



Helping you guide
your child's heart
to the heart of God



016: Family Time (Family Worship): How to establish a life-giving spiritual habit for your family

INTRO AUDIO:

You know, there is a reality in life that the things that are most important to you are the things you will make time for. So I want to ask you to seriously consider if you really want your children to become God fearing believers in Jesus Christ. What time are you committed to devoting to that endeavor? This is God fearing kids and the parents who raise them.

MINDI:

Hi there, I'm Mindi Green

CAREY:

And I am Carey. We're glad to be with you again.

MINDI:

Yes we are. And we want you to be thinking about how habits are formed in your family. We would say that happens through repetition and it takes time.

CAREY:

Yeah, for sure.

MINDI:

We want you to think about how you can develop habits with your children in setting God's word and worshiping him.

CAREY:

And part of that is notice we're talking about this in a family context, in a group context, how, how can you do this together as a family? And today we want to kind of walk you through one way that we decided to do this, that we just called family time. That's how we knew it. That's how our kids understood it and knew it. And some people might call it family worship, but it's really just, uh, an opportunity for us as a family to do this thing. Mindi just mentioned a building habits. So Mindi, what would you say when you think of family time? What's the purpose of family time?

MINDI:

The purpose is to grow close as a family to have good connection and grow strong in relationship.

CAREY:

So you're saying to each other,

MINDI:

Right?

CAREY:

I would

MINDI:

Agree. And this is something that we did regularly. It was weekly for a long time. It was Friday nights, tell our kids were teenagers and they had things to do on Friday nights. So we changed it.

CAREY:

Yeah. I remember switching to Tuesday or Wednesday or something like that. Yeah, yeah, yeah. And that relationship together may sound kind of funny because, you know, especially when you think of it in terms of family worship, that doesn't sound like worship. This just sounds like connecting is a family. So how do you see those connecting together?

MINDI:

We believe that as our children have learned to become close to us, it lays a foundation for them to be close to the Lord. So as we're having good close connection in our family time, that's a perfect foundation for us to start teaching them about their relationship with the Lord.

CAREY:

One of the ways I've thought of it is that as they learn to trust us and hear from us how the Lord is a part of our lives regularly and see the demonstration of him through our lives and in our lives that trust that they're developing and building for us, builds a desire in them, them to have what we have this relationship with the Lord that they see demonstrated as being so beneficial. And so the connection in a family between parents and kids and between kids and each other are vital to our spiritual growth and our, our relationship with the Lord.

MINDI:

Yes, absolutely. And in our family time, we specifically had it be a time where we are studying the Bible together. And that is valuable. That is huge because a godly family is an example of what God's church really is supposed to be if we're doing it the right way. So we wanted our children to enjoy studying the Bible with the family. Yeah. And to learn how to do it.

CAREY:

Oh, I remember so many conversations we had about various passages from new Testament, gospels to old Testament stories of the Kings and, you know, uh, GIDE in things like that. I remember us having great conversations with the kids about these things. And we're going to walk you through here. Some of the principles for leading family time, some of the basic practices you can do and give you our real life

example of what we did. Let's start for a moment talking about how to lead an effective family time. I think first off you need to just be real. Don't feel like, well, I don't have a Bible degree, so I can't teach the Bible and that's all hog west. You don't need a Bible degree. You just need to be a little further down the path than your kids are than your family is. And you need to have that genuine connection with Christ yourself.

CAREY:

So just be real, let your own life experience and your own relationship with Jesus. Inform how you talk to your kids about the scriptures that you're reading together. And, uh, as we get into it a little more in some future episodes, we'll talk about how to go about it with scripture specifically, but for now, just think of it in terms of being real, using your Bible, uh, demonstrating to your kids, that it's valuable. It has authority. It has the truth of God that can help them in their lives to not only live a better life, but to honor him.

MINDI:

And I want to remind you, dear parent <laugh> who is listening, you'll find great encouragement and confidence in teaching your children, the Bible, if you are having that time in the Bible. Yeah. So let's just do a little reminder. You have got to be regularly spending time with the Lord and learning from him. I mean, you might have read one verse that morning in your quiet time and you were so excited how to encourage you. Well, that might be just the verse you want to talk to your kids about during family time. I can't tell you how many times we used our family time as an opportunity to tell our children how we were being encouraged in the Lord, how he showed us something that morning or the day before, or even if it was an, a sermon at church. I mean, that is living life and that is showing your children how to practically grow in the truth of God's word.

CAREY:

Yeah. That is so, so valuable. And I remember times you and I would be on a date discussing various theological or spiritual subjects. And we'd say, this is something we should talk about in family time. And sometimes that's where the topics would come from.

MINDI:

Yeah, exactly. Yeah. So family time actually was something that we looked forward to all through the years with our

CAREY:

Kids. Yeah. And the kids did too. Yeah. It wasn't a begrudging thing or that sort of thing. We'll talk to you some in a moment about how to make it that way, where your kids don't feel like it's a drudgery to come to family time. But I think the thing I would say, just sum up this thing about the, the principles and the philosophy behind family time is in the end, trust God to use the efforts you're making to lead your kids himself. He will do that. He's faithful to do that once he's he's in their life, he's not going to leave that work undone. And he's going to use your efforts as a parent and he is going to guide you in what you do.

MINDI:

Amen.

CAREY:

All right. Now let's talk about how you go about it. Practically. We were just discussing and talking about how we did this and we really had three different, I guess you'd think of them as major headings or locations is how we framed it. Just because it's how it worked in our family and it's at the table. So we had a, a table component. We we'll impact that in just a moment in the family room. That's where we would move next and do various activities in there will impact that in a moment. And then this is third. Category's not really a location. It's just variations on that, that we would do that. We did once a month. And we'll talk about that in a moment. So Mindi let's start about at the table.

MINDI:

First of all, we decided we were going to have family time once a week. And it was something when our kids were little, we really talked it up. We were excited about, it's going to be family time. I'd ask the kids what their favorite foods are, what would they like me to make? So I was excited to make a feast for the family and a special dessert. So family time was Friday night for us. I had a special meal and a very important thing that we did at the table was we had a special person.

CAREY:

And you actually got that idea from your family growing up, right?

MINDI:

Yes. I think that we had a special person like on birthdays and things like that. So you and I decided to have this be a regular weekly thing with our family time.

CAREY:

Yeah. So describe to me, what do you mean by a special person and how is that not showing favoritism to a kid <laugh> over the others?

MINDI:

Yeah. Well, special person also could include us. So I actually had a little list. I kept in my desk and recorded every week who was a special person. So I wouldn't miss out on somebody, but the special person, we did that for the purpose of learning, how to encourage one another and to build one another up. I don't know if you have ever gone to like a pottery place where you paint your own dishes, but that's, I did that one time and I made a plate and it, and I drew on a special person. And so we used that plate every week and the kids were kind of excited to see if they were going to sit at the seat where the special person plate was. Yeah. And who was going to be the special person this week? It's kind of fun.

CAREY:

Yeah. And the special person usually would have like a special treat under their plate or something like that as well.

MINDI:

Yeah. And then Carey would think of an idea of what we would say after we would pray and start eating. Then Carey would say, well, the special person is Caleb tonight. And we all want to go around the table. And we want to tell Caleb something that we saw him doing this week that was loving or encouraged

you. I mean, Carey would have different ideas every week of something that we would say to that special person to encourage them.

CAREY:

Yeah. Why they're special to you or what they've done that encouraged you or how you saw Jesus living through them this week, you know, all kinds of variations on that, that you can bring to the table.

MINDI:

Yeah. And many times Carey, and I would talk about it. You know, I might have an idea of what needs to be talked about or a person who needs to be the special person this week

CAREY:

And encouraged in a certain way. Sometimes we could just be very practical about

MINDI:

It. Right? Yeah. So that was really good. Our kids got very comfortable and used to saying, Caleb, you were loving because you helped me pick up my toys or we've did that done that for their whole lives. And it was just such a beautiful thing because God tells us to encourage one another daily in the Lord. And so we practically obey that scripture by doing that in our family times.

CAREY:

Yeah. And let me say a few things about this regarding the kids' ages, when they're younger, you have to instruct them how to encourage, you have to instruct them how to even think of things. Because sometimes they'll say, well, I don't know. And we don't take, I don't know for an answer, we help them. Well, has he helped you with something? Has he been nice to you? Has he, you know, and we would, we would prompt them and help them. And it doesn't take long before they're doing it themselves when special person time comes around and they're excited to because they get to participate and they get to be a part of it all. And as the kids got older, we would kind of advance the questions. We would make it more meaningful, more in depth. We would orient the thing. We're all mentioning around something that's more special to their character, more special to their attitude or their personality so that we could be building them up all along. And I'd love for you to have a vision about this, that if you start this, when your kids are young and by the time they've hit that awkward preteen and teenage stage, this is not an awkward thing to go along with it. This is something that's actually building them up and affirming them in what God's doing in their life that they're not uncomfortable about. And they're not uncomfortable about saying things about their siblings or their parents who, by the way, parents are special person sometimes too. That's just a great thing.

MINDI:

Yeah. It's been one of our favorite things and we're so thankful God gave us that idea and we would hope that you would want to carry on that idea in your family because it's a great opportunity to learn how to encourage one another.

CAREY:

Yeah. And I really miss it honestly now that our kids I do too now that our kids are all grown and out of the house, although sometimes at a holiday or a birthday, we'll do a special person, obviously with a

birthday boy or girl, but we make it a tradition steal when we can. Now another thing that we would do at the table sometimes not always was memory versus we had a box of verse cards that I had either purchased or made up. I think we've done both various times in our lives that we thought were essential for the kids to learn about various topics, various doctrines, various truths. And we would work on them and we would go around the table and have everybody give it a try and help them learn. And I, I remember our daughter Madeline, when she was small, we lived in Hawaii. How old was she when we lived in Hawaii,

MINDI:

Three or

CAREY:

Four, three or four. And we're doing first Peter five five, which says cloth yourselves with humility for God, opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble. And she would say the P P five, five God give grace to humble <laugh> that she would say, and it was just so cute and so exciting to hear her in her little voice saying God's word. And our kids grew up doing that. They grew up learning scripture and we would laugh and joke about how well someone did or, or men you need to really work on that, you know, those sorts of things. And it, it was a good natured, fun thing for us to do.

MINDI:

And when they were little, Carey was real good at putting verses to songs or we'd even use the, the recorded songs like yeah, the IV kids club and we would sing those to memorize verses. And so, I mean, there's just a lot of creative things. There's a lot out there for you as parents to be able to find online or even in homeschool groups. Yeah. If you really want to have a, a systematic thing to follow, there's a lot of great ideas out there.

CAREY:

Yeah. And with memory versus especially with younger kids, you have to take it slow and you have to be very encouraging and very appreciative of the efforts that are made. Another thing we would do is we would have a box that we called the prayer box. And at various times we would have various things in there. It would be sometimes concerns we knew of in a family and extended family. Sometimes there would be cards that profiled a various part of the world or a country, and we'd pray for that country and the people in the country. Sometimes it was missionaries that we knew and we'd have their cards in there as well. And so there's just all kinds of variations of that, that you could do as a family, just praying together as a family, learning to lift up the needs of others.

MINDI:

And again, when our children were real young, we kept it really simple and we would guide them in how to pray and we'd even tell them what to say. And then they would repeat after us. And we'd encourage them in that literally you're holding your child's hand to go through every step of this process. And eventually they're going to know how to do it on their own. Just like teaching them to ride a bike. Yeah. So any age you can start this at where they're starting to talk where they're understanding words.

CAREY:

Yeah, absolutely. And just to make sure we, we zoom out and look at this from like a helicopter view, all this that we've described so far as going on at the table, we're all seated. We're having a meal. It doesn't

have to be a formally structured, really stern thing. It's fun. We're having fun around the table. As we do these things together, we're taking turns, we're listening and we've kind of set the tone and set the environment. That family time is a time where we all participate and we all get to listen to what other people have to say. It becomes a time where everybody's engaged and everybody's involved, right? So from there, we'd finish up dessert. We help get the dishes off the table. And we'd usually try to keep the washing of the dishes separate to do. After all the activities were done, we'd move into the family room. And in the family room, we did some different things. When our kids were young, we would always include things like a storybook Bible or a book of missionary stories, for example, where we would read something and it would be something on their level that they could engage with. We had older kids at the same time, we would help them to appreciate the kids' story and draw out conversation pieces from the story that they could relate to and try and make it fit. Everybody.

MINDI:

I remember when they were real little, we just used their little baby Bible book and they'd sit on our lap and you would point to the pictures and you would just teach them about those pictures and about Jesus. And we'd just hang onto one simple little truth to talk to them about. So it was very simple family times when they were little were usually pretty short.

CAREY:

Yeah. And it was always age appropriate. And you know, the difficulties come when you get more kids in the mix at different ages, and then you have to get more creative at times, but you can also enlist the older kids in helping with the younger kids to, to be a part of teaching them the truths that they need. So there was always some sort of Bible reading or story reading with an application. If we could manage it. And as the kids got older, we would actually use the Bible. We would read stories from the Bible and discuss them together and have conversation around those things. Our next episode, we're going to talk about how to specifically use scripture in a family time setting and how you can go about that. But for now, just know that that's, that's a part, an important part of what we're doing there in the family room. And then also singing worship. You want to say a few things about that? Yeah.

MINDI:

That was fun. When the kids were little, we tried to do fun, active songs, clapping, jumping, dancing, kids love to be goofy and you're playing with them. You're rejoicing with them. You're having a wonderful time. You're not being strict and stern and you know, no Johnny sit down and sing that song, you know? Yeah. I mean, it's, you're just wanting them to enjoy life and enjoy worshiping the Lord. And it's important to just keep things simple. Remember we're singing about Jesus loves me. Did you know, he loves you Johnny and you just keep singing and you have a good time and you just help them to remember those key phrases. God is so good. Isn't he good? Was he, he good to today to you? You know, you just, you want to make it personal and practical throughout this whole thing and have a good time with it.

CAREY:

Yeah. And as our kids got older, the songs would mature as well. You know, until there was one point when all of our kids were junior high age or older, or maybe even in elementary school that we were, we'd actually borrowed him books from our church and we're singing hymns.

MINDI:

Yeah. Junior high or high school

CAREY:

Actually. Yeah. And so I was raised in a Baptist's church, so I only knew a certain number of hymns. And so I would just go through the hymn book from the beginning and the next HYM I came to that, I knew I would teach it to the family and we would sing it together. And then the next week we'd do another one, you know, and that sort of thing. So,

MINDI:

And we really enjoyed that. I didn't know any hymns because I went to the Bible church

CAREY:

<laugh> yeah. And so, so we learned a lot of hymns and some of them the kids liked some of them they didn't, but, but the cool thing about it is we're learning to worship in a way that is bringing in a depth of theology that hymns often have and a depth of, of meaning and application that many modern worship songs don't have. And the kids also learned to appreciate him. So not think of it as just old people, music, they were able to appreciate different styles and different ways of, of worshiping together.

MINDI:

Right. Alongside appreciating and loving the worship songs of our kids. Favorite groups. Yeah. I mean there were times that we even sang to those rock and roll screamo bands <laugh> yeah, because it really meant a lot to them.

CAREY:

Yeah. And we would even let our, our son, for example, Caleb we've mentioned him a few times was into screamo at a certain point in which is a musical style. If you don't know that it's, it's really heavy metal sort of a thing with actual screaming going on. And you know, we couldn't hear what was being said, but we actually sometimes would enlist Caleb's help in helping us understand the song and know what is teaching. And there were times we were all just brought to tears at the depth of lyrics that these songs contained, uh, these, these bands that had a vision for people who loved that kind of music and wanted to get the gospel to them. And so it was just very encouraging to us to know our son though. He is listening to a type of music we would never listen to is just being saturated with the truth of God and these lyrics. And it was a powerful, powerful thing.

MINDI:

Yeah. That's just an example of you being willing to just things as your children are growing and asking Lord to give you wisdom to do what's best for them at that stage. Yeah. You know, when, when they're three years old, you're seeing clap your hands, all you people and God is so good when they're in high school, you might be having fun listening to their rock music. Yeah. Or whatever it is. Yeah. In your day and age, you're just willing because the Lord, he's not, he doesn't want us to be rigid. He doesn't want us to be legalistic. He's wanting us to get to the heart and get to truth every time.

CAREY:

Yeah. And another great resource we have these days is YouTube. I mean, there's so many, many worship songs on YouTube that actually have the lyrics on the screen and you can cast that to your

television and you can all sing together with lyrics on your television. I mean, it's just very, very easy to do that these days. Then the last element that we would get into in our family room is prayer. We would pray together about concerns or cares. And this was a little different than the prayer box at the table. This was more about their needs. We would ask them, what can we pray for you about what's going on at school? And this, as you can see, is bringing a deeper connection as a family. Like we mentioned at the outset and we're, we're not just enjoying all our time together, getting into the word of God together, learning more about God together, but we're actually building relationship with each other at the same time, caring for each other through prayer. And Mindi mentioned at the beginning, the family is like a small picture of what the church is supposed to be like. Well, in this prayer time, we're practicing all those one anothers of the new Testament. Encourage one another daily, love one another, pray for one another. All the various things are coming together in a family time.

MINDI:

And just to give you a vision for fast forward, we right now with all of our kids out of the house, we have a weekly text that is sent out from Carey right now. Our daughters were doing it, but they got busy with school, but we pray every week for someone different in our family. So this goes out to everybody, our son-in-law, our daughters-in-law and our grandchildren are included. So it's a beautiful thing. We're continuing to pray for one another in our family, even though it's just Carey and I now in our home and our kids are making their own homes.

CAREY:

Yeah. That's a great vision for the future that I think we'll just give you ideas about how these things can continue on. Right now we mentioned a third category, which I called variations on the theme of family time. And really all this is, is that once a month we decided, of course, there's no rules. You can do whatever you want. We decided to have a fun time as family time, once a month. And so we would either have a game night or a movie night, or sometimes we'd go out and do mini golf, you know, just various things that we would decide to do. And, and just spending time together as a family, having fun,

MINDI:

Right. Or going out to eat, playing ultimate Frisbee <laugh>

CAREY:

Yeah. I mean, there's all kind you can fill into play. Right? All kinds of things that you can do as a family. And again, it's all around that theme of connecting as a family, letting the relationships you're building there, be kind of a demonstration to your kids of what it's like to live life in the presence of the Lord and with his joy so that they begin desiring that for themselves. And over time, as they grow up the practices of prayer and scripture memory, a Bible study and sharing of their lives with others just becomes a very natural thing that they would honestly miss. If they moved into a stage of life where they didn't have it and it's all because it's become a part of them, it's become part of their, their personality and their practice of loving and knowing the father.

MINDI:

And it's very encouraging for us to see our oldest son and his wife carrying on these kinds of traditions. Of course, they're making them their own and they look a little different, but they have their family, Bible reading and singing songs. And, and then our second, our daughter, who's already starting to show her little boy. Who's not even one yet his little kid's Bible book. So it's just, each of our children are going

to find what fits them, but they have the same theme of staying close together as family and coming together, studying God's word together and praying together. And that's passing on the generational faith that we've talked about.

CAREY:

Let me just say, if you have any questions about this very big nutshell, we just gave you about family time. Please don't hesitate to ask. We have an option on the website at God, fearing kids.com, where you can click a button and ask your question. And we would love to include your voice asking the question on an episode of the podcast. We're going to do some Q and a episodes eventually where you can ask your question and we can answer. So thanks for listening. Let's spend some time in prayer. As we wrap up Lord Jesus. We know that you are worthy of our praise and you're worthy of our devotion and adoration. And we want the parents that are listening to have a vision for how they can lead their kids day by day, week by week in knowing and following you from the heart and family time for us has been such a great tool that you've used to build the relationships in our family in a way that causes our spiritual growth to flourish within the context of community like you intended to happen within your church. And so Lord, we ask that you would equip and motivate the parents who are listening to understand what they can do in their context to begin leading their kids in a regular time of habitual practice of connecting as a family and growing in their faith. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

CAREY:

You can join us in making an eternal difference in the lives of other Christian families, but financially supporting this podcast, visit [God fearing kids.com/support](https://GodFearingKids.com/support) to see all the options monthly supporters will receive our partners only bonus podcast, digging deeper as our thank you gift. And to, uh, I know I'll, I'll cut that last part when special time comes around special person time when special person time comes around, but the, the re the, but the cool thing about it is