

The **Faith Shaper 7** Guide to Christmas

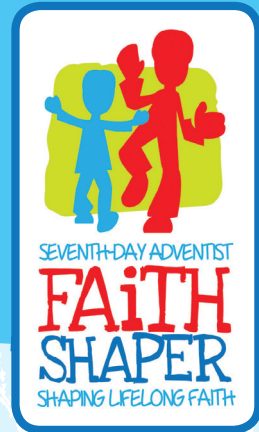
Shaping life long faith at Christmas

Being intentional
as a family

Tune into God



7 Essential Faith Experiences



For Home,
Church and School

- S** Service and Mission
- H** Homes Empowered
- A** Authentic Relationships
- P** Participation
- I** Intergenerational Connections
- N** Noteworthy Memory Events
- G** God Encounters

children.adventist.org.au/faith-shaper

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord
and Saviour Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 3:18, NIV)

Faith Shaper Guide to Christmas

Why be intentional?

It's the crazy season. The season of stress, of overfilled malls, and maxed out credit cards; of fat men in red suits, of Christmas trees and a few overplayed songs. It's also the time when people smile in the street, your grocery checkout lady looks you in the eye and for a few short weeks people's worlds appear to expand, before rapidly shrinking back down to size in time for the Boxing Day sales.

With all of the traditions and love; of looking past yourself and finding joy in giving to others; tomorrow someone will still be lonely and their world may still be falling apart. The deaths and births, joys and heartaches associated with living don't stop at Christmas. And for the majority the only hope this world has, the only hope this world needs will be represented by a nativity scene standing in their front yard, wrapped up in Christmas lights hoping that one day they will notice.

This Christmas, help your kids discover more than how to be simply consumers. As adults, make it your aim to build holistic relationships with your kids. Encourage them to participate in creating memories with individuals across all generations in your church and family. Help your kids to share the hope, love and joy that Jesus brings to this world through service to your friends, family and community. Get creative, love extravagantly and have fun.

We have created this guide to help you be intentional in creating space in this Christmas season for the things that matter most.

Blessings

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MAKE A PLAN TO TUNE OUT THE NOISE:

Turn off the TV for _____
(a day... a week... a month)

Take a break from your social media

Power down your phones, tablets
and other electronics in the evenings

Avoid the shops as a form of
entertainment

MAKE A PLAN TO TUNE INTO WHAT MATTERS:

Play worshipful music and Christmas
carols

Connect with loved ones on the
phone, over dinner or write a letter

Create memories with friends and
family with simple traditions and
activities

The weather is warm so get out in
nature

Be intentional & write it out

Why be intentional?

We are so busy these days that we miss the important moments unless we schedule them in. Sit down with your family and write out two simple ways my family is going to tune into God and each other this holiday season.

Write down idea # 1

Write down idea # 2

What now?

Now use the blank calendar in the back page's of this booklet to write in 5-8 dates/times for your family to DO these simple things.

Service & Mission

When Jesus was asked what the greatest commandment in the law is, He said "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment" (Matthew 22:37-38, ESV). He then proceeded to share that the second greatest commandment is to "love your neighbour as yourself" (Matthew 22:39, ESV).

Kids have a great ability to break down people's defences and to open lines of communication. The command to love your neighbours is one command of God that can be easier to obey with your kids than without. This season look for ways to involve your kids in getting to know your neighbour. Try an idea from the list, or better yet come up with your own!

our family service & mission plans

As a family decide on two service and/or mission activities you can do as a family this month. Write them on the calendar.

Beginner-Kindergarten

- Go on walks as a family around the same time each day.
- Sit on the front porch and let your kids play in the front yard.
- Pass out baked goods as a family (invite kids to help or make a card as they are able).
- Host an activity in your front yard/driveway that you invite the neighbours to: lemonade stand, street cricket, holiday BBQ etc.
- Create a block/street email and phone contact list for safety.
- Go to story times at your neighbourhood library and invite your neighbour to come along.
- Start hosting play date weekly for other parents or organise one at the local park.
- Offer old toys/clothes to neighbours with kids younger than yours.
- Prayer walk as a family and pray for your neighbours.
- Invite your older neighbours who will be alone for Christmas to come over for a potluck Christmas meal.

Primary - Juniors

- Sit on the front porch and let your kids play in the front yard or driveway.
- Invite your kids to help bake a treat and write a card for your neighbours, then take them around to our neighbours.
- Host an activity in your front yard/driveway that is easy for neighbours to joining in and/or invite them to: lemonade stand, street cricket, holiday BBQ, christmas carols etc.
- Create a block/street email and phone contact list for safety.
- Attend your kids team practices and volunteer to bring snacks or contribute in some way.
- Offer old toys/clothes to neighbours with kids younger than yours or donate them to a clothing bin or shelter.
- Prayer walk as a family and pray for your neighbours.
- Go out as a family and start tidying your street or offer to help in an older neighbours garden one day.

Authentic Relationships

A recent Time magazine article titled 'The 5 Things Your Kids Will Remember About You', listed the five parenting habits are the most significant to kids:

1. The time you made them feel safe (or the times you made them feel unsafe)

There's a vulnerability and a need for protection in the heart of every child. Your kids will remember those moments you chased the monsters from under their bed or held them after a nightmare, but they'll also remember the times when your temper became the monster they feared. Our kids are probably going to see us angry sometimes, because that's part of life, but make it your mission to make your children feel safe and secure at all times when they're with you.

2. The times when you gave them your undivided attention

Kids measure love primarily by our attentiveness to them. The times you stop what you're doing to have a tea party or go outside to throw a ball or jump on a trampoline will be memories etched into their minds and hearts forever. Take the time to do the little things with your kids, because in the end, they'll be the moments that matter most.

3. The way you interacted with your spouse

Our kids are forming their views of love in large part by watching how we treat our husband or wife. Strive to have the kind of marriage that makes them excited to get married someday. Give them the security that comes from seeing their Mom and Dad in a committed, loving relationship with each other.

4. Your words of affirmation and your words of criticism

A child's heart is like wet cement and the impression made early in life will harden over time. They'll base their sense of identity, capability and even self-worth largely upon the words you speak to them in those formative years. Part of our job as parents is to correct and discipline, but even in correction, let your words be full of love, encouragement and positive reinforcement.

5. Your family traditions

Kids love spontaneity, but they also have deep need for predictability. They'll remember with great fondness the "traditions" you establish whether it's a weekly family movie (or game) night, a place you regularly travel for family getaways, the way you celebrate birthdays and special events or any other special tradition. Be intentional about creating some traditions that they'll want to pass onto their own children someday.

An authentic relationship is one of the key foundational experiences for both healthy development and long-life faith development. Attachment and nurturing is essential. We do our best as parents to be good role models, but we also need to surround children with quality people from all generations – leaders, mentors, grandparents, and other young people – in as many settings as possible.

On the next few pages are resources that you and your family can use to help develop deeper and more meaningful relationships with each other and God.

5 ways to say I love you

We believe that we were created by a loving God, so it is only natural that children need to feel loved in order to best develop and succeed. But if you and your child speak different love languages, your display of love might get lost in translation – affecting your child's attitude, behaviour, and development.

In order to help you communicate "I Love You" effectively with your child we have developed this simple activity, based on Gary Chapman's 5 love languages, as a way to empower your home through building authentic relationships. Download this resource by visiting <http://children.adventist.org.au/authentic-relationships>

10 things I love about you

Words can inspire, encourage, devastate, uplift, tear down and ultimately change the direction of a child or spouse's day, week, and in some instances, their life.

Be purposely intentional by taking just ten minutes each day to make a profound difference for one you love by communicating 'I love you'. Download this resource by visiting <http://children.adventist.org.au/authentic-relationships>

Participation

Christmas activities

This holiday season is the perfect opportunity to practice loving our kids by encouraging them to participate actively at home, school and church. Inviting children to be a part of the Christmas plans helps to empower them to take an active role in the family, church and school. It helps them to feel that they are valued and heard. Allowing your kids to have a voice – and for us to listen, really listen to their questions and ideas – can help to build the foundation of confident, expressive people and lifelong faith.

Easier said than done? True. Christmas plans can bring out the control freak in all of us. But making a shift in our attitude, being more flexible, letting go of the perfectly tidy and embracing the slightly messy (ok probably really messy) is a way of growing life long faith. Write on the calendar what you are going to do as a family to participate.

6 easy ways for your kids to participate in Christmas

1. Let them choose their favourite dish or dessert- they can help or you can do on your own.
2. Invite them to create holiday decor, name plates, centre pieces or place settings.
3. Encourage them participate using their gifts, be it at church or at home. Get them to sing and item, create artwork, whatever it is that they are good at.
4. If you're having guests over or joining at another home, make a little thank-you gift for your guests or the hostess.
5. Let them come up with/help choose a way that you can serve the community you live in or church you attend at Christmas.
6. At the Christmas table, be sure to invite them to have a voice, be a part of the conversation or say a prayer.

Your ideas

Intergenerational Connections

Connecting intergenerationally

Christmas is a wonderful time to make intergenerational connections. There are so many wonderful traditions, stories, recipes and memories that older generations can share with younger generations. And younger generations have the ability to provide so much joy in a season that can be for older generations very lonely.

This Christmas as a family, decide on one activity you can do to provide joy or include a person of an older generation in your christmas (put it on the calendar). Also make it a mission to ask older members of your family for old family recipes and traditions they can pass on to your kids.

Family/church traditions

Family recipes we discovered and want to try

My favorite family story

Note worthy memory events

Memory Events & traditions

There are so many wonderful and creative activities and simple traditions you can add to your holiday season. Christmas is the time of traditions and love; of looking past yourself and finding joy in giving it to others. There are so many incredible traditions associated with Christmas . As a family get your kids involved in participating in old and creating new family Christmas traditions.

Do a little research on ideas then sit down with your kids and ask what they would like to do. The reality is that most kids have an opinion and are so excited when they are asked to share it. Once ideas have been shared agree on 1-5 that you would like to do this year and schedule them in.

our family tradition ideas

Make a list as a family of 2-5 traditions you'd like to try with your family this year:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Kindness elves

Create a new tradition for Christmas with the Kindness Elves, an alternative to the popular Elf on the Shelf idea, and place the focus instead on positive, character-building activities for kids. Teaching love, kindness and gratitude with a hope to raise kids who move away from the “entitlement” attitude which pervades our modern generation. Visit here to read about the tradition <http://theimaginationtree.com/2013/11/alternative-elf-on-shelf-tradition-kindness-elf-kindness-elves.html>

For parents

As a parent make a list of one memory you would like to make with each child and a memory you would like to make with your spouse this Christmas season.

God Encounters

Encountering God

Christmas is a wonderful time to help your child to encounter Jesus and the gift of grace that has been given to them. One way to help your child discover the gift of Jesus and grace is to start the conversation. Be willing to sit and discuss what it means to you and teach your child how much it can mean to them.

One tool to help you do this is the GraceLink @ home pages available on our website. These pages give you ideas for ways to integrate these conversations in play, activities and family challenges for different age groups. Visit <http://children.adventist.org.au/gracelinkhome> to view or download these free printable pages.

Beginner discussion topics

- Jesus likes to be with us.
- How can I show God's love to others today?

Primary discussion topics

- God's gift of grace gives me hope and joy.
- Jesus is God's special gift to me.
- Jesus gives me joy and hope.
- I can look forward to the future because God loves me
- How does knowing God bring joy in your life?
- How do you feel when you talk about Jesus?
- What do you want in your future that Jesus can provide for you?

Kindergarten discussion topics

- God sends angels to help us.
- Jesus is the best gift from God.
- God shares His gift with everyone.
- How can I share the good news with someone today?
- What can we do today to share the best gift from God?
- How can we share God with

Beginner extracted from GraceLink curriculum Year B, Quarter 4.

Kindergarten extracted from GraceLink curriculum Year B, Quarter 4, Week 11, 12 & 13.

Primary extracted from GraceLink curriculum Year D, Quarter 4, Week 11, 12 & 13.

Learn to pray in awe

Have you ever really watched and listened to a child pray? They believe that if they pray, God will 'help grandma find her glasses', 'make the family pet get better' and 'keep monsters away at night'. Kids will pray about what matters to them, when it matters to them and they believe without a doubt that God listens.

As adults many of us lose the ability to pray unjaded. There have been many unanswered prayers, moments when it felt like, if our prayers were emails, they would be going straight to the spam box. Prayer can become mundane, another task just to tick off the list. Our children pick up on this and as they grow, many of them lose the sense of awe that the creator of the universe has time to listen and communicate with them.

This Christmas season we want to encourage you as individuals, as churches and as families to get creative and rethink how you do prayer. Bring back that sense of awe, get relational, create some memories and help your kids develop lifelong faith.

10 ideas to get you started

- 1. Prayers by flashlight** – In the evening, make prayers before bed special by huddling together under a 'prayer tent.' Sit side-by-side on your child's bed and throw a spare sheet over top of you both to create your prayer tent, then pray together by flashlight. For some good Scripture verses to pray through in your prayer tent, check out Psalm 139.
- 2. Sharing the moment** – 'Share the moment' prayers help kids remember that Jesus is with them every minute of the day. Just before you experience something special and wonderful, take a moment to invite Jesus to share the experience with you. For example, before you walk the family dog, you might pray, God, we would really like to share this walk with you. Keep us safe and help us to see you along the way.
- 3. Sharing interests** – Reassure your child that Jesus wants to hear about anything that's on their mind. Simply invite them to pray by saying, God loves to hear about the things that you love. Would you like to talk to Him about trucks today? To get their ideas flowing, you might like to read a book on your child's favourite subject, then tell Jesus about some of the things you learned.

- 4. Centre of attention** – Choose a specific day of the week to pray for one person in the family, then pray together at the dinner table after your evening meal. For example, on Mondays you might pray for specific blessings for Dad; on Tuesdays, for your eldest child; on Wednesdays, for the next eldest, etc. Your child is sure to listen intently to hear what you pray for them! In the process, they'll learn how to pray for others. Also building this habit early on in life can be helpful in the teen years when your child may be reluctant to make their prayer needs known.
- 5. Newspaper prayer** – More suitable for older children, the newspaper prayer will help your family remember to pray for people in other regions of the world. 10 to 15 minutes to go online and identify something in the news that we could pray for. Then as a family pray about what you have read.
- 6. Prayer deck** – Prepare a small stack of cards with each card displaying the photo of someone you pray for regularly. Each evening before or after dinner, shuffle the cards and deal one or more cards to each member of your family. Take turns praying for the people on the cards you receive.
- 7. Create God Encounter Moments** – Creating moments where your children can encounter God can be simple things like one Sabbath morning waking the kids before sunrise and jumping in the car, bundled under blankets, and driving to convenient or scenic vantage point or beach and waiting for the sun to rise. As the sun rises have a short worship and prayer.
- 8. The Prayer Jar** - Place a jar and some pieces of paper on the table where you eat your meals. During the day, family members (and household visitors) can write down a prayer request and put it in the jar. At meal times, pull the slips out to add special requests to your prayer time.
- 9. Sticky Note Prayer Reminders** - Put prayer sticky notes in hidden places throughout your house. Use these as reminders to pray through the day and pray about everything. Be creative and even consider using prayer scriptures as ideas for notes.
- 10. Prayer Journal and Calendar** - This is a fantastic resource for kids aged 4-12. Use it as a way to start a conversation with your kids about prayer. Discuss requests, share answers to prayer and help them discover what prayer means to them as they develop lifelong faith. Visit our website to order <http://children.adventist.org.au>

Faith Shaping December

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
		1	
6	7	8	
13	14	15	
20	21	22	
27	28	29	

er

Being intentional
as a family

Tune into God

esday

Thursday

Friday

Sabbath

2	3	4	5
9	10	11	12
16	17	18	19
23	24	25	26
30	31		

Verses



Faith @ Home

The Daily 5:
Essential Relational
Moments

Shaping Faith

Big Verse:

"Repeat them again and again to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are away on a journey, when you are lying down and when you are getting up again. Tie them to your hands as a reminder, and wear them on your forehead. Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."

Deuteronomy 6:7-9

1. When they first wake up:

How do you greet your child when they first wake up or as they are getting ready for the day?

- Remember to say "I love you and I'm glad that you are my son/daughter!" Go beyond the routine of just "Good Morning".
- Compliment: Praise is the act of expressing approval, admiration or complimenting your child. Doing this in the morning not only helps your child start out the day feeling positive and confident, it also provides them with the reassurance that you as a parent are proud of them and love them.

2. When they leave in the morning:

How do you leave your child in the morning? If you have only one smile in you, give it to the people you love.

- Speaking "life" into your child through "**Words of Encouragement**." The word "encourage" means "to make courageous." When you speak words of encouragement you are giving your child that extra energy—extra courage—to take into the day.
- **Affection:** do you offer any kind of affection? A hug, high-five, kiss on the cheek, hand on their shoulder.

3. When they are gone for the day:

How do you connect with your child when they are gone during the day? Do you put notes in their lunch box, pocket or school bag for them to find. It is important to let your child know that you love and are thinking about them even when you are not there.

4. When they arrive home:

How do you greet your child when they arrive home? Whenever your child comes home greet them with the "big 4" affection, excitement, appreciation and empathy. This says to your child they are more important to you than anything else you might be doing when they walk in the door.

5. When they go to bed:

How do you say goodnight to your child right before they go to bed?

- **Gratitude & Appreciation:** By noticing and expressing what you value about your child you not only build their confidence but when you appreciate something you are putting extra value into it. The key is to notice and thank your child for something specific.
- **Prayer:** Should be the final words your child hears from you.

A meaningful "good night" can allow your child to fall asleep peacefully. It also reinforces the fact that you love, appreciate and care for them no matter what has happened during the day.

