

## **Please Pass the Faith**

**Parents have the most critical influence on the faith formation of their children**

Therefore, what can parents do to cultivate their children's spiritual growth and development?

**Five Key Themes** ("How Parents Nurture the Spiritual Development of Their Children" by Holly Catterton Allen, in *Understanding Children's Spirituality: Theology, Research and Practice* by Kevin Lawson)

1. Participate in religious activities and rituals as a family.
2. Foster mutual conversation and discussion.
3. Model a congruent spiritual life before your children.
4. Parent lovingly, yet firmly.
5. Be involved in an intergenerational Christian community as a whole family.

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*Families and Faith: How Religion is Passed Down Across Generations* by Vern Bengston

### **In Families - Warmth Matters**

The quality of the parent-child relationship directly affects how much influence mothers and fathers have on their children's religious orientations in adulthood.

When children perceive their relationship as close, affirming and accepting, they are more likely to identify with their parent's religious practices and beliefs.

Children respond best to parents who are unconditionally supportive, who provide consistent role modelling of religious practices, and who do not force their beliefs or practices on their children.

### **The Special Place of Grandparents**

Grandparents pass their faith on successfully when they reinforce or accentuate parent's religious socialization, or when they replace or substitute for parent's religious socialization in the absence of a parent.

Grandparents who challenge or subvert the religious socialization of parents are generally not effective and often counter-productive.

As a grandparent you become "God with skin on".

### **Best Practices:**

Prayer

Family Stories and Traditions

Model Faith

Sharing Unhurried Time

Spoil and Bless