

A Parent's Guide



to living a life of faith with children

www.AUCE-UCC.org

Where do I begin?

Children learn faith from parents and other caring adults in their lives that live faith all of the time, every day. If you pray, your children will pray. If you read the Bible regularly, your children will want to know what's so important about that unique book. If getting to worship regularly matters to you, your children will know that something important happens when you are in that building and with the people you meet there. If faith informs how you interact with the world as in seeking justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly with God (Micah 6:8), then your children will see you do that and will want to do the same, because they know it has made you who you are—someone they love and respect.



For many of today's families, adding one more thing to their already hectic schedules and routines may seem daunting, if not impossible. Yet we offer here an alternative to the addition of "one more thing"—it is an invitation to families to look at their daily lives through a different lens—by keeping God in mind in whatever they see and do.

What follows is a basic outline to be used as a guide or reminder for parents who wish to become more intentional about the faith that they are passing on to their children. It is not a checklist, as following Jesus and living in God's way are not accomplished by mastering a list of tasks. Living a transformed life as a follower of Jesus each and every day is what makes a Christian. Coming together and supporting one another as we try to do this is what makes a church. And so we offer these guidelines to help you determine how to live your daily lives together as you recognize God's great love for you.

And finally, given the opportunities provided by web technology, it is our intent that this guide be a work in progress. We welcome updates and additions so that its availability on the AUCE website will provide you with the most current advice available from the members of AUCE.

Many thanks to our AUCE member contributors:

Deborah Gline Allen, C.M.C.F.

Rev. Ruth Shilling Hainsworth

Rev. Dr. Olivia Stewart Robinson

Sara Weatherman, C.M.C.E.

Karen Ziel, C.M.C.E.

Getting Started

Using AUCE member, Ivy Beckwith's focus on Story, Ritual, and Relationship (see [Formational Children's Ministry: Shaping Children Using Story, Ritual, and Relationship](#)), we recommend looking at what already happens within the life of your family each day through these lenses:

- ❖ When do you tell or read stories?
At bedtime? In the car? At meals?
- ❖ When does your family participate in traditions or regular activities (rituals)?
On holidays? A weekly family night? At church?
- ❖ How does your family foster relationships among family members and others outside of your family?
Family reunions/holidays? Neighborhood gatherings? Church functions? Extra-curricular events such as sports or arts? Service/mission projects?

Now, how can you incorporate these things that you already do into faith-based discussions or activities? Below is a chart that you can use as a guide, with sample activities or ideas to use as jumping off points. A blank chart has also been provided for you to use as a worksheet for your own family. Please remember that this chart is meant to be tweaked and changed on a regular basis, adapted to your family's lifestyles, schedules, traditions, and preferences.

We hope that your family will be nurtured, enriched, and blessed as you strive to keep God at the center of your daily life together.

Sample Chart

to be used as a guide

	Story	Ritual	Relationship
Advent	Write your own “waiting” story to use each year.	Make your own Advent Wreath or count-down to Christmas calendar.	Find a needy family in your community to help this season.
Christmas & Epiphany	Read many different storybooks or versions of the Christmas story	Attend Christmas activities at church as a family.	Interview extended family members about their childhood Christmases.
Lent	Read the Gospel of Mark together from The Message .	Brainstorm a list of ways to remember God every day.	Choose a service project to participate in during Lent.
Easter & Pentecost	See if you can locate a resurrection theme in the storybooks you have at home.	Continue some Easter Sunday practices at home for the next couple of weeks.	Bring Easter flowers to someone who is house-bound.
Summer	Write & illustrate storybooks based on your family summer adventures.	Find ways to worship together even when you’re away.	Send vacation postcards to your church family.
Fall	Find age-appropriate stories to read about the cycles of life & death.	Take weekly walks together to observe & give thanks for changes in foliage (or other aspects of nature where you live).	Call a relative who lives in a different climate and talk about what you see out your window.
Winter	Watch the movie “Frozen” and talk about where God might be at work in the story.	Light candles at dinner each night & talk about Light.	Invite your neighbors over for hot cocoa.
Spring	Read storybooks about new life & compare with resurrection.	Bring a flower(s) to give away wherever you go.	Help an elderly neighbor to maintain their garden.
Birth	Gift the baby with a Christian storybook or simple children’s Bible.	Write a prayer for the new baby to be prayed at each birthday.	Draw a picture of the baby each time you visit & observe the changes.
Baptism	Share the story and photos of your child’s baptism on its anniversary each year.	Create a water ritual together to celebrate baptism anniversaries.	Send an anniversary card to your Godparents each year.
Starting school	Read the story of Jesus’ learning as a young person (Luke 2:41-52).	Pack a weekly prayer or scripture verse with lunches.	Collect school supplies to send to children who have none through agencies such as Church World Service (http://www.cwsglobal.org/get-involved/kits/school-kits.html)
Confirmation (or entering adulthood)	Share memories and stories from childhood that have significance for entering adulthood.	Create a ritual “rite of passage” for each child in your family.	Share symbolic gifts between the confirmand and parents (& grandparents).
Marriage	Watch love story movies together.	Compile & illustrate a booklet of scriptures about love.	Gather the family to share stories of inspirational family weddings/ marriages.
Death	Read Waterbugs and Dragonflies and talk about life, death, and new life.	Attend a memorial service with your child of someone you don’t know well to help your child become familiar with this ritual.	Gather church friends together to remember pets who have died (tell stories, share photos, etc.)
Add your own categories here & below			

Blank Chart

to make your own

	Story	Ritual	Relationship
Advent			
Christmas & Epiphany			
Lent			
Easter & Pentecost			
Summer			
Fall			
Winter			
Spring			
Birth			
Baptism			
Starting school			
Confirmation (or entering adulthood)			
Graduations			
Marriage			
Death			
Add your own categories here & below			

Additional Note:

You may have noticed that there are no recommendations for what to do with specific age groups of children. This is because a child's growth in faith is not dependent on his/her chronological age. Thus, verbal children are often just as capable of having theological discussions as adults are; however, they may not be as capable of articulating exactly what they mean. This is not a problem, for the main goal of having these discussions together is to allow them (and you) to develop the habit of including God and faith in your daily activities and conversations. For more on this concept, see [Karen-Marie Yust's Real Kids, Real Faith: Practices for Nurturing Children's Spiritual Lives.](#)

Another helpful resource for families:

Vibrant Faith Ministries (www.VibrantFaith.org) has a website specifically for families that includes activity and discussion ideas for parents, grandparents, young families, and families with teens: www.VibrantFaithAtHome.org.