



INCREMENTAL
REVIVAL | Journal

a resource of grace church of rancho cucamonga

PARENTING

Spring 2022



INCREMENTAL
REVIVAL Journal

a resource of grace church of rancho cucamonga

PARENTING

5719 Beryl Street
Rancho Cucamonga, CA 91737

info@gracerancho.com
(909) 870-9013

Why “Incremental Revival”?

You hold in your hands the inaugural edition of the Incremental Revival Journal. What began as an idea a couple years ago is now a reality. And, Lord willing, it's only the very beginning.

Our hope is to produce a resource created by the members of Grace Rancho for the members of Grace Rancho. It can sometimes be hard for Christians, especially in our information glutted society, to know who they can trust. Which authors are trustworthy? What podcasts are recommended? Which ministries are worth following? There is so much out there and the overload can be overwhelming.

That's part of the story of how we came up with the idea of creating a regular journal. We figured it might be worth creating our own content for our people. We could print a few every year, choose relevant topics that would be helpful for our church, and enlist some elders, staff, and members to write about it. The more the idea percolated, the more we thought it had potential.

First of all, it might contribute toward the culture of reading we're hoping to develop here. Whereas the whole world is going digital and visual, we think there's still value in analog print media. The journal articles will be bite-sized, easily digestible chunks, readily accessible for those who don't normally read much. Additionally, we hope to regularly include book recommendations and reviews that might guide our readers for further study.

Not only that, but we're hoping the journals create a sort of “buzz” of conversation among the church members. There are certain topics that can be highly personal and hard to bring up (marriage, parenting, hospitality, etc). We hope putting journals out will enable our church members to start open dialogues about these issues - even reaching out to the authors to discuss in more detail. Plus, we get the added benefit of a growing collection of resources that we can use in the future.

One more thing: you may be wondering about the name of the journal: Incremental Revival. It's a bit clunky, I know. The phrase came from our study of the parable of the sower in Mark 4. It's a short and sweet story. The sower sows the word, he goes

to sleep, the crops grow, and at the harvest time, he reaps a great harvest. The lesson that Jesus is teaching his disciples is that the ordinary, obscure, and seemingly insignificant acts of faithfulness are what God uses to produce glorious and abundant fruitfulness. That's where the idea for "incremental revival" comes from.

Incremental revival means we prayerfully give ourselves to the small, seemingly insignificant acts of faithful witness, and trust that over time, God uses it for great and glorious purposes.

This is a valuable way for us to think. Grace Rancho must not be a flash of excitement this year. We want to be plodding faithfully, growing in health, counseling the hurting, equipping disciples, training leaders, sending teams, sending missionaries. And if we are to move in that direction, we've got to have a biblical understanding of how kingdom work happens. May this journal contribute, even in a small way, to the revival we hope to see in the years to come.

Pastor Eric

Contents

- 1** [Introduction](#)
Eric Durso
- 3** [God's Plan for Parents](#)
Eric Durso
- 8** [Learning to Be a Parent: How I'm Working to Grow Into the Role](#)
Michael Sciarra
- 11** [Reflections on Parenting & Grandparenting: Priorities for the Journey](#)
Steve Severance
- 16** [Teaching Kids Doctrine: the Usefulness of Catechisms](#)
Justin Grasmick
- 23** [Dinner as Discipleship: Using Everyday Moments to Disciple Our Kids](#)
Mark Severance
- 27** [Discipline as Discipleship: How Loving Parental Discipline Prepares Kids for Life](#)
Eric Durso
- 34** [It Takes a Church: Raising Your Kids in the Church](#)
Mark Severance
- 38** [Lessons I Learned From My Father](#)
Kent Roberts
- 41** [Lessons I Learned From My Mother](#)
Ashley Durso
- 46** [Fatherhood: How God the Father Shows Dads What to Do](#)
Eric Durso

Contents

50

[Mothering: Encouragement for the Weary Mother](#)

Jodi Severance

53

[Snapshots: How Some Fathers Are Leading Their Families in Devotions](#)

- a. Mark Severance
- b. Hans Van Velzer
- c. Frank Aguirre
- d. James Bogle
- e. Justin Grasmick

58

[Snapshots: How Busy Mothers Make Time for the Word](#)

- a. Ashley Durso
- b. Cheryl Van Velzer
- c. Rachelle Bogle
- d. Kim Roberts
- e. Jaime Grasmick

65

[Helpful Books We've Read](#)

Introduction



Eric Durso

It was 2am. I think. I don't remember it very well. I was tired.

I had stumbled around in the dark trying to get water for my three-year-old daughter who had woken up thirsty. She figured, of course, that daddy was ready to be at her service. When I finally brought her a cup, she was outraged. There was no ice in the water. There was supposed to be ice! And what happened next went down in history as one of the most epic tantrums the Durso household has ever seen.

I'm glad none of it was caught on film. It wasn't exactly one of my shining moments as a father. I was bumbling, impatient, and stubborn (I didn't want to get her the ice she was demanding!), and was probably guilty of matching her tantrum with one of my own. When it was all said and done (I think I finally caved and got her ice), I fell into bed exhausted. "What in the world just happened?" I wasn't able to fall asleep right away. I was convicted of my own failure to be gentle, patient, and kind in the moment. My lack of Christ-likeness was exposed. Again.

I feel like that moment all those years ago is a metaphor for parenting in general. It can feel like we're in the dark. Perhaps we're exhausted. We're still dealing with our own sin. And in the midst of it, we're trying to care for a precious (and depraved) child God has given to us.

Parents need help. I know I do. That's why it's tragic that we can be extremely closed up when it comes to discussing parenting. We can act like we've got it all together (and craft our social media feeds to feed that narrative). We can downplay the significant problems we're having. Or we can say, "Well, that's just how

I was raised” and refuse to think more deeply about how God intends for us to parent.

The church must be a place to have these conversations. We parents need to be honest, get real, open up, be transparent. We must start talking about the massive responsibility we have. We must open our ears to hear from others who are in the midst of it, fighting to be faithful. We must bear their burdens and let them bear ours. And we must listen to those who have done it - and have the wisdom and perspective and scars to show for it. We don't get redos with our kids.

Our hope is that this journal helps us open up and talk about the glorious and difficult job of parenting. It is written by our church, for our church. The articles you read are all written by church members. The contributors (and their articles) are not perfect, but they're soldiers fighting the good fight of faith. And they're eager to help. As you take a look at the table of contents and begin reading through it, I'd encourage you to start some dialogue around these topics. Read it with a fellow church member. Reach out to the contributors. Ask them questions. Talk about your experience. Share your struggles. Ask for prayer. Open up.

There's grace the whole way home, church. Let's be faithful until we're there.

God's Plans for Parents



Eric Durso

For roughly three decades the Chinese government has been mandating a one-child policy. Parents are only allowed one kid. After that, there are penalties. Consequently, the fertility rate - the average number of children a woman will have over the course of her life - among Chinese women is 1.54. Surprisingly, American's fertility rate is 1.6 - barely higher than theirs. Apparently, we've invented our very own one-child policy.¹

In the 1960s, America's fertility rate was close to 4, indicating that families today are not as willing to have large families as they have previously been. The follow-your-heart, achieve-your-dreams, find yourself lifestyle our culture has been preaching for so many decades doesn't jive with expensive, time-consuming toddlers.

And we've all heard the stories. The dad who will do anything to get out of the house. The mom who complains about them all the time. The looks a parent gets when out with two kids or more. And the one I've heard the most: "You have four kids? I can hardly stand the one I have."

If the statistics and anecdotes are right, they point to a sad reality. Children aren't valued and parents do not embrace the calling God has given them. This is more than unfortunate - it is devastating. If the church imbibes the worldview of the culture at this point, it will rot from the inside out. We must recapture God's plans for parents. So here are several points that will begin rounding out our understanding of biblical parenting.

¹"America's Baby Bust," Jonathan Last; Wall Street Journal

Parents That Picture the Gospel

Before you're a parent, you're a spouse. God's design is that children are raised by a man and a woman who have covenanted together in "till death do us part" marriage. This is the ecosystem in which healthy children grow.

One of the most important passages about the family is found in Ephesians 5:22-33, and one of the most foundational principles taught in that passage is found in verse 32. After describing how a man and a wife leave their parents and come together as one, Paul writes, "This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it [marriage] refers to Christ and the church." What does that mean? It means that marriage was invented by God to point to a greater spiritual reality: the reality of Christ's love for the church.

Parents, start here. Work on your marriage. Fathers: the greatest gift you can give your children is a picture of glad, humble, sacrificial, gentle, strong Christ-like love toward your children's mother. And a mother's delight in her husband, respect for him, and submission to his leadership is valuable beyond all riches. This is the inheritance your children - and grandchildren - need passed on.

Parents That Delight in Their Children

Christian parents: want to shine a light in this dark world? Delight in your children. Enjoy them, and say so.

The world says that children are expensive, time-consuming, loud - and often smelly - burdens. God's Word says, "*Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth. Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them*" (Ps. 127:3-5).

God opens and closes the womb. Every child to have ever been born has been a good gift from the Father. They are not white elephant gifts, or gag gifts, or gifts you can return. These are thoughtfully planned, perfectly designed, and inherently good gifts.

Yes, parenting is difficult. But choose to love it. See the beauty in it. Enjoy it. Give thanks a lot. Laugh with your children. Do fun things together. Make memories. And embrace the hard stuff as God's sanctifying grace.

Parents That Express Love

Parents can learn to parent by observing what God is like. We'll explore this more in another article. Briefly, let's reflect on some basic realities.

First, God knows us. This is intimate knowledge. It's attentive. It's there. God doesn't need to learn about us, but we need to be diligent learners of our children. We, more than anyone else, are the ones who should learn their desires, inclinations, struggles, hopes, dreams, and fears.

Second, God promises his presence to us. He will never leave us nor forsake us (Heb. 13:5). He leads us by still waters and walks with us through shadowy valleys. He doesn't work all the time and miss our ball games. He values moments. He's there.

Third, he wants us to know him and his world, and so he speaks. This is why we call Scripture revelation. God reveals himself to us. He reveals the truth to us. His words are constantly making sense of the world. His words give us a framework for interpreting our experience. This is precisely what parents are called to do.

And lastly, he constantly reveals his love for his children. Read the Scriptures and see how frequently we are reminded of the never-ending, unstoppable, boundless, measureless love God has for his own (Eph. 3:18-19). Parenting is a presence that expresses love.

Know your children. Spend quality and quantity time with them, as you do, use your voice to make sense of the world and repeatedly remind them of your never-ending love.

Parents That Teach Their Children

John Younts wrote a parenting book called *Everyday Talk: Talking Freely and Naturally About God With Your Children*. The title summarizes what I think is God's strategy for parenting. He gets it from Deuteronomy 6:4-9:

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You

shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

This text says nothing about planned Bible study, family devotions, or even Sunday school. These things are great, but they're no substitute for God's way: Word-filled parents who love the Lord their God with all their hearts and talk about him all the time.

The culture will not cease trying to teach your children. Parents must have a steady, consistent, and reliable voice that brings God's truth to bear on the mundane activities of life. Every day can teach a thousand lessons.

Parents That Rest in Grace

It seems parenting has gotten far more complicated these days. Every friend has an opinion about how sleep schedules should work. Every mommy blog knows the perfect diet for a toddler. Parents are tempted to compare their children with the neighbor's Instagram highlight reel. Should babies cry it out? Should mothers breastfeed? Should toddlers be allowed to watch Teletubbies? I think too many parents wear themselves out and drive themselves crazy trying to get all the particulars just right.

I think the best parents get the big things right. They love the Lord with all their heart. They take their children to church without fail. They read their Bibles, pray with their children, and work hard. They don't cheat, they don't get drunk, they don't chase riches. They're consistent in discipline and hospitable with guests. And they're not panicking about whether that bowl of Lucky Charms had too much sugar in it (hint: it did).²

Let's not overcomplicate parenting. By grace, build a strong marriage, love your kids, talk about Scripture with them, bring them to church, pray a lot, and then rest in God's grace

Conclusion

Parenting is a glorious, difficult, exhausting, complex, rewarding, and overwhelming task. That's how God designed it to

² This section is inspired by Kevin DeYoung's article "Parenting 101"

be. God puts eternal souls in our care - a calling so weighty we must turn to divine grace again and again. Carrying this weight brings us often to our knees, where we should have been all along. In all of it, God is at work in us and in our children. Let us embrace the journey together.

Learning to Be a Parent: How I'm Working to Grow Into the Role



Michael Sciarra

When my wife and I decided to try having kids we talked about a lot of details: when would be an opportune time to have a child, where we would be living at that time, how we would afford children, and so much more. But there's one question we didn't give much attention: "how are we going to parent our kids?" Perhaps this reveals our naivety and lack of forethought, but my bet is that most young parents find themselves in our situation: chasing an ever stubborn toddler around trying to figure out the when, why, and how of the many facets of parenting as we go along. While we are learning much along the way, and I am no expert, here are some areas we are trying to honor the Lord and be intentional in while learning to be God-honoring parents who raise children that fear the Lord.

Priority

Shortly after moving to Grace Rancho in June 2018 we found out we were pregnant with our first child, Ezra. Pastor Eric and Ashley were some of the first people we told. In our conversations then and now Eric has made one thing about parenting abundantly clear: *what our kids need most is godly parents*. That is the priority. If our lives are not devoted to God's Word, rooted in prayer, and modeling godliness to our children then nothing we try to do as parents holds any true weight. We must be committed to growing in godliness if we are to be useful parents. We are trying, albeit imperfectly, to prioritize spirit-empowered growth in godliness as we begin raising our children. Lord willing, they will learn to serve the Lord in their lives by watching ours.

Prayer

If the early stages of parenting have revealed anything it's my inadequacy. On my own I cannot muster up enough patience, enough love, and enough wisdom to parent in a God-honoring fashion. I need help. The best place to go when in need is to the Lord, who is an all-knowing, ever-caring, and abundantly gracious Father who knows exactly what I need before I even speak. He knows my weaknesses and failures, yet loves me enough to provide through his Spirit the strength, wisdom, and guidance needed to parent in a way that glorifies him. So, every day we spend at least a few moments in prayer asking the Lord to give wisdom, to save our children, and to grant us godly and gracious attitudes as we shepherd our children.

People

One temptation that is felt in the earliest stages of parenting is to isolate oneself. If I'm being honest, my pride and fear of how others' might judge our parenting abilities and practices has often kept me from seeking the care and counsel of more mature, experienced Christian parents. Yet at the time of me writing this, Taylor and I have a mere year and a half of parenting under our belt. We are young, inexperienced and need help from our fellow church members to parent well. Thus, we're trying to seek help from other brothers and sisters - whether it be helpful tips and observations from new parents or wise and godly counsel from parents farther along in life than us.

Pages

Another way we are seeking to learn and grow in this early stage of parenting is through reading good books. First and foremost we have to be grounded in Scripture. After that, we are seeking to read biblically-based parenting books together so that we might better understand how Scripture calls us to parent. There are a myriad of books and opinions on how one should parent, discipline, and train their children, so it's important we go to Scripture and those who have faithfully studied what it says about parenting. Currently, Taylor and I have been incredibly blessed as we read through Tedd Tripp's *Shepherding a Child's Heart*, and we've also just started reading Paul Tripp's *Parenting*.

Practice

“Practice makes perfect” the old adage goes. So parenting practice makes perfect parenting, right? If only that were true! While we won’t ever be perfect parents, we can still practice. Whenever we can, we aim to put into practice the God-honoring parenting we are learning from the Word, good books, and our fellow church members. Though Ezra is young and has the attention span of the wily little monkey that he is, we try to take time and teach parts of the Gospel to him, explain why we discipline him, and pray with him. It helps him, but it helps us even more as we ingrain biblical patterns of parenting into our lives. Before we know it our kids will be transforming into adults, with our influence over them lasting a small percentage of their lives. We want to take hold of every moment we can to shepherd and teach them well.

Reflections on Parenting & Grandparenting: Priorities for the Journey



Steve Severance

Reading God's Word

I did not grow up in a Christian home. In fact Judy and I were married eight years before we came to know the Lord. By this time we had two boys, and we thought we had the perfect size family. When we came to know Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord, He changed our hearts and gave us two more children. As Christians, we now had a purpose for living, and God's Word, to govern our living. For it says:

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.."
(Deuteronomy 6:4-7)

Reading God's Word became a priority. It took me awhile before this became a daily habit. Teaching our children the truth about God, attending church faithfully and giving to the Lord's work became very important to us.

Our new relationship with Jesus Christ brought many new responsibilities, but we had God's Word and we wanted that to be our guide. I was called to be the leader and Judy was my help-mate. It took many years to find my way as a spiritual leader and

for Judy to find her way as a follower. In fact, we can tell you that we have not yet arrived! We learned to ask God for help often and how to apply His Word in our own lives and in the lives of our children. Here are some of the ways He led us.

Praying With and for Children and Grandchildren

We learned to pray with and for our children. They are all different, some more sensitive than others. Life was difficult for one of our sons, and Judy did not know how to interact with him. He would go off to school crying and she would be crying. God encouraged her to pray with him every morning in this way: 1) Thanking God for creating him before He ever created the world; 2) Thanking God for putting him in our family; and 3) Thanking God for creating him for a purpose. These prayers seemed to settle his heart in a way that nothing else did. We then started praying these prayers daily with all of our children.

Of course we prayed for many other things such as how to effectively develop our children's character, wisdom in discipline issues, and many special needs.

In our prayer book, we have a page for each grandchild with their picture and prayer requests on it. We try to update their pages with new pictures and requests once a year. As we update these pages, we remove each page and put it into a separate folder for each grandchild. In these folders we have included notes and pictures they have sent to us over the years. When the grandchildren reach the age of 18, we give them their folder.

Teaching What We're Taught

We knew we wanted to have devotions with our family, but I struggled in this. I always felt I did not have enough knowledge. At one point, after spending a month going through a study, I asked, "How did it go and what did you learn?" Without hesitation one of our sons responded, "Dad, that was the most boring thing I have ever heard!" Judy then encouraged me to just teach our children what I was learning as I read the Bible; to make it personal and not as though I was delivering a sermon. That was helpful to me.

Encouraging God-Honoring Interactions

On our way to church, I would ask everyone. “Who are you going to encourage today?” I would remind them it could not be their best friend. My goal was to train us all to reach out beyond our comfort zone and look out for the needs of others. On the way home everyone, including me, had to report on whom they encouraged.

We wanted our family to speak kindly to one another. When the children were not kind, they were required to write a verse of Scripture. The goal was for them to know what God says about their words and actions, not just what we, as parents, thought. Frequently Ephesians 4:29 (*“Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification, that it may give grace to the hearer, according to the need of the moment.”*) was the verse, but not always.

When our children were growing up, we spent our family vacation at a Christian family camp. We sat under the teaching of God’s Word twice a day, and relaxed and played the rest of the day. In their teen years three of our children spent their summers working at the camp.

“I will exalt you, my God the King; I will praise your name for ever and ever...Great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom. One generation will commend your works to another; they will tell of your mighty acts. They will speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty, and I will meditate on your wonderful works.” (Psalm 145:1, 3-5)

Modeling a Life That Follows Christ

One of my favorite bosses used to say, “Everything you do, everything you say, sets a tone, sends a message.” If I want our children and grandchildren to love Christ and His church, I must model that in my life walk with Christ. I must get better at dying to self and better at living for Christ. Two of my “heroes” are Barnabus and Mordecai. Barnabus was known as an encourager (Acts 11:22-26), and Mordecai sought the welfare of his people and spoke peace to all his people (Esther 10:3).

Expressing Love, Encouraging Growth

I desire that my love for our children and grandchildren

would be displayed in my verbal and physical affection for each of them.

I look for ways to encourage our grandchildren to grow spiritually. One year we were able to send our five oldest grandchildren to the Cross Conference which is centered on missions – either going or sending. We also look for age appropriate books to send to them and to read to them. It is our goal as well to end every phone call with our grandchildren with prayer.

I want our grandchildren to learn to be thankful in all things, so when they send me a written “thank you note” for a gift, I send them a “thank you note” for their “thank you note” and enclose a \$2 bill.

Spending Quality Time

When our children were growing up, we spent our family vacation at a Christian family camp. We sat under the teaching of God’s Word twice a day, and relaxed and played the rest of the day. In their teen years three of our children spent their summers working at the camp.

We believe it is important to gather our family together at least once every two years. It is our number one priority to spend time together in worship and in God’s word as a group on a daily basis. We plan it out ahead of time. We also plan our day’s activities and meals so we know what to expect and who is responsible for each part. We have camped, rented a mountain cabin, gathered in our home (We painted the garage floor and the grandchildren slept in sleeping bags on the floor. They loved it!), been to an amusement park and served at Children’s Hunger Fund together. When we gather we make matching t-shirts. We put a verse of Scripture on the shirts. As the grandchildren have gotten older, some of them designed the t-shirts.

Remaining Thankful

It has been a great blessing to be a father and grandfather. Through trials and challenges, our family has brought great joy to my life. As I look backward and forward the second verse of a song resonates in my heart:

“My heart is filled with thankfulness

*To Him who walks beside;
Who floods my weaknesses with strength
And causes fears to fly;
Whose every promise is enough
For every step I take,
Sustaining me with arms of love
And crowning me with grace.”¹*

¹My Heart is Filled with Thankfulness, by Keith Getty and Stuart Townend.

Teaching Kids Doctrine: the Usefulness of Catechisms



Justin Grasmick

Parenting... what an incredible blessing! Parents have been given the wonderful gift of children to love, care for, and enjoy. Being “Papa” to my four kids is one of the greatest joys of my life, yet it is one of the most challenging things I do.

You see, Dad and Mom, being a parent involves more than us solely enjoying and building relationships with our children. It goes beyond family activities, or the kids’ involvement in sports, or encouraging and supporting an education for a future career. Though all these things can certainly be good and beneficial, as parents we have a much greater responsibility. We have been called by God to teach the Scriptures to our children. Consider the following verses:

Deuteronomy 6:6-7 “And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children...”

Proverbs 22:6 “Train up a child in the way he should go...”

Ephesians 6:4 “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”

2 Timothy 3:15 “and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus...”

The Bible is very clear about our responsibility to teach our children, but how do we go about this in everyday life? I want to encourage you to consider a very effective tool that has been used for centuries: catechism.

What Is Catechism?

If the word “catechism” sounds strange or foreign to you, don’t be too surprised. It’s not used as commonly today as it was in the past. During the Reformation of the 16th century and also the Puritan era, parents felt strongly about catechizing their children. This method was used by the people in the church to teach their children God’s Word.

Catechism comes from a Greek word found in the Bible, “katacheo”, that simply means “to teach”. The word is used in the New Testament to refer to teaching someone in a systematic way with questions and answers. Luke, at the beginning of his gospel refers to this. He speaks of “*the things you have been taught, (or catechized)*”. His purpose in writing his gospel is that those who have been taught, (or catechized) in the doctrine of Christ, might have, “*...certainty concerning the things you have been taught*” (Lk. 1:4). In other words, Luke’s gospel serves as a means of catechizing believers.

In short, catechism is an organized approach to teaching doctrine through memorized questions and answers drawn from the Scriptures. The questions and answers develop a basic understanding of topics such as God, sin, Christ, salvation, the Bible, the church, and so forth, with each answer being supported by Scripture references.

Here’s an example from the Westminster Shorter Catechism:

Question: What is the chief end of man?

Answer: Man’s chief end is to glorify God,(1) and to enjoy Him forever.(2)

Scripture references: (1) 1 Cor. 10:31; Rom. 11:36 (2) Psalm 73:24-26; John 17:22, 24

Why Use Catechism?

There are many great reasons why we should use catechism

to instruct our children. Here are just a few to consider:

Catechism Is Biblical

As noted previously, one of the reasons we should catechize our children is because we find this method in the Bible. In addition to Luke's reference, we see that Paul also used the concept in Galatians 6:6 when he said, "*Let the one who is taught (katacheo) the Word share all good things with the one who teaches (katacheo).*" In Acts 18:24-25, Paul said that Apollos was, "*an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures. He had been instructed (katacheo) in the way of the Lord.*"

More importantly, even the Lord Jesus used catechism. Jesus regularly asked questions to make others think about important topics and to help them understand who He was and what He had come to do. Before entering Jerusalem to face His death on the cross, Jesus asked His disciples one of the most important questions ever posed, "*Who do the people say that the Son of Man is?*" (Mt. 16:13). When a somewhat ambiguous answer was given, he asked a follow-up question, "*But who do you say that I am?*" Peter then responded, "*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.*" Jesus' questions lead the disciples to a deeper understanding of divine truth.

When reading the gospels, you'll find that Jesus often asked very penetrating questions to different audiences to induce a response. The answers would then be used for testing or rebuking, but primarily for teaching. As parents, we would do well to follow the example of the greatest teacher who ever lived. The Lord Jesus instructed others in essential biblical truth using catechism, therefore we ought to implement this method with our children.

Kids Naturally Ask a Lot of Questions

"Papa, who created God?" "Mama, why does God let bad things happen?" Not long after our children learn to speak, they start asking questions. They are filled with curiosity, eager to learn more and they expect parents to have the answers. We need to be prepared for these questions, especially the spiritual ones, because the answers will shape our children's view of God, their need of a Savior, and their perspective of the world around

them. Using catechism is an effective tool that gives us simple ways to explain complex biblical truths to our children. Not only will it equip them with answers to some of the most important questions they'll ever ask, catechism will also encourage more questions and discussion about the Christian life.

Additional Reasons to Use Catechism:

- They help provide a solid biblical foundation
- They help explain clearly what the Gospel is
- They help guard against false doctrine
- They encourage critical thinking
- They help our children understand how to apply Biblical truth
- They teach that the Christian life is the God-centered life.

Choosing a Catechism

Biblically Sound

It's important to use a biblically sound catechism; one that focuses on gospel basics. Our family has used The Westminster Shorter, the Heidelberg, and New City Catechisms. All of these are available online to download and there's even a great phone app for the New City Catechism so you can always have it with you.

Age Appropriate

Keep in mind that you want a catechism that is age-appropriate. Both adult and children versions are available for most catechisms in which vocabulary and sentence structure is simplified for younger children.

Using a Catechism

Establish a Routine

Decide upon a day and time that your family will gather. For example, we typically catechize during Saturday morning breakfast. Whether it be daily, or weekly, consistency is the key. Children will look forward to the time together as they like routine and predictability.

Review

Before teaching the next catechism question and answer, we review all that we have learned. I ask the questions and the kids jump in with the answers. Sometimes we go around the table and each answer a question, other times the first one to raise his/her hand gets to answer. You'll be surprised at how eager the children are to learn. The key is to review the material repeatedly until it is memorized. Get creative and make this fun!

Teach

I introduce the next question and its answer. Our children take turns reading the Scripture references aloud which teaches them to always search God's Word for answers. When kids read the Bible references, they interact with the text and better grasp the Biblical truth presented. The goal is not simply to quote every catechism question and answer, but to demonstrate a clear understanding of each truth.

Apply

The catechisms have major implications for believers. This is where we get to talk about practical application and encourage our families to live out the truths of God's Word. The doctrines of the Bible were never intended to be an end in themselves, but rather a means to an end, which is a transformed life.

As parents, if we are to train up our children "*in the discipline and instruction of the Lord*" (Eph. 6:4), the next natural question is "How?" I've found the catechisms mentioned above to be an invaluable resource to accomplish this goal. My hope for my children is that they, like Timothy, would know "*from childhood... the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus...*" William Beveridge, a 19th century theologian who was raised with catechism instruction, said these words near the end of his life: "*The older I grow – and I now*

stand upon the brink of eternity – the more comes back to me the first sentence in the Catechism which I learned when a child, and the fuller and deeper its meaning becomes: What is the chief end of man? To glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.”

May God receive all glory as we strive to lead our families in His ways. Romans 11:36

Train up a child in the
way he should go;

Even when he is old he will
not *depart* from it.

Proverbs 22:6

Dinner as Discipleship: Using Everyday Moments to Disciple Our Kids



Mark Severance

Deuteronomy 6:5-7 *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.”*

Ephesians 6:4, *“Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”*

Both the Old and New Testament command parents to disciple their children. Sometimes, that process can be formal (certain day, certain time, specific topic, etc.), but most often, discipleship will be informal. As Deuteronomy 6 describes, it’s happening in the course of the normal events of life. Meals are a fantastic way to accomplish this. Everyone has to eat. Why not make it a point to redeem the time? What are some ways to begin using family meals as unique opportunities for discipleship?

Pursue the Lord Privately

Don’t miss the order of instruction in Deut. 6:5-7. *“You shall love the Lord your God ... these words shall be on your heart ... You shall teach diligently to your children.”* You can’t give what you don’t have. Said another way, you can’t pour from an empty cup. Fill your soul with Jesus so that you always have something to give to your children.

Prioritize Family Meals Together

When the kids are little and parents control all aspects of the schedule, it's pretty straightforward. But as children get older and add sports, jobs, friends, and other activities to the mix, this becomes an increasing challenge. In those circumstances, don't be passive. Do whatever you can to coordinate calendars to secure certain meals together throughout the week. Additionally, prayerfully consider if non-essential activities outside the home could be trimmed or eliminated to ensure family meals are a consistent priority. (Susie may not need ballet, jiu-jitsu, and macramé lessons all at once.)

Be Intentional

I'm a big believer (based on lots of experience) that mealtime entropy is one of the laws of the universe. Without some exterior force, family meals will descend into chaos and disorder. (For you math types, the formula is: $\delta q_{rev}/T = \Delta S$) At times, there is no stopping that train. But more often, dads and moms, you can have a significant influence on the tone and the quality of the conversation as you intentionally guide the discussion. This means you'll need to think ahead of time about what you'd like to accomplish and then commit to make it happen.

Be Flexible

While it's important to use meals as an opportunity for discipleship, don't be legalistic. Free-flowing conversations around the table are a gift from God. They create memorable moments and lots of laughter. Further, there are meals where the goal should be reduced to each family member consuming the required amount of food to remain alive for a little while longer. If you're unwilling to adjust expectations or hold your agenda loosely, you'll be angry and impatient and a walking contradiction of the truths you're seeking to communicate to your family!

With those principles in mind, here are a few practical ideas for making the most of your mealtimes together as a family:

- *Read the Bible.* Start reading through a book of the Bible a few verses or a chapter at a time. Ask a few questions to get your family thinking about what the text means and how it should be applied. On Saturday evenings, read the

text for the next morning's sermon and/or the Sunday school lesson in order to get a running start for church.

- *Pray.* Your children don't come out of the womb knowing how to pray. Use mealtimes as a discipling opportunity to teach them to pray. Pray through the membership directory. Pray for specific needs in your own lives. Confess sin. Adore the Lord for the truths you've read about in your Scripture passage. Thank Him for specific answers to prayers, various blessings, and even trials that He uses for His glory and your good.
- *Ask a Good Question.* This is a fun one with a lot of different options. A couple of my favorites are "What are you thankful for in the last couple of weeks?", and "What was encouraging from the most recent church service?"
- *Memorize Scripture.* Pick a verse or a passage of Scripture to memorize as a family. If you're not sure where to start, there are all sorts of resources online, including www.fighterverses.com.
- *Review Articles.* Read and discuss a good article. It could be from the Grace Rancho newsletter or another trusted resource that provides good food for thought and exhortation from God's Word. On occasion, you may want to broaden this approach and read articles about current events in order to help interpret news from a Christian worldview.
- *Share a Book Report.* If a child or parent has recently finished a good book, provide an opportunity to share the plot, what they learned, what they enjoyed (or didn't), and if they'd recommend it to other family members.

These are just a few of my ideas and I'm sure you can come up with others as you ask God for wisdom and seek to redeem the time around the table. In closing, don't forget to do your best every day and simultaneously rest in the sovereign grace of God. Be encouraged by this quote from C.J. Mahaney on being a father to his son, Chad:

"I am not an expert on fathering. Daily I am reminded of

*my weakness and sin, and I often need to ask for my son's forgiveness. I am a fellow sinner and address all fathers from that perspective. And ultimately my confidence is not in my fathering skill or these practices. My confidence is in God's grace and His eagerness to reveal the gospel of grace to my son. Left to myself, I am in way over my head as a father. But God hasn't left me to myself. He has called me to this holy task. He has given Chad to me as a gift and a holy assignment. Chad needs to be trained and I need to be sanctified. And God has promised to do both by His grace and for His glory."*¹

¹Excerpt from a 2006 C.J. Mahaney blog post.

Discipline as Discipleship: How Loving Parental Discipline Prepares Kids for Life



Eric Durso

The mission of the church is to make disciples and the front-line of that mission is in the home with our children. They are the first “people group” a church needs to reach with the gospel, and parents are the “missionaries” sent to them. If you’re a parent this is your mission! It’s not primarily to help your children get good grades, excel in sports, or attain hefty scholarships. Rather, set your sights on God’s priorities: aim at helping your children come to know, love, and serve Jesus Christ.

Every Christian parent will agree with that priority readily enough. Children, however, won’t - at least not initially! Like every human since Adam, they’re born with an agenda to live for their own desires. They are born practical atheists, ruled by the passions of the flesh and enslaved to sinful desires (Eph. 2:1-3). Or, as Proverbs puts it, “*Folly is bound up in the heart of a child*” (22:15). It is for this reason that parents need more than a desire to raise their kids in the truth. They need to understand God’s methods for discipling them. And too often, this is where we fail.

The purpose of this article is to introduce a critical component of biblical parenting: discipline. Many Christian parents have no idea how to discipline their children – particularly as it relates to spankings, swats, reminders – corporeal child discipline. They’re desperately afraid of doing it wrong and messing up big time.

However much we might fear it, God has given us this responsibility. Proverbs makes this abundantly clear, and this article

will aim to summarize what they teach about biblical parental discipline.

Biblical Discipline Comes From Parents That Delight in Their Children

Proverbs 3:11-12 *“My son, do not despise the Lord’s discipline or be weary of his reproof, for the Lord reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights.”*

A principle conveyed here is that God’s discipline flows from love and delight, not retaliation or frustration. And that’s how parents ought to discipline their kids. Discipline is much easier for a child to accept when the child is convinced his parents truly delight in him. If the atmosphere of a household is dark and parents are perpetually high strung and ready to snap, children will think that their discipline flows from the parents’ anger, not love. J.C. Ryle notes that *“Love is one grand secret of successful training.”*

Biblical Discipline Is a Rescue Mission

Proverbs 6:23-24 *“For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching a light, and the reproofs of discipline are the way of life, to preserve you from the evil woman, from the smooth tongue of the adulteress.”*

Proverbs 23:13-14 *“Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you strike him with a rod, he will not die. If you strike him with the rod, you will save his soul from Sheol.”*

In the first text God makes clear that reproof and discipline are protective. They “preserve” us from evil - evils like fornication and adultery. The second text makes the same point: that discipline is God’s means of protecting our children from death - both physical and spiritual.

Think of sin like a path your children are tempted to explore. It’s a dangerous path, filled with thorns, snares, and enemies that threaten the lives of your children. When you see your children headed toward that path, you need to act swiftly to protect them. That’s what discipline is. It’s rescue. It helps them return to the path of joy and blessing.

Biblical Discipline Includes “The Rod”

“The rod” is the Proverbs’ way of referring to what many people today call “spankings.” In recent years the use of the rod has been questioned. Some call it child abuse. Some know it’s right, but are so afraid of doing it wrong they never do it at all. But consider the following texts that exhort parents to use “the rod” in discipline.

Proverbs 13:24 *“Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him.”*

Proverbs 22:15 *“Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him.”*

Proverbs 23:13-14 *“Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you strike him with a rod, he will not die. If you strike him with the rod, you will save his soul from Sheol.”*

Proverbs 29:15 *“The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother.”*

Proverbs 29:19 *“By mere words a servant is not disciplined, for though he understands, he will not respond.”*

Children are not born morally neutral. They’re born foolish. As Voddie Baucham quipped about a wayward toddler: “That’s a viper in a diaper and you better get it under control!” Should their folly continue to grow and blossom, they will bring great suffering everywhere they go. Parents must use “the rod” for the benefit of their children.

The word for rod in Hebrew is *shebet*, and it refers to a small branch, a stick, an offshoot. It’s the word used to refer to a shepherd’s staff. A shepherd would use a shebet to guide and direct his flock, and often that meant using the rod to hit the sheep when they persisted in the wrong path.

A shebet was not for an angry shepherd who wanted to beat up his sheep, but rather for shepherds who loved their sheep and wanted to protect them. The physical, tactile, even painful sensation from the shebet taught the sheep to stay near.

A faithful parent will never vent his anger upon a child. Rather, the faithful parent recognizes the threat of folly, the danger of sin, and thus moves toward the child in love, providing the God-given remedy. Whenever there is clear disobedience, God’s way calls for “the rod.” In those cases, a parent should lovingly

correct the child by removing him from the situation, explaining his offense, giving him a swat, embracing him in love, and restoring him to fellowship.

Before moving on, let's be clear: physical abuse of a child is a gross sin. If you cannot control your temper and are tempted to inflict more pain than needed, stop. Never attempt to discipline a child while angry or out of control. The goal of discipline is not to frighten into submission. Rather, it inflicts small measures of pain in the moment to prevent greater amounts later on.

Biblical Discipline Is God's Way to Drive Folly From Our Children

Proverbs 22:15 *"Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him."*

Children don't learn to sin because they see others doing it, they learn to sin because they're sinners. It's part of their nature. I have never screamed at my wife because she took my favorite toy, but that never stopped my toddlers from doing it. No one needs to teach them selfishness. Why? Because "folly is bound up in the heart of a child."

God says that the way our children are released from the bonds of folly is through loving discipline. When a parent consistently disciplines a child, the child learns to associate sin with pain, and that's a good thing.

Biblical Discipline Gives Wisdom to the Child (29:15)

This is the other side of the coin. Discipline drives off folly and welcomes wisdom: Proverbs 29:15 *"The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother."*

Wise children - respectful, hard-working, diligent, polite - are disciplined children. Parents who desire wise, contributing, productive children should work at being humble, godly, and consistent in discipline. Give the gift of wisdom to your children: discipline them in love.

Refusal to Biblically Discipline Is Harmful and Hateful to Our Children (13:24)

Proverbs 13:24 *"Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who*

loves him is diligent to discipline him.”

Sometimes we think “I can’t spank my children, I love them too much!” I understand this sentiment. This might be the hardest part of parenting, and there have been times tears have been close to my eyes when disciplining the children I love. But listen to Tedd Tripp’s piercing observation:

“Who benefits if you do not spank your child? Surely not the child. The above passages make it clear that such failure places the child at risk. Who benefits? You do. You are delivered from the discomfort of spanking your child. You are delivered from the agony of causing discomfort for this one who is precious to you...According to this passage, it is hatred, not love, that will keep me from spanking my child. Love will force me to do it.”

Biblical Discipline Gives Rest and Delight to the Parent (29:17)

Proverbs 29:17 *“Discipline your son, and he will give you rest; he will give delight to your heart.”*

There’s no question that a commitment to discipline will take time, energy, and effort. It will be emotionally draining. And it will expose your own sinfulness in the process.

But all discipline is forward looking. We discipline not because it inflicts pain in the moment, but because it produces fruit in the future. A peaceful home, where parents can rest and enjoy their children, is the result of many long days and hard nights committed to the consistent discipline of their children.

Most people are surprised to learn that my sweetheart wife earned the nickname “Stubby” as a three-year-old” (short for stubborn). I’m told that there was something of a routine during family dinners in those days: the family would gather at the table, Ashley would act out, her sisters would roll their eyes and think, here we go again, her defiance would be met with swift, biblical discipline, and afterward they’d reconvene at the table. This happened for a whole year, like clockwork.

Ashley was saved shortly after that (four or five years old) and has since grown into a wise and godly woman. And she has (more than once) thanked her parents for their consistency to discipline. Her parents are enjoying the harvest of a well-disciplined child.

Parents, Start Today

Parents, embrace God's way. Talk with your spouse and get on the same page. Start praying for wisdom. Continue to review the Proverbs for direction. And let me urge you: If you're not sure how to proceed, reach out for help immediately. If you're not sure about how to discipline, when to discipline, or have more specific questions related to your specific situation, call a leader in the church and get help. It really is that important. You won't regret it.

“The *purpose* for
your authority in the lives
of your children is not to
hold them under your
power, but to empower
them to be self-controlled
people living freely
under the
authority of *God*.”

— Ted Tripp
Shepherding A Child's Heart

It Takes a Church: Raising Your Kids in the Church



Mark Severance

One of God's greatest gifts to parents and to their children is the local church. God designed the church to be one of the primary ways each member of your family understands the truth of God and His Word, grows in the context of a loving community, and receives necessary exhortation and encouragement to remain faithful to your gospel calling.

Dads and Moms, God has given you the church as an essential part of your exhausting, rewarding, confounding, exhilarating, discouraging, and joyful parenting journey! Don't ever let busy schedules, competing priorities, individualistic tendencies, or sinful hearts lead you away from your church family and the wisdom and protection it provides. Rather, make the church a top priority! You need it and so do your kids!

Here are four practical ways for you to lead your family in prioritizing the local church.

Set an Example of Loving the Church

How can you set an example for your children of loving the church? Start by showing up whenever possible and participating enthusiastically. Your kids will be able to tell if you genuinely love the church as they watch you listen to the Word and sing with, fellowship with, pray with, and just be with God's people. Go ahead and embarrass them by issuing a heartfelt "Amen," singing too loudly, hugging liberally, weeping unashamedly, and staying too long afterwards.

During the week in your home, lead your family in frequent

discussions about the church. One question I like to ask in our home is, “What was something encouraging from church today?” Answers range from truth shared in the sermon, a specific song we sang, a good conversation before or after the service, a new visitor, witnessing a baptism, or playing with friends! Let these types of conversations become a springboard to talk about God’s wisdom in designing the church and the beauty of His body in our local church. Regularly affirm the leadership and other members. Pray regularly through the membership directory. And if criticism is ever warranted, be extra charitable and gracious in every respect.

Charles Spurgeon once referred to the church as “the dearest place on earth.” Step aside Disneyland! Is that the way you feel? Is that the way you behave? Your kids will know and are likely to follow your example.

Pursue Relationships With a Variety of People

In his wisdom, God designed the church to be filled with all types of people that don’t look like your family. This represents a wonderful opportunity to know and love folks of different backgrounds, ethnicities, political persuasions, ages, interests, and more. 1 Corinthians 12:22 says that we all need each other. So pursue these opportunities as a way to show God’s kindness to others and model Christian charity to your children.

One of the best ways to do this is hospitality. Invite people into your home to share time, food, and meaningful conversation. And rather than relegating the children to a separate room, consider how they can be part of serving your guests. When they’re young, this could be as simple as greeting them or helping set up. As they get older, seek to include them in the conversation and challenge them to think of and ask thoughtful questions. Seek to cultivate a sense of wonder and curiosity about the specific individuals God has placed in your spiritual family.

Another way to encourage this type of thinking and behavior is to ask your family who they spent time with before and after the church service. It’s an ongoing reminder and challenge (for parents and children alike) to not settle for what’s comfortable and limit interaction to a small group of existing friends. Every individual at church has a story and every person needs encour-

agement and exhortation. Joyfully seek to minister to all sorts of different folks! God will use you to be a blessing and you and your family will be blessed as well.

Humbly Use Your Gifts to Serve the Body

God has gifted you and your family in unique ways. Model the joy of serving your church family by humbly and faithfully using those gifts. Teach your kids that every single person at church has an important role to play in the body of Christ. Whether your role is upfront or behind the scenes, let them see you serve as unto the Lord.

Additionally, teach them early on that serving the body of Christ is not just for adults or big kids. Everyone (even kids!) has an import job to do and a role to play. Find ways for them to serve. When they're little, kindly interacting with adults and other children is a good start. Many adults, especially those whose children are out of the home, are really encouraged by interacting with young people. As your kids get older, they may have opportunities to help in Sunday school classes or other age-appropriate ministries. In every stage, affirm their desire to use the gifts that God has given them as they understand and embrace the joy of ministering to others.

Ask for Help

This last point may be the most difficult. Parenting is hard. Kids are confounding. It's tough to know what to do in many circumstances. Regular prayer needs to be our first response (James 1:5). But don't forget about or neglect the wisdom that God provides through your church family. We're all in this together!

Partner with brothers and sisters. Humbly seek and receive wisdom. Ask for prayer and practical advice. Pursue accountability and confess your sin to one another when appropriate. Let the gospel free you from keeping your need a secret or being defensive about your shortcomings or failures.

Just imagine the gift that this way of thinking and behaving would be to dads and moms (and children) in every stage of the parenting process. We'd be able to give and receive in a way that genuinely helps others, fosters unity in the body of Christ in

spite of differences, and brings glory to God!

In conclusion, we want every family, every parent, and every child at Grace Rancho to experience the many benefits God designed the local church to provide. For the sake of your spiritual health, the glory of God, and the continuation of the gospel in the lives of your kids and grandkids, make the church central in your lives and parenting!

Lessons I Learned From My Father



Kent Roberts

A majority of the lessons we learned as children will ultimately shape how we live in the present day. They will be the foundation of our current actions and our future ones. These lessons, whether they are good or bad, will have an impact on how we live our own lives and how we will eventually train our children. They say you cannot pick your family or your neighbors, but God does place people in our lives who will set an example and pass on life changing lessons to be followed. Throughout my life, I have had many people who have set a high example of Christian living. Those who have shown by example, lived a life worth following, and taught me lessons of life. One of those people is my dad.

My dad spent his career as a principal of a Christian school, which was associated with the church we attended, and our lives revolved around the school and church. When I think back on all of the lessons my dad has taught me, the list is quite extensive. There are many practical lessons, such as riding a bike, car maintenance, baiting a hook, and skinning a buck, just to name a few. Yet, as there are many I could write about, there are a few specific lessons that I would like to highlight, primarily those which have had a large impact in my daily living, from my time as a young boy to my life today. These are not all encompassing, but these three lessons I learned from my dad are what I hope to instill in my children as well.

Faithfulness

One very important lesson I have learned from my dad is faithfulness. This was not something only taught or told, but more of a living example. He showed me what it was like to be faithful to God, family, and work. Unless we were sick in bed, not a Sunday went by where we missed going to church and being involved in various aspects of ministry and serving. Church was a clear priority and attendance was a non-negotiable item. Not out of a legalistic approach, but because he knew the command, value, and importance church was to our family. To take it further, it was not showing up to church and going home. It was the involvement of being part of ministry and serving others. Being faithful takes consistency, and my dad showed me what this looks like.

Humility

Another key lesson I have learned from my dad is humility and self-sacrifice. There has not been a time in my life where I can remember my dad ever putting himself above others. Countless times I have seen him put others before his desires, showing me the truth of Philippians 2:4 which says, *“Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interest of others.”* He would put aside his own priorities and put others before himself. This was displayed in his sacrifice of time and effort at church and school and for friends and family.

Hard Work

Lastly, a solid lesson my dad instilled in me was to always have a strong work ethic. Once again this was not just told to me but shown to me. I can vividly remember times as a young boy watching my dad work, and more importantly doing it the right way. Showing me to always do my best no matter what the task was or how difficult the job. He would always tell me, “If you are going to spend the time to work, you may as well do it right the first time.” This applied to whatever task he was doing. And why was this so important to him? Ultimately, it was not to bring glory to himself, but rather to bring glory to God. He showed me how to fully live out Colossians 3:17 which says, *“And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus,*

giving thanks to God the Father through him.”

These three key lessons I continue to learn from my dad today. Nothing has changed, he still exemplifies these characteristics. This is due to his never-failing consistency. I constantly share these lessons with my kids, but my prayer is that I do not just share them, but actually live them in my life as my dad has shown me and continues to display.

Lessons I Learned From My Mother



Ashley Durso

I still remember being about 12 years old when the cashier at the grocery store asked me “what do you want to be when you grow up?” to which I naturally, and even excitedly, responded “a wife and mom.” I did not expect the blank stare response I got from the cashier. Perhaps right then and there I began to realize just the tiniest glimpse of the gracious gift God had blessed me with; a mom who made being a wife and mom look like the most enjoyable, important and delightful role. The thought never crossed my mind until that day that some people may think of it as “just” a wife and mom because I had seen how a woman who fears the Lord fulfills this significant role with so much purpose as she works to help her husband, care for the physical and emotional needs of her family, and make the home to be a place of peace and rest for the family to be – all to the glory of God!

The longer I’ve been married and the more I experience motherhood, the more I feel appreciation and admiration for my mom. I see that this role is not as easily fulfilled as my little 12 year old self thought it was! I got to watch mom joyfully do it each day, and by God’s grace, I pray that our children will now get to watch me joyfully fill this role of “wife and mom” for His glory. For the sake of this article, I’ll focus on three main ways I saw mom fulfill her role and some small ways those practically played out in the day-to-day life of my family growing up that still impact me today.

She Helped Dad

This may seem a bit odd as the first principle to put here in a parenting article, but it is no mistake. Mom always put her role as “wife” before her role as “mom” and that is perhaps one of the best gifts she has given us kids; a mom we knew loved, respected, and admired our Dad. This played out practically in a number of ways, but one particular way that stands out was the way she used her words, or lack thereof, to help him. I still, to this day, cannot think of a single complaint to tell you that my mom has muttered about my dad. I can, on the other hand, give you a long list of things my mom loves about my dad, because she makes them known. Now, understand that yes, they both certainly tease each other about the different ways they do things and have times when they have issues to discuss, but they are absolutely committed to being one another’s biggest encouragers. Therefore, they very intentionally took the time and care to privately and patiently work out those issues together.

Mom took Proverbs 31:11-12 seriously and sought to live it out in her words and actions, showing her desire to do good and not harm to my dad. Whether he was by her side or not, Dad knew she would not mutter a bad complaint against him. Dad’s heart could safely trust in her to honor him with her words and the impact that had on our family was beyond measure. This allowed Dad to excel in fulfilling his God-given role of husband and father. Wives, do not underestimate the powerful impact your support, respect, and encouragement can have in helping your husband. Seek to be his biggest encourager; it is a role God has given specifically to you – don’t discount it. Be mindful of your words, whether that be holding back the complaint you were about to mutter or actually saying out loud that sweet thought you had toward your husband. As moms, be reminded that your kids are hearing and seeing it all and will be blessed by watching the honor, love and respect you show for your husband. I am so thankful for my mom’s commitment to helping my dad by upholding his honor in our household.

She Cared for Our Physical and Emotional Needs

A few things I did not think about until actually starting out as a wife and mom as an adult...dinner does not just appear each night at the table, laundry does not just clean itself and get back

neatly folded in the drawers, and toilet paper does not just stay always supplied in the bathroom cabinets on its own....turns out the “magic fairy” who did all that was MOM! I never realized until tending to these daily “magic fairy” tasks, how repetitive they are. These are daily needs that must be addressed in order to keep people alive, and mom quietly and joyfully accomplished them repetitively, day-in and day-out for years. Without realizing it, God was using my quiet and passive observance of mom fulfilling her role to build into me the eternal perspective of these seemingly mundane tasks actually being quite significant, God-glorifying, and therefore a true joy to do. They are not meaningless. They are God-given and, therefore, I can and should enjoy them, and view them as a way that God allows His “*grace to extend to more and more people*” so that “*it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God*” (2 Cor. 4:15-18). This truth reminds me that the physical needs being cared for also impact the emotional needs God has placed in my nurture and care in giving us precious little ones.

Some important things mom did to care for us emotionally: she always gave us the benefit of the doubt, she would ask us questions about our day, and spend endless hours listening to us talk about them. We knew she really liked us. We felt like she trusted us, which made us want to be trustworthy. She didn’t nit-pick our words or behavior (quick note for girl moms: mom tried to keep fashion finds fun together, making modest finds/tweaks a fun challenge that we enjoyed doing together and not a point of tension over trends between mom and daughter). She didn’t assume the worst or judge our motivations. Just as she honored my dad, she treated us with honor and respect. I never heard her say anything negative about us to other people. If ever there were issues at school or with my friends, I knew my parents would always have my side and defend me. I think this kind of support helped us feel secure and comfortable in our own skin. What a gift that quiet trust was to us kids, having a trustworthy helper to love us when we knew we were less than lovely at the moment. A small glimpse of the greater trust I would later grow to have in Christ as my Savior who loves me beyond compare when I have done and can never do anything to deserve it.

Mom’s small acts of faithfulness in caring for both my physical and emotional needs daily showed me I could trust her. This

planted the seeds that God would later grow into an unwavering trust in His unfailing and perfect love and care for me. Moms, do not underestimate the significance of the many hours of physical and emotional energy God is allowing you to pour out in service to your family. He knows how He is using it for His eternal purposes. Do those “magic fairy” tasks joyfully and trust Him to use it for your good and His glory!

She Made Our Home a Place of Peace and Rest

My mom didn't have a sister until she was fifteen years old, and moved out to college when her little sister was just three, so she never really had siblings to play with. This led to the frequent reminder from her to all of us (myself, my 2 sisters and 1 brother) of how blessed we were to have siblings. We simply were not allowed to fight. We were not allowed to yell at each other or hold grudges.

When there was quarreling among us, we were not allowed to lock ourselves away in our room and ignore our siblings. Mom and Dad made us work it out and saw to it that forgiveness was sought out, given, and peace was restored. Our siblings were gifts from God, our best friends, and we were all on the same “Smith Family” team. This was huge in providing our whole family with a comfortable, welcoming, restful, and peaceful home that we all enjoyed being in.

Our home really was a joyful place to grow up as peace was promoted and planned (Pr. 12:20). A few simple and practical ways I see that mom “planned peace” for our home: Family dinners each night around the table together (and all the grocery budget, shopping, planning, cooking, cleaning and time management that involves), keeping an orderly home (not saying it was perfectly tidy all the time, but an overall feeling of order that helped our home be a comfy, cozy, and restful place to be), celebrating big and little holidays, birthdays and family get together in simple yet special ways (favorite meals made, birthday candles, and always ending our birthday meals with words of encouragement saying “what we love” to the birthday person). One last thing: our fun family vacations, enjoying the blessings of family and God's beautiful creation around us to enjoy. Mom went with Dad's lead, and planned and prepped and worked hard

to make our three week camping (yes, you read that right, three weeks of camping) vacations happen each summer and we have so many fun memories because of that!

So, fellow moms, let's take the time to plan peace for our families and make our homes restful, enjoyable and joy-filled places for everyone to be together in. It is indeed hard work, but thankfully, by God's grace He will enable us to do that. He has placed you in this wife and mom role on purpose. I pray that this brief article leaves you feeling a little more equipped with some practical ways to move forward in humbly serving your family, trusting God is using all the big and little moments to show His love to those he has entrusted to your care right now. Be encouraged to stay "*steadfast, immovable and always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.*" (1 Cor. 15:58). I can tell you my mom's labor was not in vain as I sit here and reflect on God's goodness in the practical lessons learned as I grew up watching her, without even realizing the way God was using it for my good and His glory! Thanks, mom, and thank you LORD for your kindness in granting me such a mom.

Fatherhood: How God The Father Shows Dads What To Do



Eric Durso

Is it possible for a man who didn't have a father to be a good father?

The answer, of course, is yes! God is gracious. Through Christ's work, we are adopted by God and invited to call him "Our Father." He is a father to the fatherless, and if men want to learn to be fathers to their own children, they have a portrait they can look at. It's right there in holy Scripture. In order to be a father, we must get to know the Father. He is fatherhood in perfection.

Obviously, all of Scripture reveals God, and this short article cannot summarize everything the Father is. There are multi-volume theological works for that. Here, we'll simply observe one of the most stunning portraits of a father-son portrait in Scripture: the baptism of Jesus in Mark 1:

"And when he came out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being open and the Spirit descending upon him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my beloved Son; with you I am well-pleased.'" (Mark 1:10-11).

Douglas Wilson has pointed out five important truths about fatherhood from this text.¹ Let's take a look at them one by one.

Dad Is There

First, the Father was there. He is not an absentee dad. It was a big moment in Jesus' life, and the Father ensures his son knows he's there.

¹Father Hunger, Why God Calls Men to Love and Lead Their Families.

Fathers can't escape the fact that they really matter. God designed it that way. They have a presence, which means that they cannot help but impact their children. Even the dad who runs away shapes his children - although not in the way he should. A potter needs to be near the clay to shape it, but a dad will shape his children wherever he is.

The good kind of shaping happens when fathers are present. We can start with a simple word for all fathers: stay. Stay with your wife. Stay with your kids. Stay with your family. By God's grace, resolve to be present in their lives. You will not be perfect, but you must be present.

Dad Makes His Presence Felt

Second, he makes his presence felt by sending his Spirit to descend upon Jesus like a dove. He not only shows up, he wants his Son to feel his presence.

Fathers must be near, and they must make their nearness palpable. They ought to hug, wrestle, hold hands, pat on the back, and wipe away tears. They can play horsey or give airplane rides. Their lap is free parking.

They're also present in loving discipline. A father's hand will correct, his eyes will teach, his arms will embrace. Things are different when daddy's home, and that's good.

Dad Speaks

Third, he makes his presence known by speaking to him. Fathers must not be silent. Fatherhood is verbal.

God's Words given to us in Scripture make sense of the world for us, and fathers have the same responsibility with their children. They don't need to be loquacious. What they do need is to realize that their children are, from birth, interpreting the world around them. They're trying to make sense of it. A father must bring clarity, direction, and coherence to the world. His teaching cannot be relegated to five minutes after dinner or a prayer before bed. His words are the winds that blow the fog away. When dad speaks, reality should come into focus.

This is why fathers' words need to be shaped by the Father's Word. So that when they speak, they are bringing light, not

smoke. Clarity, not confusion.

My dad had some sayings that stuck with me. As a kid, some of them confused me (“Sometimes you eat the bear, and sometimes the bear eats you.”), others were like arrows lodged in my mind that stuck there until adulthood. I remember when he said, “Show up on time and work hard, and you’ll be ahead of half the workforce.” Or, when I set my hopes on playing in the NBA, he said “The ones who make it to that level practice every day and have a ball with them wherever they go.” The moments were insignificant, but they left an impression on me: hard work is essential to living a good life.

That’s a small example of the power of a father’s voice. Let’s speak up. Speak about God’s glory. Speak about life and work and suffering and joy. Saturate your words with God’s Word and then speak.

Dad Expresses Love

Fourth, the Father expresses his love for his Son. There was a generation of fathers who didn’t know how to tell their kids how much they loved them. Let us not be that way: the Father said, *“This is my beloved son.”*

God is love, and he says so again and again in his word. His heart is fit to burst with love. He has chosen to love us for all eternity, and gave his son to secure our redemption so that he could continue to lavish his love on us forever. Fatherhood loves.

And just as the Father’s love was expressed in words and actions, so should a father’s love. Never hold back an “I love you.” Let them spill out with embarrassing regularity. The dad who doesn’t regularly express love with words and actions sends his children on a quest to earn their father’s approval.

Ed Moore writes:

“I’ve heard guys blame their bad dad for their being a bad dad. But I say that’s hogwash. My dad had no idea how to be a dad. All he knew was that he loved his kids, and he said it all the time. He said, ‘I love you. I’m thankful to be your dad. I’m proud of you.’ Every night before I went to sleep, he would put his hand on my head, he would kiss me, and he would tell me he loved me. He said everything that needed to be said every

single day.”

The kids may roll their eyes when they're young, but when they're sixteen and facing peer pressure, nineteen and making life-altering decisions, or fifty and watching you breathe your last breaths, you're going to want them to know that you loved them with all your might.

Dad Takes Pleasure

And last, the Father took pleasure in his son. He says, *“In whom I am well-pleased.”*

Children are a gift, and fathers need to appreciate the gifts the Father gives them. Fathers don't say a plastic “thank you” as they unwrap the present, while slyly eyeing whether a return receipt was included. They understand that God shaped and fashioned this child, this son, this daughter - perfectly for them. The child a father receives is his child, handcrafted for his enjoyment and sanctification. It is a good gift. And there are no return receipts.

A son will sense whether his father delights in him or merely tolerates him. A daughter can tell if dad thinks she's a burden or a joy. Some parents are baffled that their kids can't wait to move out when they're eighteen after they've treated them as an interruption for seventeen.

I think one of the ways dads do this is by ensuring he makes great memories with his kids. Those memories are like lasting notes that say, “I really enjoy you.” My dad always took us on vacation. When money was tight, when life was busy, when things were rough - it didn't matter - every summer we'd hit the road and drive up to Yosemite. I could tell my dad loved spending time with the family. We felt loved.

Make sure your children hear you take pleasure in them. Tell them when you're proud of them. Be at the game and cheer loud. When they fail, look them in the eye and remind them that you're always for them. Make memories and capture moments - so that your kids look back and think, “Yes, he told us that he loved us, but more than that, we felt loved by him.”

Mothering: Encouragement for the Weary Mother



Jodi Severance

Dear Younger Me,

You are tired. You've actually had to make a rule that you won't use the word "tired" because you don't want your children to only remember that you were always so t----. You blow it regularly. Your priorities seem often out of whack and you see your failings much more clearly than you see God's grace flowing through you to your family. Be encouraged. Not only are God's priceless mercies new every morning, but you are loved completely and fully by your Creator, and your performance as a mom and wife (on the good days or bad days!) doesn't change that.

God has given you the incredible gift of being a mom. Your husband likes to remind you that you are "living your dream!" On certain days and in particular moments, it doesn't always feel like a gift – more like an inconvenience and even a burden. In those times and in those situations, here's a little perspective from your older self who is still learning and growing, but has benefited from additional time, wisdom, and the relentless grace of God.

Being Tired Is Normal

It's kind of what you signed up for. Fundamentally, parenting means laying down your life for your kids. The "easier" phase of parenting is non-existent. At times, you may marvel at the lack of appreciation your family shows for you. Death to self is never easy, but it's what God calls you to. *"For even the Son of Man came*

not to be served, but to serve.” (Mark 10:45) When you surrender to Him, He gives power to the faint and to him who has no might he increases strength. (Isaiah 40:29) He also increases your joy in serving Him as you serve them.

Your Routine Is a Great Servant, but a Terrible Master

It's good to have a plan, to have structure, to be intentional about how to spend your days with the kids. There are lots of benefits to a tidy home. But sometimes, you need to stop holding those things so tightly. God often brings interruptions (i.e., children and their mess) into your life in ways that you wouldn't choose and times that you don't prefer. If comfort is your idol, you won't see these interruptions as a good thing. You'll angrily see them as an impediment to your agenda and your happiness. Strive, by faith, to see God's good and loving design in the interruptions of life. Seek first HIS kingdom (Matthew 6:33) and not your own. Surrender when your days take a different path than you planned.

Embrace the Process of Change in the Kids' Lives

It's right to want your kids to trust Christ and live for His glory, but this doesn't always happen in the way or the time frame that you desire. Be faithful to do your part to bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord, but trust God with the process. Rather than wanting so desperately to change them and force them into being the people that you want them to be, ask God for grace to be truly thankful in order to appreciate the people that God created them to be. Embrace the fact that you're not sovereign! Enjoy the kids, celebrate little victories, let the kids know you're so thankful for them, laugh a lot, and rejoice in the Lord! (Philippians 4:4) Don't let the length of the process steal your joy or diminish your faith in our good, wise, and loving Heavenly Father.

Ask For Help

This parenting thing is really hard. And I'm more convinced than ever that God designed it that way so that we would see our need for help and humbly and regularly ask. First, run to Him! Your *“help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.”*

(Psalm 121:2) When you lack wisdom, He gives it “*generously.*” (James 1:5) He is strong and kind and His “*power is made perfect in your weakness.*” (2 Corinthians 12:9). Second, lean into the body of Christ. Your brothers and sisters want to pray for you, provide practical help for you, offer counsel, and bear your burdens. Don’t be too proud to ask or receive the help you need.

In Seeking To Help Your Kids, Don’t Forget To Examine Your Own Heart

When you see your kids as the main problem, you’ll be self-righteous and angry when you discipline. When you forget your own need for a Savior, you’ll see their sin as primarily against you. When you’re idolizing your agenda, you’ll be less concerned for their heart and just want them to stop being naughty or childish simply to make your life easier. So look often at Christ. Preach the gospel to yourself every day. Live a life of daily repentance and faith. Be humbled again and again at His amazing, undeserved grace in your life. When you live from that perspective, you’ll be better equipped to lovingly and compassionately point them to their need of the Savior.

Be Faithful And Trust The Lord With The Results

Deuteronomy 6:7 commands you to teach your children “*diligently.*” Be faithful to do it! “*When you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.*” But don’t forget the instructions in the previous verses: fear the Lord your God, keep all his commandments, and love the Lord your God. The old saying that “more is caught than taught” is true. By the grace of God, take care that your life matches your words and reinforces the truths of the gospel. So give grace to yourself and the little people in your life! And pray, pray, and pray some more for God to do the work that only He can do.

I recently read an article that said, “Parent like you can save your children and pray like you can’t!” Younger me, that’s great advice. Be faithful, trust the Lord, admit your weaknesses, pray like crazy, and may your daily joy in Jesus grow stronger each day! They really do grow up so fast.....

Snapshots: How Some Fathers Are Leading Their Families in Devotions.



Mark Severance

How am I leading my family in devotions? In summary: inconsistently, imperfectly, sometimes impatiently, but striving to be faithful. Praise the Lord for his patience! Specifically, it's been a goal to spend time as a family at least five days a week seeking the Lord in Bible study and prayer. Over the years, we've used many different approaches including: reading through a book of Scripture, Bible storybooks for little kids, missionary biographies, age-appropriate Bible studies, and catechism-based resources. (If you've got any questions about specific resources, just ask me or Jodi. We love to share recommendations for resources that have been a blessing to our family!)

Most days, it's short (and hopefully, sweet). Ten to fifteen minutes is about the right amount of time. We've done dinnertime, bedtime, and breakfast time. I try to keep it interactive, with plenty of opportunities for questions and answers.

Bottom line, if flawless execution on your part and perfectly behaved and grateful children is your standard, you're bound to be disappointed. Rather, strive for consistency and trust God to do His work through His Word. In the long-term, it's unlikely that your kiddos will remember anything specific from family devotions. But they will remember that time in God's Word and praying together as a family was an important priority. By grace, this will be an important way that God grows and shapes them for His glory!



Hans Van Velzer

Family devotions have taken different shapes in our home over the years. The basic format that we have followed typically involves singing a couple worship songs together, reading Scripture or some other Bible based devotional book, and praying through the membership directory for our church. My goal has been to make this a daily routine, usually right before bedtime as this gives us a chance as a family to close out the day remembering that it is the Lord who has ordained the events of the day and given us the strength to make it through to bedtime no matter what the circumstances have been. We are currently reading through *31 Ways to be A 'One Another' Christian* by Dr. Stuart Scott as a family. Lately we have been reading through this together just as we are finishing dinner. Sometimes our family prayer time is not as structured as I'd like, but our kids get involved in thinking about those in our church and our family who need specific prayer. The most important thing that I've learned over the years is that consistency is critical when it comes to our "Bible Time." When the day is filled with tough circumstances it's easy to crawl inside your own head and let discouragement win the day. In those moments especially, consistency is crucial and the encouragement that comes from the excitement in our kids is a gift from God in our Bible time. It seems that pushing through those discouraging times results in memorable family devotions that remind us all how critical it is in the messy world we live in to come together as a family unit in worship and prayer before our Lord, Jesus Christ.



Frank Aguirre

What I've learned to do over the last few years is to take advantage of the one on one times I have with my kids. There are times I'll take Lanna on a "ride along" with Dad, so we usually get into what I've been learning and I have time to share with her as we are traveling from stop to stop on my route.

If I've been studying something from a growth group, or prepping to teach Sunday School, as an example, when we take neighborhood walks in the evening I'll share some thoughts and raise some questions about the Bible story and get their feedback. This usually leads to more discussion about what the Word says.

Recently, to my joy, I've begun a book study with my twin boys that's soaking with Proverbs. It's helping them understand what godly discipline looks like. It's been a joy to see their response from the book.

Even though I imagine or plan what I'd like to do in a controlled, comfortable setting in the living room or kitchen table, with every eye focused on the scripture and everyone listening intently, everyone asking the amazing question, because of their amazing listening, and I provide the perfect biblical answer..... um, it very rarely / never really happens that way. Instead God uses it in other ways when we are out and about. I'm reminded of this: salvation is of the Lord, growth is of the Lord, repentance is of the Lord. My point is God must do the work, but I need to be faithful in teaching accurately His word with those He has entrusted to me. Lord, help me!

Jesus said, "*repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand*" (Matt. 3:2). My role is to keep teaching my kids that truth; we all must be ready for His return.



James Bogle

My philosophy in terms of family worship is pretty simple: we do it together in the evenings, as often as possible throughout the week, and I remain flexible in order to seize opportunities to speak to my family about topics as they arise. The plans have evolved over the years as the children have grown, but we are currently reading through a chronological Bible reading plan. We start off with time in prayer (currently praying through a global prayer guide from Voice of the Martyrs, but the membership directory is a good resource too). We are also going through Jonathan Edwards Resolutions. I basically read it to them and then explain what it means. It's a good short lesson to set the tone before diving into the word. In addition, we take one day per week (Sunday or Monday) to go through the sermon that we heard that week so that I can make sure the family understood the message and how it might be applied.

I mentioned earlier that I like to remain flexible. What I mean by that is there are times when we veer off of the regular plan in order to address a topic that may be a teaching lesson that can be applied right away, usually because something has occurred and it needs to be addressed biblically. Some recent topics include purity and modesty, but we have also gone through doctrinal items and/or topics that have come up in the regular reading plan, such as the Jewish feasts. Ultimately, the goal is to get the family together, hear from the word of God, and see if I can get us talking and growing. We don't do it perfectly and it certainly doesn't happen every day, but God is faithful to use it for our good.



Justin Grasmick

It's been a type of tradition in our home to have a family breakfast and Bible time on Saturday mornings. I usually make an egg scramble and cinnamon rolls, and then we feast on the Word. I've been taking the family through Catechisms over the years. I'll have the kids read the Scriptures that support the questions and answers and then we discuss appropriate responses to what we've learned. We also have a time of Scripture memorization. We've been able to memorize 26 verses, each starting with a letter of the alphabet.

After Sunday worship, we usually grab lunch and discuss the sermon. The kids are great note-takers, so they pull out their notes and recap the sermon by sharing the main points. This often leads to more questions, and is an extension of Sunday worship with the church.

During dinner time we like to discuss what each family member read in the Bible that particular day. Each of the kids has their personal Bible time and as we sit at the table, they take turns explaining what they learned. Jaime and I ask leading questions and we all interact with our discussion centered on the Word of God. This is a great way of holding one another accountable with our time in the Word, while also nurturing family unity and modeling how we can all learn from each other.

As the kids are getting older, I've been able to start discipling the boys in an intentional one on one setting as well. I've been taking my oldest son through the Proverbs, which brings up many topics that allow a father to share how God's Word applies to life. We both look forward to this time together of discipleship and relationship building.

Snapshots: How Busy Mothers Make Time for the Word



Ashley Durso

Making time to be in God's Word as a mom is certainly not a "one size fits all" type of topic. So none of these are a must-do or the best way to do it. But the non-negotiable in all this is, Momma, you *need* to be in God's Word! That being said, read through these and see which ones seem like doable and helpful tips for you to try out in your day to day and fight to make it happen.

One of the easiest ways to get God's Word in front of your eyes throughout the entire day, is having verses up in your house. No matter the format, get God's Word tucked into those nooks and crannies of your home. I have been surprised at how much having these verses around has truly helped me in the moments when the selfish or impatient thoughts begin creeping in. To look up at those verses on the wall or by the sink and be reminded that my life is hidden with Christ in God, I can indeed fill my mind with the things that are above (Col. 3), and put others interests ahead of my own, following Christ's perfect example of sacrificial humility (Phil.2) is astounding! It's like placing actual weapons on our house walls to pull down and help us fight the battles against our own worst enemy – sin – when it inevitably interrupts our days.

An early morning hour of quiet time reading and studying God's Word and writing my prayers down in my prayer journal are absolutely a favorite thing of mine. However, over phases and stages of motherhood thus far I have realized this is not always a guarantee, am I right, mommas?! I am so thankful that even in the last few years God has graciously reminded me that He is not limited to those early morning hours. As much as I still prefer

and desire that time each morning, He faithfully reminds me to not be so attached to the time of day or length of time I get to spend studying His Word each day, but He has made me increasingly more aware of the tiniest moments I do have to sneak in looking at and listening to God's Word. A few helpful listens for the car, the laundry folding times, or the dishes washing times have been: the Dwell app and the ESV app on my phone, or just getting God's Word playing in the background of my day. A few other podcasts I have found helpful to keep my mind on things that are above: Journeywomen, Femina, and Risen Motherhood.

Hymns and music playing in the background of our days at home is another surprisingly helpful way to reorient your thoughts to things that are above. When the song "Great is Thy Faithfulness" comes on in the background right as you were about to complain, you are reoriented to God's faithfulness to provide for you. When the phrase "yet not I but through Christ in me" is sung in the background, I am reminded that I can, through Christ in me, be patient in that discipline moment that has just arisen with the kiddos, and He allows me to stop and think wisely about my words in that moment. When the line "to God all praise and glory" is sung as I do the four hundredth dish in the sink that day, I am reminded that even that dish washing is to the glory and praise of God, who I am a daughter of and now have the privilege of serving in all that I do, and suddenly I am enjoying that I get to do 399 more dishes in the sink for the glory of God with an attitude of thankfulness.

Memorizing large portions of scripture has been a game changer in truly meditating on scripture throughout the day. It is hard work to memorize. You have to be practicing to have it memorized and suddenly you start to realize it is helping push out the worries that can so often sneak into our mommy minds during our days. Get at least one other person to memorize with you, have deadlines for when you will have certain portions memorized (feels scary but the accountability is so helpful), and enjoy the hard work. You can even practice saying the verse to your kiddos, and/or memorize it with them.

Reading good books, specifically before bed helps quiet and calm my heart and mind too. Even just a quick ten minutes chips away at a book



Cheryl Van Velzer

Routine is an important part of getting time in the Word. For me and my kids. The early hours of the morning are the best time for me to get time in the Bible. The kids are not allowed to come out of their rooms until 6:30am. I try to wake up by 5:30am to give me time to start the day off in fellowship with the Lord. Social media and other distractions aren't allowed for me before 6:30am either. Of course, there are times when that ideal morning time doesn't happen, or when it happens but it's just hard to focus (like when that hour is spent in training the child to stay in his/her room). For those crazier days in life when there's a new baby or sickness or other things, I try to listen to the word on my phone while I'm getting ready for the day, or take advantage of the children's nap time to do some study. I also use a scripture memory app to get a little in here and there throughout the day. The important thing is to prioritize the Word in your daily routine and your kids' daily routines.



Rachelle Bogle

In different seasons of life, my time to study God's Word has changed over the years. When the kids were young and took naps during the afternoon, I would save nap time to read my Bible and work on study materials. They were early risers during that time, so I didn't have mornings available. Now that the kids are older and sleep in more, I use the early mornings to spend time with the Lord, reading, studying and praying.

The most important lesson I've learned that has impacted my study time, no matter what season I'm in, is the act of being intentional. I have found that I must be intentional about making God's Word a priority in my life. I cannot expect to find time as the day goes on because that rarely happens. I must set that time aside as I plan out my day and week. Some days I may only have 15-20 minutes, and that's okay. I also use walks or laundry time as a way to listen to podcasts or sermons.

I have also learned that if I have limited time, my time is best spent by doing actual verse by verse studies of the Bible, taking one book of the Bible at a time. I have grown more in my understanding of the Bible and the Lord by doing Bible studies rather than topical book studies.

To stay on track with my studies and prayer time, I highly recommend having some accountability. I actually love having an accountability partner, someone I can touch base with weekly or bi weekly. God has given us special gifts of friendship in the body of the local church. It is so important, for so many reasons, to utilize these special friendships for our growth in Him.



Kim Roberts

When my kids were small, I would use naptime for devotions. When naps stopped, this turned into a time designated for them to read books and play quietly. To train them I would have them look at books while sitting next to me as I read my bible, starting with five to 10 minutes and extending to 30 minutes. As they became used to this I would have them read books in their room for “room time” and play quietly with a special toy saved for that time.

As they got older, and our days became fuller, I found it necessary to get up before them in the mornings to spend time in the word and pray. But early mornings can be hard. On the days that don't go as planned I don't feel guilty about putting on a TV show for the kids so I can have a quiet moment with the Lord. And in really busy seasons I schedule an appointment in my daily planner when I know I will have time to spend in the word.

With children, we can count on interruptions, sleep deprivation, and constant demands. There can be weary seasons. Trust God's sovereignty in these things. He is making us dependent on Him. During those times when devotions are sparse and the desire to study isn't strong, we can be tempted to think that God is ashamed of us. But as believers there is no condemnation in Christ Jesus. Christ has already made us right with God. He desires relationship and wants us to come to Him no matter how long it's been or how bad we've failed.

I have to continually remind myself that quiet time isn't about me, it's about God. It's not necessary to always read devotionally or study deep and have a profound application so that I feel satisfied I had a successful quiet time. Simply reading the word and asking God to help us understand His story from Genesis to Revelation is equally important and brings Him glory. “*God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him*”- John Piper



Jaime Grasmick

Every mother feels the exhaustion of motherhood. There is quite a demand on our time, our thoughts, our emotions, our whole being. Our three boys are each 18 months apart and I really struggled with my time in the Word, thinking “God knows I’m in a crazy season.” And while He definitely knows all things, I used that as an excuse to be lazy in my discipline of His Word. But the challenges of two toddlers and a newborn brought me to my knees and set things right- I needed to be in the Word! There is no way I can be a God honoring mother without roots digging deep into the rich soil of His Word!

I love getting into the Bible in the morning. It seems the most fruitful time for me and sets the tone for the day. For the past few years, I have been making my way through the Word from beginning to end. I take a passage of Scripture and fill my journal with observations and key thoughts. I sometimes write prayers to the Lord- it could be adoration, confession, thanksgiving, or supplication. There are days that I am able to get through a chapter or two. There are other days that I only look at a few verses and need to meditate on just that through the day. This depends on the genre and the content of the book. Another factor is the going-ons of the day. If I’m in a rush, I will dig into *New Morning Mercies* by Paul David Tripp. I’ve even grabbed this devotional as we’ve run out the door and the kids and I can read it in the car.

My time in God’s Word can look different from day to day. Once a month I go through a Psalm with a friend, so I’ll spend time preparing for that, and during women’s Bible study season, I’ll study a book of the Bible with the church. On days that I’m able to get outside and walk, I love to listen to a sermon on the passage I’m studying, or to one of my favorite podcasts. But I find myself longing to jump back in to studying and journaling as I

make my way through the Word. When I've struggled with being consistent, I've asked friends to keep me accountable. We've snapped pictures and texted them to one another, or just sent a quick text of something that blessed us in God's Word. Leaning on one another has strengthened my resolve to be in the Word, and has encouraged God-fearing friendships.

A few tips that have been helpful for me:

1- When the kids were little I trained them not to get up before 7:00am. This helped me to take charge of the day, and to protect my time in the Word. If I know they may be up by 7:00, I know I need to be up at 6:00 to get an hour with the Lord. This even sets the tone for the day with the kids realizing they need to submit to the order of our day as opposed to getting up whenever they choose and the day revolving around their wants.

2- Light a candle while you're in the Word and teach the kiddos not to interrupt if they see the candle burning. Instead, the kids wake up and see you with the candle on and they know you're in the Word. This means come give Mama a hug, but wait just a bit while I finish the most important part of my day. The kids learn to respect this time, and you don't have to say a word.

Helpful Books We've Read

Glory in the Ordinary by Courtney Reissig

Instructing a Child's Heart by Tedd Tripp

Loving the Little Years by Rachel Jancovick

Missional Motherhood by Gloria Furman

Parenting by Paul David Tripp

Sacred Parenting by Gary Thomas

Shepherding a Child's Heart by Tedd Tripp

Treasuring Christ When Your Hands Are Full by Gloria Furman



PARENTING - Spring 2022

Copyright © 2022 by Grace Church of Rancho Cucamonga

 INCREMENTAL
REVIVAL | Journal
a resource of grace church of rancho cucamonga