



Time, God's Gift to Families

By Marilyn Sharpe

June 2005

Yes, I do know how busy you are! Your calendar or palm pilot is packed full. Your "to do" list grows every day. So many people of all ages need something from you. Occasion-ally even you need to eat and sleep.

But I also know that everything vital to the well-being of your family and each of its members happen in time. Real, face-to-face time. Not a note. Not a voice mail. Not an e-mail.

Many of us have seen the commercial with the busy mom and the little girl who asks to schedule an appointment with her mom. It's poignant. It's real. Let's create that time together before our children are no longer asking for it.

Family is the place you know and where you are known, where you love and are loved. To give this gift to your children — the gift of knowing, being known, loving, being loved, passing on faith and values, celebrating triumphs, healing wounds, giving hope — you need to be present.

How can we do this in such a busy world? Make it a priority.

In a week, Americans average 26 hours of television viewing, two hours nurturing faith ... and eight minutes having conversations of substance with their children.

Try this for one week:

- * Schedule 15 minutes a day to spend together as a family;
- * Sit down together to talk;
- * Turn off all the electronic devices and don't answer the phone;
- * Clear your mind of all those things you need to do before the day is over;
- * Be fully present and attentive;
- * Thank God for these incredible people in your life ... and let them know how you value them!

Remember that God came in Jesus Christ as the Word made flesh. He came as "Emmanuel, which means, 'God is with us.'" (Matthew 1:23)

God came to be in relationship with us. Can't we do the same with our children?

Family Activities

1. Schedule "family appointments" on your calendar for the next two months. Do it today!
2. Create a family fun jar, with each person in your household putting in ideas of things they'd like to do as a family. Everyone agrees ahead of time to do whatever activity is drawn from the jar ... without complaint.
3. Have a half-day family work-a-thon — clean up the yard, plant a garden, prepare a week of dinners, polish shoes together, get ready for a party. Put on music. Say "thank you." Go out for pizza (or your favorite family food) to celebrate.
4. Go on a picnic (or have it on a blanket at home if the weather doesn't cooperate) and tell stories about all family members when they were children.

Do one-on-one family dates. Have each pair plan an hour together, just the two of them. Walk around a lake or park. Visit a local site you've always meant to visit. Look at family pictures and tell stories. Go out for dessert.