

Core Topics for Families – (All Ages)

These 12 topics help families of every age discover God together. Each one includes a short description in simple language, plus suggested readings for parents (and older youth).

The 12 Core Topics of the model are designed for families of all ages to explore together. The descriptions in this guide are written in simple, accessible language so children, youth, and adults can journey side by side. Each topic also includes **suggested readings**—these books are chosen specifically for parents and caregivers but could be read by youth. They provide depth, context, and practical wisdom to help adults guide their families while also growing in their own spiritual formation. Parents are encouraged to read these works personally or with other adults, and then translate the insights into conversations and practices appropriate for their children.

1. God’s Heart Toward Us

Description:

The way we see God shapes everything. This topic helps families learn that God is not distant or angry, but loving, present, and always ready to be with us.

Suggested Readings (Parents): *The Good and Beautiful God* by James Bryan Smith; *Abba’s Child* by Brennan Manning

2. Talking and Listening to God

Description:

Relationships grow through conversation. Families can explore prayer, journaling, and learning to notice God’s presence in everyday life.

Suggested Reading (Parents): *Hearing God* by Dallas Willard

3. God’s Kingdom

Description:

God’s Kingdom is not just in heaven—it’s here and now wherever love, justice, and peace are present. Families can look for ways to join in what God is doing.

Suggested Reading (Parents): *The Divine Conspiracy* by Dallas Willard

4. Life Together

Description:

We grow in faith when we are with others. This topic explores how friendships, family, and community shape us and show us God's love.

Suggested Reading (Parents): *Life Together* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer

5. God's Story (Scripture)

Description:

The Bible tells God's story and shows us how our story fits in. Families can read, imagine, and respond to Scripture together.

Suggested Readings (Parents): *Eat This Book* by Eugene Peterson; *Meeting with God in Scripture* by Jan Johnson

6. Different Ways of Following Jesus

Description:

There are many ways people connect with God—through prayer, serving, creating, worship, or action. Families can discover which ways come most naturally.

Suggested Reading (Parents): *Streams of Living Water* by Richard Foster

7. Practices that Shape Us

Description:

Habits like prayer, silence, Sabbath, or simplicity help us make space for God. Families can experiment with practices together to see which ones open their hearts.

Suggested Reading (Parents): *Celebration of Discipline* by Richard Foster

8. Knowing Ourselves

Description:

God made each of us with gifts, limits, personalities, and desires. Learning about ourselves helps us grow closer to God and others.

Suggested Readings (Parents): *I Told Me So* by Greg Ten Elshof; *The Enneagram Made Easy* by Elizabeth Wagele

9. Our Everyday Purpose

Description:

God is with us not only at church, but in school, work, sports, and home. This topic helps families see ordinary life as a place to serve and love God.

Suggested Readings (Parents): *The Gift of Being Yourself* by David Benner; *Let Your Life Speak* by Parker Palmer

10. Who We Really Are

Description:

Our true identity is not in what we achieve but in being loved by God. Families can remind each other daily that we are God's beloved children.

Suggested Reading (Parents): *Life of the Beloved* by Henri Nouwen

11. Growing and Changing

Description:

Following Jesus means being transformed—learning, healing, and becoming more like Him. Families can look back together and notice how God is changing them.

Suggested Reading (Parents): *Renovation of the Heart* by Dallas Willard

12. Walking the Journey

Description:

Life with God has seasons—joy, doubt, questions, growth. This topic helps families recognize where they are on the journey and trust that God is always with them.

Suggested Readings (Parents): *The Critical Journey* by Janet Hagberg; *Mansions of the Heart* by Tom Ashcraft