



Parenting

Raising the next generation

Foreword

At its heart, the gospel is an invitation to enter into relationship with God. Parents can model what that looks like every day. Parents can show their children what it means to turn to God in difficult times, to forgive and love each other, to receive God's grace when mistakes are made, and to thank him for the good times too.

The truth is life is messy. There will be times when kids are tired, when work is stressful, when the house is a mess, and there's a mountain of washing that needs doing. The vital thing to take hold of is that there is no one way of doing faith in the home. It's about finding what works best for you as a family.

Good parents aren't perfect and that's ok. There's no formula to follow but there are ways we can grow. Our children are watching and finding things out from us all the time and that includes what they learn from us about faith.

We want you to be equipped as a parent to develop the skills needed to raise the next generation. We will all be familiar with the aircraft safety announcement that tells adults to put on their oxygen mask before attending to their children. It sounds counter-intuitive but on reflection makes perfect sense.

As parents we need to be well enough to have the energy and resources we need to take care of our children. An important part of that will be giving time to the significant adults relationships in our lives. If we are parenting alone, this will be relationships with friends, and if we are married, our marriage relationship.

God has a great plan for your children and for you as a family. You are called and capable of parenting your child to know and love God. Parenting for faith will look different for every family because God designed it to be light and natural and reflective of you as a unique family.

So, when we share our faith with our children, whether it's reading the bible, worshiping together, praying, or in everyday conversations, we are inviting them to share in a loving relationship with their heavenly father who loves them so much. He longs for us to draw close to him and breathe life into us. As we do, we get to know him and his goodness. He reveals to us how much he loves us and wants to bless us, he wants us to have a close relationship with him and walk in his truth; to know that we belong and have a home with the father, this is part of our true identity. So we are inviting our children into a life-giving and exciting journey that we can go on together, there's something for everyone.

We hope that this booklet helps to equip you with some practical ways to share your faith with your children and to feel encouraged that you have all you need already!

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What We Know

Parents are their children's biggest influencers, but many don't know where to start. We are grateful for the research and insight provided by organisations and individuals on this issue, notably the *Fuller Youth Institute*, *Vern L. Bengtson*, and *Theos*.

Studies have shown:

The Challenge...

1. Only around 50% of children brought up in Christian homes still follow the faith as adults.
2. Among Anglicans who say that religion is very important in their lives, only 36% listed religious faith as an especially important quality that children can be encouraged to learn at home, compared to good manners (94%) or tolerance and respect (83%).
3. 28% of church-attending Christians report that they do not mind whether or not their children share their beliefs.
4. Despite 85% of parents believing that they are primarily responsible for their child's spiritual development, they also genuinely believe that the Church is better placed than they are to actually do it.

You are Perfectly Placed

1. Parents have the biggest influence on the faith of young children, followed by church leaders, Christian friends, church youth leaders, then Sunday school leaders.
2. The majority of people who come to faith do so before the age of 19.
3. A child who does not go to playgroup or nursery school will probably spend at least 21,900 working hours within the home. It could take the average church group more than 421 years to spend the same amount of time with this child.
4. The key factors that increase the chances of children choosing to follow their parents faith are:
 - a. Children feel close to their parents and grow up in a warm family.
 - b. Children see that their parents have a developing, authentic (not perfect) faith themselves.
 - c. Parents seek to develop and nurture their children's faith.
 - d. Children receive positive multi-generational input from the wider family and church.

Making Him a part of your everyday

205 The commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them **when you sit** at home and **when you walk** along the road, **when you lie down and when you get up.** **Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads.** **Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.**

Deuteronomy 6:6-9

The book of Deuteronomy lays out some of the most well known guidance to parents for how they can raise their children knowing, and loving the Lord. In this short verse we can see how raising Godly children is not just a case of building in formal structure but a case of learning to integrate God into the normal, unstructured, moments of life.

Let's take a close look at what this might look like in our homes:

When you sit²⁰⁵

Think about the phrase ²⁰⁵when you sit in your house²⁰⁵ for a moment, and consider how it might relate to your home.

Sometimes it is the setting aside time to pray, read the Bible, or to worship as a family. These are the more planned and structured times of the day, they can be relaxed in nature and don't²⁰⁵ need to be more than a few minutes.

It may be you could share something from the Bible that you like. What would work best for you? Is it looking at some of Jesus²⁰⁵ parables or miracles with some questions to answer?

Or would your family prefer memorising key scripture verses together? As children get older you can aim to help them carve out their own time to read God's²⁰⁵ word. Guiding conversations around God's²⁰⁵ word or asking key questions is a great way to make the most of a meal time. With older children, how do biblical truths relate to their lives at school and to the views of their friends?

Could you draw a picture to describe a verse you have read or pick out key words?

When you walk

Or when you're in the car! These times will be more unplanned and unstructured, what's happening nearby, an overheard song or news report? What do you notice? Real life events can be opportunities to make God's word relevant to the world around us. Simple statements that bring God naturally into conversation can be a great way of sharing faith in the everyday, look at that really tall tree, isn't God amazing to have made it so tall? What do you think God was thinking about when he made that sunset? Can you find something around us that you can say thank you to God for?

When you lie down and when you get up

Reflection at the end of the day is a natural way of processing the day's happenings. Children can often find that the quiet time as they lay in bed is the perfect time to open up to their parents (it's also a way for them to stay up later,) but don't let this opportunity pass you by.

Pray together as you say goodnight. You could include an encouraging Bible verse as you do. There's nothing better for ending sibling rivalry than hearing each other share our worries or troubles. In the morning you could make praying together a way of preparing for the day ahead. It can be a simple blessing. Sharing naturally with our Father is best.

We don't have to pretend with him and we can tell him what we're struggling with. We can share our doubts with him and bring our fears before him. He doesn't need us to put a brave face on us before we come to him. Our children need to see this otherwise they may think they've got to be perfect to come before God.



Write them on the doorframes of your houses.....

It is valuable to have God's word strategically placed around the home and can be a reminder of some key verses for your family. You could make them together.

Top Tip: Make sure you have a Christian CD in the car. These can be great ways of teaching your kids verses or stories from the Bible. (*Sovereign Grace Kids Album Listen Up!* a great album which will help communicate Jesus' parables.)

Creating a Devotional Time

The benefit of using both structured and unstructured approaches combined is a great way of ensuring core truths from the Bible become routed in the everyday experiences of life.

Again, there is no perfect formula for a Bible reading time but here are a few suggestions:

Set expectations

Make it clear that everyone's opinion is valued, we all need to feel comfortable enough to share and explore together. Don't be afraid to set a few expectations here. These could include engaging with what's happening and listening to answers without making fun of each other.

Age appropriate

It's important to start with small amounts. It is good to read straight from the Bible and there are some great resources available to aid family Bible times including lots of different Bible versions (*see resource page for more information*). Don't be afraid to try a few different versions. Choose sections that are suitable for your family.

Top Tip: Buy a Children's Bible for your child.

Play

Toys or Bible story books can be a great way of bringing a Bible time alive and can also help younger and older children participate in a way that is suitable for them. Younger children may enjoy playing with some special Bible related toys or looking through Bible picture books, don't forget to draw them in by asking them questions too. Resource yourself with a box of goodies. Why not encourage them to dramatically read the words or act it out? Try sharing the reading between you, a line each. Children may like to illustrate while they hear or retell parts.



Questions

Asking questions is a great way to interact with each other. Listen carefully to their answers and let them ask questions as well. If you don't know the answer you can say so, you don't need all of the answers. Perhaps you could research it together.

You could try having a question box with prepared questions in. Try to use both open ended and closed questions.

Try to use both open ended and closed questions.

2015 What does this make you think about?

2015 What bit can you remember?

2015 What might this tell us about God?

2015 What did you like about this parable the most?

2015 Was there anything you didn't like?

There will be some times that are great and you'll remember why you're doing it. They'll also be the times when it all ends in tears and arguments. This is normal and so don't worry about it keep persevering and have in your mind the phrase: *do it any way.*



Prayer

As we encourage our children to develop their relationship with God, it is great to model a loving friendship with prayer at its core. We can come to our loving father as we are, throughout the day, practicing an awareness of Him as we move through the day. Sharing this with our children is a good way of learning together. There are so many different ways we can pray. At its heart, prayer is linking up with our loving father, through conversation, thoughts, listening, through our actions or just being still with him.

There will be more spontaneous times to pray for example, if someone in the family talks about a difficult situation at school or work, pray for it briefly and matter-of-factly out loud there and then. If you hear something tragic in the news, get into the habit of asking God out loud to bless that situation, God, please bless those people in....

Good times to pray together are those times you do something regularly, like going to bed, eating a meal, on the way to school. Keep prayer times short unless anyone wants to go on for longer. Feel free to pray the same family prayer at the same time of day. A good way of helping your family bring their concerns to God is to ask key questions.

For example:

2015 What are you most thankful for today?

2015 What did you find difficult today?

2015 When did you show love today?

2015 When weren't you kind today?

2015 What would you like to say to God about today?

2015 Do you need anything today?

Different ways to pray:

Here are just a few creative prayer ideas that you might like to try at home:

Give thanks: It is amazing how quickly giving thanks can change the atmosphere, ask around and tell me two things you want to say thank you for. This can be a mood lifter and takes us straight into God's presence.

Formal prayers: ones you repeat Thank you God that you have given me your child to look after, to know and to love. Amen Having a scripture about sleep to hand at bedtime can be a comfort to children: Thank you God that when I lie down to sleep, you keep me safe. Psalm 4 v 8

Conversational prayers: What was the best thing that happened today? Invite the child to tell God about it either in silence or by whispering into their pillow.

Listening: Prayer is not just about talking to God; it's about listening to him. What do you think God might be saying?

Light a candle: having a ritual can bring a special atmosphere to prayer, it doesn't make it any more holy but it can bring a sense of awe and wonder. You could say The Lord's Prayer by candlelight.

Prayer maps: draw or make a map of your street and as you do pray for the people in the homes.

Lollipop prayers: write the name of each family member on a lollipop stick, put them in a jar, each day or week, everyone picks a stick out and prays for that person.

Gratitude journals: a simple couple of things to say thank you to God for, it could be every day or once a week.

Prayer booklets: keep a prayer diary writing in answered prayer.

Walking prayers: collect bugs, leaves and give thanks for what God has made.

Big prayers: choose a pebble and as you throw it into a river, lake, sea or a bucket of water, think of someone and shout out: Please help (name) know you Jesus. As you throw the pebble into the water watch as the ripple grows and think of how God's kingdom grows. Notice how the rings gradually spread out

from the point where the pebble entered the water.

Give (name) the courage to start the ripple of God's kingdom in their home/ school/ work place. Finish by asking God to show you and your family how you can be extending God's kingdom. Take a picture of the ripples as a reminder of your commitment to extend God's kingdom.

Walking prayers: start off by walking slowly in silence, paying attention to everything you hear and see. When you reach an



agreed point pause to share what you've seen or heard. Give thanks for anything beautiful and ask for God to help if there's anything spoilt. Then run to the next agreed spot and feel

the exhilaration of living in God's amazing world. Share how it felt to run freely and give thanks for God's amazing freedom. Look around and pray for what you see.

Puddle prayers: wearing wellies, imagine each puddle is a different situation or person that you want to know the love of Jesus. As you jump say the person's name out loud and see how big a splash you can make.



Extreme prayer: find some extreme places to pray and take a picture of yourself there. The bible is full of people praying in all sorts of places.

Where is the lowest, highest place you can find?

Where is the busiest/ most silent place?

Flag/ ribbon prayers: make flags to wave or streamers, as you wave them pray for Holy Spirit to fill your lives and the lives of the people you know.

Fan prayers: make a fan or turn on an electric fan, as you feel the blowing air invite Holy Spirit to fill you.

Pray at mealtimes: Think creatively about how you pray for your food. You could perhaps pray for the country where your food came from.

Praying for our kids

We can look to the promises in the Bible and pray scripture over them;

2015 We can pray for Christian influences to come across their paths at the right time.

2015 We can pray for their character and for the fruits of the spirit.

2015 We can pray that they would have wisdom to make good choices and that they would be emotionally strong and able to recover from setbacks.

2015 We can pray for their future jobs, relationships and marriage partners and we can pray that they have soft hearts that respond to God's love for them.

Godly Family Time

Care for the Family 2015 top tips for things we can do at home:

1. Play with your children.

This reaffirms our love for them and our enjoyment of life. It helps to develop their imagination which is what they use to picture what God is like.

2. Eat a meal together.

No matter how old, this can help to develop communication amongst your kids. From toddlers to teenagers everyone can answer questions: what was the best/hardest thing about your day? Did you see God in anything you did today? Did you talk to God about anything today?

Top Tip: Take it in turns to go out for breakfast with one of your children. It doesn't need to be complicated or expensive.

3. Say sorry when you're wrong.

Sometimes showing we're not perfect helps our children to see that God loves us even when we make mistakes. Saying sorry can make a difference to their perceptions of what it means to be a Christian at the same time teaching them about forgiveness and demonstrating what God does for us.

4. Point to God in the everyday.

Creation is a great conversation starter. If you mention it on a beautiful day or you point to a really tall tree or if you're amazed by how much it rains, adding on a simple statement:

God so amazing to have created all that?

Or use the opportunity to thank him for his creation. This can be a natural way of making God a natural part of conversation and everyday life.

5. Offer a glimpse of your spiritual life.

Some of our relationship with God can be quite private. Silent prayers, bible reading. Giving our children a little insight into what we do gives them an example to follow. Could you tell your children what you just read in the bible? Perhaps ask them to pray for you. Maybe share what you learned at church so they can see how that impacts you. Showing children that God is part of your life and that you spend time with him makes God and faith seem more real.

6. Pray at bedtime.

We can show children our faith by praying before they go to sleep. Encourage them to pray even if they do it in their head. If they don't want to they will still know that you trust God enough to talk to him. You could pray for something more specifically or thank God for something or a situation at school.

7. Share a story.

There are so many ways to share a bible story. Read it, act it out, do a creative activity to illustrate it. Think how you and your child interact best. Share with them why you love that story. What does it show you about who God is? You could share with older children why you love Jesus, how you became a Christian, your own personal story.

8. Meet up with others from church.

Spending time with others from Christian families can help relationships develop giving children others to talk to when you're not in favour. Having fun together is a great way to share the love of the wider family of God as children grow up.

Ask God to show you which families could be a fit for you.

9. Offer an explanation.

Children don't automatically know the reasons why we do things. We can help children join in and give them motivation by explaining why we go to church, why we sing songs together, why we make time to talk to people and be kind to them.

10. Find a time to pray.

Praying for our children often can get squeezed out of our day. It is great to pray for our children to grow up loving Jesus. Can you find a way to remind yourself to pray for them? Maybe each time you see a particular picture of them on the wall? Or as you check on them at night. Find ways that work for you.

Resources

Bibles

Suitable for pre-school children:

My Very First Bible Lois Rock

My First Bible Stories adapted by Jillian Harker and Michael Phipps

The Play Along Bible Bob Hartman

My Friend Jesus by Stanborough Press

Suitable for ages 4+(as a guide)

The Jesus Storybook Bible Sally Lloyd Jones

The Lion Read and Know Bible Sophie Piper

The Beginner's Bible Catherine DeVries

My First Message Amazing Stories of the Bible Eugene H Peterson

Suitable for ages: 7+ (as a guide)

International Children's Bible

Hands on Bible NLT

Community Bible Experience NIV

The Adventure Bible

Diary of a Disciple. Peter and Paul's Story Gemma Willis

Diary of a Disciple Luke's Story Gemma Willis

The Bible Project's animated Bible series on Youtube.

Devotionals

My Big Book of 520 Minute Devotions Pamela Kennedy and Douglas Kennedy

Love Letters From God: Bible Stories Glenys Nellist

Little Love Letters from God: Bible Stories Glenys Nellist

Love Letters From God Bible Stories For a Girls Heart Glenys Nellist

The Beginners Bible Everyday Kelly Pulley

Jesus Calling 365 Devotions for Kids Sarah Young

Jesus Calling for Little Ones Sarah Young

Tops published by CWR www.cwr.org.uk to provide bible readings and prayers, puzzles and cartoons.

Bible Blessings For Bedtime Linda Carlblom

Craft

Bible Journaling Drawing, colouring, doodling and Design by FaberCastell

Faber Castell Bible Journaling Kit Faber Castell

Doodle Through the bible for kids Jonny Hawkins

Bake Through the Bible Susie Bentley Taylor and Bekah Moore

I Am So Many Things Colouring Book Thea Muir.

Parenting Books

Getting Your Kids Through Church Without Hating God Rob Parsons

Parenting Children For A Life Of Faith: Creating a culture where parenting for faith can flourish Roschel Turner

It Takes A Church To Raise a Parent Roschel Turner

Raising Faith: Helping our children find a faith that lasts Katherine Hill

Websites

careforthefamily.org.uk

parentingforfaith.org A library of free videos, articles and resources helping parents and kids to connect.

The Bible Project Youtube project

godventure.co.uk ideas for sharing faith at home, prayer and bible related activities and shopping.

flamecreativekids.blogspot.com creative prayer activities

Apps

Guardians of Anchora developed by Scripture Union. An adventure exploring the bible. Choose a guardian hero, train and explore.

Bible App for kids developed by Life.Church. Through interactive adventures and animations kids explore the stories of the bible.

Spotify developed by Spotify Ltd. free music app great way to listen to praise music on your phone or tablet. Adult supervision recommended as the app itself is suitable for ages 12+

Shopping

www.eden.co.uk

www.thegoodbook.co.uk



