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# parenting CHRISTIAN kids



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## Avoiding the Summer Slump

### POWERSOURCE

#### ASK GOD:

1. To help you connect with your kids over the summer.
2. To show you areas where you can grow as a parent.
3. For opportunities to let your kids expand their responsibilities.

It's summer, which means kids are out of school and schedules and routines go out the window. Kids stay up later, sleep in longer, and look to you to fill their days with stuff to do.

As our summer schedules relax, it's easy for kids to fall into this slump. They're not engaging their brains as much as they were during the school year. And while breaks are healthy, it's not always good for kids to completely disengage for months at a time. According to research, kids typically score lower on standardized tests at the end of summer vacation than they do on the same tests at the beginning of the summer.

Coinciding with the dropoff in academic activity, your kids' faith growth can also fall into a summer slump.

Church activities can be less structured during the summer break. And summer vacations and schedules may mean families aren't attending as regularly.

But there's good news! The effects of the summer slump are less pronounced in kids whose families intentionally engage their kids with growth opportunities—whether it's library visits, art classes, or simple nature walks. Keeping your kids engaged translates into their spiritual growth, too. Intentionally involving your kids in faith conversations, sharing your wonder at God's creation while camping, or simply praying together daily will keep their spiritual minds sharp and expanding. You're the #1 influencer in your kids' spiritual lives; take the summer as an opportunity to keep learning—and growing—together.



## TEACHABLE MOMENTS

### Honoring God

This month, we celebrate dads. Here's a project to help kids show their appreciation for their Heavenly Father.

Gather art supplies such as paper, markers, or paints. Have family members each draw or paint a picture of something he or she is thankful to God for.

Take turns sharing your pictures and explaining why you each chose that picture. Then discuss these questions:

- **What does it mean that God is our heavenly father?**
- **Why does it matter if we're thankful for what God gives us?**
- **What are other ways we can show our thankfulness to God?**

Close by praying, "God, thank you for being our heavenly father, and for all of the ways you have blessed us. Amen."

## Intentional Engagement

So how can you integrate intentionality into your family's summer routine? Here are easy ideas to choose from. Some may be things you're already doing, but with an added twist, can be a great time of growing closer together and closer to God.

### Start a family book club.

Take turns selecting a book; then meet weekly to discuss it. While you do so, weave in questions and discussion about faith and how it shows up in the book. Perhaps a character exhibited Christian behavior, or someone's selfish motivations led to a downfall.

This idea is a good excuse to wade into the books your kids are reading and interested in. You can grapple with principles in the book or explore challenging concepts together through thoughtful conversation.

A family book club has the added benefit of keeping your kids reading over the summer, helping to stave off the summer slump. In addition, many libraries offer free summer reading programs.

### Teach your kids life skills.

One of our main jobs as parents is to raise kids who can function once they leave the nest. So use the summer months to teach kids skills they'll need in life. Here are possibilities: cooking, laundry, cleaning a bathroom, sewing, creating a grocery list, simple budgeting, basic repairs, yard maintenance, maybe even ironing.

Teaching kids these skills will take effort, but once they've learned, you can integrate them into their normal chores. You'll save yourself time in the long run and teach your kids self-sufficiency.

### Adopt a neighbor.

If you have a neighbor who's elderly or a single parent, that person might be struggling to keep up with yard work. Consider tasking your kids with helping out by going over once a week to pull weeds, water, or plant flowers. (After you ask the neighbor for permission, of course.) You can talk in the evening and discuss what they experienced that day and why lending a hand to others is something Jesus wants us to do.

### Quick Ideas

- Sign up your kids for a Christian summer camp. Many camps have scholarship programs available, so don't hesitate to ask if money is an issue.
- Take your kids to vacation Bible school. Each day, ask your kids what they learned and talk through practical ways to live that out.
- Go for a hike. Look for and talk about God's creation.
- Have a movie night. Look for biblical truths you see—and don't see—in the film.
- Invite your kids' friends over for dinner and games. Your family might be one of the only stable influences in a kid's life, and your home could be an oasis.

"Direct your children onto the right path, and when they are older, they will not leave it."—Proverbs 22:6

## MEDIA MADNESS



### MOVIE

**Title:** *How to Train Your Dragon 2*

**Genre:** Action, Adventure, Animation, Fantasy

**Rating:** PG (for adventure action and some mild rude humor)

**Cast:** Jay Baruchel, Gerard Butler, Cate Blanchett

**Synopsis:** Viking hero Hiccup and his dragon Toothless have discovered a cave full of wild dragons—and a mysterious Dragon Rider. Soon they find themselves in the middle of a battle to keep the peace in their kingdom.

**Our Take:** The first film was surprisingly great—and highly successful. The hero used his mind more than his brawn, and that's a great example for kids who might not feel as athletic as their peers.



### MUSIC

**Artist:** Propaganda

**Album:** *Crimson Thread*

**Artist Info:** Propaganda is a rapper, speaker, and spoken-word artist. His YouTube video “G.O.S.P.E.L.” has garnered millions of views.

**Summary:** His new album features 13 tracks—including collaborations with Lecrae, Braille, Andy Mineo, and Derek Webb.

**Our Take:** Hip-hop is huge, and finding a talented hip-hop artist who genuinely loves Jesus is difficult. Propaganda has toured with Greg Stier and Dare2Share, so he knows how to relate to kids. But he doesn't water down his gospel message. These songs can be a great jumping-off point for discussion.



## CULTURE & TRENDS

A school in New Zealand stopped enforcing playground rules during recess. The result: a decline in rates of bullying, injuries, and vandalism, as well as an increase in kids' concentration in class. According to a study by the American Academy of Pediatrics, unstructured play outdoors during the school day is just as important to student achievement as reading or math class. (*Children's Ministry Magazine*)

## Games, Sites & Apps

### Mario Golf: World Tour

Mario is back in a new golfing game that features three unique 18-hole courses. The game includes numerous characters to use, unlockable features, multiplayer options, player challenges, and fun items to find. *Rating: E; Nintendo 3DS*

### girlscouts.org/forgirls

This branch of the main Girl Scouts site provides numerous age-appropriate resources for girls. It also includes places to color and create artwork and activities to increase community and self-esteem.

### Super Why App

This \$2.99 iPhone and iPad app helps kids learn to read, with four different games that help them identify letters, learn sounds, trace and write words, and figure out rhyming words. Available in the App Store.

## QUICK STATS

**Doesn't Add Up:** Most kids lose about two months-worth of grade-level equivalency in math skills over the summer months. Kids from low-income families also lose reading-achievement levels, even though middle-class kids often make slight gains in reading achievement over the summer. (*National Summer Learning Association*)

**Engaged Dads:** Three-fourths of surveyed dads said they're more involved with their kids than their own fathers were. Another survey found that 86% of dads spend more time with their kids than their dads did. (*time.com*)

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