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# An Opportunity for Families

Jack and his family live in Kampala, the capital of Uganda. He gives some tips on how they have been coping with the lockdown, which has been a great opportunity to grow as a family

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The world has been afflicted with so much woe from this COVID-19 pandemic that it seems almost churlish to recognize the occasional ray of light among the gloom. But I

would like to talk about one such ray here, a spark of light at this dark time.

One of the consequences of school closure and many workplaces shifting to the home-based work mode is that families are spending much more time together than the norm. The time recouped from work and school commutes and a hundred other demands on us of movement from place to place is now available as an opportunity for family flourishing. I share a few ideas on how this time can be used.

### **Family get-togethers after meals**

Family get-togethers extend family interaction after meals. It is a time for sharing family stories and general conversation. This is a custom that has always been tough to adopt in our family but it is having a renaissance during this lockdown. Many creative people have come up

with quizzes and fun games which are going around the internet. We have found these handy for get-togethers. The main point is that family members can share portions of their life, sometimes for the first time, with guaranteed attention from the rest. The lockdown has been on for some months now where we live but we have already had a dance presentation by our daughter. And amazingly, I have even considered leading a song!

### **One-on-one time**

I have navigated the minefield of a discussion about smartphones with our eldest teenage son with no collateral damage to the relationship. That's a big issue to settle these days especially since he has younger brothers and sisters who will be influenced by his example, which will do half my work for me in a few years. How did this happen? We

listened together to three podcasts from the Heights Forum Podcasts, produced by the Heights School in Washington about the broader factors at play in this decision. Yes, the podcasts are excellent, but the point is that the time was there to be used. I have also had many other substantial conversations with my other children.

## **Home libraries**

One of the questions I sometimes have to answer is "What book should I read next, Dad?" It lightens my heart to be able to make some suggestions. The home library is getting a lot of traffic these days. Screens have their attractions but books are in the conversation too.

## **Service**

One of my duties at home is to ensure that everyone is up at a set time in the morning, with a general

family goal to be “up before the sun.” I got this idea from an excellent novel entitled The River and the Source by Dr. Margaret Ogola, of beloved memory: may her soul rest in peace. It is a daily challenge but provides many great possibilities. I get to say the first word to everyone each morning. What an opportunity to strengthen connections! Personal customized timetables for family members are also proving a hit, especially with our younger children. A 7-year-old can be a formidable opponent if she starts to own her timetable. I just love having to arbitrate when a claim for computer time is backed up by reference to a personal timetable entry.

## **Hope**

Hope springs eternal, even at this trying time. Articles abound with tips on how to survive the lockdown that usually push services like Netflix and

similar items. I am glad to testify that alternatives exist which provide a lens through which the lockdown can be leveraged, not just survived. We can put our time to much better use if we embrace the opportunities that come with the difficulties of the pandemic. Life can always accommodate both rain and sunshine if we embrace it joyfully. And we may even see a rainbow!

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