

# Using the Bible as a Family

## Goals

- Regularly reading the Bible as a family and as individuals.
- For all members of the family to fall in love with the Bible.

## Barriers

- Catholics do not commonly read the Bible. 57% of U.S. Catholics say their frequency of reading the Bible outside religious services is “seldom/never.” Only 21% read the Bible at least weekly. (Pew Research, *U.S. Religious Landscape Survey*, <http://religions.pewforum.org/reports>)
- Many Catholic parents are not well-educated about the Bible. They are sometimes also embarrassed about this, and may not want to admit it. They may also feel inadequate if their children ask them questions they can't answer.
- The Bible can be difficult to read and understand. It can be like reading Shakespeare.

## Objectives

Purchase engaging, age-appropriate Bible(s)

- Make specific recommendations (see separate handout).
- Facilitate purchasing (e.g. bulk orders).
- Have sample copies for review, and use them at the parish.

Teach parents basic biblical literacy

- Online video can be a great option here.
- Don't assume any knowledge, and teach the basics: the basic structure, how to find particular verses, who wrote the Bible, etc.

Encourage regular use of the Bible in the home

- Suggest using it for bedtimes stories.
- Suggest using it for prayer, particularly during liturgical seasons.
- Explain how to find Mass readings: child versions can be read before or afterward.
- Offer family Bible study options.
- Scripture-based children's songs can be a great way to learn about the Bible.

Excite parents about reading the Bible themselves

- Recommend ways to read the Bible (not all the way through). Suggest starting with the Gospels.
- Introduce them to *The Message: Catholic/Ecumenical Edition*.
- Offer adult bible study group or book options.

[GrowingUpCatholic.com/bible](http://GrowingUpCatholic.com/bible)

# Praying as a Family

## Goals

- Regularly prayer together as a family.
- Cultivate self-motivation to pray.

## Barriers

- Many families seldom pray together. 37% of U.S. Catholic families *never* pray together. (Pew Research, *U.S. Religious Landscape Survey*, <http://religions.pewforum.org/reports>)
- Many parents seldom pray alone. 58% of Catholics in the U.S. pray daily. (Pew Research, *U.S. Religious Landscape Survey*, <http://religions.pewforum.org/reports>)
- Many Catholic parents are intimidated by prayer. They may not remember the words to formal prayers. They may not know where to start in offering spontaneous prayer or making prayer fun or engaging for their children.

## Objectives

Offer parents resources and tools for teaching traditional prayers

- Offer the prayer texts
- Suggest good ways to help children memorize prayers

Teach creative and engaging prayer forms

- Teach creative mealtime and bedtime prayers, as well as traditional ones.
- Suggest blessing and prayer books that children will appreciate.
- Teach about other creative prayer forms, such as praying through art (*Praying in Color* by Sybil MacBeth), prayer through writing (*Writing to God* by Rachel Hackenberg), and imaginative prayer (Ignatian contemplation).

Encourage regular prayer

- Suggest bedtime blessings/prayers.
- Encourage seasonal prayer practices: Advent wreath-making party, Jesse Tree crafts, Lenten prayer book, etc.
- Encourage regular mealtime prayers.
- Suggest prayer as a special activity. We know of families where one parent has regular prayer time with each child once a week. The child picks who/what they pray for and record it in their prayer journal.

Suggest praying at special occasions

- Rites of passage (even relatively minor ones: first day of school) can be great opportunities for prayer.

Encourage parents to model

- We all need to turn to God in prayer
- Telling your child about your own prayer will be a bigger encouragement to them than just telling them to pray.

[GrowingUpCatholic.com/prayer](http://GrowingUpCatholic.com/prayer)

# Having Supper as a Family

## Goals

- Families sharing meals together.
- Families using their mealtimes to spend time together, work together, and connect with each other.
- For families to have an ingrained experience of an intimate meal, so they can relate to our Eucharistic meal-centered faith.

## Barriers

- U.S. families are eating dinner together much less often. Only 51% of families eat dinner together daily. Many only do so a few times a week. (Pew Research, 2010, <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2010/11/18/iv-family/>).
- U.S. families are having shorter and shorter mealtimes.
- Families are more and more distracted by televisions and always-on electronic devices.

## Objectives

Challenge parents to make mealtimes a priority

- Affirm that it will take significant effort and prioritization to make this happen (you will have to say “no” to something else).
- Inform them of the positive effects of family meals.

Coach parents to make supper meaningful

- Remove distractions (e.g. put all mobile phones in a basket in another room)
- Make it a little special (with flowers or a candle), but keep it simple.
- Have everyone helping setting up and cleaning up.
- Discuss the events of the day. What happened at school or at work? Everyone can share a “highlight” and “lowlight” of their day.

[GrowingUpCatholic.com/supper](http://GrowingUpCatholic.com/supper)

# Faith Sharing as a Family

## Goals

- Families sharing caring, faith-based conversation
- Families connecting their daily life experience with their faith and perhaps Sunday liturgy

## Barriers

- On average, a child spends three minutes per day in non-directive communication with his or her parents.
- Families are so distracted with activities that it's hard for them to be present to each other (or God).
- Families can be intimidated in having faith-based conversations.

## Objectives

Help families insert faith sharing into their regular routine

- Have them insert it into “already scheduled” household life: supper, after particular events, etc.
- Special prayer or sharing times rarely work and are hard to maintain

Suggest reflective talk

- After an event such as sports practice or dance rehearsal, do "reflective talk." Simply ask questions of each other about the day and what's happening.
- Children can be drawn into a discussion through this Examen. Ask questions such as: What touched you about this event? What memories do you have about it? What really struck you in this? What did you learn from this?

Promote Using a Question of the Week

- Pick one question to reflect on as a family each week.
- Try drawing it from the Gospel for Sunday Mass, but don't be tied to that approach.
- Make it provocative and draw household members into the discussion.
- Post it on the fridge. Bring it up at supper.
- Subscribe to our Weekly Readings email for questions of the week for both parents and children.

[GrowingUpCatholic.com/faithsharing](http://GrowingUpCatholic.com/faithsharing)