



Bulletin

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The Heavens Declare . . .

THE GLORY OF GOD

BY VANCE FRY

ONE RAINY EVENING A FEW YEARS BACK, WE WERE SHOPPING for kids' shoes when I turned to see my 2-year-old daughter, Isabelle, standing perfectly still in the main aisle, staring toward the front of the store. From where I stood, I couldn't see anything interesting. A few clothing racks, some checkout lanes.

"Izzy," I said, "can you come here?"

She didn't respond. Couldn't respond, it seemed. I walked over and knelt down next to her. From her angle, I could see out through the windows at the front of the store. A stunning sunset was breaking through the rain clouds and enflaming the western sky. It was changing quickly—a dark front was rumbling in to re-shroud those brilliant colors—so I stayed down next to my daughter. "It's like God made a painting that moves," I said.

In that special moment with Isabelle, I was reassured of the truth of the psalmist's words: "The heavens declare the glory of God" (Psalm 19:1). Yes, at times God may feel distant and "wordless," but other times His proclamations and presence are truly undeniable—to young and old alike. As parents, do we stop amid the flurry of family life to recognize those moments when the King throws back the curtains to declare His glory?

We haven't attended church as a family for many years. How can I reintroduce my family to church after such an extended absence?

ANSWER:

If you're just beginning to introduce or reintroduce your children to church, start small and begin slowly. A good first step is to sit down and talk to your children about what church is and why we should go. Tell them who God is, why He created church and how it is relevant to their lives. Talk about your personal reason for wanting the family to go.

The next step may be attending a church service or perhaps a church barbecue or sports event (if you want to make the experience as enjoyable and nonthreatening

as possible). A good idea is to link up with another family in the church that has children the same age as yours. This will help your kids feel more relaxed. You may even want to try out more than one church until you find one that your family feels comfortable with.

Once the importance of church has been established and your children have some firsthand experience, start to establish a regular pattern of attendance. At first, you may go only once a month, or once every two weeks. That's OK. Move at a pace that the entire family is comfortable with. If your children have events or practices that conflict with church times, announcing that church now takes precedence might backfire. Instead, find a different service that is later or earlier on Sunday or perhaps on a Saturday night. Or go

when you can. Then the next time you sign your child up for such an event or sport, look for a club that doesn't conflict with church attendance times. The worst thing you could do is try to force church on your children without their understanding what it is or why they should go. That kind of approach will only breed resistance and rebellion. Instead, start out slowly and build up to regular weekly attendance.

And remember to pray about this every step of the way.

(Adapted from the *Parents' Guide to the Spiritual Growth of Children*, general editors John Trent, Rick Osborne and Kurt Bruner.)

TOUGH QUESTIONS FROM KIDS

ANSWER:

Here are some ideas to get you started: (1) Turn off the lights when you don't need them. (2) Turn off the faucet when you're done using it. (3) Don't waste food; take only as much as you can eat. (4) Don't litter. (5) Take good care of your pets; they are part of God's world too.

Tough Questions from Kids

What can kids do to help take care of the world?



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ENCOURAGING YOUR KIDS TO CARE

Empathy and compassion are important traits to teach your kids. Explain that having empathy toward a friend means having the ability to relate to that person's feelings. And having compassion means caring about a friend's distress and having the desire to alleviate it. Ask your child to come up with scenarios where he could demonstrate these virtues. For example, if a friend falls down on the athletic field and is embarrassed or hurt, your child could help her up and encourage her to "shake it off." Or ask your child to imagine that he is the one who is hurt or embarrassed—what would he want a friend to do to make it better?

And don't discount what your kids are learning about interactions with others while they're observing adults. Modeling empathy and compassion is the best way to teach your kids to live it.

Encouraging empathy and compassion gives kids practice in seeing beyond the tight friendships they've developed so they can recognize the needs of others around them. When they do encounter someone who's hurting, ask your kids a few questions that will help them recognize the deeper need:

- How do you think she feels about what's happened?
- How does Jesus feel when He sees your friend cry?
- What can we do to make a difference?

Asking questions like these, and exploring the answers, gives your kids the power to make someone else's need personal, which is where real growth occurs.

—Nicole O'Dell



STATION ROTATION

When my children need time apart, I set up stations around the house with different activities. At the kitchen counter is Play-Doh with cutters and mats. In the living room are blankets and pillows with a basket of books. In a bedroom is a bin of LEGO blocks; and in the upstairs hallway are a beanbag chair and an electronic device. Healthy snacks are at the kitchen table.

My kids, who range from toddlers to tweens, draw numbers to determine the station where they start. Then I set the timer for 20 minutes. When the timer goes off, they rotate to the next station.

—Tannis Oliveri

ADVENTURES IN MARRIAGE

The routine of married life can creep into boring as we go through the ordinary, familiar motions of daily tasks. How can we actively fight the mindset of dissatisfaction and relish each day God has given us together? It can be as simple as mixing things up.

Rearrange the routine. Change the route you to drive to work or where you go to eat after church. If you simply rearrange when you do certain tasks, all of the must-do's can seem a little less mundane. Moving around your bedroom décor or your meal-planning routine doesn't cost more time or money; it simply keeps life pointed toward interesting.

Try something new. Back in the days of dating, everything felt exciting. Even going to the grocery store together felt adventurous.

Since that time, most of your days are filled with things you've done over and over again, but trying new things together can refresh the years ahead of you. It can be something formal, like a fitness class, or informal, like tackling a home-improvement project. Just make sure the never-been-done-before factor is there.

Surprise each other. An unexpected surprise fights boredom. It can be as simple as a breakfast out or a late-night candlelight dinner at home after the kids are in bed. But the surprise can be a gift for your husband or wife too: washing

and vacuuming his or her car, making plans for your spouse to see a friend, or delivering a special treat for no reason.

Ask God for new eyes. If the mundane is setting the tone in your marriage, ask God to help you see your life and the gifts He has provided with a fresh mindset and appreciation.

The best way to show you value this life and your spouse is through gratefulness. Ask God for an outlook of gratitude for each task, responsibility and detail of your life.



The ordinary lives we lead are full of good gifts from God. When we do our creative best with the life we've been given to share with our spouse, we join God in the adventure He has set before us.

—Alexandra Kuykendall