

Family Driven Faith: Doing What It Takes to Raise Sons and Daughters Who Walk with God

by Voddie Baucham Jr., Grace Family Baptist Church

Read the Bible

I often meet people who complain about the Bible's complexity or lack of relevance (or both). However, when I ask them how much of the Bible they've actually read, they usually begin to backtrack. . . . Listen to what the Bible has to say about its place in our lives.

The Bible is our source of wisdom: "The mouth of the righteous utters wisdom, and his tongue speaks justice. The law of his God is in his heart; his steps do not slip" (Psalm 37:30-31). *The Bible is our source of righteousness:* "Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against You" (Psalm 119:11). *The Bible is our source of direction:* "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalm 119:105). *The Bible is our source of hope:* "For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope" (Romans 15:4).

Our ultimate prayer for our children should be for them to utter the words of Psalm 40:8: "I delight to do your will, O my God; Your Law is within my heart." However, this will not happen unless we read the Bible at home. We must get our kids into the Word of God if we intend to get the Word of God into our kids. It won't happen by osmosis.

In our home we read through the Bible night by night. In the morning we have our time of

family worship and catechism, but the evenings are a lot simpler. We just get on a schedule and work our way from Genesis to the maps.

this idea in 2 Peter 1:3 when he writes, ". . . seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life

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There are plenty of tools to help along the way. In fact, there is a one-year Bible designed to give you the Bible in daily doses and keep you on track to finish in a year. There are also numerous web sites that will send you a daily reminder of what sections you should read. I don't care what methodology you use as long as you are reading. You don't even have to do it in a year. You could slow down and do a two-year pace if you want. *What matters is that you read the Bible.*

Why is reading the Bible so important? That is a legitimate question. Let me offer a few answers. *First, the Bible is the very Word of God.* In 2 Timothy 3:16 Paul writes: "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness." The Bible is not just a good book—it's God's Book. In fact, the Bible is the plumb line against which we measure all other books.

Second, the Bible is God's primary tool in preparing us for a life of godliness and service. Paul continues in 2 Timothy 3:17, ". . . so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." Peter echoes

and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence."

Third, the Bible is an agent by which God conforms us to the very image of Christ. Second Peter 1:4 tells us, "For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust." Peter makes reference to "true knowledge" (v. 3) and "precious and magnificent promises" (v. 4). There is no doubt that the revelation of which Peter speaks is accessed through the Bible. I don't know about you, but I want to be like Jesus. More importantly, I want to raise sons and daughters who are like Jesus. God will use the Bible to make that happen. Reading the Bible will lead us to the true knowledge of the Lord. Reading the Bible will expose us to the "precious and magnificent promises" of the Lord. God will use the Bible to transform our lives.

Fourth, the Bible is a change agent. Hebrews 4:12 reads, "For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to

Voddie Baucham serves as pastor of preaching at Grace Family Baptist Church in Spring, TX, where he resides with his wife and six children.

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judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” You may not be able to change your son’s heart, but the Word of God can. Try all you want, but you can’t reach that sullen teenage daughter of yours the way the Bible can.

Reading and memorizing Scripture and the catechisms of the church results in incredible development of children, both spiritually and intellectually. What families regard as important is evidenced by the manner in which they spend their time. Therefore, regular family worship shows the children that their parents believe that Jesus Christ is central to all of life. This practice leaves a legacy that will benefit thousands in generations to come.¹

Q&A

My family and I recently worked through R. C. Sproul’s book *Essential Truths of the Christian Faith* during our breakfast devotionals. The book is divided into 102 small chapters, each one dealing with a great doctrine of the faith. Reading the daily chapter took no more than five or ten minutes. However, we often spent half an hour or more discussing the truths we read.

I wouldn’t trade those morning discussions for anything. I absolutely love sitting around the breakfast table with my family, discussing the great doctrines of the Christian faith and their implications for the way we live our lives. In fact, we discovered that the children enjoy it as much as my wife and I do. Now we are working through Starr Meade’s book *Training Hearts and Teaching Minds*. It is a daily devotional

based on the Westminster Shorter Catechism. The type and level of questions we have encountered recently has been amazing.

Some time ago Bridget raised an issue that we needed to discuss as a family. The children sat and listened; they even added their two cents. At the end of the discussion Bridget and I rose from the table (about to head for our room to get ready for the day) when our eleven-year-old son chimed in, “Aren’t we going to do the book today?” “Yeah, we forgot our devotion,” Jasmine added as Trey reached over and grabbed the familiar text from the bay window next to the table. Bridget looked at me with a smile and said, “Yeah, Daddy, I can’t believe you were going to leave the table without our morning devotional.”

The fact is, my children weren’t hungry little theologians who couldn’t wait to tackle another complicated theological truth. They were just a couple of kids who had questions. As their parents we found an avenue for providing answers. All kids wonder about theology. What child hasn’t asked questions like “Who made God?” or “If Jesus is God, how can He be *the Son of God*?” These are theological questions, and one of the greatest things we can do as parents is provide opportunities for those questions to be asked and answered. But how do we create such a place?

First, give your children permission to ask biblical questions. Bridget and I have been blessed with very inquisitive children. I say blessed because their inquisitive nature makes them very teachable. However, I must admit that we haven’t always seen it as a blessing. Let’s be honest—one can only take

so much, “Daddy, why is that?” Eventually we all learn how to say, “That’s just the way it is.”

However, if you want your children to learn biblical truths, you are going to have to give them permission to ask biblical questions. That means we can’t say it’s OK with our lips but tell them something different with our attitude. We must demonstrate a genuine willingness and desire to hear our children out. Parents who huff and puff when their children ask biblical questions are saying, “Don’t bother me, kid, I’m busy.”

Second, validate your child’s honest biblical questions. One of the best things you can say to an inquisitive child who asks you a theological question is, “That’s a great question.” Or better yet, you might say, “I have often wondered that myself.” This not only lets the child know that it’s alright to ask legitimate questions but affirms the factual nature of the Christian faith. Think about it. What if you kept asking someone about his or her faith but he or she never acknowledged or tried to answer your questions? Eventually you would assume that the person either didn’t know very much about his or her faith or that there wasn’t much to be known. The same is true with our children.

In fact, you may be reading this book right now looking for answers because no one cared enough or knew enough about the Christian faith to validate the legitimate questions you asked along the way. Perhaps you grew up believing that one must accept Christianity on “blind faith” but later realized there had to be more to it than that. Or maybe you had well-meaning parents who taught you things that turned out to be false. Although this may be common, it is not biblical.

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The Bible gives a beautiful example of the kind of attitude we should have toward those to whom we teach the faith in the prologue to Luke's Gospel:

Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus; so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught. (Luke 1:1-4, emphasis added)

Note Luke's choice of words and phrases: *compile, eyewitnesses, investigated, carefully, consecutive order, exact truth*. This is not the stuff of fairy tale or legend. This is solid, verifiable, historically reliable truth! Let your children know that our faith can stand up to their questions.

Third, answer your child's biblical question. It's one thing to validate a question; it's quite another to answer it. A child who is encouraged to ask biblical questions and has those questions validated but unanswered may get the idea that the Bible has no answers or that his parents don't. In either case a very important authority in the child's life will be undermined.

I have told the story of my journey to faith so many times that those closest to me know it by rote. That story is important to me for many reasons—not least of which is the fact that I was lost, but now I'm found. However, one

of the most important elements of my story is the fact that the young man who shared the message of Christ with me took the time to answer all of my questions (over a period of three weeks).

Sometimes those answers were on the tip of his tongue. However, I distinctly remember that on more than one occasion he had to admit that he didn't have an answer. But he didn't stop there. He always followed up with "but I will find out." Eventually he would find the answer to my questions. This process taught me two things that have greatly impacted my Christian walk.

First, I learned that being a Christian doesn't mean you have all of the answers. In fact, the more I walk with Christ, the more I realize that I have more questions than I do answers, a lot more. Paul alludes to this reality when he writes, "For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known" (1 Corinthians 13:12).

Second, I learned that Christianity stands up to scrutiny. Steve didn't try to convince me to stop asking questions. Nor did he cop out by claiming that I had to close my mind in order to exercise my faith. He went and found answers. Granted, there are some questions that can't be answered (like, why did God do things the way He did?). However, those things are unanswerable because of the infinite nature of God and the finitude of man.

Fourth, teach your children to answer their own questions when they can. When my daughter was fourteen she began to work with a writing tutor. She has always been a very gifted writer, and she was finished with tenth and eleventh

grade English by the time she was fourteen. Her tutor had developed a composition course that was part biblical worldview, part critical thinking, part creative writing, and part research methodology. It was a perfect fit. Jasmine met with the tutor once a week, and Bridget and I worked with her on the daily nuts and bolts.

One of the greatest blessings of this course was the day I realized my daughter and I had begun sharing a library. She walked into my office one day with a determined look on her face and said, "Daddy, I just *love* your office" as she diligently searched for a book on comparative religions. It was one of the greatest moments she and I had ever shared. My little girl had gone from "Daddy, what does this verse mean?" to "Daddy, where can I find information on Mormon theology?" She had begun to seek her own answers!

I have to admit my daughter's act of independence was a bitter-sweet moment. Part of me was excited about the achievement of one of many parental goals. However, another part of me was sad to see the little girl we brought home from the hospital getting smaller in the rearview mirror. But if my goal is to send my children forth as arrows (or nuclear missiles) bent on making a significant impact in the world for the cause of Christ, they are eventually going to have to know the Lord for themselves and think His thoughts after Him without me looking over their shoulders.

Notes:

1. David Wegener, "A Father's Role in Family Worship," *Journal of Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, Vol. 3, Issue 4, 1998.