

One Story

How Your Family Rhythm Reflects the Greatest Message



By Steve Bourque, ©2025



Note to Readers

This booklet was adapted from a series of YouTube scripts created for my Family Rhythm channel. You can find the video versions of this booklet on the [channel playlist](#) about Right Relationship.

Each chapter began as a script designed to encourage parents in short, practical videos. Before that, Family Rhythm has been in a lifetime of development as I seek to be a blessing to kids, an encouragement to parents and a support to the Church.

What you'll find here is a written companion, expanded and formatted to help you reflect more deeply, engage as a couple, family or group, and build lasting habits that point your children to Jesus. Consider it part devotional, part theological reflection, part instruction guide, part workbook, part journal. It is PACKED with insights and tools. Use it any way that benefits you.

While the tone remains conversational, the content is structured to support personal reflection, small group discussion, or family devotional use.

Bottom line: if this booklet can point your family to a closer relationship and adventure with Jesus in the day-to-day grind, I've done my job!

— Steve

Dedication

To my family—my wife, my kids, all we've fostered, extended family and my church family.

To the families who are faithfully showing up—

—in the carpool lines, at the dinner tables, during bedtime chaos,
and in the quiet, unseen moments that shape generations.

May this booklet remind you that your family's story is part of a much greater one.

May your rhythms point your children to Jesus, and may your home echo the beauty of God's redemptive narrative.

With gratitude for your courage, perseverance, and faith,

— Steve



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Introduction

Why Family Rhythm Matters

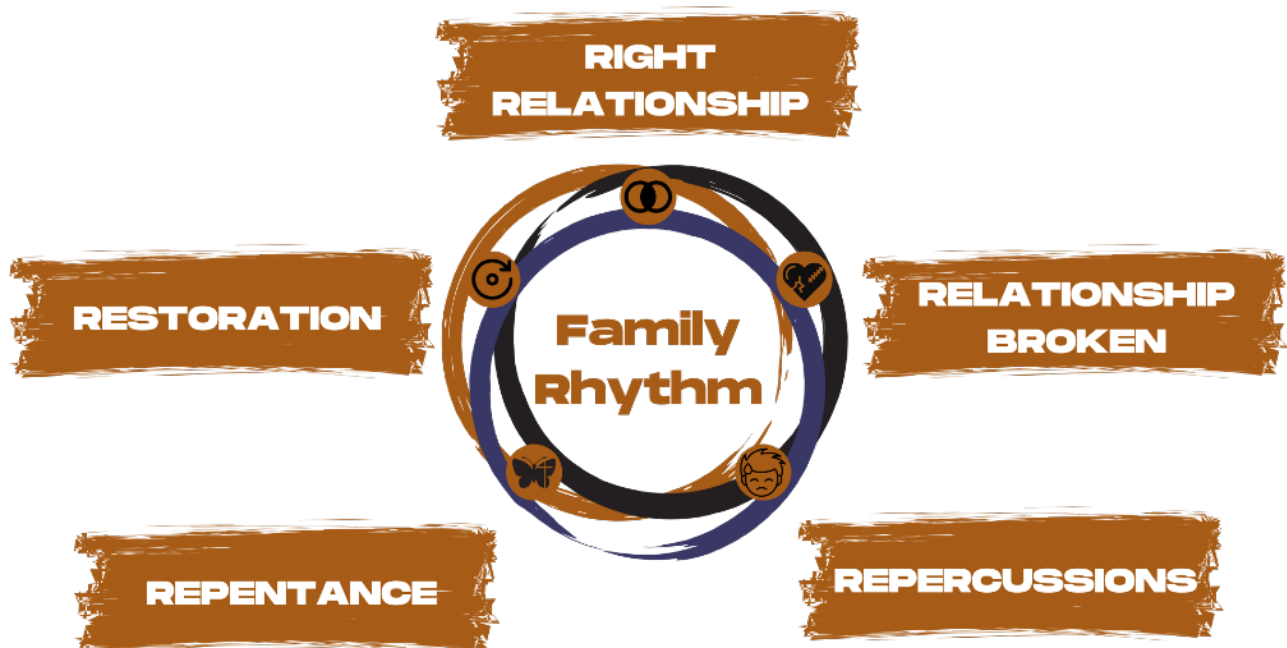
Every family lives by rhythms—bedtime routines, carpool lines, mealtimes, weekend habits. But these rhythms aren't just practical—they tell a story. As parents, we have the opportunity to shape the story our families live into, pointing our children to Jesus through everyday moments.

The Family Rhythm Circle that informs this booklet follows the arc of God's redemptive story through five relational themes:

- **Right Relationship**
- **Relationship Broken**
- **Repercussions**
- **Repentance**
- **Restoration**

Each chapter in this booklet corresponds primarily to the first part of the story while also keeping the whole story—the One Story—in view, helping you focus on the right relationship we can have in Jesus Christ.

We'll look at how one story sustains us in the journey of parenting and family life. We'll learn key skills we can grow in to celebrate the right relationship we can have with God and others. Skills like core values, a rule of life and daily connection habits. Enjoy your adventurous family story with God!





Chapter 1: One Story

How to Teach Your Kids the Big Picture of the Bible

Opening Snapshot

Ever feel like parenting is just a string of random moments—bedtimes, tantrums, dishes, repeat? What if there was one story that made sense of it all?

Our lives are full of rhythms—school pickups, late-night feedings, meal prep, and family conversations squeezed between activities. But underneath it all runs a larger narrative. And when parents begin to see their family life through that story, everything takes on new meaning.

The Big Idea

This is the first chapter in a journey through the Family Rhythm Circle, focusing primarily on the first part of God's story: Right Relationship.

Parenting can easily feel fragmented, but God's redemptive story from Genesis to Revelation gives us context, hope, and purpose. When we align our daily rhythms with this story, we find a compass for family life—not just tips and tricks.

We'll explore how seeing yourself as part of God's story shapes how you lead your family, and how you can help your kids grasp the big picture of the Bible in simple, meaningful ways.

Scripture Lens

Hebrews 1:1–2 says:

"In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by His Son..."

There's one story unfolding from Genesis to Revelation—God's redemptive narrative.

And you're in it.

Your kids are in it.

Even the chaos of family life is part of that story.

...and it all centres on the message God has for us through His Son, Jesus Christ.



Story & Illustration

When I was a young parent, I didn't just want tips or some magical way to impart faith values to my kids. I wanted a way to think—a framework, a compass.

I didn't know it fully then, but I needed a rule of life (see chapter 2), a rhythm—a way to live out the Gospel at home.

That desire took shape during a chaotic season: full-time work, a master's degree online, raising three kids under ten—and fostering on top of that.

Rhythm? We barely had one.

I'd try to stay connected—reading kids' books over video calls when I was away, sneaking in bedtime routines when I could. But I felt the loss of presence deeply. I knew I needed more than survival. I needed a story to guide us.

That's where the idea of Family Rhythm was born. Through my studies, ministry, and many messy family dinners, I began shaping a model to help our family live out the Gospel in real life. And I've been refining it ever since.

The One Story — N.T. Wright's 5-Act Drama

The theologian N.T. Wright describes the Bible like a five-act play:

1. Creation — God makes everything good, including us.
2. Fall — Sin breaks the world and our relationships.
3. Israel — God begins His rescue plan through one family.
4. Jesus — The Hero enters. Through Him, the rescue is fulfilled.
5. Church — That's us. Living out the story until it's complete.

This story isn't just ancient history. It's the story of your family, too.

Family Rhythm's 5 Rs

Family Rhythm mirrors this same redemptive arc:

- Right Relationship (Creation)
- Relationship Broken (Fall)
- Repercussions (Israel's messy journey)
- Repentance (Jesus' invitation)
- Restoration (The Church living it out)

This story isn't confined to Sunday mornings. It's lived out in your kitchen, your minivan, your bedtime routines.



We don't need to invent a story for our families. We just need to join the one God is already telling.

Family Habit in Focus

Start learning and living out the One Story together

This is what keeps us from getting stuck in pain and disorientation—it gives us a larger purpose. Even simple, consistent practices can help your children grasp the big picture:

- 📖 Bedtime — Read Bible stories not just for morals, but as chapters in one great story.
- 🗣️ Dinner Table — Ask, "Where are we seeing God's story in our day today?"
- 🖐️ Five Fingers (for younger kids):

1. God made us 🌍

2. Sin broke us ❌

3. Jesus rescues us 🛟

4. We turn to Him 🙏

5. He sends us 👉

You're not just raising kids. You're raising disciples who know the plot of God's great rescue.

Reflection Questions

- How well do your kids understand the overarching story of the Bible?
- In what everyday moments could you begin telling God's story more intentionally?
- How can you model "Right Relationship" for your family this week?

Final Thought

Your family's story is already woven into God's story. When you begin to live with that awareness, even the mundane becomes sacred.



Going Deeper: A Closer Look at the 5 Acts

N.T. Wright's framework helps us see Scripture as one sweeping drama, not just disconnected stories.

- Act 1: Creation (Genesis 1–2) — God creates the world good, with humans made in His image to steward creation. Foundation: God as Creator; humans as image-bearers in relationship with Him and each other.
- Act 2: Fall (Genesis 3–11) — Humanity rebels, bringing sin, death, and brokenness. This act introduces the central problem: alienation from God, self, others, and creation.
- Act 3: Israel (Genesis 12–Malachi) — God chooses Abraham and Israel to be the means of restoring creation. Their story of covenant, law, kingdom, exile, and hope ends with anticipation of the Messiah.
- Act 4: Jesus (The Gospels) — Jesus fulfills Israel's story, deals with sin through His life, death, and resurrection, and launches the new creation. This act is the climax of the drama, revealing God's redemptive solution in Christ.
- Act 5: Church (Acts–Revelation, and today) — The Church lives out God's mission through the Spirit, faithfully improvising, like actors in a play, in light of the previous acts.

This model keeps Jesus at the centre, avoids shrinking the Gospel to "going to heaven," and highlights God's plan to renew all creation. This grand narrative can play out in your home too.





Chapter 2: Rule of Life

Build a Rhythm that Points Your Kids to Jesus

Opening Snapshot

What if the key to passing on your faith wasn't in grand gestures or forced lessons...but in small, daily rhythms?

When it comes to spiritual formation in families, we often imagine big, transformative moments—family revivals, elaborate devotional plans, or perfectly orchestrated worship nights. But the truth is, faith is most often formed in the ordinary.

If you're rethinking how spiritual formation actually happens in your home, you're going to appreciate this chapter.

The Big Idea

In the previous chapter, we looked at the power of One Story—learning and living out God's redemptive narrative as a family. Now we turn to the structure that helps us live it out: a Rule of Life.

This ancient Christian practice is not about rigid rules, but about intentional rhythms that keep our families focused on Jesus. In a world of distraction, a Rule of Life gives us a trellis to grow on.

Scripture Lens

Hebrews 12:1–2 says:

"Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus..."

This passage gives us a picture of focus and perseverance. A Rule of Life is like fixing our family's eyes on a greater purpose—even in the mess.



Story & Illustration

When I first became a parent, I wasn't looking for hacks—I was looking for a way of thinking.

My question was simple but weighty: 🙋 How do I pass on my faith to my kids?



Not just rules. Not just good behaviour. I wanted our home to reflect grace and truth, to feel the wonder of being part of God's big story.

As a former children's pastor, I loved storytelling and creative ideas. But as a dad, I also knew the daily messes—the tantrums, the tired nights, the moments where "quiet time" was anything but quiet. I began to realize that what shapes faith most in the early years is modelling. Children learn by watching.

So spiritual formation became less about formal lessons and more about lived rhythms. Stories, values, relationships, habits, and identity were being communicated through how we lived—not just what we said.

Introducing a Rule of Life

While I was getting my master's degree I read a book called *Spiritual Theology* by Simon Chan. In it I stumbled onto this ancient Christian idea: a Rule of Life.

I discovered that it's not about "rules" like don't run in the house. It's about creating a rhythm—a pattern of spiritual life that keeps us centred on Jesus. It's spiritual discipline. The team at *Practicing the Way* define it this way,

"A rule of life is a schedule and set of practices and relational rhythms that help us create space... to be with Jesus, become like Jesus, and do what Jesus did..."

— *Practicing the Way*¹

Think of it like scaffolding or a trellis. My wife grows tomatoes in our backyard, and the trellis isn't there to restrict them—it gives them structure so they can thrive. A Rule of Life functions the same way for spiritual growth. As Chan writes,

"The rhythm that a good rule establishes helps us maintain our spiritual focus."²

— Simon Chan, *Spiritual Theology*

Chan compares this to the story of the tortoise and the hare. The hare bursts with energy but loses focus; the tortoise, slow and steady, wins with consistent rhythm. A Rule of Life helps us keep going, especially when family life gets chaotic.

Margaret Guenther, former director of the Center for Christian Spirituality highlights the value of a Rule of Life,

"A good rule can set us free to be our true and best selves."³

— Margaret Guenther

¹ <https://practicingthewayarchives.org/unhurrying-with-a-rule-of-life/workbook>

² Chan, Simon. *Spiritual Theology: A Systematic Study of the Christian Life* (p. 191). (Function). Kindle Edition.

³ From the downloadable workbook: <https://practicingthewayarchives.org/unhurrying-with-a-rule-of-life/workbook>



A Rule of Life isn't about legalism—it's about freedom and intentionality.

Family Habit in Focus

✓ Create a Rule of Life as a Family

Start small. Pick one rhythm this week to begin with. This is a working draft, not a rigid rulebook. It's about focus, not perfection.

Here are some places to start:

- 📖 Scripture — When will we read together as a family?
- 🙏 Worship — Can we sing or pray together regularly?
- 🍽️ Meals — How might mealtimes become spaces for spiritual conversation?
- 🛏 Bedtime — How will we end the day with Jesus?
- 🌞 Sunday Rhythm — How will we centre our week around worship and rest?

Example from our family:

At mealtimes, we often keep a devotional book nearby. Before or during dinner, we'll read a short section and then share our "Pow and Wow" — something encouraging from the day and something difficult. This creates meaningful conversation and a rhythm of reflection and gratitude.

Our simple Rule of Life might say:

"We will spend time connecting with each other and with God through short readings and intentional conversation during meals."

It's not elaborate, but it's consistent—and it shapes our family culture over time.

Reflection Questions

1. What rhythms already shape your family life?
2. Where have "unspoken rules" already formed habits?
3. Which one new habit could you try this week?
4. How can your Rule of Life reflect your family's unique personality and schedule?



Final Thought

A good Rule of Life doesn't restrict you—it frees you to be your truest self in Christ.

When families build intentional rhythms together, they're not just organizing their time—they're shaping their hearts.

Going Deeper: A Spiritual Framework for Families

The idea of a Rule of Life dates back to the 4th century, when early Christian communities sought ways to structure their lives around the presence of God in a culture that constantly pulled them elsewhere.

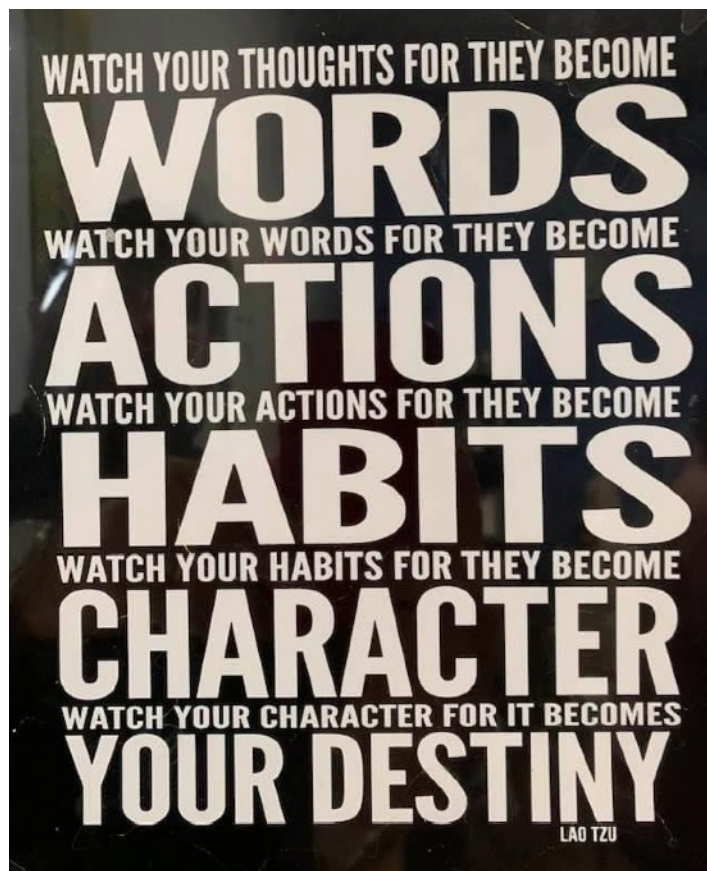
Simon Chan writes:

"Embracing a rule of life means allowing our lives to be reconstituted by this new pattern... The rhythm that a good rule establishes helps us maintain our spiritual focus... To embrace a rule is to make a commitment to a certain pattern of living that helps reinforce desirable habits in the long term."⁴

— Simon Chan

He points out that the real problem isn't that we lack a rule, but that we've developed bad ones—habits centred on comfort, distraction, and busyness rather than Christ.

A Rule of Life offers a deliberate alternative, shaping your family's habits around what truly matters.



⁴Chan, Simon. *Spiritual Theology: A Systematic Study of the Christian Life* (p. 190-191). (Function). Kindle Edition.



Chapter 3: The Mystery of the Ring

Marriage, the Cornerstone: Rediscover the Mystery

Opening Snapshot

What if your marriage was more than a relationship—what if it was a living picture of something sacred, mysterious, and eternal?

We live in a world that often treats marriage like a bad option or even a prison. But Scripture calls it a profound mystery—a signpost pointing to Christ's covenant love.



The Big Idea

Marriage isn't just about two people in love; it's a covenant designed to reflect how Jesus loves His people. That's why it matters for our families, our kids, and the legacy we leave.

Even if you're not married—or you're parenting in a blended or single-parent family—this chapter still matters. The covenant picture of marriage shapes the culture of love, forgiveness, and faith we model in every home and church family.

Scripture Lens

"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. This is a profound mystery — but I am talking about Christ and the church."

— Ephesians 5:31–32

Paul, who wrote this, isn't only describing human marriage—marriage isn't just about you two—he's describing an iconic mystery that reflects how Jesus loves His people.

Marriage reflects the mystery of the Gospel narrative. Within family life, we move through the Family Rhythm arc—Right Relationship → Relationship Broken → Repercussions → Repentance → Restoration—and a healthy marriage lets kids see that redemptive movement up close.

We see our right relationship turn to broken moments and sitting in that pain and consequence. But then there are turning points where we get our hearts right, which is followed up with the experience of true forgiveness and reconciliation.



Story & Illustration — The Ring and the Covenant

Imagine a quiet village in 10th-century France. A young Christian couple stands before the altar. Their hands are joined by a priest, and between them lies a simple golden band—the wedding ring. Lifting it, the priest says:

"This circle, with no beginning and no end, is a sign of God's eternal covenant. As Christ gave Himself for the Church, so you must give yourselves to one another."

In a world where marriages were often political arrangements, Christians began to frame marriage as holy and covenantal—a reflection of Jesus' love. The ring wasn't mere jewelry; it became a public witness of an invisible promise—mutual submission, fidelity, and sacrificial love before God.

Note: This is a faithful teaching story (a composite) drawn from documented developments in Christian marriage practice; it helps us feel the covenant meaning many believers embraced.

Quick History — Why Rings Matter

Ancient Egypt: Rings symbolized eternity; worn on the "vein of love" finger.

Greeks & Romans: Rings conveyed commitment (and at times ownership); iron and later gold signified durability and trust.

Christian Era (from 9th c.): Rings were blessed in church liturgies as outward signs of covenant vows.

Modern Era: Dual wedding bands became common in the 20th century (e.g., WWII), and today the ring remains a universal symbol of vowed love.

Right after teaching on marriage, Paul turns to parenting (Ephesians 6:1–4). That's not an accident. Healthy marriages shape healthy homes, offering children a living classroom on love, forgiveness, repentance, and restoration.

And when a household isn't built on marriage (single, blended, adoptive, or spiritual family), the church family is called to embody covenant love so that no one is left without a community of belonging.

We have glimpses of a restored family as demonstrated in a healthy church. Where once there were orphans, now they have family. Where once marriages are split, now there is support to navigate the wild waters. Where once there was loneliness and isolation, now there is community and deep fellowship.

Family Habit in Focus

Put Your Marriage on Display (quietly, intentionally)

Small, visible gestures plant big, lasting ideas in kids' hearts:



- Wear your wedding ring with renewed intentionality and explain why it matters.
- Tell the difference between a "happiness contract" ("I'll stay as long as I feel fulfilled") and a covenant ("I'm giving myself for your good").
- Frame your story—hang a wedding photo; share a brief "hard season + God's faithfulness" testimony at dinner.
- Practice repair—let children witness repentance and forgiveness after conflict.
- Pray together—30 seconds, hand-in-hand, before bed or when leaving the house.

These habits don't need to be flashy—just visible and consistent. When your home quietly honours covenant love, your kids witness the Gospel in motion.

Reflection Questions

- What story does our marriage tell our children about love, faithfulness, and forgiveness?
- Where do we need to move from contract expectations to covenant commitments?
- What one small, visible practice could we adopt this week to honour our vows?
- How might our church friendships support our marriage (and how could we support someone else's)?

Final Thought — A Sign You Can Wear

A ring is a circle you can see. A covenant is a circle you can live. Let your marriage become a window through which your children glimpse the love of Christ: steadfast, self-giving, and full of hope.

Special Note

FamilyLife Canada is the mission organization I serve with. We are here to help your marriage flourish and live on mission! Stop by our website, familylifecanada.com, for excellent and free marriage tools. Learn about our Weekend Getaway Marriage Conferences happening across Canada. We offer help and hope for you.



Going Deeper (Notes & Helps)

Ephesians 5–6 Snapshot

5:1 — Imitate God as beloved children.

5:15 — Live wisely together.

5:21 — Mutual submission in reverence for Christ.

5:22–30 — Spousal love patterned after Christ's sacrifice.

5:31–33 — Marriage reflects the Gospel mystery.

6:1–4 — Honour, obedience, and godly instruction in the home.

Covenant, Not Contract

Contract: "I'll stay if you meet my needs."

Covenant: "I give myself for your good, before God." Covenant faithful love creates security where confession, forgiveness, and growth are normal.

Church as Family

Where marriages are wounded or families are fragile, the church becomes family to the family-less—a place of presence, prayer, and practical care.

Suggested Practices for Couples

- Weekly check-in (15 minutes): "Where did we see God's grace this week? Where do we need repair?"
- Monthly remembrance: Take a half or full day to revisit vows or read Ephesians 5:25–33 together and have conversations through this chapter.
- Quarterly reset: A simple at-home or one-night retreat to pray, reflect and plan rhythms for the next season.

Research/Background (for your study)

Rings appear in Christian liturgies (from the 9th century) as blessed signs of covenant.⁵

The Council of Trent codified marriage as sacrament; the *Rituale Romanum* preserved ring blessings.⁶

The "vena amoris" (love vein) is a romantic tradition from antiquity, not anatomy—still a helpful image of united hearts.⁷

⁵ https://www.encyclopedia.com/religion/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/rings-liturgical-use?utm_source=chatgpt.com

⁶ https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09703b.htm?utm_source=chatgpt.com

⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vena_amoris?utm_source=chatgpt.com



Chapter 4: Shalom

What Is Sin and Shalom? And Why It Matters for Your Family

Opening Snapshot

Ever feel like something's just... off in your family life? That quiet tension could be pointing to something deeper—and it might be the doorway to the peace you've been missing. We try new schedules, calmer voices, better routines—yet peace still slips through our fingers. Maybe the core issue isn't just what we do, but who we are becoming and how we relate.

The Big Idea

Shalom is more than "no conflict." In Scripture it means wholeness, harmony, everything—as-it—should—be with God and one another. Theologian Cornelius Plantinga writes that sin is the "vandalism of shalom."⁸ God designed life to flourish in joy, peace, and connection—sin fractures that design. The Gospel is God's restoration of shalom through Jesus, and families can practice rhythms that reflect and point to that restoration right at home.

Scripture Lens

Romans 5:1 (NIV)

"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Romans 5:11 (NLT)

"So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God."

To be justified is to be made right with God—not earned by us, but gifted in Christ. Reconciliation is not only legal; it is relational: welcome back into friendship with God. From that friendship flows a renewed capacity to practice shalom with those closest to us.

Story & Illustration — A Morning of Shalom

At 7:45 a.m. the house is humming. Your three-year-old marches in one sock, singing their own theme song. The six-year-old is explaining rules to

⁸ Plantinga, Cornelius. *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin* (p. 7). (Function). Kindle Edition.



a game no one understands. Your ten-year-old is "confidently" making pancakes.

You pause and smile: We're good right now. We're together. We're okay.

That moment of rejoicing is more than a feeling—it's can become a practice of delight. If Jesus has made us friends of God, then part of our calling as parents is to enjoy our kids. Linger. Laugh. Let the pancakes burn a little for the sake of the story with six plot twists. These moments are glimpses of shalom—relationships as God intends: alive with joy, connection, and peace.

Family Habit in Focus — "Shining Face Moments"

Once a day, intentionally let your face light up when your child walks into the room.

Pause what you're doing, make gentle eye contact, and let delight show.

A simple: "Hey—there you are!" or "I love seeing you." is bigger than you might think especially when multiplied over 365 days a year.

This habit echoes the priestly blessing: "The LORD make His face shine upon you..." (Numbers 6:24–26).

Why it Matters

Children "read" our faces before our words. A shining face communicates safety, welcome, and worth. It is a micro-practice of restored shalom—your countenance mirroring God's toward them.

Mini-Variations to Try This Week

- The Doorway Pause (greet them as they enter the room)
- The Wake-Up Smile (first face of the day = delight)
- The After-School Reset (60 seconds of undivided presence and pleasure before any questions)
- The Bedtime Benediction (a final shining look + a short blessing)

Reflection Questions

- Where do you most feel the vandalism of shalom in your family (rush, irritability, avoidance)?
- What one moment of your daily rhythm could become a Shining Face Moment?
- How might Romans 5:1–11 reframe the way you repair after conflict?



- What's one habit that helps your family linger and delight together (story time, walk, unhurried meal)?

Final Thought — Peace You Can See

Shalom is not the silence that follows a scolding; it is the music of a right relationship. Let your face go first. Let delight lead. As God's face shines on you in Christ, let your face shine on your children—until the peace of God becomes the rhythm of your home.

Going Deeper (Notes for Parents)

Sin & Shalom (Plantinga⁹)

Sin: "missing the mark," vandalizing God's design for flourishing.

Shalom: God's comprehensive peace—wholeness with God, self, others, creation.

Implication: God is for shalom, therefore against whatever fractures it.

Romans 5:1–11: A Relational Arc

1) Justified by faith → 2) Peace with God → 3) Hope of glory → 4) Love poured into our hearts → 5) Christ died for us → 6) Saved from wrath → 7) Reconciled → 8) We rejoice in God Himself (v.11).

This is the pathway from ruin to rejoicing—and the shape of wholeness and flourishing in our homes.

A Simple Family Blessing (adapt for mealtime or bedtime, based on Numbers 6:24–26)

May the LORD bless you and keep you.

May His face shine upon you and be gracious to you.

May He turn His face toward you and give you peace.

And may our faces shine on each other, as His shines on us. Amen.

Practice Starter–Pack

- Name the Good: One "grace sighting" each evening.
- Gentle Repair: "I'm sorry. I was short. You matter to me." (embrace + eye contact)
- Slow Ten: Take 10 slow breaths together after conflict; then pray one sentence each.
- Sabbath Hours: One to three protected hours weekly for delight (church, games, walks, stories).

⁹ Plantinga, Cornelius. *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin* (p. 7-17). (Function). Kindle Edition.



Knowing God Personally — The Source of Shalom

If you or your child is asking, "How do I start a real relationship with God?" the Gospel is beautifully simple: God loves you (John 3:16; John 10:10), our sin separates us (Romans 3:23; 6:23), Jesus is God's provision (Romans 5:8; 1 Corinthians 15:3–6; John 14:6), and we receive Him by faith (John 1:12; Ephesians 2:8–9; Revelation 3:20).

We'll walk this more fully in Chapter 5: Knowing God Personally.

A Short Blessing for Parents

May your face shine on your children again. May you delight in your children as God delights in you. When your face turns away from your children, may it be only for a moment. May the peace of God reign in your family. May shalom be the rhythm of your home. Amen





Chapter 5: Knowing God Personally

You're Not Just a Parent—You're a Child Too

Opening Snapshot

You're packing lunches, refereeing screen time, and hunting for that missing shoe again. In the noise, it's easy to forget who you are. We pour ourselves out for our kids, but inside we can feel empty—parenting from exhaustion instead of identity.

Here's the good news: before you're a parent, you're a child—deeply loved by God. Rediscovering the joy of that relationship is the turning point that reshapes your home.

The Big Idea

This chapter walks the same arc as Family Rhythm—and it's not just for your kids. It's for you:

- Right Relationship — God's design for your life
- Relationship Broken — how sin fractures shalom
- Repercussions — why we can't fix it alone
- Repentance — turning home to the Father through Jesus
- Restoration — living as God's beloved child

Knowing God personally isn't a reward for the spiritually impressive; it's a gift in Jesus—received with open hands.

The Gospel through the Family Rhythm

1) Right Relationship — God's Design for You

John 3:16; John 10:10

"God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son..."

"I came that they might have life, and have it abundantly."

You were made for connection with God—peace, joy, and belonging. Like a child who knows they're safe and wanted. That's the original rhythm.

2) Relationship Broken — Our Sin and Separation

Romans 3:23; Romans 6:23



"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God..."

"The wages of sin is death..."

We've chosen independence over intimacy. In family life, this shows up as tantrums, cold shoulders, slammed doors. Spiritually, it looks like distance, shame, and self-reliance. Shalom is vandalized.



3) Repercussions — We Can't Fix It on Our Own

Romans 5:8; Isaiah 59:2; 1 Corinthians 15:3–6

We try tape-and-glue solutions: self-help, religion, doing better. But the gap remains.

"While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

"He was raised on the third day... He appeared to over 500 witnesses."

God Himself bridges the gap in Jesus—bearing sin's consequence to make restoration possible.



4) Repentance — Turning and Trusting

John 1:12; Ephesians 2:8–9

"As many as received Him... He gave the right to become children of God."

We turn from self and trust Jesus. Repentance isn't humiliation; it's coming home.



5) Restoration — Becoming God's Child

Revelation 3:20

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock..."

When you receive Jesus, you're not merely tolerated—you're welcomed, adopted, restored. You won't become a perfect parent, but you will live as a beloved child—and that changes everything.



Scripture Lens

Romans 5:11

"So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God."

This is more than a fix after a fight. This is friendship—the joy of being close, even when nothing's wrong.

Story & Illustration — The Pillow-Fort Truce

Three siblings (4, 7, and 9) build a pillow fort. It's glorious—until someone knocks it down. One stomps away. One yells. One hides under the couch with Goldfish crackers.



Before you intervene, something surprising happens:
"Let's build it again."

"Okay—but this time don't knock it down!"

A giggle. A cushion flies. They're rebuilding—together.

That's a glimpse of right relationship returning—not because there was no conflict, but because the joy of being together grew bigger than the fight. That's what life as God's children is like: repair is normal, joy is shared, and the relationship keeps winning.

Family Habit in Focus — The Daily Joy Check-In

Once a day (dinner, bedtime, or the drive home), ask:

"What made you smile today?"

"What's one thing we can thank God for together?"

This simple rhythm trains your family to notice grace, name joy, and turn toward God like a child to his daddy.

Variations:

High/Low/Thank You: one highlight, one hard thing, one thing you love about God.

One-Word Prayer: each person offers one word about who God is. Go around as many times as you'd like.

Joy Jar: write joys on slips; read them on weekends.

A Simple Prayer

If today you want to begin (or renew) a relationship with God, you can pray:

Lord Jesus, I need You. Thank You for dying for my sin. I open my heart and receive You as my Saviour. Thank You for forgiving me and making me Your child. Take the lead in my life. Make me the person You created me to be. Amen.

If you'd like a short guide, see: Power to Change's [Knowing God Personally \(PDF\)](#)¹⁰

Reflection Questions

- Where do you most feel like you're parenting from exhaustion rather than your identity as a child of God?

¹⁰ <https://p2c.com/wp-content/themes/avada-corp/files/Knowing-God-Personally.pdf>



- Which part of the Gospel arc (Right Relationship → Restoration) do you need to sit with today?
- What would change in your tone and rhythm at home if you lived as a beloved child first?
- When will your family try the Daily Joy Check-In this week?

Final Thought — Parent from Who You Are

Your kids don't need a perfect parent. They need a parent who is deeply loved—and who knows it.

Live as the Father's child. Let beloved-ness set the cadence. Your home will feel the difference.

Going Deeper (Parent Helps)

How to Share the Good News with Your Kids (Simple Outline)

- God loves you & has a good plan (John 3:16; John 10:10)
- Sin breaks our closeness with God (Romans 3:23; 6:23)
- Jesus fixed what we can't (Romans 5:8; 1 Corinthians 15:3–6)
- We receive Him by faith (John 1:12; Ephesians 2:8–9; Revelation 3:20)

Conversation Starters

"What do you think God feels when He thinks about you?"

"What are some ways we can know God personally?"

"If Jesus were sitting at our table, what would you want to ask Him?"

Next Steps

If you prayed to receive Christ or want to talk more, mark it down, tell someone you trust, and begin reading the Gospel of Mark together as a family—one short scene a day, ending with: "What did we learn about Jesus? What can we thank Him for?"

You're not just a parent. You're a child. Live from that relationship—and let its joy shape your home.



Chapter 6: Reflecting on Core Values

How to Reflect on Your Family's Core Values (Before You Pick Them)

Opening Snapshot

My dad used to tell me: If you aim at nothing, you'll hit it every time.

Most families want to raise kind, faithful, respectful kids—but without clarity on core values, we drift. If we don't define what matters most, life will do it for us. This chapter helps you slow down, notice what your current rhythms are already teaching, and start aiming your family in a better direction.

The Big Idea

Before you choose values, you need to surface them. Your calendar, tone, mealtimes, money choices, and bedtime routines are already discipling your kids. Reflection is how we name the culture we're building—on purpose, not by accident.

Scripture Lens

As a follower of Jesus, a children's pastor, and a dad, this passage has anchored me (I even named our children's ministry "the LEDGE" to capture both adventure and foundation). Hear Jesus' words:

"Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock... But anyone who hears my teaching and doesn't obey it is foolish, like a person who builds a house on sand."
— Matthew 7:24–27 (NLT)

Another translation highlights practice:

"Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock." (NIV, v.24)

Jesus isn't offering abstract ideas; He's laying out Kingdom values to be lived. Families who practice His way build on bedrock—habits storms can't shake.

Previously, in *One Story and Rule of Life*, we focused on Right Relationship and the rhythms that support it. Now we'll start a specific skill for Right Relationship: core values reflection.



Story & Illustration — The Reunion Table

Picture the best family reunion you've ever attended. The 🍷 smell of burgers, 😄 laughter from backyard games, 🗣️ old stories told, 🧠 new memories made.

What makes it actually special? The values at the table—love, kindness, curiosity, honour, joy. That day didn't just happen. It was built on years of intentional practices that surfaced and reinforced shared values.

Two framing ideas:

"Focus is fertilizer." — Jim & Lynne Jackson, Connected Families

"What you focus on, you move toward." — Rick Warren

Focus forms culture. Families focused on strong values grow toward them.

God's Heart for Family Values

Look at the Shema, the central morning and evening Hebrew prayer from Deuteronomy 6:4–9: Love the LORD... Impress these on your children... Talk about them at home and on the road...

God's vision is a whole-life apprenticeship in love and obedience—woven into ordinary moments.

Biblical threads that shape a family values menu:

- Loving God & neighbour (Shema; Great Commandment)
- Covenant faithfulness (promises kept, forgiveness practiced)
- Prayer & Scripture (shared rhythms)
- Provision & care; generosity and stewardship
- Honour & discipline; truth-telling with grace
- Serving one another (the "one-anothers" of the NT)
- Responsibility & growth; wisdom and work
- Celebration & gratitude; Sabbath rest and delight
- Identity & belonging; being known and loved
- Passing on faith in everyday life

These aren't slogans; they are relational, spiritual, and practical habits.

Reflect First, Then Choose — 15-Minute Values Audit

This week, don't pick values yet. Notice them.



Step 1 — Observe (5 minutes)

As a parent (or as a couple), without judging, list a variety of your current rhythms and habits.

- Morning routine
- Mealtimes
- After-school and screens
- Chores and money
- Bedtime
- Other

Step 2 — Name (5 minutes)

From your list, circle 3–5 of those rhythms and try to name the values your kids are learning—healthy or unhealthy.

Ask: What do our rhythms reveal? (e.g., hustle, kindness, hurry, gratitude, distraction, hospitality) What's being passed on (intentionally or not)?

Step 3 — Aim (5 minutes)

If you discover one or two values you'd like to make a core family value, write one sentence:

"We want to keep reinforcing _____(rhythm) because _____(value)."

You're not fixing everything. You're aiming the ship.

Family Habit in Focus

The 15-Minute Reflection (Solo or Couple)

Set a timer for 15 minutes and complete the Values Audit above. Then pray a short prayer: "Lord, show us what we're really building. Teach us to practice what You value." This could become an ongoing habit to revisit every 3–6 months for evaluation and development.

Reflection Questions

- Where does our family feel like it's built on rock? Where does it feel sandy?
- If a guest lived with us for a week, which 3 values would they say we embody?



- Which value do we desire most for our kids five years from now—and what tiny practice could begin today?
- What does our tone (not just our words) teach our children about God?

Final Thought — Aim Small, Steer Daily

Houses are built one brick at a time; cultures are built one practice at a time. Aim your family at bedrock—then take the next small step. Reflection today makes choosing tomorrow wise.

Going Deeper (Tools & Templates)

A. Sample Family Values Menu (start here, not to overwhelm):

Faithfulness · Kindness · Gratitude · Honesty · Wisdom · Courage · Hospitality · Service · Stewardship · Sabbath Rest · Reconciliation · Joy · Responsibility · Humility · Perseverance · Generosity · Patience · Justice · Peace/Peacemaking · Curiosity

B. Rhythm Mapping (10-minute exercise):

Sketch a typical weekday and weekend. For each segment (morning, school/work, after school, dinner, bedtime), note:

- Current practice → the value it teaches
- One micro-shift you could try next week

C. The Storm Test:

Ask of each hoped-for value: Will this practice still work on a hard week? If not, shrink it until it will.

D. Preview of Part 2 (Next Chapter: Choosing Core Values):

We'll translate your reflections into 3–5 chosen values, write short value statements, and attach repeatable habits to each—simple, sustainable, and storm-proof.

This week's takeaway: Don't skip reflection. It's how you locate the drift, turn the wheel, and set your family on the rock.



Chapter 7: Choosing Core Values

How to Choose Core Values for Your Family (A Step-by-Step Guide)

Opening Snapshot

If someone followed your family around for a week, what values would they think you have—besides snack hoarding and Netflix mastery?

In Part 1 (Reflecting on Core Values) we saw that values are already shaping your home—whether you've named them or not. Now we'll move from vague hopes to concrete, intentional habits that build life-shaping values your kids can feel every day.

Scripture Lens

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock..."
— Matthew 7:24

Values aren't just beliefs; they are practices. The goal isn't merely to name your family's values, but to build them into rhythms—bedrock you return to when life gets busy.

Story & Illustration — Learning by Rhythm (with a wink)

No one sat my siblings and me down to announce: "Children, our official core values are..." But I remember church (three times on Sundays... and midweek—was there a punch card? 😊). And road-trip vacations: a car full of sand, wet towels, homemade subs, and a little sibling warfare.

Those rhythms quietly taught me: worship matters, togetherness matters, faith matters. Your kids are learning the same way—through what your family repeats.

Part 1 Review — What You Already Did

You answered:

What rhythms are shaping our home?

What's already being passed down?



Now we'll choose the values that will guide your direction—then attach doable habits so they actually happen. This will reinforce the direction of your family for the long-haul and prevent drifting away.

"Most of us put little thought into how we invest our time and our money... we spend our time doing things that have little value, rather than things that will truly matter in the future."¹¹

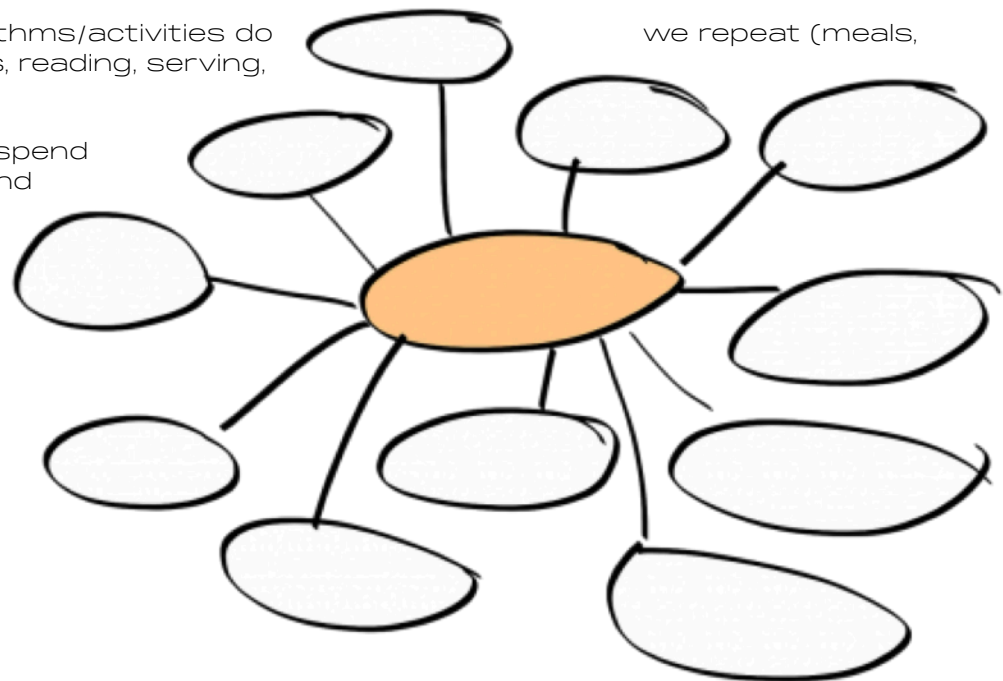
— Joe & Aimee McGinnis, *The Family Road Map*

Step-by-Step: From God's Values → Family Values → Your Core Values

Step 1 — Look at What's Already There (Reality Check)

Ask: What rhythms/activities do church, sports, reading, serving, screens)?

Where do we spend time, money, and attention (calendar + bank tell the truth)?



¹¹ McGinnis, Joe and Aimee. *The Family Road Map* (p.13). PDF.



Examples → the value beneath:

- Weekly family meal → Connection
- Serving at church → Faith / Worship / Servanthood
- Bedtime snuggles & stories → Emotional Safety / Affection
- Saturday hiking → Creation Care / Adventure / Health

Key insight: Rhythms reveal values—intended or accidental.

Step 2 — Name What Matters (Vision)

Ask: What qualities do we want to describe our family?

What do we want our kids to carry into adulthood?

Common values: Faith, Kindness, Generosity, Gratitude, Perseverance, Servanthood, Reconciliation, Responsibility, Wisdom, Joy, Hospitality, Patience.

Unique values: Creative Expression, Curiosity, Adventure, Lifelong Learning, Laughter, Craftsmanship, Nature–time, Music.

Tip: Aim for 4–5 core values (you can list more as "supporting values").

Step 3 — Identify Habits that Embody Each Value (Practice)

Ask: If this value were alive in our home, what would we do weekly or daily?

What's the smallest repeatable habit that would make this value visible?

Examples:

- Curiosity → Library night; a 10–minute "teach us something" share at dinner; family museum/YouTube learning hour on Saturdays.
- Reconciliation → A repair script everyone knows: "I'm sorry for _____. Will you forgive me?" + a short prayer together.
- Gratitude → One "thank God for..." each meal; a Gratitude Jar read on Sundays.
- Faith → Read one Gospel scene at breakfast; pray one sentence each at bedtime.
- Service → Monthly "Bless a Neighbour" mini–project; kids help plan it.
- Responsibility → Family chore chart with rotating "captain"—celebrate effort, not perfection.
- Joy/Sabbath → A weekly delight hour: games, music, walks, unhurried dessert.



Make It Concrete: The Family Compass

A. Write Value Statements (short + action-oriented)

- Faith: We keep company with Jesus daily and weekly.
- Kindness: We treat each other with gentle words and helpful hands.
- Reconciliation: When we hurt each other, we repair quickly and pray briefly.
- Gratitude: We notice gifts and say thank you—to God and to people.
- Responsibility: We contribute at home because we're a team.

B. Attach Rhythms (one per value to start)

- Faith → "One Gospel scene at breakfast, M–F."
- Kindness → "One specific affirmation per person at dinner."
- Reconciliation → "Use our repair script + 10 slow breaths + 10-second hug."
- Gratitude → "Gratitude Jar—read on Sundays."
- Responsibility → "Two age-fit chores/day; celebrate with a silly high-five."

C. Storm-Proof Test

Will this habit still work on a hard week? If not, shrink it until it will.

Family Habit in Focus — Core Values Celebration Night

1. Make choosing values a party, not a lecture.
2. Brainstorm Wall (15–20 min): On poster board or sticky notes, everyone writes values, traditions, and behaviours you want to embody (older kids add ideas too).
3. Theme Hunt (10 min): Cluster duplicates; name clusters (e.g., Kindness, Faith, Responsibility, Joy).
4. Narrow to 4–5 Core Values (10 min): vote with stickers or dots.
5. Write Value Statements (10 min): One line each (see examples above).
6. Attach One Habit per Value (10 min): Keep it small and scheduled.
7. Post & Celebrate: Put the "Family Compass" on the fridge or family wall. End with dessert and a simple prayer of dedication.

Because... "What you focus on, you move toward."

— Rick Warren

And... "Focus is fertilizer."



— Connected Families

Reflection Questions

- Which value do we want to be unmissable in our home a year from now?
- What one habit will we start this week to embody it?
- What will we stop doing (or shrink) to make room for this habit?
- How will we celebrate progress, not just outcomes?

Final Thought — Clear, Small, and Joyful Wins

Don't wait for a perfect plan. Choose clear values, take small steps, and make it joyful. Over time, tiny faithful practices grow a culture your kids will love and carry for life.

Going Deeper (Templates & Tools)

1) Family Compass (print for the fridge)

Our 5 Core Values: 1 _____ 2 _____

3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____

One-line Value Statements:

Our Weekly Rhythms (1 per value):

Value 1 → _____ (Day/Time: _____)

Value 2 → _____ (Day/Time: _____)



Value 3 → _____ (Day/Time: _____)

Value 4 → _____ (Day/Time: _____)

Value 5 → _____ (Day/Time: _____)

2) Calendar & Chequebook Audit (20 minutes)

Look at last month's calendar + spending. What did we actually value? What one reallocation of time or money would better reflect our chosen values?

3) Quarterly Reset (30–45 minutes)

Re-read your Core Values. Keep / Tweak / Drop any habit that isn't working. Add one new micro-practice.

4) Sample Value → Habit Ideas (pick one each):

- Faith: Sunday anchor (worship + unhurried meal).
- Kindness: "First words gentle" morning rule.
- Gratitude: Thank-you text together every Tuesday.
- Reconciliation: Family repair script on the fridge.
- Responsibility: Saturday "10-minute tidy" playlist.
- Curiosity: "Teach us something" at Thursday dinner.
- Joy/Sabbath: Weekly "delight hour" (phones away).

This week's assignment: Host your Core Values Celebration Night and build your Family Compass. Then start with one tiny habit. Small seeds. Big harvest.





Chapter 8: Muscle Memory

Training Kids with Grace & Muscle Memory

Opening Snapshot

Teaching kids good habits is a lot like teaching them to ride a bike. At first it's wobbly. Then it clicks. And sometimes—you're just praying they remember the brakes. The habits you repeat at home today become your children's muscle memory tomorrow.

The Big Idea

Values don't form kids—habits do.

Thinking and talking about values matters, but repeated rhythms are what sink truth into hearts and bodies. If we don't set those rhythms with intention, life will set them for us. Scripture calls this training—steady, grace-filled practice that produces a harvest over time.

Scripture Lens

"No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it."

— Hebrews 12:11 (NIV)

"Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace."

— Matthew 11:28–30 (MSG)

Discipline. Training. Rhythms. Grace. Not cold religion or rules, but training a way of life with Jesus that starts in daily family life. Think, "I want good for my family so much that I will gladly do what it takes to train them well."

Story & Illustration — Why Repetition Wins

What is rhythm? It's a strong, regular, repeated pattern of movement or sound.

Your family already runs on patterns: bedtimes, mealtimes, driving to practice, how arguments start and (hopefully) end. The question is: Are those rhythms discipling your children toward Jesus—or just helping everyone survive the day?



Think about learning to ride a bike or hit a baseball. At first you overthink every detail: feet here, eyes there, elbows up. With practice, it becomes automatic. That's muscle memory.

Plain-language brain science:

Repetition strengthens the brain's pathways (motor cortex, cerebellum). Like paving a dirt trail into a smooth road, the brain wraps pathways with "insulation" (myelin) so signals travel faster and smoother. Under pressure, your body runs the learned pattern without conscious effort. Spiritually, habits do the same thing—they make faith doable under stress.

Guest Moment — Interview View with My Wife Daphne (Condensed from Video)

What is Muscle Memory?

Well muscle memory is one of those things that describes itself. It's the memory your muscle has. Some people can think of things that they do automatically. I often teach it in the context of swimming.

Most recently, I've been teaching little kids how to swim. And sometimes I find myself wondering, "How did I learn this again? It's been so long, I just do it now." And that's muscle memory. Yet when I teach the kids, we have to go through a pretty specific breakdown of the stroke. I have to teach how to breath, teach how to place their arms, how to pull, how to kick and oftentimes they can't think of all those things at once when they're first learning it.

So we'll take it one step at a time. Like, hey, if they put their face in the water while they put their hands out of the water, then that's great. But for them to actually learn how to do the stroke, they have to do all five pieces.

What Happened on the Lake?

I took the girls out swimming and paddle boarding and we got to go a pretty far distance out. What sent us back in quicker than I had even anticipated was a storm was coming in. Thunder started. Rain started to patter on the water. Waves started kicking up. We're like, we got to head in.

As I was swimming, I actually got nervous...The funny thing is the whole time I'm thinking about [the storm], I'm still swimming. So I'm not thinking about how I'm swimming at all. That was complete muscle memory at that point.

How Does Muscle Memory Show Up in Our Family?

I would say, having pizza nights on a Sunday. The fact that the kids can count on that...is a great thing to have happen. They're already talking about how they want to do that with their kids.

Now some people will say, well that's just building a tradition. But I believe it's become so comfortable with us and now everyone knows exactly how



they want to make their pizza. It was something new that felt a little bit labouring, but now it's like everyone knows.

Family Habit in Focus — Pick One Rhythm & Practice It Daily (7 Days)

Choose one ordinary moment and give it a simple, repeatable practice for a week:

- Dinner: Ask, "Where did you see God's goodness today?" (one sentence each)
- Bedtime: Pray one sentence of thanks together
- Doorway: When a child enters the room, pause + shining face + "I'm glad you're here"
- Car rides: Pick a Conversation (What's your favourite...? Who are you playing/talking with? What challenges are you facing? What is something you're looking forward to?)

Keep it tiny. Tiny endures Tuesday Troubles.

7-Day Micro-Plan (check them off):

- Day 1: Introduce the habit (explain the why in 20 seconds).
- Day 2: Repeat + celebrate any effort ("We did it!").
- Day 3: Repeat + keep it short (under 90 seconds).
- Day 4: Let a child lead the habit.
- Day 5: Repeat + add a smile or touch (high-five, hug).
- Day 6: Repeat even if the day went sideways (especially then).
- Day 7: Repeat + 60-second celebration ("What changed this week?").

Practice Builder — Make Habits That Stick

- Cue → Routine → Reward: Tie the habit to an existing cue (e.g., plates on table = start gratitude). End with a micro-reward (smile / high-five / "thanks everyone").
- Shrink to win: If it fails twice, halve it. (One sentence prayer → one phrase → one word.)
- Storm-proof it: Would this survive a hard week? If not, simplify.
- Model first: If you want to see it in them, they need to see it in you.



Reflection Questions

- How does repetition build physical muscle memory? How does it build spiritual muscle memory?
- Which daily moment (meal, bedtime, commute) is ripest for a tiny, faith-shaping habit?
- What gets in the way—perfectionism, hurry, screens—and how can we shrink or shift the practice to fit reality?
- After seven days, what fruit did we notice (tone, kindness, connection)?

Final Thought — Grace Trains

Jesus doesn't hand you a rulebook; He walks with you and says, "Watch how I do it."

Choose one rhythm. Repeat it in grace. Over time, grace becomes muscle memory—and your home learns to move with Him.

Going Deeper (Tools & Templates)

A. Muscle Memory Cheat Sheet (post on the fridge):

Cue: When we _____ (e.g., plates hit the table)

Routine: We _____ (e.g., each say one thank-you)

Reward: We _____ (e.g., clink cups / high-five / "Amen!")

B. Repair Script (for conflict muscle memory):

With eye contact and sincere voice say,

- "I'm sorry for _____."
- "This is wrong because _____."
- "I the future, I _____."
- "Will you forgive me?"
- 5 slow breaths + 5-second hug + one-sentence prayer

C. Menu of Micro-Habits (pick one):

- Gratitude: One thanks at dinner
- Scripture: One Gospel verse at breakfast



- Prayer: One-sentence bedtime prayer
- Service: One tiny help for a neighbour each month
- Joy/Sabbath: 30-minute "delight hour" weekly (phones away)

D. Parent Heart Check (because it starts with us):

Where am I hurried? Where can I ask Jesus for His unforced rhythm today?

What tiny personal habit will I practice this week (breath prayer, 2-minute silent thanks, short Psalm)?

This week's assignment: Pick one rhythm. Run seven reps. Celebrate the tiniest win. Grace will do the heavy lifting.





Chapter 9: Treasure Hunting

From Nitpicking to Treasure Hunting: A Parenting Shift That Changes Everything

Opening Snapshot

Have you ever noticed how easy it is to nitpick your kids—but how hard it can be to celebrate the good stuff?

Parenting comes with needs, stressors, and pressures that multiply fast. When once you were single and independent, now you have little ones depending on you. Add our natural negativity bias—the human tendency to notice what's wrong more than what's right—and it's no surprise our words can drift toward critique. But you can retrain your attention. The shift from nitpicking to treasure hunting changes the atmosphere of a home.

The Big Idea

Your children are not projects to fix; they are persons to behold—image-bearers with God-given dignity, potential, and calling. Treasure hunting doesn't ignore problems; it reframes your first response. You still coach and correct if needed, but you lead with connection and affirmation, then guide toward improved choices. Over time, your gaze teaches your kids how God looks at them.

Scripture Lens

Genesis 1:26–28 reminds us that every person is made in the image of God—your child bears His creativity, purpose, and worth.

Philippians 4:8 calls us to set our minds on what is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy. Even in hard moments, Scripture invites a higher focus.

Within the Family Rhythm circle, when Right Relationship breaks, we can still move through Repercussions → Repentance → Restoration. Treasure hunting helps parents walk that redemptive path with hope.

Story & Illustration — Seeing the Gold

Brains are wired to notice threats faster than blessings—handy for survival, rough on family life. In a busy home, irritations stack: the spilled milk, the sibling jab, the undone chore. If we're not careful, resentment follows.

But irritations can become signals. Instead of, "Here we go again," try:



- How can I connect here?
- What can I bless here?
- Which good trait can I affirm here—even in bud form?

We chose our kids' names to remind us to look for gold:

Sonora ("pleasant sounding") nudges us to admire her artistry—even when carefree .speaks louder

Josiah ("God supports") evokes a king who did what was right—so when boldness gets brash, we can coach it toward courage—with-kindness.

Selah (pause/reflect) invites us to breathe and notice before we speak—even when silence is frustrating.

Treasure hunters learn to seek and name the good, not just feel the bad.

Family Habit in Focus — From Nitpicking to Treasure Hunting

This week, practice two simple tools:

1) SHAPE Scan (for how God may be forming your child from Saddleback Church)¹²

- Spiritual gifts — budding mercy, teaching, encouragement?
- Heart passions — what lights them up?
- Abilities — natural strengths or new skills?
- Personality — how does their wiring show up under stress and joy?
- Experiences — what have they learned through recent wins or losses?

Consider taking the SHAPE-style assessment from your child's perspective and use it to spark affirmation.

2) ABCs of Affirmation (make praise concrete from Connected Families)¹³

A — Action: "I noticed you ____."

B — Benefit: "That helped ____ because ____."

C — Character: "That showed your ____ (e.g., perseverance, kindness, self-control)."

Example:

A—You shared your markers with your sister.

¹² <https://www.freeshapetest.com>

¹³ <https://connectedfamilies.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/2025-ABCs-of-Affirmation-PDF.pdf>



B—It kept the peace and helped her finish her drawing.
C—That shows kindness and generosity.

Pro tip: Keep affirmations true, specific, and short. We're training attention, not giving speeches.

Practice Plan — The 3×3 Treasure Hunt

For three days, aim for three affirmations (ABCs) per day—spread across your kids (or three for the same child if you prefer). You may want to have a notebook handy!

Pair this with a SHAPE reflection one evening: jot one SHAPE observation for each child.

Bonus micro-habits:

- Name Blessings at Bedtime: "May you know _____" (name something true about God or your child.)
- Kitchen Sticky Note: Write a one-line ABC and leave it where they'll find it.
- The "Catch 'em Doing Right" Alarm: Set a phone reminder to look for treasure once mid-afternoon.

Reflection Questions

- When am I most prone to nitpicking (time of day, trigger, context, emotional state)?
- Which virtue do I want to spot and strengthen first (kindness, courage, responsibility, self-control)?
- What's one ABCs affirmation I could give my child today?
- How might my tone change if I remembered my child's image-of-God worth before I corrected?

Final Thought — Your Gaze Disciples

Children grow toward the face that delights in them. Let your first look be treasure hunting—then guide with wisdom. In time, they'll learn to see themselves (and others) the way God does: valuable, redeemable, and called.



Going Deeper (Notes & Helps)

Why Negativity Feels So Loud

Humans tend to react more strongly to negative cues than positive ones (a common "negativity bias"). That's normal—and trainable. Intentional affirmation helps re-balance attention so the good doesn't get crowded out.¹⁴

Treasure-Hunting Scripts

- Connection first: "Come sit with me a sec."
- Affirm then coach: "I see your determination. Let's aim that strength at the right target."
- Name the good in conflict: "It was honest to tell your brother how you felt; now let's choose respectful words."

Weekly Rhythm to Sustain the Shift

- Sunday: 10-minute SHAPE check-in (one note per child).
- Weeknights: One ABC affirmation at dinner or bedtime.
- Monthly: Family "Treasure Board"—post sticky notes with things you saw God growing in each person.

Blessing (speak over your child)

May the Lord remind you who you are—His image-bearer and beloved.

May courage rise, kindness grow, and wisdom take root.

May you see the good God is growing in you, and join Him with joy.

Amen.

This week's assignment: Run the 3×3 Treasure Hunt and write one ABC per child each day. You'll be surprised how quickly the room feels different when your eyes learn to find the gold.

¹⁴ "Studies that involve measuring event-related brain potentials (ERPs), which show the brain's response to specific sensory, cognitive, or motor stimuli, have shown that negative stimuli elicit a larger brain response than positive ones." <https://www.verywellmind.com/negative-bias-4589618#:~:text=Studies%20that%20involve%20measuring%20event,brain%20response%20than%20positive%20ones.>



Conclusion

Living the One Story at Home

Every family has a story. Some of it is planned, much of it unfolds in the everyday moments—the ones that often feel too ordinary to matter. But this is where the One Story comes alive. God's redemptive narrative isn't just something to be studied on Sunday mornings; it's meant to be lived in your kitchen, whispered at bedtime, shared in laughter, and practiced in the quiet, ordinary habits that form hearts over time.

Through the pages of this booklet, we've explored how rhythms like covenant love, shalom, personal faith, intentional values, muscle memory, and treasure hunting can anchor your family in God's bigger story. You don't need to build a perfect home. You need a faithful home—one built with rhythm—one step, one habit, one act of grace at a time.

Your rhythms in the daily mess of family life can reflect the 5 Rs of the redemptive story:

- **Right Relationship** — delighting in God's good design
- **Relationship Broken** — acknowledging our need for grace
- **Repercussions** — living honestly in the real world
- **Repentance** — turning our hearts toward Him again and again
- **Restoration** — experiencing His renewal in our homes

When your family lives inside this story, your everyday life becomes a living testimony to God's faithfulness. Even your imperfect moments—the hard days, the arguments, the tears—become spaces where the Gospel breathes hope.

So take what you've learned here and start small. Pick one rhythm. One value. One shining-face moment. Then repeat it, and watch how God weaves your family's story into His. Watch how satisfying it is to be in right relationship with God and each other.

May your rhythms point your children to Jesus.

May generations after you find their place in God's Story because of the work you started today.



About Steve

I'm married with three children. I serve as a missionary with FamilyLife Canada. We envision every family receiving Christ's help and hope, flourishing and living on mission. If you'd like to learn more about FamilyLife Canada, please visit our website, www.familylifecanada.com.

To go deeper, get personal parent or family ministry leadership coaching, please visit my website, www.stevenbourque.com. I equip couples and parents, in partnership with churches, to build connected families with coaching and without financial burden.

To partner in prayer or financially, please connect with me or go to my giving page using the QR code or going to this link: p2c.sh/bourque.

