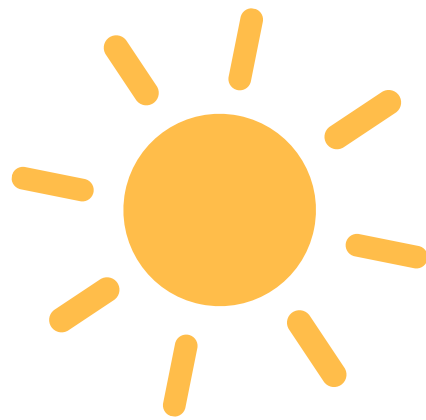


FAMILY CULTURE CHALLENGE

Intentionally Foster LOVE, JOY,
and PEACE in Your Family



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Have you ever been stuck in a rut as a family? You want your family to be characterized by positive things, but instead you find yourselves short on patience with each other, complaining, and frustrated. I totally get it, because I've been there too! So many times I've been on a track of constant discipline with my kids, but none of the positive traits I wanted to see were growing in our home!

One day, I found a gem of parenting wisdom tucked away in an unassuming place. In Ephesians, Paul writes:

"Therefore, having put away falsehood let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor... Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear...Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you (4:25-32)."

Amidst his practical instruction to the Ephesians, Paul lays out a helpful framework. When you remove something negative, you need to add something positive. Put away falsehood = speak the truth. Stop stealing = work with your hands. No corrupting talk = build each other up. Put away anger = be kind to one another.

As parents, we definitely need to correct and give discipline for wrong behavior - but we can't stop there! We also need to intentionally grow the positive traits that we want to see. Lately, I've found three simple ways to do this...

#1 Talk - I intentionally introduce the positive traits and we talk about them. We read Bible verses about them, talk about why we might want to live out these things, and go through examples of what they look like. I also "talk" by pointing out when I see my kids living out these traits. Encouraging them in this way helps so much!

#2 Show - The most important way I've found to teach my children positive character traits (and also the hardest!) is to model them myself. If I want our home to be a place characterized by responding in love, then I need to set the example for how to respond in love. If I want our home to be full of joyful workers, then I need to joyfully set about my tasks. Children learn and model so much more after what you do, than just what you say.



#3 Do - When Paul wrote to the Ephesians, he gave them practical ideas of things to DO. Instead of just reprimanding my child for being unkind to his brother, we also come up with ideas for ways we can be kind. Instead of just talking about the importance of serving others, we roll up our sleeves and actually serve. I don't just show them how to resolve conflict peacefully, but I walk them through it and have them practice doing it themselves.

Talk, show, and do are the simple steps for this challenge as well! Each week you will first talk about the character trait. Read the verse(s), sing the song(s), use the discussion guide, and talk about what this trait would look like in your home and why you want to see it grow.

Then, it starts with YOU and the example you set. Use the tips to help you have the trait on your mind throughout the day. You can also print and cut out the included cards to hang somewhere you'll see or keep one in your pocket.

Finally, use the included posters to help encourage your family to now go and DO these things (I include one challenge to get your started!). Instead of a traditional rewards chart where each individual member gets stickers for good behavior, with a prize after receiving a certain amount, these posters are set up to work towards a cooperative goal of a visual reminder of the love, joy, and peace filling your home. The way it works is that whenever someone sees someone else doing that trait, they put a sticker on the poster. No putting stickers on for yourself! These posters are meant to be a way to encourage each other, not as the sole motivation for acting loving, joyful, or peaceful.

One more thing I want to mention is that love, joy, and peace are the words I chose for our family because I think they really encompass the atmosphere I want to nurture in our home. However, you may want to choose different words! Just use the words you want, but follow the same method of "talk, show, do" to grow them in your home.

Lastly, whenever we are intentional about building good character traits I find it doubly important to remember to also saturate our home with the gospel. A focus on good behavior without a gospel centered heart is just legalism. Don't forget to point your children to the only One who is always loving, always joyful, and always full of peace. We desire to do these things out of love and gratitude to the One who covers us in grace and declares us righteous. "We love because He first loved us." (1 John 4:19)

Praying your home overflows with love, joy, and peace as you set out on this journey as a family!

LOVE

TALK

Verses: 1 Corinthians 13, 1 John 4:7-21, Matthew 5:44, Matthew 22:37-39

Songs: How Deep the Father's Love for Us, Peace Like a River, Joy Joy Joy (Down in My Heart)

Discussion: Why do we love? What does love look like? Do we love someone only if they are kind to us? What practical things can I do to show love to others in my family?

SHOW

- Proverbs 13:24 says: "Those who spare the rod of discipline hate their children. Those who love their children care enough to discipline them." (NLT) Remember that when we correct and guide our children through kind and patient discipline, we are loving them!
- Sometimes it is helpful to have a phrase to repeat. One that I come back to often is "respond in love" (Proverbs 15:1). When I'm tempted to respond in anger or frustration, this phrase often pops into my head.
- Each day this week, make it a point to intentionally connect with your child/children/spouse in a way that makes them feel loved.

DO

Start each day with a ten second hug!



JOY

TALK

Verses: Philippians 4:4, Psalm 28:7, James 1:2-3, 1 Peter 1:8-9

Songs: Joyful Joyful We Adore Thee, Peace Like a River, Joy Joy Joy (Down in My Heart)

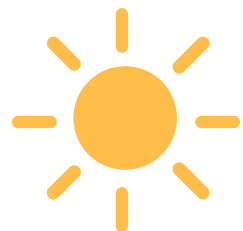
Discussion: What is joy? Where does our joy come from? When should we be joyful? What would it look like for us to go about our days with a joyful spirit?

SHOW

- It is so easy to become weighted down by the demands of parenthood and lose our joyful spirit. Start your day with even just a few minutes to connect with the Lord and pray to him that you be filled with joy as you go about your day.
- God is our ultimate source of joy, but finding the little things throughout your day that bring you life is a great secondary way to bring joy to your heart, especially if you approach those things with an attitude of gratefulness to Him.
- James 1 tells us to have joy even in our suffering. Only by fixing our eyes on Jesus, who endured the greatest suffering for "the joy set before him" (Hebrews 12:2), can we experience this deep, God given joy.

DO

Kids are often better at displaying joy than us adults! Join into some of their play this week. Have a dance party! Jump on the trampoline! Have a pillow fight! Laugh together!



PEACE

TALK

Verses: Colossians 3:15, Hebrews 12:14, Romans 12:18, James 3:18, Philippians 4:7

Songs: Make Me A Channel of Your Peace, Peace Like a River, Joy Joy Joy (Down in My Heart)

Discussion: What does it mean to live at peace with each other? Where does our peace come from? Does peacemaking come naturally or do we have to work at it? (Ps 34:14) How can we live at peace in our home?

SHOW

- Being peacemakers does not come naturally to us or our children! Oftentimes, kids just don't know how to respond peacefully in certain situations. Role playing and acting out different scenarios is a great way to help them learn.
- Just like we talked about with love, it can be helpful to have a reminder phrase to use during non-peaceful situations. "Respond in love" is once again a good choice. "Put others first" is another good one.
- Another verse that is good for encouraging peace is Proverbs 15:1, "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." Using "gentle words" is something that does wonders to bring peace into the home!
- Don't forget that while outward peace is great, the best peace that Jesus brings is an inward peace that persists no matter the outward circumstance.

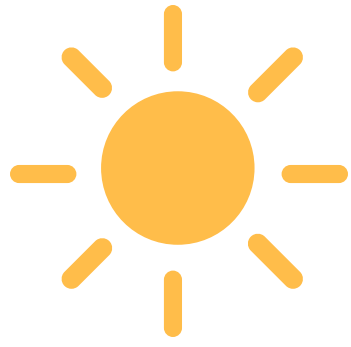
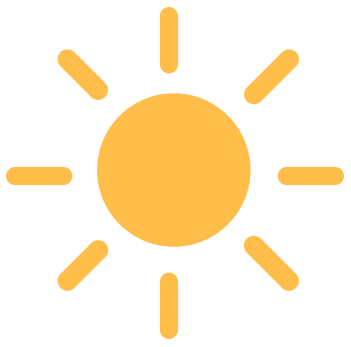
DO

Introduce the concept of peace by having a "peace party." Have everyone choose one thing that makes them feel peaceful (music, cozy blankets, hugs, warm drinks, etc.) and include it in your party. During your party, talk about how you want your home to be filled with God's peace.

— LOVE —



— — JOY — —



— PEACE —



Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

-1 JOHN 4:11-12 ESV

Rejoice in the Lord always.
I will say it again: Rejoice!

-PHILIPPIANS 4:4 NIV

JESUS,

Help me to model a love, joy, and peace that flow from you. Help me to encourage these traits as the Spirit works to grow them in our family.

AMEN.

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

-JAMES 3:18 NIV