

"I feel more like a chauffeur than a parent. How can I make the most of time on the go with my family?"

Moses instructed the Israelites:

A Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road.

—Dt. 6:5-7

Sometimes my children and I do "sit at home." But often we are driving somewhere: school, church, music classes, or swimming lessons. We spend many hours in the car together each week.

Our minivan looks like a cross between a desk, a recycling bin, and a fast-food restaurant. Overdue library books, a few petrified french fries, and papers litter the floor. It may seem an unlikely context for teaching lessons about life and faith. But if I want to talk about God with my children as we "walk [or drive] along the road," I need to intentionally make the most of this time. But how?

Saturated with Scripture

In Deuteronomy, God says His commands are to be upon *our* hearts first and then impressed upon our children. Thus, the first step to making the most of time on the go is to saturate our minds and hearts with His Word. We'll only be able to teach our children to the extent that we are walking with God ourselves. We need to be able to help them see how Scripture is "useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training" (2 Tim. 3:16) us in the situations we face every day.

Recently, my daughter was aggravating her brother, which she often does in the car. I could have responded with overused parental wisdom: "If you can't say anything nice, don't say anything at all!" But our children quickly grow inured to clichés such as these.

Instead, I said gently, "The Bible tells us, 'Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up' [Eph. 4:29]. Do you think what you just said built your brother up?" My daughter hesitantly agreed that it did not.

Our kids may not always seem to respond wholeheartedly to Scripture in these moments. But when they see us consistently rely upon the Word, it will shape their thinking and their attitudes toward God over the long haul.



Intentionally Present

It's all too easy to focus on our next destination and tune out our kids as we drive. But vulnerable, open moments often happen in the car. We need to be ready to capitalize on them by listening intently when our children talk.

Turn the radio down or off when your kids speak to you. Work at being mentally present with them instead of thinking about your do list or schedule. After they share their thoughts, don't respond by issuing directives such as "What you need to do is . . ." Instead, use questions to teach and guide them: "What do you think about . . . ?"

When I drive my daughter from school to music class, I try not to ask, "How was your day?" This question tends to elicit a brief "fine" that quashes the conversation. Instead, I ask more specific questions: "What was the best thing about school today? Or the worst?" This type of inquiry draws out my daughter and invites her to share what she's thinking and feeling.

Lessons about Limits

Finally, I always keep my eyes open for chances to discuss how God's Word applies to our busy lives. The highway has no shortage of such opportunities.

For example, my six-year-old can read not only speed-limit signs but the speedometer as well. I realized she'd acquired this skill when I was zipping along at 50 miles an hour one day, and she piped up, "Mom, the sign says 40. Why are you going 50?"

What was I supposed to say? That it's OK to break the rules if you don't like them or if they get in your way? The question she was asking was this: Are the rules *really* valid? Because we regularly discussed the importance of being obedient to God's commands, she wanted to know why I was unwilling to obey a traffic law.

As I took my foot off the accelerator and coasted to 40, I realized I was the student this time. I admitted to my daughter that I was speeding—and breaking the law. This lesson about limits showed her that I was not above the law; the commands I often talked about with her applied to me, too.

I'm learning to slow down and to live with integrity myself as I try to teach my children the same lessons. In our daily coming and goings, we'll find many opportunities to help them apply truth to their lives—and ours—if we pay attention. ♦

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