

POSITIVE PARENTING
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HOLY GROUND

Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.
Exodus 3:5

One breathtaking evening, sitting on a friend's deck overlooking a gorgeous lake, I put on a sweater to watch the sunset, listen to the quieting woodland sounds, hear a loon's plaintive cry ... and I slipped off my sandals. I knew that I stood on holy ground.

I grew up in Minnesota. The still water of an evening lake, surrounded by birch and pine, has always been holy ground. I see the fingerprints of the creator God there. First, my parents showed me awe, wrapped in their loving embrace. Then, my husband and I discovered it together, wilderness canoe camping on our honeymoon. Later, we shared it with our children, lying on a dock, much too late at night, watching the Northern Lights or huddled in an impromptu igloo in our front yard, marveling at the crystalline beauty of winter. Now, we hold our grandchildren and re-experience wonder and awe in their young eyes, and we give thanks for this holy ground.

In Exodus, Moses slowed down to notice the burning bush, to hear God call him by name, to turn aside, to stand before God. What is the message for us in families?

We need to slow down. Otherwise, we will speed past the holy. We need to notice. Children help us do that with their lively sense of wonder and their questions. It can be contagious that wonder, seeing the world through the fresh eyes of a child. We need to listen for the voice of God, calling us by name, claiming us in the waters of our baptism. We need to stand before God, listening to the improbable things God will ask us to do, on behalf of the world He loved so much that He sent his only son. We need to thank God for the holy ground of our lives.

So, what and where is holy ground for you and for your family? Sometimes it is a place apart. It may be the mountains or ocean or a quiet lake. It may be your grandparents' home or the church you grew up in. It may be a country, whose beauty or the needs of its people, that calls you to come as a family. It most certainly is in the car with a proud teen, celebrating the story of their success; the bedside of a little one, after prayers and goodnight kisses; the delight of a toddler who has a sand castle to show you; a birthday party for one you weren't sure would live until this day; the dinner table, the everydayness of it, wrapped in love.

Thank God for this holy ground, and tell your children...

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

1. Look at a family photo album or box of old pictures. Tell your children about the places pictured and why those places mattered. Tell a story from your life in that setting. Thank God for that holy ground.
2. Take an older relative or friend to revisit a family home, playground, shop, neighborhood, school, or church they loved as a child. Invite them to share a story of that place with your family. Thank God for the blessing of that holy ground.
3. Ask your children, “Where in our home do you feel closest to God?” Together, thank God for that holy ground.
4. Tell your children where in your world you feel closest to God. Thank God for that holy ground.
5. At your dinner table, with family assembled, light a candle and invite all to slip off their shoes, for this is holy ground.