

PURPOSEFUL LIFE PRACTICES

We can be like “a vine ... growing on a trellis and cultivated toward maturity. ... The trellis curbs our tendency to wander ... and as mature vines we are cultivated to produce an abundance of fruit for the glory of God.”

— Steve Macchia

Instead of talking about bad habits, let’s consider this: What is the best habit you have? You know, the one you really need to hold on to.

We all have habits that guide our lives. And in days of chaos and uncertainty, it’s important — especially for children — to have habits and rhythms. **The natural rhythms of life can bring our children to an awareness of God** — until walking with God through the day becomes a life-long habit. If we have purposeful life practices, they will nurture our souls — and the souls of the children we influence.

For many centuries people have called this spiritual practice “having a Rule of Life.” They meant “rule” as a set of repetitious practices that support us in having a growing faith, a blossoming love relationship with God. One church leader from long ago described these habitual spiritual rhythms as “**something to hang on to in the dark.**” These are the practices we have acquired over time that we reach for — without even thinking — when we need to be steadied.

We are called to purposeful life practices by God. The Bible says this: **Take your everyday, ordinary life — your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life — and place it before God as an offering ... fix your attention on God. You’ll be changed from the inside out.** (Romans 12:1-2 *The Message*) (Read those verses in several versions.) The ordinary becomes sacred as the Spirit of God uses it to transform us.

If you want the children in your care to enjoy the true abundance of a life in God’s presence, then begin early in their lives to invite them into purposeful spiritual practices! It is in his presence where they will begin to be fully who God created them to be. As we move forward into developing intimacy with God, we will each discover the personal spiritual habits that will nurture our unique relationship with God. And we can offer that great blessing to our children as well.

Start the conversation with your child!

“Come and sit with me a minute. Let’s ask God to tell us something which will help us love him completely, with every part of ourselves, every part of our lives ...”



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INVITATIONS TO ENGAGE

EARLY CHILDHOOD (2-6 years old)

“What is your favorite song about Jesus? I will sing that song to you while you brush your teeth every morning this week. Then at bedtime would you like to sing it for me?”

“While you wash your hands, let’s sing, ‘Clean my heart, O God, make it ever true. Clean my heart, O God, make me be like you.’ Now let’s sing it again!”

What are the child’s current habits? Use them as contact moments with God.

ELEMENTARY AGE (5-10 years old)

“Every time we sit down to eat, we say thanks to God (or maybe for your family bedtime prayers are more of a routine). Let’s think of a way that we can turn those prayers into real conversations of thanks to God. Let’s make the ordinary extraordinary!”

Maybe it’s as simple as standing up to pray or holding hands.

PRETEEN/EARLY ADOLESCENT (10-14 years old)

“Will you read these verses from Romans 12:1-2 to me? I’m wondering what ideas God might give you if you would ask him how he would have us do what is in Romans. Would you ask God to help me understand that and then I will do the same for you?”

“How can you invite God to be with you all day? What ordinary, routine things do you do that you can use as ongoing reminders that God is really here with you — no matter where here is?”

“What time of the day is most stressful for our family? What could we do to turn that part of the day into a time to ask God for help? What verse from Scripture could be our ‘HELP US!’ verse?”

RECOMMENDED RESOURCE

Crafting a Rule of Life, by Stephen A. Macchia