

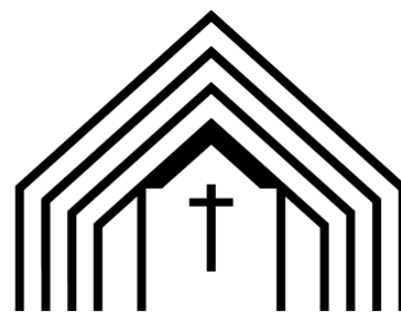
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# parenting CHRISTIAN kids



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## Take Charge of Your Family's Schedule

### POWERSOURCE

#### ASK GOD:

1. To help you make wise choices about time management.
2. To guide you and your kids as you set priorities.
3. To protect your family—and your family time—from busyness and stress.

Just when your family gets settled into summer, school registration sneaks up on you. No matter what grade your children are entering, school bells bring super-sized family calendars. Even toddlers seem to need a social secretary these days!

Lately there's been a movement against hurried, harried, and over-scheduled kids. Always being busy takes a toll on children and their families. Plenty of free time is vital—and doesn't mean your kids will miss out on opportunities. Here are tips for balancing busyness and rest:

- **Schedule family time.** Block it out on your calendar, just as you do with other important obligations. Plan at least a couple of hours a week for together time,

and don't let other responsibilities interfere. Also make family mealtime a priority.

- **Sign up with care.** The start of a new school year is the best time to limit activities. Be realistic about how many your family can handle—and about the amount of homework time and sleep each child needs.
- **Involve your kids.** Ask children about their preferences. Which activity means the most to them? Which ones are they willing to cut? Parents make the final decision and can make church-related activities non-negotiable.

Read on for more great ideas to make the most of your family time.

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## TEACHABLE MOMENTS

### Grow in Wisdom

Read aloud Luke 2:40, 46-47. Talk about Jesus growing up, learning carpentry skills, and teaching in the temple. Say: **Just as Jesus grew and learned, we're growing and learning.**

Ask family members to think of skills they're learning at school or work. One at a time, have family members act out the skills while others guess.

Say: **The start of a new school year is exciting! It means we get to learn new things and try things we haven't tried before.**

Invite your kids to talk about new things they're excited to learn as well as things they may feel nervous about.

Say: **As you learn and try new things this year, remember that Jesus is always with you. He knows what it's like to learn new things.** Close in prayer, thanking Jesus for his love and presence.

## Slow Down!

When kids are too busy, they miss important childhood experiences. David Elkind, author of *The Hurried Child*, emphasizes that schedules filled with too many programmed activities can limit experiments in self-discovery. Children need time to read, draw, dream, build, and even experience boredom. Unstructured time offers a chance to play in natural ways, boost creativity, and develop personality. Packed schedules make it more difficult for children to build a network of social support. They need contact with extended family members, neighbors, and playmates of various ages. Try these ideas so your family members can slow down and connect with one another—and with God.

**In With the Good** Give family members each a card with Philippians 4:8 written on it. Think about the activity you each do the most, and place the cards in those places. Challenge family members to think about the positive side of their favorite activity—and how it honors Jesus.

**Mad, Sad, Glad** At dinner, have family members each share something about their day that made them mad, sad, and glad. This prompt will help everyone reflect on their day and connect feelings to experiences. Before clearing the table, pray together as a family.

**Cross Challenge** Play a seek-and-find game during the week. Try to find as many crosses hidden in everyday life as possible (signposts, telephone poles, etc.). Share your findings at dinner.

**Pop the Question** Before a meal, write questions about each other, about God, or about anything discussion-worthy on slips of paper. (Ideas include "What's your favorite movie?" and "What's the first question you'll ask Jesus when you get to heaven?") Tightly roll each slip to fit inside a balloon. Then inflate the balloons and tie off the ends. Before every course of a

meal, let each family member choose a balloon and sit on it until it pops. Then discuss the questions from those balloons during the next course. Repeat! (This activity works well even without balloons. If you use them, be sure to discard all the pieces afterward.)

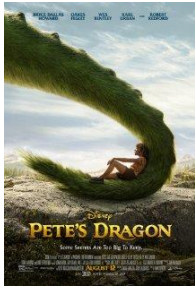
**Busy Bee** Choose a leader. Have the leader say either "Martha was busy" or "Mary was quiet." When "Martha" is said, have the leader do an action such as run in place or turn around. Everyone else should follow the leader. When "Mary" is said, everyone stands still. The leader may try to trick the others by saying "Mary" and doing an action. Those who aren't tricked remain in the game. Afterward, read aloud Luke 10:38-42 and discuss the story of Mary and Martha.

**Noise Busters** Hand out paper and pencils and ask everyone to concentrate and draw a self-portrait. Meanwhile, turn on a radio very loudly, sing off-key, and drum a table. The more noise the better! After a few minutes, stop the noise. Ask: "How well could you focus on your drawing? What distracts you from focusing on Jesus? How can we quiet those distractions this week?"

"My dear Martha, you are worried and upset over all these details! There is only one thing worth being concerned about. Mary has discovered it, and it will not be taken away from her."

—Luke 10:41-42

## MEDIA MADNESS



### MOVIE

**Title:** *Pete's Dragon*

**Genre:** Adventure, Fantasy

**Rating:** PG

**Cast:** Bryce Dallas Howard, Oakes Fegley, Robert Redford, Wes Bentley

**Synopsis:** This reboot of the 1977 Disney classic features Grace, a forest ranger who grew up listening to stories about a dragon. After meeting 10-year-old Pete, who claims to live in the forest with a dragon, Grace sets out to discover the truth. Meanwhile, other people are trying to hunt the dragon.

**Our Take:** This live-action movie featuring an animated dragon named Elliott is sure to delight children as well as parents who saw the original. Use the film as a springboard to talk about reality vs. fantasy, as well as pursuing the truth about people.



### BOOK

**Title:** *Raymie Nightingale*

**Author:** Kate DiCamillo

**Synopsis:** After her father runs off with a woman, 10-year-old Raymie hatches a plan to stay out of the county orphanage. While trying to win a local beauty pageant, Raymie opens herself to new friendships and gains valuable self-knowledge.

**Our Take:** This story is loosely based on the childhood of DiCamillo, author of *Because of Winn-Dixie*. She's known for tackling tough subjects (divorce, alcoholism, abuse, etc.) in thoughtful, kid-friendly ways. Raymie's plight reminds readers that although childhood is sometimes complicated and sad, there's always reason for hope and humor.



## CULTURE & TRENDS

**Lunchbox Competition** Social media is making parents anxious about what they send for their children's school lunch. Pictures of elaborate Bento box creations lead to inferiority complexes, as well as to "shaming" about what types of foods parents offer. ([usnews.com](http://usnews.com))

**Try on a Tail!** Hotels are selling scads of mermaid tails to children—as well as adults. Kids enjoy "mermaid posing" and games such as hula-hoop diving, while adults take water-fitness classes—all while donning a mermaid tail. ([abcnews.go.com](http://abcnews.go.com))

## Games, Sites & Apps

### Mirror's Edge Catalyst

This first-person action game is set in a futuristic dystopia. While performing parkour stunts, a daring heroine named Faith tries to get citizens to think for themselves. The game, which has some mild language, is best for ages 10+.

### MusicTheory.net

Free online exercises help young musicians learn to identify notes, chords, and more. Kids can take theory lessons on a range of subjects and also work on ear training. Premium apps, available for a small fee, can enhance the learning experience.

### Name Play

With this app's games, children can practice reading and writing using the letters in their own names and other people's names. Parents must enter a child's name to begin. The app does not share information. Just add names for more word play. Best for ages 4+.

## QUICK STATS

**Raised Right** In response to the statement "I'm raising my kids the way I was raised," 50% of millennial parents agree, 28% disagree, and 22% are neutral. ([Millennial Marketing Study](http://Millennial Marketing Study))

**Impoverished Students** A majority of U.S. public school students are now considered low-income. Not only does that mean more kids qualify for free-and-reduced lunch; they also need social and academic support to keep up with more-privileged peers. ([washingtonpost.com](http://washingtonpost.com))

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