**The most important job you have**

***Mission as Life* wants to help you take responsibility for the spiritual, intellectual and social development of your children.**

*Deuteronomy 6:6-9 And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart.* ***You shall teach them diligently to your children****, and shall talk of them* ***when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up****. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.*

The teaching of our children involves formal and informal instruction. **The most effective means for embedding values and spiritual truth to our children involves them first seeing us live out those values in our lives and then having an opportunity to cement those values into their personal lives through action.**

For too long **many families have handed off the spiritual instruction of their children to the church**. Unfortunately, research shows that **churches are failing miserably at this**. Studies from the Southern Baptists have shown that up to 90% of youth who have spent their young lives in our churches, attended our Sunday schools and gone to our youth groups drop out of church after two years in college. A full 75% never return to church.

**Some important questions for you to consider:**

* How often do you talk to your children about how God expects them to use their skills and abilities in the world?
* How often do you take your children with you to serve others?
* Which of these two actions is more common, 1) you set aside church, opportunities for serving others, or other spiritual activity to pursue recreation; or 2) you set aside recreation or entertainment to pursue church, serving others, or other spiritual activity?
* How often do you use the “news”, current events, popular movies or music as a launching point for teaching spiritual truth (whether examples of what not to do or what to do)?
* What is your family’s sense of “calling” as it relates to God’s purposes in the world?

**Shaping family patterns to reflect God’s values**

**Five things you can do now to refocus your family**

* **1. Break the electronic addiction.** Too often family members are isolated by their iPods, cell phones, computers, game boys, and television. Designate specific times when these are to be turned off and you gather as a family to talk about what you have discovered in scripture, challenges you face in living out your faith, how God is using you to reach friends, and things for which God is burdening your heart.
* **2. Think global…act local.** Integrate a global perspective into your family’s life. **Begin to study other cultures together.** You can use ***Operation World***, which provides insight into cultures and how much they have been exposed to Christianity. Look around your community for local agencies where you and your family can serve together. **Visit ethnic neighborhoods, festivals, or restaurants and experience the culture.** Work with international students at a local college.
* **3. Rethink and reshape holidays.** Recapture holidays and celebrate them in ways that emphasize God’s Kingdom agenda. **Move the focus from the secular to the religious, from being self-centered to being other-centered, and from being materialistic to being spiritual.** You can even create new holidays or choose to celebrate those holidays on the Christian calendar which our society normally does not recognize. Have a party for God!
* **4. Rediscover the power of scripture.** People spend far too little time in the scriptures. **Carve out time for each person in the family personally and the family together to study God’s word.** Some ideas include reading it before or after meals, before bedtime, evening “quiet time”, etc. Use modern translations or vary them for different perspectives. Talk about what you read and isolate what you are expected to do based on what you read.
* **5. Alter your “change” orientation.** Begin to focus your family on freeing up financial resources for God’s Kingdom. **Start saving your loose change. Get the whole family involved in setting goals for giving and selecting specific ministries or causes to support.** Will it be helping the homeless? Alleviating child slavery? Supporting orphans? Supporting a specific missionary? Having a goal and charting your progress creates excitement (especially for kids) and helps build your willingness to faith to a higher goal. Once you succeed here, begin to look more closely at how your money is spent and **how you can free up more resources (maybe involving simplifying your life) to advance God’s Kingdom.**

# Is Your Parenting Hitting or Missing the Mark?

**It really depends upon what you are aiming for.** Like most parents you long for your children to “succeed” in life. But what does that mean? Is it merely getting into the right schools, having the right grades, the right friends and the right skills so that they can get the right job?

Ask yourself this question, “**Am I helping my kids develop the ‘right stuff’ from a Biblical perspective?**” Are you, like an archer, carefully aiming your parenting to produce Godly children who will not only have a vital relationship with Jesus Christ, but embody God’s Kingdom values in the way they live their lives?

**What can you do to help your kids develop spiritually?** Merely sending them to church activities isn’t enough. Studies show that 90% of youth who have heavily participated in church drop out after 2 years in college. For many youth, the checking out begins as early as the age of 16. They find packaged religion to be irrelevant to the real world. What can you do to counter this trend?

* **Embrace God’s Kingdom agenda.** Whether you know it or not, you are now teaching them values that either conform to or conflict with God’s Kingdom. When you decide to participate in an activity that regularly interferes with spiritual responsibilities (church attendance, Bible study, spiritual service) you have taught them that personal fulfillment is more important than obedience to and fellowship with God. You are on display to them 24/7. They watch your every move, how you spend your time, how you spend your money. They listen to what you talk about. Do they see in you generosity, compassion, and a love of God and His Word? Do they see you ordering your life around God’s priorities? You are the first Bible they have read and they started reading right after birth. What have they learned?
* Next, **create the environment.** How does the environment of your home aesthetically and socially reflect God’s Kingdom agenda? Children swim in the environment of the home. Things dear to God’s heart can be reflected even in the way you decorate your home. Have you as carefully thought about the “value environment” in your home as you have how you have selected its decor? Think of how you celebrate holidays… what can you do to turn them into “teaching moments” that zero in on what God values?
* **Teach by using experience.** Jesus taught people by taking them places and exposing them to real life. The world and all its activity became a textbook of illustrations Jesus used to drive home Biblical truth. The quickest and easiest way to do this is to begin to serve Christ as a family. Go on family mission trips together. Serve in your local area together. God has placed gifts and abilities in your family and He expects you to use them.