

# PARENT CONVERSATIONS

The beginning of summer always feels like a fresh start. New routines set in, and I find that if I'm not intentional, they're not always the routines that I want our family to adopt. Can you relate? The articles this month focus on intentionality. They're written by parents who are so passionate about helping equip Christian parents that they maintain (or help maintain) websites devoted to that topic. Check out their articles, and if you find yourself nodding along, check out their websites too.

—Nicole Balza

## HOW CAN OUR FAMILY GROW TOGETHER IN FAITH OVER THE SUMMER?

IF YOUR FAMILY is anything like ours, you realize that parenting is anything but stagnant. As soon as we feel we've mastered a certain season of parenting, something changes. In our family, we discovered that written plans and routines help keep us focused and provide consistency during times of change.

For example, my husband, Derek, has been doing a bedtime routine with our kids for several years. He starts by reading an apologetics book, followed by watching two songs on YouTube. He does it at the same time and in the same location every night, so our kids expect it. Now even when he is gone, they still start their bedtime routine without him.

**Writing down a plan with routines that we can do together has helped keep our family focused on God during the summer.**

Summer is one of these times of change. It's easy to get distracted by all the activities and lose our spiritual focus. Our kids go to summer camps. We go on several family trips. We're doing more outdoor activities.

A few years ago, we wanted to find a way to be more consistent with our spiritual routines, even with these seasonal changes, so we came up with a written spiritual growth plan to help keep us focused. In our plan,

we wrote down some simple daily, weekly, and travel routines to keep our family focused on Jesus, no matter what our schedule looks like.

Here are a few examples:

- In our daily schedule, we have made family dinners a high priority, so we also include family worship at our dinner time. We keep it simple: We read a devotion or a section from the Bible, sing a hymn together, and then pray.
- In our weekly schedule, we conduct a more in-depth family Bible study once a week in our home. We read the Bible a few verses at a time, answering questions and discussing the reading.
- When we travel on vacation, we follow a short routine each morning to start our day focused on God. We watch a short video devotion, sing a Christian song, and then pray together.

Writing down a plan with routines that we can do together has helped keep our family focused on God during the summer and other times of change in our family life.



Amy Weichel and her husband, Derek, are raising their four children in Nebraska. Amy is the founder of Faithful Parent, a ministry dedicated to helping parents be more intentional on their Christian parenting journey and keep their families focused on Jesus. Learn more at [faithfulparent.org](http://faithfulparent.org).

**I SAW PASTOR** Tony Schultz from *Kids Connection* the other day. The first thing that ran through my head was his catchphrase, “Stay connected to Jesus!”

That can be challenging during the summer. The kids are out of school. We take family vacations. Our kids have summer jobs. They attend or help run camps. And we want to relax while enjoying the nice weather!

That’s when I need to remember that God is just as busy taking care of us. God doesn’t take time off in the summer. Through every season and throughout every day, God continues to provide all I need. And I continue sinning, even in the summer. I still need forgiveness of sins. I still need God to give me strength and hope and comfort as I hear his Word, remember my baptism, and receive Holy Communion. I still need to remember all that Jesus did for me and all that the Holy Spirit promises to do for me. I still need to know that I’m not alone. I still need other believers to encourage me and remind me that I’m not alone. Even in the summer, I still need Jesus.

So how does my family stay connected to Jesus even during the fun, relaxing times of summer? Since we don’t go camping, we’re usually home on weekends, even in the summer. We attend worship and Bible study. If we aren’t home, we love looking for other WELS churches to visit. It’s especially fun when we travel out of our area. If we simply cannot find a church to attend, then we’ll connect to an online service. We also find joy in the extra opportunities to read God’s Word together. Summer and vacation provide more chances for our family to be together at the same place and same time. While we plan many other fun things to do, there’s nothing better than spending ten minutes together around God’s Word.

While summer has its own schedule, we need God’s blessings as much as any other time. Even though we don’t watch *Kids Connection* in the summer, it’s still good to remember to “stay connected to Jesus!”



*Benjamin Berger and his wife, Heather, enjoy any time they can spend with their children, Eliana (17) and Andrew (15). Ben serves as pastor of St. Paul, Winneconne, Wisconsin, and on his district’s Discipleship Commission, which provides resources for families at [myfamilytable.org](http://myfamilytable.org).*



**MY HUSBAND** and I have come to understand that we are discipling our kids every day whether we realize it or not. For example, we aren’t a big sports family, and as a result, our kids don’t seem to have a hunger for it either. But we do love being outside hiking, camping, bird watching, and gardening. As we have spent our summers enjoying these activities with our kids, it has nurtured a love



for those things in their lives as well. Similarly, we have discovered that disciple-making doesn’t turn off when we choose to walk in sin. It is a sad day when you clearly see your sinful behaviors in your kids’ lives.

For my husband and me, our lives changed when God got us reading the Bible together daily. Through the law, he convicted us of sin. Through the gospel, he transformed us. He gave us a new love for the things that he loves. He gave us an eternal focus. We look very different than we used to, and this work of God in our hearts flows out into the lives of our kids. Growing in our faith as a family isn’t another activity to add to our busy lives. It is our life. And this isn’t something we can fake, because our kids can smell hypocrisy a mile away.

So, what does this look like in our family this summer? It’s loving God’s Word and understanding the need for prayer. It is encouraging our kids to be reading the Bible for themselves. It’s simply talking to our kids about God and his creation when we are out hiking. It’s discussing the news, culture, worldviews, and apologetics with our older children. It’s turning our neighborhood into our mission field. It’s singing worship songs together as we drive in the car. It’s being humble and quick to repent when we live selfishly, lose our temper, or say destructive words. It’s a whole-hearted desire to honor God in every area of our life because of what Jesus has done for us. It’s all day, every day. It’s discipleship.



*Katy Goede is a homeschooling mom of six. She and her husband, Justin, are founders of Chosen Gen Ministry, a non-profit organization with a mission to outfit family discipleship. Learn more at [chosengenministry.org](http://chosengenministry.org).*

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