

# Tips for Building Stronger Families

## *Date Night for Mom and Dad*

Most married couples need more fun in their lives. As we go through the daily, weekly, monthly, and lifetime grind of dealing with work, family, and other relationships, we simply need time to reconnect. A great way to do this is to establish a regular date night with your spouse. Set aside one night a week each week to go out by yourselves...no kids. Start simple. A dinner and a movie provide an evening of togetherness. But don't get caught up in *that* rut. Mix it up. Take a drive. Stop for a picnic. Remember back to when you were dating. Do some of those things you enjoyed while in that dating relationship, ie, miniature golf, horseback riding, hiking, swimming, or just going to a ball game. Be creative. Plan it out. Guys, don't just ask her, "okay, what do you want to do?" She will appreciate whatever you take the time to plan. Surprise her! This is a vital part in keeping your marriage fresh and exciting. And sometimes things won't go as planned providing you with some great, humorous memories.

Here are some ideas for beginning your date nights:

1. bike ride
2. visit a zoo or museum
3. attend a concert
4. go bowling
5. visit a tourist attraction in your area where you've never been: Dixie Caverns, Natural Bridge, or maybe even the Mill Mountain Star!
6. go roller / ice skating
7. play a board game
8. go fishing

As Paul admonishes in Ephesians 5 for husbands to love their wives, there is no better way than to take time to spend with her. Time is critical to the husband/ wife relationship. Don't let the lack of time spent together be a source of contention. The whole family will be happier and more together when mom and dad spend quality time by themselves to nurture their relationship. The children will love you for it as well!

## *The Five "W's" for Family Devotions*

Having a specific time set aside daily for personal bible study is integral to the spiritual growth of each Christian's life. God expects his children to know what His Word says and then to follow through with His principles and commands in obedience to Him. This is critical in maintaining fellowship with our Lord Jesus on a personal level. God also expects Christian families to be close to each other as well as to Him. With the deterioration of the family due to all of the world's influences, it is vital that the Christian family unite as God had originally intended. So, I have put together the "Five W's" that will help families in starting their own devotional time together.

First W: WHO?

Whether you have a family of two or twenty-two it is necessary to have EVERYONE present during the devotional time. This needs to be a priority. Ideally, Dad would have the responsibility to lead the devotional thought. God intends for the husband/father to be the spiritual leader of the house and this would solidify that principle in the minds of the children. However, the important thing is for the family to come together regardless of who leads it.

## Second W: WHAT?

This can be the most daunting task AFTER you get everyone together. What will be the topic? What shall the devotional illustrate? Just remember that this doesn't have to be anything out of the sermons of Billy Graham. It may start out with a simple question: "What are you studying in Sunday School? Or "Is there something any of you have questions about concerning what a teacher at school said about church or the Bible? or maybe what the Pastor said? Some of the best "devotionals" come simply out of conversations with your family about God's Word. What ever the topic or discussion, **always** read and discuss scripture. This should be the **primary** focus. Have a plan. There are great devotional books available at the book store and is a great source. God will use it to bring your family closer together as you study His Word.

## Third W: WHERE?

There are varying opinions on this. Some say there should be a specific place each time you have your family together for devotions. I like the idea of switching it up. If it's nice outside why not go in the yard or on the deck. If at bed time, why not switch rooms every time? Where ever you decide, it needs to be a place where there are no distractions. This is critical. As parents, you need to have everyone's attention. No one should be doing homework or texting their friends. Make sure you have a setting where you have everyone's undivided attention. You want your children to be relaxed and comfortable and free to speak their minds if appropriate. Don't make it boring or mundane for them. This can only make them resent "having to do devotions".

## Fourth W: WHEN?

This can be the toughest question when dealing with families trying to decide when the best time to get everyone together is, especially when your children are teenagers. Trying to schedule family members all together at once is certainly tough to do. Many families have time immediately following the evening meal. Everyone is together and this can be a valuable time to take a few minutes and look at scripture. Please keep in mind that when dealing with your family devotional time **quality** is more important than **quantity**. You don't have to have a long drawn out sermonette to be effective in your devotionals. So, whatever time you can set aside is appropriate. But be cautious. You will certainly want to avoid rushing through just to "get 'er done". Be intentional. Most families like the idea of getting together right before bed time. Things are winding down and it's a good time to talk about your day and conclude it in God's Word. Mornings work for some families but if you're anything like ours, there is just too much rushing around trying to get out of the house to school, work, etc.

## Fifth W: WHY?

The family, as God intended, is the center of culture and society. If we're going to be godly people, we've got to have godly homes. The key ingredients to a godly home are a godly mom and dad who are loving and praying for their children and who acknowledge that God is the head of their home. The core of a solid family is founded in the rock that is Jesus Christ. Having a family time of devotions is paramount to keeping families together and growing children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Ephesians 6:4.