

CHOOSING YOUR FAMILY'S FOCUS

Leading your kids to love Jesus takes time and an intentional focus. While it may feel intimidating and you may not feel prepared, you can do it. Keep things simple and start by choosing your FOCUS.

F - First Seek Him

Parents must keep their own spiritual lives on track. Of course, I do not mean they live a perfect life because that is not realistic. No one can live a perfect life, but we as parents must strive for Christlikeness. We can exercise spiritual disciplines in order to continue to breathe life into our own discipleship. We must keep alert and alive spiritually so we can be attuned to what God is teaching us so we can pass it on to our children. We daily need to be reading the Word and praying.

Strengthening our spiritual lives enables us to effectively disciple our kids. Look to the example of Jesus in how He modeled love, leadership, and service in every way perfectly. (1 John 2:6)

33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. MATTHEW 6:33

O - Opportunities Come Knocking

Listen for them! Parents, there are opportunities all around you that can serve to impact your child's spiritual life if you will recognize and capitalize on them.

Unfortunately, our calendars are so filled up with activities that sometimes we do not allow time for the teachable moments that God has placed before us. God inserts people and situations in our paths daily for His purposes if only we are not too busy to see them. It may be the time we are driving our kids to school. We can sing songs from worship services or share a passage of scripture we read that morning. When school is finished and the kids are in the car or at home, we can ask about school. There are times that children really want to share something, but they remain silent until they are "Quizzed". Some opportunities come once a year. We can celebrate spiritual markers such as salvation, baptism, a call to ministry, a wedding, and more with our children. Make your family's spiritual milestones occasions to celebrate and have fun. Are you looking at everyone around you and finding ways you can share the gospel with them? Your kids are watching. Who are they going to see you share Jesus with? Our children are listening to what we say and watching what we do with all the people God brings in our lives.

16 making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. EPHESIANS 5:16

C - Color Outside the Lines

Spiritual growth does not have to occur while reading your Bible with your children. Think creatively regarding ways to shape your kid's spiritual lives. If you are eating at a restaurant, strike up a conversation with your server, invite them to church, or share the gospel with them. Take a bike ride with your children. Talk with them about God's creation, the fall, sin and Jesus. It is all right there. Use the backyard playtime as an outreach. We share with our neighbors while playing together. Host a block party for your street or neighborhood in order to meet your neighbors. If you have new neighbors, bake them some brownies and take them to their house, introduce yourself, and invite to join you at church.

U - Understand that Your Children do not Always Understand Things of God

Your children are on a spiritual journey. They are in different stages along the way based on their age, experience, and exposure to the gospel. Allow your children the freedom to ask you questions. One time our oldest daughter came home from elementary school and asked us what a certain word meant that she had heard that day. It was a curse word. We did not act shocked. We knew she did not understand the meaning of the word. She had just heard it at school and genuinely wanted to know why a friend would say it. It was a great teachable moment about how we can honor Christ with our lips and lifestyle. Talk with your children about money and how you give because God wants us to be good stewards of His possessions. Encourage your kids in their baby steps of faith no matter what they look like (or sound like).

S - Simple Teaching and Activities are Important

Parents may think they have to get the best Bible available by app or hard copy to make a big spiritual difference. Well, this does not have to be the case. You can do a lot of simple acts to ensure that your children are heading in the right direction spiritually. You can get up, eat breakfast with your kids, and do a short devotion with them before they leave for school. If your kids are in a group at Parkway, ask them what they talked about in group this week or look online for the kids lessons for the week. There are great family discussion questions given each week. When your kids bring home coloring pages from their group, take time to discuss the biblical truth contained in it. Develop the habit of praying at mealtime and give kids the opportunity to pray with you. When you make their lunch, put a verse of Scripture on a piece of paper and insert it into their lunchbox. At bedtime pray for lost neighbors and friends or family.