

WHY THEY STAY

The statistics are staggering. A whopping 75% of young adults between the ages of 18 and 29 leave the church. Sometimes, later in life they come back, but sometimes they don't. So, the question is: how can we, the church and we, the family work together to keep them from leaving at all? Let's take a look at the 25% who chose to stay and what they had in common growing up in church and at home. The following five actions steps will show you just how easy it is to implement both at home and at church!

First and foremost, the number one action that families can take is eating dinner together 5 out of 7 nights per week. It's almost hard to believe that the simplest and most natural thing to do has the greatest impact! Those who know me know that I am a stickler for this. So many times, dinner time is the only time that families are together throughout the day. Schedules are stacked, distractions are everywhere, and you are tired. I get it. But what if? What if you deliberately scheduled your activities around dinner? You have to eat, right? Why not make it count? At home, I have a no TV or electronics rule while we are eating. We may not always have the deepest conversations while we are together, but the point is that, well, we are together!

The second most impactful action is for families to serve together in a ministry. Families who serve together form a great bond both to the family itself, and to the others serving along with them! It can often create intergenerational relationships that normally wouldn't have formed under different circumstances. The main motivation for serving together is modeling. When parents dedicate their service to the church and include their children, they are creating a path for their children to follow well into adulthood. Serving also creates a sense of connectedness. Families will feel a deeper sense of connection to each other and to the ones they are both serving and serving with. Lastly, serving gives them ownership. They are a part of something greater than themselves and church becomes less about one's self and more about the Lord and others.

The third action step is having at least one spiritual experience at home during the week. Don't panic! This one is easier than it sounds and most likely, you are already doing it! Read your Bible together as a family. You may need to change Bibles throughout the years to make it age appropriate, but I guarantee that you will still get something out of it. Pray together as a family. Most likely you pray at the dinner table. Expand it to nightly prayers if you aren't doing that already. I like to pray with my boys before school or work. Showing your children that it is easy to talk to God is essential! It doesn't have to be long or extravagant; it only has to come from the heart.

The fourth action step is entrusting children with responsibility at an early age. Having children serve even at an early age sets the tone for the rest of their lives. It tells them that they are important, their talents are valuable to others, and it gives them responsibility and ownership. That's why I love Youth Led Sundays! A child of any age can greet someone at the door as they are entering the sanctuary. They can sing in the kid's choir. The possibilities are endless. The reward is eternal.

The fifth and final action step is having at least one faith-focused adult (other than their parents) in their lives. Have this person be someone you know well and trust. They should have the same values and beliefs as you. This way, you can be certain that your children are hearing the exact same thing you tell them every day. The difference is this: as a child grows into adulthood, your own influence on them diminishes. We've all been there before. After all, there was a time when we thought that we were smarter than our parents. Giving them another person they (and you) can trust gives them an outlet to voice their questions and concerns. It also gives them another voice of truth.

Now, as you read this, I hope that you see this as a great and easy formula to do. I would wager that you are most likely already doing some if not all of it. Just remember that consistency is the key and that you are not alone! Both the staff and members of Grace are here for you. Let us know how we can support you through this great and awesome journey. After all, we're in the trenches together!