



# FAMILY VACATIONS

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Before you exclaim, "Family vacations? Who has time for that!", stop just one minute and let's think about what constitutes a family vacation. It might be that dream trip to Alaska or Florida or London, but it might be something much simpler. It might be an overnight to a water park, a weekend camping trip, a day at Valleyfair or the beach, a week at a cabin on a lake, a long weekend at Grampa and Gramma's, or a delicious Saturday at home with no tasks to accomplish.

What makes it a family vacation for you and your family? The only non-negotiable ingredient is (surprise!) the family. It is really important to include the entire family. Plan for it or not, this will be a time your family makes memories, stores up family stories, and decides who you are as a family. The location, the length, the events, the memories to be made, all these are yours to design to fit your family, ages and stages, interests, time available, and, yes, of course, the budget.

This is the perfect opportunity to practice the Four Keys for passing on faith. (Here is a little secret: most of them happen quite naturally on family vacations. This is just an invitation to be intentional about them.) They are:

\* **Caring Conversations:** Trust me, these start the minute you are in the car or otherwise on the way ... even if packing wasn't a high holy family moment!

\* **Family Devotions:** Include grace before meals, thanking God for the gift of this time together. Pause, awed by a landscape, a sunset, or the delight of new experiences and thank God. Get out your FaithTalk™ or FaithTalk™ with Children cards and experience faith-filled conversation.

\* **Rituals and Traditions:** Do something once with a child and it becomes the new family tradition. Bless one another. Eat special foods. Everything counts.

\* **Family Service:** Every-one pitches in with tasks. Pick up trash that isn't yours. Watch another family's child to give a harried parent a few minutes of peace.

And, here are more ideas for creating a family vacation:

## Family Activities

1. Plan a dream family vacation. Ask each person what, if time and money were no object, they would most love to do as a family. (It is important to listen to dreams. Remember, this costs you nothing in time or money, so be generous!) Now, listen. Just listen.
2. Create a Family Day Vacation Jar. Ask each member of the family to write on a slip of paper what they would most like to do as a family if they had one day to spend together. All agree to do whatever is important to the other members of the family. Draw one slip out and begin.
3. Make a scrapbook or photo album of past family vacations. Spend some time looking at pictures and memorabilia and telling stories. (Some of the best stories are the ones of quirks and foibles and misadventures. A sense of humor is a fabulous family bonding quality.)
4. Have each child keep a journal of your next vacation. This may be a written account, a collection of memorabilia or postcards, or pictures colored with crayons or markers.