

21 Years On...

Things I'm Glad I Prioritized and Some I Wished I Had

1. My walk with God

It is easy to think “I can do this parenting journey”, but I tend to make a mess without walking the road with His presence and strength and grace. It needs to be in me first.

Reality Check: Sometimes this was achieved by prioritizing devotions and character issues with the kids but I was feeding me at the same time.

2. My marriage

Daily times (starting the day praying together/couch time) and the special times (dates and time away).

Reality check: there were some lean hard years. Pray for him, support and love him through it. Be kind.

3. Ages and stages

Each stage builds on the previous one. Focus on the stage you are in.

- Preschool years: building trust, routines and obedience – starting habits of the heart.
- Primary age: little and often, line upon line, taking time for character issues over academics
- Intermediate age: helping them start to develop their unique talents, gifts and interests (need to make time for it), developing a heart for God and His call on their lives.
- High school age: transitioning to more freedom and finding their own way in the world. Focus on relationship and influence, not authority. Time for setting a stake in the ground.

Reality check: hardest thing was having kids in different stages and keeping track of that. At times with a child you need to take time to go back to the previous stage and work on that for a while. Long term view.

4. Read Aloud

Jesus was a storyteller. We learn so much through stories. Story time began as babies and we still do family read alouds. Build family memories as you share stories together. Lessons of love, sacrifice and courage come alive in biographies and stories. Choose wisely. Have conversations – don't be too quick to move on to the “real schoolwork”.

Reality Check: use audiobooks when you need to, encourage your children to take turns too. Allow the hands to be busy if needed; colouring, puzzles, crafts, building blocks etc.

5. Lego and nature

The educational and character forming benefits of hours of Lego and time in nature are vastly underestimated.

Reality Check: Do you have a ‘plan follower’ or a ‘create my own’ child? Both are important skills. Time with siblings gives opportunity for sharing, negotiating and appreciating each others’ different skills.

6. Cookies and Soup

Build imprinted memories of what ‘home’ means through the senses. The simple things make home a wonderful place to be; the hugs and laughs, smells and sounds of a place of peace and refuge, a Shiloh.

Reality check: Balancing housework and life can be hard, but lessons from Mary and Martha doesn't mean no housework ☺. Team work at home – lots of opportunities for this – projects, maintenance, housework.

7. Their walk with God

This is not the least of the list but is woven through all the previous things. It begins and ends with Jesus. They need to stand on their own faith feet not yours.

Reality Check: It is their walk, not mine.