

INVITATION TO RHYTHM

By the time our children turn nine years old most parents feel like they run a part-time taxi service to get everyone where they need to be when they need to be there. School plays, soccer practice, church activities, sleepovers, birthday parties, basketball practice, dance, piano lessons, and an occasional trip to the doctor send our family calendars into a chaotic frenzy.

As parents we end the day and wonder how we made it through, but have you ever stopped to wonder what your child is feeling? Do you find yourself having to constantly push them to keep up? Are they pushing back on you because of it? How can we set our kids up to discover a better rhythm to life?

This year we are **inviting your child to discover a rhythm for their life**. Your child will begin to be pulled in many different directions so we are hoping to help them learn to manage a great gift God has given them...time. The truth is that time is a limited resource. There is only so much of it and we are only given a certain amount of days to live life. Every moment truly does matter and making the most of it means we have to discover a rhythm that maximizes the time we're given.


Some parents want their kids to have schedules that are packed so they can experience many different opportunities as a child. Some parents want to focus their child's activity so they can still have time to play, explore, discover and still be a kid. No matter the preference for your family we hope this year we can help your child overcome an out-of-control pace that brings stress on them to an intentional pace that brings balance. When we help kids to learn to manage time and set priorities we set the up for healthy balance in life.

RHYTHM AND TIME

We want you to **commemorate the commitment to rhythm with a gift related to time**. This can be a new watch, a family heirloom watch, an hourglass/sand timer, a sports themed/animal themed calendar, etc. Take into consideration your child's level of responsibility. You may not want to spend a large amount on a watch if your child may lose it or break it.

Present the gift to your child during a special time, possibly at the dinner table at home one evening. If the gift is a family heirloom and there's a story to share or a relative to present the gift, even better. Use the script below as a guide during the presentation or use it as a reference in writing a note inside the gift.

We've spent some time looking at what it means for your life to have RHYTHM with your priorities, your time with God, and with rest. We've learned it's OK to say no in order to say yes to things that are most important to us. We've figured out a plan for a consistent time to spend with God, and scheduled time to rest each week. All of us have a limited amount of time each day, and we want to use each minute to its fullest. I believe you are ready to take on this rhythm we've discussed and honor God with how you spend your time. We want you to have this gift. Every time you look at it we hope you'll remember that time is a gift from God and we all get to choose how we spend it.



HELPING YOUR CHILD DEVELOP A GOD TIME

Explain to your child that God time is simply time between them and God. During God time you can take time to read the Bible, pray, and listen to music.


The first step is determining a TIME and PLACE. Good places to choose from would be his/her bedroom, kitchen table, wherever they do their homework, etc. Then figure out a time. Are they an early riser, do it in the morning. Maybe right after school is out or after homework, while you're cooking dinner, or right before bed are all good options.

Next, help your child know what to do during his/her God time. Make sure they have a good translation of the Bible to read (NLT, NIV, ICB, The Message, etc.). You can direct your child to read a story each day and then write down in a journal what they read/what it meant. Starting in the New Testament in Matthew is a good start. There are also many devotional guides for young children at your local Christian bookstore.

Maybe your child is unsure how to pray, and it's possible you've never talked with them about HOW to pray. Prayer is simply talking and listening to God. They can pray by first thanking God, then telling God how much they love Him, and end with asking God for needs.

In order to make this most successful, it'd be best for you to do this with them for about a week. Help them think about what they're reading. Pray first, then let them pray. This is your chance to model for them how to have a God time. Once your child seems to understand, let them initiate this on their own. Remember to check in with them weekly to see how their God time is going. Ask them what they are learning about God, Jesus or the bible.

Having a consistent God time is something with which most believers struggle. This is your opportunity to make sure your child is set up for success. That he/she knows the importance of a God time and that it becomes a very natural rhythm in his/her everyday life.



9-YEAR-OLD ACTIVITIES

In talking with parents, the general theme of families with nine-year-olds is that life just gets crazy this year. Children are beginning to discover talents and participate in more extra-curricular activities than ever before leading to a rushed and, sometimes, chaotic life. We want to help families discover a rhythm that is doable so that activities aren't controlling their time, but that families are controlling their activities.

ACTIVITY 1: RHYTHM WITH REST

With the craziness of life, the one thing that often gets pushed away is time to REST. We were made for much more than constant entertainment.

We were created for peace which can be nearly impossible with the demands of life. Look at how God took a rest in **Genesis 2:1-3**

"So the heavens and the earth and everything in them were completed. By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing. So on the seventh day he rested from all of his work. God blessed the seventh day and made it holy. He rested on it. After he had created everything, he rested from all of the work he had done."

God gave His absolute best then rested when done. Ask your child, when do you rest? Make sure to include times when they're actually sleeping as well, since we know many kids don't get enough sleep (need 10-11 hours per night). When do they have down time, time to reflect and think about the day, the week?

Create a 7 day weekly calendar on a piece of paper or marker-board with your child. Take the time to fill this out together. Most weeks will be similar for children. They have school on certain days, they have after school activities on specific days, write in where God time fits within each day, include chores/responsibilities. Then write down when in the week your child will have rest. When will they be UNPLUGGED in order to think through their week to evaluate like God did, WAS IT GOOD?

This small calendar will help kids with a visual for expectations with his/her time. You can hang it in his/her bedroom, tape it inside their closet door, etc. as a frame of reference on a week to week basis.

ACTIVITY 2: RHYTHM WITH GOD TIME


Often we allow all the other things in our life to interfere with God time. This activity is designed to help your child figure out a rhythm for God time; when, where and how they'll spend time with God. This is something adults struggle with as well. It's OK to be honest with your child about your current rhythm with God time and if that is/isn't a struggle for you. Why do we need to have consistent God time? Jesus, Himself, made sure to carve out time to talk with God. Read **Mark 1:35**

"It was very early in the morning and still dark. Jesus got up and left the house. He went to a place where he could be alone. There he prayed."

Take some time to think through your family's weekly schedule. Help your child figure out the best time of day when they can carve out some time to pray and read their Bible. Is it in the morning before school, as soon as they get home from school, after dinner, before bed? Land on a specific time during the day that he/she can have God time.

Make sure they have a plan of what to read (1 chapter/story a day starting in John, a devotional guide), a Bible, and know to spend time in prayer (love God, thank God, ask God). See the resource "Helping Your Child Develop a God Time" for more guidance.

This will begin a habit that will lead them to pursue a real relationship with God. Make sure to consistently check in with your child to see how their God time is going. If they forget to do it, evaluate priorities and figure out what is taking precedent over God time. This will be an ongoing conversation with your child, but one that is worth the intentionality.



WHAT'S GOING ON WITH MY 9-YEAR-OLD?

This is the year that children begin to see clear differences between themselves and others, which can lead children to suppress their individuality. We need to help children see that they are uniquely made. This is the year that children's interests in multiple areas can peak, leading to increased chaos in scheduling. Here are some of the developmental changes they are experiencing right now.

EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Your nine year old may:

- Define themselves based on attributes or achievements
- Will test limits
- Have a strong desire to do things well
- Struggle to handle failure and criticism
- Can become stressed because of schoolwork
- Can bite off more than they can chew by overshooting abilities

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

- Are growing permanent teeth
- Have interest in team sports
- Are recognizing the large differences in size and ability among them and their peers
- Are increasing in coordination as well as motor and non-locomotor movement
- Are increasing in attention span

RELATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Place high importance on friendships and have very close friends
- Begin to display a sense of humor
- Become less dependent on parents and more dependent on peers
- Begin to care for and play with younger children
- Recognize when someone is being left out and take initiative to include them

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

- Move out of the egocentric stage to begin considering others
 - Begin to distinguish what is important
 - Can ask big spiritual questions and tend to have big ideas on their own
 - Can rank themselves and others based on material possessions
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