



March 2014

parenting CHRISTIAN kids



through excellence in
ministry to children.

St. Luke UMC
www.stlukeumc.org

Preparing Our Hearts

POWERSOURCE

ASK GOD:

1. To help you find ways to grow closer to him—and not just during certain times of the year.
2. For opportunities to teach your kids how to block out distractions and focus on him.
3. To guide you to be intentional with how you lead your kids.

During the Easter season, people in some churches prepare their hearts and draw closer to God through a formal time of prayer, fasting, and giving. But even if your church doesn't formally practice this observance, drawing your heart closer to God is a worthwhile and important pursuit.

In Matthew 13 Jesus talked about how good soil was key to a good harvest. A farmer who ignores the soil will have bad soil, but if he works to make the soil good, it will produce a great harvest.

When we pray, fast, and give, we're preparing the "soil" of our hearts.

We're aligning ourselves with God and his great work.

Think about ways your family can create soil-strengthening habits together.

- Find times to pray aside from mealtime and bedtime. The drive to school is a great chance to begin the day with prayer.
- Think of a way your family can bless another family. Maybe your family could entertain the kids while Mom and Dad go on a date. Or you could give a gift of home-baked goodies you've prepared together.

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TEACHABLE MOMENTS

Distractions

Let your kids focus on what distractions can do to our relationship with God with this experience.

Have a child volunteer tell everyone the plot of a favorite movie. Once he or she begins, work hard to create distractions—jump around, talk over the story, crank up music or the TV, clap, repeat everything your child says, and more. Afterward, ask:

What was difficult about telling the plot? What are your biggest distractions? What distracts you from God?

Say: **Things distract us from focusing on God, too. We're "too busy," or we just forget that God wants to spend time with us.**

Ask: **Think honestly about your biggest distraction. What would you be willing to give up for one month?**

Pray: **God, help us to remove the distractions that keep us from connecting with you.**

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Eliminating Excuses

As parents and Christians, our lives are full of things we're supposed to be doing. Have a quiet time every morning, pray with the kids, pray with our spouse, join a small group, coach our kids' sports teams, and volunteer in their classrooms—at least until they're too embarrassed by you. Those are all *good* things, but the load can become overwhelming. Here are two ideas for simply incorporating these things into your life—without adding *more*.

Power Down—Most people reach for their phones before they reach for anything else each morning—including their Bibles. If you want to carve out time to be alone with God, but you can't seem to find the time, leave your phone *off*...

Even if you have a Bible on your phone, it's easy for a text or notification to pop up while you're reading. And then you'll check the message. And the next thing you know it's time to get ready for your day.

A physical Bible won't interrupt you. And you can highlight, or write notes, or check that linked verse. It's very retro!

But maybe your house is too crazy in the mornings, and this just isn't possible. What about work? Plan to arrive 15 minutes early. When you get there, don't turn on your computer. Email and projects can wait. After all, you got in early, right? Spend this "extra" time with God.

The New Small Group—Don't have a small group at church? That's okay; make your family your small group.

Now, before you list off all of the reasons this idea *won't* work, think about reasons it will—and the

benefits you'll reap when it does. The goal is to set aside time when your family is already together to open faith conversations and explore the Bible together. It doesn't have to be long, involved, or arduous. Really, it's as simple as a conversation about a topic you can relate to.

If you've been a part of a "regular" small group, you know that you come to *really* know those people. Wouldn't that be a great thing to say about your kids? And for your kids to say about you?

Make your group a safe place, where your family can talk about anything. And if you don't know the answer to a question, that's okay! Find the answer, and tell your kids about it later. You'll spark more discussion when you follow up.

Grab opportunities as they arise. If a movie or TV show sparks discussion (or even disagreement) among your family members, you can grapple with it during your time together.

There's an added benefit to leading this small group. If you train yourself to lead this small group, then you'll be ready to lead *any* small group—kids, teenagers, adults. Plus, you'll have learned how to open the doors to important faith conversations with your kids.

"And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable."

—Romans 12:1

MEDIA MADNESS



MOVIES

Title: Muppets Most Wanted

Genre: Comedy/Family

Rating: PG (for mild action)

Cast: Ricky Gervais, Tina Fey, Ty Burrell

Synopsis: The Muppet gang is headed around the world on tour, but they're caught up in an international crime caper when Kermit is mistaken for a master criminal.

Our Take: The Muppet movies have always been family friendly, full of fun cameos, and generally absurd. This one should be no different. With Kermit being mistaken for someone he's not, you could discuss how sometimes we have two sides to our personalities.

TV

Title: Brain Games

Channel: National Geographic

Summary: This TV show digs into the ways our brains can trick us—and the ways magicians, advertisers, and others can *make* our brains trick us. You'll see optical illusions, ways to boost memory, and how we can be distracted even when we know we're being distracted.

Our Take: This is a great show to watch as a family. There's nothing offensive in it, it's full of ah-ha moments, and there are lots of opportunities to talk to your kids about how we can be fooled.

CULTURE & TRENDS

Millennial moms (between ages 18 and 32) are confident. Ninety-six percent of moms polled describe their parenting style as "loving," 92 percent think they're "encouraging," and 90 percent are "supportive," according to a new survey from Baby Center. *J. Maureen Henderson, contributor to Forbes*

QUICK STATS

Buckle Up More than one in three kids killed in car accidents weren't properly restrained. And a quarter of parents and caregivers drive around with unbuckled kids in the car. (*autoblog.com*)

Charity Begins at Home Ninety percent of kids between ages 8 and 19 give to charity. Talking to kids about charity has a greater impact on their giving than role modeling alone. (*unfoundation.org*)

Games, Sites & Apps

Yoshi's New Island

This installment of the classic franchise finds Yoshi and Baby Mario exploring a rich, clever world in search of treasure and fun. While you can't play as a family, it's a great game for all ages. *Rating: E; Nintendo 3DS*

timeforkids.com

This companion page to Time Magazine has articles from adults and "kid reporters" on topics that include national interests, science, entertainment, and just-for-fun.

Gabbit app

Whether you're at the kitchen table, waiting at the doctor's office, or on a road trip, this app will give you lots of thoughtful questions to get your family talking. And there are plans for Road Trip, Couples, Dinnertime, and Youth editions. Available in the App Store.

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This page is designed to help educate parents and isn't meant to endorse any movie, music, or product. Our prayer is that you'll make informed decisions about what your children watch, read, listen to, and play.



March

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
						1 Peanut Butter Lovers' Day
2	3	4	5 Ash Wednesday	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14 Family Movie Night- Jungle Book 6:30- Loft	15 Ides of March
16	17 St. Patrick's Day	18	19	20 International Earth Day	21	22
23 Family Worship Day Kids singing in Worship	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31 FCPS Spring Break Begins					

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