

With all of the great children and youth programs within churches today, many parents allow churches to “take the wheel” when it comes to their kids’ spiritual development while they take a more passive role. We can easily become convinced that it’s the church’s job to help our kids grow spiritually, not ours. Yet, guess what? God specifically places the responsibility for nurturing a child’s spiritual development on parents – not the church! In the Bible, in Deuteronomy 6:6-7, we read, “These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.” While our churches serve to partner with us in this great task of spiritually nurturing our kids, God has given us – parents – both the responsibility and the tremendous opportunity to pass our faith to our kids. It’s one way you can truly ‘get back to the basics’ as a parent. Still, I understand that many parents find it hard to talk to their kids about God and spiritual issues. So, here are some practical suggestions about how to get started.

- 1) Be yourself.** You don’t need a seminary degree to talk to your kids about God. You don’t have to speak in King James language to send a message that you want to talk about spiritual issues. In fact, if you do, your kids will think you’re really weird! So, be yourself! Share your understanding of who God is and why God matters to you – in a way that reflects the real you.
- 2) Don’t limit your conversations on spiritual matters to Sunday morning!** This is not to say that Sunday morning is off-limits for spiritual discussions, but don’t get caught in the trap of compartmentalizing faith issues to certain days or certain times. Let your kids know that spiritual issues are important in your life all of the time! This is exactly what the quote from Deuteronomy is talking about: talking about God when you sit at home, when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up! Spirituality is to be part of an ongoing discussion in our homes, with our families!
- 3) Let your kids catch you in the act of doing something spiritual.** Do you have a regular devotional time – where you read the Bible and pray – that you spend with God? Do your kids know it? How about letting your kids “see” you being involved in your own spiritual disciplines. Don’t forget that your actions will teach your kids a lot about your faith – probably even more than your words!
- 4) Look for natural opportunities to raise spiritual issues.** This takes some intentional work by parents to be on the lookout for opportunities “along the road” of life, where issues almost beg to be discussed in light of our Christian commitment and faith. Many opportunities will arise as your kids watch you live life. How do you, for example, demonstrate your faith when some jerk cuts you off on the highway? Perhaps, depending on your reaction, this may be a time to discuss the issues of revenge or forgiveness!
- 5) Take the posture of a “fellow-learner” as opposed to that of a “teacher and student”.** Being a “fellow-learner” takes the pressure off as far as trying to send the message that you “know it all” (and your kids will already know this isn’t true!). When discussing spiritual issues, you will most likely hear a question from your adolescent that you can’t answer. It’s fine to say, “I don’t know. Let’s work on finding the answer together.”
- 6) Utilize media to launch discussions about God and the Christian life.** While much of today’s media is negative in its influence and portrayals of values, it can provide a launching pad for discussion of how Christian values compare to whatever is seen, heard or read.
- 7) Have a plan for family devotional and prayer times.** First, find a devotional guide, sign-up for HomeWord’s “Daily Devotional” or download HomeWord’s “[52 Faith Conversations for Families](#).” Then devise a plan (daily, weekly, at certain mealtimes for example) and then stick to it. Build the habit so your kids learn, “this is what we do as a family.”
- 8) Have fun with your kids!** Unfortunately, too many kids are taught through role modeling from their parents and other adults at church, that Christianity means being grumpy and bored. Perhaps one of the most spiritual things you can do for your kids’ spiritual growth is to model for them that the Christian life is filled with love, peace and joy! So plan intentionally fun times for your family. Let them know that the Christian life can be fun!
- 9) Get involved in ministry together as a family.** The call to Christ is the call to serve. You can communicate a lot about your faith in Christ by your willingness to serve; by getting involved in ministry. For years, successful youth ministries have known that getting kids involved in ministry and service results in spiritual growth and in bonding together the youth group community. Do you know what? The same benefits will occur within families when they serve together!
- 10) Disciple and equip your kids.** Actively participate in teaching your kids about God and what living the Christian life looks like. Why not do a weekly Bible study together with your son or daughter? Ask your children’s pastor, youth pastor or leaders for ideas for Bible study material. They’ll never be able to use all the materials that are available to them! How about reading a book together on a spiritual topic and then having a weekly discussion about what you’ve read? For ideas on how to be more involved in discipling your kids, I recommend you read, *Ignite the Fire* by Barry and Carol St. Clair.