

Quiet Time For Children

by Denis' Thomas

Christians need to take time daily to study God's Word, apply it, and pray. Quiet times are great for adults, but what about children? As a parent, have you longed to see your children eagerly open the Bible and enjoy their own quiet time? They can, and you can teach them how. This step-by-step approach teaches children to cultivate their own quiet time so that "All your sons will be taught by the Lord, and great will be your children's peace" (Isaiah 54:13).

Model it.

Allow your children to observe you during your personal quiet time. Gently remind them not to interrupt you. Let them watch as you read the Word. Let them listen as you pray. In the beginning, have your quiet times together to show your children what you do. As they develop their own quiet times, draw apart so everyone can enjoy personal time with God.

Schedule it.

Just as your quiet time depends on a routine, so does theirs. Help your children create a schedule for their quiet time. If they are very young, plan a time for them and make it part of their routine—perhaps before naptime, after waking up, or just before lunch. Make it easy to remember by associating their quiet time with another activity they do every day.

Locate it.

Help your children choose a location for their quiet time. For toddlers, try a blanket on the floor. For older children, try a special chair. When you tell them it's time for quiet time, they should know where to go.

Arrange it.

Help your children collect the materials they will need for their quiet times. Children who haven't yet learned to read may enjoy using a picture Bible or easy-to-read Bible. If

they have learned to write, provide pencil and paper and encourage them to write what they learn, or a write a Bible verse. Keep their quiet time materials in a bin or basket (perhaps one like yours) and place it near their quiet place. You are helping them develop the habit of having everything ready when they sit down for a quiet time, just like you.

Talk about it.

Ask your children to tell you what they learn in their quiet time. Tell them what you've learned. Let them have a say in deciding when and where to have a quiet time. Talk about why you do it the way you do. This can be a valuable teaching time.

Do your best to make your children's quiet time a joy, not a chore. Don't let it become a battle. Make it fun! Be aware of what you are teaching them. If you snap at them when they interrupt your time, they learn that quiet time makes Mom grumpy. If you praise them for sitting still, you encourage their eagerness to do it again.

Keep their early sessions brief, about a minute for each year of age. A five-year-old can easily start with five minutes. Gradually make it longer. Begin as soon as you can. Even toddlers can enjoy this daily habit. Encourage them to use their quiet time to think about God and look at the Bible. When finished, ask them to talk about their quiet time. What did they think? How did it make them feel? You'll be amazed at how profound they can

be. Finally, be patient. Your quiet time isn't perfect every day, and it won't be for your children.

Parents have a wonderful opportunity to prepare their children to enjoy a lifetime of quiet times. You can instill in them this daily discipline so they won't struggle with it as an adult. You are preparing your children's hearts with rich soil where God can plant seeds as they study his Word. Isn't that worth a few minutes each day? ■

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