

Teach Your Children Well

We'd like to bless and encourage parents who are raising their children today.

We asked those who have raised children, those who are doing it now and those who have their own childhoods to remember, to be willing to pass on their wisdom.

It's in the spirit of God's desire for children to be nurtured like this:

"Impress these commandments on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk on the road..."

Deuteronomy 6:7

We hope that the experiences of others will be a rich resource for your family.

Greg, Sam & David



What I have learnt that I would like to pass on to other parents...

Tell your children the story of how God has had mercy on you. Let them see the weaknesses that God has helped you with.

We found that having good mentors outside the family was really good for our children. They also had a fantastic youth group and very supportive peer friends.

We are inspired by our young families today – they seem to be able to share well with their children in all manner of areas.

I remember singing songs to my children when they were young: 'Jesus Loves the Little Children' and 'Jesus Loves Me This I Know' – sowing the seed of God's love for them!

Really listen to your children – talk to them even if they don't offer a response – look for the positives at all times, even when family life stresses you out and lastly, PRAY – NEVER UNDERESTIMATE THIS!

To let my journey with God be evident to my children – the ups and downs, struggles and triumphs. This is faith grounded in day to day realities, displaying the great treasure in the clay pot!

Bringing our children to church every Sunday – against all the pressures of sport, rest etc. – has not always been easy but has borne witness to the supremacy of God. Kids are not the most important thing – God is! It's good for our kids to know this.

- *Talk* with your children as much as possible
- *Listen* attentively and often
- Be very *patient* and *loving*

“Teach Your Children Well” – it’s a command from God that brings rich blessings. There are 15 references in the bible about training children in the ways of the Lord – 10 are laid squarely on the father of the home – go to it, fathers, in the power of the Spirit.

To teach and show them the ‘unconditional love of God’ – to love them for who and what they are, not for what or who you want them to be.

Sunday was a great day for our family: no ‘ordinary’ work for us of any kind: school, business or house! Church, relax and get ready for a fresh start of the work week on Monday.

Each of the young people had a go at breaking the biblical and family ‘rule’, but soon realised that the day for God’s rest was a wonderful relief in their busy lives: “Yea, it’s Sunday – no work!”

Talk and pray regularly with and for your children – do not be put off by circumstances or reactions. Spend time with children – make sure there is one-to-one time – get involved in their activities, ie. do something with them as well as talking (do not let work or daily activities crowd out the one-to-one relationship. Going camping or some such one-to-one – hiking, fishing etc, is very valuable).

Knowing what I know now:

- I would from the day of my children’s birth prayed each day *protection* over them from the powers of darkness
- I would have spent *much more time* talking to them and spending time reading and *filling their minds* with God’s word
- In spite of all the interruptions, persevere in *praying together* until it becomes a natural thing for them to talk to Jesus

- Model Christian life
 - “Do as I do, not just what I say”
 - Pray together, especially if sick – we saw miracles happen and that grew faith in the boys and me
 - Youth Group is paramount in being with a peer group of believers
 - Always show LOVE and AFFECTION even when you are cross
 - ALWAYS COMMUNICATE
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- Time is precious. We have learnt and practised to always have meals together. No TV, no distractions. We have spent time enjoying the meal, hearing others’ stories of the day, praying for concerns and sharing each others’ joy
 - Sunday has been a first priority – to go to church and avoid sporting/ social/convenient options which may detract from its importance to us and our family
 - To pray with our children each night over the events, joys, sadnesses, concerns for others, friends, family of the day
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Always love the person. You may not like what they have done or said, but you need to let them know that you will always love them.

To actually say the words “I love you”. My daughters knew of the love my husband and I had for them, but when I actually said the above, I received a beautiful response from each of them individually. And it is beautiful when your grandchildren know of your love for them and in return they spontaneously tell you “that they love you too”

- To have spent more time as a family, listening to one another
- Family discussions concerning community as well as Christian events
- Praying as a family (small children participating)
- Spending more times with other Christian families
- More fun times and more laughter

Not to neglect following up what you have promised you will do. It is easy to procrastinate and then lots of other things crowd in and stop you from fulfilling your promise.

A promise that has encouraged me at different times from Isaiah 40:11 “He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young.” The Lord cares for our children and also cares for a mother’s needs – he leads us *gently*.

At his baptism, God spoke to Jesus and said: “This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased.” He speaks these words to us in our baptism – being baptised into Christ. We are joined to him and receive all the blessings etc. of Christ.

- Love and pray for your children
 - Share around the meal table
 - Give children responsibilities
 - Teach them the scriptures and pray with them
 - Apologise when you have been wrong
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It is so easy to let the busyness of life with young kids get in the way of your relationship with God but also your relationship as husband and wife. We have tried to demonstrate the importance of our relationship with each other to our kids by:

- Greeting each other first before the kids when we come back home from work; ensuring that the kids see us having time together *whilst they are around* (eg. 15 mins couch time after work); affirming each other in front of the kids

In terms of passing on faith, use every opportunity at all times of the day. Talk with each other in the car, walking to school etc. Bring God into the mundane and the ordinary - communicate the omni-presence of God and encourage kids that he wants to be continually engaging with us, not just at set times of the day or the week (important though these times are).

Make time to be together:

- For an outing – have a picnic day in the National Park, count the koalas, play tennis, see the wildflowers
- Wash the dishes with each of your children; it is good ‘chat time’
- Eat your meals together with the TV turned off

Be prepared to stop and listen when they want to talk with you

Encourage politeness

We found that using David Watson’s book “Through the Year with Jesus” at the end of breakfast time each morning was an excellent way for all the family to come together – much harder at other times. We were able to do this while the children were all at school or university and before too many other ‘extra-curricular’ activities made such a gathering more difficult. There was a short scriptures followed by an explanation and application of it. We then went around the family with each member saying a prayer. After a time this became an important start for each day (until they all eventually ‘flew the nest’) and something we all looked for.

Ephesians 4:26 says “do not let the sun go down on your anger”. With our two girls there often were arguments and I started a CDC, a ‘closed door chat’ where we sat on the bed and talked through the problem and then prayed about it. In most situations the children went to sleep in peace, not in anger. This continued well into their teen years.

- “Do unto my child as I would have him do unto me”
- Talk with, not talk to
- Listen to, not just hear
- Love unconditionally: it will be returned fully
- Hug (and tickle) often
- Teach, but recognise that he also knows much
- Tell your child you love them regularly

Keeping Sunday a restful family day. After hearing a sermon many years ago on this we decided to give it a try and have found it invaluable. We try hard to guard our Sundays, and try not to do any housework, homework or preparation for work on Sunday. Instead we come to church and then go home and put our feet up. Usually we go out for some exercise together and go walking in the park, bike riding or down to the beach (our 3 favourites!). They are fun in any weather and we have a good chance to chat together and enjoy each others' company. Our kids enjoy it as much as we do, and will complain if we slip back into our 'bad old ways'.

From our fridge: 'If you want your children to talk to you, sit down and look comfortable!'

My parents were fantastic at showing us a relationship with God. We didn't regularly do bible studies etc. (tried to on and off) but we saw their relationship with God. I remember the following particularly:

- They often prayed with others. If we had a problem (large or small) they would naturally pray with us. Others would come to our house and mum or dad would pray with them. We often saw dad praying and reading the bible in the morning in the lounge.
- Dad sang hymns and choruses all the time – especially in the car. Sometimes we'd all join in.
- We saw them 'reaching out' to the community and helping at church and were involved.

With my mother I learnt a bible verse every month – for years. Sat with her and my bible – underlined it, she explained it to me and I learnt it. Many years later on, in times of trouble, I had the knowledge and reassurance of God's love, promises and hope.

- Listen first with your mouth shut
- Attention seeking = connection seeking

We often find that it is through our relationships with our children rather than “programs developed for our children” that the time with God (whether it be teaching, praying or reading Scripture) becomes positive.

There is also appears to be a link. Buying a devotional book does little compared to the parent who prepares a devotion and leads the devotion. The child sees and feels the parent’s passion and what is important to the parent. Perhaps they see that even in the ordinary person it is in God that our life becomes rich and great.

These are the things that appear to work for us:

- Spending 5-10 minutes with children when they hop into bed (most days). This is a great opportunity to build relationships, talk about the day, tell them we love them, listen as well as share our days experiences or family history. And approx twice a week - read Scripture and get them to read Scripture too (It’s one on one time rather than in front of siblings, we have found that where siblings are involved, too often issues can occur.)
- At the milestone birthdays (10, 13, 16, etc) a ritual present is given that is linked to the truth about Jesus, or who they are in Christ, or who our neighbour is (eg. a ‘good torch’ engraved with their name and a bible verse about Jesus being the light of life). At 13 or 15, letters are also requested from the child’s good adult friends and good mentor type older people in their lives. Often the people who love them will write about that which they most love. God often becomes a big topic.
- When our children see us involved in Church, we believe they see that which is really important to us. If they see that mum and dad are people that have the light of life, we believe they will be led to the light of life also.
- Our family enjoys movies together (at home). After the movie, discussion regularly occurs (by design) regarding the movie, and often we as parents use the movie to highlight something about: life, loving, living - which God has created and is good. Often movies that aren’t necessarily Christian? have a theme related to life or love etc. Even stories where the hero saves themselves or others can be used to talk about the work of Jesus.