Parent/Child Dedication // hwcFamily

"The idea of infant dedication flows from the Hebrew context of Scripture. Although most of us don't practice infant dedication in exactly the same way as our Hebrew counterparts, the intent is similar. In an act of worship we are giving back this child that has so graciously been entrusted to us and we are committing to lead her in the 'discipline and instruction of the Lord.' That is no small act or commitment. I believe this beautiful moment carries with it an act of covenantal promise much like a wedding. In an act of celebration and commitment we vow before our spiritual family and friends to steward the life of our child in a godly way. Our church in turn agrees to partner with us as we help our children grow into adults who love God and love people the way Jesus does."

- Brian Haynes, The Legacy Path, page 61

Introduction

"When you see how much time you have left, you tend to do more with the time you have now." - Reggie Joiner

There are typically 936 weeks you have with your child from birth to high school graduation. Now there's flexibility with that number because of when your child was born and when they graduate or go off to college. But 936 is the average.

New Baby

936 weeks. 6552 days. 157,248 hours. 9,434,880 minutes. 566,092,800 seconds.

New Kindergarten Student

663 weeks. 4641 days. 111,384 hours. 6,683,040 minutes. 400,982,400 seconds.

New 6th Grade Student

351 weeks. 2457 days. 58,968 hours. 3,538,080 minutes. 212,284,800 seconds.

New 9th Grade Student

195 weeks.1365 days. 32,760 hours. 1,965,600 minutes. 117,936,000 seconds.

12th Grade Student

39 weeks. 273 days. 6552 hours. 393,120 minutes. 23,587,200 seconds.

"When you see how much time you have left, you tend to do more with the time you have now." - Reggie Joiner

In light of seeing how much time you have left, what values and character traits do you want to see in the lives of your children as they mature and grow? What are your dreams and hopes for your children? Take a moment and write down some thoughts. Values. Character traits. Dreams and hopes.

Let's hear some of your thoughts...

Leaving a Legacy

There is a famous story about a leader who was appointed to govern an entire race of people who had been severely oppressed. The people had suffered hundreds of years of persecution; their identity as a race had been threatened, their will crushed, and their faith assaulted. In a legendary rescue attempt, this leader became the strategic influence that saved the entire nation from probable genocide. He helped them rediscover their distinctiveness as a people and rebuild their faith. Their transition to healing and recovery took them through several decades, hundreds of miles, and countless challenges. The entire race endured an agonizing process in preparation for redeeming its heritage.

After years of waiting, the day approached when the people would reclaim their homeland and settle their families in their native country. Suddenly, rumors spread throughout the nation that their leader was stepping down. The people were aghast, thinking he had come too far not to complete the journey with them. He had become the patriarch of their race, a hero to their children. He had rescued and revived their destiny as a people. This was their pivotal moment. They were on the brink of their most promising days.

They gathered tentatively to listen to his farewell speech. He began by recounting their journey and reminding them of the covenants they had made with their God. They had heard all this before, and for a while it seemed as if he was simply reviewing what they already knew. Then he subtly began to shift his message. In his voice and words, they could hear concern about their future they had not anticipated. They had been ecstatic about finally arriving at their promised destination, yet he seemed anxious about how their newfound blessings might affect their faith. More specifically, he seemed intent on addressing how they would transfer their faith to their children and the generations to come. Too much was at stake to let this fall by the wayside. It had taken a long time to get to this point, and he wanted to ensure they didn't make the same mistakes many of their parents had made.

Then he said something profoundly different from anything he had ever said before, challenging the hearts of every family:

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

"These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts.

"Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

"When the Lord your God brings you into the land he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you--a land with large, flourishing cities you did not build, houses filled with all kinds of good things you did not provide, wells you did not dig, and vineyards and olive groves you did not plant--then when you eat and are satisfied, be careful that you do not forget the Lord, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery"

(Deuteronomy 6:4-12 NIV).

Deuteronomy documents the message Moses gave to the Israelites before he died, just before they took

possession of Canaan. He is transitioning his leadership to Joshua, giving his farewell address regarding the critical issues facing Israel's future. As a seasoned, 120-year-old leader, Moses warns the Hebrew people against the danger of becoming spoiled by the wealth of Canaan. He admonishes them to "be careful" not to forget God, because he knows how easy it will be for them to get distracted by prosperity and riches. He gives them a plan to guard their heritage and transfer their faith to the next generation. The reasons this text is so important is that it's his final challenge. As their leader, he leverages the historical context of the Hebrew people and an understanding of their potential future into a carefully crafted exhortation. His words are deliberate and strategic for anyone interested in leaving a legacy.

In this pivotal moment in Israel's history, Moses is speaking to the entire nation and calling everyone to be responsible for how the next generation is raised. His comments have incredible insights for all parents about their role to influence their children's relationships with God.

"Leaving a Legacy" is borrowed from Think Orange by Reggie Joiner, pages 52-53

3 Important Things to Understand about Parent/Child Dedication

These 3 things work in tandem with one another:

1. Personal relationship with Christ (Deut 6:5-6)
2. Intentional discipleship with your family (Deut 6:5-9)
3. Communal responsibility with your church (Deut 6:4)

1) Personal Relationship with Christ // Deut 6:5-6

"The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts" (Deuteronomy 6:5-6 NIV).

If you don't have a personal relationship with Christ, how can you expect your child to? How can you expect your child to become a Christian and grow in the grace and knowledge of God through Jesus Christ, if you are not growing in the grace and knowledge of God through Jesus Christ? Do you have a relationship with Christ? Are you living like Jesus in front of your family? Are you modeling a kind of discipleship you want them to emulate?

If you don't have anything spiritual to offer... then... you don't have anything spiritual to offer.

The best thing you and your spouse can do spiritually for your children is to be growing in the grace and knowledge of God through Jesus Christ.

Practical Steps for Developing a Personal Relationship with Christ

- Repent and believe the Gospel (this is when you stop believing in your own righteousness and start believing in the righteousness of God through Jesus Christ, crucified and rose again!)
- Read your Bible and pray (this is not only vital for you, but your kids need to see you practicing these patterns!)
- Go to church (this is where you are around lots of other people who need Jesus, just like you!)
- Get involved in a small group of men or women (you need help, just like everyone else!)
- Share struggles and weakness with your family (you're not superman, or superwoman!)

- Apologize and ask for forgiveness when you are wrong (this is humbling, but it is not only good for your soul, it models to your family that you answer to God, not themselves!)
- Model a life lived in submission to Jesus Christ.

How difficult is it to maintain an active, growing relationship with Christ with a family? Why or why not?

2) Intentional Discipleship with your Family // Deut 6:5-9

"The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates" (Deuteronomy 6:5-9 NIV).

3 Things Have to Happen in Order to Have Successful, Incarnational Disciples as Children

1. Proximity
2. Time
3. Intentionality

Proximity

I don't know if you know this or not, but families exist in close quarters with each other, usually in the same house! Proximity in a family context is built into the structure.

Time

Families have a lot of time together, much more than anything else. Even though their hours at school are significant, the amount of time a student is potentially with their family is bigger. But not every family uses the time wisely or effectively.

How are you using the time you potentially have with your children?

- Are you on the computer, phone, Facebook, Pinterest, more than you have face time with your kids?
- Do you watch sports at the expense of time with your children?
- What about outdoor activities like hunting, fishing, and recreation? Is it isolated from your children?

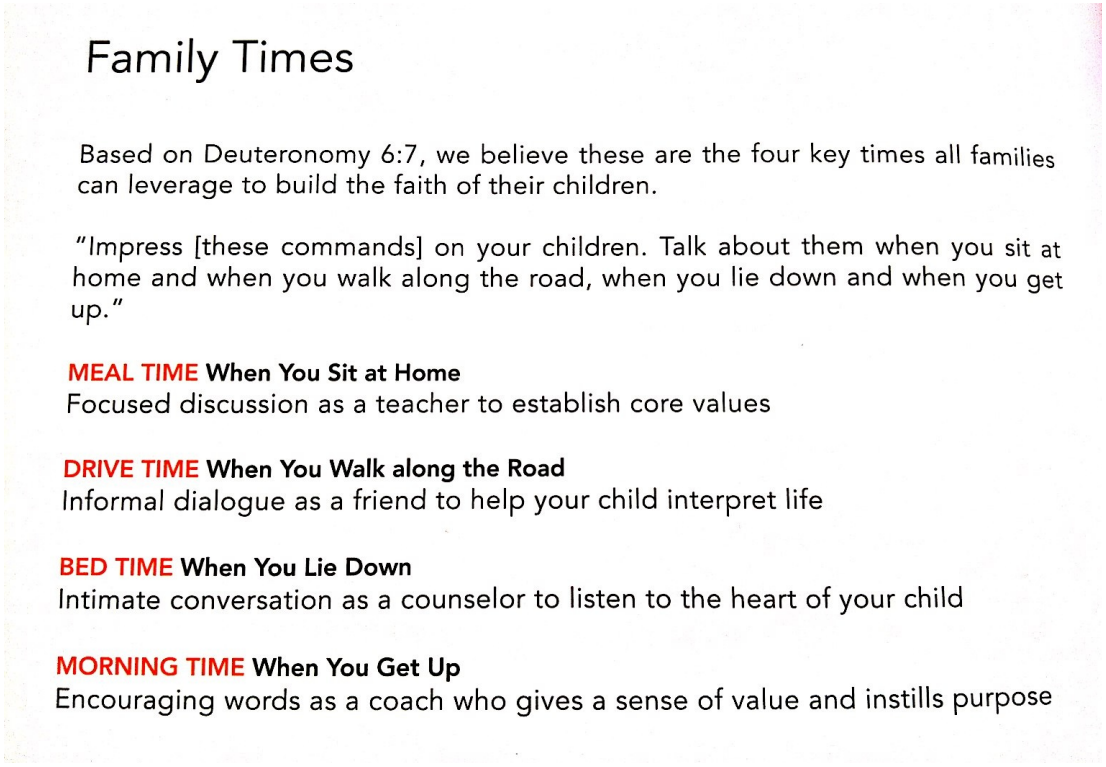
There are some things we should stop doing and some things we should start doing with our children.

Intentionality

This is the tricky one. We are in close quarters with one another. We have the potential to spend a lot of time together, but is the proximity and time intentional? Do you invest in your child intentionally?

- Do you read to them?
- Do you play with them?
- Do you know their favorite color, favorite ice cream flavor, and favorite activity at school?
- When was the last time you prayed with them, read the Bible alongside of them, asked them what they think about God?

Are we intentional with the time and proximity we have with our children?



Family Times

Based on Deuteronomy 6:7, we believe these are the four key times all families can leverage to build the faith of their children.

"Impress [these commands] on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up."

MEAL TIME When You Sit at Home
Focused discussion as a teacher to establish core values

DRIVE TIME When You Walk along the Road
Informal dialogue as a friend to help your child interpret life

BED TIME When You Lie Down
Intimate conversation as a counselor to listen to the heart of your child

MORNING TIME When You Get Up
Encouraging words as a coach who gives a sense of value and instills purpose

Ways to be intentional with the time and proximity

- **When you sit at home.** Turn off the TV, the computer, tablet, and smartphone (not all the time, but most of the time). Play board games. Play in the backyard. Go for a walk or maybe a drive (see next point). Go to a park. Play tag. Wrestle. The temperature and the playfulness of a home is determined by the intentionality of the parents.

  What else can we do "when we sit at home"?

- **When you walk along the road.** Some of us spend a lot of time in the car, some of us spend a little. No matter how much, this is a fantastic environment to ask questions and talk (about anything... God, school, friendships, choices, favorites, dreams, ideas, stories, etc). You can pray in the car. You can listen to music together in the car.

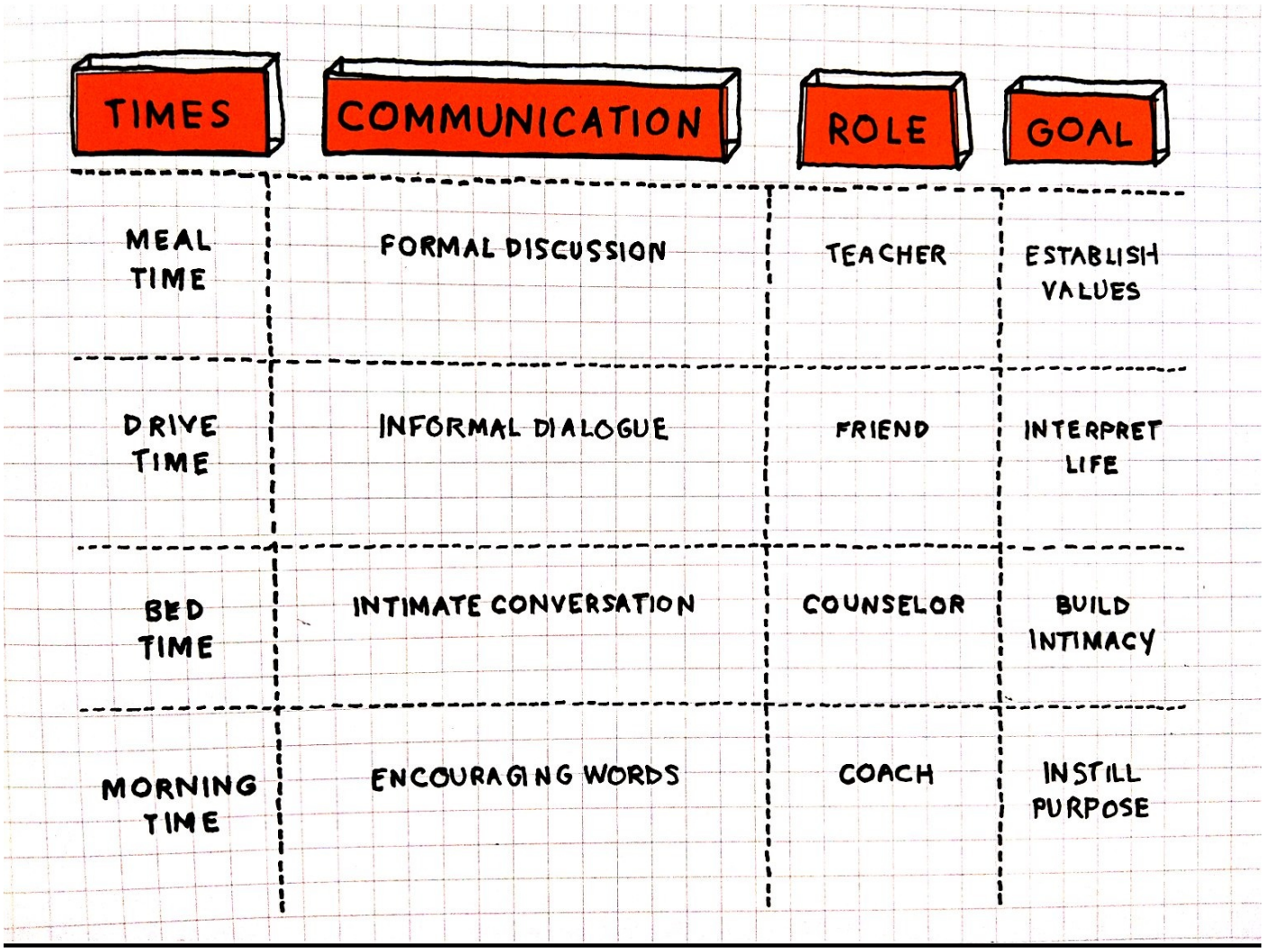
  What else can we do "when we walk along the road"?

- **When you lie down.** Bedtime is special. It's the wind-down of the day. Here is where you can recap the day's events, pray and read the Bible. Words of encouragement and affirmation are vital at this time.

  What else can we do "when we lie down"?

- **When you get up.** Getting up in the morning provides a blank page for your family to start fresh relationally. Just a few encouraging words carefully spoken or written can give your children a sense of value and instill purpose. What can I say or do to give them fuel for dealing with whatever they have to face today?

  What else can we do "when we get up"?



These can be called family spiritual rhythms or practices. What spiritual rhythms are you going to start in your family right now?

3) Communal Responsibility with Your Church // Deut 6:4

"Hear, O Israel. The Lord our God, the Lord is one" (Deuteronomy 6:4 NIV).

Sticky Social Web

"Parents of younger children will often buy into the myth that they are the only adult influence their children need. But parents of teenagers often realize that their children are hungry for approval and advice from someone who is not their parent. So there are really only a couple of options: Kids will either seek out another adult's validation on their own, or the parent can be a part of the process and pursue strategic relationships for them."

- Reggie Joiner, Think Orange, page 70

Dr. Kara Powell calls this your Sticky Faith Team, or a sticky social web--a cluster of intentional, intergenerational relationships. All of our kids need other adults to affirm and guide them, to be encouraged and involved (i.e. Sunday school teacher, small group leader, coach, teacher at school, family friend, etc.).

Your child needs 5 intentional, intergenerational relationships, and these won't happen by accident. You as a parent have to be intentional.

"How do I go about a 5 to 1 sticky social web for my kids?"

Ask your kids to name 5 adults they respect and want to be like. Invite those adults one at a time over for dinner sometime to get them more involved in your child's life. Setup intentional times when your kid can interact with these other adults they look up to and respect. You don't have to keep this 5 to 1 goal a secret to your kid. Be open with your child or teen about it as well as the adults you are trying to get your adolescent around more often. Or you can go to other adults who you as a parent know you want to influence your kids and talk with them about crafting and engaging in a more intentional sticky social web. You want to point your kids to adults who care about your kids and want to point your kid to the God who made them.

Can you think of some adults that you respect and what your children to be around? Write them down.

Church Programs

Our church has programming for children of all ages. Our strategy is to connect as a secondary series of adults in the spirit of a community with your children. We have made this subtle shift over the last couple of years. We really believe in coming alongside of you as parents saying similar things you say to your children, we are just another voice parroting the same things. It's not been an easy shift. Programming for small groups is messy and often difficult. It's easier to not do that. But it's just not what the church is designed for: easy things. The church is made up of families who collectively help each other out.

There might be something the my daughter's teacher or small group leader says that finally connects with her heart in a way that her Mom and I cannot. We need to depend on each other. We need to depend on the church.

And the church programs is only as good as the amount and quality of the leaders present.

Conclusion

Parent / Child Dedication is more than a formal ceremony that happens in church. It's the beginning of (1) developing a personal relationship with Christ, (2) doing intentional discipleship with your family, and (3) participating in a church community.

Dedication Ceremony Details

1. We need a digital picture of your child. You can send those to office@haywardwesleyan.org
2. We also need a Bible verse for your child. Comb through the Psalms, Epistles, or anywhere else for that matter and pick a verse that you think will be meaningful for your child as he or she grows up. You can email that verse to office@haywardwesleyan.org
3. Let us know what service you plan to attend: 8:20a, 9:40a or 11:00a.
4. Feel free to have sponsers or god-parents come up front with you. This is right along with intentionally picking other adults to have influence in their lives.
5. Taking pictures of the ceremony is perfectly fine. You might want to get someone to take pics for you!