



AGE 4

The Root Years



HOME
22.6

AGE 4

A Snapshot of Life

From age 4-5 years, children

- Express love for God and Jesus.
- Like to tell Bible stories.
- Exhibit a conscience.
- Show concern for others.
- Recognize that Jesus loves people and helps people in special ways.
- Are bossy and show great independence.
- Enjoy being silly.

Parenting Tip

Invite your child to pray with you. Encourage him to talk to God about his concerns. Make it a priority to memorize Bible verses, and explain to your child how God teaches us through His Word.

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.



Exemplifying Christ daily in your life lays the spiritual foundation for your children so that when they reach the age of accountability, they will ask Jesus into their heart. Continue to be a role model, and God will guide you in this journey. "Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock," says 1 Peter 5:2-3.



Parenting Tool: *Self-Control*

Teaching self-control is one of the most important things that parents can do for their child. By learning self-control at an early age, your child can make appropriate decisions and respond to difficult situations that can yield positive outcomes. Your child can learn to manage emotions, anxiety, and impulses well enough to resist temptations, at least most of the time. Kids need to be taught that self-control is an individual responsibility, and a parent cannot do it for them. However, you, as a parent, have the responsibility to guide your child's behavior with God's Word as your teaching tool. Learning for preschoolers happens through discovery and repetition, not through harsh words and punishments. Learning self-control happens slowly through childhood. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control..." says Galatians 5:22-23.

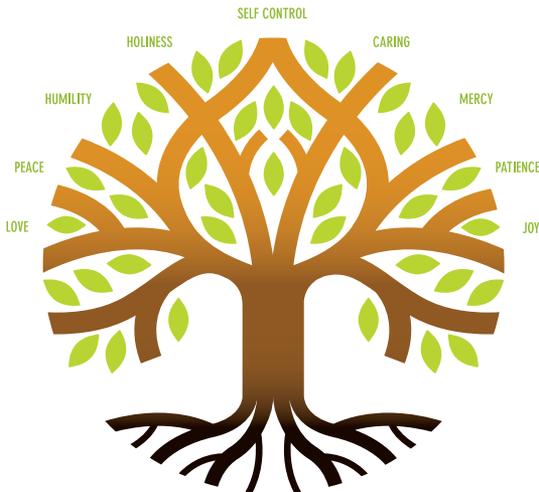
Some steps to developing self-control in your child:

1. Build trust. Parents who are responsive to their child's needs foster trust. Every time parents attempt to soothe anxiety and foster a feeling of safety and acceptance, parents help their child reach a more mature stage of self-control.
2. Model appropriate behavior. When parents cannot manage their own emotions and react with anger, it teaches children to respond in this manner as well. As parents, you must learn to regulate your own emotions, so you can stay calm and loving with your child.
3. Set limits. When we set limits that our child accepts, it helps them practice self-control. Make sure the limits are acceptable to you and your spouse, and make sure that your child understands the limits you are setting.
4. Explain impulses. Help your child become aware of his or her impulses before they lead to a bad choice.
5. Allow do-overs. Children learn from experience far more than they learn from words. The best way to increase a child's learning is with repetition. After you have completed instructive corrections, make sure to give your child a chance to "try again." Make the experience a teachable moment.

Ask yourself these questions:

- Do I control my emotions and anger?
- Do I respond in a loving and kind way when I discipline my child?
- Does my child understand the limits and rules?
- Do I make teachable moments?

God will help you through these challenging years if you only seek His help. It will not be easy, but it will be rewarding as you see your child grow and develop in God's grace and love in the years ahead. Find strength in Luke 11:9, "So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find..."



"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control..." - Galatians 5:22-23

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.

“The righteous man walks in his integrity; his children are blessed after him,” says Proverbs 20:7. Walk in His ways, and He will direct your path in pouring blessings into your child’s life that will last throughout eternity.

Ways to Bless Your Child

Meaningful Touch

In the Scriptures, touch played an important part in the bestowal of the family blessing. When Isaac blessed Jacob, an embrace and kiss were involved. Genesis 27:26 reads, "Then his father Isaac said to him, 'Come near now and kiss me, my son.'" A gentle touch, a hug, or holding of the hand are all confirmations of love to your child.

Daily blessings of Scripture

It is wonderful to know your children are hiding God's Word forever in their hearts. As Psalm 119:11 says, "Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You." Memorize some of these Scriptures listed below, and help your child memorize some of the shorter ones.

- Psalm 100—"Make a joyful shout to the Lord, all you lands! Serve the Lord with gladness; come before His presence with singing. Know that the Lord, He is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture. Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name. For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting, and His truth endures to all generations."
- 2 Peter 3:18—"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ..."
- 1 Peter 2:17—"Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the King."
- James 1:22—"But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves."

Written or spoken blessings

As you continue to pour blessings into your child, here are some fun ways to express these blessings:

- Blessing Candy—Store some Hershey's kisses and Reese's peanut butter cups in a container. Buy or cut out some blank circles of paper (sized to fit on bottom of candy pieces) and write a word of blessing or encouragement on the blank circle. For example, you could simply write the word "eyes" if you wish to express how beautiful your child's eyes are and how God made your child's eyes just the perfect color. Or, you could write the word "joy" if you want to describe to your child the joy he or she brings into your life. Attach the circle of paper on the bottom of a piece of candy. Let your child pick a piece of candy on special occasions, and share the blessing you

placed on the candy.

- **Blessing Balloons**—Buy some small balloons and insert notes written on small pieces of paper inside; blow up the balloons and tie the ends. Let your child pop a balloon, then read the note to them.

Add these blessings to your “blessing box.” From time to time, take some of the blessings out and read them again to your child. Affirm your child’s worth!

One-on-one time

Make a “blessing jar.” Decorate a wide-mouthed empty glass or plastic jar with ribbon, stickers, or markers. Go outside with your child and have him or her find items (such as flowers, leaves, or blades of grass, etc.) to put inside the jar. Talk about how God made all these things to “bless our lives.”

- Let your child pick a special outing.
- Have a movie night with popcorn.
- Make a card to take to a neighbor.

A blessing for you

“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! We have blessed you from the house of the Lord,” (Psalm 118:26).

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 Exodus 1

READ

o Exodus 1:1-14

o God's people experienced great suffering at the hands of the Egyptians, who forced the Hebrew nation into bitter slavery. In addition, Pharaoh ordered that all Hebrew boys who were born be killed, so they would not rise up and become a mighty army against him. At that time, a baby boy was born to a Hebrew woman who hid him and placed him in a basket in the river to be found by Pharaoh's daughter. When Pharaoh's daughter found the baby, she had pity on him and raised him as her son. She gave him the name Moses. In His sovereignty, God was raising up a deliverer among Pharaoh's own household.

o Exodus 2:23-3:12

o God heard the cries of His people, and He did not turn a deaf ear. He knew of their groaning, and He knew of His promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. So God began the redemption of His people.

The Bottom Line: Indeed, God does hear our cries and He is attentive to the details of our lives.

Questions:

- How can we see the sovereignty of God unfold in this story?
- How do we see God's attentiveness to His people in this story?
- In what ways does this Old Testament story point us to Christ?

PRAY

o When we pray a prayer of thanksgiving, we are expressing our gratitude to God. Prayers of thanksgiving can be lifted up in response to who God is, what He has done for us through Christ and for the blessings He continually bestows upon us.

Biblical Basis for Thanksgiving:

Psalms 69:30, Psalm 100:4, Philippians 4:6, Revelation 7:12

Take some time for each of those gathered with you to express their thanks to the Lord.

o Europe is home to 12% of the world's total population. It is 71% Christian, however, in the last 250 years the population of believers has declined. This area of the world is becoming exceedingly secular and the population of believers is disappearing as more and more Europeans turn to atheism and humanism.

- Pray for the Holy Spirit to prepare the hearts of the lost and to grip the lives of the people of Europe with the Gospel.
- Most Christians in Europe are Roman Catholic. Pray that God would awaken a desire to know, love, and seek God. Pray that they would experience true rebirth and repentance and they would not settle for lifeless, ritualistic religion.
- Ask for God to send workers to the field and to stir the hearts of his Church to go and bring the good news to all the ends of the earth.

Source: Operation World by Johnstone and Mandryk

MEMORIZE

o Psalm 19:14 "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer."

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 Before you begin, turn the television on and have the remote control in your hand. Sit with your child in front of the television and set the volume at a normal level. Say, "Can you hear the words the person is saying on the television?" Turn the volume down and repeat the question. Continue to turn the volume down until the volume cannot be heard.

o Why can we not hear the television? We can't hear it because Mommy

and Daddy turned the volume down with the remote control. Do you know that God hears you and sees you all the time? He is different; He plans, hears and sees everything. He hears you even when you think he can't.

o Even when we are sad, hurting, crying or happy God knows because he knows everything about us. We are reminded of this in Psalm 139. Remember the story of baby Moses in the Bible? Moses was hidden in the basket to protect him from Pharaoh. This was God's idea. God gave Moses' mother the idea to hide her baby in the basket to protect him. Ultimately, God provided a deliverer in His sovereign way. God heard the cry of his people and he hears us, too.

Children (Grades 1-5)

o Begin with several small sheets of paper. Have your child(ren) write out a need they have on each sheet. Example: food, clothing, education, sleep, shelter, etc. You may want to help them come up with this list of needs. Then, have them wad up each sheet of paper.

o Stand across the room from your child(ren) and have them throw all the paper wads towards you as quickly as they can. Tell them you will do your best to catch and read each one.

o Clearly, you will be unable to complete this task and multiple paper wads will not make it to your hands or be dropped. Help your child(ren) understand that although you were unable to hear each of their needs, God is always willing, able, and eager to listen to the cries of His children. No detail of our lives is too great or too small to bring to God. His love for His people and His power to provide for the good of His people have no end!

Students (Grades 6-12)

o Think about a time when you were a child when you were either lost or hurt and cried out for one of your parents. Tell that story and how you felt when they responded. Do you ever feel lost, out of place, or mistreated as a teenager? How might this compare to what the Israelites experienced?

o What does it mean when we say God is sovereign? How should this affect our everyday lives? *NOTE: Sovereignty is defined by Merriam-Webster as supreme power. In Wayne Grudem's book Christian Beliefs, he says, "God's will is the ultimate reason for everything that happens...Sometimes God's will is clearly revealed, such as when, from Scripture, we clearly know what we should do or what God has specifically commanded us to do...At other

times, Scripture does not give us clear direction as to what we are to do or how we are to act. It's at times like these that our attitude should be one of humble reliance upon God and His sovereign control over the events in our life."

- o What are some ways you've seen God's sovereignty at work in your family?

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 4-year-old to church?

Attending church is not like taking your family on a vacation to Disney World, but the teachers do work hard to teach the Bible in ways that are relevant and fun for kids. By learning Bible stories, truths will be hidden in your child's heart. Four-year-olds know these stories and are excited to come and hear God's Word. They love to answer questions and can often tell the stories themselves. They learn that church is where they come to worship through group time and music. They connect with others by interacting with their friends and teachers. They grow in the Word of God through learning Bible truths and memorizing Scripture. Through Immanuel Baptist Church's Mission programs, kids learn about missionaries and how to be a missionary throughout the community by telling others about their special friend, Jesus. As parents, it is our responsibility to help put God's commands in our children's hearts, just as Deuteronomy 6:6 instructs, "And these Words which I command you today shall be in your heart."



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.



Praying for others at a young age helps your children learn that we are to be light in a dark world by caring for others.

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Parenting Tools: *Prayer*

In 1 Thessalonians 5:17, it says to “Pray without ceasing.” Explain to your child the meaning of this verse. When you are driving in your car, many opportunities can arise to pray for others. Some might be when an ambulance or fire truck goes by, or when you see a wreck, a homeless person on the road holding up a sign asking for money, or a stray dog wandering down the street. You can also use this time in the car to share prayer requests for friends and neighbors who have prayer needs. God wants us to come to Him with all things and at all times, so let your child see you praying throughout the day for a variety of needs.

Younger children think life is all about them. They do not even know that life exists outside of their present want or desire. Taking time with them to stop and pray for others is a part of their spiritual growth. Pray in ways your children can understand so that prayer will become a routine in their lives. Be sure your children understand that prayer is simply a conversation with God. Always give your child an opportunity to pray and to pray in his or her own words.

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Parenting Tools: *Sharing*

It's not at all unusual for children who are four years old or thereabouts to have difficulty sharing. Why this is typical of this age is anyone's best guess, mine being that toddlers are just beginning to grasp the concept of private property. When the issue of sharing is addressed, parents should definitely use the opportunity to teach their children that we should love others and show that love by how we treat them. The problem of simple, garden-variety nonsharing can be solved by parents and other caregivers who are firm in their expectation that children share and who provide the disciplinary structure within which sharing can be learned. One way to do this is to use a simple kitchen timer to signal when the toys in question have to be exchanged. In most cases, once children have learned to take turns in this fashion, they begin spontaneous sharing in almost no time at all.

The answer to a four-year-old who hits, kicks, pinches, and bites is to immediately remove the child from the group, even if it's a group of two, until he or she is ready to apologize and share. If an aggressive incident occurs twice in the same play session, I'd recommend confining the child – even at the tender age of four – to his or her room for the remainder of the day, along with an early bedtime. If one wants the aggression to stop, which should be everyone's aim, and quickly, the consequence must be memorable. It must create a strong mental imprint that will hopefully begin to inhibit aggressive outbursts. Use this as an opportunity to explain that our actions show what is in our hearts. Also explain that our family is a family who follows Jesus and that Jesus would not want us to hurt others, but to help our friends.

