

Secret of a Loving Family

People were confused in the times of Jesus' ministry. Their religious leaders only pretended to know God and to live a holy life. These Israelite leaders asked Jesus a loaded question: "What is the greatest commandment?" Jesus' response challenged the leaders and the people: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind... and love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:37, 39). Obedience to these words of Jesus fulfills all the commandments and allows others to see what God is truly like.

Proving the genuineness of your faith starts in your own home. Is your Christian example confusing to your child because you act one way in public and another way at home? Children follow the example of those people with whom they live. The quality of your child's faith is directly influenced by the quality of your daily walk with the Lord. As you go about your day, your children watch, listen and learn from you.

"That's my mommy!" or, "That's my daddy!" your child may say with pride. You hold a highly important position in your child's life. As a Christian parent, you help shape your child's picture of Christ's love for him and model how a truly loving Christian lives.

Homes and families need to be safe places where Christ's love is exhibited. A family that is loving and close-knit does not "just happen." Close, loving relationships require commitment and time. The following areas are important in families that function well. Use these questions to help evaluate the interactions within the family God has given you.

Appreciation — How often do family members verbalize gratitude to God and for one another? Are you teaching siblings to say thank you to one another, not just to adults? How does your example show your child you appreciate your spouse as a person, not just as someone who provides or gives gifts? What are you doing to encourage appreciation of God-given differences of personalities, talents and interests?

Togetherness — How often does your family do things together? Do the things you do together allow for enjoyment of people as well as the activity, such as planting a garden or playing soccer? Does your family enjoy being together? How do you include the children in some appropriate adult activities? What family traditions have you established, or would you like to establish?

Communication — Are all family members encouraged to listen and talk to one another? Is one talkative

person allowed to dominate family times? How are you encouraging a quiet family member to interact and to communicate better? Do you look into your child's eyes when she is talking to you? How are you training your child to be a listener? Do you refrain from interrupting each other? If it is necessary to interrupt, do you say, "Excuse me"?

Commitment — Is each family member rightfully loyal to the family? Have you talked to your children about not sharing "family matters" outside the family? Do you avoid talking about your spouse or children negatively to other family members and to outsiders? How are siblings praying for one another, as well as for Mom and Dad?

Faith — Is your family consistent in church attendance? How often does your family participate in church activities? Do you share with one another what you are learning about God and how you are obeying Him? What kind of a daily family devotion time does your family have? Do they see you reading the Bible and praying? How does your family know one another's prayer needs? What ways might your family serve others and actively be the hands and feet of Jesus?

Crisis — Are problems viewed as challenges from God's hands to meet together, or are they faced alone? Is there sufficient trust so family members willingly share their problems to receive help, prayer and encouragement from the rest of the family? Does the family pray together over big and small things (mother's surgery and son's lost toy)? Does your family seek only to place the blame in a crisis situation or look for God's providential hand in it?

To achieve closeness does not necessarily require finding more time to do more things together. Finding the time for the family often can be resolved merely by including your spouse and child more often in more of your life — in your prayers, thoughts, activities, conversations and fun. Although building a loving and close family does not mean scheduling longer days and more activities, it does mean keeping the commitment to be together.

We may hear, "What matters is the *quality* not the *quantity* of time I spend with my child." This is a gross simplification of a lifetime responsibility. Good parenting requires both quantity and quality. Children of all ages benefit from just spending time with Mom and Dad, as well as from the planned "quality" parent-child occasions.

Where can you begin? The following acronym is easy to remember and may help you evaluate and prioritize your time:

Consider your schedule — write it down so you can see it.

Handle with prayer — ask God to help you evaluate your family’s activities and your time schedules.

Initiate the plan God shows you — begin immediately to put it into effect.

Look for the blessings — obedience brings blessing!

Discover the fruit of God’s love in you and in your child.

Applying this acronym may lead to a closer and stronger family where faith and love are demonstrated. This love and faith in action provide a strong witness to others of what God is really like.

Preschool Program
<p>Bible Reading: Matthew 22:34-40</p> <p>Bible Truth: God is not pleased with people who pretend to be good and holy.</p> <p>Scripture Verse: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” — Matthew 22:37 (NIV84).</p>

School Program
<p>Bible Truth: Living for anything other than love for God will finally bring loss of everything.</p> <p>Scripture Verse: “Jesus replied: ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and Prophets hang on these two commandments.” — Matthew 22:37-40 (NIV84)</p>