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Lockdown, an opportunity for families

Jack and Josephine live with their family in Kampala. He gives some tips on how they have been coping with the lockdown. It has been a great opportunity to grow as a family.

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There is so much woe visited upon the world by this COVID-19 pandemic that it seems almost churlish to recognize the occasional rays of light

among the gloom. I set out to comment about one such ray here, a spark of enthusiasm at this 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

This is an extension of family interaction after meals 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 in 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 in one of these moments. Atypically, I have even thought of 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 as he has siblings for whom demonstration effect will do half my work for me in a few years. How did this happen? We listened together to three podcasts from the

Heights Cast, a podcast of 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 had so many other moments with his siblings too, moments pregnant with potential.

Home libraries

One of the questions I have to answer occasionally 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 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 a tour de force of a novel titled The River and the Source by Dr. Margaret Ogola, of beloved memory and may her soul rest in peace. It is a daily challenge but has its golden moments. I get to say the first word to everyone every morning. What an opportunity to strengthen connections. Personal customized timetables for family members are also proving a hit, especially with 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 time. Articles abound with tips on how to survive the lockdown usually pushing services like Netflix and similar. I am glad to affirm that

alternatives exist which provide a lens through which the lockdown can be leveraged, not just survived.

Within families, for instance, we can put our time to much better use if we embrace the opportunities that come with the difficulties of the pandemic. Life always could accommodate both rain and sunshine if only we can appreciate rainbows.

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