

FOOTHILLS INTENTIONAL FAMILIES FEEDBACK 2011

WHAT MY PARENTS DID (OR ARE DOING) RIGHT:

I believe they prayed for me... Probably the best thing they could have done. Second best thing they did was send me to Foothills.

My parents presented the Gospel to us in terms we could understand. They prayed with us and for us on a regular basis. My mom had us memorize Scripture as she did the dishes with us. We had missionaries as frequent guests in our home. It is no surprise we ended up as missionaries as this was a practice in both of our homes. We took family vacations each year, and so did my husband's family.

Mom stayed home, so she was always there to talk to when I came home from school. Her presence provided a built-in accountability. They set limits (i.e., no dating until 16, can't go to just *any* movie or watch just *any* TV show).

My parents are mutually supportive, kind, loving, don't talk badly about each other, exercise self-control (don't fly off the handle with each other), and are accepting of each other's children (even if they don't really enjoy being around them).

My mom prayed for my brother and me. She would close her bedroom door, get on her knees and pray for at least 15 minutes. Her prayer topics covered us, our missionaries, the pastor, and her walk with the Father - including praises to Him. I did not realize what she was doing with the door closed all the time, so one day I snuck up and listened closely! To this day I try to use this as model for myself. Praise God for Godly parents.

They call often to check in, and tell us how proud they are of us and how thankful they are for us. They took us on many trips that were both fun and educational, especially trying to combine Dad's business trips with family trips. They tried to give us an example of a loving, devoted marriage: dated, gave thoughtful gifts, served one another, showed teamwork, always had family dinners, were very affectionate and faithful. They talked to us about finances, making wise decisions, honesty, integrity, and fidelity.

We spend a LOT of time together as a family. As teachers, they had the same schedule we did. Together activities included camping, board games, hikes, picnics, games of HORSE in the driveway. They attended all our sporting events, piano recitals, etc. They also set high expectations, curfews, consequences, etc. We changed churches a lot, but we always went to church, prayed together, did occasional Bible studies together, etc. They put a pod in the backyard so friends were at our house rather than us being who knows where.

My mother stressed the importance of going to church, so we went every Sunday. Although it was a Catholic church, I did get the foundation of the faith with a few added doctrines. As children we attended catechism every Saturday.

My mom always had an open table; everyone was always welcome for a meal. My parents knew the huge importance of taking care of family and loving each other even when it was difficult.

My parents were not Christians and they did not do much right. They divorced when I was young and both remarried. My mother divorced a second time and never remarried again. Both my parents were alcoholics. After I was saved I led my mother to the Lord. We're still praying for my dad.

They were physically there for me and instilled a knowledge of the existence of God.

My parents taught me how to work hard, be reliable, responsible and truthful. We went to church regularly, and were active in our church. My mother prayed with us every morning and at bedtime, as well as at mealtime. The Lord was always talked about, especially His blessings in our lives. My parents and extended family expressed their faith in actions and prayer. This is where I learned to trust in Christ.

We went to church regularly and made friends there, especially youth group and summer church camp.

WHAT WE DO TO KEEP OUR MARRIAGE HEALTHY:

We try and pray together as a family each night before bed. As a couple, we try and pray once we are in bed and before we go to sleep. We have taken courses studying books and all. Honestly none of that was all too helpful. We call upon others for wisdom when needed. We try to talk about our issues and concerns quickly and not let them fester. It helps to have a great wife who is willing to sacrifice her own desires and comfort for the greater good of her husband and children.

We make our marriage a priority. We schedule weekly dates. Since babysitting isn't always available, we have an "in house" date. The kids go to bed early and we stay downstairs and have a movie date, or game date, or whatever. It is time for just the two of us. We talk to each other and consult each other. We do have get-away times by ourselves. We read to each other, play games together, just spend time together, playing, praying and working. Since we both work in the home, we have the opportunity to spend lots of time together. This helps in our case. We do not even consider the option to divorce, so when disagreement comes, we work it through.

We pray together every night and do a devotional each night I am home. We make Friday evening our set apart date night. After a disagreement, we do not go to sleep without coming to an agreement (which usually comes down to me not being considerate, or loving enough, or not realizing my wife is very sensitive - and I am not always!).

We have weekly date nights - might be just a cup of coffee at a restaurant to a full dinner & movie thing, and quarterly/ semiannual weekends away by ourselves. We pray and do Bible study together and meet with our small group together

We talk about our FEELINGS! 😊 not really! We have dates, and meet with Mike every couple of months. We've learned to let little things go, show appreciation, and work through important decisions together.

We have the mindset that divorce is not an option so we'd best just work things out. We have date nights and occasional weekend getaways. When the kids were younger we swapped overnight babysitting with friends.

Now we watch football and basketball together. Long ago we figured out 'who does what' around the house. We've read all the biblical marriage books and attended marriage conferences, etc., so we at least know what we're supposed to do even if we don't – HA!

1. We are very aware of the other person's needs, wants, etc. We communicate about everything.
2. We can usually tell if there is something that is not right. We try to bring these things up in a loving way so as not to offend.
3. We call or leave notes just because.
4. We try to have a date night once a week.
5. We discuss situations that touch us with a godly perspective.
6. We do as many things together as possible.

I tell my husband weekly that he is the sexiest man on the planet. I pray for him and our marriage daily; I pray weekly for God to help me be a gentle and loving wife. I allow my husband to be the leader of our family because I know that our marriage cannot work without this. Finally, I put him first, even when it's against my selfish ways.

I think the way to keep a marriage healthy is to love and respect (now where have I heard that before?) each other and remember to keep Christ in the marriage. I truly believe that a cord of three strands is not easily torn apart. It is important to talk with your spouse. I remember reading that the average married couple spends 17 minutes a day in real conversation. If that is true, most people talk to their pets more than their spouse. I also think it is important to have dates with your spouse to keep the romance alive.

1. We are interested in our spouse's hobbies and make room in the budget for them.
2. We don't have the means to go on regular date nights but we spend most of our evenings together reading or watching TV.
3. We don't spend time alone with people from the other sex; we don't have close friendships with people from the other sex.
4. We enjoy lots of humor, and have frequent romantic times and sex.
5. What we have been slacking in is reading the Bible together and praying.

We spend time together, walking, exercising, and having coffee and dates. We try to do different activities to keep our marriage fresh. We pray for each other, have dinner together, and discuss our day and future. We are respectful towards each other especially with our words. When we have disagreements we find a place to be together alone and work things out.

We calendar/plan together so we are on the same page. We have regular dates, from just talking together over ice cream to spending a week together in Hawaii. We talk through disagreements and offenses and then apologize for our sins.

WHAT WE DO ON PURPOSE TO PRODUCE FOLLOWERS OF JESUS IN OUR CHILDREN:

Each night before bed we try to read a Bible lesson and pray with the kids. Every Friday morning I wake up with my son, and we eat breakfast together. This provides a reoccurring time to be together and talk about life. We talk together, eat together, read the Bible together and pray together. This has become a source of excitement for

him. Since the girls are now getting older, I am planning on putting each child on a weekly rotation for Friday breakfast.

First of all, I try to set an example of serving Him by being honest about when I fall short, and accepting their feedback about it. We give them feedback when they fall short, and make sure they have role models they're close to outside of the family. We send them to Christian counseling (I am very careful about who any of us see) if they need and desire it. I teach them apologetics as I believe that's the best way for them to keep their faith. I make sure they understand our faith is more than going to fellowships, church, Bible studies--we are here on earth to change the world and having a ministry is not an option, no matter how busy we are. I set a Biblical standard for behavior and morals and don't deviate from it if they whine about it.

We included our kids in almost all ministry events. We took them to church; we took them to ministry events; and we had them participate as best they could. We definitely took the family approach. We had family devotions and expected them to participate with comments on the Bible passage. We confronted them with the Gospel, so they were prepared to make that decision to follow Jesus. We never expected they would not be followers of Jesus. As they grew we encouraged them to use their unique gifts for Jesus. Most of all we got up early in the morning and prayed for them each day. We invested in their lives with prayer and time. We made sure they knew we loved them, but God loved them more. We let them know they were valuable.

Pray with them. Read Bible to them. Have Bible studies (homeschooling helps). Take them to AWANA and be their AWANA leaders. Stay for Sunday School and be their teachers when we can.

We are accepting of who they are; pray with them; spend time together and talk about their relationship with the Lord; ask how we can pray; are there for them; do Bible study and discipling together; show forgiveness, are real, and show the love of Christ.

We make church a priority, not just something we do if there's nothing else that weekend. We pray together as a family, and include subjects such as Bible, character traits & worldview in our homeschool curriculum. We encourage youth group participation, and are involved in bible studies and reading the Word where the kids can see that it is important to us. We pray for our kids – their 'now' and their 'future', as well as for parenting wisdom and guidance.

We attend church and often discuss the message and its application to our lives with our kids. We also discuss daily life events in the open and talk about how God would have us act or react in the given situation. We need to do a better job but are working on: 1) creating a family mission statement, 2) setting aside time throughout the week to pray and read Scripture and 3) discuss more the reasons we do what we do and why. Everything comes from and comes back to God.

We never do enough, but we try to be good examples of what we want to produce, praying together and praising together. We ask them when they are making choices to ask the Lord for His guidance.

We made sure that Jesus was the focal point of our marriage and we placed family in front of careers right from the start. We talked with our children and made sure they knew that we would never lie to them (we didn't do Santa Claus but taught them the true meaning of Christmas as one example). We disciplined them when

necessary and made sure they knew the consequences of inappropriate actions (we used a James Dobson book as a guide). We always attended church and talked about our faith. We lived our beliefs as an example to them. We prayed with our children. When we made mistakes we let them know and apologized.

1. Read the Bible and pray regularly
2. Apologize to them when we have done wrong.
3. We use the Scriptures and Bible stories to solve problems.
4. We disciple our children as we would with a new believer, reminding them of what a follower of Jesus is supposed to do such as forgive, pray, read the Bible, fellowship with other believers, help the poor, etc.
5. We read through the Bible several times so they get a sense of God's history with His people.
6. We have family worship with just singing.
7. We serve in our community through AHG and Boy Scouts.

When our children were young and at home, we'd pray together at mealtime and bedtime. We'd have devotionals with them in the mornings. We spent a lot of time together as a family, playing, working, visiting friends and family. We tried out many different activities to do as family, especially outdoor activities. We had dinner all together at the table almost every evening and we'd let each child tell us about their day, and ask them questions. We'd have many a great discussion especially during their teen years.

God has a plan for each of us – Jer. 29:11-14a. He wants us to know and follow His plan – Jn 15:15. We homeschool to integrate the God of the Bible in our children's learning. We talk about stuff in the perspective of what could God be trying to do with this problem, news or current event. We used to do family nights, but now I sometimes share my prison ministry messages with the family where we learn and dig into the Bible together.

OTHER THINGS WE DO TO BE INTENTIONAL IN AND WITH OUR FAMILY:

We eat together nearly every night. This is quite intentional! We severely limit the number of activities that the kids are involved in to make time for us to be home at night and on the weekends. We have told our oldest that he can choose one activity a year to be involved with. One night a week is rushed because of these activities. However, these activities allow us to still go to the church together and come home together. We have also been reading novels to our kids before bed with the entire family sitting together in one room. This has turned into a special time for our family.

We made sure we took family outings. One fall morning, we got the kids up at 5:30am. We got them dressed for walking, and we took a long walk ending up at Denny's for breakfast. Other times we went to Disney together and shared time together. We made sure they knew we appreciated them. We spent seven years doing twelve hour/day rehab with our son. That was intentional! It was not lost on our daughter. We talked to them about how we could help people in need, and then we did it. Since we homeschooled both, we were able to eat our meals together, and that was helpful. We always had a book we were reading as a family. We took turns choosing the book. It was fun, and we still like to read. We set up movies and things we liked to do as a family. We also insisted on early bed times so they (and we) got enough sleep. We expected them to obey and expected they would participate in family events. We looked at our kids as a blessing from the Lord and made sure they knew that.

Get involved with the activities they are interested in (volunteer to coach their sports, help with Boy Scouts, etc). Watch movies together. Eat meals together as often as possible and make everyone sit around and visit. Let kids help with projects (house maintenance, repairs, cleaning, building floats for parades, etc.).

I assume "being intentional" is intended to mean in a spiritual context. I wish we lived closer to the kids, but we don't. But when we do see them, we have a lot of opportunities to share spiritual insight to the oldest son and his family. This is because the oldest son does not put any effort into doing so, other than letting the kids go to church if they want to. Every time I see them, I stress knowing God and that His plan is not just a good thing, it is *critical* to life - especially in today's Godless society.

We write notes and letters, journal thoughts and prayers (a journal for each child & grandchild), and pray for them.

We do things together – basketball (our kids play, we are involved as scorekeeper, etc). We eat dinner together most nights. We know our kids friends, have them over frequently and ask about their lives. We watch movies/TV together and have many holiday traditions.

1. Attend home fellowship and Bible studies
2. Make time to do things as a family and less times as individuals.
3. Look for ways to show the love of Christ to our neighbors and family.

We eat, play and pray together, and are currently trying intentionally to connect more as a family with our neighbors.

Since our children are now grown, we still try to get together regularly. We try to provide guidance if we see a need and let them know we are always there for them. They continue to follow the Lord. We also are very involved in our small group which we also consider family. We get together regularly, pray for each other and really care about one another.

1. We laugh together.
2. We take family trips, even if they are very short.
3. We eat dinner together every night.
4. We are involved in missions and pray for the persecuted church.

Make time to do fun stuff when we are all together. We enjoy hiking, picnics, dinners that we all prepare together. At least weekly calls to everyone helps us to check in and stay in touch.

"Get it done, then you can have fun" is our saying to finish chores and homework before play. I (dad) host church service when away camping, on vacation or on hunting trips. We also care for others.