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parenting CHRISTIAN kids



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Live With Eternity in Mind

POWERSOURCE

ASK GOD:

1. To help you keep the “end goal” of eternity in mind each day.
2. To guide you in the work of raising children who love and follow Jesus.
3. To nurture your children’s growing faith—and your own.

Ever feel as if you’re living in survival mode? Many parents are pulled in all directions, juggling never-ending responsibilities at home, work, and school. That can make it tough to keep our perspective on what matters most: our future with God.

The celebration of Jesus’ Resurrection reminds us we have a forever home in heaven. But how do we stay mindful of that good news from day to day when we’re busy trying to keep the fridge stocked, meet deadlines, and get everyone to school and activities on time?

Here are some tips for helping your family stay focused on heaven while dealing with the challenges of life on earth:

- Talk with a pastor, mentor, or friend to determine what kids need to know about Jesus and when. Brainstorm simple ways to incorporate Jesus into everyday life on an everyday basis.
- Talk to with your spouse, family members, and caregivers about your spiritual priorities, making sure you’re all on the same page.
- Intentionally arrange daily and weekly plans around your spiritual goals. If activities start to interfere with your priorities, re-evaluate and rework your family’s schedule.

When you make faith the top priority for your family, it’ll help your children make it their top priority as well. Read on for more ideas about how to look forward to heaven every day of the year.

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TEACHABLE MOMENTS

Jesus Is the Key

You'll need a bunch of old keys, plus a padlock and key set. Hide all the keys throughout your house. (Remember where you've hidden them!) Have family members go on a hunt for the keys, telling them how many to find.

After all the keys are located, say: **Only one key will open this padlock. Let's take turns to see which one it is.**

When the lock is opened, read aloud John 14:6. Ask: **In what ways does the key that opened the lock remind you of Jesus? How did Jesus "unlock" the way to heaven for us?**

Say: **Because Jesus died for our sins and rose again, we can live with him forever in heaven. He opened the door and gave us new life. That's great news to remember all year long!**

Close in prayer, thanking Jesus for giving us new life.

Maintain an Eternal Perspective

According to the Barna Research Group, 85 percent of parents with children under age 13 believe they're primarily responsible for teaching their kids about religious beliefs and spiritual matters. (Just 11 percent say it's the responsibility of the church.) Yet according to related research, a majority of parents don't spend time during the week discussing religious matters or going over religious materials with their kids. For many parents, it's not so much that they won't spend time having spiritual conversations with their kids. It's simply that they don't know what to do or where to begin. Parental involvement is vital to children's spiritual growth. With that in mind, try these ideas to keep Jesus and faith in him at the forefront of your family's life:

Before & After Prepare for worship by softly playing Christian music in your house and car beforehand. After worship or Sunday school, ask children what they learned and how they can apply the lessons in the week ahead. Also display and refer to any take-home papers they received.

What's Our Mission? Place Jesus at the center of your home and family by working together to craft a family mission statement. Decide what your purpose, vision, and values are, and have everyone commit to live by them—both privately and publicly. Then pray together, asking Jesus to help you live them out.

Pray Without Ceasing Move prayer beyond the dinner table and bedtime routine. Pray for and with your children as they leave for school, when they're discouraged or facing a challenge, and when they have something to thank or praise Jesus for. Try using a prayer calendar, filling in every day with the name of someone your family can pray for.

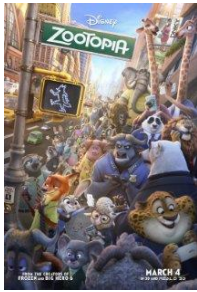
"Wordly" Wise Play a word-association game by standing in a circle and tossing a ball around. When someone throws the ball, have them say a word, such as *food, clouds, tree*, etc. Then have

the person catching the ball respond with the first word that comes to mind. After everyone has had a turn, say, "Jesus died on the cross, but he didn't stay dead. Jesus came back to life and is living in heaven. By believing in Jesus, we can join him in heaven someday." Play the game again, calling out the same words, but this time challenge family members to respond with words associated with heaven—such as *feast, angels, or life*—because Jesus is alive in heaven. Afterward, ask, "Which was easier: thinking of earthly or heavenly words? What encourages you when you think of heaven?"

Running as a Team Run a three-legged race in which you add runners to the group each round. Play until everyone is tied together. Afterward, sit down (with ankles still attached) and ask: "What was it like to work together this way? Why was it important to work as a team and communicate as we ran?" Read aloud Hebrews 12:1-3. Say: "We have another race to run—the race of life. The Bible encourages us not to give up when we're running this race. When we help and support one another—and rely on Jesus—the race will be much easier. And we'll all win the best prize ever: life forever with Jesus in heaven!"

**"I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us."
—Philippians 3:14**

MEDIA MADNESS



MOVIE

Title: *Zootopia*

Genre: Animation, Action, Adventure

Rating: PG

Cast: Ginnifer Goodwin, Idris Elba, J.K. Simmons, Jason Bateman

Synopsis: In a city where all types of talking animals live together, a police-woman rabbit pursues a fugitive fox, only to discover they're both targets of a conspiracy. The creatures must deal with bias and stereotypes—just as humans do.

Our Take: The takeaway of this film is that even natural enemies can become best friends. The Disney brand and animal-based humor will attract kids. But parents beware: some of the humor is rude and plays off of things such as an animal nudist colony. The film also includes a musical performance with sensual dancing.



MUSIC

Title: *Surrender*

Author: Kutless

Synopsis: The ninth album from this Christian band is a return to the hard rock sound they're known for—and one preteens like. Thematically, the songs praise God. Standouts include "Mirror," which uses the metaphor of a mirror to examine encountering God, who's looking over us. And "One Thing Remains" is an excellent cover of the popular worship song.

Our Take: *Surrender* feels stronger than anything Kutless has done in years. They remain a good choice for preteens who like hard music. Because band members are unabashed with their Christian faith and sing lyrics that point kids to Jesus, we can recommend this album.



CULTURE & TRENDS

Charters on the Rise Though they began as an educational experiment, charter schools are thriving throughout the U.S. More than 2.9 million American students attended charter schools last year, with some showing large gains in their achievement. (*usnews.com*)

Healthy Choices Since the recent USDA changes to school lunch standards, kids are choosing healthier lunch foods with fewer calories. USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack says, "Children are eating more fruits and vegetables and consuming more nutrients, making them better prepared to learn and succeed in the classroom." (*farmfutures.com*)

Games, Sites & Apps

Mighty No. 9

This new game, a homage to the classic *Mega Man* games, features a robot who takes on enemies' powers and weapons after defeating them. The violence is pixelly and cartoonish, but the game is challenging enough that kids can't just breeze through it.

Spatulatta.com

On this cooking site for kids, young chefs will find recipes and video tutorials featuring two sisters. Kids can develop basic skills and create entire meals by choosing from ingredients and cuisine types. The blog isn't current, but the site is packed with kid-friendly material. You can find it at www.spatulatta.com.

Kuddle

This free app is a way to ease preteens into photo sharing on social media. Kids can share pictures with friends, but all friend requests and posted photos first go through parents for approval. Measures are also in place to prevent bullying within the app and ensure that the photos shared are appropriate.

QUICK STATS

Weighty Issue Being overweight is the number one reason kids are bullied, according to a study from Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity. In the U.S., 47 percent of bullying instances are because of weight. The next most common reasons, race or physical disability, each accounted for 11 percent. (*onlinelibrary.wiley.com*)

Hold It! Although 80 percent of elementary-school teachers let kids drink as much water as they want during class, 90 percent admit they also discourage kids from taking bathroom trips during class. (*parents.com*)

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