

Catholic Parenting Newsletter

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**Bits and Pieces
from
Here and There**

“Every family needs a prayer champion. What would happen if your family’s champion was you.” *Allen Hunt*

“When our children observe our behavior, we are teaching by merely being present.”
Dolores Curran

“We are here to teach our children to see the world differently—to discover a loving God who made us all to live big, beautiful, meaningful lives.”
Matthew Wagner

“Jesus loves each of us as if there were only one of us. And he wants to be closer to us than any friend on earth could ever be.”
Danielle Bean

“Hope is the virtue of a heart that does not ... remain locked in the past, but looks toward the future.” *Pope Francis*

**National Catholic
Schools Week
begins on
January 27.**

Helping Our Families Find “Hope” in the New Year

Lets focus on the virtue of hope after the holidays. When we find hope in our lives, we can teach our families that we can trust God’s grace and the gift of salvation each and every day. Begin by using the four-part **H.O.P.E.** plan for the year.

Happiness: Jesus taught us the way to be truly happy is to live the beatitudes. These eight happiness, or blessing, statements can be found in *Matthew 5:3-12* and help us focus on having the right attitude. As a family, learn one beatitude each week and choose one way to live out that beatitude this year.

Openness: Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to help us have the strength to follow him. As a family, talk about the Holy Spirit and the ways he is guiding you, and be open to the Holy Spirit in a special way. Once a week, have each family member share all the different ways they have seen the Holy Spirit at work in nature, at church, at

school or work, and in other people.

Prayerfulness: Jesus showed us how to pray, giving us the Lord’s Prayer, but he also encouraged people to ask God for what they may need as a way to build up trust and reliance on God. Set aside time as a family at least once a week to share needs you have noticed in family, friends, neighbors or the world at large. Make a list of these petitions and pray for God to help the people involved.

Enthusiasm: Jesus encouraged us to live fully as children of God. The word enthusiasm comes from a Greek word meaning to live in God or to be inspired by God. As a family, agree that this year you will greet new ideas and people with enthusiasm—with a willingness to participate and work together. Also be hopeful and trust that God will bring about good when difficulties arise.

Adapted from Family Faith on the Go

Recommended Reading: *Amazing Grace for Fathers: 75 Stories of Faith, Hope, Inspiration, and Humor* by Jeff Cavins

Amazing Grace for Fathers celebrates the power of fatherhood — and that power is love. The love of our fathers on earth reflects the infinite love of God, our heavenly Father, from which all fatherly guidance, discipline, and protection flows. The powerful stories in this book show just how deep a father’s love is for his children, particularly when he lives in and is strengthened by God’s grace. Here, you will find support and inspiration for your own fatherhood.



Five Basic Rules of Listening

Communication is the maker or breaker of all relationships. “You just don’t understand!” is a comment many parents hear. Do not underestimate the importance of communication. Most problems and conflicts can be avoided or solved when two people take the time to share thoughts and feelings.

It is never too early to begin forming good communication habits. It takes a lot of time, but the effort will be worth every hour. How do you establish positive communication? You learn new ways to listen and talk with your child.

Rule # 1—Listen with your whole body. When listening to your child remember the cliché, action speaks louder than words. Turn off the television, keep good eye contact, put down the phone and give your child your undivided attention.

Rule #2—Ask questions. Asking questions will show your child you’re interested in what she has to say. It will also extend a conversation and open up more areas to talk about.

Rule #3—Do not interrupt. Plain and simple, do not interrupt. Let your child speak his mind.

Rule #4—Don’t have all the answers. While children may come to you for answers, it is better to ask questions and encourage the child to find their own answers when possible.

Rule #5—Repeat, repeat, repeat. Repeat what your child says. This will assure your child that you are listening and you will know you’re understanding your child’s message.

These five basic rules of listening will help you get your communication lines open. Keep in mind, it will take time. If you have not had a lot of positive communication with your child, and your child suddenly finds you are all ears, your child may wonder what’s up. Implement the five rules slowly over time. Start with one and then add the others.

(Excerpted from “The Parent Resource”)

Time Together Builds Strong Families

The beginning of a new year is a great time to implement new traditions. Here are a few tips for creating family togetherness in the new year:



Designate one night per month, mark it on the calendar, as “Family Night at the Movies.” Rent a movie, pop the popcorn and enjoy the show. Don’t begin until everyone is available to watch the movie.

Choose one special event for the upcoming season —— a camping trip, a night at the theater, a day at the zoo, a picnic in the park. Let each family member take part in planning and participating in the event.

Plan a special day with each child one-on-one. Individual time alone with each other helps build relationships. Work with grandparents or other adults in your child’s life who might want to make plans for a special day also.

REMEMBER, put these events on the calendar for everyone to see.

SIBLING REVELRY by Dr. Gregory Popcak

“He hit me!” “She started it!” “Give that BACK!” “Stop TOUCHING me!”

Brothers and sisters often struggle to negotiate the challenges of living under the same roof, but you might be pleased to know that sibling rivalry isn't a necessary part of family life. Want to transform sibling rivalry into sibling revelry? Here are a few tips you can use to make this miracle happen.



BUILD YOUR TEAM—The more a family feels like an actual team that works together and takes care of one another, the more times siblings spend enjoying each other instead of fighting. Build team spirit by creating ample family rituals that give you and your kids plenty of time to work, play, talk, and pray together every week. If you want to stop sibling rivalry in its tracks, cut back on the overabundance of extracurricular activities and focus your energy on carving out time for an actual family life.

INSIST ON RESPECT—Smart parents know respect is not just something kids owe parents. It is something brothers and sisters owe each other. Teach your children a healthy emotional vocabulary. When your children express themselves to their siblings in inappropriate ways, make them restate themselves respectfully. Instead of calling names, teach the angry child to say, “You’re hurting my feelings, please stop.” Instead of hitting and taking a toy, teach the frustrated child to say, “You need to give me a turn.” And teach your kids the difference between seeking your help to handle a tough situation and tattling to get someone in trouble.

GET ONE-ON-ONE TIME—Finally, look for opportunities to get one-on-one time with each child and make a point of actually talking with them and listening to them when you get the time. You don’t have to spend a ton of money to make this time meaningful. Even bringing one kid with you to the grocery store can be a treat if you actually give that child your undivided attention while you’re out. Sure, if you have the time and can afford a special treat, that’s great, but the best treat is your time. Siblings fight less when they feel that there’s enough of you to go around.

Taking the time to adopt these three simple habits can enable your children to revel in their relationships with one another and turn your family into the school of love the Church says it is meant to be. Adapted from *Take Out*

“I Love You Unconditionally”



Valentine’s Day is one of those high-pressure holidays. We try to make it memorable. We try to make it special. And that can be challenging. *Keep it simple!* Go around the dinner table and tell one another three things that you genuinely love about each member of the family. Be specific. Be sincere.

But don’t stop there.

After everyone has finished, go around the table one more time. Make eye contact. Remind one another that—with or without those attributes just shared—we are all loved with no strings attached. Our love for one another as a family is unconditional. We love each other just because. Just like God loves all of us. It will be a memorable Valentine’s Day. As for special? Who said it’s something only to be done on February 14?

Adapted from *Take Out (Family Faith on the Go)*

**Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas
Marriage & Family Life Office**

Catholic Parent Newsletter

12615 Parallel Parkway
Kansas City, Kansas 66109

Phone: 913-721-1570 ext. 149

Fax: 913-721-1577

Email: famlife@archkck.org

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and/or contact person
information here!

A Prayer for Our Family

(a prayer for hope & love)

Lord God,

I give you all the members of our family, especially the children. You know them all so well and love them all. I ask that you would cover us with your gift of hope.

Hope that draws us together to work out our differences.

Hope that helps us to celebrate together and care for one another.

Hope that watches over us wherever we go.

Hope that overcomes adversity and gathers strength to overcome.

Hope that guides us and gives us vision for our future together.

Hope filled with love.

Hope that fuels faith.

Hope that breathes peace.

May our family live in you
Underneath your promises.

Amen.