



AGE 2

The Root Years



HOME
22.6

AGE 2

A Snapshot of Life

From age 2-3 years, children are able to

- Sing simple songs about God.
- Listen to Bible stories.
- Initiate play with peers.
- Use their imagination.
- Assert their independence strongly.
- Enjoy repetition.
- Have better gross-motor coordination.

Parenting Tip

Immerse your child in books. Read to your child, and let him or her “read” to you. Your child will likely want the same books to be read repeatedly, so choose simple books with quality illustrations. Play Christian songs in the car and at rest time. Teach motions to songs. Give attention and praise for positive behavior.

Parent Dedication

What is Parent Dedication?

Parent dedication is giving a strong spiritual legacy to your children. The Legacy Principle, the Likelihood Principle, and the Lenses Principle are crucial to your child's spiritual growth. In the parent dedication section you'll find tools to help you grow as a parent. **The Legacy Principle** states that the scriptures tell us that what we do today directly influences the multi-generational cycle of family traits, beliefs and actions – for good or bad (Exodus 20:5-6, Psalm 78:5-8). So passing a strong faith to our children begins by having a strong faith ourselves, modeling the gospel in our marriages and in how we relate to those closest to us. Some of us need to break negative cycles that may have started with our own upbringing in order to launch a new and improved legacy for the next generation. **The Likelihood Principle** states that the good news is this: in the context of healthy relationships, children tend to embrace the values of their parents. Proverbs 22:6 tells us that when children learn right from wrong at home under the nurturing, loving training of parents, they tend to adopt mom and dad's beliefs. While there are no guarantees because every child has a free will, kids are far more likely to embrace their parent's faith if they enjoy their parent's company! That's a big part of the reason parents are warned not to "provoke your children to wrath" but rather "bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). Bottom line – a strong relationship with mom and dad is key to a strong Christian faith. **The Lenses Principle** says Jesus taught that our enemy's primary weapon is deception – getting us to believe and live according to lies rather than truth (John 8:44). And when someone is deceived, he or she does not know it! Our children are growing up in a culture that bombards them with lies. An hour or two per week at church is no match for the hundreds of hours spent with media, school, and friends. Nor can it compete with a child's fallen nature that often wants to rebel against what is good, true and beautiful. It is the job of parents to equip children with the corrective "lenses" of truth so they can better navigate the deceptive roads of life.

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As we are the clay, Jesus is the potter. He has placed children in our lives to mold, so as they grow, they will draw to Him. Are you daily spending time in His Word, and letting Him guide you so you can be the disciple-maker in your child's life? Remember to reflect on Isaiah 64:8 "...we are the clay, and You our potter; and all we are the work of Your hand."

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Parenting Tool:

Guiding Behavior

At this stage of development, your child is starting to use words to express his or her feelings. Your two-year-old can listen to and understand what you say. The words you use, your tone of voice, your facial expressions, and your body movements are very powerful tools in guiding your children's behavior. A calm but firm voice conveys that you love them and that you mean what you say. John 17:17 tells us, "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth."

Always focus on the behavior

It is not the child we want to change. Rather, it is the inappropriate behavior. Calling attention to inappropriate behavior lets the child know that the actions are not acceptable, but he is still loved. Focus on appropriate behavior. Praise and reinforcement will let the child know which behaviors are appropriate and acceptable. Make it a point to catch your child behaving well, and encourage him with your smile and loving touch. As you reflect on Scriptures such as Psalm 71:8, "Let my mouth be filled with Your praise and with Your glory all the day," you will have wisdom to know when and how to praise and encourage your child.

Have a clear set of rules

Rules must be consistent and fair. This helps your children know what to expect and to understand their limits. They need to understand the reason for each rule, so make sure you explain it in words they can understand. Ask God to give you wisdom for establishing a clear set of rules by meditating on Psalm 19:14, "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight..."

Be consistent

Be clear in the expectations and consequences of your child's behavior. When you set guidelines and limits, you must stick to them. When you're not consistent with your routine, children get confused and may act out more or throw more temper tantrums. Be consistent in all things—whether it's with discipline, sleep habits, or mealtime routines. Be a parent of your word. Without consistency, children cannot feel the security of a parent's love. As 1 Corinthians 13:8 reminds us, "Love never fails."

Allow your child to make acceptable choices

Offer limited choices to your child that are acceptable to you. As Isaiah 1:17 reminds us, we need to help our child “Learn to do good...”

Know what your child is doing

As you allow your child to make acceptable choices on his/her own, you must also watch your child closely. If you see an inappropriate behavior coming, redirect your child to another activity or area. 2 Timothy 4:5 reminds us, “But you be watchful in all things...”

Communicate your expectations to your child

Let your child know you expect positive behavior. Help him or her to solve problems with positive words. Remind your child with love and respect about the expectations you have. In this way, you will help your child learn John 13:17, “If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.”

Kids will be kids, but if they are not taught appropriate behavior at an early age, they will not grow up to be responsible adults. Guiding their behavior with God as your teacher will instill His love in their lives, which will impact their lives for eternity. As Psalm 48:14 tells us “...He will be our guide...” if we lean on Him for His wisdom.



Let your child know that our actions, what we say and do, reflects who we are. In this way, you will help your child learn John 13:17, “If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.”

Blessing Your Children

How do I bless my children?

There is power in a blessing. The Hebrew word for blessing is used over 640 times in the Old Testament alone. Do you know the very first thing God did after creating us? In Genesis 1:27–28 we read, “So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them...” We were made for blessing! Based on examples in the Bible, there are five basic elements that make up a biblical blessing:

1. Meaningful Touch Meaningful touch has many beneficial effects. The act of touch is a key to communicating warmth, personal acceptance, and affirmation—even physical health! For anyone who wishes to see the blessing grow and develop in a child, touch is an integral part of the blessing. As Mark 10:13–16 says, “Then they brought little children to Him, that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked those who brought them. But when Jesus saw it, He was greatly displeased and said to them, ‘Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.’ And He took them up in His arms, laid His hands on them, and blessed them.”

2. A Spoken Message Words have an incredible power to build us up or tear us down emotionally. This is particularly true when those words are coming from our parents. Therefore, the blessing hinges on a spoken message. Your child desperately needs to hear a spoken blessing from you. As parents, we must be keenly aware of the power of the spoken word and also be aware of how powerful the absence of spoken words can be. Both people and relationships suffer in the absence of words of blessing, or those spoken words of love, encouragement, and support. Proverbs 16:24

reminds us, “Pleasant words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the bones...”

3. Expression of High Value To “value” something means to attach great importance to it. This is at the very heart of the concept of blessing. Anytime we bless someone, we are attaching high value to him or her. Our children need to hear that they are someone who has great worth apart from his or her performance. As Ephesians 4:29 reminds us, “Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.”

4. Picture of a Special Future Communicating a special future to a child is another important part of giving the blessing. Children are filled with the potential to be all God intends them to be. Picturing a special future for your children can help bring out the best in their lives. It gives them a positive direction to strive toward and surrounds them with hope. When a child feels in his or her heart that the future is hopeful and something to look forward to, it can greatly affect his or her attitude toward life. We can see this very thing in our relationship with the Lord. Jeremiah 29:11 says, “‘For I know the thoughts that I think toward you,’ says the Lord, ‘thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.’”

5. An Active Commitment The first four elements listed above are the building blocks of the blessing, but the mortar that holds them together is an active commitment—the fifth element. This element of the blessing describes the responsibility that goes with the blessing. Parents need to rely on the Lord to give them the strength and staying power to confirm their children’s blessing. You have God’s Word through the Scriptures as a guide, plus the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Words alone cannot communicate the blessing; they need to be backed with a commitment to do everything possible to help the one blessed to be successful. Isaiah 40:31 encourages us, “But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.”

For more information on the biblical blessing, see *The Gift of the Blessing* by Gary Smalley and John Trent, PhD.

Ways to Bless Your Child

Meaningful Touch

"He took a little child and set him in the midst of them. And when He had taken him in His arms, He said to them, 'Whoever receives one of these little children in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but Him who sent Me,'" says Mark 9:36–37. Jesus loved to take the little children into His arms. When you embrace your child, you convey Jesus' love to him or her.

Daily blessings of Scriptures

"I rejoice at Your word as one who finds great treasure," says Psalm 119:162. Rejoice in His words and speak them to your child daily. Pray His words at naptime and at bedtime.

Some verses to consider

- Romans 8:28, "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."
- Peter 5:6, "Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time."
- Matthew 6:33, "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness..."
- John 14:6, "Jesus said, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.'"

Written or spoken blessings

"Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in the power of your hand to do so," says Proverbs 3:27. Words of love and acceptance are so important. Do not delay in communicating blessings through words and notes. Make a "love envelope" by writing a blessing on cutout hearts. Let your child open the envelope and pull out a heart. Share the blessing with your child. Add these written blessings to your "blessing box."

One-on-one time

Life is so simple at this age. Your child loves being with you and having fun. Build memories that will last forever. Not only will your child be blessed during your special time together, but you will be, too. Try some simple activities:

- Coloring a picture
- Going to the park
- Playing with play dough
- Going to lunch (let your child pick the location)

Make it a priority to spend time with your child!

A blessing for you

"Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, and whose hope is in the Lord,"
Jeremiah 17:7

What's a Blessing Box?

In Genesis 1:27–28 God's Word says, "So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them..."

We were all made for blessing! Written words can place unconditional love and acceptance into the heart of a child. One idea for sharing blessings with your children is to have a "blessing box," or a special box where you can store written blessings and encouraging words for your child as they develop.

Several ideas for written blessings include Scripture passages you claim for your child, words of affirmation, descriptions of accomplishments, desires for the future, prayers, or whatever God puts on your heart. Continue to store these blessings in the special box throughout your child's life. Think of what a treasure it will be in your child's adult life to have this blessing box!

Family Time

What is Family Time?

The idea of family worship is both attractive and intimidating. The thought of beginning a new pattern of worship in the home can be overwhelming for those just beginning. This guide includes answers to basic questions that we hope will equip you to lead your family in worship.

What does the Bible say about growing together in Christ as a family?

The importance of the family in discipleship is prominent throughout the Scriptures (Deuteronomy 6:6-7; Psalm 78:5-7; Ephesians 6:4; 2 Timothy 1:5, 3:15). Husbands are primarily responsible for the spiritual leadership of their wives (Ephesians 5:22-33). Parents, especially fathers, are primarily responsible for the spiritual growth of their children (Ephesians 6:1-3). These are huge responsibilities, but God has promised to provide everything we need to lead our families well, according to His design. As leaders in our home, the critical thing to remember is that God's Word must be written upon our hearts. Our faith in Christ and reliance on His Word should be authentic, tangible, and transparent.

What are the benefits of family worship?

- Family worship brings glory to God. It is a visible reminder for all in the home that God is worthy of our time, attention, and affection.
- Family worship produces joy in the home. Jesus will bring joy to families who worship and grow together. The love of Christ will be more evident in a family where worship is central.
- Family worship effects change in the world. As families read, pray, study, sing, and grow together, they join from their homes in what God is doing across the nations, while influencing each other's lives for generations to come.

What should we do during family worship?

Keep it simple. Consider the following elements as you worship together:

READ—Read a portion of the Bible together. Don't worry if you've already read it in your time alone with God. Reading a chapter a second time will only reinforce what God is teaching you. If children are present and able to read, allow them to do so. Of course, you'll want to explain difficult words and concepts (but don't worry too much if you can't explain everything!).

DISCUSS—After reading the Bible together, work through a simple process of examining what has been read, much like you do in your own time alone with God. Give everyone a chance to discuss the passage and consider how it applies to everyday life. Ideally, you will lead by example and share with your family what you learned in your time alone with God and the difference it has made.

PRAY—Consider praying through the key points of the Bible passage that you have just read and discussed. Ask God to change your hearts, minds, lives, and family accordingly. This specific prayer can lead to a more general time of prayer that uses the letters P-R-A-Y as a guide:

Praise—Worship God for who He is.

Repent—Confess your sin to God and acknowledge your need for Jesus.

Ask—Intercede for particular needs in your life and other's lives.

Yield—Surrender your life to following Jesus wherever He leads you.

Try to include everyone as you pray, even if this is on a rotating basis. Additionally, you may want to keep a prayer journal that enables you to keep track of prayer requests and God's answers to those requests.

SING—Sing or listen to music together as a family. If someone in the family has musical gifts, that person may lead some simple songs. If no one in your family is musical, you can sing along with music from a CD or DVD and discuss what the songs mean.

MEMORIZE—Choose key verses or passages to memorize. You may want to work on a verse or passage for a week or a month. Either way, be sure to work together, taking time to understand what you are memorizing. Periodically, set aside time to review verses over the course of the year.

Frequently Asked Questions About Family Worship

1. What if a father or mother is not a Christian?

The commands regarding family discipleship in the Bible assume believing parents. Of course, this is not always the case. In those instances where the father is not a follower of Christ, the mother will need to take the initiative for leading family worship in a non-offensive and non-threatening way. In the case of a mother not being a follower of Christ, the father should lead with compassion and sensitivity.

2. What about a single parent family?

In this case, the responsibility falls to the single parent. This, along with the many other duties that single parents have, may present a significant challenge. However, God will supply great grace and everything we need to raise and strengthen our children in the faith.

3. What about children?

The dynamic of family worship will vary considerably depending upon the ages of the children involved. The goal for every child in the family is not the same. With young children, focus on the importance of knowing God, respecting the Bible, and worshiping as a family. With older children, dig into Scripture more, ask good questions, and discuss how the Bible relates to life and how a relationship with Christ changes us every day.

4. How do I keep things interesting if the ages of my children vary widely?

Regardless of age, include children in planning, reading, singing, teaching, and praying as much as possible and as much as maturity will allow. Make sure to keep things simple, and don't be afraid to keep it short; listen well, and be aware of what is happening in each child's heart and life.

5. What time of day is best for family worship?

Timing is far less important than consistency. Some families prefer to worship as the day begins. For others, evening may work best. Many families prefer to adjoin family worship to the evening meal since everyone may be present at that time.



Deuteronomy 6:7 says,
“You shall teach [God’s words] diligently
to your children, and shall talk of them
when you sit in your house, and when you
walk by the way, and when you lie down,
and when you rise up.”

Concentrated time in family worship
can serve as a catalyst and support for
“as you go, as you sit, as you walk”
conversations and applications of God’s
Word within our families. Encouraging
and challenging our spouses and children
in Christian faith happens best in the
context of real, everyday life. Family
worship builds consistency into our family
routines and opens up many opportunities
and possibilities within our family
relationships.



A Family Time from Genesis 37

READ

o Genesis 37:1-4, 37:17b-27

o When Joseph's brothers saw a caravan coming, they formed their plan. They decided to sell Joseph as a slave. So Joseph was taken to Egypt, and the brothers believed they were rid of the brother they despised. They told Jacob, their father, that Joseph had been killed by a wild animal. Joseph was sold to a man named Potiphar. Soon, Potiphar grew to trust Joseph and placed him in charge of his household. But Potiphar's wife tried to tempt Joseph. When he refused to dishonor God, she made accusations and sent him to jail. While in jail, Joseph began interpreting the dreams of others. When Pharaoh himself needed his dream interpreted, Joseph was called. His accurate and insightful interpretation earned him a favored place with Pharaoh and in the country of Egypt. He was placed in a position to help Egypt survive a coming famine. Joseph's brothers learned that Egypt had abundant food during this famine, so they set off to buy some grain for their families. After their arrival, they discovered that it was their brother Joseph in power, who was being used by God to deliver people during this time.

o Genesis 45:1-15

o We see in this story that God displayed His sovereignty through the life of Joseph. God took him through trials and many struggles in order to work out His plan. The plan was for Joseph to be in just the right place, at the right time, specially prepared to preserve the Egyptians throughout the famine. God was with Joseph the entire time – during his exaltation and also during his humiliation. He guided and protected Joseph, and ultimately, He worked through his brothers' sin to preserve the entire family.

The Bottom Line: Even when evil seems to be in control, we can be confident that God will take evil and use it for our good and His glory.

Questions:

- Were Joseph's brothers following God's plan when they sold him?
- How do you think Joseph felt throughout his years in Egypt?
- How did God use the brothers' sin for His glory?

PRAY

o Confession is our personal acknowledgement of the sin in our lives. God tells us in His word to confess our sin to Him and to turn from it. Confession is vital in the life of every believer as they seek to be more like Christ. If you desire to read some passages from scripture about this, some are listed below.

Biblical Basis for Confession:

Proverbs 28:13; Romans 10:10; James 5:16; 1 John 1:9

Take an opportunity for those gathered with you in worship to spend time in silent confession to God.

o Latin America is made up of 46 countries and territories – 25 of which are islands. Approximately 595 million people live in Latin America currently. In 1900, almost the entire population was considered Catholic. Since then, many changes have taken place. Strict traditionalism with strong opposition to Protestant missionary activity has given way to freedom of religion and rapid Evangelical growth. Evangelical churches are now becoming rooted and sending out missionaries of their own. The missions movement has had an enormous impact on the world – first from North America, and now increasingly from Latin America.

- Their churches will understand how to support cross-cultural outreach.
- Training programs to develop that result in fruitful long-term missions.
- Pray for our Immanuel partners in Latin America.

Source: Operation World by Johnstone and Mandryk

MEMORIZE

o Genesis 50:20 "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today."

SUGGESTIONS

These suggestions are intended to help parents facilitate God-centered discussions with their children. Parents should prayerfully use these suggestions to help their children discover the truths of God's Word and worship Him together.

Preschool (Birth-Kindergarten)

o Show the child a piece of rope, scarf, or chain. Say, "In Joseph's day chains or ropes were used to keep a slave or prisoner from running away. Joseph's brothers were jealous and wanted what he had. Joseph's brothers sold him to be a slave in Egypt. He had to work very hard and could not run away. But God didn't allow Joseph to be a slave forever (throw the rope or chain to the side). God allowed Joseph to be a very important person."

o Discuss how God used something bad in Joseph's life and made it good. Say, "God makes everything happen just like He says it will. Did God leave Joseph while he was a slave? No. When he was in jail? No. God is always with His people, those who trust him."

Children (Grade 1-5)

o Questions to ask: Have you ever had a fight with your brothers or sisters? Were your feelings hurt? How do you think Joseph felt when his brothers sold him into slavery? Did God know what was happening? Why do you think God didn't stop it? When bad things happen to you or you are mistreated, is it hard to trust that God will turn those bad things to good?

o Did Joseph just happen to end up in Egypt? Did he just happen to gain favor in the eyes of the jailer? Did he just happen to be able to interpret dreams? Did there just happen to be a famine in the land? Did it just happen that Joseph's brothers came to buy food from him? Are all of these events coincidental or do they show that God had a plan?

o Discuss who the hero of this story is – Joseph or God? How did Joseph point to God's greatness?

Students (Grade 6-12)

o It would have been understandable for Joseph to question all the hardships he experienced. Read Genesis 45:5-8 again. Have you ever been in hard circumstances for a lengthy period of time? Did you have or show bitterness to those that seemed to cause your suffering?

o Rather than harboring bitterness Joseph boldly declares to his brothers, "... it was not you who sent me here, but God." (v. 8) Joseph makes it clear that God's will is what was being exercised, not man's. Does knowing that God always accomplishes His plans encourage or scare you? Discuss.

o Joseph's trust in the Lord was magnified during his most difficult moments. What can we say about how Joseph believed and trusted in his master?

Church Community

What is Church Community?

With so many young people leaving the church after they are under the leadership of their parents, it is important that we teach the necessity of the church. Scripture says that the church is the Bride of Christ and He has given the church these four responsibilities: worship God, connect with others, grow in God's Word, and go tell the world about Christ. It is important that our children understand the heart behind what the church is meant to be and that our children allow Christ to transform their hearts to serve Him through His church.

We go to church to worship our God who has saved each of us and given us a personal relationship with Him. We go to church to come together to celebrate our Heavenly Father by giving Him our worship. Our children should see families living their lives side-by-side, sharing experiences, caring for each other, being open with one another, and praying together. Our children should know that the church is a place where they can grow in their faith and gain the knowledge that will help them grow closer to the Lord and live a more abundant life. In other words, our children should know the church is a place where we can be transformed. Finally, the church leads us to the point where we must open our eyes and our hearts to step out and follow the nudging of the Holy Spirit to reach the world around us.

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Why is it important to bring my 2-year-old to church?

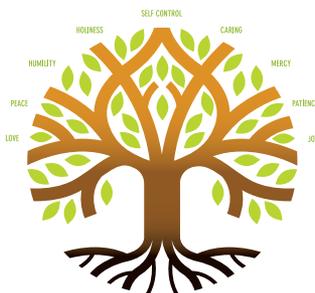
This is the age where your child transforms from a toddler to a young child. Children are like sponges, wanting to absorb everything you say, and trusting you and others in their life. Sunday school teachers can play an important role in the way your child reacts to coming to church. Your child is taught to sit in a circle and listen to Bible stories. Two-year-olds love singing songs and interacting with other children their age. They connect by building relationships with their teachers and friends. They grow in the knowledge of Jesus, and are excited to hear Bible stories and make fun crafts that go along with the story. By exposing your child to church at an early age you allow them to experience Colossians 3:16, which instructs us, "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your heart to the Lord."



Discipling As You Go

What is Discipling As You Go?

Deuteronomy 6 is clear in its instructions to parents: constantly, as you live your life, be an example and train your children to follow the Lord. As parents, it is important for us to live a consistent life of faith in front of our children. As things happen in life, we should use those events to train our children, not only in right and wrong, but also in how to make decisions to live the abundant life that Christ has for us. We should model and explain how God's truth should be the standard of how we live our lives. In other words, even from the beginning, we should teach wisdom rather than the facts of "do's and don'ts." Faith is much easier caught than taught. Parents should always help their children see life's decisions through the lenses of our faith.



Parents must trust the Holy Spirit to work in the lives of their children, but the scriptures also teach us to give loving discipline and exemplify Christ-like behavior to develop the spiritual growth of our children.

Parenting Tools: *Temper Tantrums*

Children can create big scenes. No matter how sweet your child is or how good of a parent you are, meltdowns can happen. At this age, children may know a lot of words, but they do not have the ability to construct complex sentences or put words to all the emotions they are feeling. They are easily overwhelmed and usually want to do more than they can handle. They live in the here and now, not in our cookies-are-for-after-dinner-world. For two-year-olds, not getting what they want, when they want it is a top temper tantrum producer. Some ways to help your child when he or she has a tantrum include:

- Acknowledge the frustration. Look your child in the eye and let him or her know you feel his or her pain.
- Be silly. Laughter can be a great tantrum-buster.
- Try a distraction. Give your child something else to think about.
- Ignore it. If you do not react, your child may give up.
- Leave the scene, but do it without making a fuss. You will be modeling calm behavior. It may be inconvenient, but it shows who is in control—you!
- Avoid the trigger. Try to figure out what sets your child off.
- Offer options. When children feel overwhelmed, they need your help; however, they still want to have a say in things.
- Give fair warnings. Children are more likely to behave if they know ahead of time what they can and cannot do.
- Show your children how you want them to act. Teach your children to use words to express themselves. Good ones to start with are, “Can you help me?” and “Excuse me.” Telling your children you want them to be good is not really informative. Instead, tell them you want them to ask for things in a quiet voice.

Remember, parents’ behavior also matters. A child may be more likely to have temper tantrums if parents react too strongly to poor behavior or give in to the child’s demands. As Isaiah 1:17 tells us, “Learn to do good...”

Parenting Tools: *Bedtime*

Bedtime can be one of the most stressful times of the day. It may have already been a long day; your nerves are frayed and your patience has run out. This is where establishing a bedtime routine is beneficial for everyone.

Here is a routine example:

1. Bathe/brush teeth/comb hair
2. Sing a song together (it can be one from your childhood, radio, or hymn)
3. Read a Bible story (this is a great time to connect the events of the day with a spiritual truth)
4. Everyone take a turn to pray

Setting a routine will help your children know what is coming and what is expected of them.

Perhaps your family already has a routine, but staying in bed is a real challenge. Try this: take a small piece of cardboard and some twine to make a door hanger (think "do not disturb" sign at hotel), and color one side green and the other side red. Before putting them in bed explain the concept of the door hanger. If they need to get up for something and the sign is green, then they have one opportunity to come ask a question or get a drink. However, after they have gotten up once the sign will be turned to red and they will have to stay in their room until morning. The first time they come out of their room address their need or question. If they come out after that, refer them to the sign and remind them of the "door hanger rule" that they will need to wait until morning. This may take several attempts and you may even choose to include a consequence for them leaving the room when the sign is red, but be sure you are prepared to enforce the consequence. It may take a few nights, but this will help to settle your bedtime process. When they ask about this new rule, remind them that it is not to keep them from having a few more minutes of fun but to help ensure that they have the best tomorrow. Explain to them that in order to have the best day tomorrow they need to be well rested, and teach them that God's rules are the same way. He wants the best for us in the long run and His Word teaches us how to obey His commands, just like we need to obey our parents.