

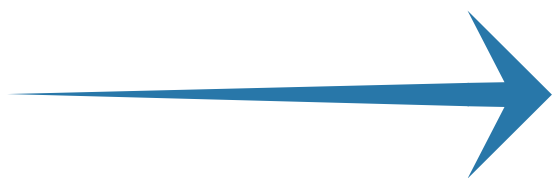
PARENTING
WITH
PURPOSE

CONNECTING YOUR
CHILD WITH JESUS

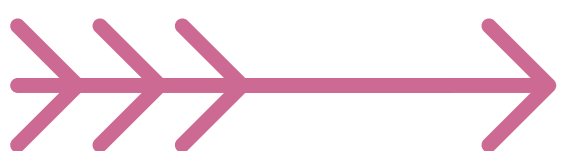
BRAD KLASSEN

Parenting With Purpose: Connecting your Child with Jesus

As a parent, if you are like me, you have a desire and a heart to see your children love Jesus and grow in Him. This could be based on many different things.



Maybe for you it's because of the life change He has made in your life.



Maybe it's because you know the truth of His word and you want your kids to know His truth too.



Maybe it's simply because you want to see them in Heaven with you one day.



Maybe you have a different reason.

Whatever your reason, as a Christian parent, this is not a bad desire. In fact, this is a God-given job when you become a parent.

Paul writes in **Ephesians 6:4** that fathers are to

“Bring them (their children) up in the training and instruction of the Lord.”

He also writes in **I Thessalonians 2:12** that a parent is to be:

Encouraging, comforting, and urging their children to “live lives worthy of God.”

Now, I know that the Bible has many other references to parenting.

In fact, it is a well of wisdom from where we, who did not get an instruction manual with each kid, can dive into and learn how to do what seems to be impossible.

But how do we do this in today’s world?

Paul didn’t have iPods, Netflix, and the next great video game system to compete against. He didn’t have unlimited texting or malls to shop at.

How do we grow our kids to love Jesus in a culture that is so overwhelming?

Let me offer few suggestions. This is by far not the only list of ideas out there, but it can be a start.



1.

Love Him Yourself

How can you expect your kids to love Jesus if you don't love Him yourself?

Are you growing in Him?

Are you spending time in His word?

Are you allowing Him to change and shape your life?

This is the foundation of helping your kids grow. They need to see you do devotions (or at least see evidence of it).

Do they know you are praying and reading Scripture?

If not, take some time right now to make some changes in your life for this.



2.

Pray

This is key.

Pray for them.

Pray with them.

Let them pray.

Just pray.

In our home, our kids often want to pray at the dinner table. As we have heard their prayers, we have had many times where “Amen” was immediately followed with us busting our guts in laughter. Kids not only say the craziest things, they also pray them.

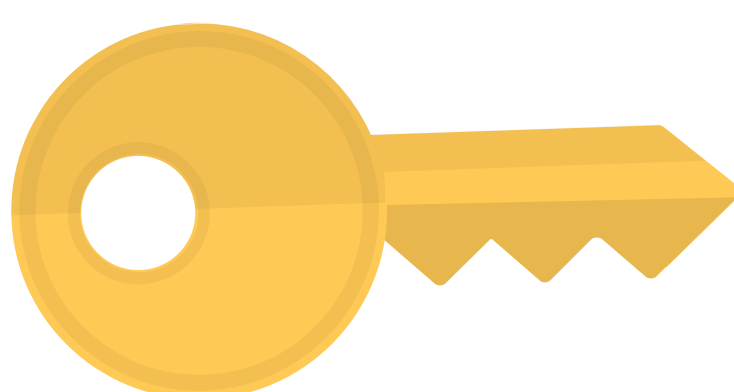
And this is okay!

Jesus knows they are kids and He knows their hearts. What He wants is for them to know His heart, even at their young age. Prayer is an important aspect of having a relationship with Jesus. Help them learn to talk with Him early on.

When your kids come find you in the night because they had a bad dream, love them, and teach them that even in the fear of night, they are not alone and can talk to Jesus (**Ps 23:4**).

When they can't sleep, teach them to pray for their friends, teachers, or others until they feel the peace of Jesus rest their minds (**Philippians 4:6-7**).

In this world, we all need all the prayer we can get. Teach them while they are young.



3. Let the Bible Come to Life in Your Home



In our North American culture, we tend to forget that the Bible stories were lived by real people with real emotions.

When David wrote the Psalms, he wept.

When King Nebuchadnezzar was furious in [Daniel 3:19](#), he was really, really mad.

When Paul shouted at the jailer in [Acts 17:28](#), he had to be heard over the chaos that came after an earthquake. He SHOUTED!

Read the Bible with emotion.

Put yourself in the stories.

Let it come to life.

In our home, I tell our kids to look at the “**buts**” in the Bible. Yes, I tell them to look at **Biblical buts**. Once our preteen giggle fest ends, we look at what God is telling us with a big but. For example, look at [Romans 6:23](#) and be thankful for the God sized but in there. If our kids don’t understand that it is a real book, with real people, and real emotions, it will always be a distant and boring read.



Don't be Perfect

The truth is you won't be. As much as we are called to a life of holiness, God knows we will make many mistakes along the way. In our pursuit of God, we need to keep a life a grace. Grace for our kids AND grace for ourselves. Our kids are not perfect, and let's face it, their parents aren't either. Live a grace-filled life. A big part of this is being able to **SAY SORRY** to them when we make a mistake.

We need to model what an imperfect life with the perfect God looks like: **one of confession, forgiveness, and grace**



4.



5. Don't be Normal



This is an interesting one. We once had a friend over for supper. As she watched us around the table, she told us that what she saw was not normal. We were all there, sitting together, sharing our day and our lives together.

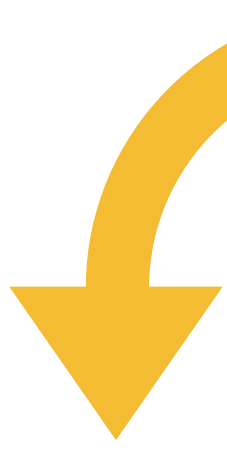
In our society, what's normal is not always beneficial.

Here are some small ideas that can make big differences:

- _____ **Eat supper together.**
- _____ **Turn off the TV.**
- _____ **Get rid of music that is not God-honoring.**
- _____ **Have a device free time at the restaurant.**

I say this knowing that each family has its own set of circumstances. In fact, I grew up in a trucking family where both my parents were on the road a lot, so the idea of the family dinner was not one I grew up with, but it is one that we have implemented in our home. What are ways you could be abnormal to our culture in your home?

6.



Memorize Scripture Together

Get Them Their Own Bible

When I asked my kids for advice on this write up, my son said that getting him his own Bible was a big deal.

He was 7 years old when he said this. Put God's word in their hands. Help them to understand it. There are so many options at the local Christian bookstore, I am sure they have one for your child.



In order to grow something, a seed needs to be planted. Plant the word of God in your hearts as a family.

Use your Bibles.

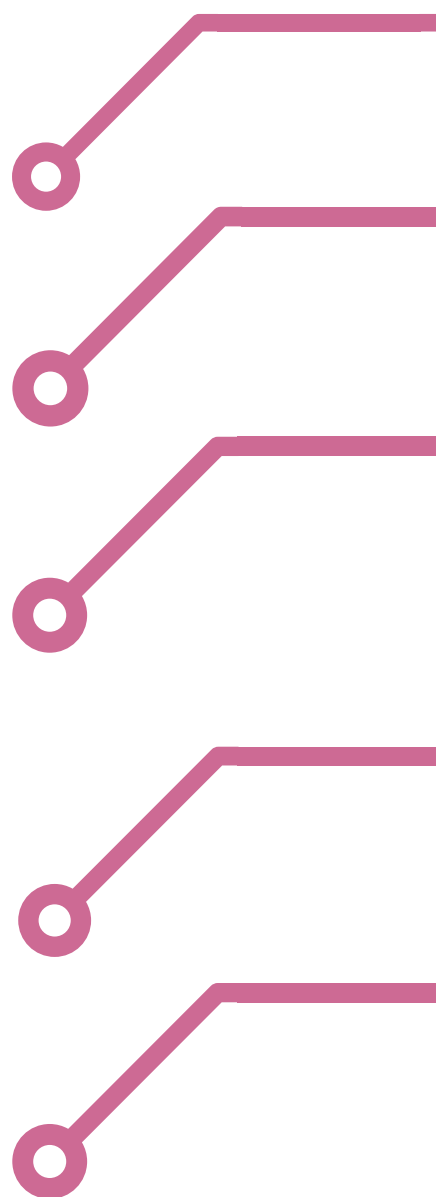
Have verses up around the house.

Talk about them at the table.

Challenge each other.

If devices are around, find a good app to help you out.

Find ways to sow God's seed into the hearts of your children.



7.



Love Them For Who They Are

8.



How many times have I told my kids to stop growing up, only to turn around and expect them to be older and more mature than they are ready to be?

As a parent, we need to walk the line of urging them forward (**I Thess. 2:12**) and yet not exasperating them (**Eph. 6:4**).

Love them for who they are, their interests, their silliness.

So many times my experience as a parent has grown when I have let them be them. They grow up too fast as it is. I don't need to help the process by pushing them out the door.

Laugh - A Lot



Life is full of confusion, questions, and pain. If that is the only picture our kids will have of the Christian life, they will have a very dark image of Jesus.

Jesus didn't promise a pain-free life, but He called us to a joy-filled one.

Is laughter a normal part of your home?

Haven't we all heard at some point in our lives that laughter is the best medicine?

Build laughter into your home, your life, and your kids.

9.

live
laugh
love

Let Them Choose

10.



As much as we want them to make the choice to live for Jesus, it is just that: **THEIR CHOICE**

If we push them, we may just push them in the opposite direction.

As parents we need to do our best and trust the One who gave them to us.

After all, they were His to begin with.

A great example of this is Jesus' parable of the Lost Son (**Luke 15:11-32**), where the father never pushes either of his sons, but lets them choose.

11.



Give Them Good Gifts



JESUS HAS A HEART TO GIVE.

In **Matthew 7:11** Jesus compares His giving to ours and says that if we who are full of sin can give good gifts, how much more will our Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask Him.

Luke writes it a bit different in **6:38** when he says how God will pour gifts into our laps.

Sometimes these gifts have a monetary value connected to them. God has dropped physical gifts into our laps. I wonder though how many of His gifts are different than that.

The gift of time, a hug, or an unexpected note in their lunch bag can speak volumes into their lives.

God gave us the ultimate good gift: a gift that had no monetary value, but carried all the blessings of heaven. He gave us His Son. Be creative and find ways to give gifts to your kids.

12.

Don't Give Them Everything They Want

This is not the heart of Jesus.

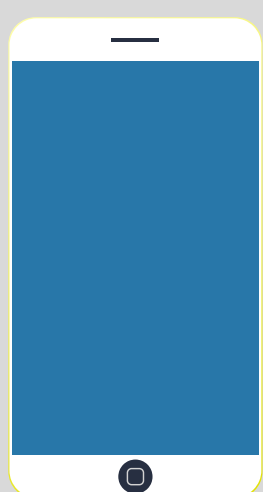
There are many references in the Sermon on the Mount to how God knows our needs and promises to take care of us ([Matthew 6:8, 6:25-34](#)).

Notice how He doesn't say He will give us our wants.

In [John 21](#) there is a powerful conversation between Peter and Jesus where Jesus tells Peter that he will be taken places he will not want to go. Later in the same passage they have a discussion about another disciple and Jesus asks Peter what it is to him if Jesus wants that disciple to have a different life.

Sometimes there is a difference between our wants and Jesus' wants.

Our kids need to learn that *we don't get everything we want, and that is okay.*



Live the Hardships of Life With Them

13.

I am sure you don't have to be told about how life is filled with pain and hardships, but if you are like me, you need to be reminded of how **Jesus is with us in the pain.**

Keep this age appropriate, but let them know how you are journeying the pain of life with Jesus.

When I lost my job and didn't know where to go next, we talked about it as a family. One day my daughter had an idea to have her own lemonade stand to raise money to help pay the bills. As cute and innocent as she was in that moment, that was not her burden to carry. We had a good talk about it and discussed how God knows what is going on and He will provide.

Maybe in their lives it is more along the lines of having a bad day at school, or a struggle with being picked on.

Whatever it is, point them to the truth that they can trust in Jesus when life is difficult.

In **Matthew 7:24-27** Jesus talks about the wise and foolish builders. It's interesting that they both got hit by the rains, but only one did not fall.

Let your kids know that you are building your life on His rock.



14.

Live the Joys of Life With Them

Jesus said He would bring “life to the full” (John 10:10).

We need to enjoy life to the best we can.

Is your home a fun place to be?

This is not about keeping up with the Joneses or whatever the next cool thing on the internet is.

But are you building joy into your home?

Enjoy each other’s presence.

Play games.

Color together.

Cook and bake together.

Go for walks.

Sit by a fire.

Not everything needs to cost a lot or anything at all. Find ways that your family can build relationships with each other.

The family is one of the most significant factors in a kid’s life. **Galatians 6:7** says that you will reap what you sow.

What are you sowing into your family life?

This is not meant to guilt anyone. Each family has a unique situation. It is, however, a challenge to look at your situation and discover ways to sow joy into your home so that you can reap joy as a family.





15.

Tell Them and Show That You Love Them

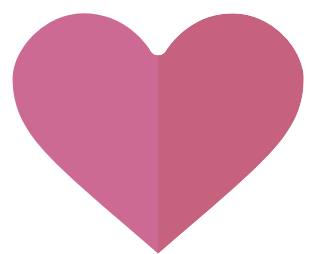
DON'T ASSUME THEY KNOW THAT YOU LOVE THEM.

Speak it into their lives. Spend time with them in ways they appreciate it.

The Bible is full of references of God's love for His people. He told us how much He loves us, then He showed it by sending Jesus **(John 3:16)**.

Do our kids know that we love them?

Take some time today to hug them and speak your love for them into their hearts.



16.

Have an Understanding of Good Theology Yourself

Kids have questions. They have big questions.

Are you able to hear their questions and answer them to the best that you can, or do you continually say "I don't know" to everything?

Kids need a safe place to ask their questions, especially the uncomfortable ones. **If they can't find answers at home, they will find them in other places.**

This doesn't mean that you will know all the answers to every question, and it's okay to say you don't know something.

But do you have a good grasp on the truth of God's word to be able to show your kids the truth of it?





17 • Get Involved in a Good Church

Maybe you already are attending a good church.

Great!

But I didn't say "attend,"

I said "get involved."

There is a big difference.

The Church is God's hands and feet to the world.

Be a part of it as a family.



Join a small group.

Find ways to volunteer as a family.

Join the children's ministry.

Move chairs for events.

Maybe there is a place in the church's kitchen for you.

Whatever it is, **SERVE!**

Teach your kids that serving in the church is a vital piece of experiencing a life with Jesus.



Growing our kids to love Jesus may seem like a difficult challenge.

We are up against some pretty tough opposition, but we also have the best Teammate one could ever have.

Jesus wants us to know Him.

That means He wants our kids to know Him.

And as much as I question His decision to give my kids the dad He did, I trust that He will be with me to help me be the best parent I can be.
