

LEGACY

5-MINUTE FAMILY PRACTICES

Informing is good, but “doing” is better.

When families do a practice together, they are more likely to repeat it at home.

The same holds true for other acts of service in the church.

When families serve inside and outside the church together, it results in...

– a shared experience, which leads to

– a shared story

– and shared identity.

Try these 5-minute family practices to engage parents and children together.

We recommend sharing these suggestions with parents at the end of your Christian formation time. You may choose to invite parents to arrive five minutes before the end of your class or session to sit with their children (ages 3-11). We recommend repeating one practice for six weeks rather than doing a different one each Sunday.

1 PRAYER STICKS: Promotes family prayer

MATERIALS: Large craft sticks and markers

Families gather and discuss prayers of praise, thanks, concerns; they also identify friends and loved ones who need prayer. Use the markers to write one prayer on each stick, and decorate the sticks. Families may choose to write the outcomes of those prayers on the other side of each stick as an act of thanks or lament.

Encourage families to keep the prayer sticks in a cup on their kitchen table and to pull out one stick to pray for during meal time prayer. In subsequent weeks families can add prayer sticks to their cup and share how any prayers were answered.

2 GOD IS MY ROCK: Encourages faith/life conversations

MATERIALS: Rocks

Dump a pile of rocks onto the table(s) and invite each person (both parents and children) to select a rock.

READ: Psalm 18:1-2

Ask families to look carefully at their rocks and discuss what they think it means that God is our rock. Next ask a few children to share their thoughts.

READ: Psalm 18:1-2 AGAIN

Note that this text says God gives us strength. Ask, How might God give us strength? It says God is our Savior. What does God save us from? And it says God is like a fort or a shield? What might God shield us from?

Children’s answers may not be typical, but their thoughts are no less valuable.

For example, a child may say, “rocks are everywhere, and God is everywhere.” This is as true as God being our strength.

FAMILY TAKE-HOME PRACTICE: Gather a few rocks and put them in a jar on the table. During your meal at the end of the day share how God was your rock using the three S’s from Psalm 18:1-2 How was God my, strength, Savior, and shield? Children don’t have to have an answer for all three. Younger children, who live in the moment, may not have an answer from the events of the day but may have a thought about God in the present. Receive their thoughts about God even if they don’t refer to the three S’s. Adding different rocks in subsequent weeks may help the children think of God in new ways. God doesn’t change, but our awareness of God and who God is can change.

3 BREATH OF LIFE: Promotes awareness of God's gift of life and sustaining presence

MATERIALS: Balloons (*Bigger balloons inflate more easily*)

Explain that today we are going to take something invisible and make it visible. Ask everyone to take a deep breath and then blow it out. Ask if anyone could see their breath. Explain that even though we cannot see our breath, we still know it is there.

Now ask each person to take a balloon, blow it up, and hold on to the end. Adults may need to help younger children get started.

READ: Genesis 2:7

Share that it is God who gives us breath. The breath we have captured in the balloon is a gift from God. Now that it is inside the balloon it has form and we can see it.

In the Bible the same word is used for wind, breath, and spirit. God is spirit but when God put skin on, God became visible in the form of Jesus.

READ: Colossians 1:15

Ask each person to release the air from the balloon, holding the end toward their face.

At the end of his time on earth, Jesus breathed into us the eternal breath of the Holy Spirit, who is with us always and guides us daily.

READ: Acts 2:1-4a

That life breath that just blew into our faces is a reminder that both our breath and the everlasting breath of the Holy Spirit are in each of us who believes in Jesus. They are both a gift from God.

Ask everyone to keep the balloons handy this week. Tell them, "As you pray at night before going to sleep, blow up the balloon. Thank God for each gift of breath that God gave you for the day. Then allow the breath to blow against your face. Talk about times when you felt close to God that day and when you experienced God guiding you."

In subsequent weeks you can use these ideas as conversation starters: reference the wind as a reminder of God's presence, or remind each person that every breath is a gift from God and belongs to God.

4 CREATION WALK: Encourages families to notice the goodness of God in creation

MATERIALS: An outdoor space

Take families outside for a five-minute creation walk. Ask them to notice and share with each other all the things they see that God has made and what they like about it. (If you have inclement weather you can take families to a room with large windows and ask them look out onto creation.)

READ: Colossians 1:16

End by joining together in one large circle or in family circles. Prayerfully thank God for the things you have seen today.

Encourage families to notice and to thank God for creation during the upcoming week. In subsequent weeks you may choose to have families look out the window rather than take a walk. Also encourage them to look for something new in creation each week.

Practices of Story and Witness and GROW KIDS RESOURCES

Encourage the sharing of a story each week. Include a rotation among all generations. This does not need to be long, but it is a reminder of the new chapters being written each week in the lives of Christ's disciples.

1. Share how engaging in a ministry of the church has impacted your life
2. Help children share their stories by using the My Adventure with God Story booklet. Visit: covchurch.org/my-grow-adventure
3. GROW KIDS RESOURCES for FAMILIES covchurch.org/children/resources/grow-kids

5 GUIDING: Encourages families to seek God for guidance

MATERIALS: None

Invite children to close their eyes. Invite parents to guide their children around the room by holding their hands. Then reverse and ask children to guide their parents.

ASK: What was this experience like? How did you feel when you started? How did you feel when you could open your eyes again?

EXPLAIN: Today we trusted someone we love to guide us. God also loves us.

READ: Psalm 48:14 says that God will be our guide forever.

This week as you play this game together, end with a prayer asking our loving God to guide us in the day ahead. In subsequent weeks families may break up and guide members of other families. This reminds us that we all belong to the family of God. As part of the family of God, we ought to be able to trust one another because our focus is on God.

6 COINS: Encourages families to reflect on giving to those in need

MATERIALS: A small chest or box with coins inside

Holding the box, explain that inside it is something that can help people who are in need. Dump the coins on a table and ask everyone to take a coin(s). Invite families to talk about ways the coins could help others. After a couple of minutes of sharing, ask a few children to share their ideas.

READ: Proverbs 14:21

All the things you talked about today are ways of being kind to those in need. It is a way of showing God's love to others.

Encourage children to give the coins to someone in need and to pray as families throughout the week for those in need. Suggest that they ask God to show them how they can continue to help and show kindness to others. Continue this practice for five more weeks, coming up with new ideas of how we can share our coins, asking children to share their ideas, and asking God to show us how to share.

7 SHARING BIRTH STORIES: Encourages families to remember and share God's miracle of birth in their own lives. Many children have never heard their own birth story, and they love to hear it.

MATERIALS: None

READ: Luke 2:1-7

EXPLAIN: We have heard the story of our Savior's birth, how God brought Jesus into the world. Today in your family groups, parents will share the birth stories of your children, how God brought them into the world.

ENDING: Each day this week as you sit around the dinner table or share devotion time together, share one unique thing about each other and thank God for the unique and special way each of you is made. Children love to hear their birth story. To adults it might seem redundant to repeat this for five weeks, but each time can be a powerful moment between parent and child. Parents can also be encouraged to share one new character trait they appreciate about their child each time they tell the story.

8 EPIPHANY, SEASON OF LIGHT: Encourages faith/life conversations using godly language

MATERIALS: Votive candles

Invite each person (both parents and children) to select a candle from those you have placed on the table.

EXPLAIN: The season of Epiphany begins January 6 and continues until Lent begins. Epiphany means making something known. It is the season of light.

ASK: Have you ever been in a completely dark room? What was it like? What could you see? What would happen if you lit a candle in that dark room? Light makes things known. It reveals things we couldn't see before.

READ: John: 8:12: "I am the light of the world."

Ask families to look at their candles and share what they think it means when we say Jesus is the light of the world. Then ask a few children to share their thoughts.

Encourage families to put their candles on the table and light them during a meal together. Then each day each person can share how Jesus is their light. Was there something Jesus made known to you? Did you notice something you were thankful for, someone who needed help? Did you feel the loving presence of God, or did God help you with something you were struggling with? In subsequent weeks light candles and ask these same questions.

9 EPIPHANY, EVERYONE IS INVITED TO FOLLOW THE LIGHT: Encourages families to reflect on how they are following and worshiping Jesus

MATERIALS: Paper stars

EXPLAIN: Last week we talked about Epiphany. Does anyone remember what Epiphany means? Yes, making something known. We also said that Epiphany was the season of what? Light.

At the beginning of Epiphany, we also celebrate the coming of the wise men or magi.

READ: Matthew 2:1-2

ASK:

- What kind of light were the magi following?
- What had they come to do?

The magi came from faraway places. What this story shows us is that Jesus loves and came to earth for everyone throughout the world. Everyone is welcome to follow Jesus. Today in our family groups let's talk about ways we can follow and worship Jesus.

ENDING: This week continue to light your candle each day as a continuing reminder that Jesus is the light of the world. Share with each other how you followed or worshiped Jesus today.

10 BLESSING: Encourages the regular act of blessing

MATERIALS: None

EXPLAIN: Today we are going to practice blessing. Blessing includes a short prayer, and it also includes physical touch. Jesus blessed children and touch was an important part of the blessing. Touch is a sign of presence, love, and identity. Touch makes blessing a memorable experience.

READ: Mark 10:13-16

ASK: How did Jesus touch the children?

Notice that Jesus does not lay an authoritative hand upon the head of the children. Rather, he hugs or embraces them. Today we will embrace and bless one another—parents blessing children and children blessing parents. You may say a simple blessing such as, “The Lord bless you and keep you,” “May God’s love abide in you,” “May God watch over you and guide you,” or you may choose to bless each other with a prayer of your own choosing.

Encourage families to embrace and bless one another. Notice that as children are blessed they lean into their parents. In the same way Christ will bless us if we lean into him each day.

ENDING: This week practice blessing one another as well as leaning into the daily blessing that Jesus has for you.

In the following weeks you can also gather around others and bless them. Invite your pastor, church leaders, and teachers to join you, and bless them. Then ask the same people to return for the last week and bless the children.

11 JOURNALING: Encourages attentiveness to Christ and sharing faith/life stories

MATERIALS: Half-sheet booklets for each child and parent

You can either do this ahead of time or the children can make these. You will need white paper, a paper cutter, and cover sheets. Cover sheets can either be construction paper which can be stapled, or you can use cardboard. Punch a hole in each sheet and tie a piece of twine through the paper and cover.

EXPLAIN: Today we are going to share something with God. You will have five minutes to either draw a picture or write a note to God on the first page of your journal. This is a time of prayer to God. Instead of bowing your head and closing your eyes, you will write or draw what you want to say to God. You may choose to write words or draw a picture of something you are thankful for, or something you need help with. Or you may depict a time when you were close to God. This is quiet time with you and God.

After five minutes ask parent(s) and children to share their notes and drawings with each other.

READ: Philippians 1:1-4

ENDING: Just as Paul and Timothy wrote letters and prayers to others, you too have created a prayer to share with each other. Each day this week write or draw a prayer to God and then share your prayers with each other.