



# Grow Together

G R O W I N G I N F A I T H A N D L I F E

May Grow Together encourage and inspire the faith you share in your home and family. May the conversations and practices, the learning and quiet actions bring abundant joy, peace, and growing grace throughout this year.

## SPACE to HEAR GOD

One of the names for God is *Immanuel* which means 'always with us.' Through his word, and through many people, God has *always* shown that he is faithful to being with us all. This God, who is always with us, who is always turned toward us, asks, "Will you be with me?"

How do we answer that question? We stay close to God through his word and through the lives of those who read his word, constantly listening for the ways in which God speaks to us.

In this edition of *Grow Together* we have many ideas and resources for you to consider as you practise being in God's word in your home and family. Reading God's word will take a different shape as your family's 'seasons' change. Each season will require different resources to use with your children as they grow. You might be at the stage of singing songs of God while your kids are in the bath. You might have more time at the dinner table as a family. You might be encouraging kids to have their own 'God time'. There are many incidental times throughout our ordinary day where we can sow the seeds of God's word into our conversations with those around us. But it helps if we are also in God's word ourselves, letting his words and love shape our hearts and minds.

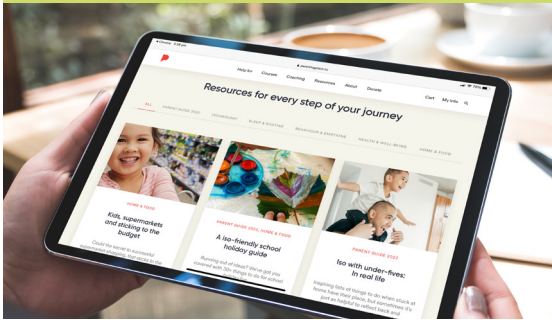
Faith comes  
from hearing,  
and hearing  
through  
the word  
of Christ.



ROMANS 10:17 ESV



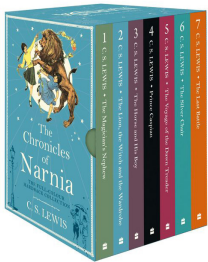
## Supporting your faith resource



**The Parenting Place**  
[www.parentingplace.nz](http://www.parentingplace.nz)

Supporting parents with resources at every stage in every age.

## Read together with your family



**The Chronicles of Narnia**  
 by C. S. Lewis

A children's classic series of seven novels. In the first book, four children are transported to the magical land of Narnia, and play major roles in adventures with talking animals and mythical beasts. The remaining novels develop the history of Narnia, as experienced by various children.

## Parent resource

### Let's talk about sex!

*Birds and Bees by the Book*, by Patricia Weerakoon, is a six-book series which allows you to explore the topics of family, body and brain development with your child. It covers topics such as sex, what it means to be a boy or a girl, and the dangers of pornography.



## Grow Ministries resource

### Woven Together

Designed to help your family discover God's Big Story through the ordinary lives of his people throughout all time – including you!



Order yours at [www.growministries.org.au](http://www.growministries.org.au)

## Putting it into Practice – one family's story



“We’ve been making space for listening to God by just taking five minutes each day to be together as a family. During this time one person is selected to be the ‘focus’ person – we take it in turns, a different person each day. We play some quiet music and listen for what God is saying to us about this person. It might be an image, or a prayer, a word, a song, we trust that whatever God gives us is for this person. We record it and give all our gifts from God for this person to them. They can then spend some time reflecting on each gift.”

## The Wider Family



Godparents play a wonderful role in the faith life of their godchildren. They can support the role of parents by keeping in touch with how their (young) godchild is growing, remembering baptism birthdays, and attending church together. Godparents can provide helpful resources, write letters, celebrate milestones throughout their godchildren's lives and pray for them daily.

**Blessed** is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose **delight** is in the law of the LORD, and who meditates on his law day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither—whatever they do **prosper**.

P S A L M 1 : 1 - 3

## Stages of faith development – children

### The imaginative world of the 3- to 7-year-old

Have you ever stood with a young child who is fascinated by a spider spinning its web? From the earliest years, children have experiences of awe and wonder. It seems that all children are born with a sense of the incomprehensible, the holy — a sense of God.

Impressions of God are generally positive — a fun, playful God or a God that may take on a magical or superhero quality. Three- to seven-year-old children readily imagine unusual creatures like monsters and dragons, so thinking of God as a superhero is not unusual. Believing in miracles presents no problem to them.

One of the most important spiritual needs of young children is the freedom to create and find spiritual images of God, heaven, and death that express their feelings and understandings. They also need to create and participate in meaningful practices and rituals, like prayerful bedtime conversations and table prayers, that acknowledge that God is active in the ordinary events of life.

Pretend play gives children the chance to try out the roles and behaviours they see around them. The three-year-old 'mothering' a doll and the five-year-old who sets up a school room and teaches his teddies and dolls are familiar examples. It is crucial that we give our children positive role models to copy.

Children at this age have a rich fantasy world and may not be able to tell the difference between facts and make believe. Insisting that they 'tell the truth' may be expecting more than they are capable of.

Young children may have alternating feelings of being powerless and of being able to take on the world. This



mirrors how they feel about their personal security and the trustworthiness of those on whom they depend. Praying with our children and talking about the trustworthy, loving nature of God will help them feel secure.

Children love stories that clearly define good and evil, which is why Bible stories (and fairy tales) are so well loved. These stories help them recognise feelings and behaviours that threaten and bother them and help them to identify with the triumph of good over evil.

Music, art, stories, pretending, eating, wondering, praying — all are important in these early years. They help teach trust — of ourselves, other people, the world, and God.

We do not learn trust by being told about it, but by experiencing it. Our actions, derived from the faith that we have as parents and nurturers, will mould and influence our children's faith.

# Lectio Divina for families

## What does it mean to pray the Bible?

**Lectio Divina is a very old way of attentively and prayerfully reading the word of God, where we seek to come into the presence of God.**

Lectio Divina is not intended to increase our intellectual knowledge of the Bible (though it can have that effect); instead, by simply being present and attentive, the time and space set aside is intended to draw us closer to God, and to transform us. There are four parts ...

1

### LECTIO – READ

**Attentiveness is key here.**

- Read the verse or passage several times, slowly. Or listen to a recording of it.
- Be attentive to details, if you have a copy you can write on, circle phrases or words that stand out to you.
- What is the meaning and background?

#### Thinking starters

“In this passage...”  
“My favourite verse was...”  
“I noticed...”

Lectio

### MEDITATIO – MEDITATE

**Bring your full imagination this time as you read and reflect**

- Imagine being in the story. What does it sound like, smell like, feel like? What do you see?
- Think about how it connects to your life. Where are you in this story?
- Listen, imagine, consider, ponder
- Linger over one word or verse

#### Thinking starters

“This reminds me of...”  
“If I were there...”  
“In my heart...”

Meditatio

**Lectio Divina**  
can be a way of prayerfully reading God’s word in one simple verse, or a longer passage. Choose one of these passages to begin with. Then choose your own verse or passage.

**Psalm 23**  
**John 10:10**  
**Matthew 13:1-9**

Contemplatio

Oratio

#### Thinking starters

“Dear Jesus...”  
“Thank you, God, for...”  
“Please help me understand...”

### CONTEMPLATIO – CONTEMPLATE

**Now rest in the awareness of God’s presence and remain open to anything else the Spirit might stir.**

- Expect nothing, simply enjoy this time
- Be quiet and still, resting, relaxing with God
- A moment of being – know you are loved
- Be open to hearing God teaching you something new.

4

### ORATIO – PRAY

**A time to have a conversation with God about what you read**

- Talk to God about what you saw, heard, felt. Tell him what you want to say
- Thank God for his word
- Ask him to lead you into deeper understanding and how you might respond

3

