

HomeFront

a spiritual parenting resource

Seek out Adventure

MODELING

"I SEE CHRIST IN OTHERS,
AND THEY CAN SEE HIM
IN ME."

IDENTITY

"I BELONG TO GOD, AND
HE LOVES ME!"



Discipleship Steps at New Life Church

Parents are the spiritual nurturers of their children's faith and are the main disciplers 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.
- 2** 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.
- 3** 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.



LET'S BE SOCIAL

 Nlcfam.org  [Nlcfamilies](https://www.instagram.com/Nlcfamilies)  [NLC Family Min](https://www.facebook.com/NLCFamilyMin)

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



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

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's 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 **MODELING** and **IDENTITY**.

- The environment of **MODELING**: 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. The statement that sums up this environment is: "I see Christ in others, and they can see Him in me."
- The environment of **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. The statement that sums up this environment is: "I belong to God and He loves me!"

Helping our children, from an early age, know and celebrate how God created them is an important first step in a healthy spiritual identity. My prayer is that each person in your family will walk in your God-given identity for the sake of Christ.



Editor's Note

The snow has melted away and the days are warmer. Summer is finally here, which for my family means long hikes up the mountainside, games with friends at the park, late-night dinners under the stars, and big adventures. Life slows down and allows for longer, deeper conversations with our children, and each day presents a new opportunity to create memories.

During the summertime season, my husband and I try to take advantage of the unhurried schedules and focus on intentionally connecting with our children both individually and collectively. We are able to get in a rhythm of weekly family nights, one-on-one coffee dates, going through a Bible study together ... anything we can dream up! At the beginning of summer, my husband and I sit down together to decide exactly how to intentionally love each one of our children. **I want to encourage you to do the same and allow HomeFront magazine to give you the content so you can focus on building the relationship.**

In honor of Mother's Day in May, we want to help children celebrate their moms. We have an easy-to-assemble charcuterie board in our recipes, an adorable story about how one boy celebrated his mom in the Early Childhood section, and a Game Time designed to make Mom feel special. God's Word highlights the environment of Modeling through the most perfect, flawless example: Jesus. He shows us what it means to lay down our lives, serve others, and follow Him.

The articles in the June section are in celebration of school officially being out. The recipes are designed to allow your child to creatively cook whimsical treats while the other articles encourage outdoor play and adventure. God's Word unpacks four key Scriptures about Identity showing we are wonderfully made in His image with a purpose.

As the days continue to get warmer, adventure is waiting for your family!

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 curricula 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

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

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.

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

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

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.

5

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

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.

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

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

FAITH COMMUNITY

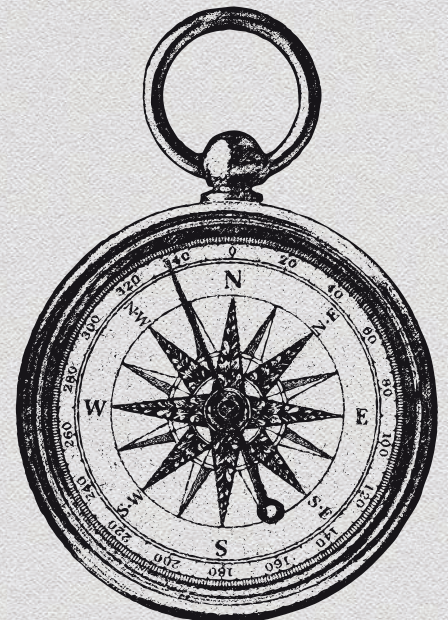
God designed us to live in community and to experience Him in ways that can only happen in proximity to one another. The faith community serves to create an environment to equip and disciple parents, to celebrate God's faithfulness, and to bring a richness of worship through tradition and rituals, which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

10

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

MODELING

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.



Jesus said,

“If you hold to
my teaching,
you are really my
disciples.

Then you will know
the truth,
and the truth
**will set you
free.”**

John 8:31-32

GOD'S WORD WEEK 1

GOD STATEMENT: JESUS GAVE HIS LIFE

SCRIPTURE: MATTHEW 16:24-25

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it." (Matthew 16:24-25)

Here we see Jesus talking about losing one's life to follow Him. Some translations say *soul* instead of *life*. In the passage above, we can interpret what Jesus is saying in a literal sense because, after all—did He not go to the cross and give up His mortal life for us? Still, there is another, perhaps more difficult, meaning to this passage.

When I was a firefighter, I knew that one day I might be called upon to lose my life for the sake of saving a complete stranger. When we think about giving up our lives for another's—the ultimate sacrifice—we can feel a sense of pride and valor. As if others should be honored, we have internally decided that we are willing to save another should the day come. In some ways, this is the easiest interpretation of this passage.

I believe the more challenging point Jesus is trying to get at is personal surrender! Not the physical sacrifice of life. Rather, the daily aspect of surrendering our lives, wants, and personal worldviews to Jesus. In other words, saying no to those fleshly desires we so often grasp—exchanging personal mindsets for a Christ-minded life.

Jesus invites us to lay down those things that we subtly worship with our time and our thoughts and instead embrace a life of passionately serving Him and others around us. We have to make this choice every day. Is this an easy choice? No! Remember, when you are given the greatest gift of love and salvation, it changes you from the inside out, and the choice becomes easier with each day.

DISCUSSION

What is one thing that you need to "lay down" that distracts you from your relationship with Jesus?

by Zachery Alvey, Emergency Department Technician, Hospital Emergency Team Instructor, 9th-10th small group leader

GOD'S WORD WEEK 2

GOD STATEMENT: JESUS IS LOVE

SCRIPTURE: MARK 12:28-31

One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?" "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these." (Mark 12:28-31)

The word *love* has meant many different things through the years. Today, we may say we love our brother or sister, just like we would say we love pizza, and, with minimal description attached to those statements, they sound the same. Here in 1 John, we read "God is love," and this love is *agape* love (Greek), which is the highest form of love possible, a perfect fatherly love God has for us as His children. What an extravagant **LOVE!**

God has lavished His love on us; while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. God's love is neverending,

unfailing—it's perfect. Earlier in 1 John 2:6 we're encouraged to "live as Jesus did," and Jesus lived a life of love. Because we are instructed to be imitators of God, we must love like God, serving others, forgiving generously, showing compassion and kindness. One of my favorite characteristics of God is that He gives to us generously and there is no greater gift than His Son, Jesus.

As Mother Teresa said, "Intense love does not measure, it just gives."

The way Mother Teresa loved was extravagant; she must have known God well because Scripture tells us that "whoever does not love does not know God" (1 John 4:8). God wants you to know Him and walk in love as imitators of God.

DISCUSSION

Do you feel like you are living out the greatest commandment? How is the Holy Spirit inviting you into loving God and loving people better?

by Brena Nath, Managing Editor of HousingWire, 11th-12th small group leader

GOD'S WORD WEEK 3

GOD STATEMENT: JESUS RESTORES SCRIPTURE: LUKE 5:27-31

After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth. "Follow me," Jesus said to him, and Levi got up, left everything and followed him. Then Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who belonged to their sect complained to his disciples, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" Jesus answered them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick." (Luke 5:27-31)

Throughout the entire Bible, but especially in the Gospels, God offers His people a message of restoration in Christ. Because Levi chose to follow God and trust in Him, he was restored. No matter how broken somebody is or how sinful that person may be, God has the power to transform him or her into a beacon of hope and an example for all Christians to follow.

Not only does Levi's story serve as a reflection of the way Christians should live, but it also reminds us of where we are without God. Jesus tells the Pharisees that

He is on earth to assist those who are sick and broken. Nobody is without fault, and there is not a single person who is sinless, but by following Christ the way Levi did, and by welcoming Him into our hearts, Jesus heals us of our personal sin and brokenness. God is a healer to each and every one of His children and does not value people by their works. "For it is by grace you have been saved" (Ephesians 2:8). Nobody is beyond that grace, and nobody is beyond God's restoration.

Because of God's promise to restore, and because of His love for us, we need not live our lives in worry. Jesus died for our sickness and shortcomings, for He is our healer and Savior. The same way that Levi had faith to follow Jesus, we can have faith in God's plan for restoration in our lives.

DISCUSSION

Where have you seen God's restoration in your life, and where have you seen His restoration work in the lives of those who do not know Him?

by Matthew Allen, sophomore at Discovery Canyon High School

GOD'S WORD WEEK 4

GOD STATEMENT: JESUS IS A SERVANT SCRIPTURE: JOHN 13:1-18

"Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them." (John 13:14-17)

This passage of Scripture beautifully narrates the story of Jesus washing His disciples' feet, but the story is not just about Jesus cleaning feet. Jesus is giving us a perfect picture of what being a servant looks like. In Jesus' day, washing people's feet was the job that nobody liked or wanted to do. Is there a job like that in your house? Perhaps doing the dishes or cleaning the bathrooms? Imagine cleaning people's feet to be just like that terrible chore. Now imagine the queen of England coming and offering to do those jobs for you. You might be a little confused or even embarrassed, right? Why would someone with so much power and prestige stoop low to perform a menial task? Yet that is exactly what Jesus did.

Jesus had unlimited power and every resource at His fingertips. Yet instead of using that power to control others, He used it to get down on their level, care for them, and serve them in the most humble way possible. And once Jesus had finished this task, He gave His disciples a challenge. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. "You call me "Teacher" and "Lord," and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you" (John 13:12-15). In these verses Jesus calls us to serve others just as He served us. While we do not need to physically wash one another's feet, we can look for ways to humble ourselves, prefer others first, and put the needs of others before our own.

DISCUSSION

In what ways have others served you, and how did it make you feel when they did? What ways can you find to serve someone near you this week?

by Olivia Baker, senior at The Classical Academy College Pathways



“Sweet Mother” CHARCUTERIE BOARD

This chocolatey, sweet, and nutty charcuterie board is a creative way to celebrate with those who made you a mom. Before or after Mother’s Day, say thank you to those special children with this yummy treat. It just might inspire some ideas to celebrate Mom on your special day.

WHAT YOU’LL NEED

- Pepperidge Farm cookies, Classic Collection
- 1 bag pretzel sticks
- 6 ounces almonds
- 1 cup mini marshmallows
- 1 bag Skittles or desired candy
- 1 bag red licorice
- 1 container strawberries
- 1 bag white chocolate chips
- 1 bag milk chocolate chips
- 1 container BelGioioso tiramisu mascarpone dip
- 2 cups vanilla yogurt
- 1 cup marshmallow cream
- 2 ounces cream cheese
- toothpicks or treat sticks

WHAT YOU’LL DO

Start with a wooden tray or slab of marble to build your “board.” Add 3-4 small bowls for the dip. To make the white chocolate dip, pour the chips in a microwave-safe bowl. Heat the chips for 30 seconds at a time and stir until melted. Don’t overcook. Scrape the dip into 1 of the bowls on the board. Repeat the steps for the milk chocolate dip. Add the tiramisu mascarpone dip in the third bowl. For the last dip, use an electric mixer to beat the yogurt, marshmallow cream, and cream cheese until smooth. Move the dip to the fourth bowl. Strategically place the big items on the board first and then fill in the empty areas with the smaller treats.

Mother’s Day Tea Sandwiches

A Mother’s Day tea with friends or family is a charming way to celebrate all the wonderful moms or moms-to-be in your life. Make your tea sandwiches special by cutting them into small triangles or shaping them into flowers or hearts using cookie cutters. Consider serving with scones, clotted cream, or butter cookies, and don’t forget the most important part: the tea!



WHAT YOU’LL NEED

EGG SALAD TEA SANDWICHES

- 8 slices thin bread (white is best)
- 6 hard-boiled eggs
- 3 tablespoons mayonnaise
- 1 1/2 teaspoons mustard
- 1 1/2 teaspoons lemon juice
- 1/4 teaspoon paprika
- salt and pepper to taste
- 24 thin slices of cucumber

SMOKED SALMON SANDWICHES

- 8 slices thin bread (wheat is best)
- 6 ounces smoked salmon
- cream cheese
- fresh dill
- 1/3 cup sprouts

CUCUMBER CREAM CHEESE SANDWICHES

- 8 slices thin bread
- garden-vegetable cream cheese
- 24 thin slices of cucumber

WHAT YOU’LL DO

For egg sandwiches, mash or chop hard-boiled eggs in a bowl. Add mayonnaise, mustard, lemon juice, and paprika. Stir and then season with salt and pepper. Spread egg mixture across four slices of bread. Top with cucumbers and remaining bread. Cut into triangles or use a fun cookie cutter. **For smoked salmon sandwiches**, spread a thin layer of cream cheese on four bread slices. Sprinkle dill over cream cheese. Layer smoked salmon and sprouts and then cover each with a remaining slice of bread. Cut crust off if desired. **For cucumber cream cheese sandwiches**, spread four slices of bread with garden-vegetable cream cheese. Add a thin layer of cucumbers and then add a second slice of bread to sandwich. Cut and serve immediately. Arrange sandwiches on a fun plate or on a tiered stand and enjoy!

Spinach Ricotta Pastry Bake

This flaky, cheesy quiche can be enjoyed for breakfast, lunch, or dinner. All you need is a small workspace, a few ingredients, and about 15 minutes to make a delightful meal your guests will surely enjoy.



WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 2 sheets puff pastry, thawed
- 6 eggs, beaten
- 1 cup ricotta cheese
- dash of hot sauce
- 1 cup spinach, chopped
- 6 slices bacon, cooked and chopped
- 1 1/2 cup cheddar cheese, shredded
- 1 medium red bell pepper, chopped

WHAT YOU'LL DO

Preheat oven to 400° F. Spray a 9" springform pan with cooking spray. Carefully unfold thawed puff pastry sheets. Roll 1 of them out to an 11" square, then roll the other to a 12" square. Use the 12" sheet to line the bottom of your pan. Lightly beat the eggs and reserve 1 tablespoon. Mix the rest of the eggs with the ricotta, hot sauce, and spinach. Layer half of the ricotta mixture on the puff pastry in the pan, then half of each of the following: bacon, cheese, and red pepper. Repeat with the remaining ingredients. Cover everything with the 11" puff pastry sheet and fold the edges in to secure the filling. Brush the pastry with your reserved tablespoon of egg. Bake for one hour or until pastry is golden brown. Let it cool in the pan for 10 minutes before serving.

Vanilla Bundt Cake with Berry Glaze

A Memorial Day barbecue is a good time to pull out the red, white, and blue! This buttery, vanilla bundt cake can be dressed with red berry glaze and fresh, plump blueberries and topped off with white whipped cream. The best part is that this cake is quick and easy to make and is sure to become your go-to dessert over the summer.



WHAT YOU'LL NEED

CAKE INGREDIENTS

- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 cups sugar
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 cup oil
- 1 cup milk
- 4 eggs
- 5 teaspoons vanilla

GLAZE INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups strawberries
- 1 cup raspberries
- 1 cup blackberries
- 1 cup powdered sugar
- 2 tablespoons orange juice
- zest of 1 orange
- blueberries for garnish

WHAT YOU'LL DO

Preheat the oven to 350° F. Grease and flour a bundt pan. In a large bowl, combine flour, sugar, and baking powder. Whisk together and then add oil, milk, eggs, and vanilla. Stir to combine. Using a mixer, beat the batter on high for 1 to 2 minutes. Pour the batter into the prepared bundt pan. Bake for 50 to 60 minutes. While the cake is baking, place the berries in a blender or food processor and puree. Add powdered sugar, orange juice, and orange zest to the berries. Use a whisk to completely combine the sugar into the mixture. Place the glaze in the refrigerator to chill. The cake is ready when an inserted toothpick comes out clean. Cool the cake completely in the pan. Once cool, invert and top with glaze, blueberries, and whipped cream.

A COVID TIME CAPSULE

*This past year has been...
unexpected.*



Our time at home during COVID-19 was hard at times, but as I think back over the past year, I've found many moments to remember that were fun, sweet family memories. Years from now we will be able to look back at 2020 and remember both the easy and the hard moments. God, in His faithfulness, will bring good out of the hard. Sometimes it just takes time to see how He does that.

For our Create section this month, we are making a COVID Time Capsule! To begin, decide as a family where you will hide your time capsule. This can be in your home to protect it from the elements or buried in your backyard. Next, decide what container you will use for your capsule. If you will be burying it outside, you'll want to use a container that will not be affected by the rain and snow. **Here are some ideas of things you can put in your COVID time capsule:**

1. Write a list of things you never thought you would hear, or say, or do. (For example, wear a mask into a store. Or, phrases we never thought we'd say, such as "social distancing," "flatten the curve." Or, I never thought I'd get up at 6:00 a.m. to search the stores for toilet paper!)
2. Write a list of ways you saw God move in your family in the last year.
3. Add memories that you made last year—games you played, movies you watched, pictures, written memories—both easy and hard.
4. Add items that represent 2020—a mask, the pajamas you wore all of quarantine (or is that just me?!?).

As you consider the last year, have fun remembering the good times, but don't be afraid to model lamenting and grieving the areas that were hard as well. **As you model finding God's goodness in both joyful and sad moments, your children will find the ability to do that in their lives as well.**

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- box, coffee can, or aluminum or stainless steel tin
- pictures and/or newspaper articles
- paper
- markers
- items that remind you of 2020

WHAT YOU'LL DO

Gather as a family to consider 2020 and how COVID affected each of you. Take time to allow each person to talk about both the hard and easy times. Write down some of your most significant memories and a list of things you never thought you'd do or say, and gather any items you'd like to add to your time capsule. Then bury or hide your time capsule and decide as a family when you will open it.

by Jeni Mason, Pastor of Family Care

PICTIONARY:

Mother's Day EDITION

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- paper
- pen or pencil
- timer

BEFORE YOU PLAY

Children are always looking to us for cues in life—from how we handle problems to our attitude while doing chores. Being intentional to model Christlike virtues in daily life gives our children opportunities to learn from us.

This month, to celebrate Mother's Day, families can reflect on good things their moms have modeled for them and have fun playing a game of "Pictionary: Mother's Day Edition."

TIME TO PLAY!

Give slips of paper to each family member, except Mom. The goal is to have family members write down as many verbs and adjectives to describe Mom as they can—the great things she does (verbs) and the beautiful qualities in her (adjectives). This is a wonderful opportunity to honor Mom and show her love and appreciation.

Fold the slips of paper and place them all in a bowl. Set the timer for one minute. Each family member will get a chance to illustrate the verb or adjective describing Mom using a pen and paper. Mom will try to guess. Have fun!

(You may play this game with Grandma, a spiritual mom, aunts, or anyone who has been a mother figure.)

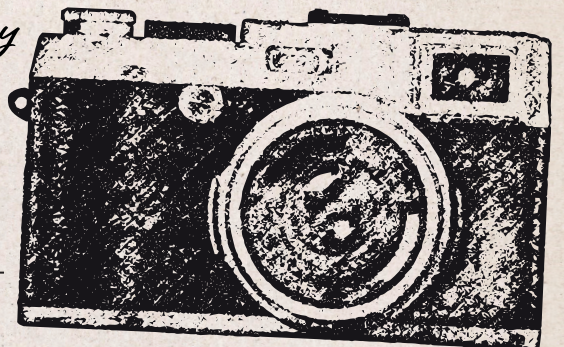


BE AN EXAMPLE TO ALL BELIEVERS IN WHAT YOU SAY, IN THE WAY YOU LIVE, IN YOUR LOVE, YOUR FAITH, AND YOUR PURITY. (1 TIMOTHY 4:12 NLT)



Example verbs and adjectives:

*she makes dinner
she does laundry
she reads to us
she is brave
she is kind*



Modeling Stillness

Finding Peace in Chaos

Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth. (Psalm 46:10)

No one modeled being still better than Jesus. He slept peacefully in the boat while His frightened disciples tried to navigate a stormy sea. When He finally woke up, Jesus extended His stillness to the water, calming the wind and waves.

Between His triumphal entry and the actions leading to His death and resurrection, Jesus withdrew to the garden of Gethsemane to pray. Knowing that the time of His death was drawing near, Jesus had one priority: solitude with God.

While He fervently prayed, "Take this cup from me," He quickly followed with "not my will, but yours be done" (Luke 22:42). He had the strength to sacrifice Himself willingly because He prioritized withdrawing from the crowds, and even from His disciples, to commune with His heavenly Father. He trusted the God He had experienced in the quiet moments.

Often, as families and especially as parents, it seems impossible to find a sense of calm. But Jesus invites us to find moments of silence, solitude, and *prayer* during the chaos. As you make your own journey toward peace, take your kids along for the ride. Here are a few ideas to create space for meeting with God throughout the day.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

1. **A plan.** Schedule time for silent prayer. It won't happen if you are waiting for a "free" minute to magically appear.
2. **Adjusted expectations.** Are you envisioning half an hour of reflective prayer and deep insight with your two year old? Think again. Depending on your children's ages, think in terms of 30 seconds to 2 minutes for quiet prayer.
3. **A timer.** Choose a time limit and stick to it. Beware: silent seconds tend to tick by slowly.
4. **Optional: soothing music.** Music can be a great tool to settle your mind. If you're looking for a quick selection at your fingertips, try the NLD Kids Worship playlist on Spotify.

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. **Sit down with your children and create your plan.** How much planning you allow your children to do depends on their ages and maturity, but give them an opportunity to own part of the experience. Explain that you want to provide a few moments of reflective prayer with God. Talk about how long you think the time should be, maybe what you should pray or think about, where this can occur, and if there should be music, journaling, or drawing involved.
2. **Find a cozy spot,** as free from distractions as possible.
3. **Remind your kids** about all the guidelines you discussed together.
4. **Set your timer and go.** Or rather ... stop. Take a few moments to be *still* with God.
5. **Keep trying.** Incorporating silent reflection is challenging but well worth it. At first, you may spend more time planning solitude and prayer than resting in God; that's okay! Habits take time to build.

SERVE

A Pattern to Follow

As you read the beautiful story about Jesus washing His disciples' feet in John 13, can you imagine yourself there in the room watching? Can you imagine Jesus reaching down to hold and wash your feet with His gentle hands?

As Jesus returns to sit at the table with His disciples, He looks at each of them and asks a question: "Do you understand what I have just done for you?" Then He gives them a challenge: "If I washed your feet, you must now wash each other's feet. I've given you a pattern to follow. What I just did, I want you to do too." Imagine again you are there in the room with Jesus. How do you feel as you consider His challenge to serve others?

Can you picture someone who loves and serves this way today? Perhaps a person who gives a hug at just the right moment, who has a word of wisdom and encouragement, a person who models what it looks like to serve others day in and day out?

As we near Mother's Day, our minds turn to the amazing women in our lives, the ones we call Mom, Mama, Nana, Mimi, Great-Grandmother, Auntie, Mentor, Sister, Wife, Friend ... the significant and blessed names go on and on! We set aside a day to honor the ones who have loved us with their lives, who have taken the challenge Jesus spoke of and have made their own lives a pattern to follow.

As you consider how to celebrate the precious women in your life, why not begin with the pattern Jesus modeled for us? Jesus tells His disciples, and all of us, "Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them" (John 13:17).



Here are some fun suggestions to love and serve the special women in your life!

CRATE A LOVE NOTE BOOKLET

Follow these prompts to write a love letter or create a treasured book of encouragement and affirmation for her! Add drawings, art work, etc.

- Mom (Grandma, Aunt, etc.), I love you because _____
- Thank you for _____
- My favorite thing about you is _____
- My favorite thing to do with you is _____
- You make me laugh when _____
- I know you love me because _____

MAKE A BOUQUET OF AFFIRMATIONS

Pick out her favorite flowers and attach strips of paper with descriptive words that come to mind when you think of her to the stems of the flowers using tape or glue. Include words like:

- Beautiful
- Loved
- Treasured
- Kind
- Joyful
- Wise

PRINT OR FRAME A VERSE

Print Scriptures of encouragement and love on beautiful stationary or consider framing one with a personal note written on the back.

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

SCRIPTURE:

Matthew 16:24-26

(Child's name), may you know that you are a child of the triune God: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. May you learn what it means to take up your cross and follow Jesus. You do not have to fear because the Holy Spirit is with you as you deny yourself to further the gospel.

Week 2

SCRIPTURE:

Mark 12:28-34

(Child's name), may you know that the Lord our God is one! He loves you so much. Because He loves first, may you remember to love Him with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. May you also love your neighbor as yourself.

Week 3

SCRIPTURE:

Luke 5:27-31

(Child's name), may you know that God sent Jesus, His Son, to earth to redeem the world. May you find comfort knowing that He loves you so much that He calls you to repentance. You are His son/daughter, and He takes great delight in you.

Week 4

SCRIPTURE:

John 13:1-17

(Child's name), may you know that Jesus exemplified the value of serving people. As Jesus took time to serve His disciples, so should we humble ourselves in service to others. May you remember that the Holy Spirit will guide you as you care for, help, and assist the people around you.

by Mary Windebank, Director of Elementary and Family Ministries

Journal

remember and celebrate

prayer

thankfulness and praise



But you are a
chosen people,
a royal priesthood
a holy nation,
God's special
possession,
that you
may declare
the praises of
him who called
you out
of darkness into his
wonderful light.

1 Peter 2:9

GOD'S WORD WEEK 1

GOD STATEMENT: GOD IS THE CREATOR SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 1:27

So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. (Genesis 1:27)

Identity is at the heart of almost all of our human and spiritual relationships. **Who we believe we are and what we think about ourselves will directly impact our actions and our decisions.** We absorb a myriad of “false identities” from our peers, social media, movies, music, and simply our culture in general. **A false identity is anything outside of who God says that I am. Conversely, a true identity is who God says that I am.**

When we look at Genesis 1:27, we see two truths. First, we find that we are created in the image of God. Wow! That’s an incredible thought. What this means fully is often a mystery, but we see that when God sought to put flesh on His image, He created humans! The way we reason, our ability to love and express emotions, to be in relationships, and our eternal state all

reflect the essence of who God is. And certainly, **being His image bearers also gives us belonging and value.** Second, we find that we are created male and female. In a world that tells us that we can determine our gender, we see from the beginning of Scripture that God’s design was to create us as either male or female. It was and is His decision, not our own.

Although a sinful world, full of sinful people, can taint the perfect image of God in humanity and distort our understanding, it is still available for us as we seek Him and resist the temptation to simply follow the world mindlessly.

DISCUSSION

What traits do you like about yourself? What parts of your identity reflect God’s image?

by Michelle Anthony, Executive Pastor North, Family Ministries

GOD'S WORD WEEK 2

GOD STATEMENT: GOD IS THE CREATOR SCRIPTURE: PSALM 139:14

I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. (Psalm 139:14)

This verse hangs on a sign above my brother’s bed. It is a daily reminder to him that God calls him wonderful. All God’s works are wonderful. Every plant, animal, mountain, sunset ... and you and me! We are the works of God, and we are wonderful. When God created us, He called us good (Genesis 1:31).

But sometimes we don’t feel secure in our identity. Honestly, we will always fight against the voices in our heads that tell us we are worthless or that our performance defines who we are. I fight those voices every day. But I can’t fight them off on my own. I need to ask Jesus to come to the places in my heart where I doubt my worth, the places where I feel bad and ugly inside. And you know what? He comes. And He reminds me that I am fearfully and wonderfully made. He’ll remind you too when you ask.

The next step is praise. The psalm says, “I praise you because I am ...” Because we know our identity as wonderfully made daughters and sons of God, we can praise Him. We can give all our adoration and our praises of thanks. When we remember who He is—a creator who does wonderful works—we remember who we are because of Him.

So I invite you right now to pray and ask Jesus to come and take away the lying voices in your head. Ask Him to remind you daily that you are His beloved child who is fearfully and wonderfully made.

DISCUSSION

Do you ever experience moments of insecurity about your identity? How can you allow God to define your significance and your identity?

by Sophia Packiam, sophomore at The Classical Academy College Pathways

GOD'S WORD WEEK 3

GOD STATEMENT: GOD IS THE CREATOR

SCRIPTURE: JEREMIAH 1:5

Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations. (Jeremiah 1:5)

Have you ever thought about how our identity is influenced by the “afters”? What are the afters?

The afters are life's milestones that begin with our anticipation of growing up—after I turn five I can play on the big kids' playground, after I turn 10 I can stay home alone, after I turn 16 I can get my driver's license.

Later, we can allow whether or not we accomplish the afters to define our self-worth—after I graduate high school, college, get that job, get engaged, get married, have children, and so on. If we live by this storyline, our identity is molded by our own doing, leaving us hopeless and unfulfilled.

Thankfully, God reveals His truth about our identity when it is molded by His storyline. Jeremiah 1:5 says, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.” God's storyline calls us to faith in His “befores”—He set us apart to be His *before* He formed us and *before* we were born. Jeremiah responded to God's call and so can we. We can choose to live by God's truth and find our identity in the one who is before all things (Colossians 1:17).

DISCUSSION

What “after” might you have relied on to influence your identity? After reading Jeremiah 1:5, what are some observations that help you know more about who God is? How does this verse help you rethink your self-worth and identity?

by Laurie Bennett, Director of Early Childhood

GOD'S WORD WEEK 4

GOD STATEMENT: GOD IS THE CREATOR

SCRIPTURE: EPHESIANS 2:10

For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Ephesians 2:10)

One of the most significant questions we ask ourselves during the course of our lives is “Who am I?” The search for identity is woven into our human nature. We all have this innate desire to discover our purpose. Throughout Scripture we read testimony after testimony of God's people discovering their true identity. The beautiful thing about these testimonies is the source from which their identity and purpose is revealed.

From a worldly perspective, identity and purpose are often achieved through success. This mindset says, “If you can prove yourself to be good enough, then you can belong.” The testimonies we see in God's Word, however, flip this mindset upside down. God says, “You already belong, and I have good things planned for you.” Throughout Scripture, God frequently calls upon seemingly insignificant people to carry out His work

on the earth—Joseph was sold into slavery; David was a shepherd; Gideon was considered the lowest of the low. But no matter how insignificant they were in the eyes of the world, God called out the identity of these young men as His sons and led them into the good works He had prepared in advance for them simply because they said yes to His call on their lives.

God is not looking for performance; He is looking for obedience. He is waiting for our yes. In the eyes of the world, identity and purpose must be earned through performance and success. In the eyes of God, our identity is already woven into our DNA as His sons and daughters, and He leads us into the divine purpose He has already prepared for us when we choose to give our yes to Him.

DISCUSSION

What qualifies us to belong to the family of God? What are some of the dreams/desires God has given you, and how can you say yes to these things?

by Courtney Mattson, Student Ministry Volunteer

Cheesy Zucchini Sausage Cups

Kids love food that can fit in their small hands, and parents love when kids eat some vegetables and protein. Your children will never suspect the zucchini hidden within the cheesy layers. Make these cups for an appetizer or as an after-school snack your children are sure to love.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 36 square wonton wrappers
- 1 cup ricotta cheese
- 1 zucchini, sliced into discs
- 1 cup marinara sauce
- 6 fully cooked sausages, diced
- 1 cup mozzarella cheese
- fresh basil



WHAT YOU'LL DO

Preheat oven to 375° F. Spray each muffin cup with nonstick spray. In each cup, layer 1 wonton wrapper and spread a layer of ricotta. Top with another wonton wrapper. Then, spread a layer of marinara and 1 slice of zucchini. Follow up with another wonton wrapper with a layer of sausage. Finally, top with mozzarella. Bake for 15-20 minutes until wonton wrappers are golden brown. Top with fresh basil.

Kiddie Pool Krispie Treats

School's out! Celebrate the beginning of summer with whimsical treats your children can help decorate. The adorable bears, sprinkling of candy, and colorful umbrellas make for a delightful treat.



WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 6 cups Rice Krispies cereal
- 4 cups miniature marshmallows
- 3 tablespoons butter
- 1 (16 ounce) can white frosting
- blue food coloring
- 50 orange and yellow M&Ms minis
- Gummy Life Savers, Fruit Roll-Ups, and small gumballs
- 1 small box of honey Teddy Grahams
- Paper drink umbrellas

WHAT YOU'LL DO

Make the Rice Krispie treats according to the instructions on the cereal box and cut into squares. If you are short on time, purchase premade Rice Krispie treats. Mix several drops of the blue food coloring in the can of white frosting until you get the blue color of ocean water. Frost the top of each Rice Krispie square with the blue icing. Alternate the yellow and orange mini M&Ms around the outside of the treat like a border to form the pool. Now decorate your pool scenes. Using the gummy lifesaver, fruit rollups and gumballs to decorate as floaties, towels, and beach balls. Cut the Teddy Grahams in half to attach to the Life Savers or lay flat on the towel. Push in the umbrellas for shade. Enjoy your summer beach fun treats.

Blackberry Chicken Salad

Imagine a refreshing, green salad filled with sweet, juicy blackberries, and a creamy balsamic dressing. This blackberry salad makes for a delicious side dish at a family picnic or beside the pool!



WHAT YOU'LL NEED

SALAD

- 1/2 pound chicken breasts
- 6 cups spring mix lettuce
- 1 cup fresh blackberries
- 1 avocado, sliced
- 1/4 cup red onion, sliced
- 1/4 cup chopped walnuts

DRESSING

- 1/2 cup blackberries
- 2 teaspoons Dijon mustard
- 2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 1 teaspoon soy sauce
- salt and pepper to taste

WHAT YOU'LL DO

Saute the chicken in a cast-iron skillet for a crisp outside (a regular skillet works too). Cook over medium-high heat until fully cooked through. Tent with foil and let rest while preparing the rest of the salad. In a large bowl, add the spring mix. Arrange the blackberries, avocado, red onion, and candied walnuts on top of the bed of lettuce. To make the dressing, use a medium bowl. Combine the dressing ingredients except salt and pepper. Use a fork to mash the blackberries to release the juices. Whisk all ingredients to combine thoroughly. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Add the sliced cooked chicken over the salad and serve immediately.

No-Bake Orange Creamsicle Cheesecake

Creamsicles may bring back memories of childhood summers playing outside until the sun goes down. If you are a fan of Creamsicles, you are going to love this no-bake cheesecake. The best part is you don't need to turn on the oven! The delicious layers of buttery cookie crust and creamy filling is a perfect way to cool off this summer.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 11 ounces vanilla wafer cookies
- 1 1/2 cup sugar, divided
- 4 tablespoons melted butter
- 16 ounces cream cheese, softened
- 16 ounces heavy cream
- 1 (3.3 ounce) box of orange gelatin
- 1 cup boiling water
- zest from 1 orange
- 1/4 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/2 cup powdered sugar

WHAT YOU'LL DO

Put vanilla wafers in a food processor and pulse until finely chopped. Add 3/4 cup sugar and melted butter and pulse until well mixed. Grease bottom and sides of a springform pan. Press crust mixture into bottom and up the sides of pan. Place in the freezer for 30 minutes. Meanwhile, Beat cream cheese and remaining sugar until smooth. In a medium bowl, combine gelatin and boiling water. Whisk until dissolved. Set aside. Zest orange and set aside. Whip heavy cream, powdered sugar and vanilla until stiff peaks form. Add 1/2 of whipped cream mixture to cooled gelatin and add orange zest. Whisk to blend. Set aside. Fold remainder of whipped cream mixture into cream cheese mixture. Spread 1/2 cream cheese mixture over crust. Pour 2 cups of orange whipped cream mixture over cream cheese mixture. Gently spread remaining cream cheese mixture over orange mixture. Pour remaining orange whipped cream mixture over plain cream cheese mixture. If desired, take a butter knife and gently glide through cream cheese layers to swirl. Refrigerate for at least 6 hours.



IDENTITY

MIRROR FRAME

Growing up in the current culture of fashion, social media, and easy access to a wide variety of opinions can be confusing to our children. Consequently, the noise of this culture frequently sounds loud in our children's ears and can quickly build a false identity. In Genesis, we see that God created us to be HIS image bearers. Each one of His children is uniquely created from the time in the womb.

Psalm 139:13-14 says, "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well." **God created each child with care, intentionality, and love.** Guess what? God does not make mistakes. In fact, God's creation is always good. Our children need to know that they were created intentionally and with a purpose. This message needs to be louder than the noise of our culture.

When false identities are spoken over our children, we need to remind them, with the help of the Holy Spirit, who they really are! **As parents, we can place daily reminders of our children's identity in Christ through words on a mirror, painted signs, notes in our children's lunch boxes, or a simple to text to our teen.** Our children need to read and hear what God says about their identity day in and day out. As a family, create an identity mirror. Place this framed mirror in an area of the house that everyone spends time in often.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- framed mirror
- magazines
- newspaper
- scrapbook paper
- Mod Podge
- paintbrush

WHAT YOU'LL DO

- Take a framed mirror with wide edges and clip words or sayings our heavenly Father speaks over us (e.g., chosen, loved, set apart, holy), or write them on scrapbook paper and place them on the frame.
- Use Mod Podge to paint a clear coat over the words.
- Let the frame dry for at least three hours.
- Put the framed mirror in a place where your whole family can see it. Every time you look in this mirror may you be reminded of who your heavenly Father says you are.

by Rayshawne Hayes, Friday Night Elementary Coordinator



GAME TIME



Let's Play

Adventure Blackout

“THINK ABOUT HOW GOD
MADE EACH PERSON IN
YOUR FAMILY DIFFERENT,
AND CELEBRATE EACH
OTHER.”

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 1 Adventure Board (see directions below)

BEFORE YOU START

God created each and every one of the people on our planet. Can you believe that? He gave us each unique personalities, likes and dislikes, talents, and gifts. These things are all a part of our identities as sons and daughter of the Most High God. As you look toward the summer, think about how God made each person in your family different, and celebrate each other by doing things that maybe only one person enjoys doing—honoring how God created them.

TIME TO PLAY!

As a family, fill in the Adventure Board with things that each person in your family enjoys doing. For example: hiking, reading books, movie night, craft day, visiting museums, etc. Then throughout the month, take time to get through as many of the squares as possible. Make it your goal to black out the entire board.

by Kendra Baker, Director of Pre K/ K

HIKING	MOVIE NIGHT	GO SWIMMING	WHITEWATER RAFTING
GO FOR A WALK IN OUR NEIGHBORHOOD	CAMPFIRE	GO FISHING	GO FOR A PICNIC
PUZZLES	ROCK CLIMBING	PLAY AT THE PARK	BBQ WITH FRIENDS

WORSHIP RESPONSE



I PRAISE YOU BECAUSE I AM FEARFULLY AND
WONDERFULLY MADE; YOUR WORKS ARE WONDERFUL,
I KNOW THAT FULL WELL. (PSALM 139:14)

Reflecting on the glory of God revealed in creation offers perspective and joy. Seeing the majesty of God in the mountains, seas, stars, and sky humbles us. We are a part of this intentional and beautiful work! As we process our identity, we can respond to the truth of Scripture by surrounding ourselves with the sublime beauty of creation and turning our hearts to the Creator who looked at us and said, “Very good.”

As a family, drive to a place where you see great beauty. This could be something simple like a trip to the Garden of the Gods or Red Rock Canyon Open Space or something more intensive like a day trip into the mountains to a favorite trail or lake. As you explore creation, marvel at the rocks, leaves, and animals or the vast immensity of the mountains. **Take time together to read Genesis 1, focusing on the way God reacts to the creation of the trees, rocks, animals, and mountains.** He responds, “And it was good.” After creating man, God looked at what He had made and said, “It was very good.” The foundation of our identity is this simple truth.

Enjoy your time in nature this beautiful month of June and truly think about what God says about you. What moving, powerful, and freeing news! **The Creator of the universe looks at you among all creation and says, “Very good.”**

by Stephen Steininger, Downtown Elementary Teacher

Identity Rocks



Several years ago, a movement began to spread **kindness with rocks**. People would decorate the rocks and share them with others by hiding them in different places around the city. My youngest daughter and I really enjoyed finding these rocks and re-hiding them, and also making our own for others to find. Sometimes, when we were driving by a park, my daughter would exclaim, "Mom, can we stop and see if we can find a rock?" It became a fun and uplifting part of our day.

Right now, many people are searching to find their identity. Our identity can only truly be found in Christ. I would like to challenge you as a family to take some time studying the weekly verses below and talking about how they point to our identity in Christ. Then, decorate a rock with the Scripture reference and maybe part of that Scripture. **On the back, we would love for you to write #NLC Family Min FB and/or #nlcfamilies Instagram.** Then go to the park, for a hike, take a vacation, etc., and hide them for others to find. Please take a picture of the rocks you hide and share them on our pages on Facebook and Instagram.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- rocks
- paint
- paintbrushes
- paint sealer

by Kristy Hollinrake, Family Ministries Midweek Administrator

WEEKLY VERSES

WEEK 1

So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. (Genesis 1:27)

WEEK 2

I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. (Psalm 139:14)

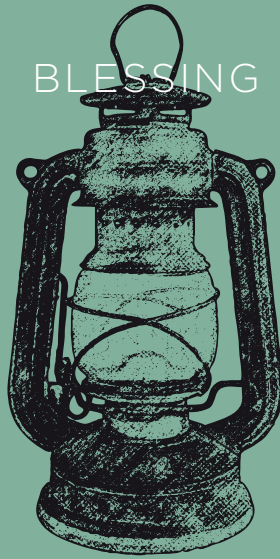
WEEK 3

Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations. (Jeremiah 1:5)

WEEK 4

For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Ephesians 2:10)

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

SCRIPTURE:

Genesis 1:27

(Child's name), may you know that you have been purposefully created in the image of God. May you know that every single part of who you are—the color of your skin, the color of your hair, your personality, and your gifts and talents—are all a part of who God has created you to be. They were all His idea! May you know that you are exactly how God intended you to be and that He loves you more than you could ever fathom.

Week 2

SCRIPTURE:

Psalms 139:14

(Child's name), may you know that you have been fearfully and wonderfully made by the God who created all things. May you know that He knit you together in your mother's womb and designed you to glorify Him. He is so proud of who He has made you to be. May you remember that He is always with you and He is not ashamed of you. He delights in having relationship with you, and your life is precious to Him.

Week 3

SCRIPTURE:

Jeremiah 1:5

(Child's name), may you know that God knew you before you were even born. God has always had a plan and purpose for your life because God is the one who formed you. May you know that you can place your hope in Him and give your life to Him. God values and cares for you more than anyone in your life ever could. Remember that you are always seen, always known, and always loved.

Week 4

SCRIPTURE:

Ephesians 2:10

(Child's name), may you know that those who have put their faith in God have been created in Christ Jesus for good works. Christ's life, death, and resurrection are the confirmation of God's love and forgiveness toward you. May you know that you were created to be in relationship with God and that Jesus Christ has made a way for that relationship to take place. May you remember that all that He does is for your good and His glory.

Journal

remember and celebrate

prayer

thankfulness and praise

RESOURCES and SUPPORT

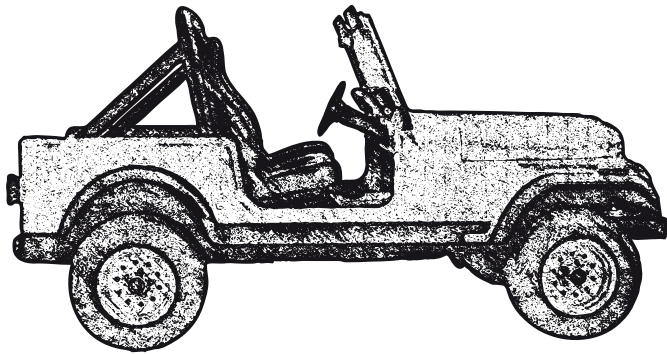


RESOURCES AND SUPPORT

CONNECTING CONVERSATIONS

get your family TALKING

If you find yourself in a car on a long road trip or passing a few hours in an airport, consider playing **Would You Rather** with your children. You might learn something interesting and insightful!



WOULD YOU RATHER ...

- Live in a tree house or in a castle?
- Ride a camel or an elephant?
- Travel by boat or by train?
- Eat popsicles or ice cream?
- Experience an epic waterslide or an epic zip line?
- Camp in the mountains or close to the ocean?
- Visit a national monument or a national park?
- Read a book or paint a picture?
- Eat 25 hot dogs or 25 scoops of ice cream?

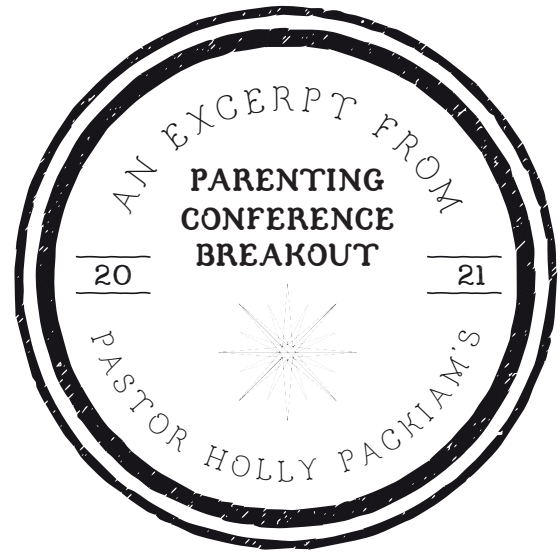


Summer often includes outdoor adventures, creating memories, late night barbecues, and vacations. Summer can also include lots of idle time for children. While idle time often sparks children's most creative ideas, it can also lead to sibling squabbles and more screen time than is good for them. Parents can help by sprinkling in some fun activities throughout the summer months. When children have things to look forward to, they are more likely to be productive in daily tasks or chores. Encourage your children to dream, create, explore, and learn this summer.

HERE ARE A FEW IDEAS TO GET YOU GOING:

- Go to a thrift store or garage sale to let each child pick something fabulous for his or her wardrobe or room.
- Stargaze from the roof or sleeping bags out in the yard.
- Invent a new type of sandwich (peanut butter and salami?).
- Make up a new dance together as a family.
- Write and produce a film or play with your friends or family, film it, and watch it on the TV.
- Learn a new board game.
- Make and fly a kite.
- Plant a garden.
- Go on a city scavenger hunt.
- Bury a time capsule filled with dated items to dig up when a child graduates high school.
- Build an obstacle course.
- Create a family summer bucket list of places to visit, people to see, and things to do.

Technology AND Today's Family



When we hear the word *technology*, we often think, “Help!” We love how tech makes our lives easier—how our kids can be quickly absorbed in a show while we make dinner. When I was growing up, most of my free time was not spent with a screen in front of me but rather outside playing until the late hours of the evening. Road trips were spent reading or playing the alphabet game. Today, most children spend several hours a day in front of a screen. There is a constant temptation to hand our child a phone while we wait in the doctor’s office, pass back an iPad on long road trips, or a set a child in front of a television so we can get things accomplished. I find myself longing for the simple days when the only options for kids were to play outside or make up an imaginary game.

A recent Barna group survey asked, “**Why is parenting more difficult today?**” **Sixty-five percent of parents said the challenges of technology and social media.** While technology in itself is not evil, it needs to be properly managed. This means asking ourselves, “What do I want for my family life, family culture, and family priorities?” In terms of building lasting fruit as we disciple our kids, we have to prioritize conversations, reading, listening, being together, laughing, and playing together over technology.

“Because technology is devoted primarily to making our lives easier, it discourages us from disciplines, especially ones that involve disentangling ourselves from technology itself,” says Andy Crouch, author of *The Tech-Wise Family*. If we want a better or different life, we have to choose it. Technology can benefit our families if used in the following ways:

1. **Technology is in its proper place when** it helps us bond with the real people we have been given to love. It’s out of its proper place when we end up bonding with people at a distance, like celebrities, whom we will never meet. For instance, it is always delightful to FaceTime a grandparent or a best friend who has moved away. Thankfully, technology allows relationships to deepen even when we’re apart.
2. **Technology is in its proper place when** it starts great conversations. It’s out of its proper place when it prevents us from talking with and listening to one another. Sharing the facts of an article, an interesting podcast, or a Scripture from a Bible app can initiate great conversation and discussion face-to-face.
3. **Technology is in its proper place when** it helps us take care of the fragile bodies we inhabit. It’s out of its proper place when it promises to help us escape the limits and vulnerabilities of those bodies altogether. Have you ever used a workout app? Or a sleep-monitoring app? There are many apps that make resources, information, and tools readily available to help us live healthier lives.
4. **Technology is in its proper place when** it helps us acquire or develop skills such as cooking, writing, fitness, decorating, and other hobbies.
5. **Technology is in its proper place when** it helps us cultivate awe for the created world we are part of and responsible for stewarding. Have you ever watched a Planet Earth video or engaged in a virtual reality walk on the moon?
6. **Technology is in its proper place only when** we use it with intention and care. If there’s one thing I’ve discovered about technology, it’s that it doesn’t stay in its proper place on its own; much like children’s toys, it finds its way underfoot all over the house and all over our lives. If we aren’t intentional and careful, we’ll end up with a quite extraordinary mess. Boundaries and rules are good things.

Find this sample rule agreement online at:
bit.ly/Sampletechandmedia

Sample Technology and Media Rules

- If a computer or a phone is in your room, the door **MUST** be open.
NO LOCKED OR CLOSED DOORS WHILE ON PHONES OR COMPUTERS.
- Phones and computers need to be turned in by 9:00 p.m.
- No phones, computers, or tablets allowed in the bathrooms.
- Television or movies on the weekend.
- One hour or less of video games per day on Saturday and Sunday.
- Two hours of television or movie watching on the weekend unless with the entire family or friends. **NO YouTube, TikTok, Snapchat, or surfing on Instagram.**

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Before you get on social media, respond to your friends, play a video game, or watch TV, ask yourself these questions:

- Have I spent time reading the Bible?
- Have I spent time talking with God?
- Have I asked the Holy Spirit to lead me today?
- Have I been active and physical today?
- Are my actions honoring and pleasing to God?
- Am I in a good place to respond to friends in love and kindness?

by Jared and Holly Newman

PHILIPPIANS 4:8 - FINALLY, BROTHERS AND SISTERS, WHATEVER IS TRUE, WHATEVER IS NOBLE, WHATEVER IS RIGHT, WHATEVER IS PURE, WHATEVER IS LOVELY, WHATEVER IS ADMIRABLE—IF ANYTHING IS EXCELLENT OR PRAISEWORTHY—THINK ABOUT SUCH THINGS.

IDEAS FOR HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

1. Consider adding screen time parameters. One idea is to focus on other ways of connecting as a family during the week and to limit screen time usage to two hours on weekends. Find a block of time during the week when all devices are turned off to worship, feast, play, and rest together—maybe the dinner hour or a Sabbath day.
2. Try not to touch devices first thing in the morning or at night. Have a quiet time, pray, or go for a walk before you touch a device. As you end the day, place devices out of reach as you go to sleep.
3. Aim for no screens before children are 10 years old. The American Academy of Pediatrics says to limit digital media to no more than one hour per day to allow children ample time to engage in other activities important to their health and development.
4. Screens should be used for a purpose and in community rather than using them aimlessly or isolated in a bedroom.
5. Instead of using devices in downtime or car time, utilize these moments for conversation and discussion.
6. Parents should have access and passwords to all children's devices to check on a regular basis. This is not an infringement on their children's privacy; rather, it is an act of love and protection.
7. Before engaging in devices, have a discussion with your child about the responsibilities and expectations of managing this privilege.

by Holly Packiam, Pastor of Parents and Families Downtown

Read this story to your young children before Mother's Day.

Jackson's Mother's Day

Jackson ran down the street toward his house. His mom was waiting for him on the front porch.

"You're really fast," she said.

"I know, Mommy. I'm going to keep running every day and build up my strength so I can run a big race and WIN!"

"You sure will," Mommy agreed.

"Mommy, I love you!"

"I love you, too, Jackson."

Jackson went into the house to play with his Lego bricks. There was music playing. He sang along: "Waymaker, Miracle Worker, Promise Keeper, Light in the Darkness, My God, that is who You are." Jackson made a really cool plane out of his Lego bricks. "Mom, is this the kind of jet Daddy flies?"

"Something like that."

"Mom, when will Daddy be home again?"

"Well, Jackson, you know Daddy is deployed right now. He had to go help people far away because of his job. He won't be back until after your birthday next fall."

"I miss him."

"I do, too."

After the song, people on the radio started talking. There was a commercial about diamonds. "This Mother's Day buy your mother a beautiful diamond necklace. She deserves it." Jackson stopped what he was doing. **Mother's Day? He sure loved his mother.** He wondered about diamonds and how much they would cost. He thought about it and decided that he wouldn't be able to go to the store by himself to buy a diamond to surprise her. He had some money in his piggy bank, but he didn't think it would be enough to buy a diamond. His mom deserved something really special because she was such a good mommy. She read him stories, she tied his shoes, she gave him big hugs, and she always made him breakfast. Breakfast! Maybe Jackson could make breakfast for his mommy for Mother's Day. What could he make, though? He wasn't allowed to touch the stove.

He kept thinking all day about how he could surprise his mom on Mother's Day. He had some quiet time in his room that afternoon. He kept thinking. If his daddy were home, he knew he would help him. Jackson started humming the song from the radio. "Even when I don't see it, you're working ... Waymaker ..." **He started to pray, "Jesus, You can do anything. Will You help me surprise Mom? Please?"**

He lay on his bed and looked around his room. There were some art supplies on his desk. He thought **Jesus might be giving him a good idea.** Jackson walked over to his desk and found some beads and a long piece of yarn. He could make a necklace. It wouldn't have diamonds, but the beads were really pretty colors. He found some blue ones. Mom's favorite color was blue! He made a pattern with the prettiest beads. He found a piece of paper and drew a picture of his whole family, Mommy and Jackson and Daddy. He drew a giant heart around them. He thought Mom would like that.

Jackson felt so happy that Jesus had given him some good ideas to make a special day for his Mommy. He put the necklace and the picture under his pillow so he could keep it a surprise.

The next morning, Jackson woke up early. He could hear birds singing and the sun was shining. He tiptoed into the kitchen. Jesus had given him one more idea. He put a piece of bread in the toaster. After it popped up, he slathered peanut butter all over the toast. Mmm, his mommy loved peanut butter toast. He climbed up to the cupboard to get out her favorite plate and took it to his mommy. **"Mommy, happy Mother's Day! You're the best mommy in the whole wide world!"**

"Jackson! What a happy surprise!"

"Mom, you sit here and eat your toast. Don't look! I'll be right back."

Jackson ran to his bedroom and lifted up his pillow. There was the pretty necklace and the picture he had colored. The picture was a little wrinkled, but he knew his mommy wouldn't care about that. He ran back to his mom. **"Mommy, Jesus helped me think of how to make a special Mother's Day for you!"**

Mommy started crying.

"Oh, no! Did I make you sad?"

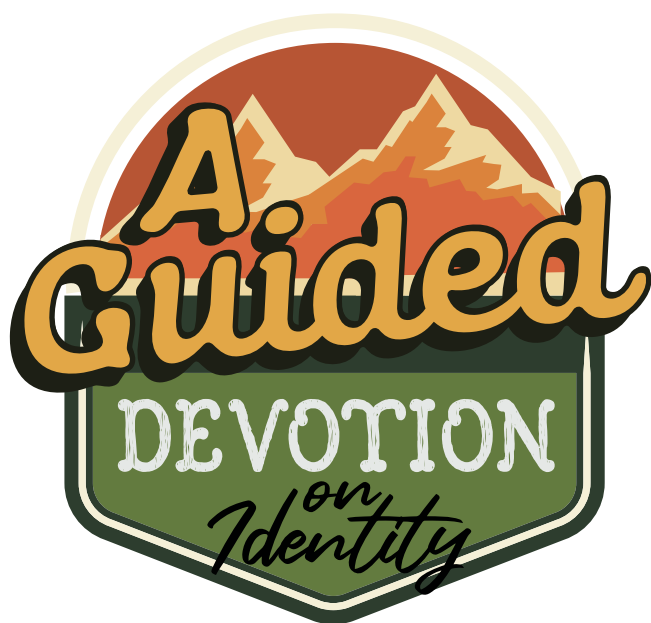
"No, Jackson, you made me very happy! These are happy tears." She gave him a great big hug.

"Happy Mother's Day, Mommy! You're the best mom in the whole wide world!"

by Mindy Harrington

Mindy remembers a Mother's Day when her kids made her peanut butter toast for breakfast all by themselves. She loves peanut butter. She lives in Colorado Springs with her husband, Dave, and works with kids at Woodmen Valley Chapel. She is grateful that Jesus helps her figure things out.

RESOURCES AND SUPPORT ELEMENTARY



Identity is a hot topic in today's culture. A quick Google search will reveal great confusion on what a person's identity is and who determines it. Identity as defined here is the essence of a person: how a person perceives himself/herself and, as a result, how that person is perceived by others. Our self-identity determines our personality and behavior. We act according to how we perceive ourselves. The big question is: Who determines our identity? And then, how do we parents help our children have healthy identities?

As believers, we know that the ultimate source of our identity is God. And we discover who we are in God's Word. Genesis 1:27 says that we are created in God's image. So, having a right view of God is essential to understanding our identity.

WHO IS GOD?

Our children need to understand that God is the Creator of everything, so He's in charge. God is our heavenly Father because He made us and He knows what is best for us. He is perfect in justice, so He has to judge sin. But He is also merciful, so He forgives our sins when we repent. His love is unconditional, which means there is nothing we can do to make God love us more or less. He just loves us all the time. God is all-knowing, all-powerful, and always with us. We need to teach our children to trust God, even though we can't see Him.

Action: Read Psalm 145. List some characteristics of God you find in this psalm.

Discuss: What are some of your favorite things about God? Why is God worthy of our worship?

WHO ARE WE?

As image bearers of God, every person has value established by God. He alone has the right to decide who we are, our purpose, and our destiny. God says that before we were born, He knew us and set us apart (Jeremiah 1:5). We are all born with a sin nature of rebellion that separates us from our loving heavenly Father. However, when we receive God's gift of salvation in Jesus, we become new creations. In Christ we are adopted as God's children, accepted, righteous, free from sin and spiritual death, holy and set apart to do God's will, and able to receive all of God's promises including eternal life with God!

Action: Read Ephesians 1 together and make a bookmark of some of the benefits of being in Christ to keep in your Bibles.

Discuss: How does it make you feel to know that you are adopted as God's chosen child? What are some of God's blessings for which you can thank Him?

WHAT CAN WE DO?

Just because we know who God is and have received Jesus as Lord doesn't mean we don't have any personal responsibility in living out our identity. Faith without action doesn't produce anything. God allows us to choose to know Him and follow in His ways. Thankfully, God helps us when we ask Him. With the Holy Spirit, we can do the good works that God has prepared in advance for us to do.

Ultimately, we need to live beyond ourselves. I like the expression that we don't need to think less of ourselves, but we need to think of ourselves less. Our true identity is found as we spend time with God and become more like Him in loving and serving others. Let's help our children learn and understand these truths so they can be confident in their true, God-given identity.

Action: Pray as a family and write down prayer requests and answers to prayer to build your faith. Attend church and worship God in your homes and serve in community with others. Commit to reading the Bible together as a family, and encourage your children to read God's Word on their own. For example: have everyone read the book of James by sections (each chapter has two or three).

Discuss: What are some difficult things that you need God to help you overcome? What are some ways you can show God's love by serving others?

by Jill Nardini, Elementary Teacher

THIS CHANGED EVERYTHING

A Devotion for Students

What if you fully understood the truth that the God who created heaven and earth is the same God who created you? What if you comprehended the fact that He intentionally formed you and gave you a purpose for life? What if you lived each day knowing you were made in the image of God? What would that change?

For me, it changed everything.

Back in middle school, I wanted everyone to like me. Imagine cute little Cath, with dirty blond hair, very awkward hugs, straight-across bangs, who lived with the desire to be seen, known, and loved. That was me! I wanted to be seen by the boys and girls, loved by moms and dads, and known by teachers and parents. I wanted to make my dad happy and my mom laugh. I wanted to be a good big sister and an obedient daughter. I wanted my friends' parents to like me, to be a good influence on those around me, and to get good grades—all with a smile on my face. I wanted my friends to invite me over, to laugh at my jokes, and to be there for me. Everything in me longed for the approval of these people because I loved them and sought out their validation through my striving. None of this is necessarily wrong; however, it wore me down because I put my identity and value in what others thought of me instead of in who God declared me to be.

A few years later I graduated high school, started college, and began serving in the middle school ministry at my church. I participated in a summer camp that focused on identity and how we are *imago Dei*, made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). Over time, declaring the truth about who God has created us to be changed the way I viewed my identity—from finding my value in others to believing my value comes from God. This freed me from constantly seeking others' approval. The change happened when I realized that God was the only one I should be looking to for validation, affirmation, comfort, direction, joy, and love. I began to understand that God was the one who uniquely created me; He calls me daughter; He made me in His image. I don't know about you, but knowing that I am made in the likeness of the God of the universe is humbling and freeing. Choosing to believe I have a purpose in life frees me from the weight of having to prove myself. It also allows me to lean into God, the one who has already planned my steps and given me that purpose (Jeremiah 29:11).

The church I was serving in challenged us, both leaders and students, to declare the truth about who God created us to be. **My challenge for you this summer is to ask the Lord, "How do You see me?" and then write those things on your mirror or in a place you look every day.** I challenge you to memorize the following verses and go through the Word—this is where God declares His children to be chosen, made in His image, wonderfully made, purposed, treasured, set apart. Take time this summer to declare these truths and watch the Lord transform you from the inside out!

SUMMER CHALLENGE

Memorize Genesis 1:27; Psalm 139:14; Jeremiah 1:5; Jeremiah 29:11; and Ephesians 2:10.

by Catherine Gerstenberg, Student Ministries Coordinator





Let's Go Build a Fort

Have you ever wondered where the childlike “dreamer” in you goes when you get older? A cursory look at our adult lives may yield the realization that we've grown up and grown boring. However, the two don't have to be synonymous. No, we can't play in the sandbox all day; bills don't pay themselves. But let's be careful not to allow paying the bills to steal our ability to dream up new possibilities for loving our spouses.

When we allow the mundane to dull our imaginations, we grow bored and tired of creatively moving toward our spouses—and boredom is the breeding ground for letting our love grow cold. **My wife, Katie, and I have been married for only three and a half years, but the pull to “boring” is just as real as it will be at thirty years.** It's our natural bent as fallen beings, but it doesn't have to be our permanent.

God made us to be like Him, and He's wildly creative—I mean, have you seen mandarin fish or the glasswing butterfly?! **And we are made in His image.** So, when Jesus said we need to be like children to enter His kingdom (Matthew 18:3), perhaps He was talking about their wild imaginations and ability to dream impossible dreams. After all, the Father has a way of making the impossible possible. **Children model God's creativity and are more in tune with their identity as children of the Creator than most adults.** So, if we want to rediscover this part of ourselves, we need to make space for creativity.

Marriage is the perfect place for God to help us cultivate the creative, imaginative parts of who He designed us to be. **We don't have to sign up for a class or drive across town to meet with experts.** Every day we get to wake up next to our opportunity to learn how to dream again—our spouse. Let loving him/her become the avenue through which God can breathe fresh life into your imagination, restoring a childlike wonder for the world. Here's a simple way to start!

Blanket forts were my favorite way of imaginative play as a child, so I asked my wife “out” on a date, and we jumped in to creating the most fantastical cushion castle we could make.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR LOVE WHILE IN THE “FORT”

- Pick a night this week.
- Gather the following items: String, clothespins, large sheets and blankets, all the pillows and cushions you own (yes, all of them), favorite snacks, and a source of light.
- Put the kids to bed or send them on a playdate elsewhere (earlier the better!).
- Build like you're a kid (aka, don't worry about the mess or orderliness of it!).
- Gather your snacks and enter your creation!

Questions to Ask Your Love While in the “Fort”

1. Where in your personal life do you feel like you've lost an ability to dream?
2. What were good things we did or patterns we had at the beginning of our marriage that we've lost?
3. Where have we gotten “boring” in our love for one another?
4. What is one way we can cultivate being creative together as a couple the rest of this year? As a family?
5. Should we leave this up until morning so the kids can see it ... and clean it up?

by Chase Windebank, Pastor of Student Ministries Discipleship



Created for a Purpose

It was a beautiful, warm summer morning. I gathered snacks, helmets, and water bottles and helped my four little ones onto bikes and into the double stroller. It was a perfect day for a trek to the neighborhood park!

As I pushed the playground swing, my thoughts wandered. I heard my daughter's delighted giggle as she swung higher and higher. My sons laughed out loud as they ran past us in a game of tag. My heart was full; this was the life I had always hoped for! No, life wasn't perfect, but in that moment, all was good and right in the world, and I was grateful!

I thought back to an unsettling interaction at the park just a month earlier. There was another child and her parent, and something just didn't feel right. My heart wanted to ask questions to follow up and make sure the girl was OK, but as they walked away, I wasn't sure how to respond to the stirring in my heart. I felt helpless and ill-equipped. I remembered a robust, yet naïve, proclamation I had made at a church event years ago in college: "I want to change the world!" At the time, I had big plans—visions for what changing the world looked like in my youth—but there I stood, uncertain and feeling too small to make a difference in one child's life. As I contemplated my options, the Holy Spirit came in close and clearly spoke to my heart. He prompted me to look over at the children He had graciously placed in my life. He reminded me that the little ones right in front of me, the four precious ones He had entrusted to me and asked me to shepherd, teach, and serve, were the world He'd asked me to change!

Dr. Seuss has been credited with the simple yet eloquent quote: "To the world you may be one person, but to one person you may be the world." Jesus showed me in that place of uncertainty that He had chosen me to be my children's mother, and through that sacred calling He had plans to change the world one little life at a time! He knew my heart and my desire to make a difference in the world around me, and He kindly reminded me that making a difference began with small acts of service right in my very own home and family.

In Ephesians 2:10 Paul tells us that we are God's workmanship, "created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." Jeremiah speaks of the same truth in his book. The Lord says in chapter 1, verse 5, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you." Psalm 139 expresses the splendor of the Lord knowing us in the most intimate way, including writing each day of our lives in His book before even one comes to be! Wow! What beautiful and encouraging truths. God uniquely formed each of us to fulfill a distinct and prepared role in His story!

The Lord used my unsettling encounter at the park to graciously show me that it wasn't my job to "change the world" but rather to look to Him for my true identity and in turn my purpose in each and every moment of daily life. He kindly revealed to me that I belong to Him, that each person in this world belongs to Him. He loves each of us more than we could ever imagine! He has an incredible plan for redemption and restoration, and we can listen for His voice to guide us as we live and move and fulfill the good works He has chosen for us to do! He called me and appointed me to be the mom each of my children need, and He has purposed to change the world one little person at a time!

As I reflect back on our days at the park more than a decade ago, my heart is full of gratitude once again. I am privileged to be living in a harvest season of parenting as I watch my teens and young adults graciously change the world around them now through small and large acts of service. They are discovering their unique identities, purposes, and callings. No, life isn't perfect, but in this moment, all is right and good in the world, and my heart is grateful!

by Lori Welch, Family Care Coordinator

Peace and Quiet Is Not Always a Good Thing

As a dad, peace and quiet is a double-edged sword. Why? Because while you want to be at rest, when the house is still, it could be because the kids are playing happily—or because they are cutting their own hair. So being undisturbed is a blend of wonderful with a splash of terrifying.

I experienced this mix several weeks ago when my wife had to step out for a meeting and I was at home with our four kids. Everyone was doing his or her own thing. I was reading in my favorite spot, our older daughters were upstairs in their room, our youngest daughter was napping, and our son, Zion (6), was in the basement. It's rare for him to free play like this; Zion (we call him "Z") prefers to have his day filled with planned activities. But today, Z was on his own in the basement. After an hour or so, he walked by me rolling a small child's bike. As he clunked down the stairs, I heard him yell, "Don't worry, Dad! I have my helmet down here for safety!"

"Awesome!" I replied.

Wait a minute. The terror started to creep in. What is he doing down there?

Eventually, I made my way to the basement and saw that Z had pulled together a mix of wood and old mattresses to create a ramp that started at least four feet off the ground, and he was lugging the bike to the top and flying down. In our basement. While mom was at a meeting. Z put couch pillows on the side of the ramp "just in case." But looking at this dangerous invention, the words of comedian Jerry Seinfeld came to mind: "At some point, the helmet was wearing him for safety."

And here's where I became convicted as a dad. First, I was convicted that my first thought was how much trouble I was going to be in with my wife. Second, I was convicted by my character defects. Over the last couple of years I've spent time digging into my own hurts, habits, and hang-ups and have learned that one of the things I struggle with is selfishness. **Selfishness as a dad leads me to crave and engineer peace and quiet when I could be building relationship with my kids.** Maybe you've done the same thing. This journey has led me to ask tough questions like, "What do I want? To be undisturbed so I can pursue work or reading or hobbies? Or to connect with my kids?"

In the moments where I'm being most honest with myself, I've not only been selfish as a dad but also lazy. Because when things are quiet in the house, it's easier. When everyone is calm or playing on their own, it's less work. But I think as a father I'm being called to something deeper.

Perhaps God wondered what His Son, Jesus, was doing down on earth sometimes. But one thing is clear from Jesus' story—His purpose was to connect. **In fact, Jesus is given the name Immanuel. It means "God with us."** We know this name because it shows up in the Christmas season. We read the name in the prophecy of Isaiah and see it fulfilled in the gospel of Matthew. Yet Immanuel is more than the reality that God put on flesh but that He came to earth to be with His creation, to build a personal relationship with us. The presence of God in His story sets the story apart from all other stories. And the name Immanuel reminds us that, regardless of our situation, we are never without hope.

God's commitment to connect with creation is the whole point of His story. And as dads, our connection to our kids is vital. But, Houston, I have a problem. I'm distracted. I'm selfish. I'm on my phone. I'm constantly checking in on my device. Or I'm focused on correcting behavior.

Dads, we can do better, and our kids will notice the difference. Connection is at the heart of how God relates to us and how He has called moms and dads to relate to their children. And I'm learning more and more to invest in relationships with my kids so we become deeply connected—and this kind of love reflects God's love for me.

So, I'm going to put away my laptop for now and go help Z build a new ramp. Maybe we'll get five feet off the ground this time.

by Matt Guevara

Matt is a humbled follower of Jesus and a father of four amazing humans in Rockford, IL (ages 5-16). The Guevara family loves to make each other laugh- which is easy when Matt shares the glorious wonder of 80's and 90's Christian music.

A photograph of a person reading a book with their hands clasped in prayer. The text 'MOVING PAST LOSS' is overlaid on the image in a white serif font.

MOVING PAST LOSS

It's finally spring! I don't know about you, but there have been times I have wondered if we would ever get out of being locked down in our homes. Our family, and many that we know have suffered loss and tragedy during COVID-19. The losses are varied: lost time with friends, lost graduations, lost vacations, lost special events, and lost time with extended family. Hardest of all has been when we've lost family members or friends to death and haven't been able to be with them or attend their funerals.

As adults we've felt these losses on many levels, but so have our children. It is tempting with summer on the way to try to just move on. **But if we don't allow ourselves to lament and grieve what we've lost, we will find that the emotions we need to release will eventually catch up with us.** In a recent New Life Family breakout session, Dr. Mark Mayfield shared that there are no bad emotions. Our children need to know that emotions are hard sometimes, but it is not bad to have hard emotions.

Modeling is our environment this month, and in our Create section you'll find a fun activity to do with your children to model how to find the good in each moment—in both the easy and the hard. Another way we can model emotional health is by talking about the easy and the hard as a family. Admitting to our children when we are struggling is important so that they know they can also share their emotions with us.

One time when my daughter was little, I was crying over a difficult situation and she walked in. I immediately started to dry my tears and tell her that Mommy was okay. She responded by commenting, "Mom, it's okay to not be okay. We all have to cry sometimes."

What wisdom from a young child! **I've learned that our children and others in our lives need us to be authentic about our emotions so they can be authentic about theirs.**

Lastly, it is vital to model that going to see a counselor is a healthy practice. We can attend counseling as a family, individually, or with our children in order to gain the tools we need to find healing for the losses we've felt over the last year and at other times in our lives.

Our Family Care team is here to walk alongside you and your loved ones in diverse times of crises and need. If you are in need of a counselor, we would be happy to send you our counseling referral list. If you are struggling with depression or anxiety that leads to suicidal thoughts, please call New Life Church at (719) 594-6602 so we can pray with you and support you in finding the help you need during this time.

by Jeni Mason, Pastor of Family Care

ANNOUNCEMENTS

UPCOMING FAMILY MINISTRY EVENTS



MILITARY MINISTRY

- REBOOT First Responder Trauma Recovery Course
- Thursday evenings, April 1-June 17
- 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.
- Alethia Church 5475 Mark Dabling Blvd #101, Colorado Springs, CO 80918
- Contact Dave Arnold at darnold@newlifechurch.org
- REBOOT First Responders is a 12-week faith-based trauma-healing course that specifically addresses the critical incident stress and trauma faced by those in the law enforcement, firefighter, EMS, 911 communications, hospital emergency staff, and corrections communities. Spouses and caregivers are welcome to attend, and the course is offered at no cost to participants. Most locations offer meals and childcare to remove barriers for families who wish to attend.

MILITARY MINISTRY

- REBOOT Combat Trauma Recovery Course
- Tuesday evenings, June 15-August 24
- 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.
- Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center 530 Communication Circle, Colorado Springs, CO 80905
- Contact Dave Arnold at darnold@newlifechurch.org
- REBOOT Combat Recovery is a 12-week faith-based course designed to specifically address military trauma. Veterans or active duty service members of all eras are welcome to attend. Spouses and caregivers will also benefit greatly and are encouraged to attend. The course is offered at no cost to the participants. This specific location offers meals and childcare to remove barriers for families who wish to attend.

PASTORAL CARE

- XO Marriage Conference
- Saturday, June 12
- 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. (doors open at 8:00 a.m.)
- New Life Church in the Living Room
11025 Voyager Pkwy Colorado Springs, CO 80921
- Register at xomarriage.com/conferences/colorado-springs/
- XO Conference provides expert marriage advice and practical teachings to help couples navigate their marriage journey. You can expect dynamic messages, worship, and an inspiring environment that will help you and your spouse escape the ordinary and build a strong marriage. No matter where you are on your relationship journey, we encourage you to attend! Join us for this one-day free event (registration required at the link above).





extravagant

DISCOVERING
A LIFE OF
DANGEROUS
GENEROSITY

brady boyd

SENIOR PASTOR, NEW LIFE CHURCH
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