

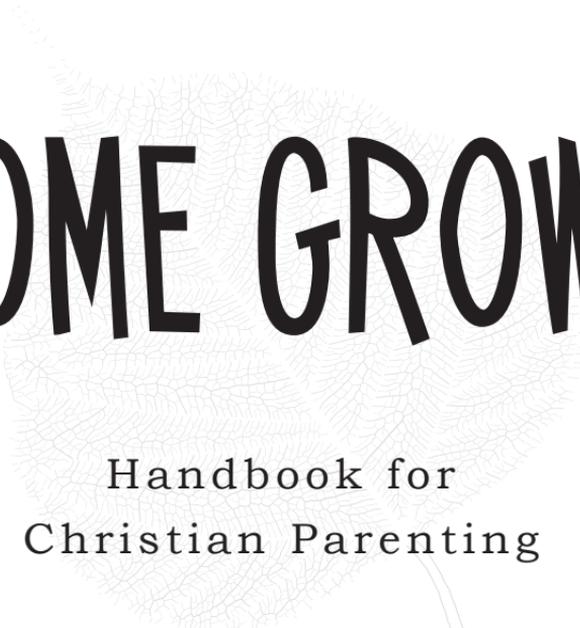
111 REAL-LIFE  
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

# HOME GROWN

Handbook for  
Christian Parenting



KAREN DEBOER



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## INTRODUCTION

**W**hen I became a parent, my friend Della gave me a copy of the book *Dr. Spock's Baby and Child Care*. Considered radical when it was first published in 1946, the book has sold more than 50 million copies. It was the “parenting bible” for Della’s mother and mine. Like them, I used the book religiously, referencing it when I suspected Steph had chicken pox, wanted Sam to quit sucking her thumb, refused to believe it was normal for Kailey to stop napping, and wondered if Tara had colic.

I loved that the book didn't have to be read in one sitting (I don't think I've sat for more than 15 minutes at a time in the 21 years since I became a parent). I also appreciated the excellent index that allowed me to find the exact answer to things I was wondering about. The only thing that seemed to be missing from Spock's book were answers to questions I had about how to raise my children to know God—questions like What does baptism really mean? How should we celebrate Christmas? Is it OK for my child to experience doubt? What if my child doesn't want to go to church?

The book you're holding in your hands is filled with those kinds of questions. Some of them are questions you might have been wondering about for a while. Others you might not think about until your child is older or there's a transition in your lives. For the answers, I consulted a variety of experts: pastors, professors, counselors, theologians, parents, grandparents, and more. You'll find their biographies beginning on page 207 and their thoughtful insights scattered throughout the book.

You can read this book in one sitting or use it as I used Dr. Spock's book: checking the index whenever you have a question about something. If you'd like to connect with other parents to swap stories, share ideas,

and support each other in the faith nurture of your kids, Patricia Nederveld has written an excellent study guide to accompany this handbook. It offers a series of small group sessions designed for busy parents just like you. Check it out at [www.FaithAliveResources.org](http://www.FaithAliveResources.org).

God—the only perfect Parent—has planted the seeds of faith in your children. You get to nurture those seeds and watch their faith grow. This book is designed to provide you with helpful information and hopeful inspiration along the way.

Blessings,  
Karen DeBoer





## CHAPTER 1

# HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS

**M**y first (and last) attempt at embroidery was a “Home Is Where the Heart Is” pillow I worked on for a home economics assignment. I quit cross-stitching after “H-o-m,” then paid a crafty friend to finish the project. At 15 I knew the value of outsourcing, and I still do.

My kids learned to swim from a certified instructor. They take piano lessons from a professional musician and learn to play basketball from an

outstanding coach. As a parent I take full advantage of outsourcing when it comes to teaching my kids.

Seeking experts when it comes to training our kids is a good idea when it comes to swimming, piano, basketball, and even embroidery. Those are specific skills that may be better taught by someone with a certain level of expertise. So, given the value of outsourcing, it just makes sense that when we want our kids to learn about God, we should send them to the best children's ministry program we can find, right?

Wrong. When it comes to faith nurture, studies repeatedly reveal that the primary place children learn about faith is in the home (after all, that's where their hearts are). As a parent—no matter where you are on your personal faith journey—*you* are the biggest influence in the faith development of your child. While your church family may provide all sorts of wonderful children's ministry resources, your kids take their most important cues from you.

God calls parents to nurture the faith of their children and lays out a plan for doing so in Deuteronomy 6. We're to make God part of our daily family routines: walking, sitting, talking, driving, working, thinking, getting up, and going. Our homes need to be places where we live as though our mailbox were engraved with the words "God lives here." When our

Most Significant Religious Influences	Percent Choosing as One of Top 5							
	Grade						Gender	
	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th	M	F
Mother	87	75	77	72	75	75	81	74
Father	64	51	55	49	57	51	61	50
Grandparent	36	28	29	34	27	22	30	29
Another relative	11	12	14	16	12	7	13	12
Siblings	22	14	13	13	15	14	18	14
Friends	22	24	28	25	31	31	22	29
Pastor	60	56	49	45	35	49	57	44
Church camp	23	30	26	25	23	23	20	28
Movie/music star	3	3	4	4	2	2	4	3
Christian education at my church	23	30	25	25	31	25	26	26
Church school teacher	29	27	17	23	20	23	26	21
Youth group at my church	25	25	32	33	33	34	30	30
Youth group leader at my church	13	11	20	17	17	15	15	16
Youth group outside my church	3	6	2	3	4	5	4	4
Youth group leader outside my church	2	1	1	3	4	4	2	3
The Bible	25	30	27	23	16	26	24	25
Other books I have read	2	3	4	4	3	4	3	4
Prayer or meditation	9	15	15	16	20	18	11	19
School teacher	3	5	2	2	3	6	3	4

Most Significant Religious Influences	Percent Choosing as One of Top 5							
	Grade						Gender	
	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th	M	F
Revivals or rallies	3	3	4	4	5	4	3	4
TV or radio evangelist	2	*	1	*	*	*	1	1
Worship services at church	10	10	10	16	14	15	12	13
God in my life	3	3	11	11	13	13	8	13
Work camp	*	1	4	2	5	5	3	3
Mission study tour	0	0	*	0	1	1	*	*
Retreats	7	12	16	20	17	18	11	17
Coach	2	2	3	3	4	4	4	2
Choir or music at church	11	12	8	9	11	6	7	12

\*Included mainline Protestant youth only (CC, ELCA, PCUSA, UCC, UMC) weighted by congregational and denomination size.

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kids wonder about God, we're to share the stories about what God did and is doing and has promised to do. Why? Because they're God's love stories—stories that include us.

Love GOD, your God, with your whole heart:  
love him with all that's in you, love him with all  
you've got!

Write these commandments that I've given you  
today on your hearts. Get them inside of you  
and then get them inside your children. Talk  
about them wherever you are, sitting at home  
or walking in the street; talk about them from  
the time you get up in the morning to when you  
fall into bed at night. Tie them on your hands  
and foreheads as a reminder; inscribe them on  
the doorposts of your homes and on your city  
gates. . . .

—Deuteronomy 6:5-9 (*The Message*)

God has “outsourced” the faith nurture of children to parents in partnership with the church, and that outsourcing begins at home.

## Questions

### 1. What does the Bible say about parenting?

Although there's not a book of the Bible titled *Everything You Need to Know to Raise Perfect Kids* (trust me, I've checked), the Bible does teach us a thing or two

about God’s plan for parenting. As Leonard Vander Zee points out, having children has always been part of God’s plan for people. Adam wasn’t meant to be alone, and neither were Adam and Eve. In fact, in Genesis 1:28, “God blessed them and said, ‘Have children and increase in numbers’” (NIRV).

The Bible also assures us that we’re not in this alone. In Genesis 17 God meets with Abraham and gives him a covenant promise to be God to him and to his children. That promise holds true for us as believing parents too!

God calls us to participate in that covenantal promise by teaching our children vital faith and godly wisdom as we talk to them about God in the midst of everyday life (Deut. 6:7). The vital faith we’re called to share involves more than imparting knowledge; it’s living into God’s story and developing spiritual practices—prayer, hospitality, forgiveness, and so on—that meld faith to practical living. And when it comes to the practicalities of parenthood, the book of Proverbs reminds us that parenting requires both loving discipline and strong encouragement.

While the Bible *isn’t* filled with tips for perfect parenting, it *is* full of imperfect parents. Although Noah, Rebekah, and David provide just a few of the many examples of how not to raise children, the grace God

offers those parents provides us with a wonderful example of the kind of love we're called to show our own children: the patient, kind, unfailing, joyful, protecting, slow-to-anger, never-giving-up kind of love that Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 13. And when you fall short of showing that kind of love—as all parents do— isn't it great to remember the assurance that we're not in this alone?

## **2. Do I need a theology degree to raise Christian kids?**

No! While raising kids to love the Lord doesn't require spending time and money on seminary training, it does require spending time with God and investing energy in sharing your faith with your kids. That kind of education happens in your home every day, so here's what you need to know and do:

- Pray with and for your kids. Job did this by getting up every morning and offering God a burnt sacrifice for his kids. As a modern-day parent I've frequently offered my kids burnt toast, but that's not the same thing! Asking God for wisdom as a parent and for a blessing on the lives of your kids is something that should be on your daily breakfast menu.

- Read the Bible to and with your kids and on your own. Many studies show Bible reading to be one of the most significant factors in spiritual growth for adults and kids alike.
- Wonder about God together. It's OK not to know all the answers, but it's important to ask the questions.
- Be part of a church family. Let others share their spiritual strengths with your kids.
- Make God part of your daily routine. Through words and deeds both inside and outside your home, share your conviction that Jesus is Lord.
- Talk about it! Share your own faith experiences with your children.
- Live it! Your kids are watching what you do more than they are listening to what you say.

### **3. Is it fair to impose my faith on my child?**

Passing on your faith isn't an imposition, it's a gift. In fact, when faith is a central part of your life, shaping what you say and do, it's impossible not to share it with your children. As Celaine Bouma-Prediger points out, as Christian parents we want to share our faith because those beliefs—like our children—are so

important to us. True faith in Christ can never really be imposed on anyone. We share our faith in the hope that one day our children will decide to make that faith their own.

#### **4. What does it mean to nurture my child's faith? How do I do that?**

My father's family owned a bakery. As a child I'd watch my grandfather use one hand to crack dozens of eggs and then add them to a huge mixing bowl filled with flour, sugar, and butter. Although my dad would sometimes let me toss in a handful of raisins or currants, I knew that blending in the yeast was his job. After all, the yeast was the most important ingredient—it activated the dough and made it grow.

Nurturing faith is a lot like blending yeast. Karen-Marie Yust explains it like this:

*Faith is a gift from God that lies dormant in children unless and until it is stirred up in them. It is like the yeast that bakers mix into bread: inactive until the baker adds a little warm water and begins kneading to spread the yeast throughout the dough. As parents, we can provide children with a rich spiritual environment*

*that activates their faith and mixes it into their everyday lives.*

*Think of nurturing children's faith as a process of raising a bicultural child: we want our little ones to know the language, customs, and practices of popular culture—at least in its best forms—and also the vocabulary, rituals, and practices of our faith tradition. Children are exposed to popular culture most of their waking hours; if they are to truly embrace their faith tradition as a second cultural identity, they need to spend much more time exposed to the signs and sounds of faith than an hour or two on Sunday morning can provide. Viewing our homes as places where we can create a spiritual world for children to inhabit alongside their popular culture world helps them discover*

*their religious identity and practice negotiating between the two cultures as God's gift of faith transforms their lives as surely as yeast makes a loaf of bread rise.*

Parents have the awesome privilege of being “God’s love with skin on” for their children.

—Scottie May et al. in *Children Matter*, Eerdmans 2005, p. 153.

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My love for baking was nurtured both in the hours I spent at my grandfather's bakery, immersed in the aroma of yeast, and through my relationships with family members who worked there. The way you and your child "do life" together is what has the most significant influence on how faith is nurtured.

### **5. How do I surround my child with people who will help me nurture faith?**

When it comes to nurturing the faith of your child, it really does "take a village." Helping your child form an identity as a member of God's family means surrounding him with people who will share faith stories, offer encouragement, and show that he is a valued member of a faith community. Here are some ideas to help you make those important connections:

- Attend weekly worship with your child at a church where kids are welcomed and valued. Introduce your child to the pastor and leadership team.
- Participate in church potlucks, picnics, and other intergenerational events. These informal gatherings offer great opportunities for your child to connect personally with the people he sees in church each week.

- Invite to your home your child’s nursery caregivers, Sunday school teachers, other children’s ministry leaders, and other church members whom your child respects. It’s amazing how making an informal connection at home lends itself to further opportunities to connect at church and in other contexts.
- Spend time with believing family members who can model and share their faith with your child. If you live far from family or if family members don’t share your faith, Joyce Berger suggests that you “adopt” grandparents, uncles, and aunts who share your spiritual values and will love your child and encourage him or her spiritually.
- Join or start an intergenerational small group in which believers of all ages can gather to learn about God while sharing their faith and encouraging each other.

## **6. How do I make my home a spiritual environment?**

Chances are, along with identifying you as “Mommy” or “Daddy” and being able to pick her “blankie” out of a laundry pile, your child also knows the difference

between Mickey Mouse and Thomas the Tank Engine, is able to point to a teddy bear in a picture book, and can recognize the McDonald's logo when you're driving through town. In her book *Real Kids, Real Faith*, Karen-Marie Yust says that in order for your child to relate to and become familiar with biblical characters and images, she needs to experience them the same way that she experiences Mickey and the gang: as part of her everyday world.

Along with the usual childhood toys, books, and music that fill your home, Yust says it's important to add "family prayers, storybooks about Bible characters, music with themes of faith and integrity, images by religious artists, toys and puzzles with religious connections, and family service projects." Making biblical characters and images a natural part of your child's daily life is an important way to turn your home into a spiritual environment.

## **7. Why take my child to church when she's just a baby?**

Our daughter Steph was six weeks old when, dressed in a Boston Bruins jersey, she watched her first hockey game on TV with her dad. Ron knew that she was too young to understand the intricacies of the game, but

he wanted to expose her to something that mattered to him, in the hope that one day she'd share that passion.

Although your baby can't engage in a discussion about the fine points of the sermon or offer an opinion on the wall mural in the nursery, exposing her to the sights, sounds, and people at church develops her understanding of church as a place to worship God with her "extended family." It also gives her the opportunity to connect with members of her church family while giving them the chance to know her too.

Ron dressed Steph in Bruins gear and introduced her to the game he loves. Bringing your baby to church is a wonderful way for you to introduce your child to God.

**8. Proverbs 22:6 says, "Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it" (NIV, 1984). What does that mean?**

Contrary to popular belief, this text wasn't written to instill fear and future guilt into the hearts of believing parents. It was meant to provide them with an encouraging "rule of thumb." Robert De Moor explains it this way:

*Proverbs provides general insights into the way God keeps creation in his providential care and how, by being wise in living in harmony with those ways, we can live better, more fruitful, and enjoyable lives. As Proverbs 22:6 observes, God made it so that what and how children are taught at an early age shapes them for the rest of their lives—something that modern neuropsychology also observes. It's wise to teach your children to trust and obey God when they're little, because, as a rule of thumb, when you do, they will "not turn from it" when they grow up.*

The reason they truly can't depart from it is that what you've taught them goes with them wherever they go and whatever they do. De Moor also points out that because this proverb is a general rule of thumb, you can't argue backwards and say that if a child does depart from God's ways when she grows up, it's because the parents didn't teach her the right way.

The hope-filled news for us as parents is that even if our kids grow up and choose to live contrary to what they've learned, the things we've taught them are still there in their heads and their hearts. The rest is between them and God.

## **9. What's the big deal about baptism?**

It's hard to imagine that the amazing child in your arms is sinful. Sure, he cries, spits up, and occasionally smells really bad—but *sinful*? Fact is, the apostle Paul included Junior when he wrote, “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 3:23-24, NRSV). Your child was born sin-filled like the rest of us and has the same opportunity to be freed from paying an eternal price for sin.

While baptism is not a “free pass” to eternity—your child will one day have to make his own commitment to God—it is the declaration that your child's sin is covered by Christ's sacrifice on the cross. At baptism, God, who knew and loved your child before he was even conceived (Jer. 1:5), promises to include your child in his covenant of grace (Gen. 17:7). As an acknowledgment of that covenant, you commit to nurturing the faith of your child. That promise and that commitment are a big deal! So is the promise from the rest of your church family to help.

## **10. Why do we baptize infants instead of waiting until they are adults?**

As Reformed Christians we believe that God's covenant includes children. Leonard Vander Zee offers these two examples from Scripture to help explain why:

*It's clear from the Old Testament that male children were circumcised as infants, including Jesus. Circumcision was a "sign and seal" for the Old Testament people of God of membership in God's covenant. Since, in our view, baptism replaces circumcision as the covenant sign (Col. 2:11-12), infants should also be baptized.*

*At the end of Peter's wonderful Pentecost sermon, he calls his listeners to repentance and baptism by saying, "[God's covenant promise] is for you and your children . . ." (Acts 2:39). As the story continues, we hear of several new believers who are baptized with their entire "household." This doesn't prove infants were baptized, but it points to the typical Jewish thinking that children are included in the covenant promise.*

*Beyond all that, infant baptism showcases God's grace in loving and choosing us before we make any choices ourselves.*

How wonderful to be assured of—and to publicly acknowledge—God’s grace in the life of your child!

### **11. What’s the difference between infant baptism and infant dedication?**

If you compared pictures of a baby’s baptism with that of a baby’s dedication, you might conclude that the biggest difference is the water or lack of water. In reality, the difference is more about what *God* does than what the parent(s) and pastor are doing.

At a dedication, parents do the action: they present their children to God, commit to be godly parents, and promise to raise the child in God’s ways. In baptism, while parents are active participants, God is the main actor, publicly declaring “You are my child” and promising “I will be your God.”

Joyce Borger says that if you think of this in terms of directional arrows, dedication is ↑ and baptism is ↓ .

### **12. Does baptism come with a guarantee of salvation?**

Choosing a name for your baby is a big deal. Names help shape our child’s identity, so we want to get them just right. I always spent hours poring over long lists

of baby names before our children were born. My husband participated too, shaking his head “no” at anything exotic, old-fashioned, or likely to make his brothers poke fun.

Joyce Borger says that baptism forms our identity in a way that’s like what happens when we give our child a name. Although the name doesn’t mean anything to the baby at first, as she hears it over and over again she starts to identify herself with that name. As your child gets older, she will also start to understand what it means to be part of the family with whom she shares a name.

As a family member your child gets to participate in the celebrations and traditions your family observes. He or she will also be given certain responsibilities. All of this helps shape your child’s identity.

While it’s not something Christian parents want to think about, it’s possible that your child will one day reject that family identity. Borger says, “So it is with becoming a part of God’s family through baptism. The child is given certain privileges (worship, church education) as well as responsibilities (share the gospel, learn, serve), but it doesn’t guarantee that the child will choose to remain a part of God’s family.”

### **13. What is God's role in baptism?**

When Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River by his cousin John, God opened the heavens and declared, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased” (Matt. 3:17). God makes that same claim for your child! As Joyce Berger puts it, “In baptism God is making a public declaration that the child being baptized is loved by him, belongs to him, and is part of the community of faith. In essence, God is giving this child his or her primary identity.”

### **14. As a parent, what's my role in baptism?**

Getting to church on baptism day is the short-term commitment; the rest of your responsibilities involve a lifetime promise. After God declares his love for your child and claims your child as a member of God's family, you get to respond by promising to take a lead role in nurturing the faith of your child and in helping him form an identity as a child of God.

### **15. What comes after baptism?**

Two things come after baptism. The first usually involves a celebration with family and friends. The second takes more time—a lifetime, to be exact—as

you begin to live out the promise you made to raise Junior to know God. You need to actively seek ways to make God part of your child's daily life. Here are a few ways to do that:

- Starting when your child is small, listen to music that glorifies God, and sing together. **Tip:** Bible verses set to music make memorization fun and easy. (See p. 159 for some great resources.)
- As your child begins to speak, encourage her to put her hands together and say "Amen" as part of your before/after meal ritual. Add words like "I love you, Jesus!" or "'Thank you for bananas, God!" as language skills develop.
- Buy or borrow children's picture Bibles. (See recommended resource list on p. 115 for some suggestions.)
- Include God in your conversations: "Thank you for the sunshine, God," "Look at the pretty flowers God made," "God sure gave you strong legs for jumping!"
- Make attending worship services part of your weekly routine.
- Connect with other believing families in your church to support and encourage each other.

- Start family traditions that bring you closer to God (see p. 108).
- Engage in practical acts of service with your child (see p. 180).
- Parent with the same love and grace that God shows us. (You'll get more ideas on how to do that as you read this book.)

### **16. How can baptism be made meaningful to my child as he grows up?**

When my kids were baptized, photographing or filming the ceremony was seen as a distraction and was frowned upon. As a result, although my kids have video footage of birthday celebrations, the opening of Christmas presents, and their soccer championships, all that marks their baptism is a photo of them beside a special cake! Your child's baptism is an incredibly important milestone of faith. Arranging for someone to discreetly photograph or film your child's baptism is one way to remember that event together.

Here are some other ideas:

- Tell your child the story of his or her baptism. A great time to do this is after witnessing the baptism of someone else. Point out that God didn't

wait until that person was an adult to invite him or her into God's family, and emphasize that babies and older children are part of God's family too.

- If your child has believing grandparents (or if you've asked someone to serve as a godparent or mentor to your child), invite them to write your child a personal letter welcoming him or her to the family of God and sharing what God has meant in their lives. Take the letter out and read it together on the anniversary of your child's baptism.
- Create a baptism book or dedicate some pages in your child's photo album to the baptism event. Include pictures of the baptism, the pastor who performed it, and your celebration with family and friends. Also consider including the baptismal certificate and letters written by yourself and others to welcome your child to the family of God. **Tip:** Give family and friends small index cards on which they can write a prayer, a favorite Bible verse, or a simple blessing for your child.
- Mark the anniversary of your child's baptism on your family calendar each year and light a candle to celebrate it.
- Read a special book each year on that date. It could be the baptism book, photo album pages,

or a special picture book. Some great choices are *Water, Come Down!* by Walter Wangerin and *Just In Case You Ever Wonder* by Max Lucado.

### **17. How can I bless my child?**

I wonder if Jesus flashed a mile-wide smile after hearing the heavenly blessing from his Dad on baptism day (Mark 1:11). Although our kids aren't waiting for us to part the sky and send down a dove, they do want our blessing. Here are some simple ways you can be intentional about providing it.

**Show it.** A smile, a shoulder squeeze, a warm hug, and a high-five are all important ways to physically demonstrate your love. John Trent (*The 2 Degree Difference: How Little Things Can Change Everything*) describes how simply lifting your eyebrows and brightening your eyes when your child walks into the room sends a warm "I'm happy to see you!" message and is a powerful way to let him know you value his presence.

**Say it.** Praise your child for who she is and recognize what she does with simple sentences like "That's a great idea!" or "You're such a great helper!" Make the

words “I love you” part of your daily vocabulary. Mark Holmen (*Faith Begins at Home*) also shares a biblical blessing each night with his daughter, using the words of Numbers 6:24-26. Consider adding a biblical blessing to your nighttime ritual or inscribing it on a card. This blessing could be as simple as “God bless you” or “God loves you.”

**Write it.** Pick up a pen and praise your child in a note, then stick it on the bathroom mirror. Slip a “Have a great game” card into a lunch bag or text an “I’m so proud of you!” message when there’s something to celebrate.

### **18. What’s a family mission statement? How do we make one?**

While raising a family may feel more like managing a nonprofit organization than a Fortune 500 company, there is one thing you can learn from both business models: the value of developing a mission statement to help clarify your goals and keep your family on the right track. A family mission statement is an expression of your family’s goals and values as you seek to love and honor God together. Making one can serve

as a great reminder that there's more to family life than housework, homework, and extracurricular activities.

You can create a family mission statement any time. Writing one when your kids are small will help you stay focused on raising a family in a way that pleases and glorifies God now. As your kids get older, you'll want to seek their input as you reshape the statement. **Tip:** New Year's Day or the start of a new school year are great times to do this together!

A good way to begin is by asking, "What kind of a family does God want us to be?" and listing ideas. There is no right or wrong way to write a family mission statement. Yours could be a one-sentence motto such as "As a family we seek to love and honor God in all that we do" or a list that begins like this:

*As a family we will*

*... love and honor God at home, at school, and  
in our community.*

*... be thankful for our blessings and share them  
with others.*

*... show love to each other by being patient  
and kind.*

*... read the Bible, pray, and worship God to-  
gether.*

Kids of all ages can participate by sharing ideas, decorating the statement page (or their own copies), and/or creating a picture that shows your family living out one of its goals. **Tip:** Help younger kids remember the statement by using pictures to symbolize certain words. Hang the statement on a wall, on your fridge, near the family calendar, or in another place where you'll be reminded of it often.

Check out these passages for inspiration as you create your statement: 1 Kings 2:1-4; Joshua 24:15b; Micah 6:8.

### **19. What's a life verse? Should I give my child one?**

My grandmother signed every birthday card she sent me with *Love, Oma*—*Proverbs 3:5-6*. We never talked about her unique signature, but I always understood that those verses were significant to her and that she wanted them to guide me too. They became our wedding text, words of comfort when our newborn required surgery, and an assurance to share with our kids when they found themselves in scary situations.

A life verse is a Bible verse or passage chosen to serve as a guiding principle for your life and/or as a

reminder of God's faithfulness. As adults there may be verses that have been especially significant to us at different times in our lives, or one verse in particular that we have clung to in a variety of situations. You may want to choose a particular verse to serve as a life verse for your child. This can be done when your child is an infant or when your child and you are able to choose a verse that speaks to her particular character traits.

You might include the verse in your child's baby album, read it aloud each year on her baptism anniversary, inscribe it on a piece of jewelry, frame it and hang it in her bedroom, write it in a personal letter to your child, highlight it together when she receives her own Bible, or, like my Oma, add it to birthday and graduation cards.

As your kids get older, encourage them to choose their own life verse—and be sure you share the significance of your own special life verse with them too!

Some popular life verses to consider:

Isaiah 40:31; Proverbs 3:5-6; Isaiah 43:1; Hebrews 10:33; Joshua 1:9



## OUR PANEL OF EXPERTS

The following people have graciously shared their expertise throughout the book:

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For a Christian parent, some battles aren't worth fighting—like whether your three-year-old can wear her plastic tiara to church. But other questions might keep you up at night:

- How can I help my kids trust God when they're worried or bad things happen?
- How do I explain tough things like death and divorce?
- Is it OK that we don't have family devotions?
- How can I make our home a place where my kids' faith will grow?

This handbook gives you practical, real-world advice about how to help your kids know and love God—and how to build a home where you can grow in faith together.

Author Karen DeBoer is a mother of four, an early childhood educator, and a curriculum editor who has been involved in children's ministry for more than 25 years. Her practical approach to Christian parenting combined with the insights of a panel of experts make this book a valuable resource for building a home where the whole family can grow in faith together.

