



# *Faithful Families: Creating Sacred Moments at Home* by Traci Smith

## Four Week Group Study

### Overview:

This study identifies four values that are woven through *Faithful Families: Creating Sacred Moments at Home* and uses them as a framework for discussion.

The four sessions are:

- Session 1: Embrace the Messiness and Imperfection of Family Life
- Session 2: Fight Against Consumerism and Materialism
- Session 3: Prioritize Time Together
- Session 4: Value Mystery and Accept Doubt

Each session is approximately 75 minutes long and uses feature articles, Bible Passages, and *Faithful Families* for the discussion.

### Session Outline:



**Opening Questions** - Two questions are given for each lesson. Allow participants to choose one and answer. Encourage participants to listen and respond only with gratitude for the story rather than piggybacking on previous responses or adding commentary, advice, or suggestions. (15 Minutes)



**Discussion of the Featured Article & Bible Passage** - Each lesson has one article and at one Bible passage, along with questions for each. This section can be expanded or shortened according to your own individual time constraints. (30 minutes)



**Application to Faithful Families/Practices at Home** - Here you'll take a look at practices in *Faithful Families* that align with the value discussed for the week, and pick one to try at home during the week. (15 minutes)



**Closing Prayer Practice** - Your group will close in prayer using a practice found in *Faithful Families*. (10 minutes)



# Leader Preparation

The leader of the study will need to do the following things to prepare the group for a positive study experience:

- **Duplicate and distribute:** You'll need the *articles* which are all available online for free as well as *Bible Passages* and the *discussion sheets* included in this guide.
- **Review the study questions and articles:** This study guide was written with a variety of different denominational (and non-denominational) contexts in mind. Yours might require some customization or tweaking for your community. I encourage you to spend about 30 minutes with the material prior to each session.
- **Review the Closing Prayer activity:** Some of the activities require special materials. Be sure to gather these in advance.
- **Plan for child care:** Since this study is specifically for families, it's essential to have quality childcare available so parents can focus on the study at hand. For some, this class will be offered at a time when children are in their own classes. If this is not the case, consider finding caregivers who will not only look after the children, but will engage them in a lesson of their own.

**FAITHFUL  
FAMILIES**  
CREATING SACRED MOMENTS AT HOME



# Session 1: Embrace the Messiness and Imperfection of Family Life



**Opening Questions (pick one):** What is the hardest part of parenting for you? OR Who is a parent you admire, and why?



**Featured Article:** *The Myth of the Perfect Parent is Driving Americans Nuts* by SWNS: *NY Post*, September 8, 2017

- What does the article say is the #1 cause of guilt for parents? Has this been your experience too, or something different?
- The article mentions some things that cause some parents to feel like “super mom” or “super dad.” When do you feel like a super parent?
- Does social media contribute to unrealistic expectations of parenting? Why or why not?
- Do you feel the pressure to be a perfect parent is greater for this generation of parents than it was for our parents? Why or why not?

**Featured Bible Passage:** Ephesians 2: 1-10

- How do you define grace for yourself as described in verse 5?
- What is the greatest gift you have ever received? What made it a great gift? Grace is described as a gift here. What does this mean to you, particularly in the context of parenting?
- Who are we, according to verse 10? What does this mean?
- What does it mean to parent out of a sense of gratitude for grace? How can you model grace for yourself and your children?



**Application to *Faithful Families/Practices at Home*:** Knowing that we are not perfect and are merely doing the best we can, through grace, we are able to be gentle with ourselves and our families through these practices. We know some will be successful and others less so. Here are a few faith practices that take very little preparation and are good “starter” practices for your family. Take a few minutes to read through them in your book and choose one to try this week. Remember: you are already a super parent! There is nothing you need to do to earn God’s favor. If something is not working for your family, let it go!

- Night Time Blessing (page 14)
- The Sacred Meal (page 173)
- With Younger Children: Marking the Days God Has Given (page 16)
- With Older Children or Teens: The Daily Office (page 176)



**Closing Prayer Practice:** Conclude with the candle prayer practice on page 155 of *Faithful Families*. Let this prayer be a reminder to rest in the grace God has given.



**Notes:**

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## Session 2: Fight Against Materialism and Consumerism



**Opening Questions (pick one):** What product or material thing have you purchased thinking it would make your life better, only to be disappointed? OR What is your most prized possession?



**Featured Article:** *Kids and Materialism: Keeping the ‘Gimmies’ at Bay* Craig and Marc Kielburger *Huffington Post, Canada*

- Are you concerned about materialism and consumerism in your family? Why or why not?
- What is the relationship between materialism and happiness, according to the article?
- How can parents curb materialism, according to the article?

**Featured Bible Passage:** Luke 12:16-21

- Why do you think human beings are tempted to build bigger barns and store up treasure on earth, despite clear and compelling evidence it does not lead to happiness?
- How does one discern between ‘enough’ and ‘too much’? What is the criteria?
- What is the consequence of building bigger barns as laid out in verse 20?
- What does it mean to be ‘rich toward God’ (verse 21)?



**Application to *Faithful Families/Practices at Home*:** Experts tell us that being grateful for what we have and giving gifts of time to one another are excellent ways to counter consumerism and materialism. Try one of these practices this week:

- Gratitude Cafe (page 18)
- Secret Helpers Week (page 194)
- Serve an Honored Guest (page 197)
- Nighttime Blessing (page 14)



# Session 3: Prioritizing Time Together



**Opening Questions (pick one):** What is your favorite family activity either now, or when you were a child? OR What are some of the barriers to having more family time?



**Featured Article:** *'Ugh' I'm So Busy, A Status Symbol for Our Time* by Joe Pinsker *The Atlantic*

- Do you agree that “being busy” has become a status symbol in our culture? Why or why not?
- Do you feel pressure to do more?
- What is the hardest part about balancing work and home life in your family?
- How do parents intentionally, or unintentionally communicate to children the value of work and rest?

**Featured Bible Passage:** Psalm 127

- Which verse from this Psalm resonates with you most, and why?
- What does it mean to labor in vain?
- What is the relationship between work and raising children, according to this Psalm?
- What does it mean to believe that God is at the center of work and home life, as this Psalm implies?



**Application to *Faithful Families/Practices at Home:*** Instead of buying into the lie that being busy and burned out is something to strive for, create space for your family to rest and enjoy silence. Some practices to help in this endeavor:

- Celebrate a Mini-Sabbath (page 30)
- Make Quiet Time Bags (page 191)

- Focus on God’s Beautiful Creation (page 208)
- Listening Car Rides (page 182)



**Closing Prayer Practice:** Conclude by writing prayers on slips of paper and placing them in the basket. (Based off the prayer basket practice on page 148). Let this prayer be a reminder that your burdens are shared with others.



**Notes:**

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## Session 4: Value Mystery and Accept Doubt



**Opening Questions (pick one):** Tell about a mystery or coincidence that's happened in your life that you've never been able to explain. OR What is the hardest tenet of faith for you to accept?



**Featured Article:** *Doubts and Questions as Teachers of the Faith* by Traci Smith

- How are faith and doubt connected?
- Did you grow up in community where doubt was allowed or embraced? How did that community shape you?
- How does wrestling with doubt lead to a more mature faith?
- Have your children ever asked questions about faith you couldn't answer? How did you handle that?

**Featured Bible Passage:** Judges 6:36-40

- What is Gideon trying to discern through this sign of the fleece?
- Gideon asks for a sign from God not once, but twice. When have you asked God for signs? What has the result been?
- Do you see Gideon as someone who has a strong faith, or a weak faith?
- If you could speak to Gideon now, what would you ask him or say to him?



**Application to *Faithful Families/Practices at Home:*** Provide opportunities for your children to ask questions and embrace the mysteries of faith. Here are several practices to try this week:

- Star Pictures (page 185)
- Tolerance (page 205)
- Lectio Divina (page 164)





## Leader Wrap Up

- At the conclusion of your study, be sure to remind parents to visit [www.traci-smith.com/resources](http://www.traci-smith.com/resources) to find more links and information related to the practices in Faithful Families. Encourage parents to sign up for email updates as well!
- Follow up with families about what they enjoyed most about this study or what they'd like to see more of. Send your feedback to me via [traci-smith.com](http://traci-smith.com)

Thank you for your commitment to teaching families how to bring faith home through simple practices!

Traci Smith