

Parents, Don't Waste Your Lazy Summer Days

By [Stacy Reaach](#) — *June 28, 2016*

Summertime. The blissful time of year when the crazy schedules stop and kids can sleep in, stay up late around the bonfire, delve into good books, and enjoy lemonade stands by the side of the road. Yet as the end of the school year drew near, I was hit with a dose of the parental panic many of us feel. Would my kids be bored this summer if I didn't have them enrolled in 10 different activities? "What camps are your kids doing? What kinds of lessons are they taking?" are questions that moms are often asking each other.

The pressure to keep our kids' schedules filled to the brim can diminish the possibility of a summer respite. But is it really such a bad thing to have wide open spaces in our planners? Might this be the very thing we need in order to refocus our priorities and make the most of the short season of time we're given with our children?

Point them to the Lord at all times

This has been a pivotal year for me in parenting. Our oldest child became a teenager. I've noticed a shift in my perspective when, in a movie or show or song, there's a sentimental moment of a child heading off to college for the first time or a young woman getting married. Instead of relating to my own experiences of going to college or getting married, I've thought mainly of my daughter. Tears have filled my eyes on numerous occasions as I ponder what it will feel like when my firstborn leaves the nest, and I have been increasingly aware that in just five short years, she could be departing from our home.

These thoughts have begun to shape how I think about spending time during these slow summer days. What do I want my kids to learn before

they leave home? What memories do I want them to have? Deuteronomy 6 gives a clear exhortation to parents as to how to intentionally point our children to the Lord.

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise” (Deut 6:5-7).

Extended time for intentional teaching

What better time than the unhurried days of summer to be intentional with teaching our children the ways of the Lord? (Eph 6:4) From the time we pour the cereal bowls to the afternoons at the pool, to the long walks and bike rides through the park, we have an opportunity to shape our children by pointing them to Christ, to engage them in conversations about the gospel. If we have overloaded the summer activity schedule and are farming our kids out to camps each week, we'll miss the unique opportunities summer gives us to spend extra, unhurried time with our children.

“What better time than the unhurried days of summer to be intentional with teaching our children the ways of the Lord?”

A friend of mine with older children told me one lesson she learned as her children have begun to leave the coop is to make the most of the time you have with them. Activities and hobbies she used to enjoy doing without her kids have become a way she can intentionally spend time

with them. “Whatever you have liked doing on your own, look for ways to include your kids,” she suggested.

For me, exercise has often been an enjoyable activity and much needed stress reliever. I like heading off on a jog and listening to my favorite music or podcasts. But this year, my 13-year-old decided to take up running, and often asks to go with me on my jogs. It’s become a way for us to spend time together, to talk about school and friends and faith while running through the neighborhood. I confess sometimes it can be hard to take my headphones off and be okay with not listening to the podcast I was looking forward to, but the time spent with my daughter is worth it. One day I’ll have plenty of time to run by myself, and I’ll be missing my sweet chattering companion.

Practical ways to be intentional

Here are a few ways to be intentional with your kids this summer, as you seek to nurture their hearts and make the most of your time (Eph. 5:15-16)

1. Nurture their faith by being intentional with Bible study. One thing my husband and I have discussed together is what kind of study we should be doing as a family. As I’m studying 1 Peter this summer and it seemed like focusing our family devotions on the same book would be beneficial to all of us. We encourage our kids to read a portion each day (okay, most days) on their own, and at dinner we come together to discuss it and ask questions.

2. Read good books together. Long road trips and lazy summer afternoons are a perfect time to enjoy reading together (of course, our 2 year old can make this challenging so it’s often done once he is down for his nap). WORLD Magazine gives a great list of top children’s books (May 14, 2016

edition). We've especially loved reading aloud *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C. S. Lewis and *Little Pilgrim's Progress* by Helen Taylor.

3. Put down your phone. How much precious time is lost because I'm checking social media or text messages one too many times? Simply putting my phone out of reach and really listening to my kids communicates they are more important than whatever message I'm trying to send or the article I'm trying to read.

“How much precious time is lost because I'm checking social media or text messages one too many times?”

4. Include your kids in your daily activities and favorite hobbies. My daughter loves to work alongside me in the kitchen and help me figure out the best deals when grocery shopping. One morning a week we have a family cleaning party, and everyone has specific chores to do. Working together creates a special camaraderie, and it is a sweet reward when we're finished and everyone can enjoy a relaxing afternoon.

5. Indulge in sheer fun with your kids. Board games, movie nights, and backyard croquet have been great memory makers in our house. Just the other night I promised to jump on the trampoline with the kids and had to fulfill the promise even as our neighbors sat around their bonfire next door. Laughing together creates memories that won't easily be forgotten.

“Prioritize the people God has given you to invest in, for the time is coming when they’ll fly from home.”

So as the days are longer and you find yourself wondering how to fill the space, look for ways to make the most of your time with your kids. Prioritize the very people God has given you to invest in, for the time is coming when they’ll fly from home and there will be no way to turn back the clock.

Stacy Reaoch (@stacyreaoch) is a pastor’s wife and mother of four. She is passionate about helping women learn to study the Bible and apply God’s life-changing truths to their daily lives. Stacy contributes articles to various publications including *Desiring God* and *The Gospel Coalition*. She and her husband, Ben, serve *Three Rivers Grace Church* in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Ben received both his M.Div. and Ph.D. from *Southern Seminary* (2001-2010). They’re grateful for the training received and friendships made during their time at *Southern*.