

## # 175 03/03/03 Family's devotional time can be unique

Planning family devotionals is a big job. Unfortunately, there is not a formula to follow. Each family needs customized structure, lessons and guidelines. I want to address some ways to make devotionals unique for your family.

Many families have hobbies. They might include outdoor activities, sports, animals, music or art. Hobbies can form the structure for family devotionals. The family that loves outdoor activities can go outside for their special time with God's Word. The family that loves animals can incorporate many stories of animals into their studies. (Use a topical Bible.) Creative families can use art and music in their devotionals. Children's ages make a big difference in terms of subject matter, length of lesson and amount of physical activity. A three-year-old child's attention span is short, but can be lengthened by having a variety of approaches interspersed with physical activity. It is easier to carry topics from one lesson to the next with older children. Small children need the entire concept, though small, presented in one session.

Issues such as aging grandparents, adoption, divorce, blended families and death present special needs for some families. Certainly, not every family would need to discuss all of those issues in depth.

Issues outside our families impact us differently. The current concern about war is a subject that many families will want to weave into their family devotionals. However, those families that include military personnel may spend more time discussing what God's Word says about war, fear, separation and faith.

Finally, the family members who are planning the topic must be flexible. Suppose that a family with teens is studying the Book of Acts. The family has chosen that study because they want to understand more about God's plan for churches. In the middle of their study, there is a tragic suicidal death at the high school. Those teens will be looking for answers to many questions about the death of their classmate. The study of the Book of Acts should be set aside for a time in order to focus on what is important to them at that moment.

Remember that your devotionals should be unique, designed especially for your family. Pray for God's guidance as you plan to meet your family's needs through the study of God's Word.