

Family Table Talk



Conversations at the Table for Families with Young Children

Talking—family story-telling—reminds us that we are important, that we belong. Talking together helps us feel secure and rooted.

In our busy, structured North American lifestyle, it is important to find time to talk. Most families with small children continue to eat at least one meal together each day. *Family Table Talk* can be used daily to promote the art of good conversation; but if one or more of the parents are commuting, *Family Table Talk* can be used on weekends when life is more leisurely.

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A Family-based Ministry Resource
The Presbyterian Church in Canada



The Candle Blessing

Family Table Talk is done as the family is eating. Use the *Candle Blessing* at the beginning and end of a meal—rather like book ends. You will need a white candle (Christ candle) which should be kept out of the reach of small children. Set the candle in the centre of the table on a coloured napkin or cloth. Vary the colour of the cloth according to the church season. For instance, if the season is Pentecost, use a green cloth or napkins. (The back of The Presbyterian Church in Canada calendar has an outline of the liturgical colours for the year.) You will also need a candle snuffer.

Beginning the candle blessing

One person lights the candle and says, “We light this candle to remind us that Jesus is like a light to the world.” He/she pauses, then says, “The Lord be with you.”

Others respond: “And also with you.”

Someone gives thanks for the food. If families do not have a standard blessing print the following on a card on the table and read it together: *God is great; God is good. Let us thank God for this food. Amen.*

Ending the Candle Blessing

At the end of the meal, someone puts out the candle by slowly snuffing out the flame, lifting the snuffer high into the air so the smoke can rise. This person says, “This smoke reminds us of the Spirit of God going out all over (name your town) and all over the world.”

The Four Quaker Questions

The inspiration for *Family Table Talk* came from an old and respected Quaker tradition which is referred to as “the four Quaker questions.” In this process, four questions are asked. The first question is a point of entry to a conversation and is a question that all members of the group can easily answer because it is part of their experience. The final question is a “God question” or a theological question asking people to reflect on the meaning of the Christian experience. The middle questions—two and three—lead people forward, toward this final question.



To be fancy about it, we might say that this process helps Christians to “speak theologically.” To be plain about it, we can say this process helps us to talk freely and easily about God and aspects of our faith. This can be done by very young children and people of all ages. When a child is too young to join the conversation, parents and/or grandparents can use the questions while the child listens. Before long, she/he will be joining in.

On the following pages are samples questions grouped according to theme which you can use, but you are encouraged to come up with your own.



Four Quaker Questions

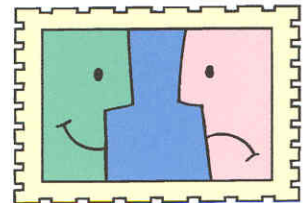
God

1. What prayer do you know?
2. Who taught you this prayer?
3. Say the prayer.
4. Do you think that God hears our prayers?



1. How old are you?
2. What is good about being your age?
3. What age would you like to be?
4. How old do you think God is?

1. What makes you sad?
2. If you saw a friend crying, what would you do?
3. If everyone on your street was sad because of bad accident, what could you do?
4. What does God do when we are sad?



1. What makes you happy?
2. If you painted a picture about happiness, what colours would you use?
3. How do people act when they are happy?
4. What do you think makes God happy?



1. Which is your favourite clock in the house?
2. Name one reason why we need to "tell time."
3. Finish this sentence: I wish I had time to....
4. How will you make time for God this week?

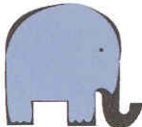
Jesus

1. Tell one thing about Christmas.
2. What colour do you remember from Christmas?
3. What sounds do you remember from Christmas?
4. Whose birth do we celebrate at Christmas?



1. What is your favourite place in the house?
2. What do you like to do in your favourite place?
3. Who else likes to use your favourite place?
4. Would Jesus like your favourite place?

1. What is your favourite thing to eat?
2. What do you like to do to get ready for a meal?
3. What is the best part of mealtime at your house?
4. If you could invite Jesus to a meal, what food would you serve?



1. Name your favourite animal.
2. If you could choose any animal at all for a pet, what would you choose?
3. Name things that you need to do to look after an animal.
4. What animals do you think Jesus liked?

1. What is your favourite bedtime story?
2. Tell a story about your family.
3. Why do we tell stories?
4. What is your favourite story about Jesus?



The Holy Spirit

1. Tell about a windy day.
2. Why do we have wind?
3. Which do you like better—a strong wind or a light wind?
4. How is God like the wind?



1. Describe a favourite gift.
2. Have you ever been surprised by a gift? Tell about that.
3. Why do people give each other gifts?
4. How is God's Spirit like a gift?

The Bible

1. Name someone you like.
2. If you could be another person for a day, who would you be?
3. If you could be someone in the Bible for a day, who would you be?
4. What do you like about the person you chose from the Bible?



1. Name one rule that keeps children safe.
2. Why do we need rules?
3. Whose job is it to teach rules to children?
4. Name a rule from the Bible.



1. Do you go to the library?
2. Describe the library in your neighbourhood.
3. Can you guess how many books there are in that library?
4. The Bible is a library (collection of small books). Can you guess how many books are in the Bible?

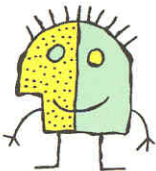
Faith

1. If you were blind, who would help you to walk without bumping into things?
2. If you were deaf, who would help you to understand what was happening on TV?
3. When you need help in the family, to whom do you turn?
4. Tell about a time when you turned to God for help.



1. Tell about a favourite family trip.
2. Tell one thing you did to get ready for the trip.
3. Finish this sentence, "The best thing about trips is...."
4. If life is like a trip, where do you think it will end?

1. Talk about the smallest thing you know.
2. Talk about the biggest thing you know.
3. Which do you think is better—something small or something big?
4. Who does God love more—someone who believes a little bit or someone who believes a lot?



1. Name someone you know who can speak a language other than English.
2. Say "yes" in any other language besides English.
3. If you wanted to learn to say "yes" in Chinese or Italian, how would you learn to do it?
4. If you wanted to say "yes" to God, how would you do it?

Church

1. Tell about the last time you were at church.
2. Describe one person you saw at church.
3. How many people do you think were at church?
4. Is the church a building or the people?



1. Describe a Sunday school teacher who is special.
2. What makes that teacher special.
3. Name another leader or teacher at church.
4. How do people get to be church leaders, ministers or Sunday school teachers?

1. Name something that is, for you, a special food.
2. What is a special food for someone else in your family?
3. How does your family get ready for special meals?
4. Why did God give us a special meal called communion?



Living as Christians



1. Tell about the smallest baby you have ever seen.
2. Tell a story about the day you were born or adopted.
3. Why do you think babies are put into families?
4. Why do we say that we are part of God's family?

1. Tell about something you do very well.
2. How did you learn to do it?
3. What is it you enjoy about this activity?
4. How could this activity help God?



1. Tell about your favourite game.
2. If you could teach a game to someone, what game would you choose?
3. If games had no rules, would they still be fun?
4. If Jesus visited your home, what games would you like to play with him?



1. Tell about your favourite TV show.
2. If you and another person in your family wanted to watch different TV shows at the same time, what would you do?
3. Why do people argue?
4. Can you remember a time when Jesus was angry?

Reaching Out

1. What is a hard thing to do?
2. Have you ever seen someone else doing something hard?
3. Tell about a time when your family helped someone do something that was hard.
4. Tell a Bible story about someone who helped another person.



1. Give everyone at your table a hug or kiss.
2. Why do you think that people give each other hugs and kisses?
3. If there is lots of love in a family, how will people act?
4. How is your family's love like God's love?

1. What is the best way to get news?
2. If you were going to send good news to a friend, how would you do it?
3. How do you feel when someone tells you good news?
4. If God wanted to send good news to people, how would that happen?

