



toddlers

TIME

In their book *Parenting Beyond Your Capacity* Reggie Joiner and Carey Nieuwhof ask an interesting question: Is God more like the everyday plates or the fine china in your home? Let me explain.

Many of us grew up in a home where there was fine china – it was probably something that our parents or grandparents received as a wedding gift. Most of the year the china stayed safely locked up in a cabinet, and whenever the fine china came out of the cabinet, it signified a special occasion. And because we knew the china was special and important, we were extra careful and formal during those meals.

In contrast, there were the everyday plates. They were

the ones you grabbed off the shelf whenever you needed them. They went into the microwave and the dishwasher, perhaps they had nicks and chips on the edges. But because they were present at most meals, no one felt tense when they were being used. These plates experienced our family as we really are.

“How do we make God a more normal part of our family life?”

In many families, God is more like the fine china – valuable and pretty to look at, but not integrated into the everyday rhythm of life. God might only make an appearance around holidays, or once a week on Sundays, but not on the days

in between. So Reggie and Carey ask: *How do we make God a more normal part of our family life?*

Moses once gave some instructions along these lines to the Israelites, just as they were about to enter the Promised Land. First, he commands them to “love the Lord their God with all their heart, all their soul, and all their strength” (Deut 6:5 – Jesus will later say this is the most important command in all of scripture). Then, in the next sentence, Moses instructs parents and grandparents to pass this love on to future generations. He even specifies when they should talk with their children about God: “... when at bed and when getting up” (Deut 6:7).

If you think about it, the categories Moses provided still apply to families today. Every family spends time at home together, just as we spend time together on the road; we are usually together when we get up in

the morning, and when we go to bed at night. It’s not too hard to imagine how we might capitalize on those daily moments together. We might play fun songs about God while driving our kids to school or daycare; we might set aside time during meals to hear about each other’s highs and lows; and at bedtime we might offer a prayer to give thanks for the important people in our lives.

There is no singular pattern that all families should follow – each family has its own unique rhythm. The key is to invite God into that rhythm. Remember, God is trusting you to teach your children what it means to love Him. We wish you the best on this journey of incorporating new faith habits into your routines and family time.

“God is trusting you to teach your children what it means to love Him.”