example, praying about an important decision such as moving to a different country.

Fasting is a voluntary spiritual discipline, not a punishment. Never use the biblical field of fasting to punish poor behavior.

Model biblical fasting in your personal life. Children learn more from what they see you do and live out than what they hear. When teaching the discipline of fasting, know that you can't lead kids to do something that you don't do personally.

While the teaching, practice, and understanding of biblical fasting will be best suited for older kids, allowing children to participate in age-appropriate ways will lay the foundations for deeper and more meaningful experiences in the future.

Tithing

Here are some suggested ways we can teach our children to tithe:

First, teach tithing and giving as worship and gratitude to God.

We must teach our kids that giving to God (with money and our time and talents) is an act of worship to God as we show our appreciation to him for all he has already done and given us.

2 Corinthians 9:12 says, "This service (Giving tithes and offerings) that you perform is supplying the needs of the Lord's people and is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God."

Secondly, we explain that giving is a way of serving God.

We teach our children that Christ calls us to be his body and that we each have an essential part to play and an area to serve (1 Corinthians 12). We are called to serve Jesus, the church, and the world.

Thirdly, share the impact of your giving.

Lastly, but just as importantly, we explain the outcome of our Giving. As we give, we present to our children, "This is so that our church can have a pastor. This is so the child in Africa has medical assistance.

Irrespective if we give digitally or physically at church, we are not only serving God but praising and thanking God. We explain that giving is one way to thank God for everything he has given us. A child needs to know that it is from God that we get everything in the first place, like our jobs, etc. We are giving him back a portion through the spiritual discipline of tithing.



Devotional - Growing in God

WEEK 1

- T** Together idea
Everyone to bring their bible
- R** Relate to your life prompts
Share about your journey reading God's word. When did you start? What does this discipline/routine look like in your life now? When? How much? Why?
- A** Apply Scripture ideas
Read scripture & discuss. *Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path. Psalm 119:105*
- I** Interact idea
Everyone shares their favorite verse from their bible. Highlight/color it in.
- N** Now pray prompts
Pray for God to give you a desire to read the bible. Ask him to help you to understand it and hear from Him.



Devotional - Growing in God

WEEK 2

- T** Together idea
Everyone to bring their cellphone or a cup of tea/hot chocolate
- R** Relate to your life prompts
Talk about what prayer means to you. When did you start praying? What does that look like in your life? When? how long? Where? Why do you do this?
- A** Apply Scripture ideas
Read scripture & discuss. *Rejoice always, pray without stopping.*
1 Thessalonians 5:16
- I** Interact idea
Discuss what is prayer? How is it similar to a cellphone or talking to a friend over a cup of tea? Do a family prayer wall using prayer cards. Start a prayer journal.
- N** Now pray prompts
Pray for God to help you to pray to him. Pray that your prayer life would be alive and fun and that you would be able to hear him speak back to you through his word, people, nature, and emotions.



Devotional - Growing in God

WEEK 3

- T** Together idea
Everyone brings a glass of water or a healthy vegetable/fruit.
- R** Relate to your life prompts
Share about your experience with fasting. When did/do you fast? Why?
- A** Apply Scripture ideas
Discuss the story of Daniel's fasting & read the scripture "*I ate no choice food; no meat or wine touched my lips; and I used no lotions at all until the three weeks were over.*" Daniel 10:3
- I** Interact idea
Discuss how fasting is like vegetables to your body. It builds your spirit man making it stronger than your flesh or natural body.
Everyone decides to embark on a fast the next day from 1 thing. TV, sweets, sugar. Plan it. Do it.
- N** Now pray prompts
Pray for God to give you a desire to do these spiritual disciplines like pray, read bible, and to help you grow in God.



Devotional - Growing in God

WEEK 4

- T** Together idea
Everyone writes down their favorite worship song.
- R** Relate to your life prompts
Share Share about what worship means to you. When do you worship? How? What is your favorite form of musical worship? (singing, dancing, art, contemplative, etc)
- A** Apply Scripture ideas
Read the scripture of the month again. 1 Peter 2:2. Reward those who can memorize it.
- I** Interact idea
Everyone sings a worship song together. (Play song & sing along or with in-instruments).
- N** Now pray prompts
Pray for God to give you a heart of worship. That you would enjoy it and feel his presence during your worship to him.

Praying for your child - Growing in God

Father God, I praise you for the gift of my child. I pray they would follow you and be a builder of your kingdom. I ask that you protect and steady their steps. May they learn to hear and follow your voice. May they grow in their relationship with you and learn the important disciplines of prayer, giving, and worship. I pray that you would give them a love for your word. Like Timothy in the Bible, may my children be an example to believers in speech, love, conduct, faith, and purity. I ask this in Jesus' name.

Amen.



What we Say

*The tongue has the power of life and death,
and those who love it will eat its fruit.*

Proverbs 18:21

1 John 4:20

Teaching your child on watching their words

Start with yourself

As with most other themes, if you want your kids to grab a concept, role modeling is the best way! If you are battling negative self-talk or angry outbursts, it will be hard to teach your children otherwise. So, I have learned first to apply this principle to my own life and teach my children from a place of authentically pursuing this characteristic in my personal life.

Strive for the gracious, loving speech

The apostle Paul's instruction to keep our words "seasoned with salt" (Colossians 4:6). Thinking of words as salt can be a helpful and practical way for children to understand the many situations where their words can be used for good:

Salt improves the flavor. A small amount of salt can coax out all the beautiful flavors around it. The same can be said for our words. It doesn't take much, but our choice of words can improve the flavors of a conversation around us through compliments and lighthearted remarks or insightful questions and respectful responses. I often quote this famous saying "if one has nothing good or beneficial to others, perhaps it's better not to say anything."

Salt preserves. Your children undoubtedly see evidence of a world in decay and how culture moves further away from God's loving plan for humankind. This isn't just in all the immoral media world your kids may be exposed to; this moral decay also is seen in the thoughtless or deceptive speech they encounter in person and online.

Encourage your kids always to ask themselves, Do my words preserve truth somehow? Truth is needed every day, be it honest and loving, such as words that clear up a misunderstanding or a word of advice or encouragement.

Salt melts ice. Children understand the simple truth: People can sometimes be cold. Freezing cold. Reflect when we speak. Do our words help melt the ice or add to the chill in the atmosphere around us?

Remind your kids that if they're given the cold shoulder from people, they can try to warm things up by respectfully responding with kindness. Practice this principle as a family when you're out doing daily life or dealing with new people.

Our words seasoned with salt can melt the iciest of hearts. My husband often practices this principle when out in public as he strives to be friendly and greet strangers. It's always great to see how a seemingly unfriendly disgruntled shop clerk can become helpful and smiley after encountering his warm and cheerful personality.

Salt was once used to slow infection and sickness. Your children will hear gossip and rumors at school or in online conversations—these painful words spread like an infection to the body.

Help your kids understand that they can choose to stop the spread by either refusing to participate or speaking up against gossiping about others. If they are courageous enough to stand against gossip, words may hurt for a moment, but your kids can help stop a nasty infection from spreading and causing much pain to others.

Salt is best used in small amounts. We may sometimes need to speak the truth, but even if words are valid and delivered in a kind, warmhearted tone, we rarely need to say everything on our minds. Once again, remind them that our words are a “weapon.” We are to use them to help others and not destroy people around us.

Teach your kids to remember to keep their words gentle and respectful. Sticking to just a few truthful words in a difficult conversation increases people's chances to be responsive to what we say. Too much salt can ruin the dish, and it can also ruin a relationship.

We are what we hear, so be careful what you listen to!

A principle I learned back when I was a child was that when it comes to computers was “garbage in, garbage out.” It's another way of saying poor input leads to poor output. I think the same principle can apply to our kids' speech. If they consume a daily diet of cultural “garbage” — everything that Netflix or Hollywood churns out from destructive social media relationships or music, movies, and books that go against your family's values — we can be sure those “inputs” will leak out in what they say. Of course, we can't keep our children from every negative influence, but we must never forget how the input affects

output and set appropriate boundaries. I often say, “in this home, we don’ttalk about others like that or swear, etc.”

This means we seek to create an environment that contributes to our kids’ ability to communicate with love and respect in our home. Yes, we do monitor media influences and other sources of negative impact. But more importantly, we aim to model calm-loving responses to life’s challenges.

When bad things happen, we try not to grumble or complain. When typical childhood mistakes happen, I remember that although difficult, it is still easier to remove grape juice stains from the carpet than to erase harsh and unloving words thrown at a child whose been clumsy.

And when I fail — when my children have received unkind words, an angry temper, gossip, I will confess it as sin and ask for their forgiveness.

I desire them to recognize that even when we fail, we can develop the habit of starting again on a clean slate.

Every day is a new opportunity to say the right thing. Have grace for them, and remember to have grace for yourself!



What we Say

Devotional - What we say

WEEK 1

- T** Together idea
Everyone brings or shows an object that represents outdoors or natural beauty.
- R** Relate to your life prompts
Share about how it is sometimes a struggle to always speak good words when is it difficult eg. angry or sad. Give an example of a time you said some-thing you regretted later. What did you learn from this?
- A** Apply Scripture ideas
Read scripture & discuss. *The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit. Proverbs 18:21*
- I** Interact idea
Discuss why the bible says our words are so powerful. How did God create the world? Through using only his words. Let everyone share about what object they are holding & how it was created by God speaking it.
- N** Now pray prompts
Pray for God to help us watch our words & only speak kind & good things.



Devotional - What we say

WEEK 2

- T** Together idea
Eat chewing gum or chocolate or a sweet.
- R** Relate to your life prompts
Share about a time when someone said something positive/encouraging to you and it really helped you / made a difference in your life.
- A** Apply Scripture ideas
Read scripture & discuss. *“Let no unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building up the one in need and bringing grace to those who listen.” Ephesians 4:29*
- I** Interact idea
Use encouragement word cards to write something positive/encouraging about everyone in the group, then allow time to read what everyone said about them.
- N** Now pray prompts
Pray for God to help us use our mouths to encourage other people.



What we Say

Devotional - What we say

WEEK 3

- T** Together idea
Share devotional time over a hot meal together
- R** Relate to your life prompts
Share about a time when someone said something negative/hurtful in your life. How did it make you feel? How did you get over it?
- A** Apply Scripture ideas
Read scripture & discuss. *“The soothing tongue is a tree of life, but a perverse tongue crushes the spirit.” Proverbs 15:4*
- I** Interact idea
Play a few rounds of “Guess the food” challenge.
- N** Now pray prompts
Pray for God to help us forgive those who have said mean/hurtful words about us. Ask him to heal our hearts.



Devotional - What we say

WEEK 4

- T** **Together idea**
Share devotional time over a warm or cold drink.
- R** **Relate to your life prompts**
Share about what you are currently working on in this area of watching your words. Eg. negativity, swearing, or share what your HOPES are for your children in this area & why.
- A** **Apply Scripture ideas**
Practice the scripture of the month (Proverbs 18:21) Who has memorized it and can say it without looking? Reward those who can.
- I** **Interact idea**
Do a poster of guidelines/rules of 'How we should talk to each other in the family. Allow everyone to participate. Discuss and state reasons for each. Place it somewhere in the house as a reminder.
- N** **Now pray prompts**
Pray for God's help to be a family that speaks kindly to one another.

Game Instructions

Week 3 - Game suggestion

During this weeks' game, you are encouraged to do a taste challenge.

To play this game you need 5-10 different food items for your kids to eat while blindfolded. After they have eaten the secret food, allow them to write down the answer on a piece of paper. The person who gets the most secret foods correct wins the game.

Suggested food items to use:

- Lemon juice
- Coconut
- honey/strawberry sauce
- Pickles
- vinegar
- Ketchup / hot sauce (older kids)
- cinnamon
- sweets
- Add your own
-

Praying for your child - What we say

Lord, there is so much hurt in this world, and so much of it begins with our words! Today I bring before you (names of children) I pray that they would understand the value of hope-filled words! May they be kinder to those around them, especially the ones that are outcasts and forgotten. May You give them words of compassion to speak to others. May they know what great power words have! Right now, I pray Proverbs 12:18 over my child which says, "There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing." May my child's tongue's/wise words bring healing. Refrain their lips from speaking rash and hurtful words towards others! In your precious name Jesus.

Amen.

Life-Giving declarations to speak over your Kids

1. "I see how God is working in your life."
2. "I love you with all my heart, and Jesus loves you most of all."
3. "God is always with you and will never leave you!" (Matthew 28:20)
4. "You are a beloved son of God! You are royalty" (1 Peter 2:9-10)
5. "You are a gift to us from God." (James 1:17)
6. "You can do all things through Christ who gives you strength!" (Philippians 4:13)
7. "God has a good plan and purpose for your life." (Jeremiah 29:11)
8. "You are strong and brave in the Lord!" (Ephesians 6:10)
9. "With God, all things are possible!" (Matthew 19:26)
10. "You are fearfully and wonderfully made." (Psalm 139:14)
11. "You are loved – no matter what. There is nothing you can do that will make me stop loving you." (Romans 5:8)
12. "Jesus loves spending time with you, and so do I." (Luke 10:38-42)
13. "Let me pray with you." (1 Thesalonians 5:17)
14. "Let's trust Jesus with this situation." (Proverbs 3:5-6)
15. "I love that God helped you (insert something that your child did – be creative, work hard, think of others, be kind to a sibling) today I am proud of You" (Psalm 28:7)
16. "God is concerned about every tiny detail of your life." (1 Peter 5:7, Matthew 10:30, Psalm 139:1-3)
17. "There is so much grace for you in this home." (Hebrews 4:16)
18. "I'm sorry – will you please forgive me?" (1 John 1:9) – our children need to know that we are sinners and also in need of a Savior – just like them, and "It is finished." (John 19:30)
19. "Thank you, God, for this precious child" (Isaiah 43:4)
20. You are going to be a world-changer and help many people!
21. "I am so happy and blessed that God made me your Mom / Dad."



Gods Grace

For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that everyone who believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.

- John 3:16

Teaching your child about God's grace

Grace is the essential motivating factor for love. Parents must be models of God's love, mercy, and grace to teach the necessary understanding in children. To grow your children's love for you, God, others, and themselves, they must be shown grace, acceptance, and understand that they will still be loved despite their mistakes.

Showing God's Grace

Children need to experience love and grace from their parents tangibly. Not showing grace and mercy can lead children to put up walls and lie because they're living in fear of the consequences and losing love and having a damaged relationship. However, if love and grace are given generously, children will learn to look to God to define them. Parents provide a safe environment for conversations that foster spiritual growth and maturity by showing grace.

I learned that all my failings and mistakes and the uncertainties I've faced in my short life had been turned around for the good of His glory. Through the grace and love given by people around me, my weaknesses became an opportunity for me to look to God and allow Him to work in and through me. This is one of the greatest lessons we can pass on to our children.

Practical ways to show them grace

Love Them as hard as you can

I think the more rebellious and difficult our kids are acting at the moment – the calmer we need to become.

Just like enforcing boundaries provides a sense of security (that they won't understand at the time), being calm in the storm can help to diffuse those intense emotions.

Do something they don't expect or anticipate

If one of my children is sulking due to not having their way, I respond by not feeding into their bad behavior and letting them know I'll be in the other room while they change their attitude

Give them your full attention and be present

We've all heard that negative attention is still attention. Kids will often act out to gain what they want from us: a response, acknowledgment, a need to be met. Emotional needs are just as vital as physical needs.

Forgive Immediately

Forgiveness and grace are such inherently intertwined concepts that you can't talk about one without another. When my kids are testing my limits to the max during those difficult parenting moments, I must fight the urge to over-punish.

It's one thing to hold to a limit, but it's another thing to keep tacking on punishments and re-hashing prior offenses.





Devotional - God's grace

WEEK 1

- T** Together idea
Give everyone a treat they normally need to work for Eg. pocket money/sweet
- R** Relate to your life prompts
Share about a time you received something you never deserved. How did it make you feel? How is it similar to God's grace?
- A** Apply Scripture ideas
Memorize scripture *"For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that everyone who believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life."* John 3:16
- I** Interact idea
Read the story of the prodigal son. Discuss how they feel about the prodigal son returning. Was it fair? Is grace fair? How is God like this good father with us?
- N** Now pray prompts
Thank God for loving us so much that He sent Jesus. Pray that we never be-come like the older brother who was judgmental.



Devotional - God's grace

WEEK 2

T Together idea

Wear a coat / blanket or shawl

R Relate to your life prompts

Share a time in your life when you messed up or made a big mistake. What did you learn? How did you experience God's grace?

A Apply Scripture ideas

Read and discuss; *“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.” Romans 3:23*

I Interact idea

Name ways people try “earn their way to heaven” by doing good deeds? Would it work? Confirm how the only way to heaven is by God's free gift of grace through Jesus. It's like the shawl/jacket we are wearing. When we come to God, He sees Jesus (jacket) on us.

N Now pray prompts

Thank God for His mercy and ask Him to never fall into trap of trying to deserve His love/grace because you already have it.



Devotional - God's grace

WEEK 3

- T** **Together idea**
Let everyone bring a bag.
- R** **Relate to your life prompts**
Share a time in your life when you had to extend grace (forgiveness) to somebody. Why was it difficult & how did God help you to do it?
- A** **Apply Scripture ideas**
Read & discuss. *“Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?” Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.” Matthew 18:21*
- I** **Interact idea**
Play “rocks of offense” game. Everyone fills their bag with heavy objects and does a race across the room first without the bag and secondly with the bag. Discuss how these bags slow them down in running the race of life & moving forward in unforgiveness is like these bags.
- N** **Now pray prompts**
Pray for the Holy Spirit to help you forgive others that have hurt you. Choose to forgive them and tell God who you are forgiving.



Devotional - God's grace

WEEK 4

- T** Together idea
Everyone wears socks
- R** Relate to your life prompts
Share about a time in your life when you had to do something but felt that you were not good enough/weak. Eg a new job, becoming a parent for the first time. How did God help you?
- A** Apply Scripture ideas
Read and discuss scripture; *“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” 2 Corinthians 12:9.*
- I** Interact idea
Play a game of Pictionary using the theme, task is easy when someone is helping you or read poem “Footprints” and discuss.
- N** Now pray prompts
Tell God what are the things that you feel weak in/not good enough. Ask for Him to help you with these things.

Game Instructions

Week 3 - Game suggestion

Play “rocks of offense” game. Everyone fills their bag with heavy objects and does a race across the room first without the bag and secondly with the bag. Discuss how these bags slow them down in running the race of life & moving forward. Unforgiveness is like these rocks.

Week 4 -Game suggestion

Play a game of Pictionary using the theme, task is easy when someone is helping you:

- Play tennis
- Wash the dog
- Film a video.
- Throw a ball
- Play in a band
- Add your own

or read the poem “Footprints” and discuss.

Footprints

One night I dreamed a dream.

As I was walking along the beach with my Lord. Across the dark sky, flashed scenes from my life.

For each scene, I noticed two sets of footprints in the sand, One belonging to me and one to my Lord.

After the last scene of my life flashed before me,

I looked back at the footprints in the sand.

I noticed that at many times along the path of my life, especially at the very lowest and saddest times, there was only one set of footprints.

This really troubled me, so I asked the Lord about it. “Lord, you said once I decided to follow you,

You’d walk with me all the way.

But I noticed that during the saddest and most troublesome times of my life,
there was only one set of footprints.

I don't understand why, when I needed You the most, You would leave me."

He whispered, "My precious child, I love you and will never leave you Never,
ever, during your trials and testing's.

When you saw only one set of footprints,

It was then that I carried you."

Praying for your child - God's grace

Heavenly Father, I pray that you would make me a better parent.

Teach me to understand my children, to listen patiently to what they have to say, and to answer all their questions kindly.

Keep me from interrupting them, or contradicting them. Bless me with the bigness to grant them all their reasonable requests, and the courage to deny them privileges that I know will do them harm.

I pray that you would help me to be fair and just and to display the grace and mercy that I have found in you to them.

Amen.





What we see

The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness.

Matthew 6:22

Teaching your child on watching what they see

O be careful little eyes what you see - What your children see affects their heart!

It is said that the eyes are the most sensitive part of our body. Our eyesight is a gift from God! Not only did He make our ability to have the vision to see but also to perceive sight from far away. For example, a child may see a flame from a candle, but he may have to touch it before learning that it will hurt him. The following time he sees the love, his mind will perceive that it is not something he wants to touch!

If it is true that our eyes are sensitive to physical light and pain, how much more are they susceptible to what enters the heart. Proverbs 7:2 says, “*Keep my commandments, and live; and my law as the apple of thine eye.*” “The apple of your eye” is a phrase that means, “Something that is special, usually someone, who is cherished above all others.” Although we know that following God’s word and the law does not bring salvation, it does show us our need for salvation through Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:24). How will our children and grandchildren know that they need a Savior if they do not know they are sinners? The law shows us that we all have sinned and fallen short of God’s best.

In this day of worldliness and humanism, we must teach our children the ways of God. Although the Ten Commandments are a good start for younger kids, there are hundreds more in the Old Testament alone! Jesus summarized them all when He said, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind.” This is the first and great commandment. And the second one is to “Love your neighbor as you love yourself.”

Suggestions to help Christian parents make decisions regarding movies, music, and games in their homes.

One of the biggest challenges facing Christian parents today is making decisions about the influence of the “world” on their children’s spiritual growth. This issue comes to a head when we consider the effects of music, movies, and television on our children.

My goal is to encourage Christian parents to open a conversation with their children about the influence of media on their spiritual lives. Whether we like

it or not, we live in the world – a fallen world – and we all must learn how to navigate it.

Here are a few factors for you to consider :

1. Know your child

We all want a recipe for parenting, a magic formula that will ensure a great final product. Unfortunately, that is impossible as our children are different and unique. One essential element in understanding this issue of what you allow in the home is to know your child or children. How impressionable are they? How mature or immature are they? How much exposure to “worldly” things do they already have at school or elsewhere? What impact do songs, movies, and video games have on their character and personality? Does restriction cause a “forbidden fruit” syndrome in a particular child?

Once you have contemplated these questions, it will help you decide whether you have the TV on as “background noise” in your home, whether you allow certain movies into your home and whether you allow them carte blanche access to secular radio?

2. Remember that they are children, not mini-adults

I remember as a kid listening to the radio and singing along with words that would make me blush today. Fortunately, at the time, I had no frame of reference for those words – they were catchy lyrics to an upbeat song. If we listen to everything with our adult ears, we will want to permanently install plugs in our kids’ ears and not listen to anything other than praise and worship. After all, there is a lot of rubbish out there.

While we can’t insulate them from the world, there is some truth to the phrase “you are what you eat” (or listen to or watch in this case). While your kids might not get the subtle sexual references in the lyrics they are singing; they might be exposing and awakening a part of themselves prematurely. Solomon, three times in the book of Song of Solomon, warns the reader to “not awaken love before its time.” This is excellent advice – once awakened, it is hard to put that part of us back. Let’s be increasingly

aware of promoting pseudo-maturity in our kids before their God-given time.

3. Know what they are watching and listening to

Turning on youtube or handing over your iPad and walking away may give you a few minutes of peace and quiet,” but free time can come at a heavy price. Intentional parenting in technology and media takes hard work and energy. We need to be diligent in making sure that we are aware of what our children are watching and listening to, and they know that this is our expectation in our home. If we set this standard at a young age, our kids will come to expect it when they enter their teen years. It is much easier to loosen the reigns than tighten them.

I encourage you to consider installing an internet filter. One of the best things we have found is software that works with a wifi router that filters the internet before entering the home. With one parent designated as the “administrator,” you can establish various time limits and “permissions” for games and websites based on the device connected to the Wi-Fi system in your home.

4. Establish and clarify non-negotiable rules in your home

While you may already have some great ideas of your own, here are a few suggestions to add to your list:

All devices such as laptops and tablets must be used in a common area (living room, kitchen, family room, etc.).

Children are given time limits per day or week by their age.

Certain shows, games, or movies are out. It’s essential to explain why and try to let them have input on these decisions the older they get.

5. Maintain an open conversation

You might have some rigid and fast rules, but let’s keep flexible on this matter. We want to ensure that we keep the lines of communication open with our children on the issue of television, music, and video games. Our

children need to know why we set the rules we do. If they want more freedom in this area, encourage them to approach you and discuss them. Listen to what they say. Spend time talking and praying about it together.

6. Hold it up to the cross of Calvary

Teach your children to have discerning eyes and ears which are sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit. Ask them, “How does this song (video game, TV show, etc.) measure up to God’s values?” “Is it for God, against God, or neutral?” The “for God” or “neutral” categories are acceptable forms of entertainment. Keep in mind that just because something is labeled “Christian” or “gospel” does not mean it is “for God.” Some popular Christian music is simply neutral – it is good to clean piece that neither corrupt nor sanctifies. It is in the middle. And some Christian artists have some songs that fall in the “for God” category despite their “worldly” sound. Listen and evaluate the content together.



Devotional - What we see

WEEK 1

- T** Together idea
Wear shades/sunglasses or a hat
- R** Relate to your life prompts
Share your experience growing up. What shows did you watch? What was allowed? What were your favorite shows?
- A** Apply Scripture ideas
Memorize & discuss scripture; *“The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness.” Matthew 6:22*
- I** Interact idea
Play a round of “Blindfold chores” game or “I spy with my little eye”
- N** Now pray prompts
Pray for God’s protection for your eyes. Specifically against seeing harmful pictures, tv shows & movies. Pray for discernment to know what is light and what is dark.



Devotional - What we see

WEEK 2

- T** Together idea
Sit together in the lounge/tv room.
- R** Relate to your life prompts
Share about a movie you watched that impacted you positively & why?
- A** Apply Scripture ideas
Memorize & discuss scripture; *“For since the world began, no ear has heard and no eye has seen a God like you, who works for those who wait for him!”*
Isaiah 64:4
- I** Interact idea
Everyone shares their favorite movie or series that they are watching at the moment.
- N** Now pray prompts
Pray for God’s help to find good content to watch. Good movies, series & music.



Devotional - What we see

WEEK 3

- T** Together idea
Listen/sing a worship song together
- R** Relate to your life prompts
Share a negative experience of a movie you watched that you wished you hadn't. Why?
- A** Apply Scripture ideas
Memorize & discuss; *"I will set no worthless or wicked thing before my eyes. I hate the practice of those who fall away; It will not grasp hold of me."* Psalm 101:3
- I** Interact idea
Play a game of 30 seconds movie theme.
- N** Now pray prompts
Pray for things that you have watched that have been scary or harmful. Ask God to help remove those images from your memory.



Devotional - What we see

WEEK 4

- T** **Together idea**
Listen to this devotional with your eyes closed
- R** **Relate to your life prompts**
Share what type of things (movies, sermons, music) you watch now & why you have made this choice. Share if you have ever had to switch off a movie halfway through & why you did it.
- A** **Apply Scripture ideas**
Meditate on the scripture of the month (Matthew 6:22). Reward those who have memorized it.
- I** **Interact idea**
Discuss your guidelines for watching tv / YouTube. When are you allowed to watch and what?

Clarify your family rules & why you have them.
- N** **Now pray prompts**
Pray for the Holy Spirit to help you with self-control to watch the things that are good for you & to not watch things that are worthless or harmful.

Game Instructions

Week 1 - Game suggestion

Play a round of “I spy with my little eye” with objects from the room

Play a game whereby each player must do a basic chore which is normally easy but difficult when blindfolded. (without the use of your eyes)

- PlayMake a sandwich
- Feed the pet
- Add your own
- Go to the toilet
- Wash a glass/plate.
-
- Put on their Pajamas
- Clean the room
-

Week 3 -Game suggestion

Play a round of 30 seconds / or Pictionary with movie-related themes:

- Spiderman
- Garfield
- Paw patrol
- Smurfs
- My little pony
- Bob the builder
- The avengers
- Bugs bunny
- Add your own
- Mickey Mouse
- Dora the explorer
-

Praying for your child - What we say

Heavenly Father, I pray that you would help us to live with a heart of integrity in our home. Don't let (names of children) set anything worthless before their eyes.

Cause them to look to you and be radiant, turning away from anything that would cover their face with shame. I pray that you would help them to have discernment from a young age so as to see what is good for them and what is not. I pray that you would empower their will to “switch off” music, video, games, and other influences that would not edify their spirit and bring them life.

I pray that you put your hedge of protection around them in Jesus' name.

Amen



Church life

Don't stop meeting together with other believers, which some people have gotten into the habit of doing. Instead, encourage each other, especially as you see the Day drawing near.

Hebrews 10:25

Teaching Children About Church

As a pastor, my children are in church a lot!

One of the things I learned working in a church is that when you attend church so often, you know that church is not a perfect place and doesn't contain perfect people. It's easy to get offended, bored, discouraged, and even fed up.

I find it sad to see many young people raised in church choosing to leave the church as young adults. I know that there are many reasons for this, but I pray for us all that our children will not take this path. My husband and I aim to instill some essential truths in them as children to help them continue pursuing a relationship with God and being faithful to God's house when they are adults.

Here are a few things I want to teach my children about the church intentionally:

1. **We attend church because we love God**

I want to make sure my kids understand that we don't go to church because we are the "pastor's family," church members, or out of obligation. We don't go because that's where our friends are, although it's a great place to find friends. We go to church, and we love to go to church because Jesus loves the church, and we want to love what He loves. (Eph. 5:25).

2. **Going to church is a great privilege**

I want them to understand and be aware that having a local church to attend every week is a blessing that many do not have the luxury of. I want them to know that having the freedom to worship God is also a great privilege that many don't have.

3. **Serving in the church is an honor, and we do it because we want to be like Jesus**

I want them to know that volunteering or serving in church serves Jesus himself. While some jobs may not be exciting or "fun," anything we get to do for the King of Kings is an honor and should be done willingly and with a good attitude. (Ps. 84:10)

Jesus was a humble servant, who came to serve rather than be served,

and we should never think ourselves too good or too important to be a servant. (Gal. 5:13)

4. People at church are part of our heavenly family, and we love them like family

Just as I am trying to teach my children to love each other, get along with one another, be kind and respectful to one another, forgive one another, and serve and defend one another, so I want to teach them these things with their brothers and sisters in Christ family. And just as our family is not perfect, neither is our church family perfect. But we are family nevertheless! If we do not love one another, we are not right with God because God is love.



Devotional - Church life

WEEK 1

- T** Together idea
Everyone sits together outdoors or on the floor
- R** Relate to your life prompts
Share about what your church experience was while growing up. Did you attend church? What kind of church? What was good what wasn't?
- A** Apply Scripture ideas
Read & discuss the scripture of the month; *“Don’t stop meeting together with other believers, which some people have gotten into the habit of doing. Instead, encourage each other, especially as you see the Day drawing near.” Hebrews 10:25*
- I** Interact idea
Let kids use their bibles/google to look up some of Jesus’ church experiences while He was growing up. Discuss them.
- N** Now pray prompts
Pray for God to help you with desiring to go to church just as Jesus did from a young boy.



Devotional - Church life

WEEK 2

- T** Together idea
Everyone wears a head covering or a hat.
- R** Relate to your life prompts
Share about your current experience. Where do you attend church, how long and why do you go?
- A** Apply Scripture ideas
Read & discuss the scripture; *“Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in your midst?” 1 Corinthians 3:16*
- I** Interact idea
Play a game of charades with the theme (things we do at church).
- N** Now pray prompts
Thank God that He has made your body a temple for the Holy Spirit.



Devotional - Church life

WEEK 3

- T** Together idea
Everyone brings a different color pen (for poster).
- R** Relate to your life prompts
Share more about your personal church experience. Do you volunteer at church? In what and why? Share your personal experience with tithing, baptism, and taking communion. What are these church activities and why do we do them?
- A** Apply Scripture ideas
Read & discuss the scripture *“Now when all the people were baptized, Jesus was also baptized, and while He was praying, heaven was opened.” Luke 3:21*
- I** Interact idea
Have a discussion or Do a feedback poster with every member giving feed-back on your current church experience. What is good, what can be improved and what can we help with?
- N** Now pray prompts
Thank God for the church you belong to. Pray for the leaders and ask God to help give you ideas/ways to get involved with serving in the church.



Devotional - Church life

WEEK 4

- T** Together idea
Everyone to bring juice & bread/biscuit.
- R** Relate to your life prompts
Share what your hopes are for your children in this area of church life.
- A** Apply Scripture ideas
Read & remember the scripture of the month Hebrews 10:25. Reward those who have it memorized.
- I** Interact idea
Take communion together as a family.
- N** Now pray prompts
Thank God for the church community who are your brothers & sisters in Christ. Pray for some of your friends from church.

Game Instructions

Week 2 - Game suggestion

Play game of Charades – “What we do at church”

A word game, charades with themes of things we do at church. Have a child act out one of these sentences.

This game gives children an insight into the different church activities.

Write these out and place them in a bowl for kids to pick out and act. Set timer for 1 minute.

- PBaptism
- Tithes Prayer
- Add your own
- Worship
- Hospitality/share meals
- Sunday school
- Fasting
- Communion
- Reading the bible

Praying for your child - Church life

Lord, I lift (name of child/children) to You. Bless them with a hunger for the things of God and for your church. May they desire to spend time with you. Give them a heart that enjoys praying, praising, and worshiping You.

Show them how to live by faith and rely on the Holy Spirit for guidance. Strengthen them to say “no” to fleshly desires and “yes” to Your Holy Spirit.

May they have the desire to remain an active church member that is alive in You.

I pray that you would give them good friends at church and help them find their place to belong and serve in your body. I pray they'll never become luke-warm Christians and would always have a strong fire within them by the Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name, Amen.



Friendships

Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another
Proverbs 27:17

Teaching your child about friendships

We each need a significant amount of wisdom and discernment when choosing good friendships. Fortunately, the bible says that if any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. – James 1:5

There are quite a few verses about friendship to study with our families in the Bible. Here are a few key ones to assist you:

Do not be misled: “Bad company corrupts good character.” – 1 Corinthians 15:33

One of the principles of good parenting is genuine concern over the types of friends our children are making. Who are our kids hanging out with? What are they doing? Do they share similar values and principles? We often pray that God bless each family member with good godly friendships and help us see other people as He does– not by their outward appearances but by their hearts (1 Samuel 16:7).

A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born during a time of adversity. – Proverbs 17:17

Scripture teaches us to value others above ourselves (Philippians 2:3). It says that true friends stick by one another through thick and thin – they love one another and continuously forgive. 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 gives us a clear idea of this unconditional biblical love.

As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another. – Proverbs 27:17

Friendship gives us unique opportunities to support and encourage one another, share our unique talents, skills, resources, and knowledge, and help one another grow spiritually and emotionally! We grow as we learn to share the gift of ourselves with each another and receive the blessings that others provide us through their friendship.

As our children go out into the world, they will discover that even when they faithfully obey God’s Word, we live in a broken, morally decaying world where people sometimes let us down unintentionally or intentionally. When that happens, that’s the time to share the lessons we’ve learned from our past experiences as we minister to our children’s hearts.

When our children are faced with a friendship that fails or disappoints, we can teach them that even though people may sometimes abandon us, God loves us unconditionally and will never leave us. (Deuteronomy 31:6).

We can pray with our kids and let them know that when we pour out our broken hearts to God in prayer, the Lord heals even our deepest hurts and pain!

He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. – Psalm 147:3

We can be vulnerable and share examples in our lives when God has healed our broken friendships. Our kids must know God has the power to make all things new and not give up on people! (Revelation 21:5)

As challenging as adult friendships can be for us to manage, making new friends and navigating friendships as a child is even more complex for kids because they lack the maturity and life experience to deal with the ups and downs that can accompany even the closest of relationships.

Teaching children to be good friends themselves

Encourage your kids to choose the right friends & be good friends themselves.

We can't choose our kid's friends, but we can equip them on how to choose good friends. Showing children what makes a good friend, choosing their friends, and being a good friend to others are important life lessons to teach our children—practically teaching them communication, loyalty, support, and handling disagreements without hurt feelings.

Shared interests help friends bond together

It may be that children are on a sports team together, in the same class, live close by, or are simply the same age.

Friendships that last are built upon finding many shared interests and enjoying time spent together doing them!

Help your children and their friends discover their interests and find things in common they enjoy doing together and help foster their interest by supporting them and encouraging their different hobbies.

Children will have a handful of friends with unique shared interests individually.

As we know, friends don't have to tick every box our kids have available to check, some friends will fill a couple, and others will fill different roles in their lives.

Here are some excellent principles to teach on building good friendships:

True friends offer support in good times and bad

Friends offer support and encouragement to each other when they are sad, upset, hurt, scared, happy, excited, and when they celebrate accomplishments.

When your child's friend is struggling, going through a difficult time, or has had something exciting happen, encourage your child to celebrate their success or help them as much as they can through the challenging time.

Friends don't gossip about each other

Friendships that last are built on loyalty, kindness, respect, and honesty, and this means that under no circumstances should friends talk badly about one another.

It's Ok for them to talk to their parents about something that they're frustrated with or need help to understand, but especially for school-age children, when cliques begin to form and peer pressure begins, talking not nice about friends is a no-no and will only hurt the other person.

Practice role-playing at home. How would your daughter feel if her best friend began to make fun of her clothing or hair? It's tough being on the receiving side of gossip, and role-playing is an excellent empathy builder for children to remember what it "feels like" to be in someone else's shoes.

Promote personal connections

Encourage your child to listen to what their friend says with an open heart. Family connections can run deep, and you may be the person your child likes to share with for now, but as they grow up, they want to be relatable to their friends, including sharing their deepest thoughts and information.

Encourage sharing when comfortable with it, but don't push any behavior they are not ready for.

As kids grow older, listen and gently guide your conversations on personal topics so they understand how to open up and what questions to ask to get to know and form a closer connection with another person.

Help kids correctly handle disagreements and offenses

It's normal for friends to get into occasional disagreements just as they do with their parents and especially with siblings; it's essential to come together and work things out.

Encourage inclusivity among friends

It's fun to be around people you know and friends, but don't forget to remind your children that it's essential to be inclusive. Also, ensure they don't leave "old" friends behind when new friends enter their lives.

There will always be friends who have grown apart and are heading in different directions, but if this isn't the case, encourage inclusion among the new and old friends.



Devotional - Friendships

WEEK 1

- T** Together idea
Everyone to bring a metal/iron object. (Refer to this when discussing the scripture.)
- R** Relate to your life prompts
Share who were your childhood friends? Are you still in contact?
- A** Apply Scripture ideas
Read & remember the scripture of the month; *“Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.” Proverbs 27:17*
- I** Interact idea
Play a game of charades using “friends” from the bible as a theme.
- N** Now pray prompts
Thank God for friends. Pray and bless them by name.



Devotional - Friendships

WEEK 2

- T** Together idea
Everyone to share a treat together. (E.g. bag of chips, chocolate bar, etc)
- R** Relate to your life prompts
Share some of your experiences with having good friends and bad friends while growing up.
- A** Apply Scripture ideas
Read & discuss the scripture; *“A man that wants friends must show himself friendly, and there is a friend that sticks closer than a brother.” Proverbs 18:24*
- I** Interact idea
Discuss what the bible says about how to make more friends, What would this look like in your everyday life?
- N** Now pray prompts
Pray and ask God to help you make more friends.



Devotional - Friendships

WEEK 3

- T** Together idea
Wear an item of clothing borrowed from another family member.
- R** Relate to your life prompts
Share who your friends are now as an adult. Why have you chosen them as friends?
- A** Apply Scripture ideas
Read & discuss; “Do not be misled “*Bad company corrupts good character.*”
1 Corinthians 15:33
- I** Interact idea
Discuss the are qualities of good friends and bad friends Discuss how we are to choose our friends wisely.
- N** Now pray prompts
Pray for God’s help with having good friends. Ask him to help you identify friendships that are not good for you.



Devotional - Friendships

WEEK 4

- T** **Together idea**
Start off this time by giving each family member a “Hi-5”
- R** **Relate to your life prompts**
Share an example of a story where a good friend was there to help you or encourage you. Share an example of a time you were a good friend to someone.
- A** **Apply Scripture ideas**
Read & remember the scripture of the month Proverbs 27:17. Reward those who have it memorized.
- I** **Interact idea**
Allow everyone to share about who their friends are now. Why? Discuss if they are good friends, share ideas on how we could improve on being a better friend to others.
- N** **Now pray prompts**
Pray and ask God for his help in being a good friend to others.

Game Instructions

Week 1 - Game suggestion

Play a game of 30 seconds/charades using theme friends from the bible.

A word game, charades with themes of things we do at church. Have a child act out one of these sentences.

This game gives children an insight into the different church activities.

Write these out and place them in a bowl for kids to pick out and act. Set timer for 1 minute.

- David & Jonathan.
- 12 disciples
- Ruth & Naomi.
- Elijah & Elisha
- Jesus & Lazarus
- Abraham & Lot
- Shadrach & Meshach & Abednego
- Paul & Timothy
- Add your own
-
-

Praying for your children - Friendships

Lord, I lift my children to You in the area of their friendships. You have not put them on this earth with the intent for them to walk alone, as iron sharpens iron, I pray You would lead Godly friends and influences into each of my children's lives.

Lord, I know it is hard to find friends who are trustworthy, but I pray You would help my children attract and find people who will build up and encourage their faith. When it seems all the world is against them, remind my children that You are the one friend who sticks closer than a brother. When the road looks dark before them, make them aware of Your presence; that You never leave nor forsake.

Lord, we know bad company corrupts good character and far too often misleads the naive. I pray that You would make my children aware of and able to recognize when they may need to remove, distance, or guard themselves against a person or relationship. Give them no interest in pursuing friendships that could harm their life, reputation, or faith.

Lord, I pray also that You would teach my children how to be a friend to those who might be needing a little encouragement. Help my children behave in a way that would attract Godly friends so that both can be helped in their relationship with You. In Jesus' name, Amen.



Relationships

*So, God created man in his own image, in the image of
God he created him; male and female he created
them. And God blessed them. And God said to them,
Be fruitful and multiply.*

Genesis 1:27

Teaching children about marriage

Children are naturally curious about marriage. They see families with different models and have questions that need truthful answers. And children deserve honest answers based on God's eternal Word rather than shifting cultural trends.

Leading by example

Begin teaching your children about marriage through your testimony. If you're married, continue to give your children a living example of the unique and beautiful love that can grow between a husband and wife. Let them see you cuddle, kiss, hold hands—show them what it means to unite yourself to someone more unique to you than anyone else.

Let your children hear and see the love flowing between Mother and Father. Fill your children's senses with the delight of a father rejoicing in the wife of his youth (Prov. 5:18) and the security of a mother embracing her Godly husband.

Whether you're married or not, expose your children to a variety of marriages that are solid, godly, and filled with joy. Talk to them about happy marriages and loving, selfless, committed couples. Give them real-life examples to help them believe God's way is always the best.

When possible, take your children with you to wedding ceremonies. Prepare them ahead of time to witness the beauty and importance of this sacred ceremony. Talk about the vows the bride and the groom make to each other. Explain that when a man and a woman get married, they promise God they'll stay together as long as they both live, no matter what; this is called a covenant.

Explain who created marriage

Ensure your kids know God created this great gift of marriage. Take them back to where relationships began in the Garden of Eden, to the first wedding. Help them understand that even with all the other creatures—even with the presence of God—there was still something missing for Adam.

But our children need to understand that marriage isn't what we think it should be or what the movies portray. Marriage is what God says because God made us, and God made a marriage for his good reasons. Make sure your children

grasp that God intended marriage between one man and one woman for life. (Mark 10:6–9)

Teach your children that marriage is God’s kind gift, and it comes to us filled with his blessing. Demonstrate to them how marriage brings joy to adults and security for kids. And teach them that scripture explains that marriage is an up-close display of Jesus for His church, whom He calls His bride.

A note to the single parents

Teaching/discussing marriage when divorced, unmarried or widowed can be very difficult. Perhaps you feel like you can’t teach on this subject when you have struggled in this area.

I want to encourage you that God can use your pain and mistakes and turn them into a message of hope. This is just what He does! Allow God to use your testimony to create teaching moments for your children. Even though you might have experienced pain and disappointment in this area, I am sure your heart desires that your children’s experience is different! I am sure you want them to have happy, fulfilling marriages and families of their own one day! If this is the case, prepare them on how to do this. Teach them what you wish somebody had taught you when you were younger, and tell them about your mistakes and what you learned from them. Teach them God’s principles to grow up with solid foundations in this area in their understanding and hearts even though they might not experience this natural. Remember that when we feel that we are “not enough,” that is when the grace of God kicks in! Lean into him.

Some sound principles to teach about dating:

1. Prioritize your relationship with God first

Before you look for a relationship with the opposite sex, you need first to seek a radical relationship with God. This may sound old-fashioned, but this is the proper way toward future blessed and joyful marriage. So many people end up heartbroken or divorced because they did not put God at the center of their relationship.

2. Date with marriage in mind

Question what is the primary purpose of dating? Is dating to have someone

to hold, hug, kiss? If someone is dating just for fun, then they are missing the whole point of exclusive dating.

You need to date to explore marriage. I often say to my kids that the fewer people you date before you marry equals the lesser amount of “baggage” like bad experiences, memories, and pain you will take into your marriage. That being said, the goal should be less and not more in this area.

Of course, you will not immediately marry the first one you date. Dating is an excellent opportunity to explore if this is someone you want to marry one day. I always say that you should prolong the “friends” stage as long as possible. This is the time to get to know the person as much as possible without intense feelings. Dating should be to explore marriage, not getting to know who the person is.

3. Date someone with the same faith

One of the most detrimental mistakes Christians make is dating someone outside of their faith. While emotion can at times cloud our thinking, it is best to follow God’s word on this subject as it will save us much pain.

Dating someone outside of our faith is like picking up a rock and pounding it on your head. Imagine how your children will feel if their parents have opposing or different religious beliefs? This is just one of the many conflicts and challenges that marrying a non-believer will bring.

4. Pursue purity in dating

It is expected that dating someone you like and even love may easily lead to sexual temptations. This is why the Bible firmly teaches everyone to watch out for this sin and do whatever it takes to avoid it.

There are boundaries that you need to know about dating. As a Christian man, you need the fruit of self-control to live in purity. Sexual acts – and all activities leading to them – are reserved for marriage.

The Bible does not explicitly outline the dating rules.

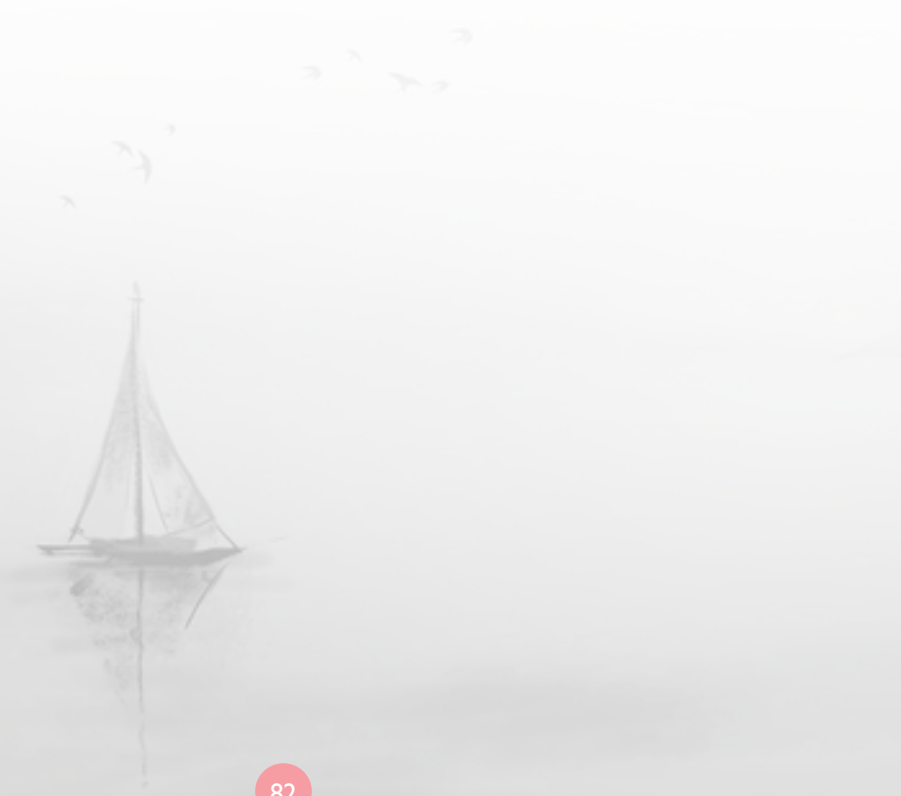
The overall principle is this: flee from sexual immorality and pursue purity. If you feel that something would be embarrassing to do in front of other people, that’s a cue to stop.

5. Be patient - there's no hurry

There are some things in life that only time can reveal. We need to be patient enough to know whether we are really in love or infatuated based on fleeting emotions. This is why Solomon, the wisest man on earth during his time, tells us not to awaken love until it's due time.

We need to be physically, emotionally, financially, and spiritually prepared before engaging in a serious relationship.

Dating too soon will make things more challenging for you and cause much unnecessary pain, which is not God's heart for you.





Relationships

Devotional - Relationships

WEEK 1

- T** Together idea
Everyone to wear a “red” item of clothing.
- R** Relate to your life prompts
Share the story of how you met your spouse.
- A** Apply Scripture ideas
Read & remember the scripture of the month “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply.’” Genesis 1:27
- I** Interact idea
Play a game of 30 seconds using the theme of famous couples from the bible.
- N** Now pray prompts
Thank God for creating you in His image. Thank Him for your body, how you look, your gender & personality.



Devotional - Relationships

WEEK 2

- T** Together idea
Everyone shares some chocolate treats.
- R** Relate to your life prompts
Share about your experience growing up. When were you allowed to start dating? What did the area of your love life look like?
- A** Apply Scripture ideas
Read & discuss the scripture; *“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church. He gave up his life for her.” Ephesians 5:25*
- I** Interact idea
Research together with the definition of how God defines love. Chat about how this is the goal for spouses and family members to treat each other. Discuss what areas could be improved according to this definition.
- N** Now pray prompts
Ask God to help you to make good decisions in the future regarding dating & relationships.



Relationships

Devotional - Relationships

WEEK 3

- T** **Together idea**
Set a romantic atmosphere by lighting a candle.
- R** **Relate to your life prompts**
Share about an experience with having a broken heart. What did you learn? How did you grow?
- A** **Apply Scripture ideas**
Read & discuss; *“Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. [23] For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which He is the Savior.” Ephesians 5:22, 23*
- I** **Interact idea**
Allow everyone to write down questions on dating, love & relationships and put them into a jar. Answer & discuss these.
- N** **Now pray prompts**
Ask God to help you to look after your heart well. Pray for wisdom in your relationships.



Devotional - Relationships

WEEK 4

- T** Together idea
Give everyone a kiss on the cheek.
- R** Relate to your life prompts
Share your hopes & dreams for your children in the area of dating & marriage.
- A** Apply Scripture ideas
Read & remember the scripture of the month Genesis 1:27. Reward those who have it memorized.
- I** Interact idea
Discuss what are good qualities to look for in a future spouse. Also, discuss what are the guidelines about dating in your family. Why?.
- N** Now pray prompts
Pray for your future spouse. Ask God to prepare them for you and you for them.

Game Instructions

Week 1 - Game suggestion

Play a game of 30 seconds/charades using theme famous couples from the bible.

- Adam & eve
- Jacob & Rachel
- Boaz & Ruth
- Samson & Delila
- David & Bathsheba
- Add your own
- Abraham & Sara
- Mary & Joseph

Praying for your children's purity & their future spouse

Father God, I lift my children to You asking that You would give them a desire to keep themselves pure in body, heart, and mind. Cover them, Lord, with a blanket of righteousness, guarding them against the habits and mindsets of the world.

Father, I pray You would work Your sanctification in each of my children. Help them avoid any kind of sexual immorality, teach them to control their minds and bodies in ways that are pleasing in Your sight. Create in them pure hearts and steadfast spirits. Ground them so completely in Your love and wisdom that they have no desire to pursue any relationship or activity that could lead them to harm.

I ask You to send an angel to prepare a spouse for these children, someone who will love and serve You, who will love and honor my child, who will choose the right path over the easy path. Prepare his/her heart for love and service.

I pray for his/her salvation and determination to follow You. When he/she fails You, I pray that he/she will quickly repent.

Help him/her to establish a lifestyle of turning to You for everything so that he/she will be wholly devoted and trusting of Your love and grace.

I pray that my child will do the same. Overwhelm them with Your Holy Spirit.

I eagerly await the spouse You're preparing the one my child will choose and I thank You in advance for the good works and your perfect timing in bringing them together. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Teaching your child about obedience

If we are honest as parents, sometimes disciplining our children can be more about us than about them.

While I used to label my discipline efforts, like most parents, as “good parenting” or “Christian discipleship,” the truth is I wanted to be a successful parent. I wanted obedient children to make me look good, and my life would be comfortable, and of course, I wanted them to know the importance of obedience so that they could reflect on others.

I succeeded at my goal. It’s true. I have discovered that you can make a kid obey. I learned that there are many ways of controlling behavior that kids would abide by. And it worked, in their younger years anyway.

However, as I’ve walked through the years as a pastor, I realize something significant. Many children obey their parents, but once they get out into the world, they walk away from God and their families to go on their own prodigal experience.

This is, of course, what none of us want for our children. We want them to learn that obedience is a good thing for themselves. It’s not something to do to avoid a negative consequence. I want them to understand the essence of obedience related to having a relationship of willing and loving submission to God. I want them to choose to obey God because they love Him.

It’s in our choice of free will to obey that we practically show love for God, and what a privilege we have! God has given so much for us that if we genuinely love Him, we won’t be able to stop our desire to do anything we can do to show love toward Him.

However, it’s vital to teach them that Obedience does not equal perfection. As adults, we frequently ask God to help us in our struggles with temptation, so why not teach our children to do the same from a young age? I also pray for my children (before them) that God would give them a desire to obey Him and the strength of will to choose the right thing.

I genuinely believe that the original submission they see in me will then help them know the significance of obedience in themselves. Otherwise, the temptation to give up the “try hard or be perfect” game will be high. They will find themselves

in a heap of discouragement with no hope that they can ever do any better. They need to know that we all, even as adults, struggle with obedience to God and that the only solution is to ask God to help us grace daily!





Devotional - Obedience

WEEK 1

- T** Together idea
Everyone to bring popcorn/chips/salty snacks.
- R** Relate to your life prompts
Share about a time in your childhood when you did not follow a rule and got into trouble. What happened?
- A** Apply Scripture ideas
Read & discuss *“Walk in obedience to all that the Lord your God has commanded you, so that you may live long and prosper.” Deuteronomy 5:33*
- I** Interact idea
As a group, write down the 10 commandments. See if you know them all. Look up in scripture ones you cannot remember. Discuss; why do you think God made these rules? How is this similar to parents making rules in their homes?
- N** Now pray prompts
Thank God that He cares about our lives. Thank him for loving us so much that he gave us guidelines for navigating through life in order to protect us from pain and bad consequences.



Devotional - Obedience

WEEK 2

- T** **Together idea**
Choose a leader by playing rock, paper, scissors. The leader must decide which room, time, position everyone must sit and object to bring. Everyone must practice obedience.
- R** **Relate to your life prompts**
Share what is the worst consequences you have had to endure because of a poor decision. Discuss what is a consequence
- A** **Apply Scripture ideas**
Read & discuss; *“Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established.” Romans 13:1*
- I** **Interact idea**
Discuss what life would look like if nobody followed the rules? At School? Everyday life? Would life be safe, good?
- N** **Now pray prompts**
Thank God for rules and order. Thank him for policemen and judges and leaders. Pray for God to protect them, give them wisdom and bless them.



Devotional - Obedience

WEEK 3

- T** Together idea
Everyone to bring a tablet or medicine. (Read out ingredients at back. Discuss how we don't understand it all, but we know that it is good for us.)
- R** Relate to your life prompts
Talk about one rule your parents had which you did not like or understand at that time but now as an adult, you are thankful for it.
- A** Apply Scripture ideas
Read & discuss; *"Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you."* Exodus 20:12
- I** Interact idea
Write down & discuss the rules in your home. Allow everyone to participate and make new rules. Discuss reasons for each of them. Place them on the wall/where everyone can see them.
- N** Now pray prompts
Ask God to help you obey your parents and to honor them.



Devotional - Obedience

WEEK 4

- T** Together idea
Everyone to bring a white flag. (Piece of white clothing e.g., sock, t-shirt)
- R** Relate to your life prompts
Discuss the concept that rules are good, but some are sometimes hard to follow. Share an example of a rule you are working hard at obeying. E.g., speed limit
- A** Apply Scripture ideas
Read & remember the scripture of the month Genesis 1:27. Reward those who have it memorized.
- I** Interact idea
Use your white flag as a visual representation of a moment of honesty. What rule are you currently struggling to obey? At school or home.
- N** Now pray prompts
Thank God for sending the Holy Spirit to be our helper. Ask for the Holy Spirit to help you with obeying rules, especially with the ones you are finding hard.

Praying for your child - Obedience

Lord, I pray You would give my children a heart bent towards obedience. Give them a desire to love You and want to serve You, following Your will in everything they do.

I pray that You would give my children hearts that are willing to obey their parents, teachers, mentors, law enforcement, governments, and the like, while still upholding Your Word as the supreme authority in their lives.

Father, I pray You would give my children wisdom in knowing when someone or something may be misleading them. Help them to be recipients of Your warnings and sensitive to the leading of Your Holy Spirit.

Lord help them understand that it is You they must follow and revere. Then help them walk out their faith courageously, serving You and holding fast to You so they may experience the blessings You have for them. Withhold no good thing from them for the honorable ways they conduct their lives. In Jesus' name, Amen.



Learning

*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge;
fools despise wisdom and instruction.*

Proverbs 1:7

Teaching your child about the importance of learning

Wisdom can sometimes be considered the same as knowledge. I read a definition of the difference between the two that makes it clear. “Knowledge is essentially about facts and ideas acquired through study, research, investigation, observation, or life experience. Wisdom is the ability to correctly discern and judge which aspects of that knowledge are true, right, long-lasting, and applicable to your life.”

So, understanding the difference, we can agree that children need to be taught wisdom. Wisdom comes through understanding and applying God’s Word to practical life experiences. Insight guides them from unwise decision-making and poor choices. And this wisdom is a gift that we can give our children.

Here are some ways we can teach wisdom in a fun and practical way.

Tell stories of people who made wise decisions and the positive effects. Then contrast these uplifting stories with those who chose an unwise path and suffered harm. Stories stir the heart and open the mind. We owe it to our children to engage them in conversations about real-life people. Use examples from people who live in your extended family and friends. Ideally, wisdom comes by allowing them to spread their wings and begin decision-making while they still live under your roof.

Teach them the value of acquiring knowledge. To walk in wisdom, we need an understanding of how things work. For this reason, we send them to school to gain knowledge on specific subjects in life such as economics, science, history, etc. Teach them the benefits of being an “eternal student,” always willing to grow in knowledge, learn new things, and be teachable no matter their age.

We all want the best for our children, and teaching these principles from a young age will help them foster wisdom as adults. God’s wisdom will follow our children for the rest of their lives. It will be with them when we cannot be. We can be at peace and comfort when we have a child who is wise in the ways of God.



Devotional - Learning

WEEK 1

- T** Together idea
Everyone to bring a stationery item.
- R** Relate to your life prompts
Share your experience with school/university life. Where? did you enjoy your experience?
- A** Apply Scripture ideas
Read & discuss; *“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.” Proverbs 1:7*
- I** Interact idea
Play a game of 30 seconds using school subjects as a theme.
- N** Now pray prompts
Thank God for your teachers. Pray and bless them.



Devotional - Learning

WEEK 2

- T** Together idea
Everyone to bring a school lunch box snack. (Fruit, sandwich, biscuit)
- R** Relate to your life prompts
Share about what were your favorite subjects in school. Why?
- A** Apply Scripture ideas
Read & discuss; *“Show me your ways, Lord, teach me your paths.” Psalm 25:4*
- I** Interact idea
Discuss what subjects children currently enjoy at school. Why? Which are they good at? What are possible career choices that could result from these interests?
- N** Now pray prompts
Pray for God to direct your steps with choosing subjects in the future in line with the plans He has for you.



Devotional - Learning

WEEK 3

- T** Together idea
Everyone to sit around a table.
- R** Relate to your life prompts
Share one or two positive examples from your school life. How did it help you become who you are today?
- A** Apply Scripture ideas
Read & discuss; *“How much better to get wisdom than gold, to get insight rather than silver!” Proverbs 16:16*
- I** Interact idea
Allow kids to share about what they currently enjoy about school. What do they not enjoy/find difficult?
- N** Now pray prompts
Thank God for sending the Holy Spirit to be our helper. Ask for the Holy Spirit to help you in the area of the school, especially with the things you are finding difficult.



Devotional - Learning

WEEK 4

- T** Together idea
Everyone brings pencils/crayons.
- R** Relate to your life prompts
Share your hopes and your dreams for your children in the area of their school & university life.
- A** Apply Scripture ideas
Read & remember the scripture of the month, Proverbs 1:7. Reward those who have it memorized.
- I** Interact idea
Discuss why is school/education important? What happens if you don't have an education?
- N** Now pray prompts
Thank God that He has made you unique with special interests & abilities. Pray for Him to give you a good attitude towards school and learning.

Game instructions

Week 1 – Game suggestion

Play a game of 30 seconds or charades using school subjects as a theme. Write these words on pieces of paper and cut them out.

- Mathematics
- Science
- History
- Biology.
- Languages
- Physics
- Physical education.
- Entrepreneurship
- Religion
- Add your own
-
-

Praying for your child - Learning

Father God, I lift my children to You, asking that You give them a desire to love You and want to follow You. By Your grace and mercy, grow in them a faith that rests only on Your great power and not on any wisdom of the world. I pray my children will be marked by righteousness, purity living by faith in all they do. Help them trust You more and more daily. Prove Your goodness and faithfulness to them in every step, season, and situation of their lives.

I pray that my children be well guarded, grounded in their faith, strong and courageous, doing everything in love. I pray that You give them your spirit of wisdom and discernment so they may come to know You more. May the eyes of their hearts be opened to the glorious inheritance You have in store for those who believe. May their faith be broadened, unbridled, deepened immeasurably, and heightened insurmountably as You display Your great power in their lives. In Jesus' name, Amen.



Your Future

*For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD,
"plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to
give you hope and a future.*

Jeremiah 29:11

Teaching Children about their future

Identify And Pursue God's Plans and purpose For Your Life

The scriptures tell us we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. Ephesians 2:10.

The truth is that God gives us the freedom to pursue any path we want in life – but God created each of us with a unique, particular purpose and a perfect plan for our lives.

God gives us unique gifts, skills, and talents predispose us to specific life vocations. These gifts, combined with our personalities, interests, heart desires, and individual life experiences, make us uniquely suited for the purpose God created us to fulfill in this world.

Psalm 139:16 says Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to pass.

If we pursue our desires and dreams without regard for God's plan for our lives, we wind up feeling empty, unsatisfied, frustrated, and meaningless. However, if we decide to partner with God and seek His guidance and will for our lives, we discover the freedom and joy that comes from living the life God created us to live – no matter where that may take us.

One of the best things you can do is to help your children in the area of their future is to discover the unique talents and gifts that God has given them. Expose them to different hobbies, sports, vocations, and cultural activities. Linked with this is attentive to their genuine interests and what things they enjoy. As parents, we are called to help develop and grow what God has placed inside them. Keep affirming these things and help them identify them for themselves from a young age. Teach them that God has not made them randomly but that he has given them these special interests, abilities, and desires to use them one day to make a difference in this world!



Devotional - Your Future

WEEK 1

- T** Together idea
Everyone to bring an object symbolizing a profession. Eg tools, cutlery, microphone.
- R** Relate to your life prompts
Share what profession you wanted to do when you were growing up. Why?
- A** Apply Scripture ideas
Read & memorize scripture of the month *“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Jeremiah 29:11*
- I** Interact idea
Play a game of Pictionary using different professions.
- N** Now pray prompts
Thank God for all the important professions. Thank him for your teachers, doctors, pastors, etc, and ask him to bless their work.



Devotional -Your Future

WEEK 2

- T** Together idea
Everyone brings their bible/bible app on their phones.
- R** Relate to your life prompts
Describe your current job. What do you do? What are the positives and negatives of your job? If time allows briefly describe previous jobs you have had.
- A** Apply Scripture ideas
Read “*Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters.*” *Colossians 3:23*
- I** Interact idea
Research (or just read scripture for younger kids), in the book of genesis, what was the first job God gave Adam to do? Discuss if work was originally created to be good?
- N** Now pray prompts
Ask God to help you have a good attitude towards work. That He would help you to be hardworking at school and with helping around the house.



Devotional - Your Future

WEEK 3

- T** Together idea
Everyone brings a book.
- R** Relate to your life prompts
Share your journey on how you decided what career to pursue. How did you decide that? Is it in line with the gifts and talents God gave you?
- A** Apply Scripture ideas
Read and discuss; *"Your eyes saw my unformed body; all my days were written in Your book and ordained for me before one of them came to be."* Psalm 139:16
- I** Interact idea
Discuss why God gave us all different talents. Using the talents and gifts cards, take turns writing down each person's gifts & talents. Or Encourage each other by guessing what professions they would be good at in the future & why you think so.
- N** Now pray prompts
Thank God for how special God made you. Thank Him for your different talents and gifts. Ask Him to help you to discover them, develop them and use them for His glory.



Devotional -Your Future

WEEK 4

- T** **Together idea**
Everyone to bring paper & crayons to make a poster.
- R** **Relate to your life prompts**
Share what your personal dreams are in your career development/goals.
- A** **Apply Scripture ideas**
Read & remember the scripture of the month Jeremiah 29:11.
Reward those who have it memorized.
- I** **Interact idea**
Let everyone make a dream poster of their future (when kids are adults) and in 10-15 years for parents. Dream in areas of family, career, their house, friendship with God, etc. Allow a time of showing & explaining their posters.
- N** **Now pray prompts**
Thank God that He has good plans for your future. Thank God for your future family and job and ask His help to make some of these dreams come true according to His will.

Game instructions

Week 1 – Game suggestion

Play a game of Pictionary with different professions.

Write out these cards and place them in a bowl. Play rounds until all cards are done.

- Chef
- Astronaut
- Musician
- Pastor.
- Writer
- Mechanic
- Teacher
- Doctor.
- Driver
- Businessman
- Add your own
-

Praying for your child - their future

Heavenly Father, I thank You that all good gifts come from You. I thank You that I can trust You for the future of my children. Please guide my child in every step they take. I pray You would be the one to open the right doors and close the wrong ones. Please make Your plans and purposes for them clear. I pray that they would know Your provision and protection in the areas You have called them into. May all that they do bring them great satisfaction and glory to Your name.

Amen.

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Note from the author

I sincerely hope and pray that you have found this book helpful and that it has been a blessing to your family!

If you have any feedback, questions, or comments I would love to hear from you!

Please feel free to contact me at natalia.venter1@gmail.com

If this book has benefited you please can I ask you to leave a review on Amazon. This will encourage other families to work through this devotional and build special memories together!

Blessings

Natalia Venter

