



Wisdom from the Word

Dr. Joneal Kirby heartfelt
Ministries

Wisdom from the Word

*“These commandments that
I give you today are to be on 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. Tie them as symbols
on your hands and bind them on your foreheads.
Write them on the doorframes of your houses
and on your gates.”*

—Deuteronomy 6: 6–9



Day 1

At the Heart of It: Follow Him and bring life to others.

There is a beautiful song that says— “Children are our future.” Nowhere are those words more true than in the family of faith. My future of a faith life lived in the legacy of those who went before me, who loved me and loved God. I am humbled by the fact that I sit on church pews bought by the tithes of my parents and grandparents. A child’s faith is blessed by the example of their parents and grandparents.

Parents *and* churches must work hand in hand to nurture a child’s faith. Meaningful Bible studies and church-centered activities for children can benefit the faith-growth of families in local congregations. But parents cannot rely solely on the church’s programs for their child’s faith.

Parents must also be in the Word, in prayer, and living a life obedient to God’s will in front of their children. Children depend on their parents for clear spiritual guidance. If you want your child’s faith to be firm and full of life, Mom, you help your child the most when you pay close attention to faith matters.

Take Action: What is your plan for growing your faith, Mom? Join a Bible study. Read through a daily devotional book. Join with a friend in a weekly prayer time.



Wisdom from the Word

“These are the commands, decrees and laws the LORD your God directed me to teach you to observe in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, so that you, your children and their children after them may fear the LORD your God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands that I give you, and so that you may enjoy long life. Hear, Israel, and be careful to obey so that it may go well with you.”

—Deuteronomy 6:1–3a



Day 2

At the Heart of It: Follow Him and bring life to others.

There is a beautiful song that says— “Children are our future.” Nowhere are those words more true than in the family of faith. We have all heard it said that we are one generation away from losing, or growing, a faithful family of God.

I am humbled by the fact that at my church I sit on pews bought by the tithes of my parents and grandparents. I enjoy and am blessed everyday by the faith that I live because of how my parents and grandparents lived in front of me.

Parents and churches must work hand in hand to nurture a child's faith. Rich, meaningful Bible studies for moms and dads, and inspiring educational programs for children are ways a church can benefit the faith-growth of the families in their congregation. But parents cannot rely solely on the church's programs for their child's faith.

Families must also be in the Word, in prayer, and living a life obedient to God's will. The Spirit of God will act. However, parents along with children's teachers and ministers must be on the same page for a child to reach their potential of spiritual growth.

Children depend on their parents for clear spiritual guidance. But when parents confess to be Christians, yet pay little attention to faith matters, and live lukewarm lifestyles which diminish the significance of God's will, children are left confused.

If you, Mom, want your child's faith to be firm and full of life, yours must be also.

Take Action: What is your plan for growing your faith, Mom? Be deliberate about seeking out support for your faith. Join a Bible study. Read a devotional book with your husband or a friend. Ask an older woman in your church to spend a few minutes in prayer with you each day in person or over the phone.



Wisdom from the Word

*The fear of the LORD
is the beginning of knowledge,
but fools despise wisdom and instruction.
Listen, my son, to your father's instruction
and do not forsake your mother's teaching.
They are a garland to grace your head
and a chain to adorn your neck.*

—Proverbs 1:7-8



Day 3

At the Heart of It: Share books of faith with your child

So, Mom, at some point you will think: how do I introduce my child to God?

Storybooks are a natural part of childhood and parenting. Purchase or borrow a small children's picture Bible book and read stories aloud to your little one. Infants are not too young to hear about God's love! Babies and toddlers are fascinated with Mom's reading voice and the pictures. There are also many appropriate books for children as they grow which will help them understand their budding faith. Children of all ages enjoy stories, remember.

You can read of Moses and the burning bush; about God parting the Red Sea; or how about that exciting story where Jonah is swallowed up by a giant fish? Children will fall in love with these inspiring and adventurous Bible stories.

How about selecting a very simple Bible storybook—appropriate for your child's age—to read at bedtime? You'll develop a routine of sharing stories about God and Bible heroes that will bond you to your little one as you both grow in your knowledge of God.

Take Action: Purchase a child's Bible, like a rhyming or a picture Bible, or get one at your library or church. Read a story from it to your child every night this week.



Wisdom from the Word

*“Let everything that lives
sing praises to the Lord”
—Psalm 150:1–6*



Day 4

At the Heart of It: Open your child's eyes to God's wonders

I guarantee that sometimes your day is so busy it could spin out of control very fast. And before you know it, you are to the end of it! Before you even realize it, there will be little if any time to focus even a few moments on God.

Everyday life is so super-scheduled and cram-packed with demands that the day's activities of work, school, children, and family activities will crowd out even the best intentions. Though most of us intend to create special moments with our kids to focus on God, sometimes the time passes us by. But the best way to turn the eyes of our children on God is in the EVERYDAY, natural moments of our lives.

What a great way to make your child aware and in awe of God's power and presence! The chill of winter, the beginning of spring, the warm slip into summer and the feeling of fall are all natural times to focus your child's attention on God's plan for the change of seasons. Conversations can focus on "Who makes the flowers grow after winter? Who blesses us with warm sunshine and makes the green grass and trees?" These small, yet meaningful, conversations put your eyes, and the eyes of your child, on the God of creation. It's simple.

Take Action: Spend some time with your child today looking for the simple things God has done and giving Him praise.



Wisdom from the Word

*“Start children off on the
way they should go,
and even when they are old
they will not turn from it.”*

—Proverbs 22: 6



Day 5

At the Heart of It: Make joyful sounds to the Lord

Mom, building your child's faith can be one of the most rewarding experiences you will ever have.

Today may be a good day to think seriously about your job as your child's spiritual teacher. I know you may worry about teaching your child important Bible truths or sharing God's plan of salvation, but long before those deeper theological discussions will be needed there are simple truths about God that all believing parents can share with the smallest child.

Just start by playing Bible songs in your car and listening to praise music especially made for little ones. As you sing the words and listen to the music together, you'll be teaching and sharing a love of praising God.

Many of these songs are about how God created all the wonderful clouds, flowers, birds, and trees, just like you've started pointing out to your child. No Bible Scholar needed here: just share the precious message of God's love through songs.

Take Action: Play some kid friendly Bible songs for your child today or sing Jesus Loves Me over and over again. What a wonderful song for your child to know by heart!



Wisdom from the Word

*“I will instruct you and teach
you in the way you should go;
I will counsel you and watch over you.”*

—Psalm 32:8

*“I know, O LORD, that a man’s life is not his own;
it is not for man to direct his steps.”*

—Jeremiah 10:23



Day 6

At the Heart of It: Teach your child to pray

His blonde curls bobbed with each bounce of his tiny head. He was praying hard; a simple, sweet, genuine prayer. Hearing his earnest conversation I thought how tender it is to hear a little child pray!

It's a reminder to us how sweet and sincere prayer can be. As simple as a child's prayer may be, we shouldn't underestimate a little one's faith. Jesus certainly didn't. In fact, in Mark 10, Jesus instructed his disciples to allow little children to come see Him and said that "The Kingdom of God belongs to them."

Perhaps children's tender hearts are touched more deeply by prayers, and in their naïve trusting way, they may understand a more innocent faith. As parents, praying for our children accesses a vital spiritual tool. Never, ever underestimate the power that you have in leading your child into a relationship with Jesus.

Mom, you can do that by praying for and with your children. Kneel with them beside their bed as they prepare to sleep. Ask for God's blessing on their lives. You can also send them off to school in the morning with a family prayer time. And just remember this: God loves your child even more than you do.

Take Action: Pray for your children all during the day, specifically asking God to intercede in their lives, whether it is to help them do well on a test or to handle a relationship with a friend.



Wisdom from the Word

*“The Lord disciplines the one he loves,
and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son.
Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his
children. For what children are not disciplined by their
father? If you are not disciplined—and everyone
undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate,
not true sons and daughters at all.”*

—Hebrews 12:6–8



Day 7

At the Heart of it: Encourage them with the kindness of consistency.

Your children need you for many things as they grow up. Disciplining is one of those things that is part of a parent's responsibilities, even though it is the pleasant part of parenting. God's Word has some things to say about this part of parenting. Colossians 3:21 in The Message Bible says this: "Parents, don't come down too hard on your children or you'll crush their spirits." One version says "Do not be so hard on your children that they will give up trying to do what is right." (NLT)

It's a difficult balance to correctly discipline children, and still maintain a relationship that encourages them. There are two keys to maintaining this balance. 1) Let your child know what your expectations are. Be very clear about them and let him know the boundaries of acceptable behavior. 2) Give fair and consistent consequences when those boundaries are crossed. There are excellent parenting books at your Christian book store or in your church's library. Look for suggestions about consequences. Remember to deliver all discipline with firmness, but also with caring kindness. This environment will give your child a loving, secure home base that they can one day leave with confidence, taking with them all that you have taught.

Take Action: Think and pray about a specific behavior you would like your child to change. How will you teach the appropriate behavior? What will be the consequences if they misbehave? Approach your discipline plan with firmness, as well as care and love.



Wisdom from the Word

*“Everyone who quotes proverbs
will quote this proverb about you:
“Like mother, like daughter.”
— Ezekiel 16:44*



Day 8

At the Heart of It: Showing respect by putting others first.

Have you ever said this about a child you know: “Where in the world did that child learn to act that way?” The truth is children learn all kinds of behavior every day in their own homes—from their parents and siblings. That is the most natural environment for learning behavior. Do you feel good about your child’s training? Have they learned how to behave themselves around others? Children have to be taught to behave when taken to special events or during routine family activities. Parties or programs can sometimes bring out a child’s worst behavior. Are they ready to behave during holidays, during family events, at special productions? God’s Word for parents is that you are the best providers of the lessons that will prepare your child for life.

Kids learn the very basics of how to get along with others in their family. Getting along with others does not mean just getting along with their brothers and sisters, but also with other families and friends. One of the major themes in the Bible is loving others. Philippians 2:3 teaches that we are to “do nothing out of selfish ambition...rather, in humility value others above yourselves.”

As moms, we must teach our children to not only look after their own interests, but to look out for interests of others. A child learns a lot by watching their parents’ behavior; how they act and respond to others. Remember that you have a young one watching you and it is likely they will imitate what they see. How nice when someone remarks, “I know where she learned that. She behaves just like her mom!” And that is a good thing.

Take Action: Basic good manners show respect for others. Do your children know these basics? Today is a good day to begin these instructions or to build on what do they know.



Wisdom from the Word

*“In everything I did,
I showed you that by this kind
of hard work we must help the weak,
remembering the words
the Lord Jesus himself said:
‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”
—Acts 20:35*



Day 9

At the Heart of it: Teach them to care for others.

We think that Christmas is just a natural time for families to think of others. However, being generous to those in need and those we love should not be reserved to only one time of year. God's Word teaches us that serving others is a part of a Christian's responsibility. Children often have the opportunity to be of service to others, but helping others is an important behavior that kids must be taught.

Children don't just naturally know what to do or how to be a help to others. You can teach your child to be a kind friend. You can also train your child to care about how others feel. When you teach kind behavior, your own example is the best teacher.

You may find that showing them how to be kind is sometimes easier than talking about it. Even at a very early age, children know when Mom is being nice and caring towards someone. Kids will pick up on your helpful and generous ways. They are paying attention and listening to what you say about people, too.

When you take a meal to an elderly adult in your neighborhood or when you give away some clothing to a needy family, you are modeling kind behavior. These actions say to your child: "This is how it is done." And one day, your child will remember how you handled a difficult situation for someone, or even how you responded when somebody was hurting or ill. Your child will see your confidence in helping others and develop the skill of being kind and caring to others.

Take Action: You and your child think about someone who needs help—a visit, a meal, some clothing—together do something to bless their life.



Wisdom from the Word

*“Do you see someone
skilled in their work?
They will serve before kings.”
—Proverbs 22:29*



Day 10

At the Heart of it: Show them the pathway.

Proverbs 22:6 teaches that if we train a child in the way he should go, when he grows up, he will stay that way. However, this is a guiding principle, not a behavior predictor because of human choice. However, when parents train their children in God's way, most of them will turn out right. Parents who don't train their kids, just assume their children will figure life out on their own. We know this: that kids don't—and won't—just naturally become responsible, self-disciplined, hard workers. It takes a lot of effort, time and patience by their loving parents for a child to become what they need to be.

It's been said that when a child learns to walk, it's time to put them to work. Now, that doesn't mean a toddler mows the yard, but a walking toddler can learn to bring mommy their toy. A little one can follow you down the hall carrying a washcloth to put away. If you will begin when your baby is this young, training them to be your helper, you will naturally be training them in the way that ALL kids need. They will learn to be responsible, to help with the family chores, to be involved and to not be lazy. God gave parents the job of training kids to be productive. That training starts at home. And if your child isn't a mere baby, you can start now.

Take Action: Make a short list of the things that your child can do around the house that are appropriate for their age and size. It may be to take out the trash or put the pillows back on the couch. It should be something that will begin to show them that they can contribute to the family and their home.



Wisdom from the Word

“Marriage should be honored by all.”

—Hebrews 13:4

*Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil;
cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love.
Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking
in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor,
serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope,
patient in affliction,
faithful in prayer.*

—Romans 12: 9-12



Day 11

At the Heart of It: How do you love him?

Does your marriage matter? Matter to whom? Well, does your marriage matter to your friends? To your church family? Does your marriage matter to your parents? What about—does your marriage matter to your children? And most importantly, does your marriage matter to you?

When things or people or anything matters to us, we tend to behave in ways that prove that is so. If you were to list on a scale of 1–5 your top priorities in your life, where would your marriage be on that list? Do you do things regularly that bless your marriage—grow your relationship—improve the health of your marriage?

Today, what could you say to your husband that will let him know that he is loved by you? Can you show energy and attention to him? Your marriage matters to God even more than it matters to you! He is the creator of marriage and He says that marriage is good for you. It is good for the family of God and it is good for your children.

How do you show God that your marriage matters?

Take Action: Begin today to pray for your husband. Ask God's blessing on his safety, for protection over his job, for his spiritual walk.



Wisdom from the Word

*“And let us consider
how we may spur one another
on toward love and good deeds.”
—Hebrews 10:24*



Day 12

At the Heart of It: Your marriage is the backbone of your family

You may be a new parent adjusting to life after bringing your baby into your home. You may be the parent of a rowdy, busy kid. Or you may be experiencing that tumultuous teen time. Adjusting your marriage relationship to make room for a new family member, or the needs of a demanding child, or the frustrations and fun of a teenager, requires some concentrated effort.

As special as kids are, their presence can put a strain on your relationship in ways that you have not prepared for. You and your spouse may be struggling more than you ever thought possible. Having kids, however, can help you build a stronger, more supportive friendship than ever before.

The difference between the marriages where happiness goes down after having kids, and the marriages which actually get better, is the quality of the relationship when kids come along. If you still are working on getting that quality—put more effort into understanding your husband. Your children deserve to live in a family where Mom and Dad are close, connected and committed—not just to them, but to each other.

It does take hard work to build a happy, healthy and strong bond. Now is always the best time to correct any missteps in your relationship, to take time to be better friends, and tare down any walls that you've started to build. Strengthen your relationship with your hubby now, and your children will be a blissful blessing to you both and to your marriage.

Take Action: Spend some time alone with your husband: a quiet evening, a night out, or a weekend away. Get to know his dreams for your marriage. Share yours with him. Re-focus on your relationship.



Wisdom from the Word

*“A wife of noble character who can find?
She is worth far more than rubies.
Her husband has full confidence in her
and lacks nothing of value. She brings him good,
not harm, all the days of her life.”*

—Proverbs 31:10–12



Day 13

At the Heart of It: Be creative and thoughtful today

Surely one of the most common challenges every married couple has is keeping a life-time committed relationship healthy and exciting. No matter how long you've been married, it takes concentrated effort to keep your love lively. That means that you may have to do something out of the ordinary to break the routine—and the mundane—of your relationship.

God's plan for marriage is for a lifetime, but a committed love can become oh-so-regular. So, if you are to keep your marriage alive, here are a few hints to bring romance and love back:

- 1) Write notes and leave them everywhere so he can find them. Leave them in unexpected places like in a suit pocket, a lunchbox, or taped to his cell phone.
- 2) Have your children make a sweet card for Dad.
- 3) Leave a loving message on his voice mail.
- 4) Bake your sweetie his favorite dessert or dinner.
- 5) Take an unexpected, surprise trip out of town for a weekend.

Now you're thinking, make your romance matter in your marriage and give your husband a blessing. Try not to do it expecting a certain response from him, just be a blessing to him.

Take Action: Pick one special thing to do for your husband today. Each week for the next four weeks, do another unexpected, special, loving thing.



Wisdom from the Word

Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel.

—Philippians 1:27



Day 14

At the Heart of It: *Those who pray together, stay together*

A mature, married woman told her best friend a secret. It was the major influencing factor in her healthy and very happy relationship with her husband of 42 years. She said the secret for their successful marriage was that they regularly prayed together.

Years ago, Dr. James Dobson of Focus on the Family asked some older married couples at a conference to give candid direction to the younger generation about the methods that had worked to make their marriages successful. Overwhelmingly a simple, very basic recommendation was repeated by these mature folks. It was to establish and maintain a Christ-centered home.

The hundreds of experienced couples told the young people at the conference, if a young husband and wife are deeply committed to Jesus Christ, their marriage has an enormous advantage in dealing with challenges to their relationship. Dr. Dobson also said that he believed the most stabilizing factor in his marriage is the prayer life that he and his wife, Shirley, share.

The divorce rate in our country is evidence that it is very difficult for couples to stay committed to their marriages. With God at the center of your marriage, it is possible you can courageously commit to a lifetime marriage. And you can start that today.

Take Action: *Focus your prayers and your plans today on how you and your husband can draw closer to God—together and individually.*



Wisdom from the Word

“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered,

it keeps no record of wrongs.

Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.

It always protects, always trusts,

always hopes, always perseveres.

Love never fails.”

—1 Corinthians 13:4–8



Day 15

At the Heart of it: Love is what you do

Have you been had the flu or a cold lately? If you are sick, feeling loving towards your husband is sometimes the last thing on your mind. You just don't feel good. God's Word speaks in ways that let you know love is so much more than a feeling. You've heard it from others, though, that love isn't love—if you don't have that “lovin' feeling”. But the thing is love is always more about our actions and attitudes than about our feelings.

Long-time married folks, who are definitely the wiser among us about long-time love, will say that there were many times in their 30, 40 or 50-year marriages that they didn't FEEL like they loved their spouse—but because of the commitment that they had made to each other, they knew that if they behaved and acted in loving ways, their relationship would be what it needed to be.

1 Corinthians 13, which is known as the love chapter in the Bible, gives many behaviors to describe what love it. Love is kind, patient and hopeful. Maybe if things aren't going so well in your relationship, you should practice kindness or patience. There is hope and definitely more joy in a marriage when the virtues of love are practiced. It's because doing these things makes your marriage healthier—and holier.

Work on your attitude- and even if you don't feel like it—act loving. And experience why God tells us that love—well, here I'll just let Him tell you: “And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.” 1 Corinthians 13:13

Take Action: Start today with a kind word for your husband and end your day with a kind word for him also. Practice that small virtue to have a more loving marriage.



Wisdom from the Word

“But for Adam no suitable helper was found. So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man’s ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman, for she was taken out of man.” For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.”

—Genesis 2:22–24



Day 16

At the Heart of It: It's about Holiness

Have you ever heard someone say, "I know that God wants me to be happy?" Perhaps you may have even said that. You may not realize it, but that thought is contrary to God's purpose for your life.

He is not focused on your happiness. He is focused instead on your holiness.

We are His children. And just as we want the best for our own kids, God wants us to live lives that will result in the best source of happiness—eternal joy! One Biblical passage that teaches this principle is in Ephesians 5. The behaviors of marriage are compared to Christ's loving sacrifice for His church. Again, holiness is the goal. Happiness is a side effect we'll experience when we live well for the Lord.

He wants to reform us and transform us into His image. God tells we are to first love others. What if God's plan for your marriage isn't that you are to yearn for a happy marriage, but to desire instead to become more like Him? As you get to know God better, you will begin to trust Him and love Him more deeply. As you get to know God in this way, you may find that your trust and love for your husband grows deeper also.

What if God designed marriage to make us more holy?

Take Action: Read Ephesians 5:21-34. What do you think God is telling you here about the significance of your marriage to Him? Knowing this, does it make any difference in the way you think about your marriage?



Wisdom from the Word

*“Be careful to obey all these regulations
I am giving you, so that it may always go
well with you and your children after you,
because you will be doing what is good
and right in the eyes of the LORD your God.”*

—Deuteronomy 12:28



Day 17

At the Heart of it: *The time is short; love on them today.*

It's always nice when you realize that you really do know more than you thought about parenting. You have more information about raising kids than you could ever use. The internet, books, magazines, and parenting classes makes a lot of information available.

Most parents know how children should be treated. You know that your child needs your attention and affection. And in order to do a QUALITY job as a parent, you must put in the QUANTITY of time required.

God has given us an enormous responsibility to train our children for HIM. God wants us to train our children first and foremost to love Him. Deuteronomy. 6:5 says: "Love your God with your whole heart. Love Him with all that is in you, love Him with all you've got." In order for our kids to know the love of God, it's important that they know that they are lovable.

As human beings, we first experience love, we first know about love, from our parents. There are no short cuts in this. Children don't wait for us to find time—they just keep on growing up right in front of our eyes. Take time for your family.

Make a consistent, daily effort to do an activity, play a game, and really talk with your children. Hug your little ones and enjoy the quickly passing days of their childhood. Show your children love by spending time with them; that is a mark of a QUALITY parent.

Take Action: *Plan a Family Fun Night. Play board games—Scrabble, Monopoly or Candyland, etc. Watch a family movie. Order pizza. Make popcorn. Make it fun and special for each person. And then... make it a tradition*



Wisdom from the Word

*“But from everlasting to everlasting the
LORD’S love is with those who fear him,
and his righteousness with their children’s children.”*

—Psalm 103:17

*“Sons are a heritage from the LORD,
children a reward from him.”*

—Psalm 127:3



Day 18

At the Heart of It: Family traditions mean family time together.

For families, traditions are a way a way of life that defines who that family is, what it stands for, and what they mean to each other. Do you have traditions in your family? You probably do, even though you maybe haven't thought about the things you do that way.

You may have certain bedtime rituals that are just part of your family's routine -- like saying prayers together, or reading the Bible each night. When you attend church together regularly, that is a family tradition for you. Traditions in families serve us in two ways: to link us to each other and to link us to our past.

When a family purposefully does things together regularly, it connects each family member to each other, usually no matter what the activity is! It helps your family to have reasons to just be together—to make memories—or spend time just being a family.

In the Old Testament, God's people were encouraged to pass on their faith stories to their children through ceremonies and special events. These rituals were in place to keep the family connected—linking the family—generation to generation. Passing on your faith can be a terrific family tradition for you to build.

Take Action: What are you doing as a family to build a tradition of faith? Have a conversation with your husband and children about these moments or activities. Build on these.



Wisdom from the Word

*“Therefore, whoever humbles himself
like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”*

—Matthew 18:4

*“Children’s children are a crown to the aged,
and parents are the pride of their children.”*

—Psalm 17:6



Day 19

At the Heart of It: Make family memories during the holidays.

Mom, does it seem that you are either cleaning up from a holiday or getting ready for the next one? Even though thinking about holiday preparations causes you to break out in a cold sweat, aren't the holidays significant times for your family? Aren't they when your family creates important memories?

Whatever your family does to make those special memories, these family traditions say, "We are a family and we really matter to each other." These activities take thought, time and energy to plan, and are experiences that build an affectionate bond in your family.

These events don't have to be expensive or labor intensive, but they sometimes take some clever planning. Plan some focused activities for you and your children so that you can relax with them—activities like a movie night by the fireplace, or some excitement—like a trip to a favorite friend's holiday gathering.

The purpose of this planning is to unite your family through fun times and build happy memories. The holidays just give a good excuse to help make this happen. These significant times strengthen your connections and make your relationships healthier.

Now, go have fun with your family!

Take Action: What family activity do your children look forward to the most? Spend some time dreaming, thinking and even praying about how to make it even more significant for them this year.



Wisdom from the Word

*“Be careful, and watch yourselves closely
so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen
or let them slip from your heart as long as you live.*

*Teach them to your children
and to their children after them.”*

—Deuteronomy 4:9



Day 20

At the Heart of It: Take time to talk and time to listen.

Teaching your child about life and the lessons they need to learn takes a dedicated amount of your time. And because this is important time with your kids, it may even require some self-discipline on your part.

Proverbs 22:6 says that if you train your child in the right way, he will not turn away from your teaching. But teaching means you have to use your family times as teaching moments so that the lessons matter and count. Time like that is really “quality time”. That means little to no distractions from other folks, work, TV, or video games. For these life lessons to stick, you may want to schedule time for these talks for just you and your child. It takes that kind of planning to have this kind of quality time together.

You could go fishing together. It's a great way to relax and just spend some time listening to your child talk about what they think about their life. You could have a conversation about what your child wants to do when they grow up—and really pay attention. Listen to their answers without judgment or criticism.

Mom, this is also a great time to talk about your values and your beliefs. It's a nice time to talk about family life. Parents have an enormous influence over their children and how they are going to turn out. God knows this and may be why He says “If you train a child a certain way, that's the way that he will go.” The time you spend today will definitely be worth it—for now and for eternity.

Take Action: Plan a special “date” with your child- with each one, if you have multiple kids. Over the next six months, make a plan to spend several hours, perhaps half of a day with each child doing something fun and relaxing for both of you.



Wisdom from the Word

*“The wise woman builds her house,
but with her own hands
the foolish one tears hers down.”*

—Proverbs 14:1

*“She watches over the affairs of her household
and does not eat the bread of idleness.”*

—Proverbs 31:27



Day 21

At the Heart of it: Strengthen your family on the road.

A significant time for your kids to build great childhood memories is during school break time. Often when adults think back on their growing up years they will talk about the wonderful vacations that their families took together.

Here's some suggestions: First, try to have a great time with your kids while not running up the credit card bill. It doubles your enjoyment if you enjoy a little cost effectiveness. You can try camping! In surveys about recreational experiences, kids often rate camping in the great outdoors as being at the top of the list of fun things to do. This family activity has the entertainment built into the experience. Visit local tourist spots. Museums and even outdoor parks are usually free. Lower cost vacations like these usually mean short car trips and can be accomplished on a weekend. Check out your state's tourism bureau. Probably in less than three to four hours of travel you can find some fun, and even free, tourist attractions. In fact, you can go to a state park, where you can fish and swim until you are all totally worn out!

The main point of these mini-vacations is to relax, laugh, and enjoy spending time with your family. Away from work and school routines. You will strengthen your family's love and you will have time to share your faith with your kids, as you make warm, unforgettable memories.

Take Action: Look at your calendar to see when the next school break is. Plan a mini-vacation to a local tourist site. If it is low-cost and low-stress, everyone will return home feeling more refreshed from the fun times.



Wisdom from the Word

*“Therefore, as God’s chosen people,
holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion,
kindness, humility,
gentleness and patience.”*

—Colossians 3:12



Day 22

At the Heart of It: Making your home feel safe.

You may have been raised in a home where love, appreciation and kindness were the norm. Or you may have been in a home where your parents yelled at you, criticized you and maybe even physically or verbally abused you. Most kids are blessed to be raised by parents who treat them with patience and positive attention. If you were not, here's some good news about your horrific home situation: God's grace and guidance allows you to create a different type of family.

Regardless of the way that you were raised, you can choose to start a new legacy for your kids. You can choose to treat everyone in your home—your husband included—with decency and with kindness. Anger and yelling does not have to be what your children experience. What experts know, and common sense tells us, is that these behaviors are confusing and damaging to children, and create feelings of anxiety and insecurity.

If you grew up in a home with drama and chaos, you do not have to allow this behavior to be a part of your own home now. If this has been your behavior in the past, it is your responsibility to change that beginning today. Do this by valuing each person in the family. Make eye contact. Speak kindly, not rudely. Tell each person in your family, regularly and routinely, that you appreciate them. Speak affectionate and loving words.

Whether you grew up in a happy home or an unhealthy one, these are some practical ways to bless your family. It is how to establish a healthy way of acting in your home.

Take Action: Choose three things to do this week to express your appreciation and care for your family. Do it. Try it. You'll be blessed. And your kids will learn how to act from you.



Wisdom from the Word

*For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children
and his household after him to keep
the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just.*

—Genesis 18:9

*Honor your father and your mother,
so that you may live long in the land
the LORD your God is giving you.*

—Exodus 20:12



Day 23

At the Heart of It: Teach your children solid values.

Families are the place where values are learned—you learned yours in your home. For instance: You either learned to be honest—or you didn't. Your parents probably taught you good manners. They may have taught you to complete a task and how to work hard.

Whether it was done intentionally or not, all of us learn from our own parents personal values. You may also have learned Biblical values. Some parents are excellent teachers of values. They are intentional and purposeful in training their children. Are you intentional in your teaching or do you just hope that your kids will pick up on them?

Children are like sponges and they will absorb anything that is going on in your home. They will absorb the words said, the emotions, and your actions. If you behave in respectful ways with your spouse, your children will learn this value from you. If you treat others with kindness, they will learn to behave with kindness towards others.

You CAN teach, train and model good, healthy values for your children. Even if you didn't have a childhood where your parents taught you, you can do better. So today, become the loving, respectful AND intentional parent that your child needs and deserves.

Take Action: Choose a specific Biblical value, such as kindness, respect, or patience, and think how you can teach your child how to behave using this virtue. Practice this behavior yourself and also train your child to do so.



Wisdom from the Word

*“The LORD does not look at
the things people look at.
People look at the outward appearance,
but the LORD looks at the heart.”
—1 Samuel 6:7*



Day 24

At the Heart of it: Watch what you watch for they are watching you

Who are you—at home? Really, who do your kids see? Are you the person that YOU want them to see or do they see the real you? Perhaps one of the reasons that it is hard to be ourselves with our children is that we are very aware that we are setting the example in behavior and words that our kids are to follow.

Family research tells us that children really do learn from the examples their parents give them. Focus on the Family research reported that teenagers said they watched certain movies and television shows because it was what their parents watched. And that can be a good thing—or not. One mom that I know watches hours of the Andy Griffith Show with her two kids. They are not crazy about the show -- but they are certainly crazy about their mom. And because she spends so much time with them, they indulge her and watch her favorite show with her.

As your child's parent you have a tremendous influence on what kind of things your family will be entertained by. What music, TV shows, movies you like will influence your children's choices. If you make good choices, it is much more likely that your kids will too. We show our children how to be wise about what is healthy to watch and listen to when we make wise choices ourselves. Remember YOUR kids are always watching YOU.

Take Action: Sit down with your kids one night and look through the TV guide and decide what shows are best to watch and which ones are good influences. Make a TV-viewing program plan and stick with it.



Wisdom from the Word

*“He took a little child whom he placed among them.
Taking the child in his arms,
he said to them, “Whoever welcomes one
of these little children in my name welcomes me.”*
—Mark 9:36-37



Day 25

At the Heart of It: Make time to spend time

Are you flexible? Not PHYSICALLY flexible, but are you adaptable... do you adjust easily? Child experts tell us that kids by their very nature are adaptable people. This just means that they are blessed with the amazing quality of being able to adjust to most situations.

Children are resilient and just have more of a willingness to adapt and change. Kids even adjust to neglect, although years down the road the negative affects of that will begin to appear.

As their moms, it's important that we understand that sometimes the feedback we get from kids is more about this adjustment ability rather than their true reaction. The feelings and fears may go far deeper than these little ones can express. Child experts say that ALL kids need time and attention from their parents. Although it might seem like some children do alright without it, their little minds and hearts are being hurt.

Let's remember this as parents: we only have one shot at raising our kids. Make time to spend time with your children. Proverbs 22:6 challenges parents to "Bring up a child by teaching him the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn away from it." Teaching and training kids takes time—time from a loving parent. And remember this also: for a child TIME spells L-O-V-E.

Take Action: Spend time with your child this week doing something involved with them. Play a board game or work a puzzle. Throw a ball. And take a ride in the car with one of your children. Listen to what they say about their friends, school or their faith questions.



Wisdom from the Word

*“Your word is a lamp for my feet,
a light on my path.”
—Psalm 119:105*



Day 26

At the Heart of It: The Living Word

God gave us an instruction book for life: the Bible. Although you may struggle sometimes to understand His Word or even at times, you may take His Word for granted, your life would not be the same without it, would it?

Figuring out life without this instruction manual would be out of the question! That would be like me finding miscellaneous car parts on my garage floor and attempting to build a working engine! I would be completely lost.

But God's Word is not just a set of religious instructions, it is alive. The Spirit of God moves through His written Word. The Bible guides us, shows us how to live, and how to have a good life protected by God's guidance. The Bible can be your family's textbook, emergency manual, and most importantly, the key to knowing God.

If you believe God's Word to be true, you will want to live as if it is your guidebook. As moms, we can best demonstrate how a life of faith is done by living purposely for God in front of our children. You can only really do that well when you know what God's Word teaches.

Have you read the Gospels lately? Matthew, Mark, Luke or John? These books teach us about the life of Jesus—what He said and did. What about any of the letters to the churches like Philippians or Ephesians? These books give specific instructions about how to live like God wants us to live.

Take Action: *Pick a specific book in the Bible that you would like to get to know better. Dedicate a week or a month to reading that book and seeing what God has to teach you through a concentrated reading of His Word.*



Wisdom from the Word

My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.

—Proverbs 2:1-6



Day 27

At the Heart of It: Impacting the generations to come

Are you a person of influence? Who are the folks in your life whom you impact, whom you inspire or encourage? There are people you see often to whom you have a certain level of importance. As a mom, you know the importance of this kind of influence.

Even while you are at home with little ones, you can see your work through the eyes of a 2-year old and peanut butter sandwiches and Sesame Street. Mothers know that what they do today with their babies, toddlers and teens will effect at least one generation. But as a mother --- as God's woman -you not only impact your children's lives and this generation, the truth is that your influence is far more far-reaching than that.

Just think about this: if you have two children and the six generations following you were to each have two children, your life will have influenced 252 children. If you had five children and the six generations following you had five children you will have influenced 97,655 children's lives!

Mom, you will impact, influence and inspire for generations. And faith begins in your generation with you. Your Christian walk is what will show up as an influence—not just in your children's lives—but in generations to come. You begin the faith walk of your family right now in your generation.

Take Action: Meditate on this: What do you want the two generations coming after you, your children and your grandchildren, to know about your walk with God? Is your life today such that the next two generations will be positively influenced by your faith?



Wisdom from the Word

*“Take the helmet of salvation and
the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.
And pray in the Spirit on all occasions
with all kinds of prayers and requests.”
—Ephesians 6:17–18*



Day 28

At the Heart of it: Rely on the Word of God

Where do you, as a Christian mother, go for help when you need it? What do you do when you get to a place and you don't know what to do next?

These are the exact questions that Cindy asked a friend from her church. This friend, a wise godly woman, answered Cindy by saying that as God's people, we can go to the Bible to get the help we need to live our lives. Cindy's friend explained that "if you don't know where to look or what to read in the Bible to get the help you need, it doesn't do you a whole lot of good." This is what she told Cindy, "As a Christian mother, it is very important for you to know what God's Word says about life, not only for your own knowledge, but also to help your children to know about God. To help you with your Bible knowledge, check out the Bible study books in our church's library. The Christian bookstore is also full of 'How to Study the Bible' books."

As Cindy's knows, the Bible is full of practical answers to everyday problems. It helps when you know how to look for those answers. It may be helpful to talk to an older, wiser friend, your pastor, or Bible class teacher. Begin to learn more about God's Word. In order to pass on faith to your kids, building your own is the place to start.

Take Action: What do you think may be the most useful thing that you would like the Bible to help you with? It may be a parenting question, or something about your marriage. After looking up some possible answers in your Bible concordance, you may want to ask your pastor or Bible class teacher for other suggestions to find answers in the Word.

