



Positive Parenting
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SUMMER LEARNING

Start with God - the first step in learning is bowing down to God; only fools thumb their noses at such wisdom and learning. Pay close attention, friend, to what your father tells you; never forget what you learned at your mother's knee.

Proverbs 1:7-8 (*The Message*)

Summer ... it's right around the corner. Soon, school will be out and a time of less structure, fewer expectations, and, perhaps, fewer commitments for you and your kids may open before you. Check school and learning off your list of things to think about until it is time to buy school supplies and school clothes. So, why do I have to bring up "summer" and "learning" in one article?

DON'T MY KIDS NEED A BREAK FROM SCHOOL?

Many of us feel that, by June, our kids are burned out and need a break from school. We are ready to put away homework time, independent reading, and school projects and just play and recreate. Yes, kids need to breathe and they yearn for a different pace of life. That doesn't preclude learning. Actually, humans are built to learn ... and to love learning. And, our kids will pay a huge price if they stop learning this summer. Studies show us that they lose three months worth of the learning they have accomplished during the school year, if we let their brains lie fallow during the summer.

Summer is the perfect time to turn your home, not into a school classroom, but a place for your kids to practice their skills, refresh their knowledge, learn something new, and share what they have learned. No, I am not encouraging you to stock up on workbooks, but to open your lives to many learning possibilities this summer.

OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN

Make weekly dates to go to the library. Read some books. Go for story hour. Check out books. Investigate summer programs available at your church, through community education, in park and recreation programs, and in summer school. Take this opportunity to learn a new skill from someone who knows how to do it. For example, learn to build a birdhouse, make a quilt, weld, cook, garden, learn a musical instrument or a foreign language. Take family "field trips" to parks, zoo, historical places, museums, lakes, or other places of interest. Libraries have free museum passes available. Consider cooking and reading a recipe as a math challenge ... doubling or halving a recipe, fractions, following directions. Teach kids the life skills of laundry and cleaning. Learning together is an incredible gift. It is fun and relational ... and you model being a lifelong learner. Play is a powerful way in which children learn. All of life is an opportunity to learn.

WHERE IS GOD IN THE MIDST OF SUMMER LEARNING?

Remember that it is God who created the marvelous minds in your family. Thank God for the ability to learn. Celebrate God's presence in all of life, especially in the beauty of creation. Take time this summer to simply rest in the presence of God, to pray for others, give thanks, read the bible or a children's bible, discuss where you experience God in your life.

SOME UNSTRUCTURED TIME, TOO

Make sure each child has time that is wide open to imaginative play, daydreaming, and time to relax. This is how children have time and space to be creative, to be bored and figure out what they want to do next, to discover their interests and gifts, and to savor life. Please don't over-plan, over-schedule, or over-commit your kids this summer.

CELEBRATING

Create opportunities for your family to gather, to learn from one another, to celebrate all of the things you are learning. Enjoy every minute!

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

1. Ask each member of your family to name one thing they'd like to learn this summer. Together, make a plan.
2. Schedule regular "library dates." Take out books on topics you'd love to explore.
3. Have a celebration dinner, at which you celebrate one new thing you've read about, investigated, and learned. Let the learner teach the rest of the family about their "summer specialty."
4. Grow something ... in a pot on the windowsill or outside in a garden. Read about the plant you are growing. If it's a vegetable or fruit, find recipes. If it's a flower, investigate other similar flowers. Visit a greenhouse, a community garden, or an arboretum.
5. Create a scrapbook of pictures, snapshots, and memorabilia from your summer, and write about what you have learned.