



raising kids to follow **Jesus**

the MINISTRY PAPERS

the testimony a christian parent loves to hear...

A "testimony" is the story someone tells of how they became a Christian, giving honour to God. When we run 'Crossroads' newcomers courses at church we invite any Christians attending to share their testimonies. It's always an encouraging time to hear how God has worked in someone's life.

But sometimes we find that someone might reply, "oh, my testimony's pretty boring really... I just grew up in a Christian family ... learnt the Bible at church ... in fact I can't ever remember a time when I didn't know Jesus. I know my trust is in Jesus for salvation, but it's something that I just sort of grew up into".

Let's be clear: that's a GREAT testimony! That's a great work of God! Far from boring, it's a wonderful encouragement to Christian parents... and to Kids Church teachers to all of us. It's a fantastic reminder that one of the ways God loves to bring people into his Kingdom is through families.

When Peter preached at Pentecost and invited people to turn to God "in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins" (Acts 2:28), he went on to say that "the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off – for all whom the Lord our God will call" (Acts 2:39). Clearly, as we respond to the message of Christ, a huge part of this response is to share it with our children.

Of course, our children will have to accept or reject this message for themselves. But as Christian parents we are given the great privilege and great responsibility to raise our children to know Jesus. And the least boring thing – the most exciting thing imaginable would be to hear them say one day, "oh... I grew up in a Christian family..."

LEADERS:...before taking someone through this paper, review the two key introductory MINISTRY PAPERS: 'the ministry training church' and 'meeting one to one'.

Connect. Grow. Serve. After **connecting** to God through trusting in Christ, a vital way we can **grow** is through a growth group and a vital way we can **serve** is through a ministry team.

This MINISTRY PAPER is designed to help your growth group leader encourage you as a Christian parent.



key verse

"the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off – for all whom the Lord our God will call" **Acts 2:39**



investigate

stop and think

read the verse again. What does it mean?

read **Acts 2:36-41**

look at the verse in its context...

and answer the questions below:

1. What does Peter say is the gospel message? (verse 36)

2. How does he say people should respond? (verses 37-38)

3. Who does he say this message is also for? (verse 39)

4. Why do you think Peter includes children in his sermon?

5. What might this mean for Christian parents?

6. So, we are to teach the gospel to our children. But let's be sure to remember: whose work is it ultimately to save people? (vs39)



think & apply

the role of the bible



But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. **2 Timothy 3:15-17**

“you brush your teeth”

Reading the Bible is like cleaning your teeth. It's something we all do every day because we believe it's good for us, and it doesn't take too long. Just like brushing your teeth, reading the Bible every day is a great habit to get into – and with far greater life-changing benefits than stopping your teeth from rotting! It's a life-giving habit we'll want our children to grow up with.

It's great to read the Bible together as a family every day if you can. We get to know God better as we read his Word. So, just like with any friendship, we want to meet with God regularly to get to know him more.

Of course, don't panic if it doesn't happen some days. Keep at it! The important thing is to help your children get into a habit of reading the Bible for themselves – and that they see that regular Bible reading is important to **you** as well. And there are some great resources around to help us ...

'Table Talk' is a book of daily Bible notes for families to use together. It is suitable for families with children aged four years or older.



'Table Talk' forms the basis for a short Bible time--maybe even just five minutes at the breakfast or dinner table--for the family to do together. It begins with a simple discussion starter or activity that leads into a short Bible reading. This is followed by a few questions and a suggestion for prayer.

Table Talk comes with 'eXplore The Bible' (XTB) notes that older children can do themselves, based on the same passages (see back page for how to order).



investigate

1. When did Timothy learn the Scriptures?

2. Who taught him the Scriptures? (see 2 Timothy 1:5)

3. Why is the Bible so important to teach our children?



think & apply

4. How can you make the Bible more a part of family life?



ideas for discussion

picture this...

Pictures or craft projects often make it easier to understand and remember what we learn. Building up a collection of visual reminders of what you've learnt in the Bible together can be really helpful. Display them where the whole family will see them regularly. How about near the breakfast table, on the fridge or on the kitchen door?



a few ideas:

- Children draw a picture based on a Bible story
- Write out a memory verse (and test each other)
- Make a list of things to thank God for
- Put up some key words from the Bible theme

other ideas for family Bible reading:

- Go for a walk and ask the children to notice things they can thank and praise God for. Read Psalm 19 when you get back.
- Invite another family for a meal, and to read the Bible together. Read Mark 10:13-16. The children could make a poster based on the passage.
- Link a family outing with a Bible passage. Perhaps a picnic (while you're there read about the feeding of the 5000 in John 6), a boat trip (Jesus calming the storm in Mark 4:35-41) or star-gazing (God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 15:1-6).

a kid's song

Oh...
The best book to read is the Bible
The best book to read is the Bible
If you read it every day
It will help you on your way

Oh...
The best book to read is the Bible

one family's story...

We're really challenged by the need to think through how we're raising our kids to follow Jesus. When the children were very young we made certain commitments about raising them as followers of Jesus, but it's easier said than done! You get so busy just feeding them, clothing them, looking after them, that it's easy to forget the thing that matters most – teaching them about God. Suddenly they're growing up and it's time to really stop and take some time out to think through what we're doing!

The first thing we're trying to address is our own walk with God and learning from his Word. Apart from church each Sunday, getting along to Bible Study each week to learn and share with other parents has been one vital source of input. We're also trying to read the Bible together and pray together each morning as a couple. Even if it's only for ten minutes it's so important to do. And if we miss a morning – or get off track with it for a while – we know we just need to get back at it again!

Then there's having a regular time of Bible reading and prayer together as a family. One of the big challenges here is to keep adjusting as the kids get older. When the kids were pre-school age an individual Bible story seemed best. But now the kids are school age something together as a family is possible. We'll be aiming for once or twice a week at this stage but hopefully it will grow to being each night.

And that's just some of the issues to think through! There's also things like making use of other resources around like Christian kids music – which we find helps the kids learn a lot of scripture. Fellowship with other families – having Christian friends and mentors – is vital too.

Raising kids to follow Jesus is a big challenge but we thank God, knowing that it's a privilege too – and that he gives us the strength.

a kid's grace

psalm 75 verse 1

Psalm seventy five: verse one
We give thanks to you Oh God
We give thanks to you
We give thanks to you Oh God
We give thanks to you
Psalm seventy five: verse one

the role of prayer

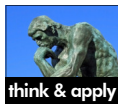
Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. **Philippians 4:6-7**



investigate

1. What might cause us anxiety in life? As parents?

2. Why is prayer so important as we raise our children?



think & apply

3. How can you make prayer more a part of family life?



ideas for discussion

praying together...

There are heaps of ways to help each other to pray. Here are a few ideas...

- keep a note of what you've prayed in a prayer diary. Look back at it each week to see how God has answered your prayers.
- prayers don't have to be said out loud: prayers can be written, drawn, sung ... written or picture prayers can be stuck on the wall as a reminder.
- get in the habit of asking God to help you understand his book – the Bible – before you read it.
- you can use an object such as a book when you're praying together. Pass it to each person in turn, and they can pray if they want to. If not, they just pass it quietly on to the next person.
- "Amen" means "I agree". It's a joining in word. We say it when we agree with what has been prayed. It's a way everyone can participate in a prayer.

the role of example

Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ **1 Corinthians 11:1**



think & apply

1. How might this apply to a parent/child relationship?

the role of church

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. **Hebrews 10:24-25**



1. Why is church important?

2. How might this especially apply to parenting?

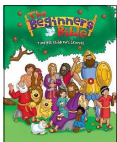


3. How can you be more encouraging to other parents?



make the most of good biblical resources...

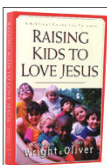
here's a bunch of resources that you might find useful in your task of raising kids to follow Jesus. We need to think and pray through how to get plenty of biblical input for ourselves as parents – and for our kids.



find the right Bible...

'The Beginners Bible' from Honeywell is one of the better children's Bibles around: faithful, well illustrated, clear expression. Use it to get established in a reading the Bible to your children. Unfortunately, like most children's Bibles, it doesn't cover the epistles, so you'll need to find other ways to include them in sharing God's Word with your kids.

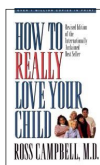
read some biblical books about parenting...



Raising Kids to Love Jesus

Wright & Oliver

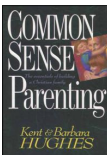
A challenging and comprehensive look at what it means to raise our kids to love Jesus. Highly recommended!



How to Really Love Your Child

Ross Campbell

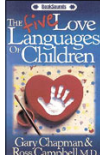
This book explores practical ways we can help our children to know our love.



Common Sense Parenting

Kent & Barbara Hughes

Reading this book feels like you have the chance to sit down with experienced Christian parents and learn from their wisdom.



The Five Love Languages of Children

Gary Chapman & Ross Campbell

This book helps us to better communicate love with our children.



the Briefing

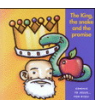
The Briefing (Matthias Media) is a monthly magazine full of great articles and resources to help you keep thinking in a Christian way about the questions and issues that life in this world throws up at us. There's also great daily Bible notes in the back that are ideal for couples to do together.



As discussed on the previous page – Table Talk and XTB are great resources for family Bible discussions as well as for the kids to establish their own regular reading of the Bible (Matthias Media).

play lots of Christian children's music

There's more and more good biblical kids music becoming available. Kids can learn lots of Scripture and biblical concepts through songs.



The King, the Snake and the Promise is a great overview of the whole Bible story in song and narration.



Colin Buchanan has produced many fantastic CDs, soaked with scripture and with a bit of an Aussie feel.

growth groups, accountability & parenting

The table below shows a number of key goals that our growth groups are aiming for as we seek to encourage each other. It's all about relationships. The growth group is a context in which we can be accountable for all the important relationships in our lives.

The third goal relates to growing relationships with those in their family/household, as servants. We are to serve our children by raising them to follow Jesus. We need a great deal of encouragement and prayer in doing this. We need accountability that we are reading the Bible to our kids and teaching them the gospel.

Raising children is a busy time of life. Unfortunately, it is a time when attending a weekly Bible Study can get squeezed out of the schedule. But it is a time when we need more than ever to be receiving this kind of input – and to make involvement in a bible study growth group a high priority. We need it for ourselves in order to better equipped to teach God's Word to our kids. And we also need the opportunity it provides to receive and give encouragement in parenting and marriage.



a growing relationship with **God**, especially through personal Bible reading and prayer

growing relationships with **other believers**, especially through the growth group

growing relationships with those in their **family/household**, as servants

growing relationships with **unbelievers**, especially through personal evangelism

growing relationships with the **whole church** in mission, serving in a ministry team