

Family Devotions

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be 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: 4-9

Raising children is a big responsibility. We want to teach our children to be kind, responsible, hard-working, able to work well with others...but the most important role we have as parents is to introduce our children to a God who loves them, to model a life lived in service to Him. God has appointed parents to be the primary spiritual guides in their children's lives. The church is here to aide families in that role.

How can parents be the spiritual guide and raise their children to love and serve God? These verses in Deuteronomy give wonderful scriptural guidelines for how to accomplish this daunting task.

Verse 5 – Your biggest responsibility is your personal relationship with God. Your children need to see that you “Love the Lord your God with all you heart and with all your soul and will all your strength.” Your own walk with the Lord is on display and they will be much more affected by the fact that you walk the walk and talk the talk than if you take them to Sunday School and say grace at meals, but keep your faith hidden the rest of the time.

Verses 7 – How do you impress the wonder and love of God on your children? “Talk about it with them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.” In today's vernacular we may say, “Talk about it when you are eating your meals, when you are driving carpool, when you are tucking your child in bed, when you are riding bikes...” Make it an every day, natural thing.

A good way to accomplish this is to get in the habit of pointing out God sightings. Your children will catch on quickly and they will begin to see God in nature, in people, and in situations. When you are outside, marvel at the intricacy of God's creation with your children. Point out acts of service and Godly qualities in other Christians. When tragedies occur in life, whether in the news or in your own family, pray together and brainstorm how you can help. Children are usually not born compassionate – they need to be taught to see the needs in others and in a hurting world.

Memorizing scripture is a tangible way to “hide God’s word in your children’s hearts.” Have a Bible verse each month that your family is memorizing. Repeat it for your child every night as you tuck them in bed. Then Bible memory comes through osmosis rather through a painful exercise. Scripture music played on CDs in the car and in the house makes memorizing God’s word easy – songs often stay with us for life.

There are numerous ideas for weekly family devotions. The simpler you make it, the more likely it will occur. Have family devotion night always be the night you have a favorite dinner, make a special dessert, or go out for ice cream. Use the stories your children are learning in Sunday School as the scripture basis for your devotion time. The TRU curriculum Third uses, for two year olds through 6th grade, is designed to allow children to be introduced to the lesson before they attend Sunday school. Parent pages are emailed the week before the lesson is taught.

Because God’s plan is for parents to be the primary spiritual nurturers of their children’s faith, we want you to be the one to introduce this part of The Big God Story to them. Let the kids be involved – let them teach the lesson to you. The more they are involved, the more they will enjoy it! Pray together. Then play together – a favorite game, or hide-and-seek. Have each member of the family take turns being the “special” one of the week. They get to choose the meal, the dessert, the game. Having a weekly devotional evening teaches your children about God and it binds the family together.

Verses 8 & 9 - Make sure your life and your household stand for who you are in Christ. Ensure that your family is visibly and obviously loving and serving God. “Let your light shine before men so that they may see your good works and give glory to your father in heaven.” Good works are wonderful, but you and your family should serve others in such a way that others are pointed to God – and give the glory to Him.

The best way to raise your children to love and serve God is to live, breathe, and model a God-centered life every day. This doesn’t mean you need to be perfect – you just need to recognize sin when it occurs and ask for forgiveness. Praise God – as parents we don’t have to be perfect!

The steps to raising children to know and love God are to model the faith in your own life, help your children to see God every day, and reach out to the community in ways that give glory to God! Be intentional – goals are rarely reached by accident. To God be the glory!

Resources:

The Complete Illustrated Children's Bible (Harvest House Publishers, Inc.) —
Bible presented to all four year old children at Third

The Adventure Bible (Zondervan) – Bible presented to all second graders by Third
*Bedtime Blessings, Vol. 2: 100 Bedtime Stories and Activities for Blessing Your
Child* by John Trent (Focus)

Spiritual Growth of Children by John Trent, Kurt Bruner and Rick Osborne
(Focus)

Foundation Verses (Children Desiring God) - Foundation Verses come in a pack
and are strategically chosen Bible verses for children preschool through age
five. The pack includes short verses with picture prompts to help non-readers
remember the passage.

My First Hands-On Bible by Tyndale House (Group)

God and Me! Devotions for Girls Ages 2-5 by Lynn Marie-Ittner Klammer
(Legacy Press)

Gotta Have God! Fun Devotions for Boys Ages 2-5 by Lynn Marie-Ittner Klammer
(Legacy Press)

God and Me! Devotions for Girls Ages 6-9 by Diane Cory (Legacy Press)

Gotta Have God! Cool Devotions for Boys Ages 6-9 by Diane Cory (Legacy Press)

The New City Catechism: 52 Questions & Answers for Our Hearts & Minds
(Crossway Publishing)

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