

# HABITS of the HOUSEHOLD

## Guided Questions

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Practicing the Story of God in Everyday Family Rhythms



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# INTRODUCTION

## REIMAGINING HOUSEHOLD



1. The author describes waking up to his family’s “this is our normal” moment. Describe your “normal.”
2. Share what stage of parenting you are in, how many kids you have, and how old they are. What areas of parenting feel like pressure points?
3. Whether in your personal or parenting life, where do you see “the heart following the habit?”
4. Have you ever heard of the term “rule of life” for a set of communal habits? What do you think the default “rule of life” is for a family in your stage?
5. “Parenting your children is not just about what you are doing in their lives. It is first about the work God is doing in your life.” How do you see God using parenting to work in *your* life in this stage? What might he be trying to teach *you*?
6. The author writes that “the greatest spiritual work happens in the normal moments of domestic life.” Do you agree?

# HABITS OF WAKING

## FORMING PARENTS



1. What is the first thing you do upon waking? How does that shape your view of the day? Of yourself? Of God?
2. Now describe your family's morning routine? How do you think that shapes your children's view of the world and God?
3. If you were to try practicing scripture before phone for a week, how would you rearrange your morning?
4. What is one routine you could start with your spouse or children in the morning that could shape the day in a different direction? (This could be reading a Psalm together, or reciting the Lord's Prayer, or even a kneeling moment in silence holding hands.)

# HABITS OF MEALTIMES

## FORMING FAMILIES



1. The author claims that “the difference between people who happen to live together and families who befriend each other are rhythms of conversation at mealtimes.” Have you experienced this? What does this suggest about the importance of the table?
2. Share what a typical meal looks like in your house. Is it as chaotic as the author’s family dinner?
3. Do you have any games or questions you use at the dinner table, or that you grew up with? If so, share with the group some of your favorites.
4. “The liturgical lens is the idea of having the eyes to see the spiritual worship bound up in a habit we didn’t think was spiritual at all.” Did you understand the author’s use of this idea? How might the “liturgical lens” help you to see the spirituality of your normal household life.
5. How often do you have a friend or guest over for dinner? Has it become a burden because the house has to be spotless? Could you imagine getting comfortable with inviting people into your mess? What would it take to start some rhythm of hospitality?

# HABITS OF DISCIPLINE

## FORMING CHILDREN



1. What are some of your knee-jerk reactions that come out in moments of discipline? Would you be embarrassed if others saw it?
2. The author describes God’s response to our misbehavior as “loving us back into relationship, no matter the personal cost to him.” Discuss whether this is how you understand God’s response to our sin.
3. Moving from discipline to discipleship looks very different depending on age and stage. Share the stage of some of your kids right now and the challenges that come with it. How you see the tension between controlling behavior and shepherding hearts.
4. What are some ways that you feel like you could improve? What seems to be working? And not working?
5. How are *you* as a parent being sanctified through the difficulties of disciplining?
6. Which of the habits in the pyramid of discipline would be the most useful for you to practice in your family right now?

# HABITS OF SCREEN TIME

## FORMING CHILDREN



1. What are the rhythms of screen time in your house? What does this look like for you? For your kids? (Remember that everyone is different and that's OK, so share without judgement!)
2. The author describes the battle over screen time as a "battle over formation." How do you see screens forming you? Your children?
3. "In the American story, limits are bad. They get in the way of our freedom, which means we need to get rid of all limits to be happy. But in the story of God, limits are the way to the good life, even the way to happiness." Where in life do you see the wisdom of setting specific limitations?
4. You may never have thought of "curation" as a paradigm for choosing what to watch or listen to. But how would you describe how you curate media for your self? For your kids? Share with each other what you have found helpful. (Remember, again, the goal is not to have the same rhythms and criteria, but in part to suggest ideas that perhaps others have not considered.)
5. What's one new rhythm you want to adopt and apply for your family's screen time?

# HABITS OF FAMILY DEVOTIONS

## FORMING CHILDREN



1. Does your family ever do family devotions? Did you grow up doing anything like this? On a scale of one to ten, one being scared to death and ten being super comfortable, how do you feel about sitting your family down for a family devotion.
2. The author says that grace means that “God can love messy things.” Do you agree? Do you feel this to be true in your relationship with Jesus?
3. The author describes how Jesus was comfortable with the messiness of children. It is a given that children (little ones especially) will misbehave during family devotions. What are some ways you can try to expect and plan for that?
4. For little children family devotions might simply be more a short rhythm of fun and snacks than it is prayer and teaching. Are you comfortable with this?
5. Brainstorm some ideas for how you can move from “nothing to something.” What would be a good step for your family?
6. The author describes some books his family has found useful, and how setting out snacks helps everyone be excited to sit down and talk. Share some resources or strategies you’ve used and how they have worked.

# HABITS OF MARRIAGE

## FORMING PARENTS



1. “It is a terrible fiction to imagine we can be good mothers and fathers without being good husbands and wives.” Do you agree? How have you seen this to be true or not?
2. The author writes that “covenant love is completely the opposite of love as a feeling. Covenant love says, “I love you despite what it costs me.” This, of course, is the biblical story of love. God loves his bride, the church, despite all our foolishness and adultery.” Have you ever considered how your marriage to your spouse is supposed to be a reflection of God’s love for his church?
3. What are some habits in your marriage that are going well? What are some you want to work on?
4. Do you have any rhythms of date nights or nights that are set aside for each other? The author suggests naming one night a week as a rhythm. Discuss how can you adapt this idea to best fit your schedule.
5. Do you have any rhythms of talking about parenting and the future together? Is this intimidating? Or something that sounds appealing to you?
6. What is one habit you would like to start to work on your marriage?



# HABITS OF WORK

## FORMING FAMILIES



1. How did you grow up thinking about work? Did you know what your parents did?
2. “We are invited into the work of the God who loves us. We were meant for this. Which is why our work inevitably becomes one of our greatest blessings, or one of our greatest burdens. That’s how spiritually important work is.” Do you think of work as a spiritual matter that God invites you to? Or just a way to make money?
3. Do your kids know why you go to work? Or why you stay home? Do they have questions? How do you talk to them about your work?
4. What are your habits of inviting your children into household work? This could be gardening, nightly dishes, laundry or something else.
5. What is one way you could invite your children into a deeper view of work? How would you start that this week?

# HABITS OF PLAY

## FORMING FAMILIES



1. The author suggest that real play is a way of imagining the kingdom of heaven to come. What do you think of this idea? Can you imagine how we were meant for a different world of unfettered joy, is that difficult for you?
2. Play looks very different for different ages of children. What are your rhythms of engaging in undistracted play with your children right now? How often do you engage in play without the tv on, with out your phone in one hand, or without turning the page of the novel you're reading?
3. Do you work to help your kids learn to play alone? Is there a set time each day where they are encouraged and expected to entertain themselves?
4. The author writes that “It is entirely possible to unconsciously indoctrinate our children into our broken view of the world, that life is fundamentally about what we can accomplish and there isn't time for much else.” Is this a struggle in your house? If so, how could rhythms of play help?
5. What are your rhythms of rest and sabbath? How could they intertwine with rhythms of work and play?

# HABITS OF CONVERSATION

FORMING FAMILIES



1. How are your friendships doing in this parenting phase of life? Do you have rhythms of pursuing deep conversation with friends?
2. Do your children see you engaging in adult relationships?
3. Could you imagine friendship with your parents? How does your answer to this question impact how you pursue relationship with your own children?
4. What are some good times or spaces that would work for pursuing your kids in conversation? What are some questions you could use to ask them to go deeper?
5. The author describes how conversation can help heal trauma. Whether on a big or small scale, how could you use conversation with your kids to walk them through difficult things they are experiencing?

# HABITS OF

# BEDTIME

## FORMING CHILDREN



1. Describe your typical bedtime routine for your age and stage. Is it chaos? A well oiled machine? Or something in-between?
2. The author gives lots of examples for bedtime liturgies, could you imagine using any of these? Do you pray for your older children before bed?
3. How could some new bedtime routine or liturgy help to remind both *you and your children* of God's grace?
4. The author writes that the "story of failure and grace in the Scriptures is so helpful to parenting. It means that every opportunity to parent through frustration and failure is not so much about what you're doing to your child as it is first about what God is doing in you. Every opportunity to parent is an opportunity to be parented by Jesus." How do you experience failure as a parent? How do you need to experience God's grace in your parenting life right now?
5. Aside from a bedtime liturgy for your children, is there a new habit or routine you could consider to help you re-encounter God's grace before going to bed?

# EPILOGUE

## PARENTING BETWEEN THE NOW AND THE NOT YET



1. Take a moment to fill out or look over the age chart together. Do you ever spend time imagining what the future of your family looks like? Is that scary or exciting for you?
2. If you've tried any of these habits with your family, then chances are you've already failed a lot. Discuss some of your attempts and failures. What have you learned about yourself? Or more importantly, about grace? About Jesus?
3. The book claims that "Habits don't change God's love for us. But God's love for us can and should change our habits." How might this change your motivation to persevere parenting well?
4. Perhaps you've found your failure to be frustrating so far. Perhaps its kept you from doing anything. If you were going to push forward, and try just one habit - what would it be?



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