



Spiritual Disciplines & Family



<https://www.rockypeak.org/ministries/kids>



Healthy Rhythms

Justin Whitmel Earley, in "Habits of a Household," profoundly states that "our routines become who we are, become the story and culture of our families." Reflecting on this, what defines the current rhythm and culture of your family?

Children often require guidance and discipleship along their journey. They need someone to walk beside them, teaching them what it truly means to make Jesus the Lord of their lives, not just their Savior. Hence, it's vital to instill in them the value of consistent communion with God, whether through quiet devotion, Bible reading, prayer, worship, etc.

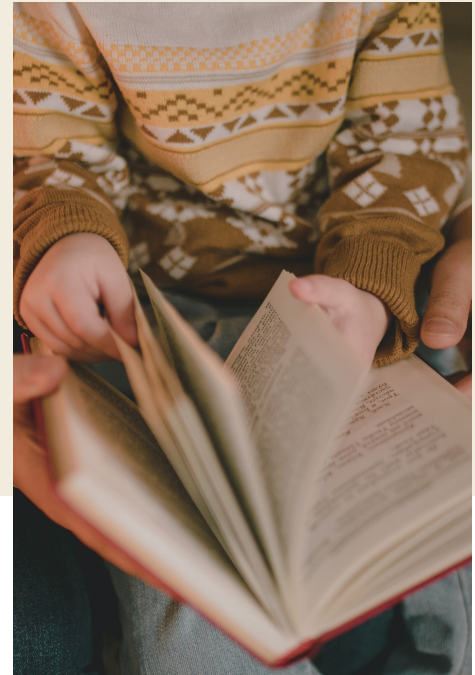
By helping our children establish a healthy spiritual rhythm, we equip them for their journey as they become more and more of who God created them to be. Such a rhythm becomes a lifeline for a young teenager amidst societal pressures that undermine spiritual pursuits. It sustains a college student, navigating life away from home, in their spiritual journey. Ultimately, it serves as a beacon for adults, reminding them of moments when the Word came alive to them in their youth.

Nurturing these rhythms within our families, not only shapes our present but also lays the foundation for a steadfast faith that endures through all stages of life.

How to Help Your Children Read the Bible

I would imagine most Christian parents aspire to guide their children in reading, understanding, trusting, and loving the Bible. Yet, for many, including myself, this endeavor can feel daunting. The vastness and complexity of the Bible can intimidate even adults. How then do we instill in our children a familiarity with the most important book ever assembled and cultivate a daily enjoyment of it?

While there's no instant solution or "flip the switch" formula, I've come to realize that every child is unique, and the Holy Spirit works individually in each of us, at different times. Nonetheless, I'm eager to share what I've found to be helpful, drawing from my experience as a parent of four children and as a Director of Kids Ministry.



"One of the best gifts you'll ever give to your children is familiarity with the Bible and its message."

—David Murray

Reading the Word

01 SELECT SOMETHING THEY WILL ENJOY

Does your child have a Bible? If not, consider investing in one. It's crucial to choose a Bible that resonates with them, something they'll eagerly pick up and explore, conveying the significance and value of this sacred text. With numerous options available, it can feel overwhelming, but we offer some suggestions on our Parent Resource page to help narrow down the choices.



02 GIVE THEM AN EXAMPLE TO FOLLOW

The most captivating Bible will gather dust if our children don't witness us reading our own Bibles consistently, enthusiastically, and joyfully. As John Maxwell aptly stated, "More is caught than taught." Deuteronomy 6:5-7 underscores the importance of modeling a love for God's Word in our daily lives and passing it on to our children. "And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. And you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house."

03 GIVE THEM A WHY

Simply commanding our children to read the Bible won't suffice. We must give them a compelling reason—a "big why." Why should we be in the Word every day? Partnered with the truth of God's Word, consistent time spent reading the Bible is one of the primary and usual ways God speaks to us. The Scriptures are not just words of wisdom to make our lives better, but the words of eternal life that can make us "wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" ([2 Timothy 3:15](#)).



04 OFFER A CLEAR, MANAGEABLE PLAN

Once we establish the "why," we must outline the "how." Create a clear, manageable reading plan that aligns with your family's rhythm. While there are various pre-made plans available, feel free to customize one that suits your children's needs. Embrace imperfection initially and Pray for the Spirit's guidance and help your children engage with the Word until you find a plan, process, or rhythm that seems to work for them.

05 TEACH THEM TO "QUERY THE TEXT"

We don't just want our kids to read the Bible, but to also understand what it says. Some key questions to ask when reading the word: What does this passage teach us about God? About sin? About salvation? About Christ? About the gospel? About life in this world and the next? You might have other questions. But teach them to query the text.

06 WELCOME THEIR QUESTIONS

Your kids are going to have questions (but we all know that). Sometimes they even ask questions we don't have the answers to. That happens, and that's okay! Let them know you will study and find out the answer or ask a pastor or mature Christian in our community for input. The key thing is, no matter what they ask, make sure you take it seriously and always get back to them with an answer if you want them to keep asking.

07 EXTEND GRACE AND ENCOURAGEMENT

Like all of us, at some point our kids are going to fail. Expect setbacks and moments of apathy from your children. Instead of giving up, offer them grace and encouragement. Maintain an ongoing interest in their spiritual journey, even brief moments of engagement can nurture a lifelong love for God's Word.

David Murray aptly stated, "One of the best gifts you'll ever give to your children is familiarity with the Bible and its message." Let's strive to cultivate this gift within our families, nurturing a deep and lasting relationship with God's Word.

The Practice of Prayer

Developing the discipline of prayer in kids is like trying to build muscle. It takes a lot of time and repeated practice. Each time you encourage your children to pray, they become more keenly aware of how accessible God is, and that they have the ability to talk with their Heavenly Father.

Nightly prayers with my children are a cherished routine in our household. While the style, depth, and intensity vary for each child based on age, my desire is to instill in them a rhythm of prayer, knowing they can "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18). Whether at mealtimes, bedtime, or on the way to school, we leverage every opportunity to pray. I want my kids to know that prayer is an important tool that God gave us as a way to communicate directly with Him.

In my line of ministry, on more than one occasion, we've encountered children who feel "too shy to pray" because they're unsure of what to say or fear saying the wrong thing. As parents, we can reassure our children that they can speak to God about anything. God already knows how their days are going, who the bullies are, and how badly they want their pet dog to be healed, but He never gets tired of hearing from them. As their parents, we must pattern a life of talking with God about the small things and the big things. By nurturing this practice, we equip our children with a profound understanding of the power and privilege of prayer, empowering them to approach God with confidence and authenticity in all circumstances.



Here are some ways to help kids practice their prayer muscle:

Pray Bible Verses

Encourage children to select a favorite Psalm and use it as a template for prayer, praising God through its words. This practice helps them feel at ease with expressing themselves without worrying about saying the "right" thing.

Practice Sentence Prayers

Invite children to offer simple, one-sentence prayers, especially in group settings. This fosters comfort with praying publicly. This has been incredibly helpful for my youngest who is working with an expressive language delay.

Create a Family Prayer Board

Establish a designated space at home, such as a poster board on a wall or the fridge, for recording and praying over family prayer requests daily. Marking answered prayers reinforces faith and gratitude.

Express Gratitude and Adoration

Cultivate a habit of thanking and adoring God, especially when joyful moments arise. While thanking God for specific blessings may come naturally, teach children to also express gratitude for who God is. One way we've tried to cultivate this is by asking our kids what they learned in our nightly Bible story, and then encouraging them to thank God for that immediately after.

Confess and Seek Forgiveness

Sometimes kids are overwhelmed by getting “in trouble.” In those moments especially, I think it’s important to stop, model for our kids what it looks like to confess that sin to God, and then ask the Holy Spirit to change their sinful desires: “God, help me to want to obey like you want me to obey.”

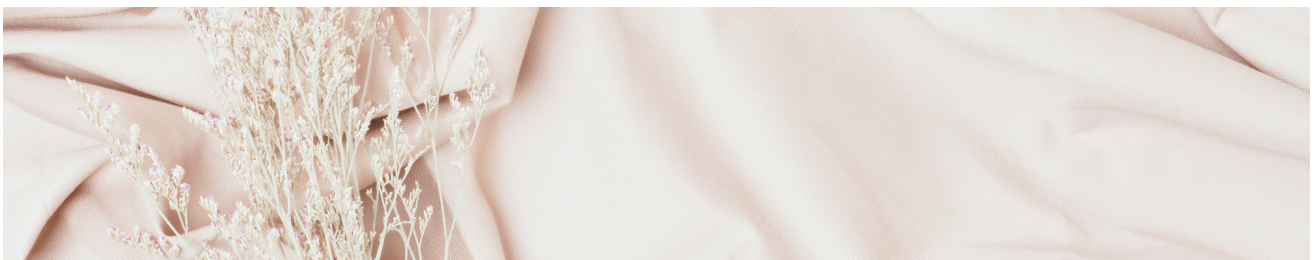
When you need help, ask God

One of the best ways to practice continual prayer is to identify the moments when emotions—both yours and your kids’—are the most intense, then stop wherever you are and take that emotion to God. Whether it's fear, anxiety, or any other emotion, teach them to pause and bring their concerns to God in prayer.

Pray often and pray with your kids

Make prayer a consistent part of daily life by praying regularly with your children. Repeating specific prayers, like the one we pray over our kids each day, helps children understand the significance of prayer and strengthens their connection with God. If it is important to you, your kids will notice. Your commitment to prayer will influence their own attitudes toward prayer.

By incorporating these practices into your family's routine, you cultivate a culture of prayer that fosters spiritual growth and intimacy with God among your children.



A Heart for Worship



It's not about place or style ... it's not even about you.

In today's culture, worship is often synonymous with music. However, tracing worship through Scripture reveals its association with the tabernacle and later the temple. Frequently, worship is depicted as a posture of reverence before God. Yet, Jesus introduces a shift in perspective during his encounter with the woman at the well in John 4. He simply points out that people will begin to worship God differently. This shift is further underscored in Romans 12, where Paul identifies the offering of oneself as the ultimate act of worship.

In other words, the act of worshiping God should not be limited to style, tempo, location, volume, and so on. It encompasses a lifestyle of surrender and devotion, where every aspect of one's being is offered as a sacrifice to God. As we embrace this broader understanding of worship, we can experience the transformative power of true worship.

ARE WE:

- ✓ Allowing children to make worship a regular part of their lives by allowing them to worship Him in spirit and in truth?
- ✓ Teaching them that worship and the music associated with it should extend into their everyday lives?
- ✓ Using music that is similar in style to what they might listen to at home at Church? (Again, this is not about lyrics.) If we don't make an effort to connect with kids on a cultural level, we may limit their ability to extend what happens at church into their everyday lives.



The Practice of Family Worship

While practicing Family Worship does require some preparation, It doesn't have to be intimidating, it doesn't have to be difficult. In fact, it shouldn't be.

Here are some suggestions for structuring your family worship time based on the unique rhythms of your household.

Start with 5 minutes. Whether it's praying together or singing along with worship songs as a family, dedicating 5 minutes is a simple yet meaningful first step. Even five minutes before the throne of God holds significance. Time spent in prayer and worship is never wasted.

While this may not be ideal for establishing a regular routine, something is better than nothing. There are some nights when five minutes is all we have in the way of energy, patience, or time. That's fine. Remember, this is a means of grace, not a burden. Seize the moment, enjoy it, and make the most of those five minutes.

ADDITIONAL IDEAS FOR YOUR TIME TOGETHER

- ✓ In addition to reading scripture your family can go through a devotional
- ✓ Memorize a verse or passage together
- ✓ Pray for each person in your house hold

Service

LIVED OUT

Action

The saying goes, "Wherever there's a need, there's a call." We can help children become aware of those in need around them. This might involve helping a literal neighbor with chores, writing letters to someone who is going through a hard time, befriending a lonely classmate, or simply assisting a disabled classmate by carrying their books.

Giving

A big part of serving is giving. We can teach kids to give by teaching them to tithe to their church home, donating items and/or money to various causes that help those in need, or participating in fundraisers that contribute to the kingdom.

Praying

Remember to follow up acts of service by praying with kids. This is the next step that helps children continue to have a heart for those in need.



Service is such an important part of modeling the most important of commandments — Love the Lord God with all your heart and your neighbor as yourself. Kids need to understand that once they become part of God's family, they are part of the body of Christ. This means they get to be the hands and feet of Jesus by serving and helping others to know Him.

What Is Stewardship

Teaching children about spiritual disciplines serves as a reminder that certain behaviors are profoundly beneficial when practiced consistently. One of those disciplines would definitely be learning about and practicing stewardship. A great starting point is helping children grasp the meaning of the term. Engaging in simple conversations to remind kids that we're each entrusted with gifts from God — such as time, talents, and treasures — encourages them to use these resources faithfully to honor Him. By doing so, we demonstrate genuine gratitude for His blessings and avoid taking them for granted.

1

Time

We all have the same amount of time, but, followers of Jesus should challenge themselves to make sure they are giving of their time to learn about our Savior, to serve others in Christ's name, and just spend personal time with our God (in His Word and through prayer).

2

Talents

God gives each of us talents and abilities that we can use to bring honor to our Creator. Using one's talents for God helps show that we are grateful for those gifts/talents and do not want to take them for granted.





Treasures

3

All good things come from God. That includes money. The Bible challenges us to give back to God 10% of what we earn. In addition to tithing, kids can learn to give offerings to help further the work of God in helping all people learn about Jesus. There are times where the “treasure” isn’t money, but offering to use something they hold dear to serve the kingdom.

Sounds important, doesn’t it? Here are some fun ways to help kids accomplish these:

Challenge your kids to write about or draw pictures of things they really do well.



Focus on things like talents, abilities, and so on. Ask them to think of ways they can use these skills to honor God.

Help your kids draw a calendar.



Go through a week on the calendar and help your kids think of things they can use their time for during the week to show their love for God.

Talk about what it means to tithe



Use the illustration of 10 dimes and a dollar bill. Show them that one of the dimes represents a “tithing.” Challenge them to “tithe” on their allowance, even when it isn’t easy! Help them know that God will honor their faithfulness.

What is Fasting All About

Scripture defines fasting as abstaining from food for spiritual purposes. Typically, fasting involves refraining from all solid and liquid food, except water. However, for the context of this document (especially when involving children), we will focus on partial fasting or dietary restrictions rather than complete abstinence. Daniel offers insight into this approach in chapter 10



HERE ARE SOME PRACTICAL WAYS TO FAST WITH KIDS:

- Make different choices.** For a period of time, choose healthy foods for snacking. Instead of cookies, choose carrots. Instead of soda choose water. Instead of fast food, choose nutritious meals.
- Abstain from sweets.** Lead kids to not eat sugar-based foods (candy, cake, pastries) for a designated time.
- A digital fast.** As a family, decide to fast from technology. This could be as simple as not using the DVD player in the minivan to complete abstinence for a week or month.
- Grow from short to more intensive fasts.** Don't start with a 40 day, "no (fill in the blank)" fast that will be difficult to achieve. Start small and build on success.

BE INTENTIONAL

Fasting must center on God	Fasting is a discipline not a punishment
Fasting helps us focus	Model biblical fasting.
Fasting reminds us that God is our provider of every good and perfect gift.	Kids learn more from what they see than what they simply hear.

This inwardly expressed discipline (not publicly shared but a private matter between the individual and God) in its traditional sense should be approached with a lot of thought and care.

Obviously, there are physical issues and limitations to consider and, quite frankly, fasting may not be for everyone — especially kids. You may want to check with a doctor before beginning a fast from food. Ultimately, I cannot think of a reason why we would ignore teaching about fasting and at some level, help kids understand, through experience, short and intentional opportunities to practice what Jesus (and many Bible heroes) practiced. This would need to be something that you feel prompting from God to participate in.



Let's Get Started!

As a Kids Ministry leader, I have the privilege of partnering with parents to lead kids to become growing disciples of Jesus. These basic disciplines outlined in this document help to accomplish that goal. It is by no means meant to be an exhaustive list, but more of a catalyst and jumping off point for families.

“when it comes to spiritual formation, our households are not simply products of what we teach and say. They are much more products of what we practice and do.”

-Justin Whitmel Earley, Habits of the Household

“Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching”

-Hebrews 10:23-25

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