

Family Time with God – 2

Try our quick and easy family devotions for all ages

Family devotions don't have to be formal sit-down events. Use these quick ideas to connect with your kids during meals, in the car, or at bedtime. The more involved "Family Night" ideas will help you create memorable evenings (or afternoons) with the whole crew. We've also added some activities just for toddlers so that even your youngest children will discover that anytime is a great time to learn about God.

Bedtime Blessings - A Letter to a Friend Ages 3 and up

You'll need a pencil or crayons, and a piece of paper. Tell your child that you're going to help him write a letter to God. Ask your child to tell God about his day or about something that's going on in his life. If your child doesn't know how to write, let him dictate the letter to you or draw a picture instead. Put the letter in an envelope and tuck it away someplace safe. In a few weeks, pull the letter out and look at it again. Talk with your child about ways God has helped him since he wrote the letter.

Prayer: Dear God, thank you for caring about our lives and for being with us every day. Amen.

No Worries - Ages 2 and up

Find a fresh flower and bring it with you when you tuck your child in. Ask your child what he thinks about the flower. Is it pretty? Does it smell good? Tell your child that flowers tell us something about God, too. Read Matthew 6:28-30 and explain to your child that just as God takes care of the flowers, he takes even better care of his children. Remind your child that whenever he gets worried, he can think about the flowers and think about all the ways God takes care of him, too.

Prayer: Dear God, thank you for flowers. Help us remember that you will take care of all our needs. Amen.

Family Night Fun - Hearts of Clay - Ages 3 and up

Point: God wants us to be moldable.

Gather: Supplies for making play dough (flour, alum [available in the baking section of the grocery store], salad oil, salt, boiling water), and a Bible.

Go: Make two batches of play dough with the family. For the first batch, place 2 cups of flour, 2 tablespoons of alum, 3 tablespoons of salad oil, and 1 cup of salt into a mixing bowl, and mix thoroughly. Add 1 cup of boiling water to the dry ingredients. Immediately begin mixing a second batch, but add an extra cup of flour to the dry mix. Keep the two batches separate as your family plays with the dough.

Ask: What did you notice about these two types of dough? Which dough would you prefer to work with?

Share: Imagine that you're play dough. Which kind do you think God would want you to be? What are some things that we do that make us hard to work with?

Read: Hebrews 3:7-11 aloud. If we have hard hearts, we will be just like that dry clay; our lives will fall apart and God will be sad about our choices. But if we have moldable, teachable hearts, we can learn to live the way God wants us to.

Remember: If we want to be usable, we must be teachable.

Pray: Dear God, help us to keep our hearts soft so that we can learn how to follow you. Amen.

Clean Up Day - Ages 3 and up

Point: God can clean a guilty conscience.

Gather: Small dish of bleach, a dark piece of material, and a Bible.

Go: Hold up the dark piece of material. Explain that when we do something we know is wrong, we feel guilty. Guilt makes our hearts feel dark, like the piece of dark material. Place the material in the bleach and set it aside.

Ask: Why do we feel guilty about some of the things we do? What can guilty feelings teach us?

Read: 1 John 1:9 aloud. What does the Bible say we can do about our guilt? What does God do with our guilt and our sin?

Share: Remove the material from the bleach. Explain that we can make material white by soaking it in bleach. We get our hearts clean by telling God what we've done wrong, asking for forgiveness, and accepting his grace and mercy. Talk about ways our conscience, the Holy Spirit, can help us make choices that help keep our hearts clean.

Remember: I have a conscience that no one can see. The more I listen, the happier I'll be.

Pray: Dear God, thank you for taking away our sin and making our hearts clean. Help us to make the choices you want us to make. Amen.

Mealtimes Moments - Big Trouble - All ages

Prayer: Dear God, thank you for looking after us even in times of trouble. Amen.

Main Course: Prepare your family's favorite dish, but leave out one key ingredient. When they start to grumble, talk together about the choices you have for dealing with the problem (complaining, making the best of the meal, eating something else). Then read John 16:33.

Table Talk: Jesus says things in life won't always go our way. How does he want us to deal with the troubles we face?

How can we help our friends when they face difficult times?

What does Jesus mean when he says he has overcome the world?

Sweeter Than Honey - All ages

Prayer: Dear God, thank you for your sweet words of love and wisdom. Amen.

Main Course: Take a jar of honey and have each family member dip in a spoon and taste a small amount.

How does it taste? What do we use honey for? Now read Psalm 119:103.

Table Talk: How is reading God's Word like eating honey?

How can it be sweet? (For example, it tells us of God's love.)

What are some ways the things we say and do can be like honey to the people around us?

Joy Ride - Book List - Ages 6 and up

Think of a book in the Bible, then give your children one clue at a time until they guess the correct book. For example, you might say, "I'm thinking of a book in the Bible that is written as a letter. It's in the New Testament. It starts with the letter J. It comes after the book of Hebrews." Whoever guesses "James" wins. The winner gets to choose the next book.

Twenty Questions - Ages 4 and up

Think of a person, place, thing, or object from the Bible. The other family members get to ask no more than 20 yes or no questions to figure out what you are thinking of. Let's say you think of a dove. The other players ask questions like: "Is it living?" "Is it bigger than a car?" "Do we have one?" The person who guesses the right answer gets the next turn.

Heritage Builders, a ministry of Focus on the Family, is dedicated to training and equipping parents to pass on a spiritual heritage to their children.
For more information or to request resources visit: www.heritagebuilders.com

Copyright © 2002 by the author or Christianity Today International/Christian Parenting Today magazine.

This article first appeared in Fall 2002, Vol. 15, No. 1, Page 20 issue of Christian Parenting Today. Used by permission of Christianity Today International, Carol Stream, IL 60188.

