

Family Devotions

By Mike Reiffer

If I were to talk about family devotions and encourage men to make the most of this summer and the most of 2020 (which is proving to be a year of unrest and disruption to say the least), I would share the following:

1. Enthusiasm is contagious. It will be much more doable to get devotions started for the family when the father is an enthusiastic participant. His joy is contagious and his passion will inspire his children. Likewise, his sternness and reducing devotions to a begrudging duty can also be contaminating. Fathers can set such a wonderful tone and their hearts on fire will certainly pass along to their children. One little tradition that has started in our home is loud music and praise and worship dance parties. It all started on Tuesday nights when my wife works late and I was playing loud music in the kitchen while cleaning up. And, because I was having a great time, my kids soon caught on - and now most family devotions to this day end with a few loud songs, singing along, and the youngest kids dancing away. Ephesians 6:4 says "Fathers, do not exasperate your children, but bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord." Your passion is contagious.
2. Plan on many attempts and several adjustments. When I was in 8th grade and went on a mission trip, the organization sending us had a slogan: "Blessed are the flexible, for they shall not be bent out of shape." Anytime you are starting a new tradition or building a new habit, it rarely goes perfectly right out of the gate and it often takes several iterations to settle on a good routine for your family and to match your children's ages and temperaments. Plan on this being a process. Plan on spiritual warfare and opposition. Plan on adapting. The end will be worth it, but persistence will be a key factor. Galatians 6:9 says "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time, we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." Stay the course, adjust, but just keep going!
3. Find what captures the hearts of your children. While it is true that the enthusiasm and passion of the father sets the tone and energy, it is also true that matching the content and style of the devotions to your children will be important. My kids love videos - so we watch Calvary Kids content and talk about it. Or, we try praise and worship songs on YouTube. My older kids currently want to be able to justify their faith, so we add Biblical content when studying astronomy or when watching the astronauts launch a few weeks ago. My little kids love to dance - so we dance. When my kids were younger, they would be entranced by The StoryBook Bible - so we did that one instead of other choices. The point is that as parents, we keep looking for what matches what they are dealing with in life and academics and what they enjoy - and then that can set the table for a devotional series, book, or video. Mark 9:37 says, "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me, but him who sent me." The Lord is praised when we approach topics with tenderness to capture the hearts of our children and to help them see what they see with the eyes of faith.

So, there you have it. Lead with your heart and your passion. Stick with it. And, meet your kids with what captures their interest and it will let them know just how relevant and applicable God is in their life. Our prayer is that the Lord would be real to them and their faith would grow.