

Home Front

a spiritual parenting resource

A FALL to remember

**COURSE
CORRECTION**

“When I get off track, God offers me a path of healing.”

**FAITH
COMMUNITY**

“God’s family cares for each other and worships God together.”

HOMEFRONTMAG.COM

Discipleship Steps at New Life Church

Parents are the spiritual nurturers of their children's faith and are the main disciples in their lives. We are committed to engaging, empowering, and resourcing our parents and families to succeed in their God-given role. Time and resources make this role challenging in our busy world. At New Life Church, we have created a clear path of discipleship for our parents with convenient times and locations. We hope to see you there!

PARENT ORIENTATION A first step toward engaging in our ministry. Hear philosophy, meet staff, and learn how to get involved.

SPIRITUAL PARENTING A six-week class that dives deep into what God's Word says about parenting.

PARENTING CONVERSATIONS An every-other-month evening for parents to discuss tough topics with other parents and hear from leading experts.

HOMEFRONT MAGAZINE A magazine designed to help you have a successful family night in your home.

FAMILY NIGHT An intergenerational family night as the body of Christ.

PARENT CURRICULUM A weekly or series handout that shares biblical information, discussion questions, and activities.

HomeFront

How to Use

1 Start by deciding on a day and time that works well for your entire family. It can be an evening around a meal, breakfast on a Saturday, or a break between sporting events. Just commit to "family time" once a week.

Utilize this magazine as a workbook to plan your family time. The calendar pages are designed to help you plan ahead. Pick a God's Word devotional, recipe, and one of the other activities titled Create, Game Time, Worship Response, or Serve. At the end of your time together, speak a blessing over your family members.

2 There are four weeks of devotionals and activities. When you have a fifth week in the month, let the kids plan the family night. Remember to HAVE FUN! Family night does not have to be perfect. If you spent time with God and with one another, it was a great family night.

3

Our Mission

INSPIRE

parents with ideas to create fun, spiritually forming times in the normal rhythm of everyday life.

EQUIP

parents to become the spiritual leaders of God's truth in their own households.

SUPPORT

families to engage their communities and change the culture around them.



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A Note from Michelle

HomeFront magazine is designed to help parents and grandparents

disciple their children and grandchildren by creating environments in their homes that put God on display. Each issue gives practical ways to develop family nights or experiences in your home based on the 10 environments in my book *Spiritual Parenting*. It is vital for our children and grandchildren's spiritual growth to set aside time on a regular basis to engage in spiritual conversations and activities that are both fun and developmental.



In this issue you will be focusing on the environments of **COURSE CORRECTION** and **FAITH COMMUNITY**.

- The environment of **COURSE CORRECTION** puts on display the way in which God seeks to discipline us in love. While punishment has the goal of punitive pain, Course Correction has the goal to heal the broken places of sin deep within our hearts and souls. We find a three-step process for Course Correction in Hebrews 12:11-13: a season of pain, being built up in unconditional love, and setting

a corrected course for future decisions. In all, we must remember that Course Correction is done in love and the desire to see our children grow in maturity in Christ.

- The environment of **FAITH COMMUNITY** invites our children into a safe refuge away from some of the hostility and temptations of the world. It is a place to have a "spiritual family" of those from older and younger generations who help us grow in our understanding of who God is. The Faith Community is critical in allowing our children to hear the faith stories and journeys from others outside of their own parents, which often fosters a greater trust in the truth of Jesus and His Word during times of questioning or doubt.

My prayer is that you will grow together as a family as you faithfully engage in the contents of this resource over the next two months.

Dr. Michelle Anthony

Michelle is the Executive Pastor of Family Ministries at New Life Church in Colorado Springs, CO. Michelle has graduate degrees in Christian education, theology, and leadership and more than 30 years of church ministry experience as a children's and family pastor. She is also the author of *Spiritual Parenting*, *The Big God Story*, *Becoming a Spiritually Healthy Family*, and *7 Family Ministry Essentials*. Michelle loves a good book and a cup of coffee.

 @TruInspiration

Editor's Note



This issue of *HomeFront* will highlight the environments of **COURSE CORRECTION** and **FAITH COMMUNITY**. At first glance, these two environments may seem to share little in common and make for an odd pairing in a magazine. Interestingly enough, the Lord showed me how the two environments are better together than separate. When the Lord course corrects us, it takes our faith community to encourage us, support us, and hold us accountable for true lasting change. Proverbs 18:1 says, "A man who isolates himself seeks his own desires; He rages against all wise judgment" (NKJV). God gives us friends, mentors, pastors, and family to help us flee from evil when we think we have no more energy to run. This is the body of Christ at its best. This is faith community.

For September, God's Word focuses on the story of Jonah. As a family, read through the book of Jonah along with the devotionals. Remember to share personal stories with your children of how God has lovingly course corrected you. It is important to share with our children that we all make mistakes, but God lovingly and patiently corrects us for His glory. In October's environment of **FAITH COMMUNITY**, each article unpacks the spiritual significance, benefits, and traditions of the biblical feasts. Biblical feasts were filled with laughter and joy as God's people experienced the generosity and abundance of their heavenly Father. As you host your own feasts, invite your children into this same joy of the Lord.

HomeFront magazine is a discipleship tool to be shared. Grab an extra copy to give to those in your faith community. I pray that your family experiences sweet moments of connection, conversations that bring unity, and a commitment to one another that runs deep as you spend time together. May you know that God is loving, patient, and kind with each of us and His Holy Spirit empowers you to extend these same gifts to your children. Amen.

Holly Newman

Holly is the Editor in Chief of *HomeFront* magazine and Pastor of Parents and Families at New Life Church in Colorado Springs, CO. She has pastored in family ministry for nearly 20 years and written curriculum for other authors as well as developed her own tween and teen curriculum on identity called *Girltime*. Her passion is for families to create influential, faith-building moments with their children. She has been married to her high school sweetheart, Jared, for 18 years. They have four children. In her spare time she loves to get outdoors with her family.

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did *you* know

It is our prayer that homes and churches would create these environments for children to live in so their faith will grow in a community of consistency, common language, and practice. To learn more about how these environments can ignite a transforming faith in your family, we suggest you read:



SPIRITUAL PARENTING:
An Awakening for
Today's Families

BY MICHELLE ANTHONY
© 2010 DAVID C COOK

10

ENVIRONMENTS

The order of the 10 Environments listed coincides with the monthly distribution of this resource.

2

“God transforms me when I step out in faith.”

OUT OF THE COMFORT ZONE

As children and students are challenged to step out of their comfort zone from an early age, they learn to experience a dependence on the Holy Spirit to equip and strengthen them beyond their natural abilities and desires. We believe this environment will cultivate a generation that, instead of seeking comfort, seeks a radical life of faith in Christ.

1

RESPONSIBILITY

This environment captures the ability to take ownership for one’s life, gifts, and resources before God. A child must be challenged to take responsibility for his or her brothers and sisters in Christ, as well as for those who are spiritually lost. Our hope is that the Holy Spirit will use this environment to allow each child to understand that God has entrusted His world to us.

“God has entrusted me with the things and people He created around me.”

3

“Asks the question, ‘What needs to be done?’”

SERVING

This posture of the heart asks the question, “What needs to be done?” It allows the Holy Spirit to cultivate a sensitivity to others and focuses on a cause bigger than one individual life. It helps fulfill the mandate that as Christ-followers we are to view our lives as living sacrifices that we generously give away!

4

LOVE & RESPECT

Without love, our faith becomes futile. This environment recognizes that children need an environment of love and respect in order to be free to both receive and give God’s grace. Innate to this environment is the value that children are respected because they embody the image of God. We must speak to them, not at them, and we must commit to an environment where love and acceptance are never withheld due to one’s behavior.

“God fills me with His love so I can give it away.”

5

STORYTELLING

The power of The Big God Story impacts our lives by giving us an accurate and awe-inspiring perspective into how God has been moving throughout history. It is the story of redemption, salvation, and hope and tells how I have been grafted into it by grace. It further compels us to see how God is using every person’s life and is creating a unique story that deserves to be told for God’s glory.

“God has a big story, and I can be a part of it!”



6

"God knows me, and I can know Him."

KNOWING

Nothing could be more important than knowing and being known by God. We live in a world that denies absolute truth, and yet God's Word offers just that. As we create an environment that upholds and displays God's truth, we give children a foundation based on knowing God, knowing His Word, and a relationship with Him through Christ. God is holy, mighty, and awesome, and yet He has chosen to make Himself known to us!

7

"I belong to God, and He loves me!"

IDENTITY

This environment highlights who we are in Christ. According to Ephesians 1, we have been chosen, adopted, redeemed, sealed, and given an inheritance in Christ ... all of which we did nothing to earn. This conviction allows children to stand firm against the destructive counter-identities the world will offer.

8

"When I get off track, God offers me a path of healing."

COURSE CORRECTION

This environment flows out of Hebrews 12:11-13 and is the direct opposite of punishment. Instead, biblical discipline for a child encompasses a season of pain, the building up in love, and a vision of a corrected path for the individual with the purpose of healing at its core.

9

FAITH COMMUNITY

"God's family cares for each other and worships God together."

God designed us to live in community and to experience Him in ways that can only happen in proximity to one another. The faith community serves to create an environment to equip and disciple parents, to celebrate God's faithfulness, and to bring a richness of worship through tradition and rituals, which offer children an identity. Our love for each other reflects the love we have received from God.

10

MODELING

"I see Christ in others, and they can see Him in me."

Biblical content needs a practical living expression in order for it to be spiritually impacting. This environment serves as a hands-on example of what it means for children to put their faith into action. Modeling puts flesh on faith and reminds us that others are watching to see if we live what we believe.

37



September

NOTES

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
30	31	1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	1	2	3

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SHOPPING LIST

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IDEAS

SUPPLIES

FAMILY VERSE

**The world and
its desires
*pass away, but
whoever does
the will of God
lives forever.***

1 John 2:17



GOD'S WORD GOD STATEMENT: GOD IS JUST

WEEK

1

Have you ever experienced a moment when God asked you to do something and you had to choose to obey—or not?

Whenever I hear the word *obedience*, my mind instantly goes back to being a small

child in a store where my mom would always tell me to stay close to her or there would be a consequence. From an early age, we are all exposed to the choice of obedience or disobedience. Will we follow our parent's corrections? Jonah, a man who knew God's voice and was chosen to be the mouthpiece of God, found himself in a place of choosing either obedience or disobedience.

As we read the story of Jonah, we know that Jonah chose the path of disobedience. Maybe Jonah was fearful of what would happen to him, or Jonah was frustrated that God had sent him to people who were wicked and did not deserve mercy. Jonah's disobedience is not an isolated event. Disobedience has been a theme in the human story from the beginning.

Adam and Eve faced the same choice Jonah confronted. The serpent tempted Adam and Eve to disregard what God had directly told them by questioning God's words and God's character.

Because Adam and Eve were suspicious of God's goodness, they willingly took the fruit and ate it, initiating a cycle of sin and disobedience for all of humanity. Jonah also wrestled with the suspicion that God was not good and ran away from Nineveh and God.

So what does God do with our disobedience? For Jonah, God showed His justice by sending a storm and a fish to guide Jonah toward the path of obedience. For Adam, Eve, and the rest of humanity, God sent Jesus as the example of perfect obedience and the pathway to perfect obedience. God's grace for Jonah, the people of Nineveh, and for us by no means excuses our disobedience. Rather, God's justice is demonstrated through His mercy and His compassion by allowing His children to repent and step back onto the pathway of obedience. The invitation to repent and to return to obedience is available to you today. God is always offering you grace and forgiveness.

DISCUSSION

Are there any areas in my life that I need to repent of to both God and people? Take some time to share and then pray over one another.

by Victor Mendoza, Associate Pastor of Student Ministries

GOD'S WORD

WEEK

2

GOD STATEMENT: GOD IS LOVE

Have you ever heard your parents say, "I am correcting you because I love you and want what is best for you"? As odd as that sounds, there is so much truth in that

statement. God is the same way. In our disobedience, God shows unconditional love. He patiently corrects us instead of leaving us to our own disobedient ways because He loves us too much to let us do what our broken hearts desire.

In the belly of a fish, Jonah was confronted by the patient, grace-filled discipline of God. Up until then, Jonah had only rejected God, turned away from His commands, and disgraced the position God had given him as a prophet. Even so, God chose not to abandon Jonah to death, full well knowing Jonah would continue being rebellious all the way to Nineveh and beyond. Jonah's story displays the effects of being confronted with the utter beauty of God's patience and grace.

In the belly of that fish, every excuse Jonah could come up with for disobeying God was stripped away, and he was left with a clear view of the Most High's salvation (2:9b), which caused him to overflow with

the prayer chapter 2 records. The very fact that God chose to punish Jonah instead of rejecting him as a son shows just how patient and good God is.

The easiest avenue to take is to try to avoid being punished. The world around us even tells the lie that parents who don't discipline their kids are the ones who are more loving than those who do. But the Bible has something different to say. God's Word says that discipline is reserved for those we love most (Hebrews 12:6). Therefore, may we take our cues from Jonah and see that we praise God for His perfect patience in disciplining us even when it hurts. Because when we are corrected by God, parents, pastors, or various wise people in our lives, our hearts will glimpse the holy and beautiful heart of the Father.

DISCUSSION

Have you ever been corrected by a parent, pastor, teacher, coach, or leader in a way that seemed harsh, but now you can see it was from a place of love?

by Chase Windebank, Student Ministries Discipleship Pastor

GOD'S WORD

WEEK

3

GOD STATEMENT: GOD FORGIVES

Have you ever done something wrong and had to do the work to make it right?

Life seems to always bring us relationships, situations, or circumstances that we seem

to be really good at messing up. Repentance is the act of turning away from what God reveals to us as sin and embracing a life of holiness.

The whole story of the Bible shows that humanity has fallen short and made a mess because of our sin, and the gospel calls us to repent and receive God's forgiveness. In the book of Jonah, Nineveh was one such place where the people had turned away from the Lord and their works had become evil in the sight of God. As a result, God used Jonah to call them to repentance.

Though it took some time and the belly of a fish for Jonah to obey, Jonah did as the Lord commanded. In response to Jonah's call to repentance, the king and city of Nineveh responded. In Jonah chapter 3 it states,

"By the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let people or animals, herds or flocks, taste anything; do not let them eat or drink. But let people and animals be covered with sackcloth. Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence" (Jonah 3:7-8).

Repentance is not simply feeling sorry for what one has done but is completely turning away from one's old way and embracing something new. Despite the fact that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23), the invitation of the gospel is to repent of our old ways and to embrace a new life that treasures Jesus. Why? Because God is a God who forgives.

DISCUSSION

In what areas of your life do you need to repent? In what ways can you leave the old way of thinking and living in sin behind and embrace a new life that loves others and honors God?

by Tim Shepard, Student Ministry Pastor

GOD'S WORD

WEEK

4

GOD STATEMENT: GOD IS MERCIFUL

Have you ever experienced mercy when you didn't deserve it? Mercy is the very substance that reveals God's faithfulness and steadfast love to humanity—the

foundation of forgiveness. All those who follow Jesus Christ are recipients of God's mercy. At its very core, we find the essence of compassion and the heart of God.

Mercy is not earned; it is given. Nineveh had earned judgment for their wicked ways; however, as a response to Jonah's call to repentance, the city turned from their evil ways and cried out to God. In chapter 3 the author states, "When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he relented and did not bring on them the destruction he had threatened" (Jonah 3:10).

Despite the fact that their wickedness had earned them judgment, God's character displayed mercy. This is why James said, "Because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment"

(James 2:13). Likewise, this is why Moses wrote, "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation" (Exodus 34:6-7).

God utilized Jonah to call Nineveh into course correction and therefore to reveal God's mercy to Jonah. This story shows that God graciously cares about and walks with His people in the midst of their brokenness. The decisive proof of this mercy and care is given to us in the person of Jesus.

His life, death, and resurrection is the ultimate expression of God's mercy and course correction to all of humanity.

DISCUSSION

Where in your life do you need the mercy of God? Where in your life can you give the mercy of God?

by Tim Shepard, Student Ministry Pastor

EVERYTHING-BAGEL CHEESEBALL



No matter what time of year it is, this Everything-Bagel Cheeseball is sure to delight your guests as the perfect fall appetizer. Shape into a pumpkin, apple, piece of candy corn, or any fall-themed shape to impress your kids. Serve with celery sticks, carrots, crackers, or bagel chips.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 1 (8-ounce) package cream cheese, softened
- 1/2 cup sour cream
- 2 tablespoons prepared horseradish
- 1 cup finely shredded sharp cheddar cheese
- 2 scallions, chopped
- 6 slices bacon, cooked and chopped
- 1/2 cup Everything but the Bagel seasoning blend
- bagel chips, crackers, or veggies for serving

WHAT YOU'LL DO

In a bowl, mix together cream cheese, sour cream, horseradish, cheddar cheese, scallions, and bacon. Form the mixture into a ball, wrap with plastic wrap, and chill for over an hour. Once the cheeseball has set, roll it in the Everything but the Bagel seasoning blend until evenly coated. To make your cheeseball resemble a pumpkin, add a real or faux pumpkin stem at the top. Then, use the tip of a chopstick or the back of a butter knife to create the grooves. Serve chilled.

Crockpot Cream Cheese Chicken Chili

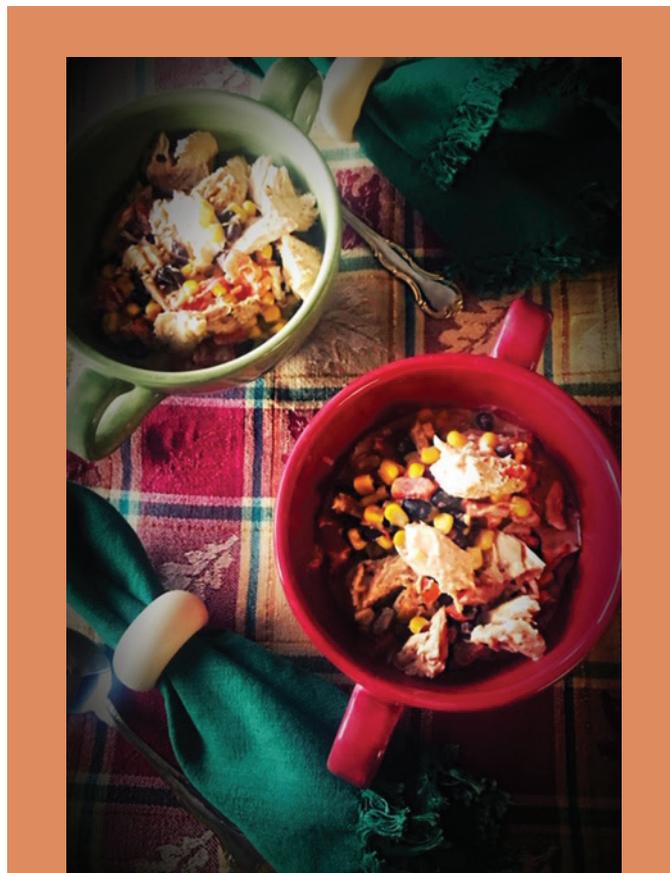
When fall comes around, two things become staples for a yummy dinner: rich chili and the ease of a crockpot. Serve this flavorful chili over rice, tortillas, or chips. Add a squeeze of lime and cilantro for a mouthwatering, easy dinner.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 2 chicken breasts, still frozen
- 1 can Rotel tomatoes
- 1 can corn kernels
- 1 can black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 package ranch dressing mix
- 1 tablespoon cumin
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 1 teaspoon onion powder
- 1 (8-ounce) package cream cheese, cut into pieces
- lime and cilantro for garnish
- rice, tortillas, or chips for serving

WHAT YOU'LL DO

Put the chicken in the crockpot. Top with tomatoes, corn, drained and rinsed beans, ranch dressing mix, cumin, onion powder, and chili powders. Stir to combine and then top with cream cheese. Cook on LOW for 6 to 8 hours, stirring once or twice to blend in the cheese. Shred the chicken into large pieces and serve.



a family favorite

Cheeseburger Soup

Fall is the perfect time to add a yummy, warm soup back into the weekly dinner menu. This Cheeseburger Soup is thick, rich, and full of gooey, cheesy flavor. It is sure to become an instant family favorite.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 1 pound ground beef
- ¾ cup chopped onion
- ¾ cup shredded carrots
- ¾ cup diced celery
- 1 teaspoon dried basil
- 1 teaspoon dried parsley flakes
- 4 tablespoons butter, divided
- 3 cups chicken broth
- 4 cups peeled and diced potatoes
- ¼ cup all-purpose flour
- 2 cups Velveeta or shredded cheddar cheese
- 1 ½ cups milk
- ¾ teaspoon salt
- ¼ to ½ teaspoon pepper
- ¼ cup sour cream



WHAT YOU'LL DO

Brown the ground beef in 3-quart saucepan, drain, and set aside. In the same saucepan melt 1 tablespoon butter and add onion, shredded carrots, celery, basil, and parsley flakes. Sauté until tender. Add the broth, potatoes, and beef and bring to a boil. Reduce heat, cover, and simmer 10 to 12 minutes or until potatoes are tender.

In a small skillet melt remaining 3 tablespoons butter and add flour. Cook and stir for 3 to 5 minutes or until bubbly. Add to the soup and bring to a boil. Cook and stir for 2 minutes. Reduce heat to low. Stir in the cheese, milk, salt, and pepper. Cook and stir until cheese melts. Remove from heat and blend in sour cream.



HARVEST CARAMEL CORN

Harvest Caramel Corn is a fall treat that combines salty popcorn, creamy caramel, and sweet chocolate. So very delicious and easy for your kids to help make!

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 10 cups popped popcorn
- salt, to taste
- 1 cup butter
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 2 teaspoons vanilla
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- Rolos
- Harvest Blend M&M's



WHAT YOU'LL DO

If necessary, make the popcorn and season with salt. Set aside. Line a cookie sheet with aluminum foil and set aside. Melt butter in a medium saucepan over medium heat. Add brown sugar and stir until thoroughly mixed. While stirring continuously, bring the butter and sugar mixture to a boil. After it boils, cook for an additional 4 minutes without stirring. Add vanilla at the 4-minute mark and stir to mix. Continue to boil for 1 additional minute and then add in the baking soda. Drizzle ¾ of the caramel mixture over the popcorn. Use a spoon to gently fold the popcorn with the mixture until all the kernels are covered. Set remaining ¼ of the mixture aside. Pour the popcorn onto the prepared cookie sheet. Drizzle the remaining mixture over the coated popcorn and immediately sprinkle the Rolos and M&M's on the drizzle. Let the popcorn cool before serving.

Obedience

GOD BLESSES THOSE WHO
OBEY HIM; HAPPY THE MAN
WHO PUTS HIS TRUST IN
THE LORD.

(PROVERBS 16:20 TLB)

To obey means to act according to what you have been asked or ordered to do by someone in authority. We have all found ourselves in situations where we have to make the decision to obey what we know is right or to disobey and follow our own way. Obedience is not always the easiest choice, but it is always the best choice. The story of Jonah is the perfect example.

Together as a family, read the story of Jonah. Prior to reading the story, create emotion faces to express the feelings Jonah may have had when God asked him to warn the people of Nineveh. Continue reading the story using the emojis as you follow Jonah on his journey from disobedience to obedience.

When people follow God's ways instead of their own, good things happen. After Jonah obeyed God, thousands of people repented and were saved from destruction! God loves us and wants us to obey Him, too. Instead of trying to hide when we do wrong, tell God about it and ask for forgiveness. The good news is that Jesus paid the price for our sins. And when we confess our sins to God, He is faithful to forgive!

At the end of the story, make this fun craft and see if you can catch Jonah in the mouth of the big fish.



WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- blue plastic solo cup
- medium-sized craft eyes
- medium-sized adhesive dots
- blue construction paper
- whale tail image download: whale.bit.ly
- string
- white balloon
- flour
- funnel
- permanent marker

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Poke a small hole in the bottom of the blue plastic solo cup.
2. Cut a piece of string approximately 1 yard long.
3. Thread the string through the hole and tie it to itself on the outside of the cup.
4. Using the downloaded template, print and cut a whale tail from the blue construction paper.
5. Using the adhesive dots, attach the eyes and tail to the cup. To attach tail the, fold the end to make a tab.
6. Fill a white balloon with flour using the funnel and tie off balloon.
7. Draw a person on the balloon.
8. Tie the Jonah balloon to the end of the string.

HOW YOU'LL USE IT

Take turns trying to catch the Jonah balloon in the mouth of the whale (opening of the cup). Count how many tries it takes for each person to do this. Encourage players to keep trying until they are successful.

Use this activity to discuss how everyone was obedient to listen and follow the instructions given. This will serve as a physical reminder that God forgives us and allows us to start fresh when we come to Him with a repentant heart.

by Christy Thomas

Christy has a heart to disciple parents by creating environments that allow them to actively participate in the faith journey of their children. She enjoys time spent with her family along with hiking and outdoor adventures. Christy has been involved in children's ministry for more than 30 years and is currently the Nursery Coordinator at New Life Church in Colorado Springs, CO.

ROADBLOCK

OBSTACLE COURSE

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- painter's tape (for inside) or duct tape (for outside)
- items to be used as obstacles (pillows, chairs, etc.)
- cookies
- plastic water bottles
- Ping-Pong ball
- cup
- prizes (candy, toys, etc.)



BEFORE YOU PLAY

Consider the story of Jonah in the Bible. God called Jonah to go to the city of Nineveh to tell the people to turn from their sin. However, rather than obeying God, Jonah ran. He fled the presence of God and found himself being swallowed up by a great fish! When we are disobedient to the Lord and pursue our own desires, we often find ourselves running into bad situations. We think we know what is BEST, but when we try to do things our way instead of God's way it is like being in an obstacle course. We need to listen to the Lord's voice to make it through life's obstacles and to make the course adjustments necessary to live our lives fully for Jesus. Once we do, we will find that it is much better to follow Jesus' voice and His commands rather than our own desires. When Jonah finally followed the Lord's voice, he preached a message of repentance that saved all of Nineveh!

TIME TO PLAY!

First, create a path in a room or outside using the tape. Once the tape is placed on the floor, choose someone to go through the obstacle course. That person must hop on one foot and stay on the tape pathway all the way to the finish line. At any point, if the person falls off the line, he or she must return to the beginning of the course. Here's the kicker! Every 30 seconds, a roadblock will be added to the course that the player must complete before advancing on the path toward the finish line. The roadblocks are listed below. Remember, once the player completes a roadblock, he must continue hopping on one leg until the next roadblock. Whoever is able to complete the course on one foot the fastest wins a prize! Repeat the challenge until everyone has had a turn to try the game!



ROADBLOCKS

1. Move one cookie from your forehead to your mouth without using your hands
2. Throw a plastic water bottle up in the air to land standing straight up.
3. Bounce a Ping-Pong ball from one surface to another and land the ball in a plastic cup.

If Only We Had Time to Think

in the belly of a whale



Do you plan out your weekly schedule? Does it ever really go as planned? It seems that even with a plan (or maybe, especially when we have a plan), it's easy for our days to devolve into reactions to new needs and new information. We may get angry or flustered, but these daily interruptions give us opportunities to put our trust in God. It's easy to believe we are doing the right thing when it is what we want to do, but are we stopping to pray and ask if the course we are on is the one God has called us to? Sometimes God corrects and guides us through major things, and sometimes He works through the daily mundane.

The prophet Jonah was one person who received a major course correction. God chose him to be His messenger to Ninevah, but Jonah had no desire to see God show mercy to those wicked people. Instead of following God's command, Jonah flees and finds himself on a boat and then overboard into the belly of a whale. He finally agrees to go to Nineveh where the people hear his message, repent, and turn their hearts toward God. Even after Jonah ran away, God stuck with him because He had chosen Jonah as one of His own.

God chooses us too, even before our hearts are ready to listen. Jonah was reluctant to preach God's message to the Ninevites because he saw them as his enemies; he wanted God to give them what they deserved—not mercy. Standing from afar, Jonah's feelings can seem extreme, but can you think of a group of people in your own life that you would prefer face the consequences for their actions rather than receive mercy? Maybe there's a particular person you're simply unwilling to forgive, whether he repents or not.

Course correction is rarely easy and can be uncomfortable if not painful. (Thankfully it's rarely in the belly of a big fish!) However, when God calls us into obedience we will see the fruit of His calling. God will use us to show His love for the world, if we are willing to listen. The world will know who we are because of our willingness to let God correct us and guide us. The good news is God's great grace. He never gave up on Jonah or the Ninevites and He won't give up on you either.

WORSHIP RESPONSE ACTIVITY

The Prayer of Confession is a powerful prayer to use to repent of our own selfishness and acknowledge our need for God's grace in our lives. God is always good, even when we, like Jonah, have turned away. With your family, pray this Prayer of Confession and then, if someone feels comfortable, have her share how she has seen God correct the course of her own life.

*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 heart;
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 delight in Your will,
and walk in Your ways,
to the glory of Your name. Amen.*

by Sarah Swartzendruber

Mercy Over Judgment

Can you recall the last time you missed the mark? How about the last time your spouse or children missed the mark? It's often easier to hold others accountable for their sins or faults than it is to reflect on our own. If you recognize this tendency in yourself, you are not alone! The prophet Jonah had the same bent.

Scripture tells us that God sent Jonah to the wicked city of Nineveh to “preach against it” (Jonah 1:2). But Jonah was worried that the people might actually repent and that God would relent from “sending calamity” (Jonah 4:2). Did you catch that? Jonah wanted the people of Nineveh to be destroyed because of their wickedness. He had no compassion or sympathy for them and it angered him that God would. Instead of obeying God, Jonah quite literally walked in the opposite direction. Instead of going to Nineveh as the almighty God instructed, Jonah hopped on a boat to Tarshish. On the way to his runaway destination, a great storm overcame the ship. Jonah asked the sailors to throw him overboard, and God sent a fish to swallow Jonah.

God did not let Jonah go despite his disobedience and his desire for God to punish the people of Nineveh. Jonah's refusal to obey collided with God's mercy, which led to God correcting Jonah's course. The fish spat Jonah out on land and God gave him another chance to obey Him—a second chance that, by definition, Jonah did not deserve. One can imagine that God wanted Jonah to extend that same mercy he had been given to others.

Like Jonah, there are times when we choose to disobey God. We too often judge others' disobedience without extending an ounce of mercy. Through His Son, God generously showed us mercy and, in turn, He calls us to offer the same to those around us ... even when it is the hardest thing to do.

SERVE CHALLENGE

God's course correction allows us to accept our flaws and move forward. The challenge this month is to think of someone you have judged harshly or someone you could generously give mercy to.

- Each family member will grab a piece of paper to write down a person's name (or draw a picture of a person).
- Take a few minutes to talk and pray about how God wants to use you to show that person mercy.
- Consider writing a letter to, sending an encouraging Scripture to, spending quality time with, or serving that person from a place of love.

Discuss the fruit and impact of the serve challenge at a later family gathering, carpool conversation, or other free moment when all members are present.

by Casey Thompson, Pre K/K Ministry Coordinator (North), and Olivia Bennett, Midweek Curriculum and Ministry Assistant (North)



LIKE JONAH, THERE ARE TIMES WHEN WE CHOOSE TO DISOBEY GOD. WE TOO OFTEN JUDGE OTHERS' DISOBEDIENCE WITHOUT EXTENDING AN OUNCE OF MERCY.

Bless with Your Words



A BLESSING CAN BE A PRAYER OF COMMISSION, A BIBLE PASSAGE, OR WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT. BLESSINGS CAN BE SPOKEN OVER A CHILD FOR THE PURPOSE OF DECLARING GOD'S PROTECTION, JOY, AND WISDOM OVER HIM.

WEEK 1

(Child's name), may you know that your Father in heaven is merciful and compassionate. He desires that you travel along the path He has for you, listening to His voice along the way. Trust that whenever you stray off course, He will provide correction to bring you back onto the path of obedience.

WEEK 2

(Child's name), may you know that God is the One who lights your path and guides you through life. He is in every moment, including times of fear and doubt. May you know that God's love for you is perfect. He cannot waver from anything but perfect love. God loves you enough to correct you when you step away from the plans He has for you. He is with you, He is for you, and He will never leave you.

WEEK 3

(Child's name), may you know that your heavenly Father loves you. The creator of heaven and earth gave it all to restore your relationship with Him. May you have the courage to turn from things that hurt you and others and allow Him to be the King of your heart. Trust that when you allow Him to be Lord of your life that your sins are forgiven and you are a part of His forever Kingdom.

WEEK 4

(Child's name), God is constantly for you and with you no matter where you go. May you know that His plans are perfect, and His presence is all around you. This means He will never leave or forsake you. May you know that God's will for you is perfect and He has gone to great lengths to adopt you into His eternal family.

by Kendra Baker, Early Childhood Coordinator; Catherine Gerstenberg, Student Ministries Administrator; and Evie Swart, Director of Midweek

JOURNAL

remember and celebrate

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prayer

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thankfulness and praise

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FAMILY VERSE

B

**Be completely humble
and gentle; be patient,
*bearing with one another
in love.***

M

**Make every
effort to
keep the unity of the
Spirit
through the bond of
peace.**

Ephesians 4:2-3

GOD'S WORD

WEEK

1

THE FEAST OF *Pentecost*

GOD STATEMENT: GOD IS PROVIDER

“Count off fifty days up to the day after the seventh Sabbath, and then present an offering of new grain to the LORD. From wherever you live, bring two loaves made of two-tenths of an ephah of the finest flour, baked with yeast, as a wave offering of firstfruits to the LORD” (Leviticus 23:16-17).

Celebrating has always been a part of Israel's history. God instructed set times for His faith community—feasts and festivals—to remember and celebrate all He had done for them, what He was doing, and what He was going to do. To thank God for His abundant provision, the Israelites counted 50 days after Passover to participate in the Feast of Pentecost. In Jewish tradition, Pentecost also commemorates God giving His people the Law on Mount Sinai.

MORE FEAST OF PENTECOST DETAILS

- Pentecost comes from the Greek word *pentekostos*, which means 50.

by Laurie Bennett, Director of Early Childhood NLC North

- Pentecost is also known as the Feast of Weeks or Shavout.
- Pentecost is a spring harvest feast.
- During Pentecost, the Israelites offered the Lord the firstfruits of their new grain.
- Two loaves of leavened wheat bread were brought to wave before the Lord.

Hundreds of years passed, and God's ultimate plan of abundant provision came for all nations when He gave His only Son (John 3:16). The death and resurrection of Jesus ushered in a new Pentecost that would bring a different harvest—not merely grain, but the souls of men and women. Acts 2 records the long-awaited Pentecost, the giving of the promised Holy Spirit to all who would believe in and follow Jesus. You can remember and celebrate that God provides His empowering presence and unites you with His faith community—a fellowship of believers.

DISCUSSION

Read Acts 2. What role do you think the Holy Spirit played in the actions that marked this new faith community? How are the actions the same as your faith community? How are the actions different?

GOD'S WORD

WEEK

2

THE FEAST OF *Trumpets*

GOD STATEMENT: GOD IS FAITHFUL

“And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Speak to the people of Israel, saying, In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall observe a day of solemn rest, a memorial proclaimed with blast of trumpets, a holy convocation. You shall not do any ordinary work, and you shall present a food offering to the LORD” (Leviticus 23:23-25 ESV).

Also called Rosh Hashanah, the Feast of Trumpets celebrates the Jewish New Year. Focusing on God's faithfulness, this celebration consists of a time of rest, a food offering, and the blowing of trumpets (or shofar).

MORE FEAST OF TRUMPETS DETAILS

- Trumpets is the first of the fall feasts.

by Laurie Bennett, Director of Early Childhood, NLC North

- Rosh Hashanah means “head of the year” and is the start of the civil year on the Jewish calendar (the religious year starts with Passover).
- A custom of this feast is eating apples dipped in honey.
- Watchfulness is an essential element during the feast.

The need for watchfulness continues throughout the New Testament as a message to believers to be prepared for the Lord's return. The Feast of Trumpets will have its future fulfillment when the trumpet blasts to announce Christ's return—“in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed” (1 Corinthians 15:52).

DISCUSSION

What does faithfulness mean to you? How do you celebrate God's faithfulness?

GOD'S WORD**WEEK****3**THE DAY OF
*Atonement***GOD STATEMENT: GOD IS RIGHTEOUS**

“The LORD said to Moses, ‘The tenth day of this seventh month is the Day of Atonement. Hold a sacred assembly and deny yourselves, and present a food offering to the LORD’” (Leviticus 23:26-27).

Atonement is defined as the reconciliation of God and humankind. The Israelites’ sin damaged and defiled their communities, the temple, and their relationship with Yahweh. Our omniscient God was not surprised by their rebellion, so He established the Day of Atonement as a reminder of their need for Him and the redemptive work He alone is able to accomplish.

During this festival, the Israelites fasted, prayed, and repented. The high priest passed through the veil of the Holy of Holies in the temple and brought with him the sacrificial blood that would atone for the sins of God’s people. This was a public event, so the entire community shut down to witness the ritual.

by Mary Windebank, Director of Elementary

MORE DAY OF ATONEMENT DETAILS

- The debt of the Israelites’ sin required payment. The spotless lamb was sacrificed for their debt.
- The high priest sprinkled the blood of the lamb, symbolically “cleansing” the Israelites of their sins.
- God graciously removed the sin from the people because of their willful repentance.
- This ancient tradition is a part of God’s grand redemptive narrative to transform broken, rebellious people into the holy people He has called them to be.

The process of atonement is only one part of an unfinished story. Jesus Christ made this festival obsolete when He died for us on the cross, and our ultimate sanctification and final glorification will be complete when He returns to judge the living and the dead. Jesus Christ was and is the perfect Lamb who died for the sins of the world and restored humanity’s relationship with Yahweh.

DISCUSSION

How does the death and resurrection of Christ impact our ability to be forgiven?

GOD'S WORD**WEEK****4**THE FEAST OF
*Tabernacles***GOD STATEMENT: GOD BLESSES**

“The LORD said to Moses, ‘Say to the Israelites: “On the fifteenth day of the seventh month the LORD’s Festival of Tabernacles begins, and it lasts for seven days”” (Leviticus 23:33-34).

The Feast of Tabernacles is a time that God set aside to remember and celebrate His work of providing shelter for the Israelites in the wilderness. When the Israelites emerged from Egypt as free men and women, they left their homes behind. As they wandered in the wilderness, the Israelites did not have tents to protect themselves from the sun. They gathered supplies that God provided in order to shelter themselves from the elements. God also offered protection from the sun’s rays by His presence. He was the shade they needed!

MORE FEAST OF TABERNACLES DETAILS

- This great festival takes place during the 15th day of the seventh month in the Jewish calendar and continues for seven days.

by Mary Windebank, Director of Elementary

- During this time the Jews built little temporary shelters outside their houses and lived and worshipped in them.
- They celebrated the completion of harvest and commemorated God’s goodness to the people during their wanderings in the wilderness.

These acts were physical reminders of God’s blessing to their ancestors for providing for them during their journey from Egypt to Canaan. This was also a time to thank Yahweh for all He had done!

In the gospel of John, Jesus teaches His followers during the Festival of Tabernacles. John 7:37-38 states, “On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, ‘Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.’”

God provided for the Israelites in the desert by blessing them with what they needed, and Jesus exemplifies that the triune God will continue to provide for His people by blessing them.

DISCUSSION

How has God protected you from the troubles of life and provided you a way out? Contemplate Psalm 91:1-2 as you discuss this question.

A Celebration FEAST

God loves feasts. As you learned in God's Word, God established feasts to teach and remind the people of Israel of His ways and wondrous works. Perhaps you have an anniversary, birthday, or special occasion to celebrate in the month of October. Turn a typical celebration into a biblical celebration feast by acknowledging God's masterful design in the person to be celebrated. Take turns as a family sharing how you see God's handiwork in the person while you enjoy this over-the-top brownie sundae.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 1 box brownie mix
- 1 gallon vanilla ice cream or frozen yogurt
- 1 jar Hershey's chocolate sauce
- sprinkles, peanut butter chips, nuts, candies, or any other toppings
- 2 muffin tins
- nonstick cooking spray

WHAT YOU'LL DO

Preheat oven to 350° F. Prepare the brownie batter as instructed on the box. Fill each muffin cup $\frac{2}{3}$ full with batter. Spray the backside of the second muffin tin with nonstick cooking spray. Place the second tin on top of the filled cups and press down slightly. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes, checking often during the last 5 minutes. Let the brownie bowls cool completely before removing and then fill each with a scoop of your favorite ice cream. Top with chocolate sauce and favorite toppings.



A RECONCILIATION FEAST

Although this doesn't sound like a happy feast, God delights in relationships being restored.

Although most of us don't try to hurt others, offenses do happen in the course of life. God's way is to repent, to forgive, and to bless. Whether the reconciliation is between you and your spouse, between your family and another family, or between your children, celebrate with a meal for the people involved. Nothing speaks forgiveness like the comfort of chicken and dumplings.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 2 pounds boneless, skinless chicken breasts or thighs
- 1 sweet onion, diced
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 2 (10-ounce) cans cream of chicken soup
- 3 cups chicken broth
- 1 teaspoon poultry seasoning
- 1 teaspoon dried parsley
- 1 teaspoon cracked black pepper
- 1 package (8-count) refrigerated biscuit dough

WHAT YOU'LL DO

Add all of the ingredients except for the biscuit dough to a 6-quart slow cooker and stir to combine. Cover and cook on HIGH for 3 hours or LOW for 6 hours. When chicken is cooked through and tender, use 2 forks to shred the meat. Stir to combine.

Open the can of biscuits and press each biscuit flat. Cut the biscuits into narrow strips and add to the slow cooker. Stir to combine. Cover and cook on HIGH for 1 hour or until the biscuits are cooked. Biscuits should be light and fluffy when finished. Serve immediately.

A FEAST FOR THE AGES

Invite some older people in your family or community over for dinner. Involve your children in planning and preparing for the occasion and encourage them to show respect throughout the evening. Remember to tell your children to stand up to honor the older people when they arrive. As you eat, have your children ask questions about the ways God has moved in their elders' lives over the years. Your guests will appreciate a nod to their era with this timeless chicken and swiss casserole.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 5½ cups uncooked egg noodles (about ¼ pound)
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 3 shallots, chopped
- 3 small garlic cloves, minced
- ⅓ cup all-purpose flour
- 2 cups chicken broth
- ¾ cup milk
- 1½ teaspoons dried thyme
- ¾ teaspoon grated lemon zest
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- 5 cups rotisserie chicken
- 1½ cups frozen peas
- 2 cups shredded Swiss cheese
- ¾ cup dry breadcrumbs
- 2 tablespoons butter, melted

WHAT YOU'LL DO

Preheat oven to 350° F. Cook noodles according to package directions; drain. In a large skillet, heat oil over medium heat. Add shallots and garlic; cook and stir 45 seconds. Stir in flour; cook and stir 1 minute. Add broth, milk, thyme, lemon zest, salt, nutmeg, and pepper. Stir in chicken and peas; heat through. Stir in noodles and cheese.

Transfer to a greased 13" x 9" baking dish. In a small bowl, mix breadcrumbs and butter; sprinkle over top. Bake 8 to 10 minutes or until top is browned.



A Love Feast

The early church used to enjoy a time of worship, sharing of the Word, and communion as they feasted with one another. Church is more than coming to a meeting; it is interaction and fellowship within your faith community. Invite those in your faith community over to worship, hear God's Word, and share in a fall-themed agape feast. Although there should be many courses and lots of laughter, here is a seasonal appetizer to kick off your feast.

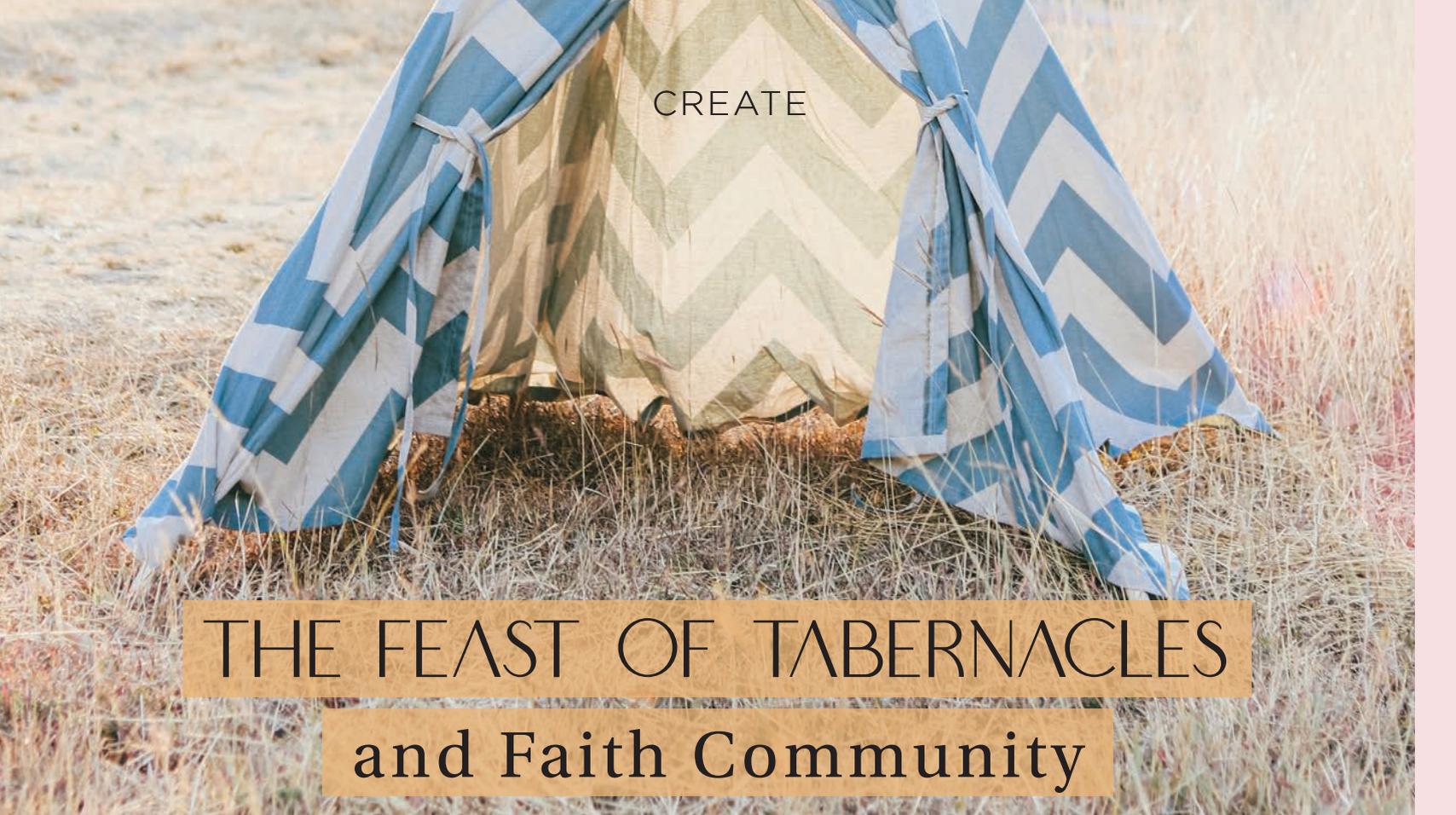
WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 1 (8-ounce) tube crescent dough
- 1 (8-ounce) wheel Brie cheese
- ½ cup whole-berry cranberry sauce
- ¼ cup chopped pecans
- 6 sprigs rosemary, cut into 1" pieces
- cooking spray and flour

WHAT YOU'LL DO

Preheat oven to 375° F and grease a mini-muffin tin with cooking spray. On a lightly floured surface, roll out crescent dough, and pinch seams together. Cut into 24 squares. Place squares into muffin tin cups. Cut Brie into small pieces and place inside each piece of crescent dough. Top with a spoonful of cranberry sauce, some chopped pecans, and 1 little sprig of rosemary in each cup. Bake until the crescent pastry is golden, about 15 minutes.





CREATE

THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES

and Faith Community

In the Old Testament, God ordained seven annual feasts for the Israelites to remember His goodness and honor His name. These feasts, first described in Leviticus, are not commanded as part of the new covenant, but they are significant because they foreshadow the redemptive work of Jesus. These days of rest from work and celebration remind us that salvation is God's gift to us through faith in Jesus' finished work on the cross.

The Feast of Tabernacles, celebrated on October 2-9 this year, is the last of the three pilgrimage festivals and the final feast of the year. During this seven-day festival, the Israelites would gather in Jerusalem, build and live in temporary shelters made from leafy branches, and bring food offerings. The purpose of this time was to thank God for the harvest and to remind the Israelites of God's miraculous provision for them in the wilderness (see Leviticus 23:42-43).

As believers in Jesus, we can appreciate the rich symbolism that this feast holds. Like the manna from heaven, Jesus is the Bread of Life. Jesus is the Rock, which, when struck, produced living water. We are living tabernacles as the body of Christ and His Holy Spirit resides in us. One day, Jesus will return, and we will leave these temporary earthly bodies for incorruptible ones that will enjoy God's presence forever!

Through our activity today, we can tabernacle, or meet with God and others, to celebrate God's gracious love and provision for all of us.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Bible
- blankets
- chairs (2 or 3)
- leafy branches or sticks (optional)
- picnic lunch or snacks

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Make a tabernacle or shelter using the chairs as supports for the blankets (like a tent). You may also put a blanket or tablecloth on the ground beneath your shelter. If you have some sticks or branches, you may use those or add them to make your shelter more "authentic." Use your imagination here. This can be done inside or outside, with just your family or with others.
2. Prepare a picnic meal or some snacks. Make sure you have water or some kind of beverage. If your children are old enough, have them help with this.
3. Read Psalm 84. Afterwards, take turns discussing how God has provided for you—even through challenging times.
4. Praise God for His provision of food, shelter, family, friends, and eternal life through Jesus!

by Jill Nardini, Lower Elementary Teacher at NLC North

GAME TIME

MEMORY

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- template of memory game cards, found at nlcfam.org under *HomeFront* resources
- description of the Biblical feasts, found at nlcfam.org under *HomeFront* resources
- Bible

BEFORE YOU START

As Christians, we can trace our community of faith back for generations! The church has been observing traditions like the seven feasts since the ancient days of Israel. Today, your closest circle of your faith community is your family! This game will give you the opportunity to spend time with your family while learning about the traditions of the church.

TIME TO PLAY!

- Print the memory game cards and cut them out. Each feast is represented by four cards. For example, Passover, Exodus 12:21-28, Doorframe, Hyssop.
- Place all cards facedown. Player one begins by turning over two cards. If they match, the player gets to keep the cards. If they do not match, turn cards back over and player two begins his turn. Continue the game until all matches have been found!

CHALLENGE ROUNDS

- Once you have found all your matches, place cards in chronological order of the feasts. Find the Scripture reference for each feast in your Bible and read together as a family!

by Shayleen Smith, NL East Children's Director

A Description of BIBLICAL FEASTS

Passover

Then Moses called all the elders of Israel together and said to them, 'Go, pick out a lamb or young goat for each of your families, and slaughter the Passover animal. Drain the blood into a basin. Then take a bundle of hyssop branches and dip it into the blood. Brush the hyssop across the top and sides of the doorframes of your houses. And no one may go out through the door until morning.' Exodus 12:21-22 (NLT)

Feast of Unleavened Bread

On the next day, the fifteenth day of the month, you must begin celebrating the Festival of Unleavened Bread. This festival to the LORD continues for seven days, and during that time the bread you eat must be made without yeast. On the first day of the festival, all the people must stop their ordinary work and observe an official day for holy assembly. For seven days you must present special gifts to the LORD. On the seventh day the people must again stop all their ordinary work to observe an official day for holy assembly. Leviticus 23:6-8 (NLT)

Feast of First Fruits

Give the following instructions to the people of Israel. When you enter the land I am giving you and you harvest its first crops, bring the priest a bundle of grain from the first cutting of your grain harvest. On the day after the Sabbath, the priest will lift it up before the LORD so it may be accepted on your behalf. Leviticus 23:10-11 (NLT)

Feast of Weeks or Pentecost

From the day after the Sabbath—the day you bring the bundle of grain to be lifted up as a special offering—count off seven full weeks. Keep counting until the day after the Sabbath. On that day, bring a new grain offering to the LORD. Leviticus 23:15-17 (NLT)



REMEMBERING TOGETHER

AS IRON SHARPENS IRON,
SO ONE PERSON SHARPENS
ANOTHER. (PROVERBS 27:17)

Today, in the craziness of things, we may forget to celebrate Christ in our lives.

Most of us are no different than the Israelites; we are quick to forget the mighty ways God has moved in our lives and in the past. In these moments, we could use the encouragement and support from those in our faith community. The biblical feasts are not a thing of the past. In fact, we can hold feasts often in our daily lives. How do we do that? We talk about faith—we remember the moments when God came through and we even share when we may need a little more faith. And, of course, every feast must have yummy food.

Proverbs 27:17 says, “As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.” Sharing our stories of faith will encourage others to remember their faith in God. Similar to how telling a funny story will trigger a person to laugh, telling a story of God in your life will trigger a person to remember her faith.

ACTIVITY

Once a month, even once a week, come to dinner as a family or larger faith community. Set the table to prepare for a feast in celebration of the Lord. Explain to your kids how important it is to remember Christ in our lives every day. Tell stories of when God came through when you needed faith and when God blessed you for having faith. Help your children see how God is in their lives.

by Ryanne Boesel, Sunday Service Coordinator, New Life Downtown

INVITATION TO A FEAST



The Old Testament feasts and festivals focused on remembering and celebrating the goodness of the Lord and all He had done for His people.

The Israelites would slow down, eat together, and praise Him in many different ways. These different ways included eating specific foods like lamb or unleavened bread. The people burned offerings for God and even took time to rest in God's presence.

Just as the Israelites feasted in remembrance of what God had done for them, you can feast in remembrance of what the Lord has done and will do for you and your family. But God has not called us to do this alone. In the Old Testament feasts, God's people came together to celebrate as a faith community. Who is your faith community? Consider family, friends, or a close group of neighbors. As a faith community, you are called to do life together and remember the goodness of God, rejoicing in what He has done for you.

As a faith community, gather for an outdoor "feast." This can be at a park or in a large yard, on a driveway, or maybe a cul-de-sac. Have a potluck where everyone brings an item to share.

SERVE CHALLENGE

As we look at the "serve" aspect of the feasts and festivals, there are people who don't have the option to feast with their faith community, or maybe they aren't connected with a faith community. This is where you, as a believer of Christ, can step in to serve those around you.

Think of someone in your neighborhood who may not know the living God or someone who doesn't seem connected with a community and invite them into yours. Invite that person to your neighborhood feast! Get to know her better and be intentional to include her in the group.

Some people don't have food, don't have a home, and ultimately don't have a community of believers around them. Your faith community feast could be a fantastic time to do a food drive and donate to those who may not have the opportunity to feast. Ask those who have gathered to "bring an item, give an item." For example, serve your community by bringing a potluck item to your feast and an additional food item for the drive to provide for someone else within your city. Everyone will be able to remember and celebrate God's goodness over a feast!

by Casey Thompson, Pre K/K Ministry Coordinator (North), and Olivia Bennett, Midweek Curriculum and Ministry Assistant (North)

BLESSING

Bless with Your Words

A BLESSING CAN BE A PRAYER OF COMMISSION, A BIBLE PASSAGE, OR WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT. BLESSINGS CAN BE SPOKEN OVER A CHILD FOR THE PURPOSE OF DECLARING GOD'S PROTECTION, JOY, AND WISDOM OVER HIM.

WEEK 1

(Child's name), may you know that your heavenly Father knows what you need before you ask Him. He is your Provider and promises to meet all your needs. May you know that the gift of the Holy Spirit is for you as you offer your life to Him. He will empower you with His Holy Spirit to live a life shaped by His love and to make a difference in your community.

WEEK 2

(Child's name), through the Holy Spirit who dwells within you, may you produce the fruit of humility, gentleness, patience, and love. May you know that you have the power to live rooted in the nourishment God provides in each moment. He offers you living water and is the sun you need to shine. May you live in community, enjoying God's love with others.

WEEK 3

(Child's name), may you know that your heavenly Father loves you and sent Jesus as a sacrifice to save you and the world from sin. Jesus' blood paid the price to redeem you and bring you to God. As you put your faith in Jesus, may you stand confident, knowing that your sins have been forgiven and that God sees you in Christ as holy and pure.

WEEK 4

(Child's name), may you know that your heavenly Father is faithful to provide. He makes your path straight before you because He loves you. May you see His goodness and generosity in your life and celebrate by being a blessing in the lives of those around you—being generous with your time, love, and resources, just as God has been generous with you.

by Kendra Baker, Early Childhood Coordinator; Catherine Gerstenberg, Student Ministries Administrator; and Evie Swart, Director of Midweek



JOURNAL

remember and celebrate

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RESOURCES AND *SUPPORT*

EQUIPPING YOUR FAMILY

CONNECTING CONVERSATIONS

get your family talking

WHEN YOU'RE IN THE DRIVE-THROUGH ...

This school year may be looking a little different than normal. Whether you have time in carpool, time at home between subjects, or extra time now that extracurricular activities seem to be on hold, take a few minutes each day to deepen your relationship with your children. For this month, consider playing a few games during your drive or home time to enjoy connection, laughter, and an opportunity to unwind from the day.

Name that Disney tune. Pull up a Disney hits song list through Spotify, YouTube, or iTunes and play a song. First one to name that tune wins!

Alphabet game. Pick a category such as fruit, movies, or superheroes. Each person must name something that starts with the corresponding letter in the alphabet. Make sure you go in order from A to Z.

“I Spy” with a twist. This is a fun take on a traditional “I Spy” game. The difference is that everyone in the car must be able to guess the object in five guesses or fewer. If players are not able to guess the object, the person will give a clue and the five guesses start over. Continue giving clues every five guesses until someone guesses it.

Keeping Up with Your Kids



Teen language can be confusing and seems to change with each generation. While most words are harmless, kids use these words to exert independence and to feel unique, free, and revolutionary. It is one way teens leave their mark. As a parent of teenagers, it is helpful to understand the slang without having to ask for clarification. Here are a few common words to help you in your communication:

GOAT—“Greatest of All Time”

Gucci—good, cool, or going well

Lit—amazing, cool, or exciting

Salty—bitter, angry, agitated

Snatched—looks good, perfect, or fashionable; the new “on fleek”

Tea—gossip, situation, story, or news

Thirsty—trying to get attention

Curve—to reject someone romantically (related to “ghosting”)

TELL THE STORY

A personal challenge I enjoy has been retelling Bible stories to my kids in my own words. It's a game for me to leave as much meat on the bones of the story while making it relatable too. Kind of like adding ketchup to everything so your kid will consider eating it. How about an attempt at Jonah?

Once upon a time there was a Father with many children. He loved them and gave them everything they needed, but some of them hated and ignored Him. There were others who loved their Father, but they hated the ones who ignored Him. They wished their Father was not kind to all of them. They wished their Father would punish their brothers.

The Father knew all of this, and He knew that one brother in particular—we'll call him "J"—hated his brothers so much he wanted nothing to do with them. So God gave J a special mission.

"Go tell your brothers that I love them. Tell them to stop hating and ignoring me and I'll forgive them."

The Father thought to Himself, "Maybe this will be good for J AND his brothers!"

This was the last thing J wanted to do and he refused to go. He wanted those brothers to be punished more than anything. He wanted it so much he was willing to disobey the Father he loved if it meant he didn't have to love his brothers.

He ran quickly to his favorite climbing tree, climbing higher than he'd ever climbed before. This was a bad idea because the higher he went the thinner and more breakable the branches were. He fell and hurt himself badly, with many scratches, and aches, and bruises. He spent three days recovering and had time to think with his Father by his side.

J knew he trusted his Father, so he decided to do what He had asked even though J still didn't love his brothers. Out he went to the mean and angry ones, telling them, "You're in big trouble with Dad, you know, unless you start listening!"

Miraculously they responded. After all these years of stinky, mean attitudes, they saw that their Father wanted to help them, so they apologized and their Father, of course, forgave them. A happy ending!

Until J stormed off in anger. What?!

J still really wanted his brothers to be punished for all they had done. He did not want to forgive, and he was angry with his Father for being so kind. The Father followed and listened to all of J's anger and all of his complaining. He then responded with an explanation of what He had been: kind—hoping J would remember kindness too.

When I put the story into my own words certain things stand out. I see that God invites Jonah into a situation that exposes his hatred. We often do the opposite: avoid anger, create diversions, run away.

God, in His omniscience, knew Jonah's heart and knew that sending him to Nineveh would hit a nerve for him. And God did not shy away.

Instead He gave Jonah a safe(ish) space to come to his own decision. You have to admit the belly of a big fish is hardly a cozy time-out corner.

Have you ever thought about how the story would be different if Jonah had not changed his mind in the belly of the fish? What if the time-out corner hadn't worked? I have to think God would have just continued to find other ways to address Jonah. In the end, when Jonah's heart was still rock-hard, God did His best work. He listened and responded with kindness.

Think for a moment about this ...

God uses all of Nineveh to help Jonah address his own hatred toward his brothers. Isn't it crazy that the book is not even about this massive transformation of an entire community? It's about the love of God for Jonah. Think about how this might play out in your home. One person needs instruction, needs you to press into situations with him or her that expose hatred. If you find yourself wanting to avoid, distract, or run, you aren't alone.

Another gift I see in this story is that it doesn't resolve. We don't ever get to see (for sure) Jonah's decision. I have no doubt in my mind that God continued to place Jonah in situations where his hatred could be revealed. The more honest Jonah got, the more forgiveness God had ready. Jonah stays messy right up to the end and God is neither surprised nor bothered. This is a gift to me because God's work in us is what makes the story—not our pursuit of perfection.

Forgiveness can carry us right up to the last line of our stories.

It's not hard to find situations that bring out hatred or anger with little people. It's part of what is so beautifully exhausting about them. Do not become weary of entering into these situations with them. In kindness, sit down with them outside the "city" and listen to their complaints.

When the situation is so overwhelming to them that they flail and toss themselves off the side of the "boat," catch them and hold them in a safe place until they are able to make a decision. Make it difficult for them to run away from your love, and, whenever possible, flail and toss yourself into the love of God.

by Katie Hoover

Katie is the official mom of the Haus of Hoov, an entertaining family of five that lives in Colorado Springs. She previously held the role of licensed professional counselor and worked with teens and young adults for 14 years. She loves God, her family, and laughing uncontrollably, in that order and all at once.



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A FRIEND in Jesus

Parents, the following is a devotional for older elementary students to read themselves, or you can help your younger elementary student work through the reading and question.

When I was a young child, I was genuinely confused when I heard the children's pastor tell me "Jesus is your friend." I mean, how could Jesus be my friend? He had no toys. He wouldn't be coming over to my house to play anytime soon. I thought that adults just didn't really understand that Jesus lives in heaven and He would not be up for some playdates.

Thankfully, I have come to understand this statement as an adult. Perhaps you have wondered this same thing? I hope to do my best to explain to you just how Jesus can be your friend and you can be a friend to Jesus. Let's look at four ways to enjoy a friendship with Jesus.

- 1. A friendship takes two people who spend time with one another.** No matter the distance between them, good friends find a way to connect with one another. Whether through a handwritten letter, text, phone call, or playdate, friends enjoy spending time with one another because they love each other. God loves you so much that He promises to be with you at all times. He is always there waiting to spend time with you (Psalm 145:18-19). If you want to be friends with Jesus, you will want to be purposeful about spending time with Him.
- 2. Friends talk to each other about everything.** Friends are great at encouraging one another, cheering on successes, and bringing comfort. A good conversation with a friend can be just what you needed at the perfect time. Jesus gives you the Holy Spirit for all of those things and more. In those moments that you would run to your friends, first run to Jesus by praying and talking with Him (John 14:16-17).
- 3. Friends trust one another.** One important aspect of establishing and deepening a friendship is to trust the other person. This means believing the best of the other person and knowing he or she has your best interests in mind. Jesus is good. His plans for you are good. He always has your best interests in mind. To know the character of your friend Jesus, you need to read God's Word (Proverbs 8:17; John 17:3; Hebrews 4:12).

I want to challenge you to pursue and deepen your friendship with Jesus. As with any friendship, it takes effort and consistency. Jesus desires this friendship with you more than you can understand. He deeply loves you and is waiting.

Question: What patterns or habits could you establish to deepen your friendship with Jesus?

by Holly Newman, Pastor of Parents and Families

IN GOOD COMPANY

The Importance of Good Friends



Have you ever heard one of your parents, mentors, or pastors say, “Choose your friends wisely,” or “You become like the people you hang out with.” Maybe as a teenager living in 2020 friendships are fun, confusing, frustrating, or complicated for you. Maybe you ask yourself, “Why are good friends so important?” Well, to put it quite simply, we need friends to walk through this journey called life with. Let me explain.

In John 15:13, Jesus says, “Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” Jesus taught us that we were not meant to do life alone; we were meant to love others, commune with others, and share in the glory of Christ with others. We see Jesus do this during His time on earth with His disciples and others as He shared about the kingdom of God and loved others perfectly. We see Jesus cry with and for His friends (John 11:35). We see Jesus lovingly rebuke His friends who have gone astray or lack understanding (Matthew 16:23). We even see the climax of true friendship when Jesus Himself lays down His life on the cross for us sinners in the purest expression of true friendship and love (Matthew 27:50). Of all these examples from Jesus’ life, one thing is clear: *we are not meant to do life alone.*

As we know, life is hard. Because of the brokenness of the world, grief, pain, disappointment, and injustice abound. Jesus said, “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). One of the avenues or means by which God speaks to us, guides us, and helps us through life in this dark and troubling world is through friends. That is why the voices you choose to listen to are so crucial. Solid friends who know and love Jesus act as a lifeline back to Him—the ultimate source of our hope, joy, and life. Good friends push you toward Jesus, remind you of Jesus, and influence you toward living a life that honors Him. They cry with you, laugh with you, celebrate you, and ultimately help you to persevere in your faith. The opposite is also true. First Corinthians 15:33 says, “Do not be misled: ‘Bad company corrupts good character.’”

What you listen to—the voices you let define you and shape you—will either point to Jesus or point to the world. *There is no in between.* So, my question to you is: What voices are you allowing into your heart to shape you from the inside out? Are they encouraging? Do they sound like Jesus? Or do they tear down, divide, and discourage you? Do they point you to worldly solutions that ultimately leave you empty, hopeless, and lonely, or do they point you to the best of friends—the Prince of Peace, the Giver of Life—Jesus? It is those voices, those friends, that I challenge you to hold on to.

CHALLENGE

Go through the book of Proverbs to locate every Scripture that mentions the word “friend” or “friendship.” Highlight that Scripture as you read it out loud. Take a few minutes to think or journal about what kind of friends God wants you to surround yourself with.

by Mariah Shepard

Mariah is a current volunteer at New Life Church in Colorado Springs, CO. Married to her childhood best friend, Tim Shepard, the two have enjoyed serving and leading the local youth ministry for the past few years. She is currently studying elementary education at Grand Canyon University online with the dream to become a teacher, as anything to do with children and youth is her passion.

A Painful Road to *Holiness*



Several days a week I snap my phone onto a tripod and we video chat with a health professional. Physical, occupational, speech, and eating therapists make up our team of helpers—each one trained to assist our daughter in becoming her best self.

When my daughter was diagnosed with Down syndrome, one of the things other special needs parents stressed to us was the importance of early intervention. They explained that the right support for our daughter as an infant could make a big impact on her lifelong development. Like a ship setting out to sail, just one degree of rotation could be the difference between landing at our intended destination and ending up far off course.

My daughter is only an infant, so most of our course correcting so far has to do with her physical development rather than her character development. However, every time we do therapy I can't help but see a clear picture of how God course corrects all of us as His children.

Like everyone, there are certain movements that are easier for my daughter and others that are harder. Often therapy involves pushing my daughter out of her comfort zone because we know it will be better for her in the long run.

For example, when she sits up she tends to lock her knees straight in front of her for extra stability. However, this makes it nearly impossible for her to get into and out of sitting on her own. So each day I try my best to help her bend her knees, and boy, does she fight it! It's uncomfortable for her and sometimes it's hard on me too because I know she doesn't yet comprehend why I'm making her life more difficult.

But I keep pushing because I know that the discomfort has a purpose. I've seen the therapy work before. While it might be frustrating to her now, I know it's going to help her down the road.

When I'm trying to correct her movements and she's trying to wiggle free, I picture my own frustration and escape-artist tactics when God is correcting my path.

Sometimes pain and discomfort in our lives today eventually “produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it” (Hebrews 12:11).

An interesting phrase there is “those who have been trained by it,” implying that perhaps there are some who do not learn from God's correction. Just as my daughter only makes progress when she cooperates with the grueling exercises, the Holy Spirit waits for us to cooperate in the pruning work of our souls.

Do we trust God enough to submit ourselves to His course correction? I believe we can if we remember that God is a good Father who is always working for our best, even when we can't see it (Romans 8:28).

As parents, we understand we are responsible for shepherding our children toward a path of healing. Sometimes we must correct them, but with the help of the Holy Spirit we have their best interests in mind even if they don't feel it.

As children of God, the roles are flipped. We must trust that our good Father longs to guide us through the sometimes painful road toward holiness. Thankfully, God is a far better parent than we are—even on our best days. Though we will encounter trials of all kinds, God is worthy of our surrender.

The next time we find ourselves struggling against God's plan, let's choose to trust our Father and allow the Holy Spirit to work for our good. Not only will we provide a model of endurance for our children, but by the power of the Holy Spirit our “endurance produces character, and character produces hope” (Romans 5:3-4 ESV).

by Kaitie Stoddard

Kaitie and her husband, Andrew, are New Life Downtown-ers who have been celebrating the joy of Down syndrome since welcoming their first daughter in 2019. They met in graduate school at Wheaton College where Kaitie completed her MA in Clinical Psychology. Kaitie enjoys sharing their family journey of advocacy and faith on social media @downrightmagical.

LET GO OF *Expectations*



The morning trivia question on the radio was “What do adults do 15 times a day and children do 400 times a day?” I was surprised to hear the answer: laugh! Why is it that children are so much more inclined to find joy in life? I believe it's our expectations.

I've always considered myself a rather pleasant, patient, and even-tempered person. But when we adopted our toddler son, I discovered a darker side. For example, shortly after bringing him home, I went upstairs at 9:00 p.m. to “encourage” him to go to sleep. Already aggravated after reviewing my half-done to-do list, I crashed into his happy little world, threw on the light, and yelled: “IT'S NIGHT NIGHT! NO MORE PLAYING!” Immediately, his lower lip protruded and his eyes filled with tears. Guilt ridden, I put on his lullaby music and comforted him in my arms. As I rocked him, I wondered, “Who IS this woman and WHAT is her problem?”

My problem was my expectations. My son was acting like ... a two-year-old! That night, I knew I needed some self-reflection. As I looked back, I could see this pattern of yearning forward to when things would be “better.” When I was still single at 29, I longed to be married. Several years into our marriage, I struggled with infertility. Why couldn't I be a mom when I so loved children? While there's nothing wrong with desires, there is a problem when those cravings lead to discontentment with the present.

The media adds to these longings and fuels the fires of dissatisfaction. We're expected to be beautiful, slim, successful; bring home the bacon and cook it up like Martha Stewart; keep a Pinterest-worthy home; and be “Supermom”! Perhaps one more class, another diet, a second job, even a wonderful Bible study will help me be fulfilled (though I have no idea when I'd have the time). We overfill our plates and then become frustrated when things start to fall off. And the price? (I guess not much laughter!) So, what should I expect?

I knew that I needed to prioritize. What's the main thing and why am I here? We are all created by a loving God who has a unique purpose for our lives. Next, I had to develop a spirit of thankfulness by counting my blessings. Through Jesus, I have a relationship with my heavenly Father. God's Holy Spirit resides in me to help me live the way He designed me. I have God's Word, the Bible, as my instruction manual. God has surrounded me with people to encourage me in my daily walk. I have the privilege of being a wife and a mom. I am fully equipped to do this life. And God promises to be with me through it all. How awesome is that?!

So, I've learned to begin each day by asking, “God, what do You have for me today?” I'm still learning to say no to things that don't fit in with my purpose, responsibilities, and time. Keeping a short list and doing a little bit each day not only reduces my stress level but also gives me a sense of accomplishment. Thankfully, I learned that time with my husband and children was far more important than a showcase house. Now that my children are grown, I have no regrets.

In addition, I learned to take life less seriously. The joy of the Lord is our strength! When you're feeling overwhelmed and your child shows you her “tickle belly,” know that it's time to lighten up. We can learn so much from our children. When was the last time your kids heard you laugh?

Our expectations affect not only the way we feel but also how we treat others. **Every day, I'm learning to give a little more grace to everyone, including myself.** I'm trying to live in the present. I'm expecting to be an example of Jesus' love for my family, friends, and neighbors. So, by the way, what do you expect?

by Jill Nardini

Jill serves as an elementary teacher at New Life Church in Colorado Springs, CO. She loves Jesus and has been blessed to teach the Word of God to all ages for decades. Her favorite title is “Mom,” and she homeschooled her two wonderful children through graduation. Jill enjoys spending time with family and friends, taking walks, and playing pickleball with John, her loving husband of 29 years.

DADDING IN FAITH COMMUNITY

Hello, fellow dads. Truth: You're doing a critical, all-encompassing, sacred work. It's also really hard. You have the weight of so many things on your shoulders. Potentially you are carrying a few (or all) of the following responsibilities: work, marriage, family, leadership, creativity, finances, planning, executing, training, investing, deciding, house chores ... whew! It's all so much. Sometimes all of it is hard to bear. Sometimes, you want to get out and let it all drop.

When I was in college, I found myself with increasing responsibilities. All of it was good ... but I was being asked to lead more things, be responsible for more people, and say yes to more opportunities on top of school and a part-time job. I remember one day I started feeling the weight of it all. It was so much and, as the tension grew, I just wanted a break and to drop it all.

As I was praying one night, I got a vision of a tree on which I was a branch bearing fruit. There was so much



THAT NIGHT, I KNEW I NEEDED SOME SELF-REFLECTION. AS I LOOKED BACK, I COULD SEE THIS PATTERN OF YEARNING FORWARD TO WHEN THINGS WOULD BE "BETTER."

fruit on my branch that the branch was being bent under its weight. I asked the Lord to take some of the fruit away because it was too heavy. He smiled and then zoomed out the perspective and showed me where my branch was on the tree. I was at the top, I was new growth, and at the bottom he showed me established, strong, massive branches bearing 50 times more fruit than I was. Then in kindness and humility He told me not to ask for less fruit, but instead to ask for more maturity and growth so I could handle the weight.

That is my prayer for you and me. I know we are handling a lot. And it may be very valid that God may want to prune some things out of our lives that no longer need to be there (*Necessary Endings* by Henry Cloud is brilliant and can help discern this). It may also be that God is encouraging you to keep bearing the weight of what already is AND agree with Him to continue to mature and strengthen so we can bear both the weight of what is and what is to come.

My main encouragement to grow in this necessary strength and maturity is to make sure you are living in community. It can be easy to think that all the responsibilities of life limit our availability to connect in a faith community, but what's necessary is the exact opposite. A lack of active faith community limits our ability to handle the responsibilities of life. Responsibilities require you to use your strength and pour out, so you need community to invest and pour into you. You need mentors, men and women older than you, who can lend wisdom to the road you walk. And you need true friends, most likely other peers who are walking the same point of the journey at the same time, to encourage you to keep going and keep growing.

My prayer for you to close: That our Father God of all power would strengthen you to bear up under the God-given responsibilities and opportunities you have in front of you. That Jesus, through the power of the Holy Spirit, would continue in you His work of maturity that you might bear fruit that glorifies Him. And that you may be blessed, strengthened, and matured in a community of friends and mentors to this end. In Jesus' name, amen.

by Evan Reedal

Evan is Pastor of Marriage and Family Ministry at New Life Downtown. He and his wife, Karen, have been married for nine years, and they have two boys, William and Alistair. He is a graduate of Denver Seminary (MA Pastoral Counseling) and Multnomah University (BS Biblical Studies and Theology, Psychology). Along with pastoral work, his life is well filled with family adventures, date nights, and good friends.

Stress, Mess, and Forgiveness



A year of stress had taken its toll. With that stress came sharp words, broken communication, and actions that seemed to wound over and over again. I knew I wasn't innocent, but it was so much easier to point my finger at my husband. I found myself complaining and grumbling to myself and in prayer—my prayers sounded more like accusations than humility. As I sat pouring my anger and frustration out in my journal and in prayer, I heard a small voice reminding me of Matthew 18:21-22: "Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, 'Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?' Jesus answered, 'I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.'"

You'd think that kind whisper would have been enough to change my heart, but I felt a little like Jonah. I sat angry and frustrated about the exhaustive forgiveness of God. I didn't want to forgive. Jonah says to God in Jonah 4:2-3, "I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. Now, LORD, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live." (Okay, I wasn't THAT dramatic!) Jonah 4:4 continues, "But the LORD replied, 'Is it right for you to be angry?'" While I did not pray Jonah's extreme prayer, I resonated with his feeling of resisting doing what was right.

How is it that I can forget and forgive my own sin and focus so much on others'? How can my sharp words and eye-rolling be okay and my husband's actions unforgiveable? Is it right for me to be so angry? No, it isn't. I'd love to say that I immediately asked forgiveness and became the sweetest wife ever, but that isn't true. It's taken multiple times of the Holy Spirit whispering "seventy-seven times" in my ear and gently reminding me of how greatly I have been forgiven. Slowly, after listening to that gentle correction, asking for forgiveness, and choosing to forgive when necessary, my heart began to change. **Forgiveness that seemed impossible slowly came and brought healing and love in the place of anger and resentment.**

Our Father gently course corrects us in marriage just as we course correct our children. At first it can seem painful and hard, but it comes from God's love and gentleness and He offers us a path to hope, freedom, and reconciliation. As we allow His love to fill us up, it becomes easier each and every day to love our spouses. If you need a gentle reminder to forgive from a place of love, consider reciting the following confession daily.

Dear Merciful Lord,

Thank You for Your gift of forgiveness. Your only Son loved me enough to come to earth and experience the worst pain imaginable so I could be forgiven. Your mercy flows to me in spite of my faults and failures. Your Word says to "clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony" (Colossians 3:14 NLT). Help me demonstrate unconditional love today, even to those who hurt me.

And when I see the person who hurt me, bring this prayer back to my remembrance, so I can take any ungodly thoughts captive and make them obedient to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5). And may the confidence of Christ in my heart guide me into the freedom of forgiveness. I praise You for the work You are doing in my life, my marriage, and my friendships.

In Jesus' name, amen.



NOTE: IF YOU ARE EXPERIENCING ABUSE OF ANY SORT, REACH OUT TO A PASTOR OR COUNSELOR. FORGIVENESS DOES NOT MEAN REMAINING IN AN ABUSIVE SITUATION. OUTSIDE HELP MAY BE NECESSARY TO COURSE CORRECT YOUR MARRIAGE.

by Jeni Mason

Jeni is the Family Care Pastor at New Life Church. Her favorite moments are spent drinking coffee and spending time with her husband, kids, and two grandchildren!

Share the Past; Remember God Provides



Grandparents have the unique challenge of staying connected with our grandchildren in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. But we also have a unique opportunity. Our grandchildren have experienced the angst of separation from friends and extended family members. Anxiety over contracting the illness as well as possible overheard parental conversations on economic concerns is also likely.

We grandparents have lived through various times of uncertainty (Desert Storm, swine flu, bird flu, Cold War, gas rationing, Cuban Missile Crisis). Sharing your own past experiences encourages your grandchildren to take the long view of their current circumstances and can produce a sense of security in family. If my grandkids are in particular need of perspective, I tell them how my grandmother baked bread and sold it door-to-door in order to buy clothes for my father. As we share these things, we should emphasize how God got us through them and not dwell on the fear factor.

Doing activities with your grandkids is a great way to grow your relationship with them. This foundation is necessary if you hope to speak into their lives. Being with them will allow you opportunities to affirm them during difficult times, to explain some of their parents' actions from a perspective of how much they love them, and to help them get back on track when a course correction is needed.

Activities together could orient around the theme of Jewish feasts. **The Feast of Tabernacles was intended to remind God's people of His provision for them and His revealed light.** The Israelites responded with thanksgiving for harvest of tree and vine (olives, grapes, figs, etc.), as well as looked for the coming and return of the Messiah. Taking your grandchildren to a farm to buy or pick fruit, spending the afternoon (or overnight) in a tent in the backyard, having a candle ceremony and reading John 8:12, or taking them swimming and reading John 7:38 could all be activities that relate back to the Feast of Tabernacles. For younger children, the waving of

palm fronds (or something similar), which also occurred in the Feast of Tabernacles, could be used to explain why the people of Jerusalem did so when Jesus entered (John 12:13). In fact, anything you can say or do to acknowledge God's provision for both our physical and spiritual lives ties back to the Feast of Tabernacles.

Perhaps you are geographically separated from your grandchildren or your risk of COVID-19 precludes getting together. We grandparents can still keep in touch through various media devices and platforms (FaceTime, Skype, WhatsApp, Tango, etc.). I have used Zoom to stay in touch with my grandchildren. I know of one grandparent who called via Zoom on a regular basis and read to her grandchildren before bedtime. The children were to keep a journal of the object lessons learned from the reading and discussion. A candle lighting ceremony representing Jesus as the Light of the World could be done over media. The act of pouring water from one container to another (John 7:37-39) could also be done.

My grandsons are delighted to receive little gifts, books, and handwritten notes. If you call, ask for one of your grandchildren, talk with him, and then ask to talk with one of his parents.

It is important that we grandparents find ways to be in our grandkids' lives and to remember that any effort, even those that don't seem to have immediate results, will still have an impact on our grandchildren for years to come.

by Dr. Mark Dawson

Dr. Dawson is a retired infectious disease doctor who has discovered a love for apologetics, biblical education, and passing down a legacy of faith to the next generation. He and his wife, Rosemary, have served as premarital and marriage counselors in their local church for more than 20 years. Mark currently teaches apologetics courses to the students at New Life Church. He has eight grandchildren and loves to get outdoors to bike ride or climb fourteeners.

Parenting THROUGH the Political Chaos

November is right around the corner—in a big election year. If your kids are like mine, they have heard all kinds of things about the candidates running and the issues on the ballot. Let's face it, 2016 was a messy election year and it looks like 2020 is shaping up to be the same. As your kids try to filter through the mess, it is important to help them look at everything through a healthy Christian worldview. No matter what is said out in the world, we can control what we communicate in our own homes. We can shine the light of Christ even into the political chaos.

When your kids come home from school stating which candidate their friend's parents are voting for or share a telephone-game version of a current event, consider these tips to have a faith-filled, love-filled conversation about politics.

- 1. Always speak with respect and kindness while trying to represent the heart of Jesus.** Remember, your kids will model not only WHAT we say but HOW we say it. As believers, no matter what you think about a particular candidate, the voting choice of a friend, or the positions of a political party, there is no reason to speak ill of them. Speak of them as children of God. Speak truth in love.
- 2. Explain the process.** To the best of your ability, explain to your kids how government works and why we have the right to vote. Be honest about why things get cruel and messy. Teach them to stay above the drama and be part of the solution.
- 3. Talk about your family values in relation to politics.** Instead of focusing on a candidate or a party, talk about the issues of each and what the Bible says about these issues. Ask your children questions to help guide them through thinking critically about what Jesus might do in these situations.

- 4. Don't let politics separate friendships or relationships.** God asks us to love unconditionally. We can disagree with people and still love each other so much. In a world that is so divided, this is a great opportunity to show unconditional love and help your child to truly grasp this important value.
- 5. No matter what happens, God is on the throne.** It is important to communicate this good news of hope to your children. No matter who is president, senator, governor, or mayor, God is in control. He raises up kings and removes them according to His grand plan. When we trust in our God, He will never fail us.
- 6. Don't forget the power of prayer.** The most influential and powerful thing we can do as Christians is to pray. Not only do we pray during the election, but we pray for the elected leaders regardless of political party. The Bible commands that we pray for our political leaders and those in authority over us. Plus, as we pray, God will direct us and our words.

Don't shy away from talking to your kids about the election. Parenting through an election year is another aspect of discipling your children. This is just another way you can raise a child who doesn't conform to the world but develops a perspective to change it for Jesus.

by Holly Newman, Pastor of Parenting and Families

ASK Our PASTORS

How do you handle extended family members with a strong opinion about how our family disciplines?

Avoidance only leads to bitterness and resentment. It's important to make an effort to be honest with the family members if their opinions have become a problem instead of being helpful. Speak truth but in love and with kindness. Be open to what they have to say and ask why they feel that way. It's important to model healthy conflict resolutions for our children.

Answers from Evie Swart

What are some tried-and-true tips or advice you have used in disciplining your children?

Disciplining is not about preventing/circumventing behavioral problems. Disciplining is possibly *more* about the shaping of your child's heart ... toward you, toward one another, and toward authority.

As the parent of three adult children and the grandparent of three toddlers, here are a few tried-and-true tips we found helpful when disciplining our children and now our grandchildren:

- At its core, discipline is about teaching, so modeling is KEY. In other words, you are the lead discipler and your children are your students ... they ARE watching you.
- Set reasonable and age-appropriate boundaries and communicate them.
- When boundaries are broken, connect (emotionally) BEFORE you correct. Be loving, logical, and positive but firm. By doing so, your children will learn to take responsibility for their actions.
- Be consistent. Easier said than done but crucial to do, even when tired or in a public place.
- Be respectful. Consider how you would want to be spoken to and/or treated when correcting your children.

In our home we remember these key principles: **model with clear boundaries, connect before correcting, always act with consistency and respect.** What a privilege it is to be the primary disciplers of our children!

Answers from Patti Fenton

When it comes to extended family, how do you handle interactions between your kids and family members who do not believe in God, engage in a different lifestyle, and openly speak about difficult topics?

We have family members who aren't believers. Sometimes I prepared my children in advance, but most of the time, we had conversations on the way home following the visit. It was a good opportunity for us to discuss how these different viewpoints and lifestyles compare to what God says in His Word. God made us and loves us, so He knows what's best. We want our children to know the "why" behind God's ways, so questions are welcome. We also pray for family members to come to know the Lord.

Answers from Jill Nardini

COMMENTS TO OUR FAMILIES

It is our heart to provide as many resources and relational connection points with your family on a weekly basis. Check out our weekly services, devotionals, challenges, games, and more at nlcfam.org and follow us on social media @nlcfamilies (Instagram) and NLC Family Min (Facebook) for up-to-date announcements. A few fall activities to watch out for will be a *Spiritual Parenting* small group, a kids apologetics digital course, small gathering hangouts, student ministry small groups, and more.

During this season, if you need help (financial, groceries, meals, hospital visits, parenting, and more) or prayer, our New Life Family Care team is here to help. Email familycare@newlifechurch.org.

We are praying for you always!



*watch our
family services any
day of the week!*

NLCFAM.ORG

CHECK OUT OUR AGE APPROPRIATE GAMES & RESOURCES
AS WELL AS FAMILY ACTIVITIES