

Ministry

Involve children in “acts of kindness,” those activities that show you care for people. Bake cookies for a neighbor; rake leaves for homebound person; make a card for a loved one who lives away. You will think of many, many more “acts of kindness.”

DO talk with your child about “why” you’re doing these “acts of kindness”—because Jesus taught us to help others; Jesus showed us by his actions that we are to help; when we help someone, we are helping God; this is how a Christian relates to another person.

Model

Children learn by modeling the behavior of those whom they value, esteem, i.e. their parents, grandparents, leaders at school or church. May we be worthy of setting the example as we help children grow in their love for God and their desires to become Christ-followers.

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Kids,
Parents,
& Faith

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We hear often “parents are the child’s first teachers.” We hear “the church aids the parents in the spiritual growth of their children; the church isn’t to assume responsibility for the spiritual growth of children.”

We have read Deuteronomy 6:4-9: “the commandments I give you today must be in your hearts. Make sure your children learn them. Talk about them when you are at home. Talk about them when you walk along the road. Speak about them when you go to bed. And speak about them when you get up.” (NIRV).

Just how do parents help their children develop spiritually? First, judging from the Deuteronomy passage, faith development is a normal, natural part of life. Secondly, parents must be intentional about “God talk” with their children.

Bible Studies

One easy way to insure that you are helping your child learn of God and God’s ways is to read Bible stories to your child daily. Select a Bible storybook that has age appropriate Bible stories. The stories should be Biblically accurate (you may want to read the account in the Bible!); the Bible doesn’t give us the names (or number) of Wise Men who met the child Jesus.

Is the story too long for the age of the child? Are the pictures of Bible people realistic? Avoid Bible storybooks that have “cartoonish” Bible people. (Because the preschooler has difficulty separating fact (the Bible) from make-believe (cartoons), might not the preschooler think the Bible people are make-believe if they look like the people in the cartoons?)

Music

Use Christian music often in your home. Again, select music that is appropriate for the age. Much of what is marketed for preschoolers is more appropriate for grade schoolers. Consider the following in selecting music to use with children:

- 1) is the language used understandable by preschoolers or young children? Is the language too symbolic (peace like a river, joy like an ocean)?
- 2) Are the words sung too fast for preschoolers to grasp?
- 3) Are there too many words? Is the song too long to hold child’s attention?

Consider asking your preschooler’s Bible study leader (Sunday School) to order you a copy of the quarterly CD or cassette tape when she orders the next quarter’s literature. This will ensure that the music is more likely to be age appropriate.

Prayer

I remember having heard a sermon, several years ago, in which the minister said that if children are to grow up to be “pray-ers,” they must see and hear their parents at prayer. How is prayer used in your home? Make prayer a spontaneous part of your daily life. As you observe a beautiful sunset, “thank you, God, for the fantastic sunset. These colors are absolutely gorgeous.” Or at the first snowfall, “thank you, God, for the beautiful snow; we will enjoy playing in it.” As you depart your house, “Dear God, please keep our house safe;” on your return, “thank you, God, for the warmth of this house.”

Prayer at mealtime is a “given.” For preschoolers, we say “thank you, God, for the macaroni and cheese, the green beans and milk.” For grade schoolers, prayer might be more “advanced” —“thank you, God, for this food and for my mother (or father) who prepared it because she loves us.” You might sing your mealtime prayer “Praise God from whom all blessings flow; praise Him all creatures here below; praise Him above ye heavenly host; praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.” And DO pray at bedtime. Prayer at bedtime adds security and hope to your child’s life...security in that parents (and God) are watching over him; hope that life will continue with the new day. Pray for loved ones, for pets, for friends. With grade schoolers learn to ask God for forgiveness. Remember, prayer is talking to and with God. Children should pray in their own language and style; formalized prayers come later.