

# The A-B-C's For Faith-Focused Families

By Pastor Rachel Burchfield

**A**ffection -- Humans were designed to express emotional support through physical touch. Appropriate affection includes sitting together, holding hands, tickling, backrubs, hugs, and holding each other when happy, sad or scared.

**B**ible Reading -- Daily Bible reading provides guidance and introduces us to our Father. Let your family see you look to God's Word as your final authority. Invite children to read short portions at family meals or special moments.

**C**elebrations & Compliments -- Celebrate genuine accomplishments on every level, whether a toddler who mastered the swingset or a grandparent who just retired. Encourage one genuine compliment each day.

**D**iscipline -- Self-control is a fruit of the Spirit and greatly needed with the family unit. If you don't master your mouth or emotions, they will master you. Discipline is needed regarding finances and screen time, too.

**E**xciting events -- Always have something on the calendar that your family can look forward to. That focus and prepping will breed unity and keep any negative moments of the day in perspective. A beach day, picnic or camping trip is free!

**F**orgiveness -- Learning and modeling Christian forgiveness is the single most important action to embrace for family relationships. Figure it out and practice it daily. "Forgive quickly" is good marriage advice.

**G**race-Based Relationships -- Not an invisible checklist of impossible standards, but a realization that God loves them in whatever condition they have chosen, and so must we. Samples: "You don't need to earn my love." "I love you at all cost." "God will equip me with everything I need to represent Him appropriately towards you."

**H**ugs -- Scientific studies reveal that hugs can prevent (or benefit) anxiety, depression, sickness and loneliness. They release a message of safety and self-worth. Hug the elderly and the fatherless frequently.

**I**nspiration -- Find ways to inspire your family to reach their goals and personal dreams. Send them a text or tangible item to let them know that you believe in them and "all things are possible."

**J**esus -- Many relatives don't serve Him because He's been so misrepresented to be a Cosmic Cop. May your life of obedience reveal to your family the true adventure of knowing Him.

**K**indness -- "Overcome evil with good" (*Rom. 12:31*) is a family rule which will help sibling rivalry every time. Celebrate all levels of kindness from sharing a toy to washing Dad's car. Catch 'em being good.

**L**ove Letters -- Any written expression of love is a tangible treasure. Hide a post-it that they will find later. Dads, buy a card and learn to be verbally affectionate. Grandparents can write an "After I'm gone, please remember..."

**M**arriage first -- The greatest thing parents can do for their children is to love their spouse first. Let them watch you prefer one another and handle disagreements with maturity. A vibrant marriage is a marathon, not a sprint.

**N**o Sarcasm!-- Most jesting begins innocently, but becomes a habit of demeaning people. Families should have zero tolerance for family jokes even when discussing relatives who are not there.

**O**pen discussions -- Create ground rules for discussing volatile or sensitive topics such as 1) Postpone chat until tempers cease 2) What's the objective? 3) What does the Word say? 4) Try to work together & compromise.

**P**rayers time -- Families who pray together stay together. Start with a weekly one-sentence prayer in a circle. For relatives not yet born again, commit to Spirit-led times of intercession and expect household salvation. *Acts 16:31*

**Q**uiet times -- Families will benefit from intentionally unplugging together. Fishing from a dock, card games, making cookies or rebuilding an engine. Anything works as long as there is positive, emotional interaction.

**R**espond, instead of react -- When you don't, apologize. A gentle answer turns away wrath. *Prov. 15:1*

**S**tructure & Schedules -- Realistic, age-appropriate boundaries will provide security and prevent strife. Parents cannot be the buddy here. Determine the family dinner nights, screen time, curfew and # of activities allowed and stick to it.

**T**raditions -- What will your family remember in 20 years? Need ideas? Plant a tree for newborns, family communion on New Year's Day, make a family flag or have a movie night. Family traditions provide a familial identity and sense of belonging.

**U**nconditional love -- Human love is limited and has hidden requirements for acceptance, but God's unconditional love believes the best and accepts people as they are. This is not to be confused with a parental need for guidance.

**V**ocational training -- Accomplishments on every level breed confidence and prepare us for our futures. Take time to teach children life skills, social training, and financial accountability.

**W**ork Ethic -- Working hard out of responsibility (not feelings) produces positive and productive people. By the age of 8, a child should contribute to the household with some simple chores and suffer consequences if not completed.

**X**mas Story -- Remember that Jesus is the Reason for the Season. Let that miracle story and those glorious gospel-exalting carols propel you into miracles for your own family.

**Y**early Review -- Buy a leather bound "Family Journal" and document the year's greatest miracles and goals fulfilled, Write down new goals and prayer requests, too. A nice restaurant is a lovely location for this special event.

**Z**eal for God's House -- Families who attend church regularly are more likely to be emotionally anchored, socially strong and prepared for a successful future. A parent's top priority question: *"Am I raising this child to know and love the Lord?"*