



Grow Kids' Faith This Summer

The warm, relaxing summer months are perfect for reconnecting as a family. They're also ideal for helping your children stay connected to God and boosting their faith in him.

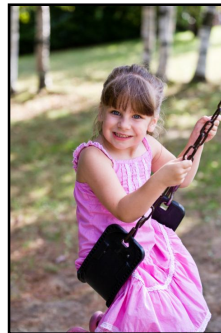
For starters, participate in faith-building opportunities available in your community. These include vacation Bible school, church camps, outdoor worship, mission projects, and more. But realize that faith growth can occur in unstructured, day-to-day settings, too. By talking to your children often about God—and your relationship with him—you model faith in action for young Christians.

Use these ideas as a springboard for summer faith growth:

Take it all in. Admire God's handiwork as you travel and sight-see. Acknowledge and thank our Creator. Use simple object lessons; for example, draw a line of chalk in front of some ants and notice that most of them won't cross it. Then talk about what it means to follow and obey God.

Take out the "trash." Together, clean up a park or street. Then discuss what God wants us to fill our minds and hearts with (see Philippians 4:8).

Take it outside. For variety, conduct your family devotions outside in the shade. Use a book-club format to go through a book of the Bible or a children's Bible storybook. Encourage questions and have children put themselves in the people's shoes. Then apply the lessons to situations we face each day as we walk with God.



Summertime Stats

As you nurture your children's faith this summer, also keep tabs on their physical and mental well-being.

- More than 10% of children between the ages of 6 and 12 care for themselves during the summer months, without supervision. If you can't afford outside child care, arrange to swap baby-sitting with a trusted friend.
- Most kids lose an average of two months of learning during the summer. Keep them growing mentally by participating in your local library's summer reading program.

PowerSource

Ask God:

1. To bless your summer months with fun, rest, and faith growth.
2. To work in your children's hearts and give them the desire to know God more.
3. To safeguard your family members physically and spiritually this summer.

Parenting Insights

Never underestimate the power of family faith conversations. They're critical for children's spiritual development. So often, though, we feel ill-equipped to openly discuss matters of faith. Remember the handy acronym **ALOT** to help you tackle any topic from a faith-based perspective.

- **Ask**—Find out how your child feels about the situation or topic.
- **Listen**—Listen actively, without interrupting, while your child responds.
- **Open**—Open your heart—and your Bible, if you need to.
- **Talk**—Talk about your thoughts and feelings on the subject—and how they're shaped by God's Word. Then also talk to God in prayer about the issue.

OpenTheBook

**"Faith is the confidence that what we hope for will actually happen; it gives us assurance about things we cannot see."
Hebrews 11:1**

When we believe in God and trust his promises, we can be certain of his work in our lives—and of spending eternal life with him in heaven.

Teachable Moments

1. **Fruits of Faith**—Pass around a basket of fruit. Have each person select a fruit that represents a character trait; then have that person share who their fruit represents and why. This is a great way to affirm the faith traits you see in one another.
2. **Faith Stretchers**—Give each person a rubber band, and talk about how it feels when your faith is stretched. Have each person stretch their rubber band to show how stretched their faith has been lately—a little or a lot.
3. **Faith Quilt**—Create a quilt-type mural to signify your family's commitment to faith in God. Brainstorm ways you serve God and new ways you can honor him in your home. Write or draw these ideas on squares of white card stock, and tape them to a wall. Add to your mural all summer long.



"So commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these words of mine. Tie them to your hands and wear them on your forehead as reminders. Teach them to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are ON THE ROAD, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up." Deuteronomy 11:18-19, NLT

When you hit the road or just kick back with your children this summer, encourage them to open up about life and faith by asking these discussion-starting questions:

1. What dreams and plans do you have for the summer? What goals should our family set for the next couple of months?
2. When you think about your priorities, where does faith come in? How can people tell how important your faith is to you?
3. How strong would you say your faith is right now? What are some ways we can trust God more?
4. Which of God's promises means the most to you now, and why?

Family Experience: God's Wonderful World

Learn about God's creation—and our role in it—by doing these summertime activities together.

- **Shine**—To make your own "planetariums," place oatmeal containers on scrap wood to protect floors. Help kids use a hammer and nail to gently punch holes in the bottoms of the containers. Turn out the lights. Put flashlights inside the containers and enjoy the light show on a ceiling or wall.
- Say: "Stars are large balls of gas that produce color, heat, and light. A star changes over time, but it takes millions—even billions—of years to live out its life span. The eye can typically see 2,000 stars on a clear night." Then ask: "What would night be like without stars?" Read aloud Matthew 5:14-16. Ask: "Why do you think God wants us to be lights on earth? How can you shine for God?"
- **Grow**—Plant seeds close enough to the sides of clear plastic cups to be visible. Care for the seeds by giving them water and sunlight. After about a week, roots will be visible.
- Read aloud 1 Corinthians 3:7. Ask: "How did your seed form roots? What role did you, the potting soil, and the water play? What role did God play? Could the plant have sprouted without God?" Talk about ways we rely on God for our spiritual and physical growth. Close in prayer, thanking God for making all things possible.





What's Playing at the Movies

Movie: *The Karate Kid* (June 18)

Genre: Family drama, action

Rating: PG (for bullying, martial-arts action violence, and some mild language)

Cast: Jaden Smith, Jackie Chan, Taraji P. Henson

Synopsis: In this remake of the 1984 film, 12-year-old Dre has to leave Detroit for China because of his single mother's job. Dre is smitten by a female classmate, but cultural differences stand in the way. He also becomes the target of the school bully. A maintenance man teaches Dre kung fu, which helps him mature and makes life in his new surroundings more bearable.

Discussion Questions: Think of a time you've been an outsider: What made you feel like you didn't belong? What helped you adjust to the new situation? Read aloud Romans 12:2. What are some ways you maintain distance from the world while living in it?



What Music Is Releasing

Artist: Hanson

Album: *Shout It Out*

Artist Info: Before the Jonas Brothers, there was Hanson, a three-brother pop band from Oklahoma best-known for the 1997 hit "MMMBop." Now in their 20s, Isaac, Taylor, and Zac record under their own label. They're also involved with fighting poverty and AIDS in Africa.

Summary: *Shout It Out*, Hanson's fifth studio album, is full of energetic, R&B-flavored pop rock and tributes to classic artists. Several songs, including "Thinking 'Bout Somethin,'" address relationships gone awry. "Me Myself and I" is about self-reliance: "There's still someone that I can tell my troubles to. Me, myself and I will never be alone."

Discussion Questions: What things can you do well on your own? Do you mind asking for help? Why or why not? What are the pros and cons of being independent? Read aloud 1 Corinthians 12:12. What does it mean to you to be part of a larger "body" of Christ?



What Games Are Out

Title	Content	Rating & Platform
<i>Scrabble Slam!</i>	This card-based game challenges players to spell words as quickly as they can.	E; Nintendo DSi (downloadable)
<i>Harvest Moon: Hero of Leaf Valley</i>	In this slower-paced game, players run a family farm and try to keep it from being taken over by a corporation.	E; PSP
<i>Skate3</i>	Players compete in new skateboarding challenges on their own and in teams. Contains crude humor and mild violence.	T; Xbox 360, PS3

RATINGS: EC=Early Childhood, E=Everyone (ages 6+), E10+ (ages 10+), T=Teen (ages 13+)



What's happening right now that may affect your children and family:

- Smart phones have become handy baby-sitting tools for on-the-go parents. For \$1.99, the iStoryTime iPhone app will "read" a story to young listeners.
- The number of children with a food allergy has increased by 18%. One in every 25 kids is susceptible to allergic reactions from such ingredients as nuts, eggs, milk, and wheat.

(U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)



Quick Stats

- 85% of parents believe they have the primary responsibility for their children's moral and spiritual development.

(*Transforming Children Into Spiritual Champions* by George Barna)

- The number of day camps in the U.S. has grown by nearly 90% in the past 20 years. More than half of camps now include community-service programs.

(acacamps.org)