



parenting CHRISTIAN kids



Blessings to you and your family, from Michelle!

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Celebrate Children's Spiritual Milestones

POWERSOURCE

ASK GOD:

1. To help you nurture your children's developing faith.
2. To assure your children that he's with them as they grow.
3. To remind you to make your children's faith milestones special and memorable.

Marking children's physical "firsts"—from first steps to first words—is an exciting and cherished part of parenting. Even more important and worthy of celebration are spiritual firsts, or faith milestones.

These rites help children know that they're growing up as Christians and continually reconnecting to their faith family. Milestones also allow churches and parents to partner together to raise up lifelong followers of Jesus.

Spiritual occasions that warrant family celebrations include:

Baptism or Dedication Children are a gift from God, so we "give" them back by committing their lives to God. By witnessing a baptism or dedication, fellow church members agree to

partner with parents to help raise children as Christians.

Receiving a First Bible When children receive God's Word, it's like their very own special love letter from God. He wants us to read the Bible and hold it in our hearts so we can live it out. Making a big deal out of getting a new Bible shows kids how important the book is to our faith and its growth.

Confirmation or Other Transitions to the Preteen Years Leaving behind elementary school symbolizes that preteens are beginning to "own" their faith. During their spiritual journey, they'll decide whether to draw closer to God or reject him. Thankfully, God is always there—for kids and parents, guiding us throughout our faith walk.

Your Family's Faith Journey



TEACHABLE MOMENTS

Come to Jesus

Place a 50-foot rope or hose in a circle around a chair. Choose one family member to be the “disciple,” and have him or her stand inside the circle. Everyone else, stand outside the circle.

Say: **Some children wanted to see Jesus. But Jesus' friends, the disciples, didn't want the kids to bother him. Imagine Jesus is inside this circle and you want to reach him. When I say “go,” lift the rope and try to sneak under it. The disciple will try to touch you before you get through. If you're tagged, sit down. You can be freed when someone else touches you. When you reach the chair, run back outside the circle. Ready? Go!**

Take turns being the disciple. Then ask: **What was easy or hard about this? How did it feel when someone helped you get to “Jesus”?**

Read Mark 10:14. Say: **Jesus wants us to come to him. Ask: How can we do that? Say: We can go to church, read the Bible, sing, and pray to Jesus. He's always there for us!**

At-home faith talks are vital for nurturing children spiritually. In *Shift* (Group), Brian Haynes offers these guidelines for family times with Jesus:

Faith talks should occur regularly and be age-appropriate. Each week, set aside time to focus on biblical truth in a relational way.

Faith talks should focus on God's Word. Read the Bible together, celebrate it, and apply it to all aspects of your daily lives.

Faith talks don't have to be difficult or formal. Make them fun! For example, go outside on a hot day and compare standing in the sun and shade.

Then read and discuss Psalm 121:5-6.

Faith talks shouldn't depend on children's choices or attitudes. God instructs parents to be intentional about leading their kids spiritually.

Celebrate New Life After seeing a baptism, talk to your children about their own baptisms—or their desire to be baptized. Tell them Jesus washes away our sins. As a family, make handmade cards for newly baptized people.

God's Relevant Word Show children how the Bible applies to their lives. Talk about biblical heroes and how they both stumble and grow in faith. Tie Bible verses into kids' interests, from music and poetry to travel and adventure.

Lifelong Learners Preteens often feel as if they've outgrown Sunday school. Provide age-appropriate Bibles and devotionals for older kids who are forming their identity in Jesus. Help them anticipate the future, and assure them that Jesus is always with them as they grow.

Family Timelines Tape a long piece of paper to a wall. Together, create a timeline of your family's journey with Jesus using words, drawings, and Bible verses. Add marriages, birthdays, and milestones such as when a child started preschool or you moved. Include fun memories as well as challenges that affected everyone. Then discuss: “What are our best memories? What difficult events

have we faced? How did those make us closer to each other and to Jesus? How have we seen God's faithfulness? What dreams do we have as a family?”

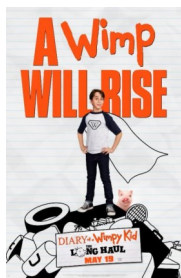
Special Sheep Draw a sheep shape on paper. Set out cotton balls and glue sticks. Have family members take turns holding up cotton balls and saying why each person is special. Then dip the cotton in glue and stick it on the sheep. Continue until you have a fluffy reminder that you are all God's special sheep. Read Luke 15:3-7 and say Jesus is a good Shepherd who loves us, his sheep.

God's Path On a map of your hometown or neighborhood, mark important spots such as your home, school, church, friends' houses, and more. Highlight the roads your family uses most often. Read aloud Psalm 139:1-3. Say: “God always knows where we are, what we're doing, and where we're going. He has big plans for us as we grow and get to know him better. Jesus loves us and will always be with us.” With a red marker, draw a large heart around all the sites you've highlighted. Display the map as a reminder of God's promises.

“Train yourself to be godly. For...godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.”

—1 Timothy 4:7-8, NIV

MEDIA MADNESS



MOVIE

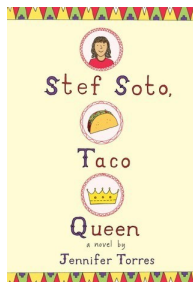
Title: *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: The Long Haul*

Genre: Comedy, family

Rating: Not yet rated

Cast: Jason Drucker, Charlie Wright, Alicia Silverstone, Tom Everett Scott
Synopsis: Hoping to attend a gamer convention, Greg talks his family into traveling to his great-grandmother's 90th birthday party. Crazy road-trip antics result. This is the fourth "Wimpy Kid" movie but the first in five years, so the cast is all new.

Our Take: Young fans of the popular book series will enjoy seeing the Heffley family in action. The film lends itself to discussions about decision-making, family unity and conflict, and how much control kids should (and do) have over their lives.



BOOK

Title: *Stef Soto, Taco Queen*

Author: Jennifer Torres

Synopsis: Middle-schooler Estefania "Stef" Soto is embarrassed by her Mexican-American family's food truck and tired of the teasing she endures because of it. When the business is threatened, however, she fervently defends it—and also learns to embrace her cultural identity.

Our Take: This heartwarming realistic fiction, geared toward grades 3 through 6, explores conflicting loyalties between family and friends. Young readers will consider the role of cultural heritage and the importance of tradition. They'll benefit from seeing how Stef finds her voice amid conflicts and challenges.

Games, Sites & Apps

Legend of Zelda:

Breath of the Wild

This new title from the acclaimed series is for the new Nintendo Switch console. For players, Hyrule is an open world waiting to be explored. They must battle enemies, hunt wild beasts, and gather food and equipment for the journey. Rated E10+

TheKidShouldSee

This.com

Parents can sign up (for free) to receive 8 to 12 videos per week tailored to curious kids. Many videos emphasize STEAM-related topics and spark conversations about the world around us. All videos are appropriate for young viewers, but the content isn't dumbed down.

Clarify* by Playbac

This video-news app from the inventor of BrainQuest explains news stories and current events in fact-based, kid-friendly language. The timely videos end with discussion-starter questions that families can use. The first week is free, but after that a subscription costs \$1.99 per week.



CULTURE & TRENDS

New Zoos Now that the Ringling Bros. circus has disbanded and SeaWorld is phasing out its orca shows, zoos are the next animal-based attraction facing changes. A reported new "unzoo" approach involves taking people to the animals and providing more space for animals to roam, often above visitors' heads. (*various sources*)

Happy Campers If you're not yet comfortable sending your children to summer camp—or just want to share in the fun—check out the family sessions being offered by many groups. It's a popular strategy for getting away together without worrying about meals or hotels. (*empowher.com*)

QUICK

STATS

Faked Out Fewer than 45% of U.S. kids ages 10 to 18 said they could accurately tell which stories in their social-media feeds were fake. Nearly one-third said they've shared fake news before realizing it. (*Common Sense Media*)

Movie Violence PG-13 movies have 23% more gun violence than R-rated movies do. (*Pediatrics*)

Step It Up Pokémon Go players walk an estimated 2,000 extra steps daily, compared to people who don't play the game. (*healthday.com*)

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