

Books and more helps - Family Faith Formation

- ***At Home with God: Family Devotions for the School Year.* Broyles, Downing, Escamilla, & Oden, Upper Room Books, 2002.**

This book is ideal for today's busy family whose days are filled with many activities and little time for lengthy devotions. Daily devotions are provided from September through May. Selections may include a brief scripture, litany, faith-filled story or simple activity. Families with elementary-aged children can take 10 to 15 minutes to focus on their faith lives at morning or bedtimes. Perfect for providing a structure to find for faith conversation in busy lives.

- ***The Intentional Family: Simple Rituals to Strengthen Family Ties.* William J. Doherty, Quill Publishing, 1997. ISBN– 0-380-73205-X**

William Doherty talks about the need to plan *intentionally* for those activities that will allow a family to bond through rituals and traditions. He notes that an "intentional" family is one whose members create a plan for building and maintaining family ties. Doherty says that intentional families observe *rituals* that may be seasonal, celebrate specific occasions, and are involved with community. A ritualized activity is repeated, coordinated, predictable, significant, able to connect family members with core values, yet flexible enough to change if not working and able to survive periods of neglect. The basic enemies of rituals are those forces that pull family members into divergent tracks; ie – busy work schedules, consumerism, extracurricular activities, or members zoning out with various forms of media. Doherty recommends improving the quality of the activities a family is already doing (like mealtime or bedtime rituals) while at the same time reducing activities that interrupt and distract from family time together. (like TV, computer, CD's).

- ***How Do Our Children Grow? Introducing Children to God, Jesus, the Bible Prayer, Church, Revised Ed.* Delia Halverson, Chalice Press, 1999. ISBN-0-827-21437-5,**

In another of her groundbreaking resources, Halverson gives practical advice with many specific ideas to help parents build a foundation for Christian faithfulness in their children. This book would be ideal for a small study group or for individuals who are seeking practical wisdom in understanding how to deepen the faith lives of their children. Any parent faced with tough questions from children would find particularly helpful the chapter on "Introducing Death and Heaven."

- ***Nurturing Faith in Families: 425 Creative Ideas for Family Ministry, Jolene L. Roehlkepartain. Abingdon Press, 2002. ISBN-0-686-04921-0***

This book is a great resource for church leaders who are looking for activities that can be used for families within various church settings. There are easy to use sidebars with research information and practical insights. This book not only emphasizes how important family ministry is, it offers concrete ways that families can strengthen faith in the home setting.

- ***Hand in Hand: Growing Spiritually with our Children. Sue Downing, Discipleship Resources, 1998.***

Downing's book gives ideas to parents and grandparents on helping their children grow into Christian disciples. Her book contains ideas, suggestions, and activities for making prayer vital, reading the Bible, developing faith traditions, and dealing with crisis times. For example, Downing gives several strategies for making prayer a part of family life, such as using prayers of lullabies and songs for babies. She notes that praying as a family helps each member develop a stronger relationship with God and equips children to live a full Christian life. Downing emphasizes that praying for our children puts them in God's hands and assures us that we are not alone in caring for them.

Downing suggests using not only regularly scheduled times of prayers at mealtimes and bedtimes, but also “teachable moments” of joy and sadness, celebration of natural wonders and times of uncertainty to share prayers. She encourages you to let your children KNOW you are praying for specific things to happen in their lives, to keep a journal of prayer times in which you write prayers for your family and a record of prayer requests and answers so that you can share these with your children.

- ***Children and Prayer: A Shared Pilgrimage.* Betty S. Cloyd, Upper Room Books, 1997. ISBN-0-8358-0803-3**

Cloyd provides a guide for understanding how children of different ages relate to God. This book gives concrete ideas for how to teach children about prayer. Especially interesting are the interviews Cloyd conducted with children of different ages about their specific thoughts on prayer. This book not only includes additional study resources but also is beneficial for parents as well as those who teach children in a ministry setting.

- ***Family: The Forming Center: A Vision of the Role of Family in Spiritual Formation.* Marjorie J. Thompson, Upper Room Books, 1996.**

Marjorie Thompson’s book is essential for anyone who is concerned about helping our families to fulfill the core purpose of forming Christian disciples. In today’s society, families are increasingly at-risk and in need of support. Thompson proposes that the church has a very definite responsibility to support families in this task of spiritual formation within the home. She believes that congregations need to support families in their efforts to set priorities when faced with overwhelming demands on time, to support couples through their years of change, and to augment parenting skills especially within the dimension of spiritual nurture. Churches can furnish workshops, retreats, family service opportunities, and guidance

for seasonal celebrations and spiritual disciplines within the home, support during times of crisis, and other practical resources and ministries that “help families of faith perceive themselves as embodiments of the church in their home life together.”

- ***Growing Compassionate Kids: Helping Kids See Beyond Their Backyard.* Jan Johnson, Upper Room Books, 2001. ISBN – 0-8385-0932-3**

Jan Johnson notes that although it may be true that some people are naturally more caring and generous than others, research shows that compassion can be taught or “caught” by children whose parents have provided learning experiences in the midst of a self-absorbed society. The word “intentional” crops up again as Johnson says parents must plan for substantive, compassionate learning experiences in the midst of our crowded schedules and multiple commitments. Remembering the words of Micah 6:8, “*What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, love kindness and to walk humbly with your God,*” Johnson offers strategies for families to be able to “live more simply so that others may simply live.”

- ***The Power of God at Home: Nurturing Our Children in Love & Grace.* J. Bradley Wigger, Jossey-Bass, 2003. ISBN – 0-7879-5588-4**

Wigger is a professor of Christian education and Director of the Center for Congregations and Family Ministries at Louisville Seminary. From the book jacket we find that this book “provides both a biblical model and practical suggestions for helping the entire family become aware of God’s presence in everyday life. He thoughtfully reveals the powerful formative influence of family life and shows that homes are the places where some of the deepest, most important learning takes place.” Wigger gives practical examples from his own life that encourages all parents to examine more closely what is happening in their own homes. This book “offers parents a wise blend of storytelling,

biblical interpretation, and suggestions for family practice.”

- ***Side by Side: Families Learning & Living the Faith Together.* Delia Halverson, Abingdon Press, 2002.**

Sometimes families will hesitate to participate in Sunday school class in addition to worship services because they feel that this is still one more hour in which they are separated from one another. This book has numerous suggestions for lessons that enable parents and children to learn their Christian faith in an intergeneration setting. These activities are shared in such a way that they could also be effectively used in a retreat setting or during in a mid-week program format. Halverson is a gifted Christian educator whose many books have positively impacted our congregation’s programming for years.

- ***Living in God’s Time.* Margaret Persky, Upper Room Books, 1999. ISBN- 0-8358-0875-0**

The blurb on the back of Persky’s book says it all: “Every parent is really a potter: one who molds and shapes. *Living in God’s Time* shows parents how to intentionally mold into their children a daily awareness of God. Persky takes the reader through the Christian year by explaining the foundational importance of each season to our inner rhythms of spiritual growth. She then gives ideas for family activities and liturgies to share in moments of family worship. The reader gradually becomes attuned to the intentional and unintentional shaping his or her children experience daily. The book also includes a guide for parents to share their growing experiences in small group sessions.” Through this book, “parents and children alike learn to reflect daily on God’s movement in daily life and to consider who and whose they are.”

- ***365 Meditations for Families.* Sally D. Sharpe, ed., Dimensions for Living, 2001. ISBN – 0-687-07337-5**

Another practical resource for families who want suggestions for devotions daily throughout the year.

- ***Making a Home for Faith: Nurturing the Spiritual Life of Your Children.* Elizabeth F. Caldwell, The Pilgrim Press, 2000. ISBN 0-8298-1370-5.**

Elizabeth Caldwell is a professor of educational ministry at McCormick Theological Seminary. She points out that just because parents have brought their children to the church to be baptized or confirmed doesn't mean that they are prepared to answer their children's hard questions about faith. This book provides "guidance to parents and caregivers who want to take an active role in the faith development of their children." This book includes questions for reflection that make is appropriate for study by individuals or groups.

- ***Parenting with Love & Laughter: Finding God in Family Life,* Jeffrey D. Jones. Jossey-Bass, 2002. ISBN – 0—7879-6425-5**

Jeffrey Jones, an ordained minister serving within the American Baptist Church, is an author, speaker and retreat leader. In this book, he "shows you how to attend to your own inner spiritual life and to the quality of your relationships within your family. By doing so you re-envision parenting as a transformative, joyful, and spiritual practice rather than merely a set of rules and regulations or tips and techniques." This book includes questions and suggestions for use by small groups or in a retreat setting.

- ***Family Faith Walks: On-the-Go Faith Activities,* Kelly J. Haack. Concordia Publishing House, 2002. ISBN – 0-7586-0045-3**

For families who want to spend more time on spiritual conversation and activities, this book is a valuable resource. Each month has six different chapters which include a scriptural focus, suggestions for “walking” and “talking” your faith, fun follow-up activities, prayer, “ponderings” to encourage deeper thinking, and a space for journaling. This book provides a structured way to spend quality faith time weekly.

- ***Family Time with God: Bible Story Activities for Every Day*, Peg Augustine. Abington Press, 2002. ISBN – 0-6870-4823-0**

An excellent resource designed for families with elementary-aged children. Devotional materials for about 10 to 15 minutes of your time are given for every day from September through May. Included are prayers, litanies, scripture, and fun stories for every day, including special ideas for seasonal sacramental times.

- ***Building Faith: One Child at a Time*, Becky Schuricht Peters. Concordia Publishing House, 1997. ISBN – 0-5700-1552-9.**

This book is ideal for helping educators and parents understand the various theories about faith development – from Fowler to Westerhoff to Gillespie. Peters also spends time reviewing Piaget’s cognitive, Erikson’s psychosocial and Kohlberg’s moral development theories as they relate to faith development. Then Peters shows what these theories means specifically for each year of development from preschool through high school. Suggestions are given for specific learning activities that appeal to each grade.

- ***Sacred Stories of Ordinary Families: Living the Faith in Daily Life*, Diana R. Garland. Jossey-Bass, 2003. ISBN – 0-7879-5267-0.**
- ***Will Our Children Have Faith? Revised Edition*. John Westerhoff, III. Morehouse Publishing, 2000. ISBN # 0-8192-1836-7**

John Westerhoff was professor of theology and Christian nurture at Duke University Divinity School for twenty years. In revisiting his 1976 classic, Westerhoff continues to believe that we have so bought into the educational instructional model of teaching Sunday school that we have failed to provide opportunities for older Christians to share their faith directly with the younger generation. Westerhoff emphasizes that the Christian faith cannot be relegated entirely to hourly, Sunday morning classes. Passing the faith must occur within many contexts including the family, the church family, and the church school. Learning the facts about religion is not enough. Westerhoff provides many ideas of how we can become more effective communities in nourishing and nurturing our children's faith.