

## 50 Family Building Activities

We all want to give our children the best life that we can. A huge part of this is relationships. I encourage you to be intentional about building strong relationships with your children. Tell them about your family heritage and traditions. Make new memories and traditions. Tell them how God has worked in your life. Show them how to have a relationship with Jesus. Enjoy your time together.

The following are just some of the many activities that you can do to build and strengthen your family relationships as well as make new friends. These activities will also help your children and teens to grow in faith, wisdom, creativity, and problem solving ... all while having fun!

### **10 Ideas for Family Night**

Schedule regular family nights. As your children get older, this can be harder and harder to do. But whether it is weekly (recommended) or a little less often, be intentional about making it happen. Put it on your calendar and make it happen.

1. **Enjoy a Comedy Night.** Do you have aspiring comedians in your home? Each person can share jokes from a favorite joke book or even original material. Or you can watch some family-friendly comedy online or on a DVD. Laugh together.
2. **Put on a talent show.** Let each person share their special talents or team up. Whether playing a musical instrument, doing a magic trick, or reciting a poem, everyone has something they can contribute.
3. **Spend the evening doing puzzles.** Jigsaw puzzles, mind-benders, puzzle type games. Work together.
4. **Cook together.** No matter the age difference, everyone can pitch in to make dinner. Whether it is breakfast for dinner, make-your-own pizzas, or grilling hamburgers, the experience of doing it together can be better than the actual food.
5. **Read books aloud as a family.** An evening read aloud time gives you chances to connect and talk. Another option to reading aloud is listening to an audio book like Hank the Cowdog, Jim Weiss stories, and Adventures in Odyssey.
6. **Enjoy a night at the movies (right at home).** Let family members take turns picking the movies. Get out the blankets and start a fire when it is cold out. Pop popcorn or buy your family's favorite snack. Movie night should be an experience of being together, not just watching the show.
7. **If you build it, they will come.** Choose a LEGO challenge everyone can work on. Create a theme park, a game, or a super-heroes world that everyone builds to make it come alive. Or make a house of cards. Or set up a domino challenge to see if you can set off a chain reaction without it stopping.
8. **Create something.** Make puppets, draw, paint, or mold something in clay. It doesn't have to be perfect or elaborate! The point is to have fun. Share your creations with one another. Or make one big project together.
9. **Invite your friends.** Having others join in teaches children how important hospitality is. Keep the food simple (even just dessert or snacks) and don't worry if the house looks perfect. The goal is to build relationships. So eat, talk, laugh, play games, or whatever you enjoy!
10. **Play games.** Games teach us about losing gracefully and encouraging one another, and *are simply fun*.

### **10 Communication Building Ideas**

1. **Use your mealtimes together to really talk (and listen!).** Ask questions, have each person share something good and bad about their day, or discuss current events.
2. **Start listening when your kids are young.**
3. **Play a game that requires good communication.** For example, cooperative board games require working together (like Catan, Ticket to Ride, Pictionary, Catch Phrase, etc. ). Or go outside to play this game: One person puts on a blindfold and the other family members help guide them using voice commands only.
4. **Help young children learn to communicate how they are feeling** when they aren't in the middle of *the feeling*. Role playing can be very effective with children. For example, if you have a child who doesn't like to lose when they play games, then pretend to play a game and lose. Show how not to lose (throw a fit, pout, whine) and then show how to lose gracefully (Say, "Good game" or "That was fun.")
5. **Turn off the electronics.** Enjoy playing a game or talking about something important to them.
6. **Use driving time.** Sometimes when our kids are teens we feel like we spend just as much time in the car taking them places as actually being at home. But that is actually a great time to talk about what is going on in their world. Teen boys especially do better with "side-by-side" instead of "face-to-face" communication. And there is no better place than the car to do just that.
7. **Laugh when things go wrong.** They always do. A merry heart doeth good ...
8. **Write a family newsletter.** Include pictures, editorials, advertisements, and articles.
9. **Learn to say, "I was wrong. I'm sorry."** And stop there. When we go on with the word *but* we have nullified the apology because we put the responsibility of our actions on them instead of us. Sure, we may have lost our temper after they misbehaved, but they don't make us yell. We make that choice. So own it and you will teach them a valuable lesson on taking responsibility too.
10. **Take turns planning family activities.** And make sure the entire family is supportive of one another's choices, *even if it isn't their personal favorite*.

## 10 Community Service Opportunities

1. **Deliver meals with Meals on Wheels.**
2. **Serve dinner at a homeless shelter** in your community.
3. **Volunteer for community events.**
4. **Participate in fund-raisers** for organizations you support.
5. **Volunteer at the local food bank or homeless shelter.**
6. **Check with your church.** We have a program to connect our members with people needing things in the community from rides to church and upkeep of homes.
7. **Invite people over who don't have their family around**—older adults, service men and women (we live in an Air-Force town), singles, etc.
8. **Help build a home with Habitat for Humanity.**
9. **Visit a nursing home together**—especially when it isn't around Christmas. Many groups sing carols and visit during Christmas, but let's not forget the other times of the year!
10. **Give to others.** Participate in Operation Christmas Child, adopt a child or family from an Angel Tree, or buy some toys to donate to Toys-for-Tots.

## 10 Family-friendly Activities

1. **Play miniature golf or go bowling.** I know. It seems pretty obvious, but how often do we take advantage of the things right in our own towns when it isn't a special occasion?
2. **Go on a picnic.** Bring kites or a frisbee, or toss a baseball or football—whatever you enjoy—but take your time enjoying the afternoon.
3. **Take a hike.** It may just be around your neighborhood or at a local park. Or maybe you have access to beautiful mountain trails. But whatever you have available, take advantage of getting a little exercise and fresh air.
4. **Play at the park.** Let your inner child come out and actually *play* with your kids at the park. Go down the slides, climb, dig in the sand.
5. **Go camping in your backyard.** Set up the tent, roast marshmallows, and get away from the electronics. Tell stories, sing, and if the neighbors look at you funny, ask them if they want to join in.
6. **Plant a garden.** If you don't have a lot of space, check out square-foot gardening or herb gardening.
7. **Invite friends over for a Saturday cookout.** Sometimes we wait for special occasions like the 4th of July, but let's not forget to do it other times too!
8. **Learn a sport the whole family can enjoy.** Tennis, running, swimming...there are many ways to exercise and have fun as a family.
9. **Ride bikes** (or scooters or skateboards).
10. **Build a fort inside.** Since you can't be outside all of the time, you can bring the fun indoors too! And since the whole family is working on this, make sure to build an epic blanket fort.

## 10 Faith Building Ideas

1. **Study the Bible together.**
2. After church on Sundays, **at lunch go around the table and let each person share something they learned** or thought about during the services that day.
3. **Memorize scripture.** Correlate it with what you are studying or use a Scripture memorization plan.
4. **Pray together.** Yes, pray for each other and your family, but also use it as a time to model the importance of praying for others.
5. **Serve in a church ministry as a team.**
6. **Go on a mission trip as a family.** It doesn't have to be out of the country or expensive. Really a mission trip is simply going somewhere and working to meet needs.
7. **Choose a ministry or missionary you will support as a family.** Whether it is financially or through prayer, support someone or a ministry that you can follow through newsletters, emails, or reports to your church.
8. **Read missionary stories together.** Talk about their faith and the impact of their ministries. Some good series are the *Sower Series* and *Christian Heroes: Then and Now*.
9. **Read and discuss books about topics on faith.** If you have younger children, Lee Stroble has a series for kids including *Case for Christ for Kids*.
10. **Model what it means to go through trials trusting God.**

(part of Kay Chance's 100 Relationship Building Ideas, Resources, and Activities for Families)

# How to Raise Successful Children:

## Lead by example

- ◇ LOVE!
- ◇ be intentional
- ◇ read your Bible
- ◇ memorize verses
  - ◇ pray much
  - ◇ go to church
- ◇ volunteer & serve
- ◇ encourage & challenge
  - ◇ listen
- ◇ apologize when wrong
  - ◇ LOVE!

## Make family time a priority!

- ◇ get involved in church together
- ◇ pray & have devotions together
- ◇ share old traditions & make new ones
  - ◇ have meals together
  - ◇ laugh & have fun together
  - ◇ do service projects together
  - ◇ learn something new together

## Raising 2<sup>nd</sup> Generation Chinese Immigrant Children

As I studied for this seminar on *Raising 2<sup>nd</sup> Generation Chinese Immigrants*, I saw much debate on the approach 1<sup>st</sup> generation Chinese immigrant parents should take when raising 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Chinese immigrant children and teens. The questions were asked: Should these parents follow the example of their parents and grandparents to raise their children in the very same way that they were raised? Should these children be raised as bi-cultural children with the richness of both the Chinese and the American cultures of values, language and customs OR should they be raised as American children totally assimilated into the American culture?

As you think about these questions on parenting styles, I am sure that you also naturally think about educational goals ... I do... because academic success results in future success in our child's life and career, right!? Therefore, it is a very important goal for most parents. And as you already know, this is especially true for Asian parents.

Amy L. Chua, author of *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother*, had many things to say about Chinese parents and their parenting style. The following are quotes from this parenting memoir. Listen and see if any of these thoughts resonate with you:

Chinese children aren't math whizzes and music prodigies by luck. Chinese parenting have a long list of abandoned activities such as play-dates, parties and sleepovers. Also there are certain beliefs that every Chinese parent has.

The Chinese mother believes that (1) schoolwork always comes first; (2) an A-minus is a bad grade; (3) your children must be two years ahead of their classmates in math; (4) you must never compliment your children in public; (5) if your child ever disagrees with a teacher or coach, you must always take the side of the teacher or coach; (6) the only activities your children should be permitted to do are those in which they can eventually win a medal; and (7) that medal must be gold.

Amy had the perfect explanation for her parenting style. Unlike westerners who may think that childhood is "*something fleeting to be enjoyed.*" She saw childhood "*as a training period, a time to build character and invest for the future.*"

On the other hand, Dyske Suematsu proposes that while the above Chinese parenting style does achieve academic success in the classroom setting and on standardized tests, it prevents a child from developing creativity and the problem solving skills that are so valuable in the American workplace today. He said that Asian children need to assimilate into the American culture and learn how to think creatively and strategically in order to really succeed in the Western world.

Take a minute and think about these two views. Which do you think is the best for your child?

After studying and reviewing our past experiences in raising our six children, as an educator I propose to you that a combination of the above two views is the best way to approach your parenting goals for child or teen. In this I see a great benefit to the educational success of the student through heritage and academics as well as creative play and problem solving. BUT, even more importantly, as a Christian, I see these two views as *part of* the Biblical plan for child development. Following the total plan will yield even greater benefits with the development of your child's personal character and integrity as well as a quality relationship between you and your child.

What is this Biblical plan? In Luke 2:52 it says that "*Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man*". Simply put, Jesus was smart, strong and had good relationships with God and people. This is clearly evidenced throughout the Bible as well as historical records from His time until now ... 2000 years later ... what an influence!

Jesus is God's Son. With God as His Father of course He was perfect and able to achieve these goals. Can we, as 21<sup>st</sup> century parents, even follow His example and achieve these goals with our children? Absolutely! I believe we can and I believe it all starts with a matter of heart ... God's heart. Because of that we are now going to look at the Bible, God's Word, to see His example of love as well as some of His instructions and promises to us.

Why look at the Bible as our authority? Because our children come from the Lord ...

*Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD ... Psalm 127:3*

and because He promises that He will give us the instruction that we need to raise them

*I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.*

*Psalm 32:8*

We have found this to be very true as we have worked hard to raise our six children. (2 slides of our children with info on each)

### **God's example:**

*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. John 3:16*

God loved us and sacrificed for us. He wanted the best for us ... salvation from sin and abundant life when we trust His son Jesus for our salvation.

*I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. John 10:10.*

As parents, we love our children and we want the best for them just as God wants the best for us. The very best thing we can do for our children is to show them God's love and lead them to trust in Jesus as their Savior. We are to "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord". Ephesians 6:4.

How do we do that?

### **God's instructions:**

• Personally read and learn what the Bible says .... make it your foundation... you can't teach what you don't know:

*Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee. Psalm 119:11*

*My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother: bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck. When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee. For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life ....: Proverbs 6:20-23*

*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. Colossians 3:16*

• Teach your children Scripture from infancy and they will be equipped for good works. Memorize it ... think about it ... talk about it ... obey it. –

*But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*

*II Timothy 3:14-17*

• Teach your children diligently/consistently by incorporating Scripture into your daily life and using the teachable moments of your life ... walking, sitting, driving, going to bed and waking up...

*And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates. Deut. 6:6-9*

*And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. Deut. 11:19*

• Teach your children what God has done in Bible history as well as your own life. Show them how God brought you to be the person you are. God is faithful and mighty. Keep a journal of things you are thankful for ... things that God has done ... remember and be thankful together!.

*Give ear, O my people, to my law: incline your ears to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old: which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done ... that they should make them known to their children: that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children: that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments ...: Psalm 78:1-7*

- Show your children how to pray.

*Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:5-7*

**God's promises:**

*Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it. Proverbs 22:6*

*Children obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor thy father and mother ; which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Ephesians 6:1-4*

*I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth. 3 John 4*

yale or heaven?