

## Chieko & I were going to bed, and I wanted to talk...

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December 7, 2013



Chieko and I were going to bed and I wanted to talk about the little family meeting we had held earlier on before the kids went upstairs.

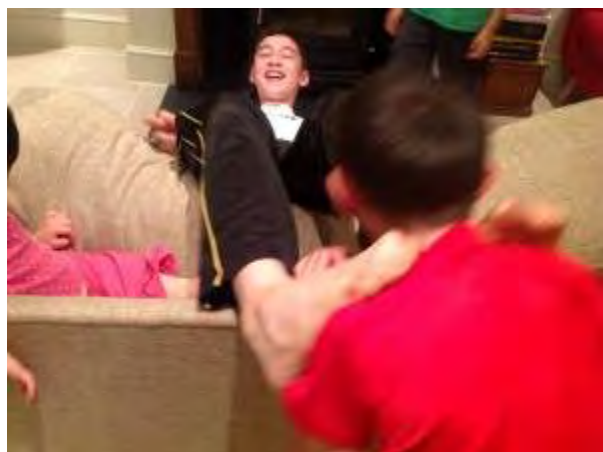
I asked Chieko how she felt it went.

She was tired so she didn't say so much other than that she thought it was fine. So I just shared some thoughts and she listened in a helpful sort of way:

Our evening family meetings are a good opportunity for the boys to learn how to behave in different environments (Amy was already asleep), and of course they get taught how to behave properly at school, because it's quite strict there.

But to learn in the family when it's okay to joke around & when to be a bit more serious is so much more powerful because it is just such a natural environment to grow in. When to know you can play around and be funny, when to be serious, and thoughtful; if they can be flexible and sensitive to 'the moment' at home, they will carry that confidence into their adult life. They will have good boundaries.

Of course it's not easy to develop the thoughtful moments with four young boys who are between 8 and 13 years old, at the end of the day. They normally want to jump on top of each other or do something loud and violent.



And then there is the whole bit we do with prayer, which is kind of different from when we pray in the morning or at meals.

I say a prayer, and then if anyone else wants to offer a pray they can (rare), and then we just have a couple of minutes quite prayer together.

I said to Chieko that if we can develop that as a family tradition and habit, then surely at some different moments they can all have some personal experience with God. Even if right now, it might not mean much to them. At least we offer them the chance.

Just to have 2 minutes of silence while being all together is quite a profound way to bond as a family.

When we think as parents of all the things we want them *to* do and *not* do, it will be so much more

powerful if they have an authentic voice coming from *within* that speaks to them, rather than them relying on directions that only come from people, essentially voices *outside* of themselves.

The challenge is whether we can be intentional and consistent in making it happen and growing the culture of real prayer within our family, and experiencing that together.

It gets me to look at my own prayer and see how authentic it is.

and right now, we are still dealing with basics like don't make funny faces at your brother, and don't get up and walk around the room and disturb others.

And exactly how we manage these things is a test for Chieko and I.

I've already learnt a lot about what *not* to do in these situations.

Every family has to figure out the culture they want to create, and the values they want to live by, and each one will be unique in some way.

But I am realizing that if I want to end up somewhere with my family it needs to be intentional. The last thing Chieko and I reflected on last night was how the next 7 years will probably be the most important for our family. IN 7 years both Damon & Len will be adults. Mark & Eddie will be in their mid-teens, and Amy will be getting ready for High School. One thing it's really worth making time for in these next few years is each other.