

KENT ANNAN

**SLOW
KINGDOM
COMING**

PRACTICES FOR DOING JUSTICE,
LOVING MERCY AND WALKING
HUMBLY IN THE WORLD

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COMING**

FAMILY TOOLKIT

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INTRODUCTION

This toolkit provides engaging ways for your on-the-go family to be shaped by practicing justice in God's kingdom coming. Like us, you probably have good ideas and good days, but also days when you're just trying to get by. Ultimately, though, we all want to do more than get by. We want our families to participate in doing justice, loving mercy and walking humbly with God, in grace and freedom!

This toolkit is based on the book *Slow Kingdom Coming: Practices for Doing Justice, Loving Mercy and Walking Humbly in the World* (InterVarsity Press, 2016) by Kent Annan and was produced by Aimee Fritz, founder of Family Compassion Focus. You can learn more about Aimee at familycompassionfocus.com and about Kent at kentannan.com.

The Family Toolkit has three sections.

1. Twenty Family Car Questions

You can take this question sheet as is into your car or cut the questions into cards to stack in a cup holder for when the time seems right. We hope each question will prompt good discussion with your kids as you drive, as we know this is when some of our best discussions happen! Of course, the questions can also work well during a meal or at bedtime.

2. Eleven Family Justice and Joy Activities

Here are eleven simple activities to do as a family to help others and to awaken ideas about justice. No, we can't promise there won't be a meltdown on the way out the door, or that your son won't slug your daughter's shoulder at some point (really, is this only our families?!). But we promise it will be worth it. We included ideas that can work for kids from chatty preschoolers through inventive high schoolers.

3. Family Prayer Prompts

These are simple invitations for your family to pray about justice—locally, nationally and around the world. They include suggestions and ideas to pray for yourselves and your home.

TWENTY FAMILY CAR QUESTIONS

Simple Ways to Grow in Doing Justice as a Family

Parent instructions:

1. Read *Slow Kingdom Coming*. (Your kids don't need to read the book to do this activity. A small note on each question says which chapter the question comes from.)
2. Print out and keep these questions in your car. (You can cut them up to fit in your console or cup holder if you prefer.)
3. When driving to soccer practice or on the way to school (or at a meal or bedtime), ask your kids one of the questions. Or let them flip through and pick a question.
4. Yes, there might be an occasional groan, but the questions will open meaningful conversations between you and your children about loving God and your neighbors.

If you had superpowers, what would you do to make the world a better place? What would your superhero name be?

practice of attention

Is there anything that scares you in the world? What is one thing we could do to make it less scary?

practice of attention

Can you think of a time someone was mean to you and then apologized? How did that feel? Is there anyone you should apologize to?

practice of confession

What breaks your heart? Why?

practice of attention

Have you learned anything new about the world these days? Who did you learn it from?

practices of respect and truthing

Can money can fix every problem? Why or why not?

practice of partnering

Have you ever been on a bad team? Other than losing, what made it bad? Have you ever been on a good team? Not counting winning, what made it good?

practice of partnering

What if our last name got changed to be whatever we spend the most time doing? What do you think our new last name would be? (The Yellers? The RunningLaterers? The VideoGamers? The Homeworkers?) What would you like our last name to be?

practice of truthing

If you could teleport to a different country, which one would you choose? Would it be just like your country? If not, what would be different?

practices of attention and respect

Do you have any friends who look or talk differently than you? How are they different? How could you meet more people who are different from you?

practices of respect and partnering

Who is a world changer you admire? Why?

practices of attention, respect and partnering

Who do you think Jesus would hang out with at school and on the weekends? And why?

practices of attention and respect

Can you think of a time you helped someone? What did you do? How did that feel?

practice of respect

Tell me about a time someone helped you. How did they know you wanted help? How did it feel to be seen and aided?

practice of respect

What do you love to do? What makes you feel happy deep down inside?
Can you think of how we could use that love and happiness to serve someone else?

practice of respect

If you were to get a tattoo about what's most important in your life, what would the tattoo look like? Why? (Kids, be sure to discuss with your parents first if you decide you want a tattoo!)

practices of attention and truthing

You know how sometimes you say something is "not fair"? What needs to happen to change it to make it fair?

practice of partnering

What would you do with 1 million dollars to try to change the world?
How would you spend your time trying to change the world if you didn't have to go to school for a year?

practices of partnering and truthing

Who is your favorite character in a recent TV show or movie? What do you like about him or her? (Talk about how attention, confession, respect, partnering and truthing—or lack thereof—are present in that character.)

all five practices

What do you think our town would look like if God were the mayor? Whose life would change the most?

all five practices

ELEVEN FAMILY JUSTICE AND JOY ACTIVITIES

When the time comes that we will look back on our life with our kids, we want to be able to see that faithful practices—not just urgent busyness—guided our way. But sometimes it's hard to know where to start. We hope these eleven simple, meaningful activities are ways your family can practice justice together. We've tested them all; sometimes they've been messy, sometimes they've been transformational. But *practicing* has always been worth it.

Before you begin, it helps if you've read *Slow Kingdom Coming*, since these suggestions flow out of the practices in the book. We hope you'll give them a try with plenty of grace, humor and a spirit of fun. They will make a real difference in how you relate to each other and the world.

1. Go on an "I Spy Secret Mission" (*practice of attention*). Tell each family member to report back on people in regular life they haven't noticed before. Challenge each other to use all five senses to gather similarities and differences with the people they meet in the day.

Examples:

- Learn the names of a few new people at school or on the bus.
- Notice differences in houses and grocery stores in different parts of town. Perhaps even go shopping in one of those grocery stores.
- Look at the people featured in commercials and billboards. What do you see?
- Ask God to show you who you could pray for in your everyday life. Who comes to mind?
- Reflect on how this "I Spy" mission changed anything about your day.

We encourage parents to do this along with your kids and report back too!

2. Read the news together (*practice of attention*). Pick an article from your newsfeed or an actual page of the newspaper. Read it aloud or pass it around. Ask your kids if they know where the news is happening geographically. Have a globe or a map ready to help them visualize the location. What questions do you have about the story? Perhaps take a few moments to do quick Google research together. If the news is unsettling, stop and pray together (see prayer prompts); you may want to repeat the prayer later on and in the days to come.

3. Confess and forgive (*practice of confession*). Modeling this humility in the safety of the home provides a solid foundation for you and your kids to continue confessing soul and justice issues down the road. These are major life skills. Consider gathering your family for a time of confession. We suggest that you might even kneel together right there in the family room. It may be uncomfortable the first time, and your family may giggle and gawk. That's okay. Let grace abound.

As a parent you could model asking forgiveness from your spouse or child for a rough word or an oversight (keep it factual and brief with no qualifications). If you are forgiven, receive that with grace. After a moment, ask if anyone else has something they'd like to confess. Your kids might not do so the first time, but we promise they will by the third or fourth time (see prayer prompts).

4. Let your hearts be broken together (*practice of confession*). Explore active compassion as a family. Put two pieces of paper on the refrigerator, bathroom mirror or other high-traffic area in your house. On one write "What breaks your heart?" On the other write "What brings you joy?" Leave some crayons or markers nearby.

Invite your family to share on these sheets what makes them sad and what makes them happy. Assure them there are no wrong answers. Leave these up for a week. After a week have a fun breakfast or dinner sharing

your answers. Perhaps you will feel prompted to take it further. If so, see the activity “Family compassion focus” below.

5. *Honè-Respè activity* (*practice of respect*). Kent wrote about the Haitian tradition of pausing before entering someone’s home or yard and calling out, “Honè,” then standing still to wait and hear “Respè” to be welcomed in (pp. 63-64). Practice this for a day as a family: before going into a sibling’s room or a parent’s or spouse’s space in the kitchen or office, call out, “Honè” [“OH-NEH”], then stand still and wait for the “Respè” [“REH-SPEH”]. Parents, this will be empowering for your kids as you call out before going into their rooms or sitting on their beds.

It will be hard, but it’s a great family lesson in boundaries and respect. We live in a slow kingdom coming, so it’s essential to learn how to wait. Be sure to debrief with humor and grace at the end of the day. (Perhaps read Romans 12:10 together, about outdoing one another in showing honor.)

6. *Read together* (*practice of respect*). Try *lectio divina* as Kent describes on pages 81-82 of *Slow Kingdom Coming*. Take one small passage of Scripture and read it aloud several times.

- Invite your children to read. In our house we allow reading in dramatic voices (baby, opera, cowboy, robot, beatbox, Gandalf). Let your kids read in a way that works for them. Loosening their holy imaginations gives them permission to humbly interact with Scripture. These are the building blocks of trust, creativity and growing faith in the Bible.
- Listen to each person read.
- Release your imaginations: Where do you think this story took place? Who is talking? Who is listening? What does everyone’s face look like? Who do you like in the story? Who do you have a hard time liking? What do you think the setting looks, sounds, smells, feels and tastes like?
- Take turns acting out what’s happening in the text. Cheer each other on. No teasing!
- Some passages to try: Psalm 139 (“I am fearfully and wonderfully made”); Matthew 14:13-21 (the feeding of the five thousand); Matthew 25:35-40 (“as you did it to one of the least of these”); Luke 14:7-14 (where to sit at a banquet).
- Use some of the prayer prompts also included in this Family Toolkit.

7. *Describe the “marathon of change”* (*practice of partnering*). We are participating in a slow kingdom coming. This means we’re not rescuing or fixing. We’ll need lots of patience as we walk year after year toward justice, mercy and humility. This is especially hard for kids to understand.

Talk about other slow, delayed gratification examples with your kids: seedlings to tall trees, building a house, the Grand Canyon, plate tectonics. My kids especially love hearing how much they themselves have changed in their young lives. Now they know how to talk, eat alone, poop alone. They can read and write. Someday they will drive and have a job. All of these things take a long time to develop. In a way, this is what God’s kingdom is like too.

8. *Dream big together* (*practice of partnering*). If someone made a movie about our family, would anyone want to watch it? (Donald Miller asks this in *A Million Miles in a Thousand Years*.) What story is our family telling? Read aloud Kent’s story about Janet and the cookies (pp. 66-68). What would we try if we weren’t afraid? What would we try if we had all the money we needed?

9. *Ask questions* (*practice of truthing*). As we walk in the slow kingdom with our families, we will have questions. Our children will work hard to figure it out and sometimes voice the questions that confuse and paralyze us. We cannot be afraid of the questions. Examples include:

- Specific questions: Are there orphans in our town? How many people are homeless right now? What is a refugee?

- Big picture questions: Why are some people starving and some people obese? Why do poor people often have lots of kids? Did babies die in the earthquake?
- Faith questions: Why is there suffering? Why is there evil? Where is God?

When these questions come, let's face them with bold humility. We can write them down in a notebook that is designated for questions. We can take our time looking for answers from all kinds of people. We can pray that God will help reveal the answers to these questions in time as we continue to seek the answers.

10. Feet on the ground (*practice of truthing*). Look for ways the slow kingdom is arriving where you already are.

- Print out information about the ministries your church invests and participates in; pray for and consider joining them together as a family.
- Visit churches nearby that typically have a different demographic than the one you attend. But don't visit as sightseers; visit as humble, gentle learners.
- Seek personal contact with the places you already contribute to financially; ask questions and listen long (p. 119). Ask these ministries and organizations how families and children could put feet on the ground to serve in real ways. Powerful engagement happens when whole families serve together.

11. Family compassion focus for a year (*all five practices*). Each of the past five years, our (Aimee's) family has chosen a different compassion focus. The last week of the year we brainstorm how we can serve and love in the year ahead. We vote as a family on New Year's Day. We research during breakfast and ask questions during car rides. We plan visits and fundraising activities. We give. Together we celebrate Jesus and the chance to participate in love.

In the past we've chosen clean water in Africa, orphans, Haiti, homelessness and local ministries in Atlanta.

All five slow kingdom practices (attention, confession, respect, partnering and truthing) help along the way. We grow and are shaped as a family by God's grace, and we get to help other people. We make mistakes. It isn't always pretty. But it is a beautiful way to discover more about the world and love together.

To learn how to do this as a family, visit familycompassionfocus.com for tools and tips (including a calendar, downloadable tools and stories). You can also read more about this in the chapter "Partnering" in *Slow Kingdom Coming*.

FAMILY PRAYER PROMPTS

PRACTICING ATTENTION

- **When our family begins exploring the slow kingdom:**

Lord, our family doesn't know a lot about the slow kingdom, but we think we want to. Reshape us to want, seek, find, choose, know, love and serve you and your kingdom. Open our eyes and hearts. Give us unity and joy as we explore together. Amen.

- **For learning how to pay attention to each person we meet:**

Lord, give us your eyes to see other people the way you do. You created every person as beautiful and valuable. Help me to see and receive the gifts you have placed inside other people. Help us not to be too busy to notice. Amen.

- **When the news of the day is unsettling:**

Lord, the news we heard today is scary and confusing. The problem feels big and we feel small. You are not surprised by it or afraid of it. We're on the lookout for your tender might. We are paying attention. Help us to keep paying attention. Show us how you'd like our family to respond. Amen.

- **When our family wants to take action, but isn't sure how:**

Lord, what do you want our family to do today to love and serve _____? Amen.

Inspired by the chapter "Attention: Awakening to Justice"

PRACTICING CONFESSION

- **When our family wants to practice confession together (perhaps on our knees in the family room, or at bedtime):**

Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole hearts; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may walk in your ways, to the glory of your Name. (From the Book of Common Prayer)

Lord, this common confession says it well. And there continue to be reasons to confess each day. Our hearts are broken by so many things. Help us to hear and see where you are calling us to serve you and other people in this slow kingdom coming. Amen.

- **When I want healing in my home, and I'm tired:**

Lord, I want to be a part of your kingdom in the world, but I confess I've hurt the people I love the most with hasty words, actions and inaction. Please repair what is broken in our hearts and home. I trust you don't turn your back on messy people, but run toward us in delight to heal and use us to bring about your kingdom. I believe you will do this; help my unbelief. Amen.

- **When we admit we need help to do the work of the slow kingdom:**

God, you are our indispensable helper. We confess that we need you. Be the bridge between our healthiest prayers and secret striving. Fill in the gaps between our best and what is needed in your kingdom. We are trying, but we know we fall short. Thank you for inviting us to participate in your will and your way. Amen.

- **When I feel convicted that maybe my helping is more about me:**

Lord, I want to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly, but deep down I know I'm hasty, selfish, tired, entitled and wounded. No matter how much I worship, pray and serve, there is still a part of me that wants protection and glory. I admit that here. I declare that my hope and freedom is in you. Please accept my humble offering. Amen.

Inspired by the chapter "Confession: The Posture for Engaging"

PRACTICING RESPECT

- **When I need patience in pursuing justice and mercy:**

God, I'm quick to run in, try to fix things and run back out. I long for easy fixes and an independent life. I'm learning to see that's not what this slow kingdom is about. Grant me the humility to slow down, listen patiently and thoroughly, and wait before initiating and acting. I need your grace to wait for invitations, open doors and holy opportunities. Help me, Lord. Amen.

- **When our family is trying a new thing with new people in the slow kingdom:**

Lord, trying new things is exciting but hard. Meeting new people who are different from us is interesting but stressful. Help us to walk in with the soft, eager attitude of learners. Please mediate between us and the people we want to love and serve. May the words of our mouths and meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight (Psalm 19:14). Amen.

- **When our family is trying to read the Bible together:**

God, sometimes the Bible feels too familiar and stale. Sometimes it's confusing. Help our family to find your truth and kingdom in Scripture. Open our ears, imaginations and hearts as we slowly read your Word together. We look to see how the Holy Spirit transforms our hearts and home. Thank you for the gift of these words. Amen.

Inspired by the chapter "Respect: The Golden Rule for Helping"

PRACTICING PARTNERING

- **When I need to partner with people in the slow kingdom:**

Lord, I understand that respect means listening to and learning from people who will be most affected, who have more experience and who have more at stake. I submit to learning from new people. Help me to ask questions and listen closely for the answers. I acknowledge that my ways are not always your ways. Increase my compassion, patience and understanding. I need your mercy. Help us to accomplish beautiful, wonderful things together. Amen.

- **When we feel something new stirring in our family:**

God, we feel like you may be writing a new story, a new song for our family. We are deeply humbled and honored to be a part of your kingdom. Grant us courage and singleness of heart as we dream big, listen

long and take risks. We know our very best still involves a lot of stumbling. You are the sovereign in this kingdom. Lead us into a new story as a family. Amen.

- **When we have good intentions but our partnerships feel sabotaged:**

Lord, we want to live into the slow kingdom coming, but things just keep getting in the way. Please strengthen us. When we feel sabotaged, guide us by your light and grace. When our pride tries to dominate, please bring us down. When our insecurities try to undercut, please hold us up. We need you and we need each other. You've invited us to co-create in the world with you and with our neighbors. You've freed us into this calling through Christ. What an amazing gift. Thank you. Please help us to live faithfully into this gift. Amen.

Inspired by the chapter "Partnering: With Not For"

PRACTICING TRUTHING

- **When our family has big questions:**

God, we see beautiful acts of love and kindness all around, but we also have so many questions about pain, suffering and injustice. Teach us, Lord. Show and tell us where you are at work, where your slow kingdom is coming. We believe you are good and know everything that's going on. Help our unbelief. Help us to be guided by what is true. Amen.

- **When we're heading out on a slow kingdom adventure (to pray in the car or at the meal beforehand):**

Lord, thank you for equipping us for what lies ahead. Thank you for the families, ministries, organizations and experts that can work together to serve your kingdom with active compassion and humble justice. Thank you for the courage, faithfulness and compassion so many people show in their regular lives each day. Thank you for granting us creativity, discernment, wisdom and grace in this adventure. Every good thing we think, dream, plan and implement comes from you. With freedom we follow you, the one who is truth, who is life and who leads us into life. Thank you, Lord. Amen.

Inspired by the chapter "Truthing: Hard Thinking and Feet on the Ground"