

FOREWORD BY RUTH CHOU SIMONS AND TROY SIMONS

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HABITS OF THE HOUSEHOLD

PRACTICING THE STORY OF GOD
IN EVERYDAY FAMILY RHYTHMS

A PDF COMPANION TO THE AUDIOBOOK

ZONDERVAN BOOKS

Habits of the Household

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ISBN 978-0-310-36293-7 (softcover)

ISBN 978-0-310-36296-8 (audio)

ISBN 978-0-310-36294-4 (ebook)

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Published in association with Don Gates of the literary agency The Gates Group, www.the-gates-group.com.

Cover design: Micah Kandros

Cover illustrations: Shutterstock

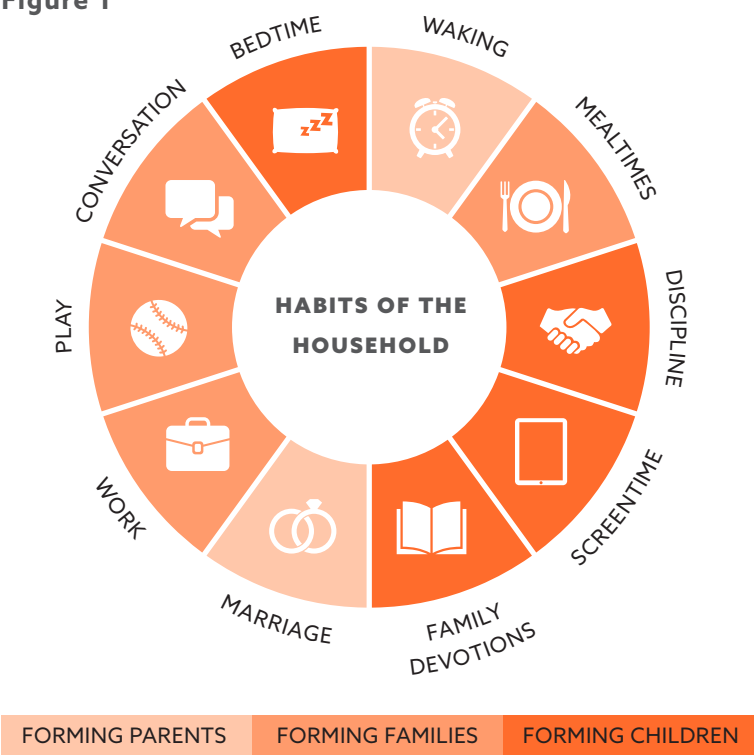
Author photo: James Lee

Interior design: Denise Froehlich

Printed in the United States of America

HOW TO READ THIS BOOK

Figure 1



HABITS OF WAKING

FORMING PARENTS



Main Idea

Waking up is a spiritual reality as much as it is a physical one. We cannot be good parents of children until we are children of God. Spiritual disciplines help us pull back the curtains and see reality as it actually is. The goal is to awaken to the reality of God's love for us and be sent out to parent in that reality.

Remember, you already have some kind of spiritual discipline that starts your morning. Consider those habits and whether they are discipling you in love or rush, in grace or anxiety.

Scripture before Phone

Along with your spouse, commit to a set of practices that make a habit of ignoring your phone in the morning and going to Scripture instead.

Tips to start:

- Set your phone to Do Not Disturb so you don't see notifications upon waking; perhaps also set an alarm or change the wallpaper on your phone to remind you.
- Try going to the same couch or chair each morning and placing your Bible and journal in a place nearby.
- Try following a reading plan or a devotional, ideally with your spouse or others.
- Be comfortable with brief readings and prayers as the norm, but let the habit grow to longer times as permitted on weekends or slower days.

- Consider leaning toward print Bibles, but when you do use a Scripture app, use voice activation to open it so you don't get distracted with other things on your phone as you open it.
- When just beginning, tell a friend or spouse that you are trying to develop this habit so they can help keep you accountable. Ideally try thirty days together.
- Explore practices like *Lectio Divina* to help guide you through meaningful prayer or meditation when you're short on time.
- Don't get mad when you mess up. Habits are norms, not rules, and grace is real, not theoretical.

"Waking from sleep may be considered a given, but waking to reality is not."

Ideas for Morning Kneeling Prayers

Briefly, and beside the bed:

- Lord, thank you for the gift of another day. Help me walk with your love into whatever work you have called me to today. Amen.
- Lord, thank you for the gift of a day with the ones you have given me to love. Be among us as we work at play and work at love. Amen.
- Lord, please help. Remind me of your power in my weakness as I try to love others, despite my exhaustion. Amen.

Remember, you don't have to try everything at once. One small change can have big spiritual impact. Pick one thing to start.

Further Resources

The Common Rule: Habits of Purpose for an Age of Distraction, Justin Whitmel Earley

The Book of Common Prayer

Revised Common Lectionary

Every Moment Holy, Douglas Kaine McKelvey

God's Wisdom for Navigating Life: A Year of Daily Devotions in the Book of Proverbs, Timothy Keller with Kathy Keller

A Gathering and Sending Prayer

Try gathering the family sometime before everyone is about to leave, joining hands, and saying a quick prayer together. A parent can say each phrase, and the children can repeat it. Make sure to keep the phrases short in words and simple in language.

- **Father, Son, and Holy Spirit**, thank you for this day.
- **Bless us** as we work, study, and play.
- **Be present with us** in all we do.
- May we bring **glory** and **honor** to you. **Amen.**

A Note on Adapting

Your job or life stage may mean that your morning looks quite different. But as a general rule, see where you can avoid screens and rush and instead embrace a short spiritual discipline.

We Always Need the Reminder of Grace: God's love inspires our action, but our action does not inspire God's love. Our family habits will not change God's love for us, but God's love for us should change our family habits.

HABITS OF MEALTIMES

FORMING FAMILIES



Main Idea

Coming to the table is the keystone habit of forming relationships. When we make the table the center of gravity, it not only helps order the household, it pulls others in, turning strangers into friends.

Light a Candle

Candles help mark moments, especially for children. Keep a special candle and matches at the table for an opening ritual. Let kids participate, even if that's messy. Upon lighting, everyone says, "Christ is light."

Conversation Habits for the Table

Children, like us, learn to speak and listen in habits they observe. Try any of the below as norms for teaching the practice of conversation.

Things to try:

- Devices, for parents or kids, are not allowed at dinner, not even in pockets or on the table. They are silenced and somewhere else.
- Pass the pepper, or some other object, and have everyone answer the same question. After going once around the table, have the next person ask a new question.
- For bigger families with older children, try the "One Conversation Rule"—which means that you can talk about anything, but everyone has to be talking about the same thing instead of having multiple side conversations.

- Try a routine of everyone answering the same set of questions: for example, sharing one good thing and one bad thing. Perhaps add one funny thing for humor. If it's breakfast, have everyone share one thing they are excited about for the day.
- As parents, try telling simple stories about your day. The art of learning to take life and put it into stories is something children can learn at the table.
- Ask specific questions. Instead of general questions like "How was school?" that can be answered with one word, ask, "Who did you play with today?" or "What is one thing you did well today?" or "What is something that made you mad today?"

"The difference between people who happen to live together and families who befriend each other are rhythms of conversation at mealtimes."

Hospitality and Opening the Table

The household is expanded through inviting people to the table.

Things to try:

- If you can, have a table that is always big enough for an extra chair.
- Remember that standing invitations (like a guest every Tuesday) go much farther for hospitality than inviting someone over once in a while.
- Ideally, let guests bring something and help clean if they want. Inviting people into the prep and the mess means we are inviting them into the household, not just entertaining them.

- If you have extended family in town, consider setting up a weekly or monthly family dinner. If you don't, try asking some close friends to share a rhythm of eating with each other.
- Keep your food simple. The goal is not to impress but befriend.

Remember, you don't have to try everything at once. One small change can have big spiritual impact. Pick one thing to start.

Further Resources

The Spiritually Vibrant Home: The Power of Messy Prayers, Loud Tables, and Open Doors, Don Everts
The Gospel Comes with a House Key: Practicing Radically Ordinary Hospitality in Our Post-Christian World, Rosaria Butterfield

A Note on Adapting

Your meal may not be dinner, but it should be something. And maybe not every day, but more days than not so it feels like the norm.

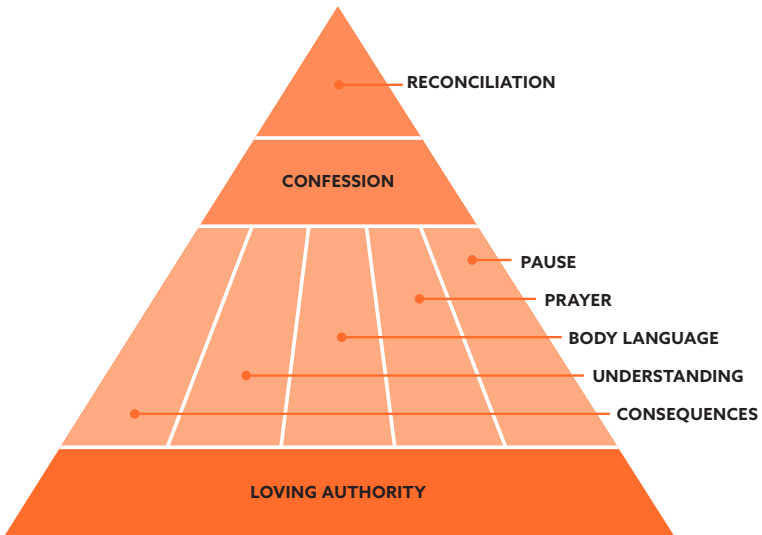
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CHAPTER 3

DISCIPLINE

Figure 2. The Pyramid of Discipline



HABITS OF DISCIPLINE

FORMING CHILDREN



Main Idea

Ordinary moments of discipline can build a life of discipleship. But discipline often becomes about our controlling our kids' behavior. Habits help interrupt bad instincts of control and anger and build new patterns of love and discipleship of the heart.

"This is the radical job of a parent, to take the ordinary moments of discipline and stitch them into a life of discipleship."

On Short Moments

Most of our discipline happens in moments, not drawn-out engagements. So think about how ending with a smile, tickle, laugh, or hug can briefly signal reconciliation and prevent us from creating a long line of ughs, sighs, or scowls throughout the day.

Remember, discipline is probably the hardest thing we do as parents. Give a lot of grace, to you and your kids.

Further Resources

No-Drama Discipline: The Whole-Brain Way to Calm the Chaos and Nurture Your Child's Developing Mind, Daniel J. Siegel and Tina Payne Bryson

Parenting: Fourteen Gospel Principles That Can Radically Change Your Family, Paul David Tripp

A Note on Adapting

Habits of discipline (rightly!) vary significantly, depending on age, family history, and child personality. But God's story of love and discipleship does not change. Wherever you are, use this as a time to rethink how your norms of discipline can be norms of love, reconciliation, and discipleship.

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HABITS OF SCREENTIME

FORMING CHILDREN



Main Idea

The fight for screentime is the fight for formation. But getting rid of screens is not the solution, curation is. This means choosing rhythms that function as limits and then choosing good content to fill those limits.

Adopting Expected Rhythms of On and Off Time Are Ways to Limit Screens

Your rhythms may be different than other people's and may vary in seasons.

Expectations to have:

- Expect others to push back on these ideas, but know that this is important, and stand your ground. Also expect a detox period where your children (and you) act and feel worse when screens are taken away, but know that God made us to be resilient, and this will resolve.

Conversations to have:

- Talk through rhythms with your spouse—a family has to be on the same page about this.
- Once you decide your on/off norms, have a conversation with your kids about what they are and why you're adopting them.

Things to try for on times:

- Weekly family movie nights, Saturday morning cartoons, one night a week, bad/sick days.

Things to try for off times:

- Typical car rides, the dinner table, alone in bedrooms. Consider having one room the family gathers in that does

not have a TV or computer. Consider excluding screens from your sabbath rhythms, or if you exclude them other times in the week, consider having them be a special thing you do engage in on the sabbath.

"The fight over screentime is a fight over who forms who."

Within Your Limits, Curate by Choosing Well

The second half of curation is picking well within your limits.

Considerations for picking well:

- Check out "Lauren's Lists" on the website. She has curated lists of shows, movies, video games, and books at <https://www.habitsofthehousehold.com/laurenslists>.
- Share lists with family and friends of great things to watch.
- Keep lists of creative video or computer games, especially multiplayer ones.
- Consider watching with your kids sometimes, and let shared content become conversation starters.
- Turn off auto-play! Don't let algorithms choose for you.
- Don't be afraid of repeating quality content.
- Consider that quality content is not always free, and good content may be worth the cost.

Remember, though fighting to limit screentime may be one of the hardest sacrifices for us as parents, it is potentially one of the most important things we can do to help our kids thrive and grow into the people God created them to be.

Further Resources

The Tech-Wise Family: Everyday Steps for Putting Technology in Its Proper Place, Andy Crouch
My Tech-Wise Life: Growing Up and Making Choices in a World of Devices, Amy Crouch and Andy Crouch
The Wisdom Pyramid: Feeding Your Soul in a Post-Truth World, Brett McCracken

Remember, grace means it's never too late to start. Don't worry about what your screen practices have been; think about what they could be.

A Note on Adapting

Our rhythms, limits, and values will all look different, but our heart to shepherd our kids should be united. Think about one place where you are surrendering formation to screens, and then try a new habit.

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HABITS OF FAMILY DEVOTIONS FORMING CHILDREN



Main Idea

When it comes to family devotions, it is not about perfect practice, it is about doing something rather than nothing. Grace means that God loves small, messy things like us and our kids. Making a habit of teaching simple truths and praying short prayers is one of the smallest and most powerful rhythms a family can practice.

Ideas for Moving from Something to Nothing

God loves messy things. You are not trying to create a perfect moment, or even teach a well-planned lesson. You are just trying to create moments where you, and your children, wrestle with Scripture and pray out loud and together.

- Look for times where you are already gathered (such as breakfast or dinner).
- Try reading a short verse together a couple of times to memorize it.
- Try reading a story from a children's book and then each sharing one thing you liked about it (you don't need to corner your kids into saying things adults think are spiritual—letting them process Scripture with you is meaningful in its own right).
- End with each person saying a one-sentence prayer about something they need, or are thankful for, or are happy about—making sure to affirm children's things to pray about, and not needlessly correct their prayer to something that is more mature than they can understand.

- Feel free to process in front of them, noting things you wonder about the passage or God. Children absorb the way we think, so just being sincere and open in front of them is a kind of teaching of its own.

Remember, God has always taught his church through broken sinners. Your hard day or recent failure doesn't disqualify you from teaching grace—it disqualifies you from teaching moralism. Start with repentance and confession, and you'll always end up pointing to Jesus.

"The most radical truths are simple ones. The most genuine prayers are short ones."

Telling Simple Truths and Praying Short Prayers

Things to try for telling simple truths:

- Try reading or memorizing some lines of a catechism together. (Try New City Catechism, this catechism for young children (<http://sovgraceto.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/Catechism-for-Young-Children.pdf>), or, for older children, The Westminster Shorter Catechism.) Starting with one question-and-response a week is ideal.
- Go through the Lord's Prayer or the Apostles' Creed and explain the concepts. Again, one line a week is plenty of fodder.
- If you do family mottos, try basing one around a short passage of Scripture (e.g., We Try to Be Strong and Courageous or We Try to Be Joyful Always).
- Memorize Scripture through music (Slugs & Bugs combines Scripture with really great music that you'll enjoy too).

Things to try for praying short prayers:

- Pray together when you find yourselves in need.
- Invite them to pray before a meal.
- Pray for them, out loud, when they share something they feel or need.
- Consider praying together before school or bedtime (see the bedtime chapter for examples).
- Pray together after a fight in the family happens.

Further Resources

DEVOTIONS

Teach Us to Pray: Scripture-Centered Family Worship through the Year, Lora A. Copley and Elizabeth Vander Haagen (This is the single-best resource we've found for incorporating both younger and older children in devotions.)

What Every Child Should Know about Prayer, Nancy Guthrie (ages four and up)

Foundations: Twelve Biblical Truths to Shape a Family, Ruth Chou Simons and Troy Simons (for whole-family devotions, ages eight and up)

The Ology: Ancient Truths Ever New, Marty Machowski (ages six and up)

Indescribable: 100 Devotions about God and Science, Louie Giglio (ages six and up)

CATECHISMS

New City Catechism, adapted by Timothy Keller and Sam Shammas

Catechism for Young Children: An Introduction to the Shorter Catechism (This is the best resource we've found for young children, two and up. You can view a version online at <https://reformed.org/historic-confessions/the-childrens-catechism>.)

The Westminster Shorter Catechism

BIBLES

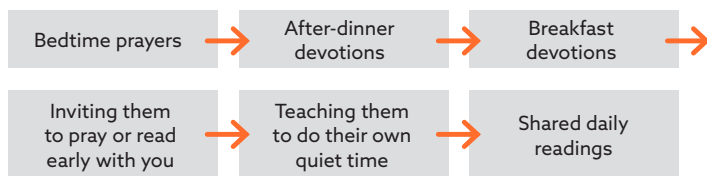
The Jesus Storybook Bible, Sally Lloyd-Jones (ages two and up)

The Action Bible, Doug Mauss and Sergio Cariello (ages five and up)

My First Hands-On Bible, Tyndale House (ages two to five)

A Note on Adapting

Age and stage will matter tremendously for figuring out what family Scripture and prayer looks like. Consider some of the following movements, as kids age:



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HABITS OF MARRIAGE

FORMING PARENTS



Main Idea

The covenant love of marriage is the foundation of love in the family. Habits of working on covenant love reveals the core truth of the family: binding love sets us free.

Ideas for Making Date Night a Rhythm

Things to try:

- Name a night of the week that will become a regular date night. No matter how informal, make that an intentional evening. If you use a shared calendar, put it on there.
- Don't feel the pressure to make it out of the house, just make undistracted space at home.
- Have a conversation about whether getting more babysitting would be good for your marriage.
- Keep lists of questions for each other; pull them out on conversation evenings (see some examples below).
- Use this date night as a way to regularly connect both physically and emotionally.

Questions for Parenting Check-Ins

- What's going well? What's hard?
- What do you need my help with?
- Who are you connecting well with? Who are you having trouble connecting with?
- How is discipline going?
- How is each child doing developmentally? Academically? Physically? Spiritually? Character development?

- Are we too busy to parent well? Are we too busy as a family?
- How are we pointing our children to Jesus?
- Do we need to apologize for anything?
- Do you need to have a one-on-one talk or an important conversation with a particular child?

*"The story of the world begins,
and ends, in a wedding."*

Questions for Date Night

- What is bringing you joy? What is weighing on you?
- When you picture Jesus looking at you, what is the expression on his face?
- What do you find yourself continually daydreaming about?
- What is one thing I can do to love you better? Encourage you more? Support you better?
- What is one daily or weekly rhythm you want to start? What's one you want to stop?
- What's something you've done recently that you're proud of?
- Who is your closest friend right now? Who do you want to be closer to?
- What are you reading, listening to, or watching that's interesting?

Ideas for Gifting Alone Time

- Regular night when one parent does dinner and bedtime solo (so the other can get out of the house or just relax).
- Weekends away with guy- or girlfriends.
- Saturday morning outings with just one parent.
- If one parent has to travel, try giving the other parent some time off when you come back.

Further Resources

ON MARRIAGE

The Meaning of Marriage: Facing the Complexities of Commitment with the Wisdom of God, Timothy Keller with Kathy Keller

Two-Part Invention: The Story of a Marriage, Madeleine L'Engle

CONVERSATION STARTERS ON PARENTING AND SPIRITUALITY IN THE HOME

The Domestic Monastery, Ronald Rolheiser (This is a fantastic little book on the spirituality of the home.)
Family Discipleship: Leading Your Home through Time, Moments, and Milestones, Matt Chandler and Adam Griffin (This is a helpful book on discipleship in the home.)

A Note on Adapting

If you're divorced or a single parent, this may be a very difficult chapter. If so, I will not presume to apply it for you. I will only gently encourage you that God's covenant love for you is more real than any of us know, and that is the love that in the end heals all pain.

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HABITS OF WORK

FORMING FAMILIES



Main Idea

We were created by God for good work. Parents should think carefully about how they can teach children the spiritual dignity of work and showcase all the good work there is to be done, inside and outside of the household.

Habits for Inviting Children into the Work of the Household

Things to try:

- Talk about the housework in a way that dignifies the work that is done there.
- If a child can do it for themselves, try your best not to do it for them.
- Teach them tasks as early as possible, whether picking up toys, hammering a nail, taking out trash, washing a dish, folding towels, wiping tables, or sweeping floors. Children remember these moments as bonding moments, even when they are work.
- Let them help host by greeting guests at the door and offering drinks or snacks, and then helping with clean-up after.
- Let them help you (even when it slows you down)—this may require adding margin in your life so that your housework is not always about maximizing efficiency.
- Work toward an age-appropriate chore system. Let them tangibly check things off and earn rewards, whether money or stickers or something else.

Key Image

We were made to work alongside God. This means we love working with people we love. You can parent in this truth by creating ways your children can work alongside you.

Showcasing Work

For any work that is outside of the home, consider whether it's possible to bring your kids with you sometime. If you work on a computer inside the home, consider taking time occasionally to let them see what you're doing and explain it.

"Work is not just a way to make the ends of life meet, work is better understood as an end that makes meaning of life."

Talking about Work with Dignity

Explaining why we work is hard. Be ready to answer.

"WHY DO YOU HAVE TO GO TO WORK TODAY?"

"I get to go to work—which I'm actually really thankful for. Because God made us all to work. Some people don't have a job they like, and some don't have a job at all. Work is a blessing."

"WHAT DO YOU DO AT WORK?"

- "Just like God helps people, at work I get to help people by . . ."
- "Just like God created the world, at work I get to create things, like . . ."
- "Just like the Bible tells us to serve other people, at work I get to serve other people by . . ."

"WHY DO WE HAVE TO DO CHORES?"

"Just like God organized the world and made it a good place

for us to live, it's our job to keep our house organized so it's a good place for us to live."

IN UNEMPLOYMENT, WE MIGHT SAY:

"God made us to work, so one of the reasons Mom/Dad is so sad right now is that they don't have a job to go to. It's sad like being really good at riding bikes, but not having one to enjoy it."

IN UNDEREMPLOYMENT, WE MIGHT SAY:

"God made us with special talents and tells us to use them, so one of the reasons Mom/Dad is so sad right now is that their job doesn't use their talents."

IN HARD TIMES OF OVERWORK, WE MIGHT SAY:

"Just like God works and then rests, one of the reasons it is so hard for Mom/Dad right now is that their job is not letting them rest, and good rest is just as important as good work."

Remember, you don't have to try everything at once. One small change can have big spiritual impact. Pick one thing to start.

Further Resources

Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work to God's Work,
Timothy Keller with Katherine Leary Alsdorf

*The Gospel at Work: How Working for King Jesus Gives
Purpose and Meaning to Our Jobs*, Sebastian Traeger
and Greg Gilbert

*Kingdom Calling: Vocational Stewardship for the Common
Good*, Amy L. Sherman

Designing Your Life: How to Build a Well-Lived, Joyful Life,
Bill Burnett and Dave Evans

A Note on Adapting

A lot of teaching kids about work depends on the work you do. Whether you're a stay-at-home parent or something else, take the time to think about how your work fits into the story of God. What part of creation does your job care for? In what ways is your job broken? In what ways could your job be redeemed? Understanding our own work is the first step to teaching our children about it.

A Workday Prayer, Adapted from John Calvin's Daily Prayers

My good God, Father, and Savior, grant me aid by your Holy Spirit to now work fruitfully in my vocation, which is from you, all in order to love you and the people around me rather than for my own gain and glory. Give me wisdom, judgment, and prudence, and freedom from my besetting sins. Bring me under the rule of true humility. Let me accept with patience whatever amount of fruitfulness or difficulty in my work that you give me this day. And in all I do, help me to rest always in my Lord Jesus Christ and in his grace alone for my salvation and life. Hear me, merciful Father, by our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.

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HABITS OF PLAY

FORMING FAMILIES



Main Idea

Getting lost in fun and imaginative play is an echo of the kingdom to come, a sign of a world that is full of joy. Practicing good habits of play is a way of cultivating a more Christian imagination that foreshadows the kingdom to come.

Lauren's Starter List for Reading

Lauren is the great curator of good reads in our family. Here are her top five in a few categories to pass on the love of reading. You can find more of Lauren's Lists on <https://www.habitsofthehousehold.com/laurenslists>.

Five Great Books to Read to Little Ones

- *Where the Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak
- *Owl Moon* by Janet Yolen
- *Never Ask a Dinosaur to Dinner* by Gareth Edwards and Guy Parker-Rees
- *The Snowy Day* by Ezra Jack Keats
- *The Little Mouse, the Red Ripe Strawberry, and the Big Hungry Bear* by Don and Audrey Wood

Five Great Book Series to Read Aloud to Kids Five and Over

- The Wingfeather Saga by Andrew Peterson
- The Chronicles of Narnia by C. S. Lewis
- The Green Ember series by S. D. Smith
- Little House series by Laura Ingalls Wilder
- Redwall series by Brian Jacques

Five Great Imaginative Stories for Older Readers

- *A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeleine L'Engle
- Harry Potter series by J. K. Rowling

- The Dark Is Rising series by Susan Cooper
- *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* by Mark Twain
- The Lord of the Rings trilogy by J. R. R. Tolkien

Note: Don't stop reading aloud once they can read! Reading is a wonderful way to bond the family together. This includes audio books and reading to each other.

"In Christianity, you won't get very far without a healthy imagination."

Habits for Cultivating Moments of Play

Things to try:

- If you're a parent who is out of the house each day, think about making half an hour before or after a concentrated time for presence.
- If you're a parent who is with the kids all day, don't feel guilty about not playing with them constantly. That's not best for either of you. But remember that ten focused minutes of engagement or attention each day could go a long way.
- Draw clear distinctions between when you are playing with them and when they need to play alone or with other kids.
- When you decide to play, treat it like work—stay focused and present. Don't bring devices.

Ideas for Structuring a Family Sabbath

Things to discuss:

- When do you start? Could you mark the moment?
- What's one thing to stop during sabbath?
- What's one thing to lean into during sabbath?

- How is worship included?
- Should the outdoors be included?
- What's one family activity that is restful for everyone?
- Could you join forces with friends or family?
- Do you need to limit devices on the sabbath?

Further Resources

ON READING

The Read-Aloud Family: Making Meaningful and Lasting Connections with Your Kids, Sarah Mackenzie (see also the website <https://readaloudrevival.com>)

100 Best Books for Children, Anita Silvey

ON REENCHANTING THE WORLD

Telling the Truth: The Gospel as Tragedy, Comedy, and Fairy Tale, Frederick Buechner

Recapturing the Wonder: Transcendent Faith in a Disenchanted World, Mike Cosper

ON SABBATH

Liturgy of the Ordinary: Sacred Practices in Everyday Life, Tish Harrison Warren

A Note on Adapting

At its core, play is the idea that we engage with the world in wonder. This is not limited by age, size, or health. Think about how you can help cultivate an enchantment with the world God made, wherever you are.

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HABITS OF CONVERSATION

FORMING FAMILIES



Main Idea

Conversation is the rhythm that turns family into friends and friends into family. Teaching habits of conversation is the way we begin teaching habits of friendship.

Considering Times for Conversations

- Use a parenting check-in to keep in mind important conversations that may need to be had with a child.
- Potential conversation times:
 - » Car rides
 - » Yardwork/chores/house projects
 - » Family trips
 - » Around a fire
 - » Taking a child out for a special one-on-one meal/treat
 - » After bedtime

Creating Spaces for Conversations

- Do you have a room that kids and adults are comfortable sitting in?
- Is there a room without a TV?
- Are phones put away when at the table?
- Can you put chairs on a porch or in the yard?
- Could a family walk be a rhythm?
- Could you light a candle or a fire?

"Conversation—inside and outside of the household—is the learned art of friendship."

Some Starter Questions for Kid Conversations

About the Day:

- What was the best and worst part of today? Anything you laughed at?
- Did anyone get in trouble today?
- Does anyone in your class not have a friend?
- What did you think about before you fell asleep last night?
- Who do you like sitting by in class? Who do you not want to sit by?

About Life:

- What's your favorite thing to do with Mom/Dad/brother/sister/friend?
- Who is your best friend right now? Anyone you're mad at?
- What do you think you're really good at? Bad at?
- What is the bravest thing you've done?
- Is there anything you want to tell me or ask me about?
- Is there anything you notice about the world that you think other people don't notice?
- What do you pray about when you talk to God? When do you pray?

A Note on Friendship

Teaching conversation and friendship as a parent presumes you practice it. Make sure there is space in your life where you pursue vulnerability and adult conversation with friends.

Further Resources

Spiritual Friendship, Aelred of Rievaulx

The Common Rule: Habits of Purpose for an Age of Distraction, Justin Whitmel Earley (chapter on the weekly habit of conversation)

A Note on Adapting

As kids age, conversation becomes more possible, and far more important. We can't force children to talk, but we can create rhythms of being available and modeling vulnerability.

We Always Need the Reminder of Grace: God's love inspires our action, but our action does not inspire God's love. Our family habits will not change God's love for us, but God's love for us should change our family habits.

HABITS OF BEDTIME

FORMING CHILDREN



Main Idea

Bedtime is a moment, for parent and child, to acknowledge that at the end of the day, God loves us. No matter our failures, we can rest in grace. Bedtime liturgies use habitual prayers to find words (and actions) that incorporate the truths of the gospel into our routines—especially at the moments of the day when we are tired and the most likely to need them.

A BEDTIME BLESSING OF GOSPEL LOVE

Said perhaps with a hand on your child's face or head.

Parent: Do you see my eyes?

Child: Yes.

Parent: Can you see that I see your eyes?

Child: Yes.

Parent: Do you know that I love you?

Child: Yes.

Parent: Do you know that I love you no matter what bad things you do?

Child: Yes.

Parent: Do you know that I love you no matter what good things you do?

Child: Yes.

Parent: Who else loves you like that?

Child: God does.

Parent: Even more than me?

Child: Yes.

Parent: Rest in that love.

A TICKLE BLESSING

Suddenly, and with lots of squirming:

Parent: Dear Lord, may this child find much joy and laughter, all of his/her days.

Child: *Uncontrollable laughter, until they can barely breathe*

Parent: Amen.

A BOUNCY BLESSING

While bouncing the bed around the child, and trying to get as much giggling and flopping as possible:

Parent: Dear Lord, may this child bounce from blessing to blessing, all of his/her days.

Child: *Bouncing and laughing*

Parent: Amen.

A SQUEEZE BLESSING

During a really big, really tight hug:

Parent: Dear Lord, may this child feel your love wrap around them, all of his/her days.

Child: *Struggles to break free and hopefully laughs*

Parent: Amen.

"In the story of God, coming to the end of ourselves isn't a sign of failure, it's the beginning of grace."

A BLESSING FOR THE BODY OF A CHILD WHILE LYING IN BED

As prayer progresses, move hands to touch each part of the body:

Jesus, bless their feet, may they bring good news.

Bless their legs, may they carry on in times of suffering.

Bless their backs, may they be strong enough to bear the burdens of others.

Bless their arms to hold the lonely, **and their hands** to do good work.

Bless their necks, may they turn their heads toward the poor.

Bless their ears to discern truth, **their eyes** to see beauty, and **their mouths** to speak encouragement.

Bless their minds, may they grow wise.

And finally, bless their hearts, may they grow to love you—and all that you have made—in the right order.

Amen.

A SHORT BLESSING FOR LITTLES WHEN YOU ARE FRUSTRATED

Parent: God loves you. Jesus died for you. And the Holy Spirit is with you. Goodnight.

Pause for a deep breath, and a gentle touch.

Parent: So I too will love you. I too will sacrifice for you. And I too will never leave you.

A Nightly Parent's Prayer

Prayed just before the parent goes to bed, either beside the sleeping child's bed, or if they sleep lightly, then with an open palm held toward or against the sleeping child's door.

"Lord help me. May I be parented by your grace, and in turn give them the same. Amen."

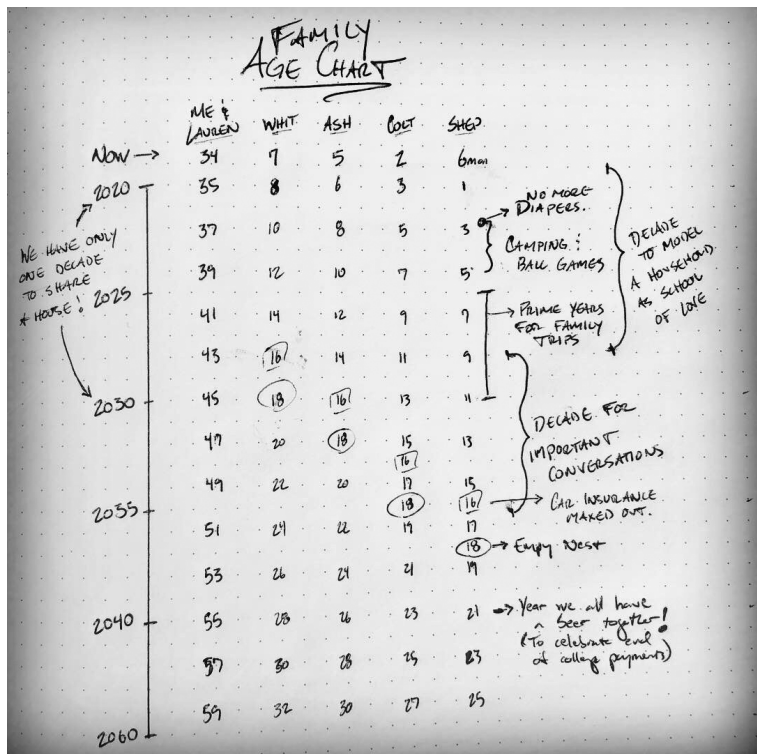
A Note on Adapting

As kids get older, a tickle blessing might be more embarrassing than endearing. I still pray for my oldest before he goes to bed, though now I'm reaching up to put a hand on his head and looking him in the eye. Intentional words still matter.

We Always Need the Reminder of Grace: God's love inspires our action, but our action does not inspire God's love. Our family habits will not change God's love for us, but God's love for us should change our family habits.

PARENTING BETWEEN THE NOW AND THE NOT YET

Figure 3



[illegible]