

HomeFront

a spiritual parenting resource

HOLIDAY

Edition



HOMEFRONTMAG.COM

6



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



SPIRITUAL PARENTING:
An Awakening for Today's Families

BY MICHELLE ANTHONY

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A NOTE FROM MICHELLE



HomeFront magazine is designed to help parents and grandparents disciple their children and grandchildren by creating environments in their homes that put God and His character on display. Each issue is created to give 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.

The Holidays are upon us! If you are like me, I see the holidays as the perfect time to be with my family and create meaningful traditions that point to Jesus. In this month's holiday edition of HomeFront Magazine, we provide you with the framework to do create an environment to put faith on display in the midst of a busy season.

Maybe you have been thinking about what it means to spend time in God's Word together as a family, how to share a meal when schedules are demanding, or even begin the lifelong tradition of blessing your children and praying with them and for them. These spiritual practices are not only significant during a time of Thanksgiving and Advent, but they proclaim the goodness of God and His presence among us, all year long.

Set aside some time now to be intentional about the way that you enter the sacred space of Thanksgiving and Christmas with your family members. The investment you make over these next several weeks will pay dividends and faith formation for a lifetime. May God bless

you as you assume the role of spiritual leadership, and build a foundation of loving Jesus together in your home.

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@TruInspiration

WHAT ARE HOMEGROUPS?

We believe parents and grandparents are the primary nurturers of their children's and grandchildren's faith, and we want to inspire, equip, and support you in that endeavor. HomeGroups are an opportunity for you to gather with several other families who are in similar life circumstances and grow together. Your HomeGroup will gather for eight weeks each semester (Fall, Spring, and Summer). This is a time for you to share a meal, learn more about God, engage with each other, and bless your children. HomeFront is the curriculum for our HomeGroups, and each volume contains a full semester's worth of gatherings.

You can still access previous editions of HomeFront magazine at homefrontmag.com. For the holiday season, a special 8 week edition of HomeFront will be available for your family to use in your home. If you would like more information about HomeGroups, or would like to sign up for a group near you, email parents@newlifechurch.org. Thank you for investing in the spiritual health of your family. We hope this magazine will serve as a practical guide for you as you seek to establish a spiritually-rich environment in your home.

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.

HOMEFRONT MAGAZINE A quarterly magazine designed to aid in successful homegroups.

HOMEGROUPS Families meeting in each other's homes to do life together and grow in their relationships with God and each other.

OTHER PARENT COURSES AND EVENTS Throughout the year, we offer special courses and events tailored toward inspiring, equipping, and supporting you as you nurture your children's faith.



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DID *you*
KNOW

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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10 ENVIRONMENTS

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

1 STORYTELLING

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

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.

2 IDENTITY

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

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.

5 OUT OF THE COMFORT ZONE

"God transforms me when I step out in faith."

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.

8 LOVE & RESPECT

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

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.

3 FAITH COMMUNITY

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

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

6 RESPONSIBILITY

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

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.

9 KNOWING

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

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!

4 SERVING

"Asks the question, 'What needs to be done?'"

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!

7 COURSE CORRECTION

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

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.

10 MODELING

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

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

LESSON ONE

1

GOD'S WORD

GOD STATEMENT: God Hears

SCRIPTURE: 1 Samuel 1:11

Have you ever been distraught over an unfulfilled hope or dream? Maybe you have prayed about it, begged God for it, and done everything you can do to try and make it happen, but you still find yourself waiting for it. This is where we find a woman named Hannah in 1 Samuel. Hannah's greatest desire was to have a child, but she was not able to get pregnant. Year after year, Hannah waited for this dream of hers to come true. One day, in her desperation, she went to the temple to pray; she went to God in her hurt and disappointment to ask Him for help.

When we don't get what we long for, we may be tempted to handle our disappointment in different ways. We can get mad at God. We can beat ourselves up. Sometimes, we even blame others for our pain. Hannah shows us the best way to handle our hurts and disappointments as she runs to God and shares her sadness, hopes, and dreams with Him.

Later in the story, we find out that God not only heard Hannah's prayer, but He also answered it in His time with a son for Hannah. Psalm 34:17-18 says, "The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles. The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit." God is not far off; He is close to you and cares how you feel. He hears you when you cry out to Him. He may not always give you exactly what you want or ask for in the way you desire, but He is always working on your behalf and providing you with exactly what you need.

DISCUSSION

- What hope or promise are you waiting for right now? Ask God for His help in waiting and be honest with Him about your hopes and dreams.

2

CREATE

Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

PRAYING HANDS

These adorable Praying Hands remind us God hears and can also be used to decorate during the thankful season! Place one at each dinner place setting. Talk about giving thanks in all circumstances.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- light brown card stock
- scissors
- pencil
- glue stick

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Fold a sheet of card stock in half.
2. Place your hand with your fingers close together on the folded card stock and trace your hand and wrist.



3. Cut out the traced hand while the card stock is folded so you will end up with two hand cutouts.
4. Level the wrist sections off by cutting a nice straight line.
5. Glue the fingertips together.
6. Place the hands on the table with the base spread apart.



L1

3

WORSHIP RESPONSE

Worship Response is a time to respond in a posture and attitude of worship toward God. There are many ways we can actively give our worship to God.

Thankfulness Tree

Thankfulness comes into focus during this time of year.

Oftentimes, at family dinners or friend get-togethers, you might find yourselves going around the table naming the things you are the most thankful for. Perhaps this year, you are full of thankfulness. Or maybe you find you are in short supply. Wherever you find yourself, take time to sit down and give thanks to our big God who, no matter our circumstances, will never leave us or forsake us. Then, as you go about your day, remind yourself of why you are thankful, and encourage others you meet to do the same.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- hand drawn or printed tree trunk image
- leaf cutouts (draw your own, or use pieces of paper)
- tape
- markers or pens

“GIVE THANKS TO THE LORD, FOR HE IS GOOD. HIS STEADFAST LOVE ENDURES FOREVER” (PSALM 136:1).

WHAT YOU'LL DO

- Sit down as a family with all of the items.
- Remember all that has happened over the last year. Talk about the good, the bad, and how the Lord has been with you and shown Himself to you.
- Then write on the leaves things or people or moments you are thankful for. Take turns sharing, and hang them up on the Thankfulness Tree. (Parents, model this for your children by going first.)
- Throughout the day, remember what you wrote, and share it with others, modeling what a thankful heart looks like.

4

BLESS

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.

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 71:15-16

BLESSING:

Precious (child's name), **you are born to tell a story nobody has ever told—your story.** I pray you will believe that your story is worth living and worth telling. The best parts are when Jesus is the hero of your story. May you talk more about Him than about anyone or anything else. I bless you to be a Jesus-storyteller who will remember everything He's done and tell others about Him too.

LESSON TWO

1

GOD'S WORD

GOD STATEMENT: God Is Compassionate
SCRIPTURE: 1 Samuel 1:20

In our last devotion we learned that God heard Hannah's prayers of hurt and disappointment. In today's Scripture we read that "in the course of time Hannah became pregnant and gave birth to a son." Not only did God hear Hannah's prayers, but He also responded. God is compassionate and cares about our hurts and disappointments as well as our hopes and dreams. In this instance, God heard Hannah's prayer, had compassion on her, and answered her prayer for a son. There are times when God doesn't answer our prayers the way that we hope, but He still has compassion on us and comforts us, and as we move through life, we realize that His plan for us was greater than the plan we had hoped for.

In your life, you may have had times where God answered your prayers very specifically and in the way you had hoped for. But maybe there are other prayers you are still waiting for God to answer—maybe even desperate for Him to answer.

We can choose to rejoice and remember God's compassion and faithfulness toward us when our prayers are answered and unanswered. We can choose to remember the times He's been our comforter when we've been sad, our peace when we've been fearful, and our fullness when we've been disappointed. He hears us, has compassion on us, and will answer in His way and timing, which is *always* good.

DISCUSSION

- Have you felt compassion and love from God in seasons when you've been waiting for His promise?
- When He answers your prayers do you remember to go back and praise Him for those answered prayers? When you are still waiting on promises, practice recalling His faithfulness and ask God to show you His love, comfort, and compassion for you.





2

CREATE

As Thanksgiving approaches, one way to begin talking about Thanksgiving dinner etiquette and thankful hearts for God's provisions to chat with your kids while making these adorable turkey brownies. They are yummy enough to share with neighbors!

TURKEY BROWNIES

BROWNIE INGREDIENTS

- 1 package brownie mix, prepared according to package directions
- 1 package candy corn
- 1 package candy eyes

CHOCOLATE FROSTING INGREDIENTS

- 1 stick butter
- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup cocoa
- 3 cups powdered sugar
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup milk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla



WHAT YOU'LL DO

Grab your favorite brownie mix and bake according to the box instructions. Once the brownies are cool, use a round cookie cutter to cut brownies into circles. In a separate bowl, combine butter and cocoa. Slowly add in powdered sugar and milk, alternating just a little at a time until well mixed. Stir in vanilla. Use the icing, candy corn, and candy eyes to make the adorable turkeys in the picture.

Worship and thanksgiving are integrally connected. When we worship God, we're recognizing and thanking Him for who He is and what He's done.

AN ACT OF POETRY

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Thankful Poem from next page
- 1 sheet of paper per person
- 1 pen or pencil per person

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Give each family member a sheet of paper and a pen or pencil.
2. Have them write the numbers 1 through 10 down the side of the page.
3. Read through the following list of 10 fill-in-the-blanks, and have your family members write down the first thing that comes to their minds when they hear each phrase. (Be sure not to compare answers so everyone's poem will be different!)
4. Once everyone has a list of 10 answers, pass out a copy of the Thankful Poem template to each person and have each one fill in the blanks using the answers he or she wrote down.
5. Finally, go around and have everyone read his or her Thankful Poem out loud as an act of worship to God.

FILL-IN-THE-BLANKS

6. Body part, plural
7. Type of flower/plant
8. Season (winter, spring, summer, or fall)
9. Sound a person makes (laugh, sing, talk, cry, sneeze, etc.)
10. Favorite toy
11. Family member who loves to cook (dad, mom, sister, brother, grandma, etc.)
12. Favorite food
13. Favorite fruit, plural
14. Item of clothing, plural
15. Sign of affection, plural (hugs, kisses, cuddles, smiles, etc.)

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.

SCRIPTURE: Colossians 3:15-17

BLESSING:

(Child's name), **may you know that God, the Father, is near to you and hears you.** May you know that not one prayer in your life has been unheard. May you rest in the fact that God is faithful to His promises and close to those who are hurting. May you stand confident that you are seen, known, and loved by God!

Thankful POEM



Thank you, God, for _____ and toes.
(1)

Thank you for the _____ that grows.
(2)

Thank you, God, for _____ each year.
(3)

Thanks that when I _____, you hear.
(4)

Thank you for my _____ and books.
(5)

Thank you for my _____ who cooks.
(6)

Thank you for the _____ I eat.
(7)

Thanks for making _____ so sweet!
(8)

Thank you, God, for _____ to wear.
(9)

Thank you, God, for _____ to share.
(10)

Thank you for the world I see.

Thank you, God, for loving me!

LESSON THREE

1

GOD'S WORD

GOD STATEMENT: God Is Worthy of Worship

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 113; 1 Samuel 2:1-10

Hannah's prayer of praise and thanksgiving provides a model for our own worship.

The word *worship* comes from the old word "worthship." It means to give honor, reverence, and devotion to the One who is worthy. We were created to worship!

God is worthy of worship because of who He is and what He has done. Using the Bible passages above, let's create our own worship psalm to God giving Him thanks!

Who God is: Hannah worships God for who He is. She acknowledges that God is holy (v. 2), all-knowing (v. 3), the author of life (v. 6), the Most High and judge of all the earth (v. 10). God alone is Creator of all, and He loves us unconditionally. He is the eternal God who wants us to live forever with Him. Knowing who God is causes us to worship. Write some things about God's character starting with "God is ..."

What God has done: Hannah also praises God for what He has done. God delivers us from our enemies (v. 1), determines life and death (v. 6), humbles and exalts (v. 7), and provides protection and strength (vv. 9-10). Hannah looked forward to God's promised redemption, but we now have the full revelation of God's salvation. Through faith in Jesus, we receive forgiveness of our sins and a restored relationship with God. Jesus also gave us the gift of the Holy Spirit to live in us so we can live for God! Write down some of the things God has done for you recently!

DISCUSSION

- What are some ways that you can model for others worship and thanks to God?

2

GAME TIME

In this game family members will practice modeling by taking turns leading the others through actions and attitudes.

FOLLOW MY LEAD

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- family members and friends
- creativity

BEFORE YOU PLAY

As parents we have the privilege and responsibility of being living role models for our children. We are imperfect, but we have a perfect Father to imitate! Choosing to follow the example Jesus sets for us will never fail. We will not always get it right, but one of the most important behaviors we model as parents is acknowledging our own shortcomings, asking for forgiveness, and making things right. We must ask ourselves, "What kinds of attitudes and actions do I want my children to imitate?" and "How can I be intentional in the ways I model these things?"

TIME TO PLAY!

Start by inviting everyone in the group to stand in a circle facing each other.

Then pick one person and send her out of the room. While she is out of the room, pick a "leader." This person will lead the others through various actions and attitudes (for example: stamping feet, spinning, standing on one foot, dancing, or singing to show emotions such as happiness, sadness, excitement, anger, etc.). Everyone else in the circle must mimic the leader without giving away who the leader is.

Bring the absent person back into the room and begin the game. Have fun watching everyone imitate the leader (especially if he models some crazy moves).

The aim of the game is for the person who was sent out of the room to guess who the leader is. She gets three chances to guess. When she guesses correctly, she becomes the leader and the leader then becomes the "guesser," and the game continues until everyone has had a chance to be the leader.

3

WORSHIP RESPONSE

Worship Response is a time to respond in a posture and attitude of worship toward God. There are many ways we can actively give our worship to God.

IMAGE BEARER

I'm pretty sure if you asked your children to finish the sentence, "In the beginning ..." they would say "God created." This Scripture is so common, I believe it's lost some of its power. We know that God is the Master Designer and created all things, but we tend to overlook the fact that the only thing He created with His hands was mankind. As God's masterpieces, we bear His image. He gives us our identity and blesses us with unique spiritual gifts and talents (1 Corinthians 12:4-11). Each gift has one purpose and that's to glorify our heavenly Father. As your child gets older you will start to become more aware of these spiritual gifts and talents.

As a parent, you are the primary nurturer of your children's faith (Deuteronomy 6:4-9). You can help them grow in their identities and faith by encouraging them to recognize their God-given gifts and talents. If you are having difficulty seeing your children's giftings, pray and ask God to give you eyes to see. He will help you and your children identify their gifts and will empower

them to operate in them. Remember not to put too much emphasis on the gifts but focus on the gift-giver. Help your child understand that their heavenly Father intentionally placed these gifts and talents in them to build His kingdom.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Index cards
- markers or pens

WHAT YOU'LL DO

- Parents write a gift or talent you see in your child on the index card. Fill as many as you can think of for each child.
- Video yourself holding up the card toward the camera.
- Gather your children and watch the homemade video together.
- Ask you children to share the gift/talent that stuck out to them.

4

BLESS

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.

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 139:13-15

BLESSING:

(Insert child's name), **you are loved by your heavenly Father.** You are chosen, special, and created with a purpose. You are protected, you are strong, and you are honorable. You were made on purpose and have a purpose. You have significance because you are a child of God. When God thinks of you, He smiles!

LESSON FOUR

1

GOD'S WORD

GOD STATEMENT: God Is Faithful

SCRIPTURE: 1 Samuel 3

Hannah was so grateful God had given her a son that she gave Samuel back to God and took him to live at the tabernacle with the priest, Eli. Eli was the last judge of the nation of Israel and the first of the prophets. Samuel was set up for success!

However, things weren't so easy for Samuel. As a child, he only saw his own mother once a year. When we think of God's faithfulness, we often imagine that God will protect us from hardships and make our lives easy. But God never promised us an easy life. Jesus said, "In this world you will have trouble." (John 16:33). So, what can we learn about God's faithfulness through the life of Samuel?

1 Samuel 3:19 tells us that "The Lord was **with** Samuel ... and let none of Samuel's words fall to the ground" (emphasis added). When God tells us to do something, we don't do it alone. Samuel had some challenging messages to deliver, but God strengthened him. We can confidently obey whatever God tells us to do, knowing that He is faithful to be with us.

We can also trust that He will fulfill His promises. Samuel trusted God, even though he didn't receive all that God promised in his lifetime. The book of Hebrews reminds us that through the trials of life, we are commended for our faith in God and His promises. The Lord disciplines us as His sons and daughters for our good that we may share in His holiness. **God is always faithful—even when we can't see the big picture as to how or why He's doing certain things.** We must choose to trust in God's faithfulness and His plans for us. In Him and only Him will we be fulfilled. God is faithful!

DISCUSSION

- What are some of God's promises that you're thankful for today?

2

GREATE

As you observe these beautiful candles at Thanksgiving and throughout Christmas, remember the faithfulness of the Lord.

GLITTER CANDLES

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- five plain candles
- Mod Podge
- sponge brush, 1 per family member
- Mod Podge clear sealer spray
- blue painter's tape

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Using painter's tape, mark off the area on your candles where you will apply glitter. Place the tape at the same height on each candle even though the candles are different sizes. This will ensure that the glitter lines up.
2. Use the sponge brush to apply a layer of Mod Podge on the area you want covered with glitter.
3. Sprinkle glitter over the candle until all of the Mod Podge is covered.
4. Let the candles dry overnight and then spray them with Mod Podge clear sealer spray to keep the glitter from flaking off.

**"IN THE SAME WAY,
LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE
BEFORE OTHERS,
THAT THEY MAY SEE
YOUR GOOD DEEDS
AND GLORIFY YOUR
FATHER IN HEAVEN."
MATTHEW 5:16**



L4

3

WORSHIP RESPONSE

Worship Response is a time to respond in a posture and attitude of worship toward God. There are many ways we can actively give our worship to God.

PREPARING FOR ADVENT

So, what is Advent? Is it just the month of December? Is it an excuse to give a child a gift each day from the Santa Advent wall calendar?

Advent is different from Christmas. Advent is like the 37th week of pregnancy; Christmas is delivery day. In Advent, we are waiting; we hope. The word “Advent” comes from the Latin word *adventus*, which means “coming.” We are in the season of anticipating Christ’s birth, His coming to us.

How do we actively participate in this holy time of year? If we are not intentional, the season slips away and we wistfully recall the scurrying, the busyness, the hustle and the bustle—and miss the joy and the miracles all around us.

WHAT YOU’LL NEED

- an advent wreath (optional)
- five candles (Consider using your glitter candles)

- matches or a lighter

If you don’t already have an Advent wreath, you can buy one premade or make your own. It’s a simple green wreath with four candleholders spread around it and one candleholder set in the middle.

WHAT YOU’LL DO

OVERVIEW: Once a week starting four weeks before Christmas Eve, gather together to remember the story of Jesus.

LIGHTING THE CANDLE: Begin by lighting one of the outer candles, and add a candle a each week.

MEANING AND VERSE: When the candle is being lit, someone shares the theme and meaning of the candle and reads a corresponding verse.

QUESTION: We ask a question about the theme, and everyone shares his or her answer or thought while trying not to repeat somebody else’s answer.

4

BLESS

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.

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 95:1

BLESSING:

(Child’s name), **may you know that God has always been and will forever be faithful.** There has not been one day of your life where God has not passionately pursued you and radically loved you. May you know that the same God who was faithful to speak to Samuel is the same God who is faithful to speak to you, wherever you are. May you have peace in the truth that our faithful, heavenly Father will never leave you or forsake you.

LESSON FIVE

1

GOD'S WORD

GOD STATEMENT: Jesus is Hope
SCRIPTURE: 1 Romans 15:12-13



Four weeks before Christmas Eve we celebrate and remember the hope of the prophets. For over 400 years there was silence and the people of Israel waited in anticipation and hope for the coming of the Messiah.

Light the first candle called the hope candle and enjoy the following discussion.

DISCUSSION

- What are you hoping for? We have hope Jesus is coming again.
- Listen to the song "O Come, O Come Immanuel"
*O come, o come, Emmanuel = Come, come, Jesus**
And ransom captive Israel = And save your people
That mourns in lonely exile here = Who are grieving in a lonely world that's not our true home
Until the Son of God appear = Until Jesus comes
Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel = Rejoice, rejoice, because Jesus
Shall come to thee, O Israel = Will come to you, God's people

*Emmanuel/Immanuel is a name for Jesus, meaning "God with us" (Matthew 1:23).

2

CREATE

"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12).



JARS OF LIGHT

This Christmas season, celebrate that Jesus is our hope and light with these jars of light. May these candles be a reminder in your home that Jesus came to draw all people out of darkness and into His glorious light!

WHAT YOU NEED

- newspaper or something to cover your work space
- mason jar
- 1 cup of Epsom salts
- 1 tablespoon white or translucent glitter
- Mod Podge
- sponge brush

- twine or ribbon
- small piece of greenery
- hot glue and gun
- flameless tea lights or twinkle/fairy lights

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Cover your work space.
2. Mix the Epsom salts and glitter together in a bowl.
3. Use the sponge brush to apply a very thin, even layer of Mod Podge onto the outside of the jar.
4. Once the jar is covered, immediately pour or spoon the glitter mixture onto the jar until it's fully covered.
5. Set aside to dry for at least an hour.
6. Using the glue gun, glue a small piece of greenery onto the jar's lid.
7. Wrap and tie the twine around the mouth of the jar.
8. Put the flameless tea lights or the small fairy lights inside the jar. Enjoy!



The invitation is always present to come and worship, we just get to respond with an excited and obedient yes!

L5

3

WORSHIP RESPONSE

Worship Response is a time to respond in a posture and attitude of worship toward God. There are many ways we can actively give our worship to God.

It's here: Christmastime! That fantastic season of lights and beauty and gifts and songs to help us celebrate and worship with our time, talents, and treasure ... though we can often get confused about whether we're worshipping the King of Kings or the cultural kings of busyness and consumerism.

While tension exists between the chaos of consumerism and the reprieve of the gospel message wrapped in swaddling cloths, there is always an invitation to worship.

Worship begins as an invitation. The angels invited the shepherds to find the baby, and the magi followed the invitation of the star. God is always inviting people to come and worship because He knows that our best is found solely in His goodness.

There are many ways to engage your family in the practice of worshipping Jesus. Consider all five senses this season.

WHAT YOU'LL DO

- **The opportunity to taste food and hear music, to hug family members and see twinkle lights reflects God's creativity and goodness to us.** This month, when baking something for a cookie exchange or making dinner, take time with your family to recognize the smells and tastes of the food. Thank God for all He has given to you, and praise Him for His kindness and goodness to your family as you focus on the senses you have to experience life.

4

BLESS

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.

SCRIPTURE: Revelation 21:5

BLESSING:

(Child's name), **may you know that you have been redeemed.** By the work of the Father through Jesus, He has made you a new creation. May you know that even though we are broken, Jesus redeems our brokenness and makes us whole. May you know that the Father sees you as perfect, spotless, and holy, just as He sees His Son, Jesus.

LESSON SIX

1

GOD'S WORD

GOD STATEMENT: Jesus is Peace
SCRIPTURE: Isaiah 9:6



This week we celebrate how Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament prophecy of Isaiah 9:6.

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Light the first candle (the hope candle) and the second candle called the peace candle while discussing the following discussion.

DISCUSSION

- Use a dictionary or your phone to look up the definition of Peace.
- How did Jesus fulfill Isaiah 9:6?
- How has Jesus been the Prince of Peace in your life?
- How can you bring peace into others lives?

2

GAME

As you play this game and look at the tranquil Christmas lights, may you remember the peace Jesus brought to the broken world.

Christmas Treasure HUNT

Looking at Christmas lights is often a fun family tradition kids look forward to with anticipation. The wise men were also filled with expectation as they followed a star in search of treasure unlike anything they had seen before. As these men journeyed over hills and passed through towns, eyes locked on the bright star, they searched for the King of Kings, our Prince of Peace—the greatest treasure. Can you imagine the reward waiting for them at the end of their journey? They saw the One who would save us all.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- paper and markers
- family time
- car
- some decorated neighborhoods

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Gather as a HomeGroups and make a list of items to search for.
2. Consider theming the list with images of peace. For example, all blue or white lights, lighted snowflakes, the nativity scene or the word peace.
3. Decide if you'll treasure hunt by family or mix up the groups.
4. Gather check lists and markers.
5. Plan to head out sunset into evening.
6. Set a group prize for reaching the end in a certain time limit—for example, “We only have two hours to find all these items, and if we do, we get to go out to dinner as a family.”

Paper Chain

TO CHRIST

L6



- | | | |
|----------------------|-------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Adam and Eve | 8. Joshua | 15. Daniel |
| 2. Noah | 9. Rahab | 16. Esther |
| 3. Abraham and Sarah | 10. Ruth | 17. Zachariah and Elizabeth |
| 4. Isaac | 11. Samuel | 18. Mary and Joseph |
| 5. Jacob | 12. David | 19. John the Baptist |
| 6. Joseph | 13. Solomon | 20. Jesus |
| 7. Moses | 14. Josiah | |

3

WORSHIP RESPONSE

Worship Response is a time to respond in a posture and attitude of worship toward God. There are many ways we can actively give our worship to God.

The story of Christmas starts long before Jesus' birth.

Long before a Savior was born in Bethlehem, God made a promise in the garden of Eden! One day, God was going to send Someone who would make everything right! And though generations of men and women failed to uphold His law, God's promise did not fail.

"For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11 KJV). Imagine the excitement the shepherds felt when they heard the news of the King. For thousands of years, the people of God had waited for the descendant of David to come and save them, and here He was!

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Make an advent chain as a family.
2. Choose how long you'd like to make your chain and then cut that many strips of paper.
3. Then go through the people of The Big God Story and choose which ones you want to highlight. You can choose from the list above or from the Bible.
4. Divide up the strips of paper and have family members draw or write each person's name.
5. Each day (for the same number of days you created strips), as a family, remember and talk about the person from The Big God Story.
6. Then ask the Lord to give you the name of a person He wants you to pray for that day. Write that person's name on the back of the paper chain link, and then connect that piece with the previous day's link. Throughout your day, remember who the Lord has put in your life, and pray that they might know Him more and for the opportunity to share the good news of Jesus with them.

4

BLESS

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.

SCRIPTURE: Hebrews 12:2

BLESSING:

(Child's name), **may you know that God is with you.** He will always be for you. May you know that you have been chosen for this time in life and you have been given what you need to walk confidently and boldly—carrying grace, truth, and peace with you wherever you go. May you know that because Jesus is with you, no weapon formed against you will prosper. So, go and live with the confidence that you are never alone. God is with you. God is Immanuel.

LESSON SEVEN

1

GOD'S WORD

GOD STATEMENT: Jesus is Joy
SCRIPTURE: Luke 2:10



The third week we celebrate the joy of the shepherds and the magi. God chose to announce the greatest event in history first to the commoner and the foreigner. The good news of salvation, forgiveness, freedom, and home is for everyone! In knowing Christ, we can experience true joy regardless of our circumstances.

Light the first candle (the hope candle), the second candle (the peace candle) and now the third candle named the joy candle. Delight in their glow as you think about the discussion questions below.

DISCUSSION:

- Are joy and happiness the same thing?
- What gives you true joy?
- Sing "Joy to the World" together as you think about the joy Jesus brought to all creation.

2

CREATE

December celebrations offer many opportunities for fun treats and cookies. These adorable cocoa cups are easy enough for the kids to create all by themselves and share with their friends. Make a bunch in no time or just a few for a fun after-school snack.



HOT COCOA MARSHMALLOW COOKIE CUPS

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- large marshmallows
- Maravillas cookies (or any flat cookie base you desire)
- mini candy canes
- red and green confetti sprinkles

- tree sprinkles
- white and chocolate cookie icing
- marshmallow bits

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Lay the cookies flat on a plate or cookie sheet. For each cookie, add dots of white icing to the edges of the cookie.
2. Place your confetti sprinkles on the dots, alternating colors.
3. Add white icing to the bottom of a marshmallow and then place it in the center of the cookie.
4. Squeeze chocolate icing on top of the marshmallow and spread using a toothpick or the tip of a dull knife.
5. Place 3 to 4 marshmallow bits on top of the chocolate icing.
6. Cut the top off of a mini candy cane using kitchen scissors and attach the candy cane to the side of the marshmallow using just a small amount of the white icing.
7. Dab the icing on both ends of the candy cane for support.
8. Finally, attach the tree sprinkles to the front of the marshmallow using your white icing.
9. Let stand for about 15 minutes before you serve or store in a container.

3

WORSHIP RESPONSE

Worship Response is a time to respond in a posture and attitude of worship toward God. There are many ways we can actively give our worship to God.

In Luke 2 verse 10 we read about the joy the Good News carried with it. The shepherds were the unexpected recipients of the most wondrous message on that silent night. To remind us of the joy a good message brings, use glow-in-the-dark stars to create a Prayer Path for your family this month.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- package of plastic glow-in-the-dark stars
- permanent marker
- tape or adhesive
- flashlights, 1 for each family member

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Using a permanent marker, write these four phrases on four larger stars:
 - Please Forgive Me
 - I love You
 - Please
 - Thank You
2. Stick these stars in order in different places around your home.
3. Turn off the lights and get out your flashlights to help lead the way!
4. Tell your children how God used the angles to deliver His message one starry night and we are going to follow a course of stars as we pray.
5. First, find the "Please Forgive Me" star. Explain how

this star is a good way to invite joy in because when we confess the things we need to say "I'm sorry" to God for, He forgives us and it shows we are ready for Him to be our King and lead us on the right course. Pray prayers of forgiveness together, confessing to God ways that you may have turned away from Him and not followed His path.

6. Next, find the star that says "I love You." This star reminds us to praise God and tell Him we love Him. Think of some names of God you could use to praise and honor Him in prayer, and pray those names back to Him!
7. The next star to look for is the "Please" star. This star on the prayer path reminds us to ask God for things we need or that other people may need. Think of people who don't know Jesus yet and pray for them, or prayer for health concerns or friends' needs, as well as your own needs as a family. Consider using the smaller stars you have left, and stick one star up for each person you pray for as a reminder to continue to pray for them throughout the month.
8. Finally, find the "Thank You" star. This star is where you can worship God for all of the ways He has blessed you and for all that He has made. See how many things you can thank God for in prayer!

Continue to follow the stars in your home on your Prayer Path throughout the month, especially when you feel like you may be getting a little "off course" and need correction and the joy of God's love and provision to get back on course.

4

BLESS

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.

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 28:19-20

BLESSING:

(Child's name), may you know that you carry the good news of the gospel within you. May you love boldly, may you teach the good news with confidence, and may you share this news with those ready to receive it. May the peace of God go before you and behind you, and know that because the Holy Spirit dwells within you, you have everything you need to share the good news. May your words be seasoned with salt as you teach about the sacrifice of Jesus that allows us to spend eternity with Him in heaven.

LESSON EIGHT

1

GOD'S WORD

GOD STATEMENT: Jesus is Love
SCRIPTURE: John 3:16



The fourth week we celebrate the love of God for sending His only Son Jesus. The Old Testament pointed people toward the coming Messiah and the New Testament is filled with true stories of the love of Christ. His arrival 2,000 years ago changed the world. When we share the love of Jesus, we're a living testimony that true love lasts forever.

Light the first candle (the hope candle), the second candle (the peace candle), the third candle (the joy candle) and now the fourth candle named the love candle. Remember to light the middle candle on Christmas day as a big celebration to the coming of Messiah

DISCUSSION:

- How has the gift of Christ affected you this year?
- Read 1 Corinthians 13. How can we reflect the love of Jesus to those around us?

2

GAME TIME

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.
John 13:34-35



The classic game of tag is a fun way to demonstrate how contagious the love of Jesus is. As the group plays, the person who is "it" will shine their light on players and bring them into the light of God's love!

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- flashlight
- all-black clothes (optional)

BEFORE YOU START

Because it's a bit chilly out during this season, the game will be played indoors! Decide which areas and rooms to play in and clear them of anything hazardous. Designate one space or room to be the holding area.

TIME TO PLAY!

Invite your family to a central location in the house. Go over the boundaries of where this game may and may not be played.

To start, choose one person to be "it." This person gets the flashlight. He will then cover his eyes and count to a certain number (you can decide this as a family). During this time, everyone else must hide. When "it" finishes counting he must begin searching for the other players.

In order to tag someone, "it" must shine the light on the person he found AND call out her name. This person must then go to the holding area until everyone else is found.

The person who was found first, gets to be "it" for the next round.

3

WORSHIP RESPONSE

Worship Response is a time to respond in a posture and attitude of worship toward God. There are many ways we can actively give our worship to God.

Do you enjoy singing Christmas songs? These tunes have a special way of transporting us to special places in our minds. Maybe a memory of singing around the campfire or caroling in the neighborhood. **How often do you pause and ponder what the song writer wanted to convey when they penned the song?** Take some time with a well-known Christmas song (one that talks about Jesus) and talk about the lyrics as a family.

WHAT YOU'LL DO

Have your kids draw the scenario the song describes, and while they draw, ask them what they think each line means. For example, in "O Holy Night," we can ask questions like "What does the word 'holy' mean? Why do you think that night was holy? Why do you think the song says to 'fall on your knees'? Why do people worship on

their knees when they meet Jesus?" **We aren't looking for right or wrong answers when we ask these questions, but we're looking simply to train our children's minds to pay attention to what God might be speaking, even in songs that are quite familiar to them.** A way to take this idea even further is to turn it into a game for your kids to play! When you're out and about as a family, challenge your kids to listen in public places for Christmas songs that talk about Jesus; see who can pick out the message of Jesus in settings that normally don't talk about Him. Talk together about why it's significant for others to hear the name of Jesus, even when they aren't looking for Him!

4

BLESS

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.

SCRIPTURE: Galatians 5:22-23

BLESSING:

(Child's name), **may you know that you are loved and you have love to give away.** Jesus said that the greatest of these (fruit of the Spirit) is love. Because Jesus dwells within you, and Jesus is love, then love is within you. May the words of your mouth, the thoughts in your mind, and the actions you portray be rooted in love. May you know that nothing you do can separate you from the perfect love of Jesus.



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