

When Your Child Doesn't Want to Go to Church

Mark was 12 years old when his parents realized that he was pulling away from spiritual things. He didn't want to pray at dinner, seemed to merely endure church, and was more interested in his electronics and friends than spiritual things. When Dad and Mom saw this tendency in their son, they wanted to do something about it immediately, before Mark became one of those statistics of kids who leave the church after they graduate from high school. Here's what they did, and it worked!

Dad and Mom determined to add an exciting devotional experience for Mark and his two younger sisters. They called it Family Time. Once a week, Dad and Mom would prepare one activity that illustrated a biblical truth. One week Dad told the kids to get their running shoes on for devotions. That puzzled them all and they came to the Family Time with a sense of anticipation.

Dad read them the parable of the man who found the treasure in the field and sold all he had to buy that field so that he could own the treasure. Then Dad told them that he had created a number of clues in the back yard with a treasure at the end. He handed the first clue to Mark that said, "Look under the trash can."

Mark ran with his sisters out to the backyard and started the hunt. After about eight clues he ended up finding a plastic container filled with their favorite cookies that Mom had made. Then they talked about why the truths of God are worth so much.

The next week they talked about withstanding the fiery darts of the devil with the shield of faith as described in

Ephesians 6:16. They took rolled up socks and threw them at each other, using a pillow as a shield to ward them off. Then they talked about temptations that might harm each of them.

Another time Mom read 1 Thessalonians 5:11, "Build one another up." The activity that day was to build a human pyramid and then talk about ways that we tear down and build each other up in our family.

The kids were excited for devotions each week. Dad and Mom continued their mission to engage the children spiritually and help them develop a living and active faith. Every couple of days they asked the question, "How did you see God work today?"

At first, the children didn't know what to say, but Dad and Mom gave them ideas, including ones they could relate to. Mom told about the beautiful sunset she enjoyed and Dad told about an answer to prayer about a difficult meeting at work. They prayed more specifically as a family, asking God to show them each how they could fit into his plan.

Dad and Mom were surprised when Mark came home from school and said, "When are you going to ask us the question?"

"What question?"

"The one about seeing God work?"

Mark had a story to tell and as he shared it at dinner, his parents smiled because they were seeing their son become spiritually engaged.

Dad and Mom also told the pastor at church that they, as a family, would help with greeting every other week. Mark began to see church as a place to give and serve, not just as a place to meet friends or learn.

Mark is growing spiritually because his parents are looking for practical ways to engage him with what God wants to do in

him personally. God wants to work in the lives of children. Parents can be the facilitators of that growth. What might God have you do in the next few months to excite your children about the Lord?

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