

A FIELD GUIDE FOR MEN

Ten Minutes

Leading your family in the Word when you feel unqualified

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You don't need to be a pastor to do this. You don't need a seminary degree, a plan on paper, or a voice made for public speaking. If you have a family, you already have the job. Somebody is going to be the pastor of your house. You signed up for that the day you became a husband or a dad, whether anybody told you or not.

Most men never start because they're waiting for the version of this that looks like church. Robes, notes, a lesson that flows. That version never comes, so the Bible stays closed on the shelf and everybody just goes to bed. Here's the truth nobody says out loud: ten real minutes with your family beats the perfect Bible study you keep meaning to start. The one you never start doesn't count for anything.

I'm not writing this to make you feel behind. I'm writing it so you have something you can actually run tonight, with kids who won't sit still and a voice that's never done this before. Let's go.

1. You are already qualified

Scripture doesn't ask you to be a theologian. It puts the job on the dad, not the professional. "These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up" (Deuteronomy 6:6-7). That's not a curriculum. That's a father talking to his kids in the truck, at the table, at bedtime. You already do all of that. You just haven't put the Word into it yet.

Paul makes the same call to Christian fathers directly, not just Israel at the edge of a river: "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). That command has your name on it. It doesn't say "fathers with the gift of teaching." It just says fathers.

2. The three-move format

Forget lesson plans. Run this every time: Read a few verses. Ask one question. Pray one short prayer. That's it. That's the whole structure, and it works whether your oldest is four or fourteen.

Read: two or three verses, not a chapter. Ask: one honest question, something like "what stood out to you" or "why do you think he did that." Pray: thirty seconds, out loud, naming somebody or something real. Then you're done. You just led your family in the Word, and it took less time than scrolling your phone before bed.

3. Squirmy kids are not a sign you're failing

A four-year-old wiggling through your two minutes of reading isn't proof this isn't working. It's proof he's four. Let him hold something while you read. Let him lie on the floor. A body that's moving can still have ears that are listening, and you're not grading stillness. You're planting a seed, and seeds don't need a kid sitting like a statue to take root.

4. Different ages in the same room

You don't need three separate devotions for three different kids. Pick the youngest kid's attention span as your ceiling, keep the reading short and the language plain, and let the older kids go deeper on the question part. Ask the little one what a word means and ask your teenager why it matters. Same verse, different depth. Nobody gets left out and nobody gets bored waiting on a lesson built for somebody else.

5. Short beats thorough, every single time

The instinct is to go deep so it feels worth doing. Fight that instinct. Five focused minutes a family will actually sit through wins over twenty minutes that turns into a fight to get everyone back to the table. You are not building one great night. You are building a habit that survives a hundred ordinary ones.

Think of a soldier packing a rucksack for a long patrol. He doesn't cram in everything he might possibly want. He carries what he can actually keep moving with, day after day. Same principle here. Pack light. Keep walking.

6. Consistency beats polish

Nobody remembers the one devotion where you nailed the application and tied it together like a sermon. They remember that Dad does this. That it happens. That it's just part of how the house runs, the same way dinner happens and bedtime happens. A rough two minutes every night for a month teaches your kids more about God than one polished half hour they had once and then never saw again.

7. When it flops, you keep going

Some nights it flops. The baby's crying, your son is in a mood, you fumble the verse, and nobody's listening. That's not a sign to quit. That's just Tuesday. Close it out anyway. Pray the short prayer even if nobody's paying attention. Tomorrow's a new night, and the flop doesn't get the final word. The habit does.

8. Let them watch you need this too

You don't have to pretend you've got this figured out. Tell your kids you're still learning too. Ask God, in front of them, to help you be a better dad. That's not weakness. That's the most honest thing you'll teach them all week: that a man doesn't lead his house because he's arrived, he leads it because Somebody bigger than him is still working on him, too. God is not grading your prayer. He's inviting your whole family into relationship with Him, you included.

Start tonight

Pick a verse. Gather whoever's in the house. Read it, ask one question, pray one short prayer. That's the whole assignment. Do that tonight, then do it again tomorrow. One inch at a time, that's how a man leads a family in the Word, not with one big leap but with a habit that keeps showing up.

The verses to have ready

Keep this list somewhere close. On nights you can't think of a verse, grab one from here and go.

Deuteronomy 6:6-7: "These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up."

Joshua 24:15: "...as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

Ephesians 6:4: "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."

Psalms 78:4: "We will not conceal them from their children, But tell to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, And His strength and His wondrous works that He has done."

Proverbs 22:6: "Train up a child in the way he should go, Even when he is old he will not depart from it."

Colossians 3:21: "Fathers, do not exasperate your children, so that they will not lose heart."

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