



## **FAMILY SPIRITUAL HEALTH**

*Talking to children about faith can sometimes feel like a daunting task.* As parents, we want to instill values, beliefs, and an understanding of the world that is both nurturing and comprehensive. Faith isn't just a set of doctrines or beliefs; it's a way of viewing the world. It intersects our daily lives in countless ways and discussing it with our children can be a fulfilling experience. Here, we'll explore simple yet impactful strategies for weaving conversations about our faith into the fabric of everyday moments.

### ***Creating a Welcoming Environment***

The first step to discussing faith with children is to establish a warm and approachable atmosphere. This involves creating an environment where they feel comfortable asking questions and expressing their thoughts.

To support this, try setting aside particular times for discussions, such as during family meals or while driving. Deuteronomy 6:6-7 in the Bible highlights the importance of keeping our faith visible at home. These times offer natural opportunities to engage in conversation without the distractions of screens or external pressures. Incorporating faith into your daily routines normalizes these discussions, making children more comfortable as they explore what faith means to them.

### ***Use Everyday Situations as Teaching Moments***

Everyday life is filled with situations ripe for discussions about faith. These moments can arise during a family walk, a trip to the grocery store, or even while watching the news. For example, if you pass by a place of worship, it is a great opportunity to talk about what that place represents and its importance in the community.

If your child encounters a difficult situation, such as a friend facing a problem, use that as a moment to explore concepts such as empathy, compassion, and support—key tenets of many faith traditions. Asking open-ended questions about how they feel or what they think can lead to deeper, more meaningful conversations that encourage critical thinking.

### ***Leverage Stories and Parables***

Stories hold immense power in conveying complex ideas, particularly for children. Whether they come from religious texts, folklore, or personal anecdotes, stories can paint vivid pictures of faith concepts. Remember, Jesus taught many great lessons using parables.

Consider reading age-appropriate books that incorporate themes of faith, hope, and kindness. After reading, engage your child in a discussion by asking questions about the characters' choices and how

they relate to their own lives. This kind of storytelling approach helps frame faith in a context that is relatable and easier to understand.

### ***Encourage Questions***

Children are naturally curious, and their inquiries can open pathways to deeper discussions about faith. When your child asks a question about faith, instead of providing a straightforward answer, consider turning it back to them. Ask what they think or how they feel about the topic.

Even if they bring up challenging questions, such as "Why do bad things happen to good people?" use these moments as opportunities to explore the complexities of life and faith together. It's important to approach their questions with honesty while maintaining a level of comfort and simplicity that is age appropriate.

### ***Connect Faith to Values and Actions***

Incorporating discussions about faith into actions can significantly enhance your child's understanding. Teaching values such as kindness, generosity, and integrity can be tied closely to many faith teachings.

Lead by example. Volunteer in your community together, discuss the importance of helping others, and frame these actions within a context of faith. Explain how these values contribute to a larger worldview of care and compassion. By seeing faith lived out, children can understand not just the concepts, but also how they manifest in real life.

### ***Cultivate Mindfulness and Reflection***

In today's fast-paced world, pausing to reflect can be beneficial for anyone, including children. Introduce simple mindfulness practices, such as moments of gratitude or prayer, into your family's daily routine.

It is a good habit to have a dedicated time of the day for the family to gather for Bible study and praying together. Consistency is key in establishing this. Encourage your child to share what they are grateful for or what they have learned throughout the day. This practice fosters a deeper awareness of their surroundings and can provide a platform for discussing faith and belief systems in a gentle, reflective manner.

### ***Embrace Imperfection***

Finally, it is important to acknowledge that discussions about faith don't have to be perfect. There will be times when conversations feel awkward, or you worry you haven't conveyed your message effectively. Embrace these imperfections, as they can lead to authentic dialogue. This also shows how frail we are and enhances the supremacy of God as our strength and help through life.

This openness invites children to feel comfortable navigating their own paths with faith, knowing that it's okay to have questions and uncertainties.

## ***Conclusion***

Talking about faith with children doesn't have to be a daunting task. By infusing discussions within everyday moments, encouraging questions, telling stories, and leading by example, you can open your child's mind to believing and walking the path of faith with you.

As you embark on this enriching journey, remember to create a welcoming atmosphere, connect faith to values, and embrace imperfections along the way. The goal isn't to give them all the answers, but rather to equip them with the tools to ask meaningful questions and explore their own beliefs. Through these discussions, children can discover that faith is not just a set of doctrines, but a living, breathing part of their everyday lives.

## **AT WHAT AGE SHOULD CHILDREN BEGIN LEARNING ABOUT OUR FAITH?**

Begin when you are pregnant

Place your hands on the abdomen and pray for the baby

Sing to the baby, play worship songs and read/play the Bible to them

Bring them to the place of prayer even if they are sleeping (pray in the nursery or their room)

Make the Bible the bedtime story book

Do more TV shows that are Bible theme related

Get them into children church weekly

Allow them to lead the prayer or read the devotion, even if they read slowly or have difficulty with larger words. Assist them and refrain from judging.

As they grow older, encourage them to share their knowledge about your faith.

Lead them to pray the salvation prayer and explain what it means to them.

Using age-appropriate Bibles for younger children is crucial to keep them engaged. By the time they reach grade 2 (age 7), they can transition to a print Bible. I recommend the NKJV or the NIV for this age group.

Preteens and teens are in a developmental phase where they tend to question things more frequently. Praying for them and with them can be very beneficial during this time. Avoid shaming or nagging them; instead, view their questions about your faith as an opportunity. Explain as much as possible, and consider finding a mentor who can communicate effectively with them and assist them in their personal journey of faith discovery.

If an older child has decided to leave your faith or seems indifferent to it, please don't lose hope or be too hard on yourself. God doesn't have grandchildren; we are all His children. At some point in life, we

may stray from His love, but if we continue to pray for the child, they will eventually return to the faith, much like the prodigal son. A helpful prayer to include is that they won't make irreversible decisions with lasting negative consequences.

Ultimately, instilling faith in our children isn't automatic; it requires divine intervention and practicing our faith in a manner that inspires them to join us.

## ***SPIRITUAL NEGLECT PARENTING***

In today's fast-paced world, parenting encompasses various responsibilities, including the spiritual nurturing of children. However, spiritual neglect often goes unnoticed, leaving a profound impact on a child's overall development. This article explores the concept of spiritual neglect in parenting, shedding light on its consequences and offering pathways to foster spiritual growth within families.

### ***Understanding Spiritual Neglect***

Spiritual neglect occurs when parents fail to provide for their child's spiritual needs, which can be as crucial as physical and emotional care. This lack of attention may manifest in several ways, such as not encouraging faith practices, disregarding the importance of religious education, or neglecting meaningful discussions about spirituality.

When a child's spiritual development is ignored, it can lead to feelings of emptiness or confusion about their beliefs and values. Parents play an essential role in helping children discover their spiritual identity and purpose.

### ***The Consequences of Spiritual Neglect***

The impact of spiritual neglect can be far-reaching. Children may grow up feeling disconnected from their faith and community, leading to a shallow understanding of spiritual matters. This disconnection can result in increased anxiety, depression, or a sense of isolation.

Moreover, children who experience spiritual neglect may struggle with moral and ethical decision-making later in life. Without a foundation rooted in spiritual teachings, they may lack the guidance needed to navigate life's challenges and make sound choices.

### ***Conclusion***

The spiritual well-being of children is an integral part of their overall development, and spiritual neglect can have lasting effects. As parents, it is essential to recognize the importance of nurturing their children's spiritual lives. By engaging in open conversations, incorporating spiritual practices, and serving as positive role models, parents can foster a deep sense of faith and connection in their children.

Ultimately, addressing spiritual neglect is not just about fulfilling a duty but building a solid foundation for future generations to thrive spiritually. Embracing this sacred responsibility has the power to transform families and strengthen communities, creating a legacy of faith that endures through time.

## **FAMILY SPIRITUAL HEALTH ASSESSMENT**

Purpose:

To help families reflect on their spiritual growth, unity, and habits that nurture faith at home. You can complete this individually, as a couple, or together as a family.

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### **1. Relationship with God**

**Rate each statement from 1 (Rarely/No) to 5 (Consistently/Yes)**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
We regularly pray together as a family.					
Each family member has a personal relationship with God.					
We talk about faith naturally in daily conversations.					
We seek God's guidance in decision-making.					

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### **2. Family Worship & Bible Engagement**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
We set aside time for family devotion or Bible reading.					
Our children/teens understand why God's Word matters.					
We attend church services or fellowship regularly.					
Worship is a joyful part of our home life (music, prayer, gratitude).					

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### **3. Love, Forgiveness & Unity**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
We handle conflict with love, forgiveness, and prayer.					
Family members feel loved, valued, and respected.					
We pray for each other's needs and challenges.					
We express gratitude often (to God and each other).					

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#### 4. Service & Outreach

**Statement**

**1 2 3 4 5**

Our family serves others together (church, community, neighbors).

We teach our children to care for others in need.

We give financially to God's work.

We look for ways to share our faith through love and action.

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#### 5. Growth & Discipleship

**Statement**

**1 2 3 4 5**

We discuss spiritual goals as a family.

Each family member is encouraged to grow spiritually.

We celebrate answered prayers and faith milestones.

We seek to live out our faith consistently (at home, school, work).

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#### 6. Reflection & Next Steps

**Total your points: \_\_\_\_\_ / 100**

**Score Range**

**Assessment**

80–100 Spiritually thriving – strong faith foundation! Keep growing intentionally.

60–79 Spiritually active – good habits, room for deeper connection.

40–59 Spiritually inconsistent – start small with regular prayer or devotions.

Below 40 Spiritually drifting – invite God back into the center of family life.

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#### Action Plan

- What is one area we're doing well in?
- What is one area we can improve?
- What can we start this week to grow spiritually as a family?

## **OTHER GREAT RESOURCES FOR THE FAMILY:**

<https://www.youversion.com/the-bible-app-for-kids/>.

<https://bibleappforkids.com>

<https://www.focusonthefamily.ca>

<https://axis.org>

<https://www.keysforkids.org/podcasts/keys-for-kids/>

[https://radio.focusonthefamily.ca/broadcasts/answering-your-kids-tough-faith-questions?\\_gl=1\\*15wv3mj\\*\\_gcl\\_au\\*MTE0MTg5MzA0Ny4xNzYwNzUxOTY0&\\_ga=2.141912880.380481380.1760751964-1611796913.1760751964](https://radio.focusonthefamily.ca/broadcasts/answering-your-kids-tough-faith-questions?_gl=1*15wv3mj*_gcl_au*MTE0MTg5MzA0Ny4xNzYwNzUxOTY0&_ga=2.141912880.380481380.1760751964-1611796913.1760751964)