

Tips for Experiencing God in Your Home

By Jim Burns, Ph.D.

Today's kids are part of a generation that values experiential learning. Educators are beginning to understand the trend and are including more opportunities for students to be involved in active learning strategies as opposed to only listening passively to lectures. Well, when it comes to matters of faith, the same issues apply. Kids today don't want to only learn information about God. They also want to experience Him. Recently, I had the privilege of speaking with noted author, Phillip Yancey, whose updated book, [*Finding God in Unexpected Places*](#) sparked my own thinking about the need for parents to help their kids learn not only *about* God, but to *know* God. As parents, we can help our kids to experience God first-hand if we are willing to take a fresh approach to how we live out our faith and communicate about God in our homes. Our homes are our children's primary laboratory for life and faith, so it's up to us to set the pace when it comes to helping our kids experience God. Here are some ideas for doing just that.

1. Pursue Knowing Jesus and a Life of Faith and Obedience. We can't pass along to our kids what we don't have ourselves. So, when it comes to experiencing God, we need to be intentional about our own passion and commitment to know and experience Him. Then, our kids will be able to see what experiencing God looks like. This generation of kids are motivated by sincerity and turned off by pretense. Today's kids have a built-in, highly sensitive "Hypocrisy Detector". So, if you're trying to come across as perfect to them, they'll see right through you – and that's a big mistake on your part. It is much better to live out an authentic life in front of your kids – and how you follow Christ and experience Him despite your mistakes and failures along the way – in order to display the example of what it looks like to live as a Christian in the real world.

As a parent, it's important to note that the spirituality of your kids is very dependent on the examples they see you setting at home. You must set the pace! If you desire your children to have vibrant spiritual lives, then they need to see an authentic faith lived out in your life. No one expects perfection, but a "do as I say, not as I do" attitude is not likely to produce a vital Christian lifestyle in your child's life either.

2. Show Respect for God's Word. This point flows from the one above. Demonstrate to your kids that you hold Scripture in high regard. Psalm 119:115 reads, "Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path." You may *feel* that in your heart, but if you don't *live it out* in front of your kids, they'll never have any idea.

3. Be Yourself. You don't need a seminary degree to experience God or to talk to your kids about God. You don't have to speak in King James language to send a message that you want to talk about spiritual issues. In fact, if you do, your kids will think you're really weird! You don't want to unintentionally send the message to your kids that only strange people experience God!

I know an excellent pastor who does a great job caring for his congregation, and his sermons are usually right on the mark. I have only one minor complaint. It's the way his voice changes whenever he talks about "GAAWD." His casual conversation changes to an extremely formal tone when he emphasizes a spiritual word. Actually, it's rather funny.

I've met parents who have the same problem. They communicate well with their kids, but when the conversation turns to spiritual issues their mouths freeze, their countenances change, and words come out in a manner that the kids hear only when their parents talk about God. So, be yourself! Share your understanding of who God is and how you experience Him – in a way that reflects the real you.

4. Don't Limit Spiritual Conversations With Your Kids to Sunday Mornings! This is not to say that Sunday morning is off-limits for spiritual discussions, but don't get caught in the trap of compartmentalizing faith issues to certain days or certain times. Doing so, again, may communicate that experiencing God is only something we do on Sundays, at church! Let your kids know that spiritual issues are important in your life all of the time! This is exactly the issue that Deuteronomy 6:6-7 speaks to – talking about God when you sit at home, when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up! Experiencing God is to be part of an ongoing discussion in our homes, with our families!

5. Look for natural opportunities to raise spiritual issues. This takes some intentional work by parents to be on the lookout for opportunities “along the road” of life, where issues almost beg to be discussed in light of our Christian commitment and faith. Many opportunities will arise at home as your kids watch you live life. How do you, for example, demonstrate how you experience God when the neighbor's dog has been barking incessantly all evening long?

6. Expose Your Kids to Others Who Know and Experience God. Don't go it alone in trying to help your kids experience God. In addition to their parents, our kids need other, positive role models of people who know and experience God. Make sure that you make an effort to expose your kids, in your home, to these kinds of people. You'll be teaching your kids that God is at work in others and not just in your own family!

7. Expect God to Show Up. Become intentional in looking for moments and circumstances at home where you can see God at work, like when your son or daughter does something unexpectedly or unusually loving. Make sure you make the most of opportunity by pointing out to your kids when those times come along. In doing so, not only will you be helping your kids experience God, but you'll also be training them to look for God to show up in everyday moments.