

Cultivating Spiritual Conversations in the Home

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*May this article be a resource and an encouragement to families.
In this article, you'll find several different ideas relating to
Spiritual leaders in the home.*

Topics include:

- Spiritual Roadblocks to Leading- and overcoming*
- Teaching them to Remember- remind, re-tell*
- Model Behavior- be what you expect*
- Prayer Journaling- remembering God's provision*
- Family Devotions vs. Children Asking- allowing interests to dominate direction*
- The Sabbath- time set aside*
- Table Talk- an outline for discussion*



It's a good and important goal to be Spiritual leaders in the home.

This is a well known thought possessed by many Christ following parents. However, it is not always as easy as it sounds. Life is full of opportunities along the road, but there are also a handful of roadblocks as well. In the area of leading your family spiritually, this is also true.

Some roadblocks include:

- Business or work
- Missed opportunities
- Leaving it up to the church
- Exhaustion
- Distractions of life
- You fill in the blank! _____

Sadly enough, many adults don't feel that they are equipped enough to disciple their children because they have not been adequately disciplined themselves.

How do we remedy this?

Start by modeling positive patterns that will lead to examples for others. If you as a parent feel you need to grow in your Biblical knowledge and relationship with Jesus, then start there. Why not use your journey as a family journey? *As adults, we don't have to know all the answers before we can show God's truth and love to others.* It may be difficult, but showing a vulnerability to your kids in your relationship with Jesus may just be the thing that will help them connect to you, and to Him in a much deeper way. *Discover God together.*

Teaching them to Remember

We have great examples from the Old Testament of how families drew together in the ways of God. In Genesis 9:15, God said,

"I will remember my covenant between me and you and all living creatures of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life."

Imagine being Noah. He was a father, a husband, and a family leader. God just did something amazing in his life. He spared Noah and his family from annihilation! Do you think Noah told his kids about what God did in his life? Of course he did! In the Old Testament, to teach, adults would pass down the truth of God and the records of families through oral tradition. It may not have looked like a family gathered around the fireplace, but possibly, at meal times, or just before bed. Perhaps the adults used everyday moments to help their children remember these principles. They held so closely to telling and re-telling the stories and truths of God so that their children would not forget their heritage and their Maker. *We too can follow this simple example.*

As with any pattern or habit, they can be difficult to begin. For many, we fall into the same patterns we followed as children, being led by our parents. We end up just doing what we know because of our experiences. For some, good experiences were an everyday encounter. For others, they came sparsely. If you see a change that needs to be made, start taking steps to see the positive change you want. If this means you need to give up some time online or watching television, choose to sacrifice that time to spend more with your children and family. *Ultimately, we need to do all that is necessary to grow into a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ.*

In no way does this article suggest that you wake up tomorrow morning and be something you're not. Be who you are, and take small steps toward being a Spiritual leader in your household. Choose the best time of day to match your family's needs. The great thing about growing as a family is that it is unique to you and the Lord. *Equip simply and naturally.*

Model Behavior

Think about what you want your kids to get. A great example to model is found within Deuteronomy 6:1-2, 4-9:

“These are the commands, decrees and laws the Lord your God directed me to teach you to observe in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, so that you, your children and their children after them may fear the Lord your God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands that I give you, and so that you may enjoy long life.

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

*These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. **Impress them on your children.** Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. 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.”*

Starting with “Love the Lord your God,” is the best foundation. We need our children to love God with all they have, and to love others as they love themselves. What a perfect place to start!

But, did you catch something for yourself in that passage? Hiding in that last paragraph are practical ideas and ways to carry out leading Spiritually in the home. Let’s break it down:

*“These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. **Impress them on your children.** Talk about them:*

- When you sit at home
- When you walk along the road
- When you lie down
- When you get up
- Tie them as symbols on your hands
- Bind them on your foreheads
- Write them on the doorframes of your houses and gates

Right there, in Deuteronomy 6, there are several examples of how parents can instill God’s truths in their children. The only way to impress thoughts upon your children is to communicate with them. Kids need repetition and consistency. The more they hear about God’s Word, His love, the Gospel story, and how living for Him is essential to life, the more it will stick with them. Model for your children while you sit at home, walk along the road, and when you lie down or wake up that you love the Lord with all you have. Pretty soon, they will too.

Lots of things penetrate our minds. Deuteronomy 6 speaks of reminding yourself on your doorframes, symbols on your hands, etc. It's as if God knows us all too well. Oh, wait! He does! He knows we can easily become distracted and lose sight. May we take this to heart and stay committed to these foundations.

Prayer Journaling- Records on God's Faithfulness

Another great tool for parents is to keep a prayer journal for your kids. It doesn't have to take any more time than 2-3 minutes per child. It helps us see God's answered prayers for our children. This simple practice will show your children that Mommy and/or Daddy, Grandma and/or Grandpa are always praying for them. You can dedicate your children's lives to the Lord and pray specifically for each child. One day, when they are older, imagine them reading through your concerns, thoughts, and desires for them. What a way to communicate your love for them! In the same way that you pray for and hope for your children, God also does this for us. He has hopes for us. He has immense love for us; too much to even grasp!

(Ephesians 3:17a-19- And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.)

You can use your prayer journal to model God's love for us, His children, and talk about that relationship. You could also include the topic of adoption from Ephesians 1 to show your children God as our Father.

And when your child comes to you and asks, "What was I like when I was little?" or "Why did you discipline me like you did when I was young?" you can pull out the old prayer journal and show them.

Exodus 12:26, Exodus 13:14, Deuteronomy 6:20, Joshua 4:6

Family Devotions vs. Children Asking

Yelling out from the living room, "Everyone! Stop what you're doing! Come in here! It's time for our family devotion!" will probably not work with some kids. This is an opportunity for you as parents to be sneaky.

Use your children's interests to benefit your impact on their lives as their Spiritual leader. You know them best! After all, you're their parent!

Your kids may drive you nuts saying, "Read to me! Play with me!" And you may be thinking, I don't have time to do that and lead spiritually! But not to worry! You can incorporate both learning and play.

Children are more eager to learn and are receptive when...

...they seek answers to questions they're interested in.

Find out what interests your children, and start with those hobbies or interests to begin thinking creatively on how to show God through their interests. It can be done with just about anything.

If it's cars:

Ask your child to show you their favorite car. Ask them why it's their favorite. Find out more about their favorite car from your child, like how it works. After a few different times playing cars with your child, you can naturally bring up all of the complex parts of the car and relate it to us as people. Just like how cars need fuel to run their complex parts, so do we need fuel from God's Word to help run us and keep us going strong in Him.

If it's art:

Ask your child if it's ok that you work on a project together. Let your child choose. Let them tell you how to do everything so they feel like the expert. After a few times "learning" from your child in the area of art, start on your together project. Depending on the medium of art you choose, will determine how you can relate the project to God. If it's anything to do with clay or pottery, use Jeremiah 18 and talk about how we need to be the clay and allow God to mold us in our lives. If it's drawing or painting, you can talk about the different colors used, how they blend together, and how something plain became something beautiful. That's how God feels about us. He created us out of nothing, dirt, and made intelligent people who need a relationship with their Maker, God. You can also talk about how God can use anyone to work together for His good, just like the colors mix together.

The point is to use your child's interests for their Spiritual gain- without them even knowing it! By doing this, it becomes a natural part of life without forcing it upon them. Eventually, once you've given them a few foundational seeds, they'll be asking you questions to further their knowledge, out of their own curiosity! When your child comes to you asking Spiritual questions out of their own personal interest, your part is easy! If you keep this going, God only knows what could blossom from simply taking advantage of everyday opportunities!

The Sabbath

Exodus 16:23- He said to them, "This is what the Lord commanded: 'Tomorrow is to be a day of rest, a holy Sabbath to the Lord. So bake what you want to bake and boil what you want to boil. Save whatever is left and keep it until morning.'

Exodus 20:8- "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.

Ezekiel 20:20- Keep my Sabbaths holy, that they may be a sign between us. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God."

God calls us to remember the Sabbath and to keep it holy.

Q- So what is a Sabbath?

A- A Sabbath is a day of rest.

We generally don't keep up any sort of "Sabbath" type observances in our culture today. But that doesn't mean we shouldn't. God had it right when He created the world, choosing to rest on the last day. What an example He set for us! (*Genesis 2:2*)

God knows we can get too busy and too overworked. So, He provided a reminder for us to slow down and remember Him. This is something to strive for personally and as a family unit. Call it family night, fun night, or even date night (with your spouse), but set aside some time to focus on the Lord together. **In addition to focusing on the Lord, focus on one another.** Use the time together to get reacquainted with one another if it's been a while.

Here's the clincher: Parents and children alike must turn off all forms of media. This includes cell phones, pagers, (unless it's necessary), television, gaming systems, and/or any other form of a distraction to what you're trying to accomplish. We can't expect the kids to give up their forms of media without the adults making the same sacrifice.

It will be rough at first for everyone to give up the things often held too tightly, but after a few tries, the overall idea will begin to sink in. Carve out an evening, or a portion of your weekend to be together. The beauty is that with no distractions, all you'll have is each other! Decide as a family what you will do together. Who knows what new hobbies and/or talents could arise from this! What began as grumbling over keeping a family Sabbath can turn into a truly wonderful thing. Your children may start to ask about having more than one Sabbath night a week. From their perspective, it's one-on-one time with Mom and Dad, or Grandma and Grandpa! This can also model as an idea/event of respect toward keeping God's commandments, honoring Him, and making wise choices with time/priorities.

Table Talk

Use your kitchen table as a Spiritual tool! Never thought it could serve meals *and* draw our hearts closer to God? It can! Gather around the kitchen table and eat together as a family as much as possible. This is a simple and routine-like way to spend “forced” family time together. Let conversations arise, and go with them.

If you’re looking to use your mealtime as a connecting time, try this simple outline:

Creating Conversation Starters about God without being cheesy!

Week One- Choose a good Bible verse to focus on. Choose a verse for the next 4 weeks.

Example- *Colossians 4:2- Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.*

Look for “action” words in the verse. For this verse, the action words would be:

1. Devote
2. Prayer
3. Watchful or Alert
4. Thankful

At dinner, start with the action words. Make it a natural part of the conversation. The kids don’t even need to know what the verse is, or that the action words come from a verse at all! Just start talking about the words.

Ask, “How is something if it’s alert? What does devote mean?” and so on. (*You can do a different word per night or every other night of the first week depending on the verse of choice.*)

Allow the kids to answer for themselves. This is very important. Remember to use their interests in this. If they are really having trouble coming up with something, you could use their interests to help them think of a definition.

“Devote can be like how you play with your puppy everyday and make sure he gets fed. What would happen if you weren’t devoted to feeding him and playing with him?” Allow them to answer.

“So, devote is sticking to something important?”

Have the kids draw a picture of the action word per their age appropriate definition. The beauty is that this works for all age groups. A 5-year-old may say something about a puppy, where a 16-year-old may say something about driving, studying, or working. The point is to get the action word to make sense to the kids and have it mean something to them personally. They’ll make their own connections. Ask open-ended questions.

The next night of the week, remind the kids of what they came up with. Ask, “So how is devote like a puppy? A job?” Allow them to answer. They need the repetition. Then ask, “So if devote is like making sure to feed the dog or going to work everyday, then what does it mean to be watchful? (Going onto the next word)

Do all the “action” words in your verse the first week, reminding them of their definitions, and having them draw it out. Put their drawings on the fridge to remind them and yourself of their definitions.

Week Two—Pull out the Bible. Why is this important? The kids will already have meanings to words in their minds from the previous week, and pictures they drew to help them remember. When connecting those meanings to a Bible verse, they instantly will recall what “devote” and “watchful” mean. When connecting it to Spiritual concepts, the point is driven home by week one’s conversations.

So in reading [Colossians 4:2](#) to the kids, ask, “Why it’s important to [devote](#) ourselves to [prayer](#)? Why do we need to be [watchful](#) and [thankful](#)?” Allow them to answer.

Remember to start with their world in continuing to help them understand. Attach these concepts to concrete ideas for the kids. Continue to see what they come up with, and review each night you get together for dinner.

Week Three—What does this look like? Pull out a real-world story.

You as the parent will need to do a quick review of the past two weeks and see what the kids have observed as a result of the action words. Ask them if they’ve noticed anything or anyone being alert, [devoted](#), [watchful](#), or [thankful](#) lately and see what they say. (Again, this is connecting it to their world. This creates interest and investment for them.)

You will share a personal story about integrating [alertness](#), or the word of your choice. Talk about your successes and failures in showing thankfulness, etc. It’s good for the kids to see their mom/dad, grandma/grandpa struggle with the same Spiritual things they may struggle with as well. This will make it very real to them. It may even create accountability within your family.

Doorpost- As in [Deuteronomy 6](#), write the verse on all of your doorposts, to remind yourselves and the kids of the Scripture you’ve been studying. You could also use a dry erase board, chalkboard, or fridge to accomplish the “doorpost” concept.

Week Four—What will we do?

Ask the kids, “What will you do as a result of this verse?” Allow for their response. Write down their answers to be able to remind them later. Allow the kids to ask you the same question, and write down your response to they can hold you to your promise.

This makes a Bible verse become real and apart of your life. You’ve just spent four weeks studying a simple verse, but have integrated it into your life in a simple way. Every four weeks, start a new round with a different verse. If you continue to bring up these simple Spiritual concepts throughout your days, you may be surprised how much it will affect your family in a positive way, without much effort.