

A photograph showing the silhouettes of three people sitting on a rocky ledge, looking out over a vast landscape of mountains at sunset. The sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and blue. The people are in the foreground, and the mountains stretch into the distance.

Families Matter... Growing God-Connected Kids

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Families matter – we have an amazing responsibility!

- ▶ Families are more effective than churches in transmitting healthy faith to the next generation.
- ▶ The everyday opportunities for spiritual interaction with our children have a much greater impact on them than what happens in our local schools or churches.
- ▶ Parents are the ones that God has designated to pass on their faith to their children. They are supported and encouraged by their local churches and communities.



God's Method of Family Faith

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children...

God's Method of Family Faith

...Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates. Deut. 6:4-9 NIV



The Greatest commandment

“‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” Matt. 22:37-40 NIV

Greatest Commandment

Heart

loving relationships
emotions

Soul

spiritual relationship
faith, prayer,
forgiveness, salvation

Mind

wondering, knowing,
understanding,
reflecting, creativity

Strength

active response –
making and doing

Loving others

because God
loves them

Loving ourselves

because God
loves us



Reflecting on God's method

- ▶ How do we, as parents of Gen Zs and Gen Alphas, make the best use of our everyday "talking, walking, sitting, and rising" opportunities to nurture their connection with God?
- ▶ How do we help them to love the Lord their God with all their heart and mind and soul and strength?
- ▶ What can we do to nurture their relationships with Him, so that we help them to fall in love with Him forever?



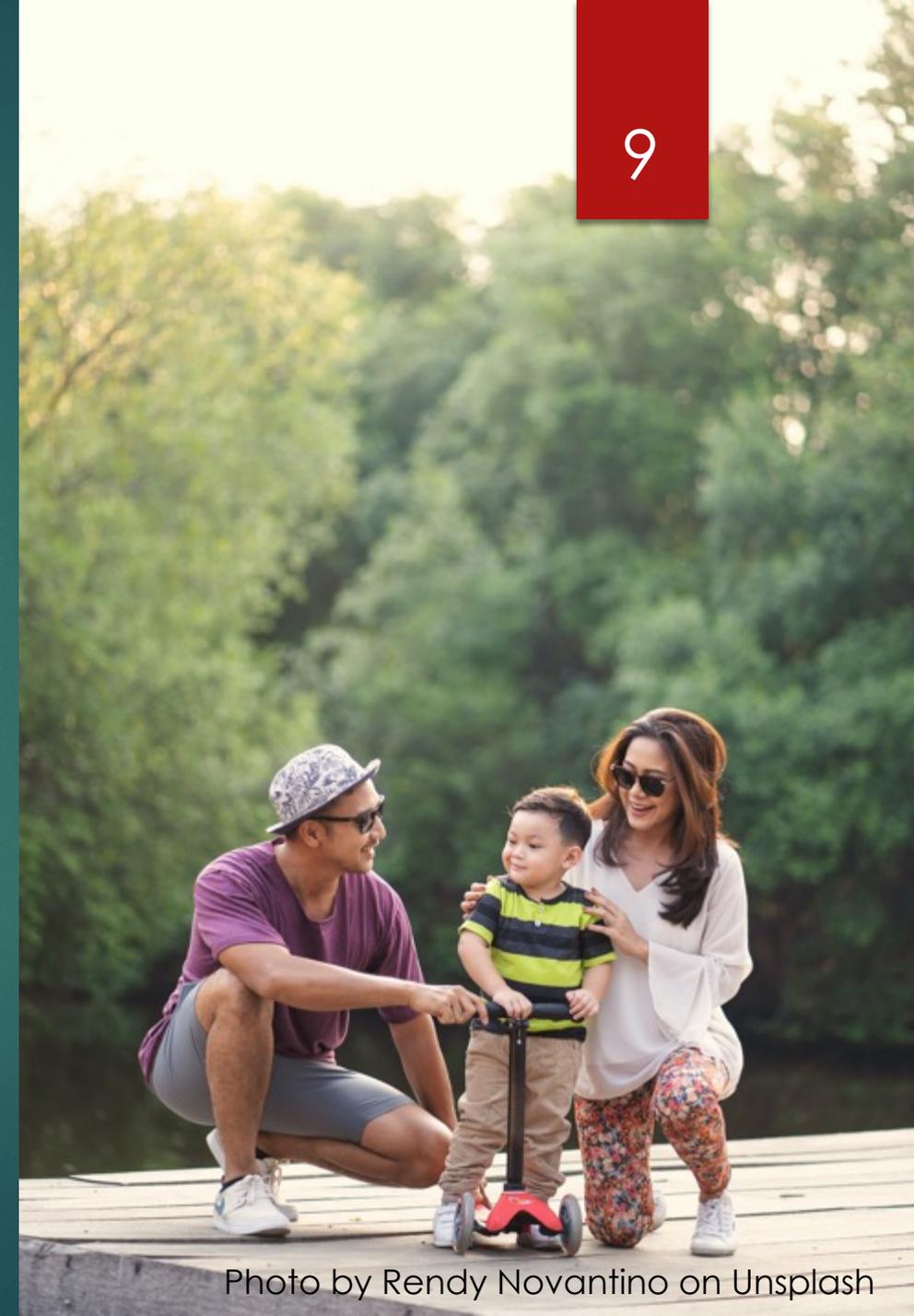
It starts with us...

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- ▶ We need to grow in our relationship with God.
- ▶ The more we experience God's love and grace, the more we'll share His love and grace with our children.
- ▶ Through being parented, and becoming parents, we learn about God's love for us.

Spiritually nurturing parents:

- ▶ Have a growing and learning relationship with Jesus
- ▶ Build close, encouraging and supportive relationships with their children
- ▶ Show love, patience and forgiveness to each other
- ▶ Nurture their child's faith according to the child's needs, interests, understanding and gifts, etc.
- ▶ Live out positive Christian values





Everyday moments

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- ▶ Often the best times to teach our children about God are in the spontaneous teachable moments of our lives.
- ▶ Ask the Holy Spirit to make you aware of these special opportunities.
- ▶ Look for God in everyday stories.
- ▶ Explore nature and be filled with wonder at God's creation.

Making sense of life and faith

- ▶ Help children to see that the “Big Picture of Everything” is that God is love and His love is the purest and most perfect love in the universe.
- ▶ Make them aware that God is looking for the best possible ways to show us His love, every single moment of every single day.

Making sense of life and faith

- ▶ Discuss the spiritual aspects of life and faith with your children so that your faith perspective makes sense to them.
- ▶ Look for God at work in your lives. Regularly ask the question: “Where did you see God today?”
- ▶ This will help them become more aware of God’s presence around them, and the way in which He works.



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Living transparently

Children need to see us having a real and imperfect relationship with God so they can see how it works. They need to see and hear us:

- ▶ Praying about our every day lives
- ▶ Listening for God's guidance
- ▶ Exploring our Bible in creative ways
- ▶ Looking for God's wonder around us
- ▶ Thanking God for His many gifts
- ▶ Using our gifts to strengthen our local church
- ▶ Joyfully giving back to God and sharing with others
- ▶ Taking care of God's creation, etc.

Modelling an apology

We need to ask our kids for forgiveness when we mess up and hurt them. We need to model a good process of apology, asking for forgiveness, repairing well and forgiving well. Here is one model:

- ▶ I am sorry
- ▶ What I did was wrong
- ▶ What I did hurt you, and God felt that hurt with you
- ▶ I love you and I don't want to hurt you that way again
- ▶ Next time I want to do ... instead
- ▶ Please forgive me when you are ready
- ▶ What can I do now to help you feel better?



Helping kids repair after hurt

- ▶ **When we have hurt our children** – we need to use a humble, honest and loving process of apology and forgiveness.
- ▶ We need to comfort the pain that we have caused them.
- ▶ We need to support their healing.
- ▶ **When our children have hurt others** – we need to show them how to repair the relationship.
- ▶ They need to listen to the pain of the person they hurt, reflect on what happened, learn from the situation, make a sincere apology and do acts of restorative kindness.





Correcting distortions

- ▶ **Distant Father** – busy working in a distant place and not really interested in connecting with His children
- ▶ **Disappointed teacher** – always writing on their report – “Could do better”
- ▶ **Father Christmas** – a big, jolly person who gives us what we ask for, if we’re really good
- ▶ **Policeman on the corner** – looking out for everything we might do wrong
- ▶ **Grumpy old man** – angry, irritable and easily offended

Adjusting the lens

- ▶ We need to check whether we have any misconceptions and distorted ideas that prevent us from helping our children to have a clearer picture of a totally loving and gracious God.
- ▶ Children need to develop a healthy understanding of who God is, and His loving relationship with all His children in the world.



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Adjusting the lens

- ▶ Listen to them – what are they already thinking and saying about God and faith?
- ▶ Ask them to describe God, or to draw Him and write some of His character traits around the picture. This can show you where their lens needs adjusting.
- ▶ If they have a picture that needs adjusting, tweak it gently. Share your picture, read Psalm 103, the story of the prodigal son and similar passages.



The Story of the Prodigal Son - Luke 15:11-31

Ask:

- ▶ Who are really the sons in the story?
- ▶ Who is really the Father in the story?
- ▶ What do you like best about the story?
- ▶ What is the most important message in the story for you today?
- ▶ Which part of the story is most about you?
- ▶ What have you learnt about God's love from the story?
- ▶ How do you want to respond to the story? (Create, write, reflect, discuss, etc.)
- ▶ (Questions inspired by the Godly Play approach to the Bible)



Chatting with God

- ▶ The best way they can talk to God is in the way that they would naturally talk to the best father ever!
- ▶ Imagine how they would talk to their dad about their day. Help them to use informal language and talk about what happened, feelings, fears and worries. Ask Him for help.
- ▶ Model talking to God in your everyday family life. Press pause in a challenging situation and tell God your needs out loud in a couple of sentences.
- ▶ God hears our best prayers whatever we say, because He can hear the things we don't have words for yet.

Chat starters:

- ▶ Tell God what frightens you the most.
- ▶ Tell God the things on your worry list and give them to Him.
- ▶ Ask God how He wants to help you with your worries.
- ▶ Tell God what you like doing best.
- ▶ Tell God something that made you laugh today.
- ▶ Tell God what you love most about your family.
- ▶ Ask God what He loves about your family.
- ▶ Tell God about the most beautiful things He made.
- ▶ Ask God what He most enjoys about His creation.
- ▶ Tell God how it feels when you're sad or lonely.
- ▶ Ask God what makes Him sad.
- ▶ Tell God what you like, and don't like, about school.





Listening for God

- ▶ Model how you listen for God's voice and recognize it.
- ▶ Tell your children about the times when God communicates with you by putting a picture in your mind, giving you an idea, speaking to you through a Bible verse, or another person etc.
- ▶ Help them to spot those moments in their life and listen for God.

Responsive parenting

Going with their flow

We need to follow our children's spiritual flow.

They are interested in different things at different times, and they will have different feelings and needs.

We need to pay attention to them and help them to make the best of these flowing interests and passions.

What are their questions about God, the themes in their conversations, the Bible stories they go back to?

Connect with their emotions: help them to find God in the ups and downs of life – Psalm 23?

Responsive parenting

Going with their flow

We need to follow our children's flow, not stem it.

Maybe they want to lead worship at home, help someone, pause and pray, light a candle, etc... Follow their promptings.

Purple flower story.

Maybe they have a desire to help at church: music team, audiovisual team, creative arts, tidying up, helping with lunches and drinks, etc.

Maybe they are passionate about a cause or a mission: caring for others, refugees, homeless, social justice, caring for the planet, etc.

Hopes and dreams for their future lives together with God.

Bedtime moments

- ▶ What do you most want to thank God for today?
- ▶ Where did you see Jesus today?
- ▶ What made you most sad/happy today?
- ▶ What character strengths did you practice today?
- ▶ I saw you making this good choice today...
- ▶ I was proud of you today when you...and I think God was too!



The big questions

- ▶ Am I growing closer to God and letting my child witness my faith?
- ▶ Is my child growing closer to God and loving Him more?
- ▶ What can I do to help myself and my child grow closer to God together?

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