

A deer in headlights.

I'm sure that's what my face looked like as I stared across the breakfast table at my husband who finished our conversation by stating flatly, "Our daughter will be attending public school." His intense reply to my suggestion of a faith-based education caught me off guard, and that was the moment I began to fear my husband's agnostic beliefs might impact my daughter's faith walk.

That moment was years ago, and I've been raising my daughter ever since in a spiritually mismatched home. And I'm not alone. There are many of us who are living to honor our Lord and our spouse in our marriage. Right behind our prayers and concerns for our husband's salvation, we fret and worry about our children's faith. A lot!

Through the years of raising my daughter with my unbelieving spouse, I have discovered a few key principals which have impacted my child's faith. Combine these truths with some effort and prayer and our children can grow into a mature and lasting faith.

First, step fully into being the spiritual leader of your home. Model a vibrant love for Jesus in front of your kids. Allow your kids to discover you praying and reading the Bible. For example, my daughter would shuffle out of her room in the early morning, and find me on the couch where she curled up next to me while I read my Bible. She knew this morning time with Jesus was the most important time of my day. She waited patiently while I read and wrote prayers in my journal. I found my time with God had the most impact on her and I didn't speak a word.

Kids learn that Jesus is important, because we make time for Him every day. It's an amazing privilege to share Jesus with our children in this way.

Second, love Jesus "out-loud." When you love Christ with all of your heart, soul, mind and strength that passion flows out of you. As God's love is lavished upon you, it flows out of you and into your child's life. This kind of love, sprinkled with kindness, laughter, joy, fathomless forgiveness and adventure, speaks louder than any amount of words. Kids are perceptive, and they recognize when mom is authentic. They also recognize a luke-warm faith. Share your love for Jesus at home, in the car and in everyday ordinary living.

Third, capture teachable moments. These profound moments when a child asks a question or offers you his or her full attention to talk about faith come sporadically and often at the least convenient time. They are fleeting as attention spans of children wane quickly. So, when your child asks a question or you have an opportunity to tell your child about some aspect of living in faith, stop what you are doing, get down to their level and talk plainly. Respond to their questions with truthful, age appropriate answers. Your child has an open heart in these moments, and they will take with them the truths you impart and then carry them with them all of their lives.

Pouring faith into our little ones is a life-long journey, but I'm convinced that if we do our part and love God with all of our heart, pray for our kids and model our love, God is absolutely faithful and He will relentlessly pursue our children.

Years ago I sat at my kitchen table fearing over my daughter's faith as a young mother. And today after the many years of public school, my daughter is a believer. This week I drove my daughter to her first week of college. And as I think back over her 18 years of living in a spiritually mismatched home, I fall to my knees with thanks because God has proven faithful. My daughter chose to attend a Christian college, Biola University. It was her choice.

As I ponder this journey of parenting in a spiritual mismatch, I marvel at how God honors a mother's prayers. He encourages us through the years of being a spiritual leader, and He allows us to become Legacy Makers. Mom, you do your part and trust God to do His.

Author Bio: Lynn Donovan is a women's ministry leader, a retreat/conference speaker and an ordinary mom and wife who shares with audiences her everyday adventures of walking in the Presence of God. Her delight is igniting women's hearts with Holy Spirit fire, inspiring wives and mothers to step fully into their high and holy calling of marriage and motherhood with joy, laughter and God's favor. She has been a featured guest on the Moody Radio Network, Focus on the Family, Dr. James Dobson's FamilyTalk and FamilyLife Today. She is the coauthor of the award-winning book, *Winning Him Without Words* and also *Not Alone, Trusting God to Help You Raise Godly Kids In a Spiritually Mismatched Marriage*. She has a son and a daughter and lives with her husband in Temecula, California. Visit Lynn online at MismatchedAndThriving.com.