

Raising a family today has to be about the most challenging thing anyone has to do. Between parents working long hours, things that need to be done around the house, kids school and activity schedules, the average American family only spends about 37 minutes together on weekdays. How many families eat more meals together in their cars than at the dinner table? With all the different places kids go today, how many Moms think of themselves more as chauffeurs than as Moms? Life on the run is not always good for the kids or for our families. If we are constantly moving from one thing to another, where are we leading our kids?

The big question is, "where are we running too?" Are we running to or from something? Where do we want our families to end up? I think most parents would say they want their kids to be happy, successful, and to contribute to society in a positive way. These are good enough goals, but they are not the most important goals, at least for Christian parents. Our number one goal should be that our children are all part of God's family. We want our kids to love the Lord and to love each other. We don't want to leave anyone behind.

Kids are great imitators. Children see and follow their parent's example. We've all seen little boys who can duplicate every move their dad can make and we've heard little girls who can repeat with the same tone everything their mom says. So what kind of example are we giving our children? Are we teaching them life on the run, over scheduled and over stressed? Or are we showing them how to prioritize their times, showing them how to say no to less important things and showing them how to handle stress. Are we showing them what it means to love and follow the Lord and to love and care for each other in the family?

The Christian parent's most important job is to pass on the Christian faith to our children. That means we need to make sure they know the Lord and His Word. We are told in Deuteronomy 6:6-8 (NLT), "**You must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands that I am giving you today. Repeat them again and again to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are on the road, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up.**" Do we do that? We talk about the things our kids are involved in, how things are going at school and the things we need to make sure we do, but do we talk with them about Jesus, about what it means to be a Christian on a daily basis?

Do our lives show our kids and the people around us that being a Christian is something we do when it is convenient; it is one option among many? Or do we show them that being a Christian is at the core who we are by the way we live, by reading God's Word, by serving others, by making worship a priority in our lives. Are we Jesus followers or people who go our own way and occasionally cross paths with Jesus?

Are we leading our children on the right path? We prepare our children for a variety of things. We prepare them for school and for a whole variety of activities. We prepare them to drive. We may prepare them to move out of our homes to start college or begin living on their own. But do we prepare them for a life of following Jesus? Jesus invited His Disciples to follow Him. He invites us and our children to do the same.

Proverbs tells us, **“Direct your children onto the right path, and when they are older, they will not leave it.”** (Proverbs 22:6) This is good advice to follow. It is not a guarantee that Children raised in a Christian home will never drift away from the Christian faith. But is good advice to model the faith life in our homes with our children. Children are more like to catch onto what we do than what we tell them to do. We need to model the Christian life for them?

So what do our children need? An Article from Family First, the All Pro Dads and I Mom parent organization, tells us **“7 Things Moms Should Do for Their Kids Every Day”**

1. Show physical affection. Hug them. Kiss them on the cheek. Tuck them in bed
2. Be fully present. Put down your cell phone or tablet. Stop what you are doing and pay attention to the child who wants your attention.
3. Be kind. Love without kindness doesn't feel very loving.
4. Use loving words. Convey your love and acceptance. Compliment them
5. Discipline calmly. Keep your cool. Discipline with firmness not harshness
6. Laugh with them. We can't be serious all the time.
7. Pray with them. When we pray with them, we show them we rely on God

Jesus is the good shepherd. We are the under shepherds for our children. So like sheep, our children need to be well fed, to be safe and not stressed and to have someone looking out for them. That is our job as parents.

Jesus said, **“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life.”** (John 10:27-28) We are at our best when walking with Jesus. Faith is a journey, following Jesus, learning from Him every day, looking to Him for guidance. The family of faith makes that journey together. Faith is trusting in the Lord to help us and lead us through the tough times of life. This is the promise from Psalm 23. **“Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me. Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me.”** (vs. 4 )

The things we talked about for parents are true for all of us. We are at our best when we are walking with Jesus. Jesus calls us to follow Him. The Holy Spirit gives us the gift of faith. We still have the free will to decide how we will live each day. Hopefully we can all say with Joshua, **“But as for me and my family, we will serve the Lord.”** (Joshua 24:15) Hopefully we will stay connect with one another in the family of faith so that we can all support each other as we walk together, following Jesus.

