

HomeFront

a spiritual parenting resource

JOYFUL

Joyful WE
Adore
THEE



Holiday Edition 

A Note From Michelle



As autumn fades and winter begins to whisper at our doors, our homes become the gathering places of gratitude and wonder. Thanksgiving and Christmas are more than two holidays on the calendar—they are sacred seasons of remembering and rejoicing. They invite us to pause, give thanks for God's faithfulness, and celebrate the gift of His Son, who brings light to everyone.

Within these pages, you'll find inspiration to linger in God's Word, to cook and create together, to honor family traditions, and to bless one another through prayer and presence. Whether around a crowded table or in a quiet kitchen moment, may these months remind us that the holiest moments often come wrapped in the simplest acts of love.

Let's allow the aroma of gratitude to fill our homes long after the last pie is eaten, and may the joy of Christ's coming shape every gathering, every song, and every story we share. My hope is that this resource helps your family experience not just the holidays—but holy days—set apart for worship, laughter, and deep connection.

With blessing,

Michelle Anthony

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michelle Anthony".

Dr. Michelle Anthony is the Sr. Executive Pastor of Family Ministries at New Life Church in Colorado Springs, CO and Director of The Initiative for Faith and Family. Michelle has graduate degrees in Christian education, theology, and leadership and more than 30 years of church ministry experience as a children's and family pastor. She is also the author of Spiritual Parenting, The Big God Story, Becoming a Spiritually Healthy Family, and 7 Family Ministry Essentials. Michelle loves spending time with her husband, adult children, and her adorable grandchildren who make faith come alive each day!

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 be involved.

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

HOMEFRONT MAGAZINE A magazine designed to aid in successful community groups or family nights for your own family.

FAMILY NIGHTS/COMMUNITY GROUPS Families meeting in homes to do life together (as individual families or combined with other families) and grow in their relationships with God and each other.

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



How to Use This Resource

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.

Individual Family Nights or Community Groups (which participate in Family Nights together with other families) are an opportunity for you to gather with several other families who are in similar life circumstances and grow together. Your Community Group 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 Community Groups, and each volume contains a full semester's worth of gatherings.

You can still access previous editions of *HomeFront* magazine at homefrontmag.com. If you would like more information about Community Groups, 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.



JOYFUL

Spiritual Parenting

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 Successful Start

Feeling prepared and ready can increase the quality of your Family Night or Community Group. Flip to the next page to find a supply list and the last page to find both FAMILY TIME Verses. The verses are designed to be cut off the magazine and framed or displayed in high traffic areas of your home. Scan the QR codes in the issue to watch helpful videos and hear our personalized Scripture song on Spotify or YouTube. Simply flip the cut out page before lesson five and enjoy "hiding His Word in your hearts" together.

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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.

DID YOU KNOW?

Each lesson helps you lead your family through four sections.

1 GODS WORD:

Spending time together in God's Word is a powerful way for your kids to learn who God is while instilling a love for the Bible from an early age. Take some time to read the passage above together and then read and answer the questions in the following devotional.

2 CREATE or GAME TIME:

Sometimes the best conversations happen around creating or playing together. Don't forget to make this time engaging and purposeful.

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.

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.

RESOURCE

THINKING AHEAD

Let's make a plan and set your family up for a successful and less stressful family night or homegroup. Consider gathering all the materials needed for each week, place them in a tote, and be ready to pull them out for the evening!

Week *One*

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Waffle cones (one for each person)
- Mini pumpkins
- Candy corn
- Nuts
- Mini marshmallows
- 9 bowls
- 9 small pieces of paper with an attribute of the Fruit of the Spirit on each: Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness, and Self-Control
- Paper or whiteboard
- Pen or Dry-erase marker
- Bible
- Dictionary
- Access to BlueLetterBible.org

Week *Two*

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 20 disposable water-cups per wreath (can be found in the grocery store paper goods aisle)
- Fall colored scrapbook paper or fall cut outs (Dollar Tree is a great option)
- Stapler
- Glue stick or hot glue gun

Week *Three*

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Paper numbered 1-5 (or number of participants)
- Pen
- Timer
- Music

Week *Four*

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Two equal sized silver mixing bowls for each participant (Dollar Tree is a great source)
- Clear plastic shower rings
- Spray paint
- Hot glue
- Sharpie or black acrylic paint

Week *Five*

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Access to YouTube
- Bluetooth player
- Paper and pen
- Family calendar

Week *Six*

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Equal sized cup for each player
- Blind fold
- Pitcher full of water
- Bound journal for each person
- Fun pens

Week *Seven*

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 2 x 79" of macrame cord per book mark
- Scissors
- Measuring tape
- 4 beads per bookmark (can be any you choose)
- Sharpie

Week *Eight*

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Fresh toothbrush for each person
- Fresh food
- Fresh outfit for each person
- Any other fresh items needed for Create

EXTRA FUN

Try the yummy recipes and enjoy the special traditions on pages 14-17.

LESSON ONE

1 GOD'S WORD The Joy Fruit

Joyride. The Savanna Bananas. Forest Frank's catchy beats. What happens inside when you think of these? JOY! Each one has a unique talent, and they decided to let the Holy Spirit use it to point the audience to the source of real joy. Ryan Trahan speaks about Jesus, The Bananas lead a Bible study, and Forest Frank teaches God's Word through song.

It's nothing new. In fact, almost 2,000 years ago, the Apostle Paul wrote to the church of Galatia, teaching them about an incredible phenomenon produced when following the Holy Spirit. He called it the "fruit of the Spirit."

Did you know the Greek word for this is actually singular? **Meaning there is one fruit with many characteristics.** Wow! When believers in Jesus lived by the leading of the Holy Spirit, good things happened and the produce benefited others.

GOD STATEMENT: God Grows Fruit
SCRIPTURE: Galatians 5:22-23

This holiday issue places a spotlight on one aspect of the magnificent fruit...JOY. As the anticipated season of family, fun, and, food approaches, it's the perfect time to prepare our hearts to follow the Holy Spirit's leading and see fruit abound as we serve those around us.

DISCUSSION

1. What is your favorite fruit to eat?
2. Take turns describing that fruit with different adjectives like, delicious, crisp, and sweet.
3. Read Galatians 5:22-23 out loud as a family.
4. Do you think the Fruit of the Spirit sounds wonderful?
5. Why do you think joy is part of the fruit?



2 CREATE An Abundant Buffet

Most everyone enjoys a waffle cone and it makes the perfect miniature cornucopia. Before your group night, visit a local candy store to gather tiny fruits and veggies. Have fun assembling this simple treat.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Waffle cones (enough for each person)
- Mini pumpkins
- Candy corn
- Nuts
- Mini marshmallows
- 9 cups
- 9 small paper labels with an attribute of the Fruit of the Spirit on each: Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness, and Self-Control

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Pour all your candy into one large plastic bag and mix.
2. Distribute evenly into the 9 cups.
3. Place a label with an attribute in each cup.
4. Give each person a waffle cone, "cornucopia."
5. Allow them to walk down the buffet line and fill their cornucopia. Don't eat yet.
6. Set them on their sides in a visible spot while you participate in Worship Response.
7. After Worship Response, pass out the treat and experience the joy of receiving something waited for!

3 WORSHIP RESPONSE

What Does it Mean?

Defining your terms is a big deal. What if a friend invited you over and in giving directions said, "Turn down Mountain Road, and my house is on the left," but when you arrived, there were four houses on the left? Yikes! You'd be confused and unsure where to go. It can feel that way when reading God's Word when we don't really understand what a word means. **For Worship Response this week, pause together and think about what each attribute of the Fruit of the Spirit really means.**

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Paper or whiteboard
- Pen or Dry-Erase Marker
- Bible
- Dictionary
- Access to BlueLetterBible.org

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Gather everyone together in a place where the Fruit of the Spirit attributes from Create are visible.
2. Aim to spend two or more minutes on each attribute.
3. First, ask what participants think the word means and write it down on the left side of your paper.
4. Then define the word with the dictionary and look at its original meaning on BlueLetterBible.org.
5. Did it mean what was thought? Was there more meaning than originally known?
6. Once all 9 are clearly defined, enjoy your Abundant Buffet!

4 BLESSING

The Overflow

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 16:11

BLESSING: (Child's name), May you be filled with the joy of God's presence. May it overflow to serve your family, friends, and fellow humanity. His fruit is delightful, and He wants to produce much in you.

The Fruit of THE SPIRIT

LOVE: _____

JOY: _____

PEACE: _____

PATIENCE: _____

KINDNESS: _____

GOODNESS: _____

FAITHFULNESS: _____

GENTLENESS: _____

SELF-CONTROL: _____



LESSON TWO

1 GOD'S WORD The Least of These

GOD STATEMENT: God Cares for Needs
SCRIPTURE: Matthew 25:31-40

Something exceptional happens when we serve others. Joy multiplies, explodes, and shines from within like a radiant light. It just does! And it pleases our Lord.

Matthew 25:31-40 describes Jesus, the King, welcoming those who are His and giving them a spectacular inheritance. Why? Because they cared for those in need of clothing, shelter, food, and water. He called them the least of these.

Doesn't this give us a glimpse into the tender love of Christ? **He is concerned with the smallest needs and rewards generously those who answer His call to meet them.** Serving is not a cumbersome task to be checked off a list, but a delight to approach with thanksgiving and recognition of our own need. The result? Deep in your bones joy to be used by God to care for others. One day, you'll be welcomed into the kingdom that was prepared for you since the creation of the world.

DISCUSSION

1. Have you ever heard the saying, "It is better to give than to receive?" Do you think that is true? Why?

2 CREATE Prayer Wreath

Not every child has a place to call home, and you'll read more about this in Worship Response. Homeless little ones is a matter of prayer for the family of God. In Create today, make a simple wreath to place in your home as a reminder to pray for those who long for a welcoming front door to call home.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 20 disposable water cups per wreath (can be found in the grocery store paper goods aisle)
- Fall colored scrapbook paper or fall cut outs (Dollar Tree is a great option)
- Stapler
- Glue stick or hot glue gun



2. Can you remember a time when serving another brought you joy?
3. Can you think of a time someone has served you?
4. Why do you think the Lord gives the kingdom to those who care for the least of these?

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Staple two cups together.
2. Repeat until you have 10 pairs.
3. Staple the pairs together.
4. Bend into the shape of a circle.
5. Let each person hot glue or glue stick fall scrapbook paper or cut-out decorations on top.
6. Cut-out a 1 x 3 inch rectangle from the scrapbook paper.
7. Write "Pray For The Least of These" on the paper and attach to the front.
8. Display in various places around your home and pray for them regularly this month.

3

WORSHIP RESPONSE

When God CALLS



Have you ever wondered what it's like to be called by God? Rhonda Paulson, the Founder and Executive Director of Isaiah 117 House, shares her story in the excerpt below taken from the About Us page on www.isaiah117house.com.

In 2014, my husband Corey and I went through training to become foster parents. As part of our training, we attended a class at the Washington County Tennessee Department of Children's Services (DCS) office in Johnson City TN. **During that class, we were informed that when children are removed from their homes, they often must come to the DCS office and wait for placement.** As I looked around the cubicle-filled space, I couldn't imagine a scared child sitting in such a sterile, cold environment waiting to learn their fate. That is when I believe God put the Isaiah 117 House on my heart.

Fast forward one year to November 5, 2015, at 3:45pm. I received a call from the Carter County DCS office in Elizabethton. Within an hour, Corey and I along with our two children, Sophie and Mac, were picking up our foster son at the back door of the office. He was dirty, in clothes that were too small, and literally had nothing in the world. This was the second time, I believe, the Lord put the Isaiah 117 House on my heart.

We asked the question, "What if there was a home where children could go when they are removed?" What if there was a safe place with friendly, loving volunteers? What if there was an environment with clean clothes, bath toys, snacks, comfy beds, and toys? What if, instead of cubicles, the traumatized child could see smiles, books, and snuggly blankets?

Isaiah 1:17 says, "Defend the cause of the fatherless." I believe that is what God was calling me to do. I saw a home with an open living space, a fully stocked kitchen, a girl's bedroom, a boy's bedroom, places to play, and fully stocked bathrooms. **I saw a team of volunteers on call to greet "the least of these" when they need love most.** I saw a place always ready to take in children in their time of need and lavishly love on them on one of their worst days. This was the dream for the Isaiah 117 House in February of 2017.

I believe these homes have the potential to positively affect the children who are coming into custody in ways far beyond what we could ever imagine, as well as support the caseworkers and future foster families who are a part of their journey. I believe these homes change the way foster care begins.

Rhonda's Worship Response was "yes!" to her Master's call. It has brought life change in many children's lives and is only growing. Scan the QR code below to learn more about Isaiah 117 House and discuss the questions below as a family.

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Ask the Lord what He is calling you as a family to do for the "least of these".
2. Consider purchasing from their online store.
3. Consider starting a house in your community.
4. Do you believe there is joy that comes from serving others?

4

BLESSING

Cared For

SCRIPTURE: Philippians 4:19

BLESSING: (Child's name), God is the mighty need meeter. May you always look to Him to direct you how to care for others. May it fill your heart to see others cared for, and may you know your needs will be supplied.



LESSON THREE

1 GOD'S WORD Stay Strong

Joy builds endurance that lasts. Think of a person who is sad or discouraged. Are they able to complete tasks well? Or is it difficult for them to stay motivated? The Bible says, **"A joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones" (Proverbs 17:22).** God's Word is true; when we have joy, our energy seems endless with extra strength to help others. Joy cultivates strength. Have you ever known a sick person who was still joyful? They seem to recover much faster! In fact, they are less focused on the pain and more focused on rejoicing in the Lord.

Where does joy come from? Temporal joy can come from others or material things. **The Joy of the Lord comes from the source of life and is steadfast, not wavering.** Worldly joy fades and soon gives way to dissatisfaction or discouragement.

Contrastingly, joy from our Heavenly Father never

GOD STATEMENT: God Supplies Strength

SCRIPTURE: Nehemiah 8:9-12

fails. It will keep believers strong and able to care for their Faith Community. God is ready to grow joy in your life. **Will you ask Him to be your source?**

DISCUSSION

1. Read Nehemiah 8:9-12 and notice he tells the people to not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is their strength.
2. What else did Nehemiah ask the people to do?
3. Did you notice he asked them to share with others?
4. Do you think there is a connection between caring for your faith community and joy?

2 GAME TIME Value for All

Exercise is a fun way to think about growing in spiritual godliness. First Timothy 4:8 says, "For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things. Holding promise for both the present life and the life to come."

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Paper numbered 1-5 (or number of participants)
- Pen
- Timer
- Music

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Allow each person to say or write a favorite exercise by one of the numbers on paper.
2. Load a few upbeat songs to a "Physical Training" playlist.
3. Set a timer for two minute rotations.
4. Take turns doing each exercise for two minutes to your fun music.
5. Enjoy growing in strength and remember godliness has even more value!

HEAR AN
UPBEAT SONG
HERE!



Workout P

Week1

Week2

Week

Mon

Tue

Wed

3 WORSHIP RESPONSE

L3



Run the Race Together

Doing hard things for the Lord together brings an extra boost in joy! This Thanksgiving season, why not train as a group to run, or even fast walk, your local Turkey Trot? This iconic 5k usually raises funds to support the community and offers families of all ages a way to breathe fresh air and get strong with one another.

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Look online for your local Turkey Trot by typing in your town, the year, and the words Turkey Trot.
2. Find the registration page and sign up!
3. Begin training by taking evening walks, gradually building up the distance.
4. Be sure to stay within your health limits. This is a time for strengthening, growing, and fellowship, not injury.
5. As your group prepares, include discussion about the joy of the Lord.
6. Consider praying over your neighbors' homes as you walk by.
7. It's highly possible to return home with an extra dose of lasting joy!

4 BLESSING

Leap for Joy

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 28:7

BLESSING:(Child's name), As you grow in the Lord, May He strengthen areas that are weak, and develop strong disciplines that glorify Him. May you know the source of real joy and may it stay with you all the days of your life.

LESSON FOUR

1 GOD'S WORD He Is Coming

Waiting. It's hard. It's usually long. But it's worth it. From the day mankind chose to sin in the Garden of Eden, waiting also began. God lovingly promised Adam and Eve that the Messiah would come to overcome the consequences of sin.

There was long waiting and one day, the perfect day, Jesus came. He came as an innocent baby, born on a starry night with angels singing and shepherds celebrating. What excellent witnesses for His birthday. The majestic and the meek both proclaiming **God's promise had finally arrived.**

Then something strange and unexpected happened. **Jesus grew into a man, the perfect man, and chose to die on behalf of sinners.** How could this be? Jesus was supposed to usher in His kingdom on earth. But it wasn't the right time. **Instead, God's promise had to be fulfilled.**

GOD STATEMENT: God is On Time
SCRIPTURE: Hebrews 9:27-28

Now, believers all over the world wait. **They eagerly wait for the day, the perfect day, when Jesus will return as King.** He is coming and when He does, will you be ready to enter into the fullness of His promise? **It will be eternal joy and totally worth it.**

DISCUSSION

1. Have you ever waited a long time for something?
2. What did waiting produce in you?
3. What does it mean to be ready to enter the fullness of His promise? Read John 3:16 as a help.
4. Are you ready?

2 CREATE Ring those Bells

When jingle bells ring, excitement grows. Their happy melody causes the listener to pay attention and be expectant for someone's arrival. This Create shows how to make extra large "bells" that may not ring, but they remind us someone, the One, is coming soon!

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Two equal-sized silver mixing bowls for each participant (Dollar Tree is a great source)
- Clear plastic shower rings
- Spray paint
- Hot glue
- Sharpie or black acrylic paint

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Glue two equal sized mixing bowls together to form the "bell".
2. Snap a plastic shower ring in half.
3. Glue one-half of the ring to the top of the "bell."
4. Spray paint the entire "bell."
5. Let dry.
6. Paint three equally-spaced circles around the bottom bowl.
7. Paint a line from each circle down toward the bottom of the "bell."
8. Display for Christmas and remember: He Came and He's coming again!

3 WORSHIP RESPONSE

Gentle and Mighty

The evangelist Charles Spurgeon once preached, "We'd do well to keep both advents in mind at Christmas."

He saw the importance of looking back and also looking forward. As this special time of year approaches, gather your Bibles and slowly compare the first arrival with the second. What similarities and differences do you find?

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Bible
- Paper and pen

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Read Matthew 1-2 and Luke 1-2. Write down things that stand out about Christ's first coming.
2. Read Revelation 1:7 and 19:11-16. Write down things that stand out about Christ's second coming.
3. As a bonus challenge, read these two accounts everyday this week and see if new aspects pop out each time.



4 BLESSING

Tell the Story

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 145: 10-13

BLESSING: (Child's name), May you praise the King, and may you speak about His power. When you tell of Him, others will know the mighty things He does, and know about His glory and majesty.



Before



After

Roasted Butternut Squash and Tomato Soup

MAKES 4-6 SERVINGS

This recipe is so easy to make and incredibly delicious for all ages. A warm homemade bowl of soup can make your family feel like autumn has truly arrived!

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 2 butternut squash
- 15-20 cherry tomatoes
- 1 full garlic clove (separated and peeled)
- 1/2 yellow onion (diced)
- 4-5 peppers (Poblano, Bell, or Anaheim)
- 1/2 cup olive oil
- Salt and pepper (to taste)
- 1 tablespoon garlic salt
- 1 teaspoon ground sage
- 1 bunch of fresh sage
- 1 12oz. container of chicken broth
- Grated parmesan for garnish

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Preheat oven to 400° F
2. Cut off the ends of two butternut squash and slice down the middle, creating two halves for each one.
3. Scoop out seeds and throw away.
4. Place squash in a baking pan along with cherry tomatoes, garlic cloves, onions, and peppers.
5. Drizzle all the vegetables with olive oil.
6. Season with salt and pepper, garlic salt, and ground sage.
7. Nestle fresh sage leaves among the vegetables.
8. Place baking dish in the oven uncovered for 65-75 minutes.
9. Once roasted, take the tops and seeds out of the peppers and the skins off of the squash and then put all the ingredients into a food processor.
10. Add chicken broth as the soup blends to desired thickness.
11. Serve with grated parmesan, cracked pepper, and a sage leaf for a festive fall look.

Christmas Tree Charcuterie

As you work together, talk about the different elements that make up a healthy, holy and happy family! Share how each person in the family plays a unique part in the beautiful picture of your home and faith.

SUGGESTED ITEMS

- Gouda cheese cut star shape
- green olives
- salami, pistachios
- papitas
- cheese triangles
- raspberries
- kiwis
- pepperoni

- cheese cubes
- green (or red) grapes
- rosemary sprigs
- candied pecans,
- crackers

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Gather the food items that feel festive and that your family enjoys.
2. Assemble to resemble a Christmas tree.



T R A D I



The Sweetness of **THANKFUL** *Hearts*

Every Thanksgiving, our family gathers around the same dining room table—its surface worn by years of elbows, homework, and countless meals. Before a single dish is passed, we each take a kernel of corn candy from a small bowl. One by one, we hold the kernels in our palms and name something we're grateful for—something we might otherwise forget to mention.

At first, when our children were young, they'd offer simple thanks: "my puppy," "mac and cheese," "no school today." But as the years have gone by, the gratitude has deepened—thankfulness for friendships restored, health regained, and God's steady hand through uncertain times.

After the final person shares, we pop our candy in our mouths and savor the sweetness of what we shared. We bow our heads, joining hands in a circle that feels like a sacred link. **There's always a pause, a holy hush, before the laughter begins again and the feast truly starts.**

That small bowl of kernels has become our family's altar of remembrance. It's a way to stop and trace God's goodness through another year. My hope is that you, too, might find a simple ritual—a tangible way to help your family remember that Thanksgiving isn't just a day on the calendar. It's a posture of the heart.

SCRIPTURE: "Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." — 1 Thessalonians 5:18

REFLECTION: What simple ritual could your family begin this year to help cultivate a spirit of thankfulness beyond the holiday meal?

By Traci Landon

T I O N S

The Light That LEADS US *Home*

Each December, as soon as the tree is lit, our family begins a nightly tradition we call “The Light That Leads Us Home”. After dinner, we turn off every light except the Christmas tree and gather close. With mugs of cocoa in hand and snuggled in blankets, someone reads a short passage from Scripture—stories of shepherds, angels, and a baby born in Bethlehem.

Then, we share one way we’ve seen God’s light shine in our lives that day—a kind word, an answered prayer, a moment of joy. Even on the hardest days, there’s always something.

When the kids were small, their answers made us laugh: “The lights at the zoo!” or “Mom’s cookies!” But now, as they’ve grown, their words reveal hearts awakening to the true Light of the world.

Before we go our separate ways for the night, we pray—asking Jesus to help us carry His light wherever we go. This simple rhythm has become the heartbeat of our Christmas season. Amid the wrapping paper and busy schedules, it helps us remember: the light on the tree is just a reminder of the Light who came to lead us home.

SCRIPTURE: “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” — John 1:5

REFLECTION: How might your family reflect Christ’s light together this Christmas—at home, in your neighborhood, or with someone in need?

By Thomas Garnett



LESSON FIVE

1 GOD'S WORD Only Today

GOD STATEMENT: God is Present

SCRIPTURE: Mark 1:35

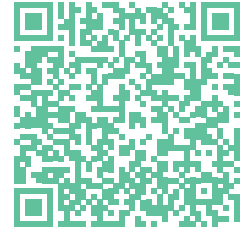
Your full presence in a conversation takes discipline.

When a friend shares a meaningful story and something distracting happens behind them, do your ears stop listening, your mind start wandering, and maybe even your eyes focus on the distraction?

It happens to everyone but there's good news. Jesus modeled how to keep our laser focus on what's important in Mark 1:35:

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.

Jesus made listening to God the priority. This habit magnified His Father's desire for each day and gave Christ freedom to pay total attention in the moment, letting distractions fall by the wayside. Following this example lifts the pressure to fix all the problems around you. God is trustworthy to defend the wrongs. He sees, cares, and is able.



DISCUSSION

1. Have you ever thought there isn't enough time in the day?
2. Why do you think we struggle with being so rushed?
3. How often do you pause and ask the Lord what He wants for your day?
4. Scan the QR code to read the long essay, The Tyranny of the Urgent, and discuss what stood out.

2 GAME TIME Attention Please

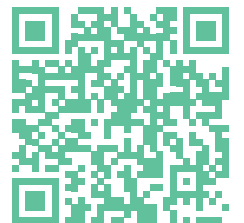
It's getting cold outside, and it's the perfect time to play the classic game of "Freeze." This game causes players to pay attention to what they hear. Have fun being silly!

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Access to YouTube
- Bluetooth player

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Connect your phone to the Bluetooth player and scan the QR code.
2. Instruct all players to show off their best happy dance when the music plays.
3. When the music stops, challenge the players to freeze in a goofy pose.
4. After the quick moving game, remind all to freeze throughout the day, check in with the Lord, and resubmit it to His will.



3 WORSHIP RESPONSE

Together Bucket List

Christmastime grows busy with parties and traditions.

Why not gather as a family and compile a Christmas Bucket List as an act of worship. Intentionally experiencing life together honors the Lord and is a reflection of His desire to be with us. Hang the list in a visible place so all can see what special commitments are ahead. A few ideas are listed below. What will you come up with?

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Paper and pen
- The family calendar

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. List lots of family activities or ideas.
2. Include small moments and even large moments.
3. Sort through all the ideas and choose between four and ten. One or two for each week.
4. Write them on a festive checklist and hang up.
5. Enjoy checking off the items and completing your Bucket list.

Activity Ideas

- Decorate an outdoor "tacky tree" together.
- Attend a local "Christmas Symphony."
- Participate in the Festival of Lights.
- Skate.
- Watch *Star* as a family with popcorn and treats.
- Dress up for a candlelight service.
- Drive around with hot cocoa to see lights.
- Pack a shoe box for a child.
- Contact the local foster care agency and offer to wrap presents the community has donated for the children.



Bucket List

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

4 BLESSING

His Plans

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 1:23

BLESSING:(Child's name), May you remember the name Immanuel. God is with you. He knows the best way to use each day. May you be willing to let Him guide you and discover the joy of His plans for you.

LESSON SIX

1 GOD'S WORD Healing Words

God loves to do this in scripture. Retell stories. It can bring laughter when reading His Word, and you see the message repeated multiple times. For example, the beautiful love story of Issac and Rebekah. Genesis chapter 24 opens with the conversation between Abraham and his faithful servant and then the servants prayer. The story is immediately followed by the servant retelling the account to Rebekah's family for a third time. It's almost funny at first read. One might think, "Okay, we get it!" **But something deeper is taking place.**

When we remember the goodness of God, the gratitude causes a physical response in our brain. Scientific studies reveal there is a rewiring and healing that happens. God wasn't being funny, He was displaying His love by revealing His healing nature.

As the anticipation and celebration of Jesus' arrival grows, so should our remembrance and gratitude. This posture is crucial to spiritual growth, renewal, and

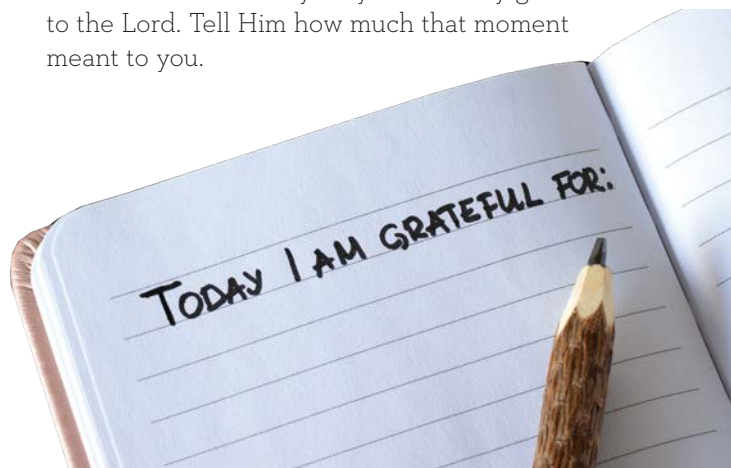
GOD STATEMENT: God Inhabits Our Praise

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 95:1-5

healing.

DISCUSSION

1. Read Psalm 95:1-5 one verse at a time, pausing to give thanks for each mention.
2. Reflect on a time this year you can truly give thanks to the Lord. Tell Him how much that moment meant to you.



2 GAME TIME A Full Cup

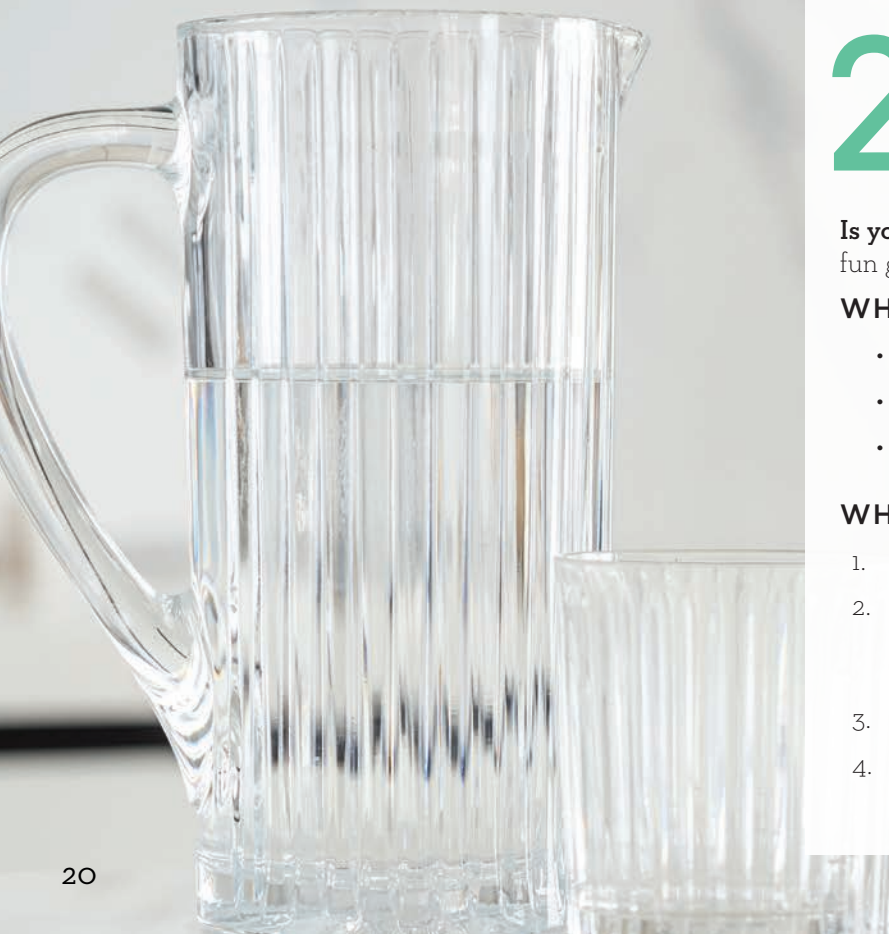
Is your cup overflowing with thanksgiving? Play this fast, fun game and by the end, your joy might be spilling out!

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Equal-sized cup for each player
- Blindfold
- Pitcher full of water

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Gather all players to the table.
2. Each player from oldest to youngest will take turns trying to fill their cup to the brim while blindfolded without going over.
3. The cup most full at the end is the winner!
4. The winner shares something they are grateful for, and everyone thanks the Lord.



3 WORSHIP RESPONSE

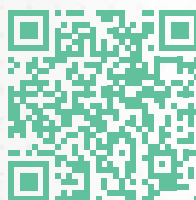
Write it Down

This season,

develop the habit of remembering and celebrating by journaling. Journaling doesn't have to be hard or happen every day. The habit can be once a week with simple notes. These intentional thoughts recorded can have a big impact in weeks and months to come. They may reveal a work the Lord is doing in your life, or an area that needs to be submitted to Him. This act is a way to grow closer to God and will certainly spark joy.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Bound journal for each person
- Fun pens to write with



WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Present each person with a simple journal. This will be their 2026 prayer and celebration journal.
2. Scan the QR code to play this month's Family Verse while allowing participants time to write their name and a note about their gratitude for what the Lord has done.
3. Challenge them to use the journal regularly throughout the year to write down prayers, answers, and praises.
4. Encourage regular review of what's recorded to help focus their heart on the goodness of God.

4 BLESSING

Goodness

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 96:7-9

BLESSING: (Child's name), May you sing praises to your glorious God. There is healing in His name, and He offers love, joy, and peace when you offer true gratitude. May you look for His goodness in every situation and settle in your heart that He is good, faithful, and true.

LESSON SEVEN

1 GOD'S WORD Contagious Joy

Picture this: someone starts laughing hard. Their head tilts back as tears stream from their eyes. Are you able to sit idly by? No way! You start laughing too! It can't be helped. Although joy is deeper than smiles and humor, it's much the same.

Read 2 Samuel 16:14-15. David was overcome with joy, and it spilled out in the form of dancing before the Lord. **Isn't it wonderful to picture the earthly king leaping about as he worships the King of the universe, both enjoying the moment of praise?** As David publicly gave thanks, others joined him with shouts of joy and rams horns.

GOD STATEMENT: God is Contagious
SCRIPTURE: 2 Samuel 16:14:15

This week, as you wrap items for others or check off bucket list activities, reflect on the gift of joy. **God gave His children this priceless treasure to unwrap in any situation.** Happy or hard, it is available through the Holy Spirit, and it can be shared with others, resulting in laughter or perhaps shouts of joy from the heart.

DISCUSSION

1. Share a time you experienced the Joy of the Lord.
2. Was it in a hard time? Was it in a good time?
3. Take a pause to recognize the greatness of this gift.



2 GAME TIME

Add On Dance

There once was a mom who had to grocery shop, and her children came too. As they walked down the tight aisle and chilly freezer section, music sang out from the intercom above. **That's when it happened.** A happy moment for this crew. The mom started dancing. Nothing major, just a few moves. Giggles erupted and a core memory was solidified. Now, anytime a happy song plays, there are three pairs of dancing feet. The joy from one moment has lasted for a lifetime. This week, play a joyful game of "Add On Dance" and see if, like the children, there is contagious laughter and memories born.

WHAT YOU NEED

- Music
- Space

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Choose an upbeat song and play it for the group.
2. Have the youngest player demonstrate one dance move they think matches the song or tune.
3. All other players mimic the step for practice.
4. Move to the next oldest person.
5. Allow them to show off their favorite jig.
6. Now all players replay both steps, building a routine.
7. Continue until all players have added on to the family dance.
8. Turn on your chosen song and see if the group can repeat the steps in order.
9. Have fun. Missteps make it even funnier!

3 WORSHIP RESPONSE

He is Working

Now that your energy is up and your heart is pumping, let's return to the story of King David. Read 2 Samuel 16:17-19. A moment of joy ushered David and the Israelite people into a time of worship. David offered a burnt sacrifice and blessed those present. Isn't it interesting the flow from jumping for joy to sacrifice and blessing?

This Worship Response, move into a slow moment and craft the joy bookmark. Remember the stories shared in God's Word Discussion. Keep your bookmark in your prayer journal to remember to celebrate what God is doing in your life.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 2 x 79" of macrame cord per bookmark
- Scissors
- Measuring tape
- 4 beads per bookmark (can be any you choose)
- Sharpie



WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Watch the how to video at the QR code above.
2. Use your sharpie to write joy on the beads if you choose.
3. Make a second bookmark to share with others.

4 BLESSING

Sing Praise

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 100:2

BLESSING: (Child's name), **May the Lord inhabit your praise.** May you be swift to sing for the Lord and invite Him into your everyday moments. His Presence will bless you and all those around you.



LESSON EIGHT

1 GOD'S WORD Reclaimed

The final week of December can get lost between travel, clean up, and recovery from all the festivities. Make it a priority to allow God to reclaim the week as a "newness week."

God instituted many new beginnings in the Bible. Jesus is the mediator for the new covenant, He freely offers new life, gives believers a new name, and one day will make a new heaven and earth. **Learn more by scanning the QR code and watching a short video on the new covenant.**

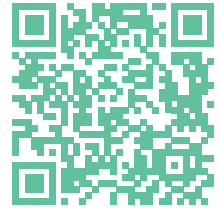
This week is the perfect time to settle your heart, remember the newness of Christ, and look forward to the

GOD STATEMENT: God Renews
SCRIPTURE: Ezekiel 36:26

plans He has for you this year.

DISCUSSION

1. Have you received the free gift of new life?
2. If you have not and want to, tell a parent or family member. They will help you ask Jesus to be Lord of your life and accept His offer of eternal salvation.
3. If you have, celebrate! Tell the story of when He became your Savior and gave you a new heart.



2 CREATE Fresh Day

Plan to enjoy a "Fresh Day" this week. This purposeful day can become an annual tradition ushering in a new year in a purposeful way.

WHAT YOU NEED

- Pen
- Paper

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Gather together and fold a piece of paper in half hot-dog size, creating two columns.
2. Brainstorm all the things your family does in a normal day.
3. Eat? Get ready? Read?
4. In one column, write down each item mentioned.
5. In the second column, describe how to make the activity fresh.
6. For example: Get Ready...Put on a freshly washed outfit. Or, brush teeth...Use a fresh toothbrush.
7. Choose a day to put these fresh starts into action and enjoy the day together.

3 WORSHIP RESPONSE

Look For the New

When God repeats a word or phrase, it signals something important. This Worship Response, spend intentional time searching for His mention of new things. A few verses have been provided below.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Bible

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Take turns looking up verses in the Bible with the word new in them.
2. Read them aloud.
3. See if your family can find even more "new" verses! The concordance in the back of your Bible is a great place to check.

New

NEW SONG: *Psalms 33:3*

NEW COVENANT: *Jeremiah 31:31*

NEW COMMAND: *John 13:34*

NEW CREATION: *2 Corinthians 5:17*

NEW EVERYTHING: *Revelation 21:5*



4 BLESSING

Each Morning

SCRIPTURE: Lamentations 3:22-23

BLESSING: (Child's name), May you wake expectantly each day. The Lord brings fresh steadfast love and mercy every morning. This is true and you can trust His faithfulness. Remember your brothers and sisters also have a new start when the sun rises. May you offer love and mercy as Christ does.

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.

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.

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!

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.

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.

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.

8 LOVE AND 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.

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!

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.

November
FAMILY TIME VERSE

*DO NOT BE ANXIOUS ABOUT
anything,*

but in every situation

*BY PRAYER
& PETITION,
WITH
THANKSGIVING*

present your requests to

God.

Philippians 4:2

HomeFront



December
FAMILY TIME VERSE

Peace I leave with you;
my peace
I give you.

I do not give to you
as the world gives.

Do not let your *hearts*
be troubled and
do not be afraid.

John 14:27

