

Make Planning for the New Year a Family Thing

When we think about New Year's, what comes to mind? Glitzy parties, fireworks, watching the ball drop, Auld Lang Syne, or perhaps if you love classical music, the Vienna Philharmonic playing The Redetsky March.

Oh, and resolutions. I always liked the idea of starting new when I was younger, but I had an appallingly bad record of keeping my resolutions. A few years ago, we came up with a new way to celebrate the new year that has been a real blessing for our family.

On New Year's Eve, we sit down together, sometimes in the afternoon, if we have a gathering to attend that evening. Those that keep journals, like my husband Hal, bring notes, the rest of us bring our memories and we talk about all that God has accomplished in our lives that year.

Year after year, we've been amazed when we hear it all at once. The blessings of God are so incredible—and so easily forgotten in all the hectic days that follow. When we think back over all the answered prayers, all the things the Lord took care of before we even knew we needed something, the links of providence in our lives, it builds our faith and helps us to trust Him more. I think this is what God had in mind when He commanded the Israelites to celebrate the Passover and told them to explain it to their children.

How can you do that with small children, though? It takes a little more planning!

Come prepared with lists of the important happenings in the year and be sure to remember the things that are small to you, but important to your children like special outings or gifts. Bring photographs and a calendar. Give them a chance to share,

too. You may be surprised at all they remember!

Be sure there are snacks and don't be hurt if the youngest just wants to sit in the floor and play. I've been stunned many times by the things our youngest children have picked up when I thought they were paying no attention whatsoever.

Finally, stop and pray together and thank God for all He has done for you this year and repent of the ways we have failed Him and accept his love and forgiveness through the sacrifice of His son, Jesus Christ for our sins. What a great way to start a new year— forgiven and full of thankfulness!

On New Year's Day, we have a huge family brainstorming session. We are very frank with our children about the state of the family exchequer and exactly where our ministry/business stands. This has been great for preparing them for life and it's been good for us, too.

Our sons have come up with many terrific ideas—some of which you've probably seen on this site or even bought for your family! We even use a PowerPoint projector to shine reports up on the wall, so everyone can be on the same page. We don't just talk business, though, we brainstorm about everything—managing the house, schoolwork, hobbies, the hopes and dreams of different members of the family.

It is a fantastic time to support each other and encourage one another. It's a great time to help the children understand that they are a vital member of the team and that God has a purpose for this family to accomplish. They are a part of that!

We do have to remind each other not to be too critical. If you stomp on a dream too quickly as impractical, you'll miss some of the really revolutionary ideas! Instead, we encourage the children to entertain even the big, outrageous ideas for a time: Is there any way to make this work? If not now, maybe in the future?

After all, a decade ago, none of us would have every dreamed we would become full-time authors and speakers. Who knows what God has planned for your family?

And how do the little guys fit into this? Sometimes they jump in with ideas. Some are silly or impractical, but others are surprisingly good. Lots of times they get bored, but we encourage them to play or read in the room with us. We think it's worthwhile for them to just be in that atmosphere.

One of the big payoffs of doing this is that our sons really "own" what we do as a family. They know the final decisions are their parents', and ultimately Dad's, but they know that they are valued members of our team, that they're important in what they do, that they can make a difference.

It's changed the way they think about our work as a family and it's made them far more creative and entrepreneurial themselves. They've learned to think about the future and to have vision. That's a great thing for a young man.

For the original article, visit [.](#)

Hal and Melanie Young, authors of the Christian Small Publishers Association 2011 Book of the Year, *Raising Real Men*, are parents of six boys and two girls. They have homeschooled through eight high-risk pregnancies, three relocations, two decades, and 181 degrees of longitude. Hal and Melanie have served on the Board of Directors of North Carolinians for Home Education for over 14 years, including three terms as President for Hal.