

1. Pray for your children. Someone once told me the secret to prayer is to pray. It doesn't have to be fancy or something that overwhelms you, it's simply talking to your Heavenly Father like you'd want your kids to talk to you. It's a very practical practice of taking things that are heavy on your heart and placing them at Jesus' feet. By praying for our kids, we release our kids back to God. When we pray, we take our eyes off the current situation and focus our eyes back onto God and His ways. Your kids are God's gift to you. Thank God for that gift. Pray for wisdom as you guide and direct one of the most precious gifts you've been given. *Included is a PDF containing a set of prayers I printed out and had in my car when the kids were younger. I pulled them out while waiting in pick-up lines at school or drive thru lines. As I prayed through the cards, I would use my kids' names whenever the card said "children" or "kids".
2. Pray with your children before they head out the door in the morning or in the car as you drop them off or even at breakfast before the day's activities begin. Pray with them and include them in the prayer as you commit their day to the LORD. Pray that they would honor God in their choices and in their words that day. Pray for opportunities to show others what God's love can look like and then pray for courage for them to do the right thing. Then, when you pick them up or are eating around the dinner table, ask them for examples of how they saw God working throughout the day. We call them God moments. Celebrate the God moments!
3. Pray with your kids at night before they go to sleep. Give their fears and frustrations of the day to Jesus and celebrate their triumphs of the day by thanking God for them. This is a great time of the day to help the kids learn what it means to trust God and to rest in Him knowing that God is in control of all things. Find a verse or a song to sing on trusting God and make God's word what you read/sing every night before they fall asleep. As they sleep, their last thought will be Jesus.
4. With each challenge that they face, really listen to their hurt and concerns. Then point them to Jesus and talk through what Jesus would do to handle each circumstance even if it's not the popular thing to do. Don't just tell them what to do, ask for their input and direct their thoughts and actions. Help them to see how Jesus would respond and tell them understand why He would respond that way. Every choice has a consequence good or bad. Don't brush off their hurt - it is real to them. But don't dwell on the hurt either, but point them to Jesus and help them through it. Let them see how God can use it for His purpose.

5. When there are disagreements between siblings or between parents and children, show a clear example of what grace and forgiveness can look like. I often picture how I would want God to respond to me when I mess up. Not with harsh words or condescending tone but with love, tenderness, guidance and grace. In our home we address things quickly, seek correction and then move on. Disagreements became lessons on how we need to treat each other even when we disagree. We are still responsible for our emotions and reactions even when things aren't going our way. As an example, when our kids argued they needed to sit on the stairs and hold hands until they could figure things out. It didn't take long before they were laughing through the disagreement. They talked it out, offered and received forgiveness, and then learned to move on from it too. It has been important to our family to realize that a brother and a sister can be best friends that get to live under the same roof. We intentionally worked on that and we made their friendship with each other a priority from an early age. Harsh words or tones towards each other were not acceptable and quickly rectified. Love for each other was the goal that we wanted to prevail. If we wanted them to love others, it needed to start at home with loving each other. How they treated each other mattered. Words mattered. Actions and reactions mattered.

6. It was important for us to teach the kids that all we have is given to us by God and we have the privilege of using all those resources for His sake. Earning money for the kids usually came through crushing/recycling cans. They learned what it meant to tithe and give back generously from an early age. It was a privilege and a responsibility to put money in the offering box at church and when they understood why, it was something they looked forward to and wanted to be a part of.

7. We taught the kids that the standards in our home were not just dad and mom's rules, they were God's standards. There is a higher accountability and greater consistency in the rules when we all follow His truths.

8. Keep the big picture in mind - God's big picture. When dealing with a difficult choice, take a step back and look at it from God's perspective.

9. Love your kids like God loves you. Love your kids like you would want to be loved. Be patient, be kind, be attentive. Have you ever been frustrated when you were trying to talk to someone and their head is looking down at their phone? Kids get frustrated with it too. If it comes down to talking to your kids or being on your phone, your kids' attention should win every time. If there is something pressing on your phone, give yourself a limit. Tell your child that you need 5 minutes to finish up and then put your phone down and listen to

what your child needed to share. They need to know they can share things and you are interested in what they have to share. Keep communication lines open.

10. Teach your kids. Don't just assume they should automatically know what to do. Set it out clearly for them. Set the expectation and then offer consequences so that learning can take place. Interact with them at their level. As an example, if we are going to the grocery store, the expectation is that we are not going to ask for any toys near the cash register. If you ask, the answer will be an automatic no. Don't just get frustrated with them every time they ask for something at the checkout. Teach them what is acceptable and let them succeed.
11. Let your yes be yes and your no mean no. And if you threaten consequences, follow through with those consequences every time.
12. Live what you want your kids to learn. They watch and observe and are smarter than you think. Kids have a great way of highlighting our insecurities and flaws. Don't be prideful if they help you to realize there are areas that need some growth/change.
13. Be patient with them, as God is patient with you.
14. Talk about God throughout your day. Show them who He is to you. Let them see a sunset and thank God for the beauty He created. Talk about His faithfulness and His goodness. Share how He has provided for you.
15. Teach them to be in control of their emotions and reactions. Help them understand that disappointment and hurt is real, but then give them tools to overcome that in a God-honoring way.
16. We talk a lot about God-honoring choices. They are not always the popular choice and a lot of times they are even harder than the popular choice, but they are always the right choice.
17. Respect. Teaching the kids to respect others was important to us. Calling friends' parents by Mr./Mrs. was a small way for us to instill a healthy respect for those in authority over them. Then later, came teachers, other parents,

leaders, coaches etc. who would have impact on our kids. Both our kids knew that they were called to respect those in authority over them. There were even times where we didn't necessarily respect the actions of that person in authority over them, but the kids knew they were still called to respect the authority of that person. Lessons learned in this area were plentiful and by learning about respect early, this helped our later conversations when situations became more complex. The concept of respecting authority is huge when it comes to honoring the authority of God and the authority of His Word.

18. Everything we do is a teachable moment. Driving is a teachable moment. How do I behave if someone cuts me off? It's a teachable moment of how to respond when others act in a way that is not God-honoring. If we as parents don't initially respond in a God-honoring way, then it also becomes a lesson on forgiveness. Everything we do has the potential to be a teachable moment to help point our kids to Jesus. How do we respond to the cashier that is taking a long time? How do we respond when we don't get the cabin at camp that we wanted? How do we respond when our luggage is lost? -- all very teachable moments, all opportunities to respond in a God-honoring way. It takes time and it takes awareness of our actions and it takes being dependent on God to guide and direct.
19. Parenting is a process of learning about who God is. As parents, if we are not learning and applying who God is in our own lives then how can we in turn teach our kids - we can't teach what we do not know. If you're not sure where to start or teaching seems overwhelming, take a small step and play worship music in the house or car. Talk about some of the lyrics in a song. Use the valuable resources that the Allstars/Safariland/Connect6/Axis/Nexus team give you to start dialogs. Remember God uses our kids to teach us about who God is too.
20. Little things are really big things. Someone once told me that as a parent the way you love your child has the potential in a very small way, to be the first glimpse your child has to see what God's love physically looks like. If Christ is in you, let them see Christ in you. Love them well. Love them like God loves you. Be full of grace, patience and tenderness. Be near, be present, be tender, be sincerely interested, wanting the best for your children and remembering that the best for your children is wanting God's best, not the world's best. Your children are on loan. So just as you would take extra care of a precious item loaned to you so that you can return it back to the owner in good shape, do that for your kids.

21. Celebrate that as parents, we are created differently. Just like each of your children are different so are we as parents all different too. Your strengths and weaknesses need not be compared to the weaknesses and strengths of others. Be content with who God created you to be and take the pressure off of being a perfect parent. We will all parent differently, we've all had different experiences that make us who we are and God knows who we are and knows who our kids need. Let's let the main parenting goal be to show God's love to our kids and not worry so much about how someone else is accomplishing that goal. We need each other to encourage and support, not compare or compete. If you need help, ask for help.

22. As your kids grow older, their need for you changes, but they still need you.

23. If you can say yes, say yes. There are plenty of opportunities to say no to things. It is easy to point out all the things that are not being done right. Yes, it is important to teach and correct, but it is also very important to praise and encourage when things are done correctly. We used to make sure we praised our kids big-time when a God-honoring choice was made.

24. Be a student of your kids. Learn their personalities so you can love them and communicate in a way they will understand best. Don't frustrate them, look for ways that will allow them to succeed in learning their way. We looked for ways to take each of the kids out one-on-one so we could appreciate their individuality, but then also looked for family projects or games to help them understand how to be a team player and work well with others that have different personalities.

25. Speak truth. Our kids always knew that if they had questions, they were always welcome to ask them and that our responses would always be based on truth. No topic was off limits. If they heard things at school and weren't sure about words or ideas, there was always an open door to whatever was on their minds. God's word was the consistent source for answers.