

Resurrecting the Family Devotion

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The traditional family devotion no longer works.

Sure, there are still parents who are able to routinely sit down quietly with their children and read the Bible or some devotional book. However, for most of us, it just doesn't happen.

I honestly thought family devotions would be simple for me. Before I had kids, I served as a children's minister, youth pastor, and at a Christian camp. Yet I failed miserably at leading a consistent devotional time with my kids. We have too many things working against us today.

Perhaps the biggest barrier is time or focus.

Work is no longer confined to the office or office hours. We seem to be constantly rushing kids from one activity to another. The internet begs us to binge on entertainment. Our cell phones constantly pulse with new posts, texts, and emails.

The success of the D-Day invasion during World War II is heavily credited to the Allied disinformation and diversion campaign, codenamed "[Operation Bodyguard](#)." This year-long deception involved double agents and actors, false radio transmissions and news articles, dummy aircraft and tanks, and even a fake army built around General Patton.

Distraction is one of our enemy's greatest weapons preventing us from focusing on what is important.

Successful family devotions require commitment. We have to be willing to make sacrifices and changes in order to carve out time for our kids. But before commitment can propel us into action, we have to believe that family devotions are vital. Unfortunately, I have always viewed family devotions as a requirement of all good Christian dads. And, if I wasn't doing anything, I felt guilty.

Here's the thing: mere obligation is a poor motivator. Passion, on the other hand, drives us to overcome obstacles.

Don't do family devotions because you have to, but because you want to. You may be wondering, *What if I don't want to?*

That's a fair question. I never wanted to. But then I discovered that it was because I never liked the family devotional books I tried.

I realized this one day at lunch, when I simply started asking the kids questions about a recent event in the news. The discussion turned into a rich family devotion!

Two things changed as a result. First, talking about current events was interesting and even fun. I enjoyed talking about things happening in our world and hearing how my kids viewed them. Second, I realized that a devotional time was about connecting with my kids. As parents, we all crave deep relationships with our children.

Today, I use what I call the "S.A.L.T." method to guide our time together.

- **SHARE** with them something important happening in our world today.
- **ASK** them questions about how they feel about it or what they would do.
- **LISTEN** to what they say before trying to present your view.
- **TALK** about how to view and respond to this event or issue based on our knowledge of God.

The key, really, is listening. I always viewed devotions as reading some book and telling my kids what to believe. However, if we listen first, they will care more about what we have to say.

It doesn't have to be perfect. And keep it simple. The goal is building a habit of conversation where your kids feel safe to express what they believe and think. If you do this now with the little things, they will come to you later to talk about the big things.

If you'd like more help, try the same devotions I use with my kids at [SaltDevotions.com](https://saltdevotions.com). They are available anywhere, anytime, on any device. Each week, simply select from new devotions that you can use at meal times, traveling in the car, or between soccer practices.

I had given up on family devotions, and maybe you have too, but it's possible to have amazing spiritual conversations with our kids if we (1) are willing to make it a priority, (2) remember that it's about building relationships, and (3) focus on listening.

And if you've never tried family devotions before, don't let the idea of leading them intimidate you. By starting out with a method like S.A.L.T., it doesn't have to feel difficult, contrived, or overwhelming. It may become your favorite part of the week!

Not a dad with kids at home? Share this resource with friends who do or the men in your church or small group and encourage them to give it a try!

Kevin McMillan is a sociologist, minister, and former Man in the Mirror team member. He is also a dad who has struggled with family devotions for over 10 years. Currently, Kevin lives in Colorado with his wife, Lesli, and their six kids (Emily, CS, King, Tristan, Madison, and Fox). You can learn about other projects Kevin is working at kevinmcmillan.com.

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