



faith PATH

FAMILY TIME

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create intentional moments

In these early years of your child's life, you have an opportunity to establish the pattern of gathering regularly as a family for spiritual growth. Having regularly scheduled family time activities will help your family to cultivate communication, faith formation, and relational intimacy. It is an investment of your time and effort that will pay huge dividends for years to come. Here's how to do it:

WHEN?

For some families this might be a particular night of the week after dinner. For another family it might be after Saturday morning breakfast. Or lunch after church. Decide what works for your unique schedule and then do everything you can to protect that time. You might need to say "no" to some good things to make family time a priority. Whatever we may believe theoretically to be our true priorities as parents, it is our calendar that will show us the reality. We suggest scheduling a family time weekly, but no less than twice per month. We have provided Family Time Stickers for you with this Guide. Show your child where to put these stickers on your family calendar, and then "stick to it!" Setting and keeping a regular schedule will show your child your commitment to your family. Nothing in this world can replace quality time in terms of showing your child that you love them—*nothing!*

THE PLAN

Plan for success by finding resources to help make your family time a great experience. We have listed a few resources in this Guide to get you started. You can find many ideas online as well. As your child gets older, ask him or her if there are specific topics they would like to discuss. Allow your child to help with the planning of your activities. And don't forget that the Bible is the most important resource of all.

THE FUN

Dante called his great articulation of the Christian faith, "The Divine Comedy." The drama of God's action in history does not end in tragedy and death, but in resurrection and new life. The Gospel is Good News! Children are more likely to embrace your beliefs and values if faith formation isn't overly serious and emotionally heavy. That's why fun time together as a family is a great context for effective faith formation. Be creative by acting out Bible stories together, or doing crafts or object lessons that reinforce biblical themes. Do not be too rigid or stressed while leading family times. It's okay for kids to be silly and it's important to fill your home with laughter.

GETTING STARTED

- **Calendar:** Get your family time onto your calendar. It won't get off the ground if it doesn't get onto your calendar first. Use the Family Time Stickers included with this Guide, and display them for all to see.
- **Make a plan:** Choose a fun activity, perhaps paired with a fun treat, to make your family time a success. Many families choose a topic like Forgiveness, Sharing, Patience, etc, to talk about. You can ask Google "Where does the Bible talk about Sharing?" and then choose a passage to read to your kids.
- **When in doubt,** buy some ice cream and read them a Bible story. Then talk about it afterward. Do not over-complicate this effort—make it easy on yourself, too!

OTHER IDEAS

- Pick a family verse that you want to memorize and recite together. Make up or use fun games to learn the verse.
- Discuss a movie that is age-appropriate for your child. Make some popcorn and watch the film together. Afterwards have a "faith talk" about the choices of characters and other aspects of the story that catch your attention. For more ideas check out movienightchat.com.
- Share with your child something that God is teaching you.
- Cook a meal together and use the time for sharing and talking.
- Take time around the dinner table to ask each member of the family to share his or her "high" and "low" of the day.
- Capture family prayer requests and write them on sticky notes for your fridge.
- Create impromptu "God-moments" by taking advantage of unplanned and unscheduled opportunities to discuss your faith within the daily routine of life.

INTENTIONAL FAITHPATH PLAN

CHILD'S NAME _____

How will you be intentional this next year?

- Pray daily for my child.
- Attend church regularly.
- Schedule regular family times.
- _____

The next step on the FaithPath is *Praying with Your Child*, recommended at age three. You will receive an email during the month of your child's birthday, and the resource will be available for you with your child's name on it at the Bringing Faith Home Center, right outside the Incarnation Bookstore.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

- *Just Add Family*, by Kurt and Olivia Bruner
- *Family Night Tool Chest* series from heritagebuilders.com
- *Fun Filled Parenting*, by Silvana Clark
- *Character Matters: Raising Children with Values That Last*, by John and Susan Yates
- See incarnation.org/faithpath for more resources.

INCARNATION'S CHILDREN & FAMILY MINISTRY

Bringing Faith Home: incarnation.org/bringing-faith-home

Children & Family Ministry: incarnation.org/grow/children