



Intentional **Parenting**



HomeLife

Building your family's faith at home

— **Guides** —

Giving a Strong Spiritual Legacy

> *If you are blessed with the gift of children, God has given you the most incredible opportunity and responsibility to help your child know, love and follow Jesus. Every believing parent hopes his or her child will embrace the faith and grow deep spiritual roots. Studies tell us that more than half of those growing up in Christian homes will walk away from Christianity by the time they leave the teen years. One reason is that parents often “outsource” the spiritual formation of their children to the church. While a good church is very important, God designed the family to be the primary place where faith is nurtured.*

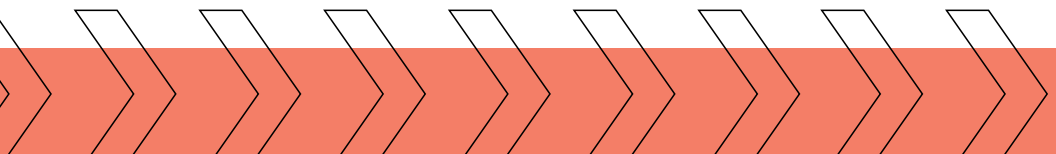
These four guiding principles can help you be more intentional about your child's faith.

The Legacy Principle

Scriptures tell us that what we do today directly influences the multi-generational cycle of family traits, beliefs and actions – for good or bad. (Exodus 20:5–6, Psalm 78:5–8). Passing a strong faith to our children begins by having a strong faith ourselves, modeling the Gospel in our marriages and in how we relate to those closest to us. Some of us need to break negative cycles that may have started with our own upbringing in order to launch a new, improved legacy for the next generation.

The Likelihood Principle

The good news is that in the context of healthy relationships, children tend to embrace the values of their parents. Proverbs 22:6 tells us that when children learn right from wrong at home under the nurturing, loving training of parents, they tend to adopt mom and dad's beliefs. While there are no guarantees because every child has a free will, kids are far more likely to embrace their parents' faith if they enjoy their parents' company! This is a big part of the reason the Bible warns



parents not to “provoke your children to wrath” but rather “bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4). Bottom line – a strong relationship with mom and dad is key to a strong Christian faith.

The Lenses Principle

Jesus taught that our Enemy’s primary weapon is deception – getting us to believe and live according to lies rather than truth (John 8:44). When someone is deceived, he or she doesn’t know it! Our children are growing up in a culture that often bombards them with lies. An hour or two per week at church is no match for the hundreds of hours spent with media, public school and friends. It is the job of parents to equip children with the corrective “lenses” of truth so they can better navigate the deceptive roads of life.

The Learning Principle

Our children can only learn what we teach them in a manner that will reach them. Children fall into one of three stages that should guide the methods we choose for discussing our faith and values at home.

- **THE IMPRINT PERIOD: Toddler to about Age 7 //** Small children are all ears. They will believe it because mom or dad said it, much as a gosling imprints itself onto its mother and follows her wherever she leads. Young children soak in what we tell them – so this is an ideal season for teaching them basic Bible stories, memorization and other building-block truths of Christianity.
- **THE IMPRESSION PERIOD: About Age 8 to Early Teen //** During this season, children no longer accept what we say at face value. They may question us, push back, or even argue. During this season, children need to know what we believe. They also need help understanding the rationale behind those beliefs. This is a positive part of their faith development because it means they have grown past blind acceptance and are ready for deeper understanding. Take opportunities to have faith conversations and to weave holy habits into the fabric of your home (Deuteronomy 6:4–9).

- **THE COACHING PERIOD: Early Teen to Young Adult //**
Our job changes when the kids enter the coaching period. We can motivate, encourage, challenge and advise. We can't force feed. We can help them clearly articulate what they believe, challenge their thinking, remind them of the "basics" learned during the "practices" of the imprint and impression years.



Understanding the different stages of development can help parents become intentional about creating and capturing opportunities to nurture the roots of faith in their children.

Going Further Resources

Courageous Parenting by Senior Pastor Jack Graham and Deb Graham // *An extensive guide to building families on the unshakable foundation of Jesus Christ*

Going Further Prestonwood Support

Prestonwood KIDZ // Prestonwood offers a variety of programs that come alongside parents in their effort to instill faith in children including age-graded weekend classes, AWANA, camps and much more. For more information, visit prestonwood.org/kidz.

Student Ministry // To come alongside parents, Prestonwood provides a range of ministries for teens. If your student needs a minister speaking into his or her life, visit prestonwoodstudents.org to explore opportunities for connecting your student to one of the student pastors.

For additional resources, scan code:



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Baptist Church

Dr. Jack Graham, Senior Pastor
972-820-5000 | prestonwood.org/homelife