

“**O**ur family is better than cable!” my son exclaimed from the back seat of the car. He laughed hysterically and flopped around in his seat, which made me laugh too!

When my son made this assessment of the comedic value of our family, my three kids and I were riding in the car. We filled our entire trip with laughter, jokes, silly stories and funny faces.

As odd as it may sound, some of our most precious times together are in the car. There’s something special about everyone trapped in that small space, and forced to touch each other. It seems we find ways to get along and spend quality time together. I love those pure, sweet family moments. At times like that, when life seems simple and carefree, my heart is full of happiness. Those are the times I am reminded how much of a blessing they are to me.

However, there also are “those times” when I have to remind myself of the blessings as I face over-flowing to-do lists, schedules, laundry baskets and mood swings from all said persons living in the Miles household. Those are the times when I feel underappreciated, fatigued and frustrated.

You know what I’m talking about - those days when you find yourself dreaming of escaping to a private island, with nothing more than an icy drink and a lounge chair. That’s when I become acutely aware of my need for God’s help to get through the day with love and patience, and keep my priorities intact.

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doing good things or extra-curricular activities.

In other situations, families may be in the same house at the same time, but still not together. iPods, internet, television, email, Facebook, texting and cell phones are just a few of the distractions that

Regardless of whether our family is having a wonderful or trying time, the most important thing is we are together. I believe time is the most precious gift we can ever give to our children.

Because we live in a society that thrives on busyness and over-commitment, it is harder than ever to make time for family. In fact, some families who love each other dearly spend very little time together, simply because they get occupied with working,

keep us from focusing on meaningful togetherness.

Yet for some, family time seems like a distant memory. Life got busy, priorities shifted, children grew, and the pulls of daily life consumed most waking moments. The sad truth is the traditional American family is in crisis, and in turn, many families get caught up doing life *for* their families, and forget to do life *with* their families. Research has proven that dedicated family time, or the lack thereof, can make or break a family unit, and even something as simple as family meals in the evenings can have a huge impact on the security and happiness of a child or teenager.

Recently in my daily Bible reading, I came across Leviticus 23:10, where the Lord said to Moses, “... *Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, ‘When you enter the land which I am going to give to you and reap its harvest, then you shall bring in the sheaf of the first fruits of your harvest to the priest’*” (NASB).

God spoke to my heart as I read that verse, gently reminding me of the importance of giving Him our best in everything we do, including our faith, marriages and families.

So I began to ask myself regularly, *Am I giving my first fruits to God every day?* Often, I hesitantly answered with an honest “no.” I had to admit there were plenty of days when I got busy, distracted or frazzled and fell short of giving Him my best.

Then, I took that same principle and asked myself if I gave my best effort to my family every day. Again, my honest answer was “no.” Although I always intend to make them a priority in my life, admittedly, there have been times when I have put others needs above those of my own family. Sometimes I have given my sweetest attitude to people outside my family, while exhibiting a lack of patience and tolerance with my own husband and children. Other times I have been willing to go out of my way to help someone else, but felt resentful when I had to do the same for my husband or children. There have also been times when I was just too tired from a stressful day to sit down and play a not-so-quick game of Monopoly.

# THE VALUE OF TIME TOGETHER

By Tracie Miles



Mothers love their families. They care for their needs, dream about their futures, and strive to give them the best life has to offer. But what if the best life has to offer is a mother who gives her first fruits to those she loves the most? Amidst the stress and strain of a busy culture, families need time and tenderness that only a mother can provide.



God calls us as Christians and as parents to prioritize both our faith and our families, and not give our leftover energy, love or time to either.

Life is busy, but time is something we can never get back. We need to seize the moments in every season of our lives, and focus on how often we are giving that sweet, priceless gift of our time, ensuring that our best is given to God and the people that matter most.

No matter how busy our lives may be, time devoted to our families, regardless of our children's ages, is time well spent. By spending time with

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them on a frequent basis, we are not only teaching them important life lessons about priorities, but we are giving a precious gift they cannot receive from anyone else.

And who knows, as you focus on spending more time together as a family, your kids might even begin to think that your family is better than cable too. 🌸

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*Tracie has been married to her husband Michael for 20 years and lives in Charlotte, North Carolina. Tracie believes motherhood is her highest calling, and her greatest treasures are her three children, Morgan, Kaitlyn and Michael. Tracie is a speaker and author*



*with Proverbs 31 Ministries, and shares God's love and promises to women's groups across the country, inspiring women and teens to be passionate about God's plans for their lives. You can learn more about Tracie and how to book her for an upcoming event at your church or organization at [www.traciewmiles.com](http://www.traciewmiles.com).*