



May 2008

Sandy Balocca
 Topeka Bible Church
 Children's Ministries
 1135 SW College Ave
 Topeka, KS 66604
 785-234-5545
 sbalocca@topekabiblechurch.org

Keep the End Goal in Mind

Life with little ones can leave parents in day-to-day survival mode. Calendars and to-do lists are essential for navigating countless appointments, chores, school activities, work obligations, and more.

Your immediate goals might range from potty-training a toddler to planning your summer schedules. But what's your ultimate goal as parents? Are you merely trying to prepare kids for adulthood?



While children's earthly future is definitely important, our main focus must be children's eternal future. It can be hard to keep that in mind with each day's pressures and obligations. But what really matters is making sure our children spend eternity with Jesus. To do that:

Develop a strategy. Partner with your church's children's ministry to ensure that your children get age-appropriate Christian education at every stage. Reinforce that education at home by using the take-home papers weekly.

Make sure everyone's on the same page. Talk to your spouse, family members, and your children's caregivers about what's most important to you, even if you think they already know.

Choose intentionally. Arrange your calendar around your big-picture goal. If activities start to interfere with what's really important, re-evaluate and re-work your family's schedule. When faith becomes the top priority for your family, it also will become the top priority for your children.

Seeking Good 'Outcomes'

What are parents most devoted to helping their children experience? In a Barna Group survey, the top answer was getting a good education (39%). Next was helping kids feel loved (24%), followed by enabling them to have a meaningful relationship with Jesus Christ (22%). Research also shows that most people become Christians by age 12 or 13, which highlights the importance of intentional spirituality. "What we build into a child's life prior to the age of 13 represents the moral and spiritual foundation that defines them as individuals and directs their choices for the remainder of their life," George Barna writes.

Ask God:

1. To help you keep a proper perspective about earthly and heavenly things.
2. To guide your efforts to raise children who love him.
3. To grow and nurture your children's faith and lead them to salvation.

Parenting Insights

In *With All Their Heart*, Christine Yount Jones shares practical tips for communicating the Gospel message clearly to children:

1. **Use concrete terms.** Instead of talking about "asking Jesus into your heart," let kids know that God wants to "become your heavenly Father."
2. **Begin a dialogue.** Talk about how you became a Christian and what God has done for you. As you explain Jesus' death and resurrection, ask lots of clarifying, open-ended questions.
3. **Celebrate expressions of faith.** Remember special spiritual milestones, such as baptism birthdays. Give kids age-appropriate Bibles so they can continue growing in their relationship with Jesus.

OpenTheBook

**"I have remained faithful. And now the prize awaits me—the crown of righteousness, which the Lord...will give me on the day of his return."
2 Timothy 4:7-8**

The "prize" of heaven waiting for faithful Christians far surpasses any earthly goal we could ever achieve. Help children get to know Jesus with these simple activities.

Teachable Moments

- 1. Start with Jesus.** Each weekday, begin your morning with Jesus. As a family, pray together before breakfast or on the way to school.
- 2. Apply it to life.** After Sunday school, ask your children not only about what they learned but also how they can put the lessons into practice. Keep take-home papers in a visible location and talk about them often.
- 3. Create a poster journal.** Write categories such as "Thank you, God, for...", "Help me, God, with..." and "God, please bless...." Hang the poster in a central place so all family members can write on it throughout the week. On the weekend, talk about the entries. Keep a Bible handy for reference.



"So commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these words of mine. Tie them to your hands and wear them on your forehead as reminders. Teach them to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are **ON THE ROAD, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up." Deuteronomy 11:18-19, NLT**

What's most important to your children? It's never too early to get kids thinking about their purpose in life...and the life to come. Use these conversation-starters:

1. Talk about the most valuable thing you own. How would you feel if you lost it?
2. What is the best present or prize you've ever received? What are some of the special gifts that God gives each of us?
3. Talk about what you most look forward to about next year, about being a grown-up, and about heaven.
4. What do you believe about Jesus? How can you show Jesus that you love him?

Family Experience: Faith-Builders

Use these fun ideas to help children understand what it means to be a Christian. Afterward, use the Bible references to tie the activities to God's Word.

• **Repentance Run (Mark 1:14-15)**—Have children line up. On "go," have them run in one direction. Every time you yell "repent," kids have to turn on a dime and go the other way. Afterward, explain that "repent" means to turn from going our own way and go Christ's way instead.

• **Follow the Leader (Matthew 4:18-20)**—For younger children, play a game of Follow the Leader to help them understand that once people become Christians, Jesus wants us to follow and imitate him by how we live.

• **Lights On! (Acts 26:18)**—Turn out all the lights in a room and talk with children about what it's like to be in the darkness. Then turn on the lights and discuss what it's like to be in the light. Make connections between this experience and becoming a member of God's kingdom of light. Then share ideas about how we can be "lights" for other people.





What's Playing at the Movies

Movie: *The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian*
(Walt Disney)

Genre: Science/fiction, fantasy

Rating: This film is not yet rated.

Release Date: May 16

Cast: William Moseley, Georgie Henley, Skandar Keynes, Anna Popplewell

Synopsis: The Pevensie siblings travel back to Narnia in this thrilling, perilous sequel. More than 1,300 years have passed, and evil King Miraz now rules. The kids meet Prince Caspian, the rightful heir to the throne. They set off to find Aslan, who helps them restore Prince Caspian's reign and save Narnia.

Discussion Questions: If you could travel to any time or place, what would you choose, and why? Do you think the world is mostly good or mostly evil, and why? What are some of the challenges you face each day? Where do you turn when you're scared? How does God help us through our troubles?



What Music Is Releasing

Artist: Leona Lewis

Album: *Spirit*

Artist Info: Since winning a vocal competition in Great Britain, this pop sensation has been climbing the charts in Europe and now in America. Lewis, 23, is being compared to vocal powerhouses such as Mariah Carey and Whitney Houston.

Summary: Lewis' album contains mostly ballads that address topics such as lost love and broken hearts. Her target audience is preteens.

Discussion Questions: Why are love and heartbreak such popular subjects for young singers? Do you think these ballads provide a good picture of what relationships are really like? Is it easy or hard to fall in love? to stay in love?



What Games Are Out

Title	Content	Rating & Platform
<i>Game Party</i>	This inexpensive collection of games such as shuffleboard is best enjoyed in groups of two or more.	E; Wii
<i>Hot Shots Golf: Out of Bounds</i>	Kids can customize a golf tournament with other players.	E for mild suggestive themes; PS3
<i>Sega Superstars Tennis</i>	This game promotes the Sega franchise and its popular characters.	E10+ for mild blood and fantasy violence; numerous platforms.

GAME RATINGS KEY: EC=Early Childhood, E=Everyone (ages 6+), E10+ (ages 10+), T=Teen (ages 13+)



Culture & Trends

What's happening right now that may affect your children and family

In a recent KidsPoll, 882 kids ages 9-13 revealed how they spend their time:

HOMEWORK

- 81% spend 1 hour or less on homework each night
- 10% spend 2 hours on homework each night
- 8% spend 3 or more hours on homework each night

ACTIVITIES

- 47% of kids are involved in 1 or 2 organized activities (sports, music, clubs, etc.)
- 39% are involved in 3 or more activities

SCREEN TIME

- 49% of kids spend 3 or more hours in front of the TV or computer each school day
- 35% spend 1 hour or less in front of the TV or computer each school day



(kidshealth.org)

May 2008

				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31