



FAMILY WORSHIP



Jacob's Well is a Christian community which exists for the glory of God and the good of the city by extending hope through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

A church for those who have grown weary with religion, yet still find themselves thirsty for God.

www.JacobsWellNJ.org

Introduction

As a family you have the great privilege of walking with God and growing in him together. In today's busy world and bustling schedules it can be difficult to carve out life space in order to worship God as a family and to build spiritual rhythms into our lives that help us grow together.

At Jacob's Well we believe that the worship of God is not simply an activity which takes place on Sundays, but rather a way of life where we see all things under the rule of Jesus and under his care. The Scriptures are clear, that whatever we do, we are to do all to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31). So this has implications for work, for leisure and the rhythms of family life. This little resource is designed with a simple goal in mind. To help fathers and mothers teach the gospel to their children and to lead their family in worship in the home. To introduce walking with Jesus as a family, let us look quickly at a uniquely Christian spirituality.

On Christian Spirituality

In one sense, this resource is a work in Christian Spirituality, following Jesus and being transformed to be more like him day after day. One of the questions we ask often at Jacob's Well is "Where does spiritual life and transformation take place?" The answer is always "in every area and detail of our lives." So the home and family must be a primary focus as we walk with God together. God designed home and family as a place of teaching and spiritual formation, a place of modeling and following, a place of discipline and repentance, a place of love and acceptance and a place where we learn to follow Jesus...together. So before we get in to some practical aspects of family worship, let us take a quick look at some of the rhythms of a uniquely, gospel centered, Jesus focused spiritual life.

Teaching and Living

Jesus was, among many things, a teacher and all of his disciples are to follow and learn from him. We are to look to his life, his instruction, his stories, his dealings with others his response to circumstances and be shaped into his image. So the home should be a place where Jesus' teachings are explained and practiced. Additionally, we are to teach and live the Scriptures like Jesus. If we only teach without living out implications of the gospel the hypocrisy is evident. If we only live without teaching then our practice is not shaped and informed by the Word of God. In such cases Jesus is not honored through the process. Either path is a dead end, so we need a Word Based instruction which leads to gospel centered practice. All of this happens in close relationships with one another.

Gospel Centered

The gospel is the good news of our holy and good God rescuing sinners from sin, death and hell by the sacrifice of his Son on a cross of execution. He took our sins and gave us his righteousness. Instead of the wrath and justice we deserve from God, we receive grace upon grace from Jesus. By the gospel God rescues us, creates a new covenant people, gives a foretaste of his Kingdom on the earth and one day will bring his rule and reign fully through Jesus. The gospel means that we repent often, grant grace and forgiveness, and extend kindness and compassion to others. Our lives will be centered upon Jesus and his completed work on the cross for sinners. The gospel causes us to reject both self-righteousness and self-

loathing requiring us to see ourselves as desperate sinners in need yet simultaneously more loved than we dare to believe.

Word Based and Fueled by Prayer

Jesus taught us something very central to life: *Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God* (Deuteronomy 8:3, quoted by Jesus in Matthew 4:4). The Word of God is our spiritual food, our daily bread, our life line by which God speaks his precious truth to us his people. The Word gives life to the soul, provides wisdom, and brings joy and enlightenment to us; it guides our journey and provides light amidst a dark world (See Psalm 19). By his Word, the Holy Scriptures, God communicates to us freely and sustains us day by day. In addition, we have the great privilege of meeting with God, speaking to him in prayer and receiving mercy and grace in our times of need. Our homes need to be founded upon thoughtful meditation and discussion of Scripture and sustained in regular prayer.

Life in Community

God never intends his children to walk alone, but set the lonely in the family of God. The church is God's family brought together in the gospel to be transformed by God and to be sent on his mission into the world. We are called together to serve, for our joy and for mission. Though God wants us to meet with him individually and personally, he never intends us to follow him alone. As the church we follow Jesus on his mission to save sinners, love the oppressed, seek justice and mercy in the midst of contemporary culture. We walk together *in this world*, aware of our culture, yet moving together to see God's work done in our communities.

Lamenting in Hope

Life is not all happy clappy silly fun. Some of life is immensely painful and tragedy is near to our doors in a world where disease and death still cast their ever present dark shadow. A follower of Jesus is always aware that sadness, mourning and lament are a part of our lives, yet we do not grieve as those without hope. So as Christians we do lament; but we lament in the hope of the resurrection. That this world is not the end and the life and light of Jesus will triumph over our darkness in the end. Even though darkness may visit, we are still a people who rise up and sing. The apostle once talked junk to death (1 Corinthians 15) – we do not grieve as those who have no hope, rather we worship in hopeful expectation of God's ultimate triumph at the end of the age (Romans 8:18-25).

It is our simple conviction that our family, both the immediate family and the broader church family, are his ordained place for God to meet us and transform us in this manner.

Some Simple Goals

Our goals for this resource are immensely practical. We want to give you some ideas to encourage living Christ-centered life together in our community shaping the rhythms of day to day life. What is offered here is in no way considered the only way that everything has to go down in your household. Yet we do hope it encourages you to form a unique culture in your family along with others in our community.

What follows will serve as a table of contents for the Jacob's Well Family Worship Resource. Each subject is designed to help you think about how to incorporate some aspect of Christian faith into your daily life.

The first segments deal with incorporating Scripture and biblical theology into your family life. There is also some material on shaping your children through catechism, an ancient practice of the church to teach sound doctrine through question and answers. Finally there are a few suggestions for prayer and singing as a family. Yes, I said singing – if you start when your shorties are young, the kids will grow up with song being a normal part of your flow. It has been a precious thing for our families and some of us are as musically challenged as they come! Anyway, on to a table of contents.

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A Note to Fathers

The Scriptures give a unique responsibility to husbands and fathers to care for and nurture the spiritual well being and growth of their families. God uniquely calls you to not simply be present in the spiritual development of your people, but to lead. Ephesians 6 tells us that we are to bring our children up in the discipline and instruction of God; a wonderful privilege we have to lead this for our families. Many times the spiritual instruction of our kids is simply entrusted to church programs rather than assumed by Fathers at home. Our view is that the church as a community is entrusted to help one another raise children. The role of the church is to equip the Fathers to embrace this call on their lives. Men, we believe in you and desire to help you to grow in your service to your family. More than anything men, remember that your marriage is designed by God to reflect the love of Jesus for his church (See Ephesians 5:18-33). Love your wives, serve them, cherish them and build them up. Your children need to see and experience this for through your marriage, they will grasp a picture of God.

A Note to Single Parents

We know many of you are raising your children without the help of another parent in the home. We want you to know that we are here to help. Whether you have sons or daughters our community desires to stand with you to help you in the task of parenting. Many of these practices and rhythms of spiritual life are practiced in our missional communities so you need not feel you have to make this journey alone. One thing is certain – God is revealed as a Father to the Fatherless in Holy Scripture (Psalm 68:5) and he will

be with you as you travel the roads of parenthood. The church is a family and we are here to express the Fathers care to you in tangible ways.

A Note to Singles

All that is in this resource is applicable to household situations with Christian roommates. Additionally, we pray that this may give you vision if you ever have a family of your own. It is worth your time to think through and pray about how you might lead your home down the road in life's journey. If you are thinking about preparing for marriage this resource will give you a head start in praying towards your future.

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The Word of God in the Home

Christians in the past set a high bar for families being a small church connected to the larger church community. In fact, many of us have seen so little family worship and devotion that we probably do not realize the extent that this was a part of daily life in days past. The practice and life of many of the people who first came from Europe to the Americas is a striking point in contrast to our own day. Listen in as Christian scholar JI Packer describes family devotional life in such households:

*It was the husband's responsibility to take them to church on the Lord's Day, and oversee the sanctifying of that entire day in the home, to catechize the children, and teach them the faith; to examine the whole family after each sermon, to see how much had been retained and understood, and to fill any gaps in understanding that might remain; to lead the family in worship daily, ideally twice a day; and to set an example of sober godliness at all times and in all matters. **To this end he must be willing to take time out to learn the faith that he is charged to teach.***

JI Packer, *The Quest of Godliness, The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1990) 370. Emphasis added.

Now this may sound a bit impossible in fast paced, 21st century life of hundreds of HD channels, internet RSS feeds, iPods, working families, soccer games and homework. Yet the worldview of Scripture must occupy our thoughts throughout each day so that we “see” the world through the lens of Scripture. We will participate in culture, interact with people from various religious and worldview backgrounds and be inundated with images, stories, ideas, value systems which are antithetical to Scripture. If we do not have our family life lingering in the Scriptures and the gospel our families can drift silently into a cultural captivity where we are really practicing another faith with Christian stuff smattered about a few times each week.

The Rhythm of Each day

God instructed his ancient people as to the relationship of his Word to their daily lives. In the six chapter of Deuteronomy we read the following:

⁴ “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.⁵ You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶ And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. ⁷ You shall teach them 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. ⁸You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹ You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

This instruction is rooted in the character and nature of God, flows forth from the greatest command to love God with all that we are. In light of who God is, in light of our response to him in loving worship, this is the sort of life we may lead. God's Word should be present with us everywhere we go and throughout each day. The Word must be connected with children at home, traveling to soccer practice, at bed time and when we get up each day. The Scriptures are the foundation of our lives together and for our homes; we can live this reality in our daily 21st century routines as well; it will take focus. What follows are some practical ideas and helps for flowing biblical teaching into your own lives – some practical ways to teach the gospel in your home. Please also take a visit to see Appendix 1 for some ideas on how to flow some of these ideas into the rhythm of a day.

Teaching the Big Story of Scripture

Let's face it; the Bible is a big book. More accurately it is a library of 66 books of diverse literary genre penned by a fascinating array of authors living in various situations and circumstances. The Scriptures are made up of narratives, history, poetry, song, wisdom literature, law codes, commandments, personal letters, apocalyptic literature, gospels (a kind of theological, historical biography) and prophecy. Just beginning to read the Scriptures can be a bit daunting to some, let alone desiring to teach its truths to others. Yet each of us can share what we do know of the Scripture and we can quite easily share its storyline with others.

If we step back and see the big picture of the grand drama of the Bible, we see that it can be described in four acts with God the main actor. Each act we give a name, a category by which we understand what God has done and what God is doing. The categories we will use are creation, fall, redemption, restoration.

Act I - Creation

*In the beginning God...*so thunders the first words of the Old Testament. The book of Genesis, the book of beginnings, tells us what we know intuitively and by scientific investigation. The universe began to exist in the finite past; it became to be when before it simply *was not*. God in his wisdom created the universe with both purpose and design. The Scriptures of the Old Testament teach us that the world was created by God and created good. Yet God did not only create the universe, but he also created a unique species, specially fashioned in his own image and likeness.

26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

Genesis 1:26, 27

So at the outset of the Bible we see a creator, a good creation, and a unique creature with a great responsibility given to him by God. Humans would rule over the created earth, hand in hand in fellowship with God. Then the treasonous act which echoes even to this day took place in paradise. The foreknown path of man would be taken – they would sin and rebel and the results would be devastating then glorious. Before turning to the rebellion of humanity, let's say one last thing about creation.

I was once asked some very profound questions by an unbelieving friend. What he said went something like this: *If God is perfect, if in himself he has no needs, has no imperfections, is not lacking anything, why did he create a world and little play friends to go with it?* I thought...that is a great freakin question! But the answer is even better. First, my friend is right. God is perfect so he did not and could not create us and the world out of *need*. He was not lonely and he did not need anyone with which to watch the football game or go to the concert. He did not have to create anything, yet he did. Why? The answer is awesome. God created not out of lack or need, but out of a desire to display, to show off his glory, and to share his delight with others. He created to give himself to his creatures and thereby share his beauty, glory and joy with them. As Jonathan Edwards so aptly described long ago in the book *The End For Which God Created the World: "It is fitting that God's glory be delighted in as well as known"*. God created the world for himself; we only exist by him and for him (Psalm 24:1, Colossians 1:15-17). We were made to

worship, delight in, and have joy in God. Which makes what we will discuss next all the more tragic and treasonous.

Act II - Fall

CS Lewis, in his classic work *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe*, describes the mythical world of Narnia as existing in a state where it is *always winter, but never Christmas*. Narnia was in a state of perpetual coldness, underneath the power of a great evil. The world was held in its wintry bondage until the time when Aslan, the great Lion, renewed and redeemed all things. Lewis' Christian worldview soaks the pages of his story as he understood the reality of our world. Our world, like Narnia, is too in bondage to decay, cursed long ago as the result of a treasonous revolt of our ancient ancestor, one known to us by the Hebrew name for man...*Adam*. The Old Testament teaches us that the first human beings, in direct contradiction to their creator, disobeyed him and reaped the consequences on the world and the human race. The Christian doctrine of the fall of humanity is established in the Old Testament in the first three chapters of Genesis. As a result of our rebellion, God himself cursed creation and human beings. The results are devastating. All people die, though we presume that we will live forever. As a result, the world is not a paradise, but rather a war zone full of disease, human atrocities, natural disasters, and our own separation from God and each other. Yet God did this in hope, (Romans 8:18-30) for his plan was just beginning. Though we had sinned, in love God set about to forgive and restore. He would win back a people from the curse and vindicate his name which had been dishonored by the very creatures he had created.

Act III – Redemption

Therefore, God set about a course of redemption, by which he would pursue and reconnect with his creatures that had rebelled against him. The plan included many people and nations, many hundreds of years and a complex matrix of events and signposts. His plan would find its fullness when God himself, incarnate as the second Adam, the person of Jesus of Nazareth, would pay the final price for sin and bring us back into relationship with God. This drama unfolded throughout the Old Testament and was ultimately fulfilled in the New Testament. It unfolds on various continents, centered in the Promised Land, through various covenants (more on that in a moment) by which God invited people back into relationship with himself. This was all extended by grace, a free gift from God who offers peace to those who now live at war with him.

Act IV – Restoration

We now live at a time where God is at work redeeming a people to be his very own children. God is giving new birth to people today around the world from every tribe, tongue, people and nation. His work is on going through the church which relates to God by a new arrangement – one sealed in the blood of his own Son. An engagement ring has been given; a promise has been made in the first coming or advent of Jesus. We now wait for the time when Jesus will return in power to claim his bride and fully realize the Kingdom which began at his first coming. At the end of all history, when the scroll of the plan of God is fully revealed, there will be a great wedding feast with Christ. At this time the eternal, joyful, and fully realized, restored and re-created world will begin. What is spoken in the Old Testament by the prophet Jeremiah (see chapter 31) will be completed in the description found in Revelation 21:1-4:

1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. 2 And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and

they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. 4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

To be honest, I am looking forward to it...this is our story and it connects to all of life's experience in every age. If we are aware of the big story of the Bible, and the hero of the story Jesus Christ we can “connect” to this story as we journey through every day experiences.

- If we see beauty in the natural world, in other human beings, in the ordering of the cosmos, in the fine encoding of DNA...we can point to God as creator
- When we see sin and brokenness around us we can talk about the world and its alienation from God and how some day all will be made right
- When we long for the world and ourselves to be changed and made better the story of the redeeming God echoes to us as the truth that it is. Almost every story in almost every culture has a world going bad and a hero coming to set things right in the end...is this not the very truth of the universe?
- We long in home for the coming day when all things will be made right in the world. We always have hope and we can connect our kids to this reality. Whenever we find Jesus' Kingdom represented on the earth we can point to its coming fullness in heaven.

A quick reminder is in order for the parents. When we connect things we see and experience with God's story we should be subtle yet intentional; we don't need to be the obnoxious Mom or Dad forcing everything to Jesus...but do ask questions, stop movies to talk, ask kids to think.

Resources for teaching the Big Story of the Bible

- Use *The Jesus Story Book Bible* to teach how every story points towards redemption in Christ. Simply reading this at bed time with your kids will give both you and them a good idea of the big story of Scripture.
- Parents – A Great and challenging book is *According the Plan* by Graeme Goldsworthy

Central Stories (Covenants)

As God worked to redeem a people throughout history, he has done so by making promises, or establishing covenants with people. Seeing the whole of redemptive history, particularly the Old Testament, through the grid of the unfolding of the covenants is very helpful. The idea of a covenant was prominent in many cultures that existed in the time of the Old Testament. A covenant was usually seen as a treaty or contract between two parties binding them to certain benefits and consequences should one party prove unfaithful to the deal. In his book *Christ of the Covenants*, O. Palmer Robertson defines a covenant in this way: *A covenant is a bond in blood, or a bond of life and death, sovereignty administered.* In other words a covenant is a bond between two parties in relationship that is not casual in nature but has strong commitments. As such this relationship and its terms are conveyed to us and established by the Sovereign God of the universe. It is both a privilege and a responsibility before God to be his people by covenant.

A complete discussion of the nature of the covenants God has established with people is well beyond the scope of this resource. I will refer you to the aforementioned work by Robertson for that. For our purposes here I simply want to present the work of God in the Old Testament as an unfolding of relationship with us through various promises he established. Seeing the people associated with each covenant promise displays God's working at various times and places to call a people back into relationship.

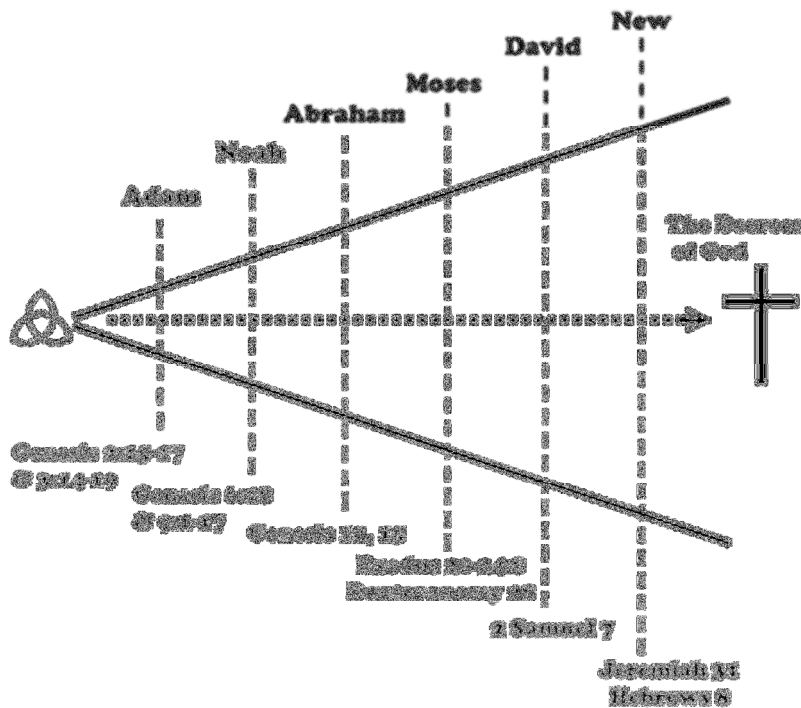
Each of these stories can be read in Scripture at the dinner table or at bed time so that kids become familiar with the story of the gospel unfolding over time. Coming to the Bible this way is better than simply telling disconnected Bible stories. All of biblical redemptive history has Jesus as the coming purpose. By all means enjoy the rich stories of the Bible...David beating down Goliath, Daniels faithfulness in the Lion's Den, Joshua's brave battle at Jericho, etc. but don't miss the act of God sowing all of history together by covenant with his people.

- **Adam** (Genesis 1-3; Hosea 6:4-7) – God created and called Adam to walk with him in joy filled obedience. Adam broke covenant and received the penalty of his unfaithfulness. Adam's sin brought death to the world. **Jesus** is the second Adam who fully obeys God and brings us life and peace with God rather than death and alienation.
- **Noah** (Genesis 6:17-18) – God promises to protect and provide for his people even in a world of destruction. **Jesus** is God's ultimate protection and ark of salvation to bring God's people safely home to his kingdom.
- **Abraham** (Genesis 12 and 15) - God's faithfulness would be expressed to this man and his offspring as it would be from the people of Israel that salvation would come for the whole world. **Jesus** the savior would come; he would come from the seed of Abraham.
- **Moses** (Exodus) – Moses led God's people out of slavery to a land promised to them. He also brought God's laws to his people. These two themes, land and law are huge throughout the Old Testament. The covenant made with Moses was simple. If the people of God walked in his ways and kept his laws there would be covenant blessing. If the people turned away from God and broke his laws there would be covenant curses upon them (see Deuteronomy 28). It is at the time of Moses that God gave the people the priesthood and covenant mediation through a blood sacrifice and worship at the tabernacle. **Jesus** fully obeyed the law and will bring us to God's final Promised Land in the Kingdom of Heaven. He is the eternal high priest, mediating the new covenant through his own sacrifice as the Lamb of God.
- **David** (2 Samuel 7) - It is to King David that God makes an additional covenant promise. In 2 Samuel 7 God promises David that his throne, his lineage of rule would be established and one of

his offspring would sit on his throne forever. An eternal king would come and take his place on the very throne of David. This King will bring an eternal and righteous rule to the world and the age of crooked human politicians and governments will finally end. Jesus is our King, descended from David and will forever sit on his throne as our eternal covenant King.

At this point in redemptive history God had promised Adam to crush the head of the serpent through the offspring of a woman, he had promised to protect and maintain the human race to Noah, he had made a great nation through Abraham through which his blessing would flow to the world, he had given his people a land and a law through Moses, and promised an eternal, good, covenant King to his man David. These covenants were in no way arbitrary, they were building, one after the other towards the covenant which would fulfill and bring them all into fullness. The following diagram is helpful in seeing the connection between the covenants.

Figure 1: Unfolding of the Covenants – Modified and adapted from diagram in O. Palmer Robertson, Christ of the Covenants, 62



God, before creating the world had decreed or purposed that he would redeem a people for his very own possession. For his glory and their joy he had created the world. This decree had to be worked out in time and through history with a building from one covenant to the next. Like a large wave gaining momentum as it moves closer to the shoreline, the plans of God would crest and find their ultimate fullness in what Scripture calls the New Covenant.

History marched forward under the direction of God until the arrival of what the Scriptures describe as the fullness of time. Of this time, the book of Galatians tells us a beautiful truth:

*4 But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, **born of woman, born under the law,** 5 to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.*

- Fulfilling the covenant with Adam, the Son of God would be born of a woman, the seed promised in Genesis 3, the second Adam (see Romans 5) whose victory secures our destiny.
- Fulfilling the covenant with Noah, God had protected humanity for this very purpose.
- Fulfilling the covenant with Abraham, a great nation had now given birth to the Savior of the World.
- Fulfilling the covenant with Moses, this person would be born under the law and he would fully obey all its demands, himself becoming the blood sacrifice for the people's sins.
- Fulfilling the covenant with David, this person was from the royal line of David and would be crowned by God as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Yes, the fullness of time had come. God the Father had sent God the Son into the world as a fulfillment of all of God's covenant promises over the ages. His coming was foretold by prophets, his work unfolded in the covenants, and his love would fulfill the hearts of his people. It is no wonder that Nehemiah, when the people were returning from exile from the land, described God in his prayer as follows: *O Lord God of heaven, the great and awesome God **who keeps covenant and steadfast love** with those who love him and keep his commandments. Nehemiah 1:5*

Practical and Fun Ways to Teach

- Make an audio CD from a listeners Bible for each story of God making covenants with his people – Max Mclean's ESV Listeners Bible is an excellent resource here.
- Teach them to see God as a grand weaver putting together all of history, and each of our lives for his purposes. See Ravi Zacharias story of an Indian weaver and his Son working in concert unfolding a grand design in the introduction of the book *The Grand Weaver*.
- Take one story of covenant at a time around the dinner table or at bedtime
- Utilize the diagram in this resource to teach the connection and unfolding of God's plan to save his people...Draw the covenants unfolding like waves coming towards a beach with Jesus being where it reaches the shore.
- Talk about how each OT story points to Jesus – utilize *the Jesus Story Book Bible* to do so with young kids.

Learning at Meals...Through Meals

If you do the work to make family meals happen during your week you can use time together eating to teach the gospel story through...well, eating. There are several significant meals laid out in Scripture which literally teach the gospel. You can teach your kids these meals in a simple fashion where they will learn them over time. Introducing such as discussion is simple and natural. Here is an example.

Hey guys, you know eating is a special thing in life. Food keeps our bodies supplied with energy; meals also give us time together as a family and you know what else meals can teach us? [Don't tell them, let them ask "WHAT!?"] There are several meals in Scripture that teach us God's plan for the whole world...

Do you want to learn about these meals?

Meal 1 – The Bankrupt Garden Banquet

Scripture Reading: Genesis 1-3

God invited his children to a great feast when he created them. He gave the first man and woman, our first parents, some commandments in the very beginning. Do you know what they were? Now most may think here that God's command was only prohibitive "don't eat the fruit!" but this would miss the fullness of the command of God. His commands were an invitation to life and abundance; in fact, he called Adam and Eve to a banquet. You may eat of every! This was the beginning of his command which was followed by one "but you shall not eat of one tree."

The point of this story is that God invites us to joy, to a feast to be with him in loving fellowship. The temptation to eat from the forbidden fruit is not about the fruit. It is about us wanting to do life on our own without God. It is a denial that he knows what is good, right and true and has the best path for us. This meal can be taught as a sad day where people abandoned God's big party for to go eat some dirt with the devil. Let's just say that Satan is not a good dinner date. This is a bankrupt banquet that has marked our world forever.

Meal 2 – The Passover Feast

Scripture Reading – Exodus 12

At the end of the book of Genesis the people of God were in Egypt as there was food in that land during the time of a great regional famine. The years past and the people found themselves under the boot of the Egyptian ruler in an oppressive slavery. As God was bringing his people out of bondage a feast known as Passover was instituted by God for the people of Israel.

Each household was to take a perfect lamb, the purest of their flock without any defects and kill it on the night of Passover. Its blood was to be placed on the doorpost of their homes so that a coming curse of death would "pass over" the house. Each house that was covered by the lamb's blood would be spared and saved.

It is no coincidence that John the Baptizer would step into history in the New Testament and declare Jesus to be the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. The first Passover demonstrates God's salvation for his people by seeing blood on a doorpost. Likewise God would someday redeem people by the blood of his own Son whereby death and hell would not fall upon them. When we repent of our sin and trust in Jesus' sacrifice, God's wrath passes over us and we are completely saved.

God instituted that his people would eat the Passover every year as a remembrance of God's redeeming them from slavery. It was at this very meal that the true, eternal Passover lamb would take his seat at the very same table.

Meal 3 – The Last Supper

Scripture Reading – Select from either of the following accounts: Matthew 26, Mark 14, Luke 22

Upon the eve of his own arrest Jesus ate the Passover meal with his disciples. In doing so Jesus identified himself with God's salvation in the Passover and he gave further meaning to his followers as he instituted a new meal that would be celebrated by his church for all time. At the last supper we see that Jesus was fulfilling the Passover and providing meaning for what the offering of his body and blood for us would mean.

Useful Illustration – If you want to teach a little art history, you may want to use Da Vinci's artwork of the last supper here.

Meal 4 – The Lord's Supper

Scripture Reading – Luke 22:14-23, 1 Corinthians 10

Almost every Christian community in every age has followed the Lord's teaching to observe a meal that he commissioned at the last supper. He took bread and wine and taught his followers to eat a meal together that remembers, proclaims and participates in the body and blood of Jesus. In the Lord's Table we see the gospel proclaimed where the body of Jesus was broken for sinners like us. In the blood of Jesus we see the blood of the New Covenant poured out for the sins of many. As the church observes this meal it looks back at what Jesus did from its present life together. At the same time it looks forward to the future at what is coming with the Kingdom of heaven...the place where a final and glorious meal is observed together.

Meal 5 – The Wedding Feast of Jesus

Scripture Reading: Revelation 19:1-10

The great and final feast in the Bible takes place in the great vision of Heaven given in the last book of the Scriptures. The final reconciliation and joyful celebration is pictured in a wedding feast. The Bridegroom Jesus and the church, the great bride of Christ, are finally unified for all eternity and there is a big party thrown in celebration. All pain, tears, sin and death are removed as the final victory of God is consummated in the Kingdom. This is a feast our family longs for as we serve on his mission sojourning towards this heavenly feast.

Shaping Sound Teaching

Children by nature are very inquisitive and anyone who has ever been around toddlers knows they just love to ask you questions. There is also a phase where the only word they know is “WHY?” Instead of pulling out your hair put that inquisitiveness to use.

For centuries Christian people have taught their kids sound doctrine (healthy teaching) through a question and answer format known as a catechism. Now, some complain that it is only a memorization technique and does not transform little souls. Let’s just say that if all kids get is something to memorize their hearts will not be changed. Yet if we use a catechism to teach in a relational context which also uses stories and imagination a catechism can provide a superb doctrinal foundation for kids.

Using a Catechism in Missional Communities

If your community has small children it is easy to use a short time of your meeting to teach the kids with catechism questions. Some groups enjoy fellowship with kids and adults together to begin their time. You can then move into a short time of instruction where the men rotate teaching the kids. The question can be read and the answer given and then a short discussion about the truth being taught. After the discussion coloring sheets which picture the question discussed can be handed out to each kid to color and review at home throughout the week. The next week the previous question should first be reviewed before moving on to the next. It is easy to connect Scripture memory to catechism without much difficulty. With young kids it is good to select just one Scripture but if you have a hungry little munchkin by all means give them more.

We have provided for you in Appendix 3 the beginning of a basic children’s catechism for young kids ages 3-8. We have some music available for you that set these truths to song which you can then sing with your young kids in the car or at home. Finally, there are a few catechisms linked for you in Appendix 4 that you can use with older kids.

Before the Throne (leading the family in prayer)

It is a bit of a cliché, but one that I find highly attractive – the family that prays together, stays together. Perhaps the greatest privilege we have as a follower of Jesus is that of prayer. The fact is the creator of the universe desires for us to intimately communicate with him each day. Prayer can be viewed as simply talking with God, sharing with him our thoughts, concerns, and desire to walk closely with him. In prayer we can find help, guidance, and strength to face life’s many tough challenges. In prayer we also find that the very one who made all things uses answered prayer to accomplish his purposes in the world. As a new Christian I found it difficult to know exactly what I should pray about. After all, did God really want to listen to a guy like me? The simple truth is that we can pray about anything and everything but there are some helpful guides to help us know how to pray. A good guideline to use in prayer is the acrostic A.C.T.S. standing for: Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving and Supplication.

First, in prayer we come first to love and **Adore** God. We also come to **Confess** sin and repent, turning to God and away from our sin experiencing his love, grace and forgiveness. Furthermore, a heart before God should express itself in gratitude. So we should be **thankful** for his provision of each day, our food, our families, both good things that happen and difficult trials he allows into our lives to shape us. Finally, we can ask God for things we need and things we desire to take place. If we come with pure motives, desiring God’s will be done we can present our requests before God...that is a simple way of saying “**Supplication**” which means to ask God for things. This little acrostic is actually derived from our Lord’s Prayer (sometimes known as *Our Father*) that we follow in Jesus’ way of prayer expressed there.

Finally, there may be times when you just don’t feel like praying. Dr. John Piper has another helpful acrostic that I have used to ask God to help me when I don’t want to pray or find my heart somewhat dry towards him. He calls them prayer IOUS. In these times it is helpful to ask God to “**Incline**” your heart towards Him (Psalm 119:36, 37), to “**Open**” your eyes to your truth (Psalm 119:18), to “**Unite**” your passions and desires in Him (Psalm 86:11), and to “**Satisfy**” your heart with good things (Psalm 90:14, Psalm 107:9). It may seem strange to pray to God about not wanting to pray, but I have found it to be a very way helpful to kick start my heart before God.

A few practical ideas...

Practically speaking, our family has a few things we do together in terms of prayer. One practice we do in the mornings the other usually around the dinner table.

Morning Prayer

Our family has made it a practice to begin most days with what we call Morning Prayer. It is quite simple really; we sing a short song based on the following Scriptures in the book of Lamentations:

²²The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; ²³they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

Lamentations 3:22-23

Here is the song for those interested...

*The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, His mercies never come to an end
They are new every morning, New every morning
Great is thy faithfulness, O Lord, Great is thy faithfulness*

After singing the song we thank God for having another day to live, have the opportunity to walk with him and be his people on mission in the world. We are not legalists in that we do this EVERY DAY! Yet we have developed this pattern in our home that my kids actually ask for us to have “morning prayer” when Mom or Dad forgets or has gotten busy with the day. The point is to develop a rhythm of giving the day to God...you can think of ways to do this for your crew.

Family Prayer

Around the dinner table our family has found an engaging way to catch up with one another, engage our hearts and obey the teaching of Scripture. In 1 Thessalonians 5:16-22 we find a rather interesting exhortation from Scripture:

¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray without ceasing, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. ¹⁹ Do not quench the Spirit. ²⁰ Do not despise prophecies, ²¹ but test everything; hold fast what is good. ²² Abstain from every form of evil.

In this passage we are told that we are to do several things. We are called to rejoice, pray, give thanks, don't quench God's Spirit, not to despise words from God, to test them, hold to what is good and abstain from every kind of evil. Our family has taken the phrase “give thanks in all circumstances” and is trying to live that out in a practical way. So we created something we call family prayer; a pretty simple way to teach our kids to thank God for everything. Here is how we roll with this.

First, someone is a note taker – at first it was always me (Dad) but now my oldest daughter takes the roll at times as well. We list all the family members' names and make two columns by each name. One column is to write down something positive we are thankful for that happened in our day. Something that made you happy, felt like a blessing, made you laugh, smile and feel pretty good about God and life. The other column is for something negative, painful, disappointing...something we typically would not be saying “Thank you God may I have another” about. So we go around the table and share one positive deal and one negative deal. We even write stuff down for our two year old, even though he doesn't have much to say about it at this point. After we finish one of us will weave together and pray a family prayer actually thanking God for ALL OF THIS. “God, thanks for the good, the bad, the ugly. We know these specific things you brought into our lives for your purposes. We thank you that even the hard stuff can work for good in our lives because we are called by you as your children.”

Again, we don't do this every night but we do it regularly, at least once a week. We are teaching our kids, and reminding ourselves of some great truths. First, God is sovereign over good and evil and works all things together for good for those who love him. Second, it reminds us that the bad stuff in life many times shapes us into the image of Jesus as much as the good stuff (usually more). Finally, it unites our family in trust of God and lets us know each other's hearts a bit. In fact, I love to hear what pains my kids as it brings my heart to a state of compassion for them. Foster an attitude of honesty, even when what pains or disappoints them is you. I have actually had my girls say “Daddy you not being here for dinner much this week makes me sad.” Hello! What a gift from God, from my daughters to remind me of what is valuable in life. Family prayer is one of our favorite practices in our home and very simple to lead as parents.

Doxology (leading the family in song)

The word Doxology comes from the Greek term *doxa* which can mean glory, praise or worship. In Appendix 3 we have provided just a short list of songs/lyrics which you can sing with your family at the dinner table, or just in the course of life. If you sing with kids early in life they will enjoy it as a flow for your family. Start early and worship God together and it may become a lifelong joy for your kids. Over time have fun together and construct a book of songs/hymnal for your family. You will form some great memories together worshipping our God.

Additionally, the CDs “Seeds of Praise – Family Worship” are very helpful to get kids singing Scripture in the car or in the home. Available at Amazon.com and other places that sell music...

Developing Heart and Mind

One of our values at Jacob's Well is to be *thoughtfully engaged*. We desire to see the intersection of truth with all of life and the integration of the theology with every discipline of study. We believe all things practical are theologically grounded and all theological truth is practical for life and the mission of the church. We value the development of the intellect as the mind is a great gift from God with which we are commanded to love him. Shaping a love for learning in the home is a unique privilege for the Christian family.

Love for Reading

There is no greater gift to give our kids than a love for books. I know we live in an age of media, social networks, text messaging, podcasts and web video. I use all that stuff and I am a bit of a technophile myself. Yet we cannot forget that the mind is stimulated by reading and thinking and our God has communicated us to us through Scripture; which is, by the way, a big set of books. Everyone agrees that reading to your kids as early as possible is a key to their intellectual development. You can even be one of those weird parents who read to your kids in the womb; I certainly was! I'll never forget reading my philosophy homework to our first daughter while she was in Mommy's tummy. We read to our kids just about every night and try to pick books that shape a view of the world which is biblical. You can see some of the lists in Appendix 3 for some recommendations.

It can be easy to just slip in the DVD to occupy our kid's time. We are not anti-video or anything and certainly allow some regulated consumption of movies, but we also realize that reading must be a part of each day. I have found that the more the parents begin to love reading that it is contagious with the kids. I have taken time where I read and my kids read in the same room. Even if for just a short amount of time each day it sets a precedent that they really see.

To begin your kid's interest in the Scriptures there are some great children's Bibles available today which we can utilize. Fathers, it is a great gift for you to give Bibles directly to each child. Sign it, make a big deal about it, wrap it in wrapping paper and make a moment of it. If we start with our kids at a young age reading can be a fundamental part of their lives.

Love for the Imagination

Human beings grow intellectually by using their imaginations and creative faculties as well. Artwork, crafts, coloring, painting, etc. can be great activities to do with your kids. With young children it is great to incorporate some sort of artistic/crafty activity along with instruction. Additionally, helping your kids developed an imaginary thought world can be fun and helpful.

One practice I do with my kids is called "Story in the Dark." It is a thing we do periodically at bed time where I just make up random stories on the fly to teach and provoke following a story in their minds. Most of the time I make up some random stories which have some virtue on display and redemption taking place in the lives of some of the characters. My favorite set of stories features Mickey Mouse, my kids, and Tricky Mouse – he is a bad little guy who usually represents the opposite of a virtue I want to teach. My kids usually show him kindness and grace...and there is even a story where he gets redeemed by hearing the gospel. I also make up stories with Thomas the Tank Engine; we like Thomas. I sometimes ask my kids to *give me a virtue*; for instance love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness or self-control. I then craft a story with that virtue on display. These don't have to be literary

masterpieces; most of mine are pretty goofy. Your kids will like the time spent with you and will even laugh with you at some of the junk you make up. These times are actually quite a trip for us.

Teaching Intellectual Virtues

Learning is an exercise in character as well as intellect so work to be building a love for truth in your kids in a manner that is like Jesus. All truth and true knowledge is from God and should provoke in us humility rather than pride. We start discussions of learning with our kids with what I have called *the bifurcation of knowledge*. Yeah, I know, that is a big word—bifurcation. Yet it simply means “to be divided into two.” Your kids can learn that – my four year old picked it up no problem. We teach our kids a simple passage from Scripture that teaches us humility and desire for learning. Here it is:

The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.

Deuteronomy 29:29 ESV

There are secret things that only God knows and there are revealed things that we can know. God has revealed certain things to us in the natural world (general revelation) and through Jesus and the Scriptures (special revelation). We need to know that we are not all knowing and that there is a realm of knowledge that only God has; I want this to provoke in our family humility in our learning, not pride. Additionally, there are revealed things that we can learn so there is truth to be gained in the study of God’s world and God’s Word. I want this to be excited and encouraging to us. All of us can learn revealed things. I ask my kids questions like this:

- Who knows the secret things!? GOD!
- Who knows the revealed things!? GOD! And we can learn them too!

We need to have courage to try and learn and to be intellectually honest in our studies. We also need to see learning as more than an exercise that will enable us to make money someday...as important as that is. We want to see learning as a joyful pursuit of God given gifts that we can learn and use in service to others. We never want to see things like spelling, math, reading, science, etc. as “separate” from God or “church stuff.” So we work hard to have our kids see God connected to all things known and unknown and learning is to think God’s thoughts after him for our joy and his glory.

Basic Thinking Skills

Basic logical reasoning ability is a bit on the down swing in our culture. One trip around the MTV dial can be my proof for this. Now I like goofing off and crazy stuff as much as the next guy, but I also find no virtue in being an unthinking idiot. Our culture has a long history of things like logic, reasoning, etc. which can actually be fun things to learn. Here are a few things we do to encourage thinking in our home.

Logic – Teaching First Principles

Thinking is part of what it means to be human. I know there may be evidence to the contrary when watching a live NASCAR race but I still believe it is true. Logic is part of language and understanding basic communication. There are a few first principles of reason which I think everyone uses by default but can also be taught as building blocks for clear thinking. Little kids can get the first four pretty easily and I have taught these to our kids. None of this is rocket science; in fact you may think these are an exercise

in stating the obvious...but not a few PhDs have built careers on being skeptical of just these things. Really, if you can doubt your own existence and write a book about it, you might just have a future in the academy. Sorry, back to basic logic.

Basic Laws of Logic

1. Law of Existence – Things exist – A is
2. Law of Identify – Something is what it is – A is A
3. Law of Excluded Middle – Something either is true or it is not true – A or Not A
4. Law of Non Contradiction – Something cannot be both true and not true at the same time in the same sense – Not (A and Not A)

First, I find the law of existence pretty self-evident unless you talk to people who believe they are living in the Matrix. I cannot help them so let’s assume we exist. Second, I have taught the law of identity to all three of my kids by making up a silly song for each of them. I’ll share them here. Please don’t mock me...I already know this is weird. You don’t have to do this—it’s just an example.

Kayla	Kylene	Tommy
<i>Something is What Something Is</i>	<i>Something is What Something Is</i>	<i>Something is What Something Is</i>
<i>Something is What Something Is</i>	<i>Something is What Something Is</i>	<i>Something is What Something Is</i>
<i>A Dog is a Dog and a Cat is a Cat</i>	<i>A Tree is a Tree and a Bee is a Bee</i>	<i>A Toy is a Toy and a Boy is a Boy</i>
<i>The Law of Identity How About That!</i>	<i>The Law of Identify for You and Me!</i>	<i>The Law of Identity, Gives us Joy!</i>

For the third and fourth law I usually just teach through examples. I’ll point to an object or something on the dinner table and say “This is green or it is not green” – and the kiddos usually reply “its green.” For the law of non Contradiction I usually make silly contradictions like “I am your Daddy and I’m not your Daddy” – to which there should be puzzled looks. You can then move to stuff like “Apple Computers Suck and they Do not Suck” if you want to get controversial. Even precious theological truth like “Jesus is God or He is Not God” or “Jesus is God and He is Not God” can be discussed in this fashion.

For practical thinking stuff there are fun little workbooks we have used as well using pictures and questions which help kids learn to reason. See Appendix 4 and look for *MindBenders*.

Integration and Intersection

I am also looking for ways to integrate our view of knowledge with the gospel and see the intersection of truth with everyday life. The following are some small examples I have done with my kids.

- **Example – Creation** – The BBC has put out a fantastic DVD which looks at the various eco systems of the planet in stark detail. Before watching these as a family we either quote Genesis 1:1, Psalm 19 or Psalm 24:1,2. We also seek to teach in the moments when we sense a connection with creation to point to the creator. Additionally, when the brokenness or depravity of the world surfaces we discuss the fall. Finally, when we see a story that shows something bad being made right or a longing for a better world we discuss how God is redeeming us and will redeem all things.
- **Example – Media literacy** – When I watch TV with the kids I want them to be aware of the way marketing and advertising encourages people to overspend and make material things a big deal. So when I hear a commercial for TVs say “change your TV, change your life” I question that out loud. Or when toys are being peddled during the commercial break of *Veggie Tales* on NBC I want

them to be aware of how media seeks to influence. I also show them in stores how companies brand almost everything to get you to buy stuff. I'll never forget when my oldest daughter counted every piece of *Hanna Montana* merchandise we saw in Wal-Mart one day. Let's just say it got ridiculous really quick.

- **Example – History** – Finally, we want our kids in touch with church history. There is a great series of animated DVDs being put out by Vision Video and Voice of the Martyrs called *Torchlighters*. These feature men and women who lived courageously for Christ in our world. Our kids love these and it gives them a perspective on gospel mission that is beyond their immediate horizons.

These resources and others are listed in Appendix 4.

Final Thoughts

God has graciously given us the joy and the responsibility of raising our kids in the gospel and teaching them to understand the ways of God. There are many things that will keep us from having gospel centered homes. Busyness, sloth, intimidation and fear all can rob us of the joy of simply teaching our kids about the great, loving and saving God Jesus Christ. We pray that this resource and its appendices might be of encouragement to begin reading Scripture, praying, singing and enjoying God together as a family.

We cannot encourage you enough to begin early with your kids as it is much easier to begin when they are little ones. Yet no matter where you are in the journey with Jesus you can start in small ways today. Maybe you are a new believer and you simply following Christ will be a huge change for your family. Perhaps you are a Dad who has been asleep at the spiritual wheel of the family and simply getting to church with your family is the first step.

Wherever you are in the process we invite you to live for God in every sphere of life and begin to teach your kids about Jesus and his love for his people and his world. The journey of your family takes place in a larger family called the church. We are here for each other to bear burdens, give encouragement and help one another grow. Our families are here with you and for you.

Soli Deo Gloria (All glory be to God),

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Reid S. Monaghan', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Reid S. Monaghan
Lead Pastor, Jacob's Well

Appendix 1 – Rhythm of the Day

Deuteronomy 6:7 You shall teach them 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*

When we Rise

To be honest, it is really easy to sleep as long as we possibly can, roll out of bed and let the day come to us, rather than us meeting the new day. One thing is sure – each day is given by God and has new mercies and new assignments to tackle. The morning is a great time to engage with Jesus as a family as we rise to live another day with him. Our family prays together most mornings (see *morning prayer* in the prayer section) and it shapes our attitudes and perspectives of the day ahead. Additionally, making the time for the family to eat breakfast is a great blessing to start the day. Fathers, get up a little early to exercise and read Scripture, then share with the kids what you learned that morning at breakfast or on the drive to school. The day and your family will benefit from having God's word and prayer begin the day.

Some Key Practices

- Morning Prayer
- Breakfast Together

Around the Dinner Table

As life has progressed in our culture, families spend less and less time together around the dinner table. With sports, clubs, the arts, church activities, work, longer commutes dominating our time it becomes increasingly difficult for families to share a meal together. We eat on the go, connect on the go and many times pass one another like ships in the night. Men, we need to work to make it possible for the family to connect with one another around the dinner table. We are not being naïve of the realities of contemporary life; we simply believe that we must work to make this happen. When the family is together we can debrief the day, share devotion from Scripture, pray as a family and fight like cats and dogs. It will likely be nearly impossible to have dinner together 7 days a week, but we must seek to be together *regularly* to share a meal and fellowship.

Some Key Practices

- Scripture – See Big story, Covenants, Meals
- Family Prayers
- Debrief the Day

At Bed Time

One of the most precious (and hectic, frustrating, difficult) times with our children is bed time. Over the years we have developed routines that we all cherish and enjoy. To be honest, we are exhausted most nights and are tempted to just throw kids under covers and retreat to some personal time. Yet time and time again, God blesses our moments with the kids. If you are a parent you know the nightly drill which can consist of homework, baths and getting to bed. With young children, the time between bath and bed is a prime real estate for spiritual formation. Our family values reading, so we read lots of books. Our

family values theological discussion so we do that some nights. Our family values imagination so we tell stories to the kids. Our family values Scripture so we read the Bible with the kids.

Some Key Practices

- Reading and Thinking
- Theology/Questions
- Stories in the Dark
- Reading Scripture
- Covenant Audio CDs/MP3s
- Audio Books

Appendix 2 – Songs for the Home

Come Ye Sinners

Come, ye sinners, poor and needy,
Weak and wounded, sick and sore;
Jesus ready stands to save you,
Full of pity, love and power.

Refrain

*I will arise and go to Jesus,
He will embrace me in His arms;
In the arms of my dear Savior,
O there are ten thousand charms.*

Come, ye thirsty, come, and welcome,
God's free bounty glorify;
True belief and true repentance,
Every grace that brings you nigh.

Refrain

Come, ye weary, heavy laden,
Lost and ruined by the fall;
If you tarry till you're better,
You will never come at all.

Refrain

Be Thou My Vision

Be Thou my Vision, O Lord of my heart,
Naught be all else to me, save that Thou art
Thou my best thought, by day or by night,
Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light.

Be Thou my Wisdom, and Thou my true Word,
I ever with Thee and Thou with me, Lord
Thou my great Father, I Thy true son,
Thou in me dwelling, and I with Thee one.

Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise,
Thou mine inheritance, now and always,
Thou and Thou only, first in my heart,
High King of heaven, my Treasure Thou art.

High King of heaven, my victory won,
May I reach heaven's joys, O bright heavn's Sun!
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
Still be my Vision, O Ruler of all.

Blessed Be Your Name

Blessed be Your name in the land that is plentiful
Where Your streams of abundance flow
Blessed be Your name
And blessed be Your name when I'm found in the desert place
Though I walk through the wilderness
Blessed be Your name
Every blessing You pour out I'll turn back to praise
And when the darkness closes in, Lord
Still I will say

Chorus:

Blessed be the name of the Lord
Blessed be Your name
Blessed be the name of the Lord
Blessed be Your glorious name

Blessed be Your name when the sun's shining down on me
When the world's "all as it should be"
Blessed be Your name
And blessed be Your name on the road marked with suffering
Though there's pain in the offering
Blessed be Your name
Every blessing You pour out I'll turn back to praise
And when the darkness closes in, Lord
Still I will say

Bridge:

You give and take away
You give and take away
My heart will choose to say
Lord, blessed be Your name

How Deep the Father's Love for Us

How deep the Father's love for us
How vast beyond all measure
That He should give His only Son
To make a wretch His treasure
How great the pain of searing loss
The Father turns His face away
As wounds which mar the Chosen One
Bring many sons to glory

Behold the man upon a cross
My sin upon His shoulders
Ashamed, I hear my mocking voice
Call out among the scoffers
It was my sin that held Him there
Until it was accomplished
His dying breath has brought me life
I know that it is finished

I will not boast in anything
No gifts, no power, no wisdom
But I will boast in Jesus Christ
His death and resurrection
Why should I gain from His reward?
I cannot give an answer
But this I know with all my heart
His wounds have paid my ransom

In Christ Alone

In Christ alone my hope is found
He is my light my strength my song
This Cornerstone this solid Ground
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm
What heights of love what depths of peace
When fears are stilled when strivings cease
My Comforter my All in All
Here in the love of Christ I stand

In Christ alone - who took on flesh
Fullness of God in helpless babe
This gift of love and righteousness
Scorned by the ones He came to save
Till on that cross as Jesus died
The wrath of God was satisfied -
For every sin on Him was laid
Here in the death of Christ I live

There in the ground His body lay
Light of the world by darkness slain
Then bursting forth in glorious Day
Up from the grave He rose again
And as He stands in victory
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me
For I am His and He is mine -
Bought with the precious blood of Christ

No guilt in life no fear in death
This is the power of Christ in me
From life's first cry to final breath
Jesus commands my destiny
No power of hell no scheme of man
Can ever pluck me from His hand
Till He returns or calls me home
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand

O Worship the King

O worship the King, all glorious above,
And gratefully sing His wonderful love,
Our Shield and Defender, the Ancient of Days,
Pavilioned in splendor, and girded with praise.

O tell of His might, O sing of His grace,
Whose robe is the light, whose canopy space!
His chariots of wrath the deep thunderclouds form,
And dark is His path on the wings of the storm.

Thy bountiful care what tongue can recite?
It breathes in the air, it shines in the light,
It streams from the hills, it descends to the plain,
And sweetly distills in the dew and the rain.

Frail children of dust, and feeble as frail,
In Thee do we trust, nor find Thee to fail,
Thy mercies how tender, how firm to the end,
Our Maker, Defender, Redeemer and Friend.

The Wonderful Cross

When I survey the wondrous cross,
On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.

See, from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down,
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Chorus:

O the wonderful cross, O the wonderful cross
Bids me come and die and find that I may truly live
O the wonderful cross, O the wonderful cross
All who gather here by grace draw near and bless Your name

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small,
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

Chorus:

Before the Throne

Before the throne of God above
I have a strong and perfect plea.
A great high Priest whose Name is Love
Who ever lives and pleads for me.
My name is graven on His hands,
My name is written on His heart.
I know that while in Heaven He stands
No tongue can bid me thence depart.

When Satan tempts me to despair
And tells me of the guilt within,
Upward I look and see Him there
Who made an end of all my sin.
Because the sinless Savior died
My sinful soul is counted free.
For God the just is satisfied
To look on Him and pardon me.

Behold Him there the risen Lamb,
My perfect spotless righteousness,
The great unchangeable I AM,
The King of glory and of grace,
One in Himself I cannot die.
My soul is purchased by His blood,
My life is hid with Christ on high,
With Christ my Savior and my God!

Creeds, Biblical Hymns and Key Passages

Phos Hilaron

Hail gladdening Light
Of His pure glory poured
Who is the immortal Father,
Heavenly, Blessed
Holiest Of Holies
Jesus Christ our Lord

We stand together to greet this new day
The light of morning 'round us shine
We hymn the Father, Son and Holy Spirit divine
Worthiest art Thou,
At all times to be sung
With undefiled tongue
Son of our God, giver of life alone
Therefore, in all the world
Thy glories Lord Thine own.

The Apostle's Creed

I believe in God the Father Almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord,
Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary;
Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and was buried;
The third day He rose from the dead; He ascended into heaven;
And sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty;
From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit; the holy Church; the communion of saints;
the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting.
Amen.

The Nicene Creed

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one being with the Father.
Through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven:
by the power of the Holy Spirit
he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,
and was made man.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father [and the Son].
With the Father and the Son
he is worshipped and glorified.
He has spoken through the Prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. AMEN.

The Lord's Prayer – Matthew 6:9-13

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen*

*Note – traditional ending for the Lord's Prayer

The Greatest Commandments - Matthew 22:37-40

And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."

The Ten Commandments – Exodus 20

Love God

- I. "You shall have no other gods before me."
- II. "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth."
- III. "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain."
- IV. "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy."

Love you Neighbor

- V. "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you."
- VI. "You shall not murder."
- VII. "You shall not commit adultery."
- VIII. "You shall not steal."
- IX. "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor."
- X. "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's."

The Gospel – 1 Corinthians 15:1 -11

¹Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, ²and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. ³For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁵and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. ⁶Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. ⁸Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. ⁹For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. ¹¹Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

Jesus – Philippians 2:1-11

¹So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, ²complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Appendix 3 – A Catechism for Kids – some simple kid’s catechism questions with some ideas for interacting with young kids...

Q./A. 1 – 3

Who made you? God

What else did God make? God made all things.

Why did God make you and all things? For His own glory

Q./A. 4-5

How can you glorify God? By loving Him and doing what He commands

Why are you to glorify God? Because He made me and takes care of me

Q./A. 6

Is there more than one true God? No, there is only one true God

Q./A. 7-8

In how many Persons does this one God exist? In three Persons

Name the Persons. The Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit

Q./A. 9

What is God? God is a Spirit and does not have a body like people.

Q./A. 10 - 11

Where is God? God is everywhere.

Can you see God? No. I cannot see God, but He always sees me,

Q./A. 12 – 13

Does God know all things? Yes. Nothing can be hidden from God.

Can God do all things? Yes. God can do all His holy will.

Q./A. 14 – 15

Where do you learn how to love and obey God? In the Bible alone

Who wrote the Bible? Chosen men who were inspired by the Holy Spirit

Q./A. 16 – 18

Who were our first parents? Adam and Eve

How did God create man? God created man, male and female, after His own image.

Of what were our first parents made? God made Adam’s body out of the ground and Eve’s body out of a rib from Adam.

Q./A. 19 – 21

What else did God give Adam and Eve besides bodies? He gave them souls that will last forever.

Do you have a soul as well as a body? Yes, and my soul will last forever

How do you know your soul will last forever? Because the Bible tells me so

Q./A. 22

In what condition did God make Adam and Eve? He made them holy and happy.

Q./A. 23 – 24

What covenant did God make with Adam? The covenant of life

What is a covenant? A relationship that God establishes with us and guarantees by His Word.

Q./A. 25 – 28

In the covenant of life, what did God require Adam to do? To obey God's commands

What did God promise in the covenant of life? To reward Adam with life if he obeyed God

What did God threaten in the covenant of life? To punish Adam with death if he disobeyed God

Did Adam keep the covenant of life? No, he sinned against God.

Appendix 4 – Using Children’s Resources

Kids Bibles

- *The Jesus Storybook Bible* by Sally Lloyd Jones from Zondervan – excellent writing and illustrations which present a Christ centered view of all of Scripture.
- *ESV Children’s Bible* from Crossway Books – the included front and back matter is also very good in introducing theology with kids.

Theology Resources

- Desiring God for Kids – several great resources for leading and blessing children. The *ABCs of God, A Fathers Guide for Blessing His Children* are two helpful tools
- Book Series - *Big Thoughts for Little Thinkers* – covering several important biblical and theological subjects from the Gospel, the Mission, the Trinity and the Scripture. Good for pre and early readers.
- *Big Truths for Young Hearts* by Bruce Ware – Great book for teaching theological truths to your kids. Can be used with anyone reading age and above.

Books

- *Biographies* – Read together as a family
- *A Pilgrim’s Progress* by John Bunyan (unabridged for older kids)
- *A Dangerous Journey* (Abridged version of Pilgrim’s Progress Illustrated for younger kids)
- *The Tales of Beatrix Potter* (younger kids)
- *Favorite Thornton Burgess Animal Stories Boxed Sets* by Thornton W. Burgess (younger kids)
- *Sammy and His Shepherd* by Susan Hunt
- *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C.S. Lewis (younger and older kids)
- *Lord of the Rings* by JRR Tolkien (older kids)
- Logic Workbooks – *Mind Benders* from <http://www.criticalthinking.com/> - excellent resources to do with your kids to build critical thinking skills

Music

- Seeds of Praise – Family Worship with well produced songs with direct lyrics from Scripture
- Catechism CD – We have some CDs that reinforce and help teach a basic kids Catechism

More Mature Catechisms for Older Kids

- Heidelberg Catechism - <http://www.reformed.org/documents/heidelberg.html>
- A Baptist Catechism - <http://www.desiringgod.org/AboutUs/OurDistinctives/ABaptistCatechism/>

Helpful Media

- *Torchlighters* –wonderful animated vignettes on people from church history - <http://chitorch.gospelcom.net/index.php/torchlighters/> - extras on the DVDs have good historical sketches
- *Planet Earth* – <http://www.bbc.co.uk/nature/animals/planetearth/> (a secular production from the BBC – has a low evolutionary undertone which is not obnoxious – our family discussed Psalm 19, Gen 1:1, Psalm 24:1,2 before watching these to center things in the doctrine of creation)
- *What’s In the Bible* - <http://whatsinthebible.com/>