• • RACTICAL W T O • **EACH YOUR CHILDREN ABOUT** • • • • •

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Let your children SEE your faith.

Life is not easy. As a matter of fact, the Bible tells us that in this life we WILL have trouble. So, we don't need to pretend like we have it all together in front of our kids. They need to see real faith in God lived out in our everyday lives. When we lose our temper, when we are worried about life, when everything is not going how we thought it would...let your kids SEE you go to your source of forgiveness, peace, comfort, and joy in prayer. They need to learn by seeing (not just hearing) that Jesus is the only reason we are making it through and He can never be taken away from us or them if they will put their faith in Him too!

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"And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him."

Hebrews 11:6

ACTION STEP

This week find a time to ask your children what is worrying them and then talk to them about something that is/has been worrying you. Right there in that moment talk to them about how we can go to Jesus and ask Him for his help. Then lead them in a prayer to ask God to be your peace and to help you put your trust in Him no matter the outcome.

Apologize when you are wrong & forgive when you are wronged.

Forgiveness is all about reconciliation and restoration of relationship, and it is at the heart of the gospel. The best way for your children to understand forgiveness is to see it modeled in your own life by how you forgive others and are willing to humble yourself to ask forgiveness from others. Being willing to ask your child for forgiveness when you know you have done something to hurt them (talking harshly, disciplined out of anger, etc) is one of the most impactful things you can do to help them understand our need to humble ourselves before God and ask for His forgiveness. And when they see you forgive others that have hurt you in some way, it is extremely impactful for them when faced with the decision as to whether they will forgive others. It's also important not to say "It's ok" when accepting an apology from your children, as they need to understand they have sinned and actually need your forgiveness, just as we have sinned and need God's forgiveness.

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"For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly father will also forgive you."

Matthew 6:14

ACTION STEP

The next time you find your self talking harshly with a spouse or child, or disciplining your child out of anger, take that opportunity to show your child you can recognize when you have done wrong, and with humility, ask them to forgive you.

Pray with your children every day.

As Christians, we believe that prayer is our way to talk directly to God, and that He uses our prayers to change hearts, minds, attitudes and desires, as well as to heal bodies, bring revival, provide resources, and move "mountains" of all kinds in the lives of His children. It is imperative that our children understand the importance of prayer, and know that we as parents are dependent on God in much the same way that they are dependent on us, but even to a larger degree. Praying together also unites the hearts of those who do it, in a way that can only happen supernaturally, as we recognize our equality under Christ as brothers and sisters and come to Him with common requests to see Him work in our lives.



"13 Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked the people, 14 but Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven." 15 And he laid his hands on them and went away."

Matthew 19:13-15

ACTION STEP

Make prayer a part of the day, more than just meals and bed time. Next time you are in the car together or on the way to school, when a need arises, or when something great happens, stop and pray! The more you can make this a daily, minute-by-minute habit in your life, the more your children will start doing it too. Pray together to invite God into every

aspect of your day.

Serve together as a family.

Jesus said that the way to be the greatest in His Kingdom was to become the least. He demonstrated His leadership and authority over His disciples by getting on the floor and washing their feet. Serving others is one of the best ways to show that you truly are a disciple of Christ. And when your children see you serving and the joy that comes from it, they learn from an early age that it is much more blessed to give than to receive. But it is also important to note that serving shouldn't be an event that we go and do every once in a while...it should be a mindset and mentality...a lifestyle. When children see their parents serving each other and finding their joy in the joy of others, it models to them what a surrendered life of obedience truly looks like before God.

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"Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

Matthew 18:4

ACTION STEP

See a need, fill a need. Volunteer to feed the homeless, do yard work for an elderly neighbor, help someone out even in a little way like holding the door open for people at the store. Any act of service, followed by some explanation of why it is better to give (serve) than it is to receive, will seal this mindset in the hearts of your children for years and years to come.

Find a good children's Bible and read it often.

The Bible is the most amazing book that has ever been written in the history of our world, because it comes directly from our Creator. Many people struggle to read the Bible because they don't understand it or because they think it's boring, irrelevant or complicated. Imagine how a child would feel when trying to approach the Bible by themselves. Having a parent read it to them in language they can understand and with illustrations that bring the Bible to life will help them in understanding the gospel at their level.

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"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 6:7

ACTION STEP

Find a children's Bible that is appropriate for your child's age or download the free children's Bible app and read it/play it together and talk about what you learn. We recommend starting and ending your childs day with stories from God's word. Take every opportunity you can to relate the story to something going on in their own life.

Spend time doing activities with your children that they enjoy.

In today's world, it's easy to allow technology to control/ overwhelm your time as well as the time of your children. It takes intentionality to put the phone/tablet down and/or turn off the tv and actually spend time doing activities together with your children that show them you don't just care about their physical well-being, but about their mental, emotional and spiritual well-being as well. Nothing shows love, care and concern for a child like time spent with them doing things they enjoy. A solid relationship with your child is critical in teaching them about Jesus. Especially as your child gets older, your relationship with them (good or bad) will be the heaviest weight on their decision to listen to you and the Godly directions/instruction you give them for their lives.

"For I will speak to you in a parable.

I will teach you hidden lessons from our past— stories we have heard and known, stories our ancestors handed down to us. We will not hide these truths from our children; we will tell the next generation about the glorious deeds of the Lord, about his power and his mighty wonders."

Psalm 78:2-4

ACTION STEP

Set aside one night a week where all phones/technology are put away and you spend time doing activities that your child(ren) enjoy, completely uninterupted. When things get tough in life they will remember those times that you spent with them. It is worth all the sacrifice in the end!

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Spend time daily on your own with the Lord.

To invest in your child means to pour into them. But pouring yourself out means you will soon be empty if you aren't being poured into. While there are many ways to pour into yourself, there is no better way than to allow the Lord Himself to pour into you. This is done best by having time alone with Him in prayer and worship, as well as reading His Word and meditating on it. Jesus is the Bread and Living Water that our souls and spirits live on, and His Spirit is our power that allows us to walk in faith, which is the only way we can please our Heavenly Father. If we try to do the right things in our own power, Romans 8 says that is walking in the flesh and will only bring destruction. But Romans 8 also says walking by faith in the power of the Spirit will bring life. We can't do that apart from walking in relationship with the Lord, which means spending time with Him consistently.

"1 As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. 2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?"

Psalm 42:1-2

ACTION STEP

If you aren't already in the habit of spending time with the Lord daily (we have all been there in different seasons of life), start today by setting aside just 5 minutes in the morning to read His word and thank Him for everything He has provided for you. Starting your day this way will go a long way in helping you to be intentional about sharing your faith with your children.

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Talk about Jesus often with your kids.

When you're spending time with the Lord consistently and your relationship with Him is fresh and growing, you can't help but want to talk about Him, and there's no better people on the planet to talk to about Him than your own children. When your children hear about how much you love the Lord and how much you depend on Him for your daily joy and strength, they will learn to love Him and depend on Him as well. While the Bible is clear that each person must have their own relationship with the Lord through saving faith, it is also clear that things of God...His ways, His character, His Word, etc... are to be passed down by the parents to the children so as to shepherd their hearts towards desiring to know and love Him.

"Parents, do not anger your children, but rear them in the discipline and in the teaching of Our Lord."

Ephesians 6:4

ACTION STEP

If you have young kids, point out all the things that God has made (The sky, the grass, the birds, the moon). Everything they see was created by God and it makes it easy to continually be talking about God and His provision in our lives. Even if they are really young you can still have these conversations because even adults need reminding that everything we have and everything we see is God's creation and was created to bring Him glory!

Remind them often, "I love you so much, and God loves you, too".

Throughout the years of raising children, there will be a multitude of circumstances that call for discipline, correction and rebuke, with the opportunity to include reaffirmation of your love for the child you are having to correct/discipline/ rebuke. But equally important to reaffirmation is random, spontaneous affirmation of your love. Children have a great need for acceptance and approval from their parents and need verbal affirmation continually that you love them, just like you need to be constantly reminded of our Heavenly Father's love for you. As the authority and the role model, you set the tone in the home and determine what type of relationship you will have with your children.

"14. For this reason I kneel before the Father, 15. from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. 16. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17. so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18. may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, 19. and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all

the fullness of God." Ephesians 3:14-19

ACTION STEP

Life can get busy and if we aren't careful we can go all day (maybe even longer) without telling our kids how much we really love them. Make it a goal (if you haven't already) to tell your children that you love them and that God loves them every single day. No matter what they have done or will do, your love and God's love for them does not change!

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Tailor your teaching to your child's personality.

It's no secret that, just like snowflakes, there are no two people who are the same...think the same way, feel the same way, hear the same way or learn the same way. Each individual and each child has a unique way of processing information. Knowing how each of your children think, feel and learn is key to actually being able to help them understand the gospel and other things of God.

"Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it."

Proverbs 22:6

ACTION STEP

This one can take years to figure out and apply, but make it your life mission to find out how your children learn the best. Some children learn through stories, some learn through physical activity, some learn from visuals. Whatever it is that they are interested in, find a way to use it to teach them about how much Jesus loves them. This week, try and relate something your child loves to do/watch/play/read to the Gospel message.

Additional Resources

Shepherding a Child's Heart

GO TO RESOURCE

5 Love Languages Of Children: The Secret To Loving Children Effectively

GO TO RESOURCE

The Gospel For 11 Year Olds Plus

GO TO RESOURCE

Three Essentials For Christian Parenting

GO TO RESOURCE

Sharing The Gospel With Children

GO TO RESOURCE

How To Share The Gospel With Your Kids

GO TO RESOURCE