

Winter Edition | 2020

HomeFront

a spiritual parenting resource



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“ We believe that the Holy Spirit is God’s chosen teacher. It is He who causes spiritual growth and formation when and as He chooses. As such, we have articulated 10 distinct environments to create in your home. We desire to create spiritual space, which we refer to as an environment, in which God’s Spirit can move freely. ”

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.

A NOTE FROM MICHELLE

We believe the Bible teaches that parents are to be the primary disciplers of their children's faith. While Christ is the cornerstone and foundation on which faith is built and the church equips believers, parents play the role of pastors, leaders, counselors, comforters, security, prayer warriors, and support to make ministry to the next generation effective.

We recognize the challenges of parenting in today's world. The church is a place where you can expect to be empowered in your role as a spiritual parent. Our desire is that HomeFront magazine will not only inspire you, but also equip you with creative and fun ideas to enhance your family times.

Moving forward this year, HomeFront will produce six issues that will each bring to life all 10 Environments I discuss in my book *Spiritual Parenting*. These environments are helpful in your role to "put God on display" in every situation. If you haven't read *Spiritual Parenting*, consider reading through it this year. Also set aside time each week as a family to put some of the practical opportunities in this magazine into action.



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 25 years of church ministry experience as a children's and family pastor. She loves a good book and a cup of coffee.

@TruInspiration

HOW TO USE

HomeFront

USE THIS GUIDE TO GET FAMILY TIME STARTED.
IT'S AS EASY AS 1, 2, 3 ...

- 1** Start by deciding on a day and time that works well for your entire family. It can be an evening, afternoon, or morning. Just commit to building this time into your family's natural rhythm—perhaps around a meal.
- 2** Look through HomeFront to see what stands out. Choose two or three experiences you would like to incorporate into your family times this month. Don't feel burdened to complete all the activities—just do what fits your family best. This resource provides more than enough experiences to create transforming environments in your home throughout the month.
- 3** Remember to **HAVE FUN!** Strive to make each gathering unique to your own family as you enjoy spending time with God and one another.



As the mom of four wonderful children, it is important to me to find pockets during the week to spiritually disciple them. However, this hasn't always been easy between juggling sports schedules, work commitments, and school activities. In today's culture, many things seem to battle for our time and our children's time. It is worth the fight to protect the moments around the dinner table. I have seen the value of hosting a weekly family night, both in our family and in families around us.

HomeFront magazine is designed to take the planning and guesswork out of creating meaningful, spiritually rich family nights. Basically, we want to take one thing off your plate and give you back the blessing of time. In this magazine, you will find games, recipes, stories, and much more to help you nurture your children in a deeper understanding of who God is while experiencing the love and affirmation of your family. Check out our **FAMILY TIME VERSE**, 2 Corinthians 5:17: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" As we kick off the new year, this verse reminds us to abide in Christ as He makes all things

new. The mess-ups, the letdowns, and the failures have gone, and Christ is doing a new thing in us. Abide in Him! This theme is richly played out within the pages of this magazine.

Dr. Michelle Anthony's book *Spiritual Parenting* talks about 10 environments that put God on display in our homes. Each article within the magazine highlights one of those environments. For additional information on those environments, flip to the last page of the magazine. In addition, we would like to invite you to take the *Spiritual Parenting* class offered in the spring and fall.

Parents, may you know that your heavenly Father loves you. As you begin the new year, abide in Him and He will direct your path. The hard things of 2019 have gone away, and God is doing a new thing. May you know that He who began a good work in you is faithful to complete it.

Holly Newman

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

FAMILY VERSE

Memorizing Scripture can be an incredible practice to engage in as a family. But words in and of themselves will not necessarily transform us; it is God's Spirit in these words who transforms. We come to know God more when we're willing to open our hearts and listen to His Holy Spirit through the words we memorize. Have fun with this verse, and think of creative ways to invite your family to open up to God as they commit the verse to memory. **Go to homefrontmag.com for a free downloadable copy of the family verse.**

Layout and Design Erin Comer | *Copy Editor* Leigh Davidson | *Proofreader* Jennifer Shepherd
Printing PressOn! Print Production, Inc. pressonprintproduction.com

Therefore,

if anyone is in

CHRIST,

the new

creation has come:

The old has gone,

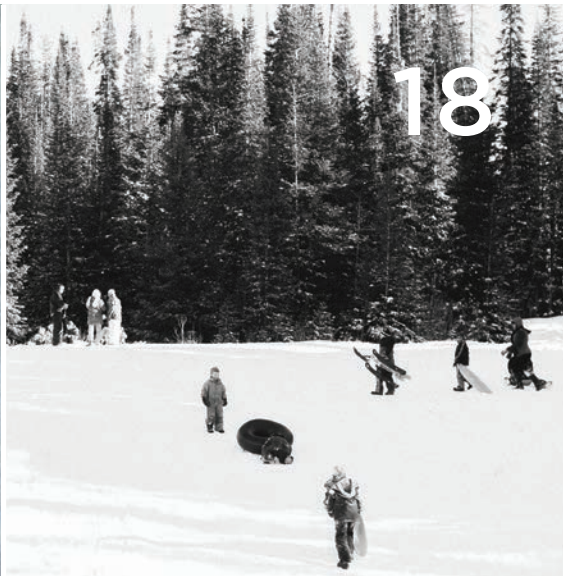
the new is here!

2 Corinthians 5:17

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GRANDPARENTING**
God Redeems All Things

CAPTURING THE SEASON

You ARE LOVED RAG WREATH

IN THE ENVIRONMENT OF *LOVE & RESPECT*

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- heart wreath form
- fabric and ribbon—red and white ticking fabric, muslin fabric, lace ribbon, blush- and plum-colored ribbon, large knitting yarn, etc.
- scissors

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Cut and tear the material in both 7" x 1" or 7" x 1 1/2" strips. No perfection necessary or even desired. The frayed fabric adds to the charm of a rag wreath.
2. Starting at any point on the heart form, simply wrap a strip of fabric or ribbon around the form and tie it in a single knot.
3. Repeat the process, alternating fabric and ribbon until the entire form has been covered.
4. For the most part alternate the ticking stripe and muslin, and space the ribbon, lace, and yarn farther apart in random patterns.
5. Display your wreath in a prominent spot in your home as a reminder of God's great love for you and your family!

Allow this wreath to serve as a reminder to you and your family that God's love for us is constant, unwavering, and enduring—there is absolutely nothing we can do to increase the love God has for us. He takes our worthless offerings, just like these rags, and makes them into something beautiful.

by Debbie Guinn

Debbie has more than 30 years of experience working in children's and family ministries. She is passionate about equipping parents to share God's truth with their children in the natural rhythm of daily life. She is a Southern California girl who transplanted to Austin, TX, to be closer to her five grandchildren. She spends her free time perusing antique stores and flea markets for interior design treasures.



THIS IS HOW GOD SHOWED HIS LOVE AMONG US: HE SENT HIS ONE AND ONLY SON INTO THE WORLD THAT WE MIGHT LIVE THROUGH HIM. THIS IS LOVE: NOT THAT WE LOVED GOD, BUT THAT HE LOVED US AND SENT HIS SON AS AN ATONING SACRIFICE FOR OUR SINS. DEAR FRIENDS, SINCE GOD SO LOVED US, WE ALSO OUGHT TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER. —1 JOHN 4:9-11



CONVERSATION STARTERS



Get to Know You Trivia

IN THE ENVIRONMENT OF *KNOWING*

This fun dinner-table game will help you and your children get to know more about each other. Through intentional listening, you will create an environment where your children know you are genuinely interested in them and care about what they have to say. It will take a little creativity, but the dividends will be well worth it!

by Debbie Guinn

get your family talking

WHEN YOUR FAMILY GATHERS ...

EACH OF THE KIDS WILL TEST THE ADULTS WITH FOUR QUESTIONS.

For example:

1. What do I usually play at recess?
2. Who are my two favorite school friends?
3. What is my favorite story from the Bible?
4. What is my least favorite food?

THEN, THE ADULTS WILL TEST THE KIDS WITH THEIR OWN FOUR QUESTIONS.

For example:

1. Where was I born?
2. When did I ask Jesus to be my Savior?
3. Where were my parents born?
4. What cities have I lived in?

**MAKE UP MORE QUESTIONS ON YOUR OWN TO
CONTINUE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT EACH OTHER.**



WORSHIP

HOSPITALITY IN *Transition*

IN THE ENVIRONMENT OF *FAITH COMMUNITY*

Change. How does that word hit you? Maybe you love it. Maybe you loathe it. Maybe you're in a place of really good, desirable change. Maybe you are still being affected by tragic or unwanted change that was thrust upon you.

The people of God are not immune to change, but there is one powerful tool that I think we neglect far too often to help us through change: hospitality. If you would, right now slow down your reading to engage in a moment of reflection on this question: was there ever a time when your life was in major change and transition and someone asked you out or invited you over for a meal? For me, the first time I realized the power of hospitality in the midst of change and transition was living in Portland, OR, after graduating college. That summer all of us grads were scrambling to land full-time jobs, figure out housing, and get settled into an adult life. The growing pangs were intense.

But oh, the sweet haven of one family's hospitality. Once a week during those initial post-graduation months, a friend's parents had us over for dinner and game night. They nourished our bodies with food and our souls through conversation. They loved us, listened to us, and supported us holistically through an acute season of change.

I cannot imagine what change would have been like for the disciples after Jesus was crucified and buried. In the gospel of Luke, chapter 24, we have an outsider perspective on this. As readers we know that Jesus is risen, but the disciples on the road to Emmaus were still in the dark. And there they

were on that road, processing all this life change with a stranger. Then they do this thing—they offer hospitality to Jesus. He stays and eats with them that evening. Then He does this thing, because any table where Jesus is present is a table where Jesus is host. "After he took his seat at the table with them, he took the bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Their eyes were opened and they recognized him" (Luke 24:30-31 CEB).

God is seen and subsequently worshipped when we participate in hospitality. Our hearts need to be heard as much as our stomachs need to be filled. We need the space to fellowship over a meal, to process change, to feel the collective support of the faith community. When we host well through listening, loving, and providing for another, we do more than host. We commune with the host, Christ Himself. This model of "love feasts," as Jude puts it, moves our hospitality and fellowship beyond just a meal and into a recognition that Christ is present, Christ is ministering, and ultimately Christ is worshipped.

by *Evan Reedall*

Evan is Pastor of Marriage and Family Ministry at New Life Downtown in Colorado Springs, CO. He and Karen have been married for 9 years, and they have two boys, William and Alistair. He is a graduate of Denver Seminary (MA, Pastoral Counseling) and Multnomah University (BS, Biblical Studies and Theology, Psychology). Along with pastoral work, his life is well filled with family adventures, date nights, and good friends.



HOW IS GOD
calling you
TO BE HOSPITABLE?

**HOW IS GOD CALLING YOUR
FAMILY TO HOSPITALITY?**

Think of person or another family that might be new to your city or church. Consider inviting them over to participate in your family night or just a family dinner. When we open our homes to others, it is an offering of worship to God.

**“GOD IS SEEN AND
SUBSEQUENTLY WORSHIPPED
WHEN WE PARTICIPATE IN
HOSPITALITY. OUR HEARTS
NEED TO BE HEARD AS MUCH
AS OUR STOMACHS NEED TO
BE FILLED.”**

Do it!

TRADITIONS

AS GOD LOVES US, WE GIVE LOVE

IN THE ENVIRONMENT OF *SERVING*

Growing up, my mom had a way of filling every holiday with special memory-making traditions. Whether it was decorating a candy house on Christmas Day, beating pots and pans on New Year's Eve, or waking up to breakfast in bed on my birthday, these traditions made me feel valued and loved. Valentine's Day was no different. My mom would deliver chocolates or candy to my school and my dad would send flowers, which I would pretend to be embarrassed by but secretly loved. As I grew older, I received other gifts from boys or friends, but my parents' gifts were always my favorite.

Now that I am raising my own kids, I find myself fulfilling these same traditions but adding my own thumbprint to bring the focus of the season back to God. For instance, Valentine's Day is centered on love, and the greatest example of unconditional, selfless love is Jesus. He showers us with His love and commands us to show that same love to others. John 13:34-35 says, "So now I am giving you a new commandment: love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my

disciples" (NLT). Therefore, rather than only showering my children with gifts, I want them to understand that they are commanded to shower others with His love.

I still give them candy and chocolate because I want them to always feel loved and valued, but I also pick up a stack of blank Valentine-themed cards. At dinner the night before Valentine's Day, I ask the kids to think about the people in their lives whom God may want them to show love to on this special day. I ask them to pray about one person who might be struggling or going through a hard circumstance, one person who has been mean or hard to get along with, and one person who tends to go unnoticed. Once they have their names, everyone writes a card that contains words or Scriptures of God's love. Over the years, God has used these cards in a powerful way.

God is love! He generously pours His love out on His children. It is important for our families to look for ways to represent God's love to others. This Valentine's Day, create a tradition of spreading God's love.

by Holly Newman

John 13:34-35

“HE SHOWERS US WITH HIS LOVE AND COMMANDS
US TO SHOW THAT SAME LOVE TO OTHERS.”

**PRACTICE
KINDNESS**

PRAYER

A PRAYER FOR *Others*

IN THE ENVIRONMENT OF *FAITH COMMUNITY*



“As much as I love gathering with my faith community, I have noticed my lack of commitment to pray for the people I know and see every Sunday.”

I'm always amazed at how God shows up on Sundays as we gather with our faith community. Sunday mornings at the Heinen house are very predictable. My husband and I take turns watching our son and getting ready. Then we leave for church. My husband is an usher so we arrive early, but I don't mind because then everyone comes up to me and coos over our sweet boy. We are totally those people who have a "spot" in church and everyone knows it. People come over and smile at Jackson and tell us how much he's grown week after week. These are our people. This is our church.

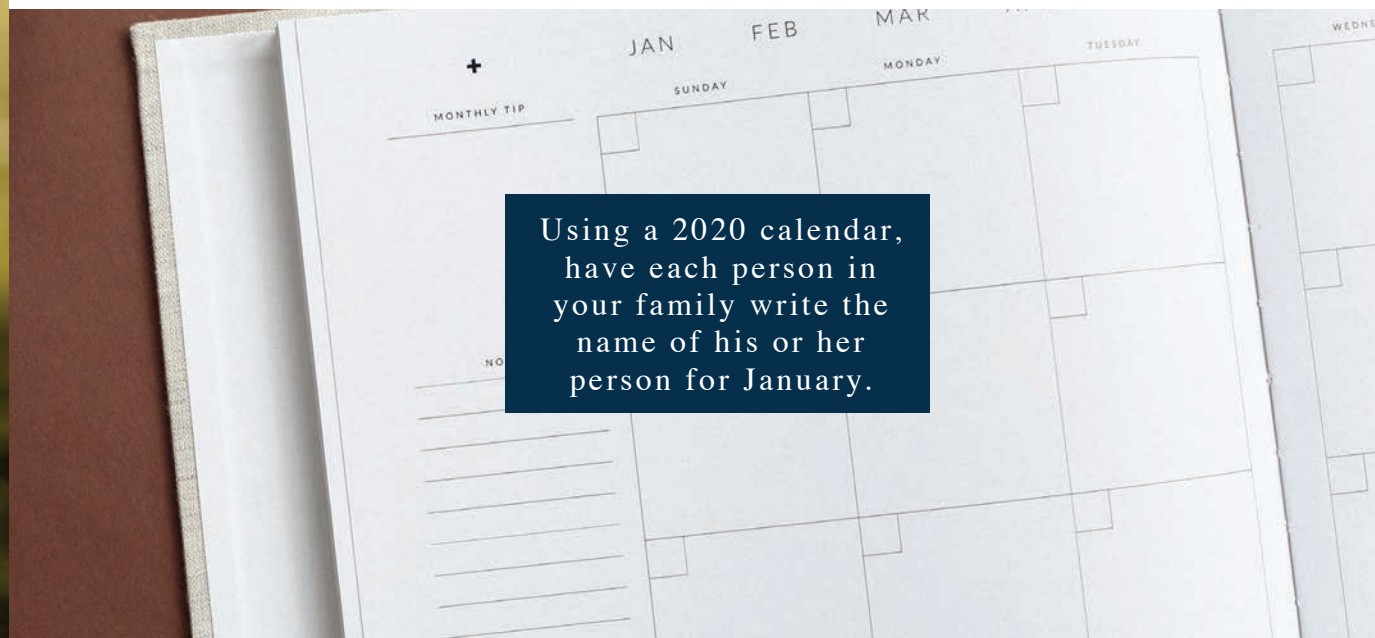
But as much as I love gathering with my faith community, I have noticed my lack of commitment to pray for the people I know and see every Sunday. **I want to be better at praying for the people in my church, and the beginning of a new year is a perfect time for a fresh start.** Would your family consider joining me in this new beginning?

I thought a fun way to pray for my church community would be to have everyone in my family pick one person we regularly interact with at church—for my son maybe a nursery worker, for my husband a fellow usher, and for me one of the moms I run into in the Family Room. We will each pick one person for January and commit to pray for that person for the whole month. Does that sound good to you too? Using a blank 2020 calendar, have each person in your family write the name of his or her person for January. Find a time that works for you to lift these people up in prayer. Your family can decide what this looks like; maybe you ask that person for one prayer request or you just listen for how the Spirit leads. At the end of the month, tell each person that you have been praying for him or her throughout the month.

Just think of the ways our faith communities will be blessed through the prayer they will receive. For my family of three, we will have prayed for 36 different people by the end of the year. Imagine what God will do through all of us loving people in our churches in this way.

by Krista Heinen

Krista is wife to Greg, mom to Jackson, and friend, encourager, and pastor to many. After more than five years of working in a variety of family ministry roles she now has the privilege of getting to stay home with her son. Krista continues to minister through momming, writing, speaking, and encouraging others in their faith journeys.



STORYTELLING

LET'S GO
SLEDDINGIN THE ENVIRONMENT OF *STORYTELLING*

Gracie slowly opened her eyes and stretched out on her warm, cozy bed. Then, she remembered it was Saturday, which meant her dad had the day off and they were going to go on an exciting adventure! She quickly pulled her feet out from the safety of her blankets and slipped them inside her fuzzy slippers.

She rushed down the stairs and, through the sliding glass door, saw a fresh layer of smooth, undisturbed snow.

At that moment, Gracie's dad walked into the room. "Good morning, Gracie girl!" he said as he got out two cereal bowls for their breakfast. "Did you see the snow we got last night?"

"Yes!" she answered as she sat down at the table. "It is so beautiful. Are we going to get to go out in the snow for our adventure today?"

"We sure are! How about we go sledding after breakfast?"

"Oh Dad, really?! I'm so excited!"

After breakfast, Gracie and her dad bundled up, grabbed their sleds, and made their way to the

neighborhood park. As they got closer and closer to the big sledding hill, Gracie began to feel more and more scared. What if she fell off her sled and got hurt? What if the other kids laughed at her?

"Dad?" she said nervously, "I don't think I can do this. Maybe we should just go home."

"Gracie girl, why? What's wrong?" her dad asked.

"Well," she said, "I'm too scared. I don't want to get hurt, and I don't want the other kids to see me and laugh at me. Please, can we just go home? It's safe there!"

"Honey, if I thought that's what you really wanted, then I would say yes. But you were really excited about sledding this morning, and I think you still are! Don't let your fear keep you from experiencing something amazing. Do you think you can be brave and go down the hill if I ride on your sled with you?"

Gracie thought about it for a moment. "Well, I guess if you are with me, I can be brave and sled down the hill!"



“Wonderful!” her dad said. “Let’s sled!”

During dinner that night, Gracie told her mom and baby brother all about the sledding adventure. After that first time she braved the hill, she rode her sled down so many times she lost count! It was so much fun.

“You know, Gracie,” her dad said as he was tucking her in for bed that night, “Our adventure today reminded me of something God told His people, the Israelites, when they were about to enter a new land. He said to them, ‘Be strong and very courageous ... Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go’ (Joshua 1:7, 9). They could have easily given in to the fear they probably were feeling, but God told them to be courageous, and you know what?”

“What, Dad? What happened?”

“They were! They trusted that God was with them, and because of that, they were able to experience His goodness in new and exciting ways. Just like you were brave today and got to experience the thrill of

sledding. And you remember how I was with you on the sled? Your heavenly Father promises to be with you wherever you go. In the familiar things, and in the new and sometimes scary things, God is always with you, and His Spirit will help you be strong and courageous!”

“Thanks, Dad!” Gracie said. “I’m so excited for our next Saturday adventure.”

by Kendra Baker

Kendra has the privilege of being the PreK/K Discipleship Coordinator at New Life Church in Colorado Springs, CO, where she loves watching kids fall in love with Jesus and learn to hear His voice. In her free time she can be found spending time outside, playing games, adventuring with her friends, or curled up with a cup of coffee, her cat, and a good book.

CREATE

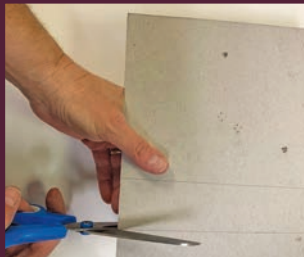
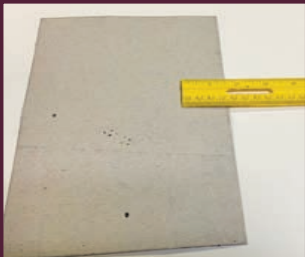


FAMILY

Worship

SHADOW BOX

IN THE ENVIRONMENT OF *OUT OF THE COMFORT ZONE*



Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.
—Romans 12:1

The idea of sacrifice messes with my ideal of comfort. Graciously, God has shown me that living life with comfort as my goal produces a shriveled heart and mind. As I submit to God’s definition of comfort, I must reconcile with stepping out of my comfort zone into a life of sacrifice.

Offering ourselves as living sacrifices can start with asking God to create a clean heart and renew a right spirit within us (Psalm 51:10). Together as a family, create a Heart Shadow Box for a worship response opportunity throughout the next month.

WHAT YOU’LL NEED

- (2) 25" x 7" black frames (dollar store)
- small wooden hearts
- small display easel
- scissors
- E6000 glue
- pencil
- ruler
- small basket or bowl
- markers

WHAT YOU’LL DO

1. Take frames apart and set glass aside.
2. Gently remove hanging hardware and stand from both frame backs. There will be small holes from removal. This is fine.
3. Turn one frame back over to work from the lightly colored side. You will be making the first two shadow box extension pieces from the longest sides of this frame back.
4. Measure one inch from the longest edge and draw a line using the ruler (do this twice).
5. Carefully cut on the line to make a long extension strip (do this twice).

6. Repeat directions on the second frame back, using the short side edges this time.
7. Once you have the short sides, cut slit in one of the pieces big enough to insert your wooden hearts.
8. Replace glass in frames.
9. On one frame, glue each cardboard piece into matching frame edges, making sure black sides are facing out.
10. Repeat last step with second frame and press to secure your completed shadow box.

HOW YOU’LL USE IT

Set the shadow box on the display easel and place it in a prominent spot in your home along with the basket filled with wooden hearts. Put the markers in the basket. If you have younger children you may want to use washable markers.

To introduce this family worship response, gather at the shadow box. Keep a Bible nearby to read and talk about Romans 12:1 and Psalm 51:10. Explain that for the next month, your family will be able to worship each day by asking the Lord to create clean hearts in them.

Each person will color or write his name on a wooden heart and place it in the shadow box. This response serves as a physical reminder that every day is an opportunity to say yes to God.

by Laurie Bennett

Laurie has a heart to disciple children by creating environments to allow them to practice hearing God’s voice and leading them to respond in worship to who God is. She enjoys each moment spent with her family along with camping and hiking. Laurie has been involved in children’s ministry for over 20 years and is currently the Director of Early Childhood at New Life Church in Colorado Springs, CO.

GAME TIME

BIGGER *and* BETTER

IN THE ENVIRONMENT OF *OUT OF THE COMFORT ZONE*

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- small item such as a penny or paper clip

BEFORE YOU START

This game does not require much prep as it takes place in your neighborhood and/or community and you only need one item to get started. Think through an area where you would feel comfortable walking or driving with your family and interacting with potentially unknown people. You may choose to go door to door in your neighborhood or venture out into local shopping centers. Once you've decided where to play, grab your small item and you're ready!

TIME TO PLAY!

Gather your family and show them the small item you have chosen to start the game. Explain to the group that, together, you are going to travel around your neighborhood and/or community in an attempt to trade this item for something "bigger" and "better."

If you are in a local shopping center, for instance, you might walk into a donut shop first. You will explain the game you are playing and show the people behind the counter the small item you are starting with (we'll say it's a penny for this example). You will then ask if they have anything bigger and better they'd be willing to trade for the penny. Don't necessarily ask for anything specific (unless of course they ask you for examples). You may end up trading for a cup or donut hole in this particular example.

Regardless of what you get, you'll take that item and move on to the next place, repeating what you've just done in the place before.

You'll want to decide on an end time for the game. The challenge will be to make as many trades as you can in the assigned amount of time. Once the game is finished, it's always fun to talk about all the trades you made and funny moments along the way.

FOR BIGGER FAMILIES/GROUPS

If your family is big or you decide to play with family friends or your life group, you may choose to split up into teams. Each team must start with the same items and the game is played the same. The only difference is now you are competing against one another to see who returns with the truly bigger and better item.

by Heather DePartee

Heather worked in children's ministry for seven years and now teaches first grade. She lives in Clovis, CA, with her husband, Adam, and their daughter, Isla. She loves pizza, houseplants, and laughing.

A close-up photograph of a person's hands, wearing a dark, textured sweater, holding a large stack of coins. The hands are cupped together, and the coins are piled high, filling the palms. The background is blurred, showing a wooden surface. The lighting is warm and soft, highlighting the texture of the sweater and the metallic sheen of the coins.

REMEMBER!

The start of the new year is always filled with buzz about New Year's resolutions and "new year, new you" talk. During these months, as we reflect on new beginnings and fresh starts, it is important to be reminded of the greatest new beginning we will ever have. This new beginning is the one we have in Christ. We were once dead and were made alive in Him! No game will ever properly compare to this completely undeserved gift. But as you reflect on starting with a penny and turning it into something "bigger" and "better," let it remind you that we started out much like the penny, and we would have stayed much like the penny had Jesus not come as our Rescuer!

Fresh Idea
FOR
THE NEW YEAR



READY TO TRY SOMETHING NEW IN THE NEW YEAR? THESE CHICKEN AND CORN BREAD CUPCAKES WILL BE A SAVORY SURPRISE FOR YOUR FAMILY!

FAMILY TIME RECIPE

CHICKEN AND CORN BREAD CUPCAKES

PREP: 20 min.	COOK: 20-25 min.	YIELDS: 12 muffins
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* For an easy metric conversion chart, search the Internet for "metric kitchen."

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- corn bread muffin mix and ingredients needed to make them
- 2 large boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 2 eggs
- 1 1/2 cups panko bread crumbs
- 6 Yukon Gold potatoes
- 1/4 cup heavy cream
- 1/4 cup butter, melted
- 3 tablespoons cream cheese
- dry packaged gravy mix or 1 can chicken or turkey premade gravy

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Preheat oven to 400° F.
2. Mix and bake the muffins according to package directions.
3. Cut chicken breasts into nugget sized pieces—there will be extras
4. Beat the eggs and add 1 to 2 tablespoons water.
5. Dip chicken breast pieces into egg mixture and roll in the panko bread crumbs.
6. Salt and pepper (nuggets) to taste.
7. Lightly grease (or prepare) the baking sheet before placing the nuggets to bake.
8. Bake for 20-25 minutes flipping nuggets half-way through baking time
9. Peel and cut the potatoes into small cubes.
10. Drop into salted boiling water and cook until tender.
11. Drain and transfer potatoes to a mixing bowl.
12. Add cream, melted butter, and cream cheese and whip the potatoes.
13. Place a scoop of the whipped potatoes on top of each corn bread muffin (like frosting).
14. Stick one chicken piece into each scoop of potatoes.
15. Warm the gravy in a small saucepan.
16. Drizzle the gravy over the chicken and potatoes.
17. Serve warm.

by *Debbie Guinn*

HOT CHOCOLATE COOKIE CUPS

THIS TWIST ON A CUP OF HOT CHOCOLATE WILL BE A DELICIOUS ADDITION TO YOUR WINTER MENU. HAVE FUN WITH YOUR KIDS AS YOU MAKE THESE COOKIE CUPS TOGETHER!

PREP: 20 min.	COOK TIME: 14 min.	TOTAL TIME: 34 min.	YIELDS: 24 cookie cups
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* For an easy metric conversion chart, search the Internet for "metric kitchen."

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 1 package refrigerated sugar cookie dough
- 1/2 cup heavy whipping cream
- 2 tablespoons hot cocoa mix
- 1 cup semisweet chocolate chips
- 1/2 cup white chocolate chips
- 12 mini pretzels
- 1 cup marshmallow bits
- 1/2 cup granulated sugar

WHAT YOU'LL DO

Cookie Cups

1. Preheat oven to 375° F and grease a mini-muffin tin.
2. Roll the sugar cookie dough into balls, 1 tablespoon at a time, and then roll the balls in the granulated sugar.
3. Place the dough balls into 24 greased mini-muffin cups.
4. Bake for 12 to 14 minutes.
5. Allow the cookies to cool completely in the pan before gently removing them. The cookies should naturally dip to create the "cup."

Chocolate Ganache

1. In a small saucepan, bring whipping cream to a boil.
2. Stir in hot cocoa mix.
3. Pour the hot cream mixture over the semisweet chocolate chips and let it sit for 3 minutes.
4. Stir until the chocolate chips are melted and the ganache is smooth.

Cup Assembly

1. Break the loops off of the mini pretzels to use as handles.
2. Melt the white chocolate and use it to attach the pretzel handles to the cookie cups.
3. Spoon the chocolate ganache into the cookie cups and top with marshmallow bits.
4. For best results, store the cookie cups in the refrigerator.

by Debbie Guinn



Winter fun
FOR
THE FAMILY

GOD'S WORD

FRESH STARTS

IN THE ENVIRONMENT OF *RESPONSIBILITY*

EVERYONE LOVES A FRESH START. WHEN WE FAIL OR FALL SHORT OF OUR EXPECTATIONS OR OTHERS' EXPECTATIONS OF US, WE WANT A DO-OVER.

As we enter a new year, many people find themselves making New Year's resolutions. They are resolving to do things differently or change their habits, often in the areas of exercise and food, but also in the area of spiritual disciplines such as Bible study/reading, going to church, or praying.

One such resolution can be to have meaningful time in God's Word together as a family. We hope that this simple article on God's Word will help you take time for the things that matter most.

Our kids are listening to what we say AND what we do. This is why we have designed this article with a Hear It section to read God's Word and a Do It section that allows for questions and then an action plan for moving forward. In the Bible, the author James tells us to not just be "hearers" of God's Word but to be "doers" of what it says also (1:22 KJV).

Practically speaking, this month's passage reminds us that the only way we can truly have a fresh start is to commit our lives to Christ and accept His gift of forgiveness. When we do this, we receive the ultimate new beginning. God's Word tells us that our past is literally gone; it's as if it never happened. What a gift that is! He also expects us to be responsible to share this incredible gift with others.

Gather your family and read the Hear It section together. Then take a few moments to walk through the Do It section together. May God bless your new year and the fresh starts He has for each of you.





HEAR IT

2 Corinthians 5:17-21 (ESV):

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Not only has God given us a new life and reconciled us back to Himself, He has also asked us to spread that message to others. We are responsible to make sure that the same grace and forgiveness that has been offered to us is offered to those we know and love.

DO IT

Discuss these questions together as a family:

- What does it mean that “in Christ” the old is gone and the new has come? What is “old”? What is “new”? (Our old way of living and our sin is “old,” and our new life in Christ and a forgiven heart is “new.”)
- How does this change the way we now live our lives? (We live our lives to honor God in all we do and say and allow God’s Spirit to guide us in all things.)
- What responsibility do we have after we have been forgiven by God? (To help spread the good news to others.)
- Have you ever received your new life in Christ by asking Him to forgive you of your sins and to live your life for Him from now on? If not, would you like to pray and do this now?

You can pray this simple prayer today:

“Dear Lord Jesus, I know that I have sinned, and I ask for Your forgiveness. I believe You died for my sins and rose from the dead. I turn from my sins and choose to follow you with my whole heart and life. I want to trust and follow You as my Lord and Savior from this day forward. In Your name, amen.”

by Michelle Anthony

TOT TIME RHYME

TOT TIME RHYME

THESE COMMANDMENTS THAT I GIVE YOU TODAY ARE TO BE ON YOUR HEARTS.
IMPRESS THEM ON YOUR CHILDREN. TALK ABOUT THEM WHEN YOU SIT AT HOME AND
WHEN YOU WALK ALONG THE ROAD, WHEN YOU LIE DOWN AND WHEN YOU GET UP.
—DEUTERONOMY 6:6-7



*I am new in Christ, hooray
The old is gone and now I know
I am new in Christ, hooray
Jesus loves me so*

*I can live for Christ today
He changes me and now I know
I can live for Christ today
And let His love be known*

*I will trust in Christ each day
He lives in me and now I know
I will trust in Christ each day
He helps me, this I know*

THIS IS SUNG TO THE TUNE OF
“MARY HAD A LITTLE LAMB.”

 Get the audio recording of this song at
bit.ly/wintertottimerhyme



by Evie Swart

Evie has been in children's ministry for more than 20 years and is the Midweek Director for Family Ministries at New Life Church in Colorado Springs, CO. She enjoys traveling with her family and eating spicy food. She is passionate about teaching God's Word and wants children and families to have a life-transforming experience with Christ.

sung by Casidey Swart

Cassidy Swart is a first year student at the University of Colorado Colorado Springs. She leads worship for weekend services as well as leads the student arts program for New Life Church.

BLESSING

A NEW YEAR BLESSING

IN THE ENVIRONMENT OF *IDENTITY*

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.

I love fresh starts. Clean slates. Each new year comes chock full of promise, potential, and the hope of change. It's such a great time to start new traditions or come back to healthier and more fruitful rhythms of life that have long been forgotten. Each time January rolls around, it brings with it a much needed chance to reset, realign ourselves, and reorient our families around what's most important.

One thing that's easily lost in the shuffle of life is taking time to slow down and speak words of blessing, truth, and encouragement into our children. As parents, we have the privilege of reminding our kids every day of their identity. In fact, it's more than that. We are the greatest influence in our children's lives, and our words actually impact and shape who our kids will become, for better or for worse. Children internalize the messages they hear from their parents, and these become the tapes that run through their heads even into adulthood.

I specifically challenge you to write your own blessing for your kids this year. You might write one for the whole family, or you might choose to write a customized blessing for each child. Take some time to pray about it and thoughtfully write out the words so you don't forget them.

In our home, we wrote a blessing that we say when we put our daughter to bed. We had the words

printed on a giant canvas so we could hang it above her crib as our reminder. Each night we bless her with these words: "Eva Lynette Schulz, may you know that God loves you, that He's always with you, and may you become all that He's created you to be."

You can use our family's blessing to get started if it would be helpful, but my encouragement is this: Blessings don't have to be complicated. They can be really simple. The best blessings are the outpouring of your heart, communicating your deepest desires for what you want your children to know and become. Come up with your own blessing and then speak it over your kids at least once a day for the next two months (and hopefully beyond). As the words become familiar to your kids, I pray they will internalize your message and that God will use your words to help instill in them a richer sense of their identity in Him.

by Emily Schulz

Emily is wife to Phil and mom to baby Eva. She serves as the Family Ministries, Women's Ministry, and Discipleship Pastor at New Denver Church in Denver, CO. Emily has her MDiv from Denver Seminary and her BA in Christian Ministries from Biola University. Her current hobbies are the same as Eva's: all she wants is for someone to feed her and let her sleep!

TAKING ACTION

VOLUNTEER AS A FAMILY:

Meet the
MOERMANSIN THE ENVIRONMENT OF *SERVING*

On any given Sunday, you can see this amazing family checking kids into classrooms, reading a book to a circle of children, jumping up and down in worship, teaching a short lesson to a group of four year olds, or sitting quietly for prayer time. The Moerman family has served Sunday mornings in Family Ministries at New Life Church in Colorado Springs, CO, for more than five years. Heather and Calen and all the children serve the church during the 9 a.m. service and then attend the 11 a.m. service together. It has become part of their weekly rhythm and they don't see it changing anytime soon.

Just like other families, they live extremely active lives with four kids in sports and extracurricular activities. Their oldest son is a basketball star who has signed on to play with the Air Force Academy. As you can imagine, their lives are busy. Nevertheless, as a family, they have always prioritized attending and serving their local church every week.

WE SAT DOWN WITH THE FAMILY TO GET TO KNOW THEM A LITTLE BETTER.

Q: TELL US A LITTLE BIT ABOUT YOUR FAMILY.

A: CALEN AND I GREW UP IN IOWA. WE ARE COLLEGE SWEETHEARTS AND HAVE BEEN MARRIED FOR 23 YEARS. WE HAVE FOUR KIDS: LUCAS, 18; EMMA, 17; KRYSSA, 15; AND BRENNAN, 8. CALEN IS AN ELECTRICAL ENGINEER AND I AM AN EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT. WE STAY BUSY WITH OUR KIDS' SCHEDULES, WORK, AND JUST LIFE.

Q: WHERE DOES EVERYONE SERVE WITHIN NEW LIFE CHURCH?

A: THE KIDS AND I ALL SERVE IN THREE-YEAR-OLD AND PRE-K/KINDERGARTEN CLASSROOMS. CALEN PLAYS GUITAR FOR NEW LIFE MANITOU SPRINGS AND WOMEN'S ENGAGE.

Q: WHAT MADE YOU DECIDE TO SERVE AS A FAMILY?

A: CALEN AND I WERE RAISED IN FAMILIES THAT SERVED, AND WE FELT IT WAS IMPORTANT TO TEACH OUR KIDS THE SAME. WE KNEW THAT TEACHING OUR KIDS TO SERVE YOUNG WOULD HELP THEM DEEPEN THEIR FAITH, CHALLENGE THEM TO MAKE THEIR FAITH THEIR OWN, AND SHOW THEM IT IS SACRIFICE THAT GOD REQUIRES OF US. WE CAN'T THINK OF A BETTER PLACE FOR OUR CHILDREN TO LEARN SERVANT LEADERSHIP IN THE SAFEST PLACE POSSIBLE, OUTSIDE OF THE FAMILY, SURROUNDED BY PEOPLE WHO WANT ONLY THE BEST FOR THEM. AS PARENTS, IT IS AMAZING TO WATCH YOUR CHILD LEAD OTHER CHILDREN TO FOLLOW JESUS.

Q: HOW HAS SERVING AS A FAMILY AFFECTED YOUR LIFE OUTSIDE THE CHURCH WALLS?

A: MANY OF THE STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS HAVE BECOME OUR "FAMILY." THEY CELEBRATE WITH US AND ARE A GREAT SOURCE OF SUPPORT THROUGH PRAYER AND FRIENDSHIPS. ONE OF THE GREATEST JOYS AS A PARENT IS THAT I HAVE SEEN MY KIDS' CONFIDENCE IN THEIR ABILITIES GROW, ESPECIALLY IN THE WAY THEY QUIETLY LEAD AND IN THEIR ABILITY TO BE GODLY INFLUENCES TO THEIR PEERS.

As the people of God, we are called to be His ambassadors in this world (Matthew 28:19-20). Sometimes that means going on a mission trip or serving at the local homeless shelter. And sometimes that means helping little babies worship, telling a Bible story, or saying a prayer over the future generation of world changers. Although God calls us to serve and lay our lives down for others, He uses these opportunities to help grow our faith, grow our leadership, and grow our kingdom perspective too.

Consider taking action and serving as a family in your local church Family Ministries department and watch how your family begins to know God more.

by Holly Newman



PARTNERING WITH

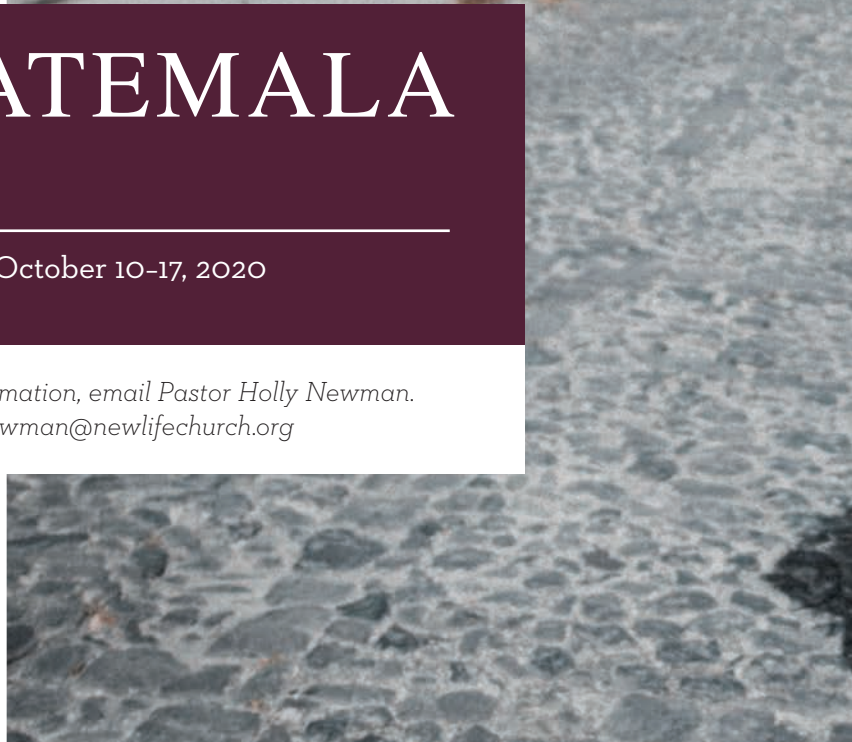
Guatemala



GUATEMALA

October 10-17, 2020

*For more information, email Pastor Holly Newman.
hnewman@newlifechurch.org*



GLOBAL

IN THE ENVIRONMENT OF *SERVING*

In 2015, I was blessed to go on a mission trip to Guatemala with my former coworkers. Our team partnered with the ministry “Manos de Jesus” to take care of widows and orphans in Chichicastenango. We fed the children, played games with them, and shared the gospel every opportunity we received. One of the most impactful parts of the trip, however, was the time spent building houses for widows and their children. Oftentimes, women lose their houses to thieves, fire, or other natural disasters. The ministry provided all the supplies to build a little house where a woman could safely reside with her children. Once the house was built, we offered the family a basket of food and the key to their new home.

I had the privilege of being there when we completed a house. We invited the mother and her children to sit with us as we prayed over her family and their new home. The translator explained that this was her home, a safe place that Jesus had blessed her with because He loves her and cares for her. I remember being overcome with emotion at the sight of the mother walking into the home with tears in her eyes. She didn’t see a tiny space or limited bedrooms. She saw a safe place for her family. She saw two beds where rest would be possible. She saw a new beginning freely given to her. She saw the love of Jesus extravagantly poured out on her.

I have always known that the love of Jesus is powerful and has the ability to change people’s lives. I hadn’t, however, seen tangible change like this before. Because of the time, money, and hard work of others, one woman and her children had a chance at a better life. Our sacrifice provided a place for others to see the possibility of new life—not only physically, but spiritually, too. I want to encourage you, as a family, to pray about going on the family mission trip to Guatemala. God changed my life by serving in a place where the air is dusty and the sun is blazing. I have no doubt He will move in your family in a powerful way as well. Even if your family can’t go, through prayer, may God break our hearts for the families of Guatemala that He has entrusted into New Life Church’s care.

by Shayleen Smith

Shayleen lives in Colorado Springs, CO, with her husband, Zac. She has seen the redemptive power of God in her own life and is passionate about helping others see that same power. She is a dog-loving, flower-smelling, art-making balloon enthusiast who loves to tell and hear stories of all kinds.



STUDENT ID

DIVE INTO THE AWKWARD

IN THE ENVIRONMENT OF *RESPONSIBILITY*

“Dad, what’s porn?”

The question stung his ears and froze his mind, but only for a minute. He had two options. He could shrug and start stammering out a beat-around-the-bush answer, trying to deflect the awkwardness. Or, he could blush but bolster himself in the wisdom of the Spirit to have an honest, no-fluff conversation. The former is easier, but the ease would come at the expense of his son. The latter is an uncomfortable or even painful investment, but it is one that would bring about an exponential return in trust, freedom, and joy between him and his son.

I am glad my dad saw the latter as his responsibility and honor, even though I can only imagine how awkward he must have felt discussing uncomfortable topics. But that’s just it—if he had not pushed through the uncomfortable, I would not have been comfortable coming to him with the next, or the next.

Your middle school student is hearing answers left and right on a range of difficult topics. Are your answers in the mix? Maybe your answer to that question is no. That’s okay! The Father is in the business of fresh starts. If He is making “all things new,” don’t you and I fall within the category of “all things”? Praise the Lord, yes!

As you start this new year, ask the Spirit to guide you to take fresh approaches in engaging your middle school son or daughter. Here are some ways you can take up your God-given parental responsibility of being the primary voice of wisdom in the ears and hearts of your children:

1. Be proactive rather than reactive with these topics.

The world your children are growing up in is an entirely different one than the world we knew at their age. The average age of exposure to porn gets younger and younger by the year,

and access to it is only getting easier. Let them know what’s out there and what other kids might show them or talk about. Take on the responsibility of initiating honest, question-filled conversations about the value of holistic purity. And yes, more than one conversation will be required here.

2. Turn the question on them.

Jesus did this all the time when asked a tricky question. If your son asks you a hard question like “What’s porn?” or “Why do some guys want to be girls?” ask him a simple question to allow yourself some insight into what he already knows: “Great question. What do you think porn is?” Leading with questions shows your student that her thoughts matter and you’re a safe place to bring her questions.

3. Enter their world.

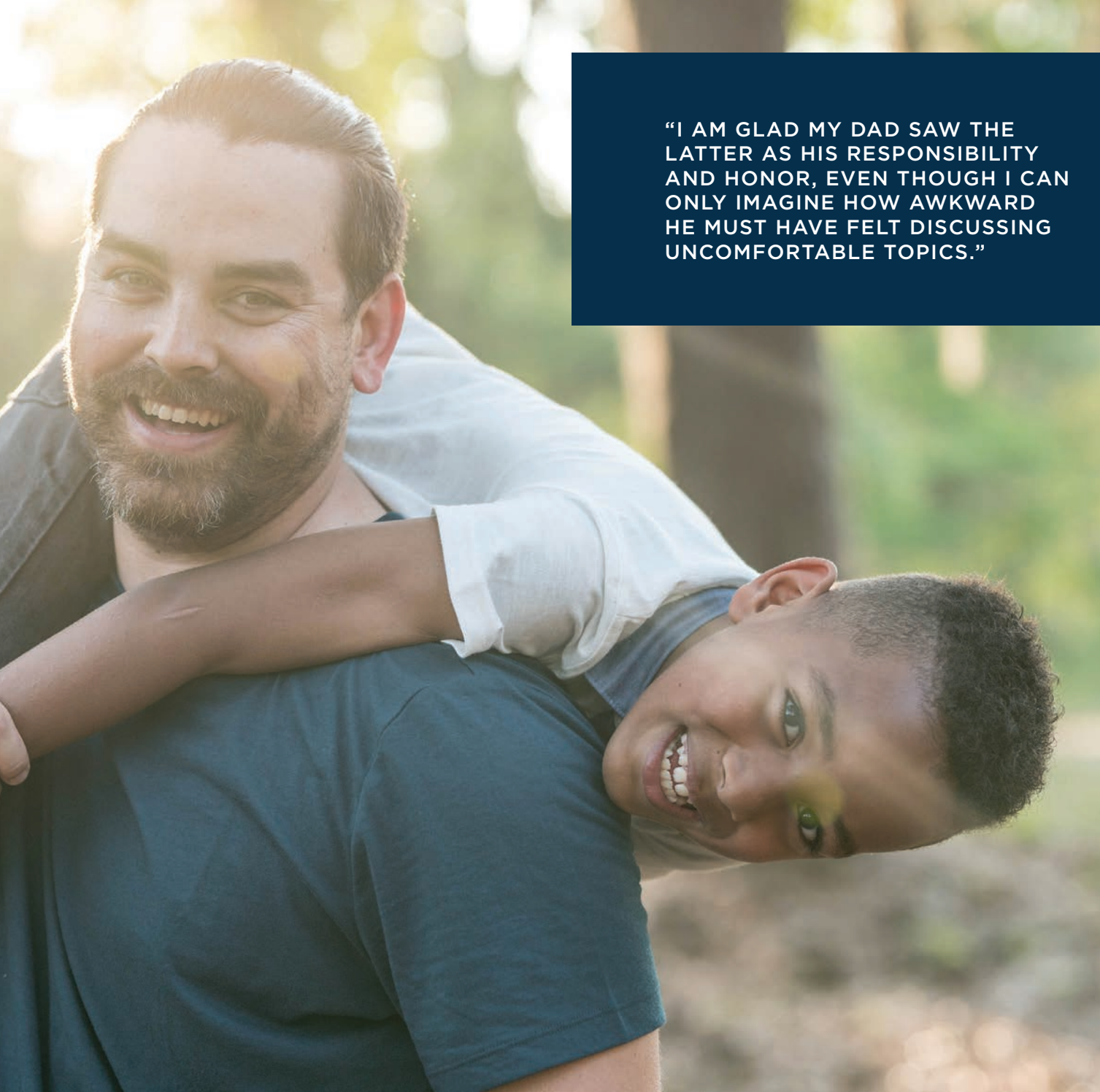
Make it a priority to listen to their music, play along with their video games (or at least try), and even participate in their favorite activities whether you are good at them or not.

Let these suggestions guide you into a fresh start with your son or daughter this new year. It will feel awkward. It will be painful at times. And it will be more rewarding that you could imagine.

May you know our Father has equipped you with everything you need for everything you face as a parent in today’s world. Rest in Him and trust Him to make all things new.

by Chase Windebank

Chase is one of the associate youth pastors at New Life Church in Colorado Springs, CO. He and his wife, Katie, love to inspire each other to learn new skills and to equip and support the next generation in their effort to know God and make Him known. They rarely pass up an opportunity to enjoy being out in the beauty of Colorado.



"I AM GLAD MY DAD SAW THE
LETTER AS HIS RESPONSIBILITY
AND HONOR, EVEN THOUGH I CAN
ONLY IMAGINE HOW AWKWARD
HE MUST HAVE FELT DISCUSSING
UNCOMFORTABLE TOPICS."

KEEPING UP WITH YOUR KIDS

Know what your kids are talking about

The Fall and Rise of Kanye West

A new rapper came onto the scene in 2004 with a groundbreaking album called *College Dropout*.

Kanye West, known as a prodigy of another rap mogul named Jay-Z, quickly became a powerful voice in the rap world, pushing styles, merging genres, and breaking records. Over the next nine years Kanye West's career was on an upward trajectory. In 2013, the public began to see a few cracks in the unstoppable Kanye West. To be clear, this didn't stop his artistry or even prevent him from almost becoming a bigger shoe mogul than rapper. In 2013 Kanye released his line of shoes called Adidas Yeezys that brought together forward fashion, music, and culture into one shoe design. In 2018, Kanye made more money from the sale of his shoes and fashion line than his music.

In a recent interview, West indicated that in 2013 he was struggling with drugs, mental health, and pornography while also exploring faith. This journey developed through the creation of his music, fashion, and messages he communicated through his lyrics and interviews. And then, in the beginning of 2019, West started hosting a church service called "Sunday Service." It started in Calabasas, CA, and has been taken on tour as well as been hosted at The Forum in Los Angeles. Kanye's dream is to build a spiritual retreat center in Montana to use for his church services. In addition to all of this, he released a gospel album on October 25, 2019, titled *Jesus Is King*. He also declared that he will now only sing songs about Jesus.

Kanye West's life has obviously undergone a strong conversion. People are concerned that his faith and walk with Christ is fake, too early, too immature, and so much more. Though we can only go off of what he says and what his actions declare,

much of this may be true. So then, what responsibility do we as parents have toward our kids regarding this pop-culture phenomenon? Most students have at least listened to Kanye's new album. Reviews are mixed as to its musical quality, but it is a clear declaration about Jesus and how He is working in Kanye's life and can work in yours. Ask your children for their thoughts.

Regardless of where Kanye is in his faith journey, many people are more open to talking about faith, music, and Jesus' influence right now. Talk with your kids about God's power; ask them what they think drew Kanye to Jesus. Marvel together at how God meets our deepest needs as humans, even when we have everything the world offers. Ask what might happen if Kanye falls or backslides. Engage your students' thoughts about their own journeys and what to do in the hills and the valleys of their faith. Kanye's journey is certainly more public than most of our journeys, but we Christians are all seeking truth from the same God of the Scriptures and want to see more people come to faith. Let's pray for Kanye and for God's kingdom to advance in our culture and the hearts of our students.

by Jeff and Shara Bachman

What It Is, What It Means is a youth ministry/pop-culture podcast in a rapidly changing world. Join Jeff and Shara as they navigate through the complex world of music, movies, media, and tech to tell you what it is and what it means for you, your family, and your ministry. You can find *What It Is, What It Means* on Apple Podcasts or where you listen to your favorite podcasts.



@whatitiswhatitmeans @jbachma



KEEPING UP WITH YOUR KIDS!

WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

“Sunday Service”

This is the name of the church-styled service Kanye West put on after the recent release of his Christian album “Jesus Is King.” Kanye has been traveling the country, partnering with pastors, and charging \$20 for a time of worship, performance of his song, and gospel-centered teaching. It has been drawing believers and unbelievers across the country.



WHO ARE YOUR KIDS FOLLOWING ON THE TIKTOK APP?

- @LorenGray
- @ZachKing
- @KristenHancher
- @GilmHercroes
- @JacobSartoris

ITUNES 100 CURRENT TOP 5 SONGS

1. “Everything I Wanted” by Billie Eilish
2. “Living Proof” by Camila Cabello
3. “Watermelon Sugar” by Harry Styles
4. “Tongue Tied” by Marshmello x YUNGBLUD x blackbear)
5. “Flames” by Zayn



EQUIPPING RESOURCES

- Technology Monitoring App: www.bark.us
- Podcast on Culture: “What It Is, What It Means” with Jeff Bachman



PARENT CHALLENGE

You may have heard the quote “You become the sum of the top five people you spend time with.” If our students are engaging in screen time more than ever before, the people they are following “virtually” matter. Our challenge for you this month is to start following the people your students are most likely following on various social media platforms. What would it look like for you to begin to understand who is influencing them and then lead your children toward Christ using some of those people’s messages as a springboard?

by Haley Downey

Haley is the Middle School Pastor at Arbor Road Church, Long Beach, CA.

FOLLOW THE VOICE OF THE LORD

IN THE ENVIRONMENT OF *KNOWING*



The Ohio winter was particularly bitter that day. The sky churned like the sea, ice crept across my windshield, the heater couldn't seem to warm my van fast enough and, though I had driven this same road every day for as long as I could remember, the fog made it feel strange and unfamiliar.

When you've lived in the same city your whole life you rarely feel out of place or disoriented. I could make it from point A to point B with my eyes closed. But everything was changing for our family and in just a few weeks we would be moving far away from our friends and family in Ohio to an unknown land called Colorado where I would be joining the staff at New Life Church.

I was terrified.

Our future was as unclear as my foggy van windows and with my physical eyes I could only see so far ahead, though I knew the mission was clear. My four year old, who had been silent for most of the drive, broke the icy air by asking, "Mommy, when are we going on our adventure?"

That's what we had been calling it for the past three months: our adventure. As we packed up each day for strangers to walk through our home, as we sold furniture and looked online for a new house, as we said goodbye to people we had known our whole lives, we spoke mostly of God's surprises and the adventure He has for us. We talked about how He extends our family into new places and spaces; we marveled at how He loves to show us His creation and bring new people into our lives to learn from and minister to as we enter new communities.

Our family members, church, and spiritual mentors all rallied around us as we wrapped up loose ends and prepared for a new season. They wrote our children cards with words of encouragement, threw goodbye parties, and helped us pack up every inch of nine years in our home. It was messy, uncomfortable, new, and so many other adjectives that describe the feeling of stepping out in complete faith.

I thought about giving Selah a big answer to her question, but all that came out was "Just another week, honey."

"I HAVE FOUND GREAT COMFORT AND CURIOSITY IN HOW GOD PREPARES ALL OF HIS CHILDREN IN UNIQUE WAYS FOR THE JOURNEY AHEAD. HE DOESN'T ONLY CALL, EQUIP, AND PREPARE THE ADULTS. HE HAS ALSO CALLED, EQUIPPED, AND PREPARED OUR CHILDREN AS WELL."

I heard her sigh as she shifted in her seat and pulled her blankie up close to her little face. And then she said, "Good, because in my head I heard Jesus say go."

I started to cry as the tangible presence of God filled our van. This van that had taken us all over the city to do ministry together; this mundane van adorned with goldfish crackers, empty McDonald's bags, and something weird growing out of the back seat cupholder that may have originally been cheese.

My four year old heard the voice of the Lord just as clearly as my husband and I had when we first said yes to this new season. She knew God's voice and found it exciting to obey Him despite the unknown. A new beginning for all of us.

I have found great comfort and curiosity in how God prepares all of His children in unique ways for the journey ahead. He doesn't only call, equip, and prepare the adults. He has also called, equipped, and prepared our children as well. With each step of obedience, each act of kindness, each movement into the unknown we demonstrate to our children the beauty of our yes and trust in the One who has asked us to step out of the boat.

The Lord taught me that day that childlike faith can often look like taking a deep sigh, shifting in our seats, pulling our blankets up to our faces and saying, "Good, because I heard Jesus say go." And then falling asleep to the sound of rain on our windows.

by Natalie Runion

Natalie is the Associate Pastor of Women and a worship leader at New Life Church in Colorado Springs, CO. She has been married to her amazing husband, Tony, for 12 years, and they have two daughters, Annabelle (11) and Selah (7). Natalie's heart is to raise up and mentor the next generation of leaders who have a heart for Christ and love for His church.

GOD'S LOVE PASSED DOWN THROUGH A FATHER

IN THE ENVIRONMENT OF *MODELING*

I was born in George, South Africa, a coastal town nestled against the backdrop of the Outeniqua mountains. When I was a youngster, our family frequently made trips into the mountains, and my dad would always tell us to close the car windows because he had the AC running. Still, I loved the wind in my face. I remember telling myself that one day I would let my kids keep the windows open in the mountains and even on the highway! But guess what? I find myself telling my kids the same thing today as we drive around the Rocky Mountains near Colorado Springs.

Our children become who they see we are—not who we tell them to be. A picture is truly worth a thousand words. Fathers play a massive role in raising children and impacting the next generation. Dads impact our lives in many ways but especially in the following areas.

OUR GRASP OF GOD

I remember the story of a second-grade Sunday school class that was asked to draw a picture of God. Little Johnny drew God with only one arm, which the teacher found strange until she met the dad, an amputee. It is not by accident that God primarily refers to Himself as our Father. This is by design, purpose, and intent. All children are born with a biological father. As fathers, our role is to present the Father. We give our children a picture of the love, the character, and the heart of God toward us.

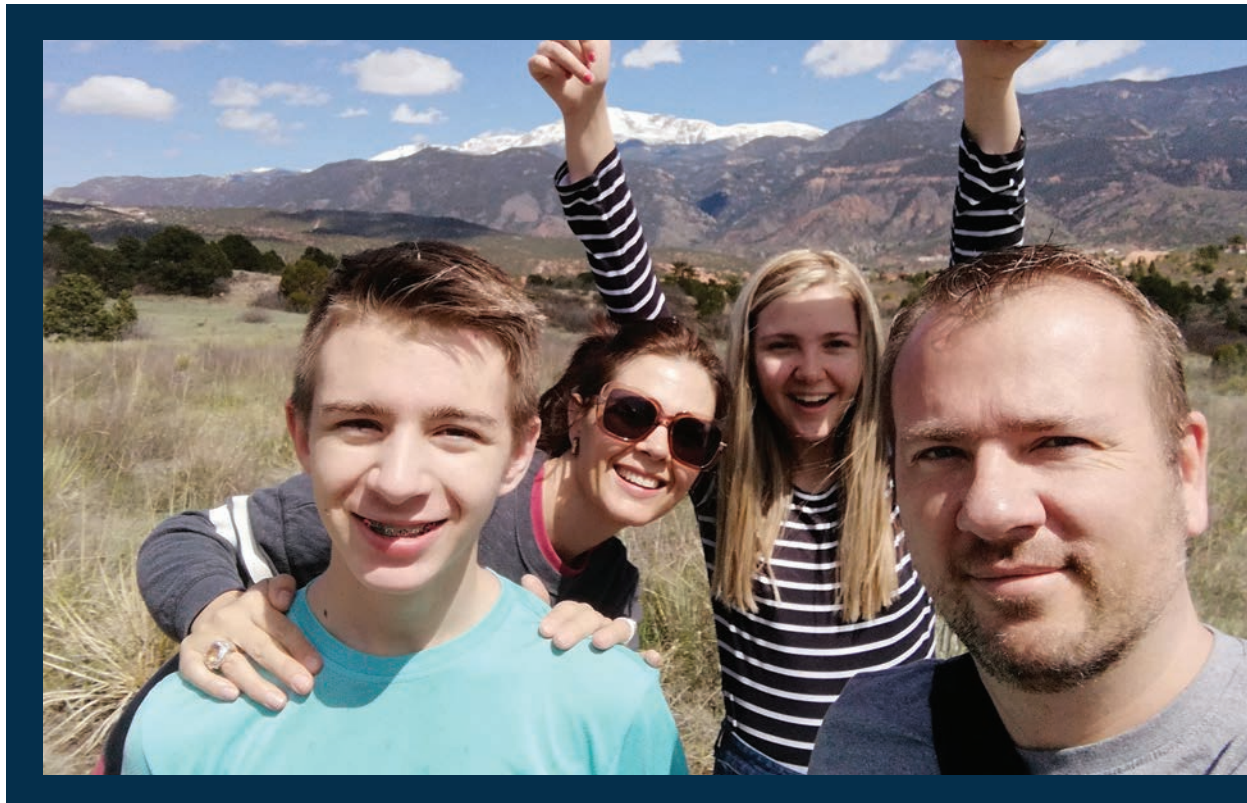
Dads, we are called by God to represent and practically show our wives and our children who He is. We all carry the scars or the joy we experienced from the actions and words that came from our dads. As fathers, let's represent God well.

OUR PURPOSE

“Train up a child in the way he should go [and in keeping with his individual gift or bent], and when he is old he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6 AMPC).

Our children do not belong to us. They are God's, and we have the privilege of being dads and primary influencers for about 16 to 18 years of their lives. God has given us the opportunity to witness the joy and sometimes the sorrow of His kiddos in our homes. Our children are uniquely gifted and we need to ask God for the wisdom to recognize and develop the gifts He has given them to fulfill the purpose of their lives.

Think of growing trees; we are to cultivate an environment for our children to thrive and bear much fruit in. As they grow, we are to bend them and facilitate growth in keeping with their individual gifts. Bend, not break, is our assignment. Unfortunately, many dads do not have an understanding of who their children are, and they try to develop them into something God never intended—and they break.



OUR IDENTITY

In Matthew 3:17, God the Father speaks three things over Jesus: “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.” In the same way, I believe our children need to experience these three things from us as their dads.

- We need to be secure in our own sonship for our children to see that we love them as the Father loves them.
- We need to walk with assurance of our own identity in Christ and confirm our children’s identity in Him as well.
- As we grow in the humility and confidence that comes from knowing that God delights in us, we can communicate to our children that we are pleased with them and that they are enough.

This is no easy task or light responsibility. Still, as we represent Christ to our children, we experience the love, joy, and respect from children who love and adore us as their dads. An unexplainable feeling until you feel it for yourself, and suddenly, we fathers get a glimpse of how much the Father loves us.

by Melton van der Merwe

Melton has been married to Erika for 22 years. They have two children, Daniella (17) and Alexander (15). They moved to the U.S. in 2018 from South Africa for Melton to serve as the Pastor of Local Outreach at New Life Church in Colorado Springs, CO. As a family they love adventure and exploring the outdoors.

TOUGH TOPICS

SPACE *to Heal*

IN THE ENVIRONMENT OF *COURSE CORRECTION*

It's January 15, 2019, and my son, King, and I are waking up in Colorado Springs—in our new home within someone else's home. A new space, our space. It's unfamiliar, uncomfortable, and unbelievably different than two months prior.

Just months before, I was working as an assistant store manager of a massive, widely popular retail store. For a single mom at the age of 25, the income I was bringing in was a dream, and I was already being groomed to eventually move up in the workplace to become a store manager. King and I were fortunate enough to still live at home in my mom and dad's house to save money. Within 20 miles of our hometown, my son had me, his dad and stepmom, both sets of grandparents, godparents, cousins, friends, uncles, and aunties. He had the big family so many of us long for—that I had longed for growing up. With minimal bills, and lots of help, we seemed to be coasting in the dreamy California wine country.

What I failed to see was the toxicity and the absence of God in this situation. I was painfully co-parenting with my son's father, the man who had abused me and put me in the hospital five years earlier. His aggressive mannerisms constantly affected our son, and King was displaying many unfortunate emotions—from aggression to detachment, major tantrums, and all-around signs of trauma. King and I were struggling to connect, and I was struggling to pour anything into him. He spent time with everyone in the family, which meant that he lived with lots of conflicting rules and no consistent structure. I knew something had to change.

Since I had grown up in the church, I began to search for God again. I was constantly asking Him, *God, what am I doing? God, why am I so sad? God, who am I? I began crying out to Him, God, help me!*

In Mathew 11:28 it says, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." Our God is a God of promises, a God of infallible truths. He is a loving God, a caring God, and in these moments, His voice became very apparent to me.


I went to visit a friend in Colorado Springs in November 2018, and God made it clear that this city was going to be a place of rest and healing for King and me. God provided a job and a spacious basement that King and I could call home. God told me to move and I obeyed.

One year later, God has provided a community, church, and space to heal. The decision to move to Colorado Springs came with its challenges. My friends and family disagreed with my decision to move away from their support and even made it challenging to actually leave. When you are a single parent, it is hard to think of a new beginning alone! But when I left my support system, I became dependent upon God. He was and is all I need.

Single parenting is so much more than parenting, so much more than creating a relationship with your child. It wasn't until finding Jesus, until taking that leap and making that choice, that I became a better mom. It isn't always easy. I fall short often, but God fills in the gaps. It's new but it's only the beginning. We have so much to learn, so much room to grow, but, through Christ, there can also be rest in single motherhood.

by Devine Natasha

Devine is a lover of Christ, a lover of life, and a mother to a little King. She has a passion for helping others, and bringing light to the darkness in the world. She enjoys being in community, podcasting for her show "The Divine Journey," writing blogs, and spending time with her little one.

A photograph of a woman driving a car at night. The scene is captured from the passenger side, showing the driver's hands on the steering wheel and her reflection in the rearview mirror. The background is a blurred city street with lights and a person in a red shirt. A white text box is overlaid on the upper left portion of the image.

“WHEN YOU ARE A SINGLE PARENT, IT IS HARD TO THINK OF A NEW BEGINNING ALONE! BUT WHEN I LEFT MY SUPPORT SYSTEM, I BECAME DEPENDENT UPON GOD. HE WAS AND IS ALL I NEED.”

Single Parenting is so hard

MARRIAGE

START THE NEW YEAR

United

IN THE ENVIRONMENT OF *LOVE AND RESPECT*

I have never been a big fan of New Year's resolutions—probably because my resolutions have usually been superficial or related to fitness and food. Several years ago, my husband and I decided that we didn't want to just set a few random goals but intentionally pray, plan, and set priorities for the coming year. Our lives had grown busy with children's schedules and work schedules. That particular January we found ourselves exhausted and feeling like things were out of control in several areas of our lives.

We decided to take 48 hours to be with just each other. During those two days, we would reflect on our relationships with God, marriage, parenting, community, and work from the previous year; then we would pray for and set goals or priorities in those areas for the coming year. Believe me, just getting away for 48 hours was a battle. We had to piece together a babysitting schedule for four kids that was like organizing a small company. Finances and work responsibilities had become difficult obstacles that almost prevented us from going away. We had to fight for it!

We have continued to fight for this time year after year because it is so worth it! I want to encourage you to consider replacing your New Year's resolutions with a committed time to seek the Lord for His plans and desires for the upcoming year. You might not be able to take 48 hours, but take as much time as you can get.

Here is how we structure the weekend. I pray it is a tool that you are able to use in your marriage.

**“WE HAVE CONTINUED
TO FIGHT FOR THIS
TIME YEAR AFTER
YEAR BECAUSE IT IS
SO WORTH IT!”**

PREPARATION

- Read through Scripture passages to bring for the prayer time.
- Write down reflections from the previous year.

SECTION 1: PRAYER AND PRAISE

Open this time with prayer and worship. Spend a generous amount of time praying individually and as a couple. It helps to come up with prayer points before this time and a few Scripture passages to read through. Second, take time to celebrate all that God has done in the previous year through discussion over a meal.

SECTION 2: EVALUATION AND DREAMING

Spend time individually evaluating the previous year and then setting values for the upcoming year. The topics include: relationship with God, marriage, family, friends, and work. Remember, this is the time to dream big, not set limits. The limits come later in the evaluation.

SECTION 3: FINANCES AND SCHEDULE

Money should follow the vision and dreams God is directing for the year. Finances, rest, and rhythms can easily get out of sorts and take constant evaluation to bring balance. This isn't a time to get detailed in your weekly budget but to focus on values that your money and time will follow.

I am happy to share our evaluation document, or check out *The Mountaintop of Marriage* by Jimmy Evans.

by Holly Newman



FAMILY TIME INSPIRE EQUIP SUPPORT

SPIRITUAL GRANDPARENTING

GOD REDEEMS ALL THINGS

IN THE ENVIRONMENT OF *IDENTITY*

"God always has a plan of redemption in mind."

“You’re going to be a grandma ...” These are words every parent looks forward to hearing—unless they come from your unmarried 19-year-old daughter. I had a few seconds to respond, and I clearly heard God’s voice say, “How you respond to this will either bring you together or tear you apart.” My response?

“We love you, and a baby is a blessing no matter what! Our desire is that you would have been married and older before you made this choice, but we will celebrate you and this baby.”

I am so thankful that I listened to the voice of God that afternoon. My relationship with my daughter had been strained, in part because of the many poor choices she had made. But my husband and I had also walked in unforgiveness toward her, and we had been grieving what we had hoped her teenage and young adult years would look like.

The idea that I was going to be a grandma at 45 took awhile to set in. My daughter began texting me questions about pregnancy, and I began to reach out every morning and night to check in. She sent me pictures of her growing belly, and the miracle of a little life took root in my heart. This sweet baby would be here before we knew it and God had a plan for his or her life. The communication with my daughter began to repair a rift in our relationship; our hearts warmed once again to each other and God began preparing my husband and me to be grandparents!

Our sweet Ryker was scheduled to be born on June 19, 2018. My daughter had invited me to be in the birthing room with them, but Ryker’s heartbeat began dropping every time she had a contraction. The nurses looked concerned, and various medical personnel came in to check on my daughter. Soon, we heard that an emergency C-section had to be performed and within minutes they were moving her to the surgery room.

The nurses told me I couldn’t be in the room, but if I stood in one spot, outside the door, I would be able to hear Ryker’s cry as soon as he was out. I planted my feet in that spot and waited. I prayed for my sweet daughter, her boyfriend, the doctors, and nurses, and I prayed most of all for my Ryker. Not long after, I heard a cry come from the other side of the door, and I stood there and wept. This baby that I’d been praying for and had come to love over nine months was here, and my heart was fully in love before I ever saw his face.

God always has a plan of redemption in mind. He was not surprised that my daughter got pregnant; in fact He used that pregnancy to give us a fresh start in our relationship—a new beginning to understand each other, to forgive, and to love each other. It came in a different way than I ever expected, but I am so thankful.

(My sweet Ryker is 17 months now, and he has a precious sister, Ava, who is one month old. My daughter and I text every day, and my husband and I love her husband as one of our own sons.)

by Jeni Mason

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

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.

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:

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.



SPIRITUAL PARENTING:
An Awakening for Today's Families
BY MICHELLE ANTHONY
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