

Practicing the *Examen* with Children

by Kimberlee Conway Ireton

To include your kids in the *examen*, choose a time each day when your family is gathered—perhaps for a meal or before bed. Explain that a highlight is something you're grateful for and a lowlight is something you're really not grateful for. Tell them your highlight and lowlight as an example. Then ask your kids to share the highlight and lowlight of their day.

It may take awhile for young kids to catch on, and you might need to prompt them to remember what happened—"Well, you went swimming today and to the park, and Sammy came over for lunch, and you fell and skinned your knee"—but if you keep asking and modeling day after day, they will get it.

After you ask each question, listen to what they say. If you say anything in response, simply mirror back their emotions: "That must have been exciting!" or "Oh, sweetie, I bet that made you sad." If you want, you could also extend the conversation: "Tell me more."

In order for your kids to feel like the *examen* is a safe place to share, you (and all other family members) must listen with respect. If your child's lowlight is that you yelled at her, please don't take offense or remind her that she'd hassled you to within an inch of your sanity before you lost your cool. Simply listen. Try to empathize. Maybe even apologize.

You might also want to pray with your kids, thanking God for their highlight and asking them to help them in their lowlight.