

HomeFront

a spiritual parenting resource

COURSE CORRECTION

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

LOVE AND RESPECT

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

KNOWING

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

MODELING

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



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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

Ten years ago, I moved to Colorado and discovered something beautiful...FALL! Having lived my entire life in evergreen California, I had not experienced the changing of the seasons as we have them in Colorado. The turning of the leaves still takes my breath away when I witness the hues of yellow, orange, and red in vibrant array. What is interesting about these beautiful leaves is that they are most lovely when dying. Isn't this true of our lives as well? We are called to die to ourselves in order to live for Christ. When we deny ourselves to follow Jesus, it is at this point that we are most lovely.

May this season allow you time to reflect on how God is asking you to "die to something" in order that you can live more fully for Him. As you do this, what you will be modeling for your children, is a life a beauty, fully surrendered to Jesus.

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 a good book and a cup of coffee.

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

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

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

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

FAMILY NIGHTS/HOMEGROUPS

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.



Issue Six

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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.

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 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.

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

COURSE CORRECTION

1 *Remain in the Vine* GOD'S WORD

GOD STATEMENT: Jesus is the Vine

SCRIPTURE: John 15

God is intentional about His children's spiritual growth—especially in giving us direction for how to stay on a path leading toward holiness and Christlike living. One of His clearest directives can be found in John 15.

Before we dive into John 15, let's ponder the topic of gardening. A skilled gardener knows exactly how to take care of a growing plant. He knows how much water and sunlight it needs. And if he's growing a fruit-bearing plant, there's something else he knows about: **pruning**.

To prune means to cut the vines and branches occasionally. This may seem like the opposite of what the gardener should do if he wants the tree to grow and bear fruit. But after a plant gets pruned, it actually grows to be healthier and produces more fruit.

DISCUSSION:

1. As a family read John 15:1-11. How many times does Jesus say to remain? What does it mean to remain?
2. Now read John 15:12-17. What does Jesus say will happen if we remain in Him (verses 4-5)?
3. What commandment does Jesus give us in verses 12-17?
4. Finally, read John 15:26-27. Who did Jesus give us to live inside us and help us when we ask Him to be our Savior?

Sometimes we aren't choosing to abide in God's Spirit. **God allows us to make choices for ourselves. The most important is to choose Jesus as Lord of our life.** Sometimes, though, we make the wrong choices. When this happens, we end up on a path that's different from the one God wants for us. This is when **He must correct our course or "prune our branches."** Sometimes God must get our attention to help us see His path for our lives. God can do this through the Bible, other people in our lives, and even the Holy Spirit speaking to our hearts.

2 *Chat and Chew* GAME TIME

Assemble a Course Corrected Trail Mix for your family using some of the suggested ingredients below. Then create a path or trail on your table during mealtime. Now tell your family you're all going to play a counting game.

SUGGESTED INGREDIENTS

- Nuts (peanuts, almonds, walnuts, or cashews)
- Seeds (sunflower or pumpkin)
- Dried fruit (apricots, cranberries, raisins, blueberries, coconut, etc.)
- Pretzel sticks
- Rice crackers
- Cheese crackers
- Dry cereal
- Chocolate, peanut butter, or butterscotch chips
- Yogurt-covered fruit

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

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Begin with your oldest child.
2. Starting with the number one, go around the table, having each person say the next number.
3. When someone gets to an even number, he must say, "Chew" instead of the "number".
4. For example: "One, chew; three, chew; five, chew ..."
5. Anyone who misses saying "Chew" (or says an incorrect number) must take a piece of the trail mix and eat it.
6. Start the game over, beginning with the next person on the right.
7. Keep playing until your path is all chewed up!

After you play, **discuss together that in life we might mess up, but God always gives us the opportunity to start over and get on the corrected path.**

3 Celebration

WORSHIP RESPONSE

COURSE CORRECTION and celebration—the two don't seem to go hand in hand. **The gospel, however, has a tendency to defy our natural instincts and to push us in a direction that seems counterintuitive.** This same gospel shows celebration to be an integral part of the redemptive process.

So what do we have to celebrate in terms of COURSE CORRECTION? We celebrate that God isn't just trying to correct a broken action but also a broken heart. Though we strive for the best and are often disappointed when we fail, God isn't surprised by our failures. **He uses them to further glorify Himself.** Because of this, we know God is constantly bringing us back to Him and molding our hearts to be more like His.

We're also given the hope that we don't have to be crushed by our shortcomings. We're assured that our loving Father is correcting our path and gently forming us into the people He wants us to be.

As your family's act of worship this month, come together and celebrate the God who brings you back to Himself. This celebration will look different for each family. If your family likes fall treats, enjoy the treats together. If your family enjoys the park, go to the park. If your family likes music, create tambourines and make a joyous noise to the Lord. **Whatever you do, just be sure that Jesus is the center of your celebration and that you take time to thank Him for making level paths for you to follow.**



4 A Spoken

BLESSING

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 her.

SCRIPTURE: Galatians 5:25

BLESSING: (Child's name), may you choose to live by the Spirit by staying "in step" with the Spirit...may you only do or say things that God wants you to and do them in His power. May you always ask for His help to do these things.

*"I am the true vine,
AND MY FATHER
is the gardener."*

(John 15:1)

As your children are blessed, tell them that they have the opportunity to also be a blessing to others. Encourage them to freely give away to others the joy and love they have received from God.

LESSON TWO

COURSE CORRECTION

1 *A Level Path* GOD'S WORD

GOD STATEMENT: God disciplines those He loves
SCRIPTURE: Hebrews 12:1-3 and 12:11-13

Before His death, Jesus fixed His eyes on the course God set before Him. It was not an easy path, it was difficult. God did not leave Him in pain. After his death, Jesus rose again to sit at the right hand of God. What a loving father!

In Hebrews 12 the author is encouraging followers of Jesus to not grow weary or lose heart. He tells us that God is committed to the COURSE CORRECTION of His children so they will live in loving relationship with Him.

It's often painful, but remember God disciplines His children in love, and then He makes a straight and level path for them to follow.

DISCUSSION:

1. Did you know you can pray and ask the Holy Spirit to tell you what He wants you to do every day?
2. Have you heard God telling you of an area He wants you to listen and obey?
3. Consider keeping a piece of paper on your desk or by your bed to write down what you hear. You can remember and celebrate how you've grown.

2 *Garden Crossing* GAME TIME

Gather your family and play this fun and slightly difficult game as a reminder that **God is the one** who keeps our path to healthy growth and to produce His fruit.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 54 sheets of paper, index cards or sticky notes
- maps provided on page 23

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Create a rectangular pattern on the ground, six sheets across and nine sheets deep.
2. Make sure each piece of paper or index card isn't more than a step away from the next one. (You'll need to step from one piece of paper to another to get across the "garden.")
3. Choose one person in your family to be the "Keeper of the Path," and divide the rest of your family into two equal teams.
4. Using a provided map and a pencil or pen, have the Keeper of the Path create a pathway to safety.
5. The path must lead from the starting point on one side to safety on the other side of the garden.
6. Be sure the Keeper of the Path keeps his path a secret, as it will be the key to getting across the garden.
7. **Explain to your family that the object of the game will be to work together as a team to cross the garden by only stepping on the correct "stones."** When a team member steps on an incorrect stone or goes in the wrong direction, she will have to start over. Be sure to alternate teams and players, as only one person is allowed on the stones at a time.

Feel free to play this game as many times as you want, allowing multiple people to be the Keeper of the Path. **Get creative, and feel free to add little twists to the path,** such as designating spots that require you to hop on one foot, do the chicken dance, etc. Work together, and have a blast!



3 Prayer Bracelets

WORSHIP RESPONSE



As we focus on hearing from God how to stay on course, let's remember to pray for others as a worship response. God listens and honors our prayers for each other. He invites us many times throughout the Bible to talk to Him about everything in prayer.

We can use this simple symbol to help remind us to pray.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Some string from around your home (ribbon, yarn, and even some old shoelaces could do the trick).

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Cut the string into sections about a foot long for every member of your family.
2. Tie small knots along the string for each person in your home.
3. Have everyone wrap the string around his or her wrists like a bracelet.

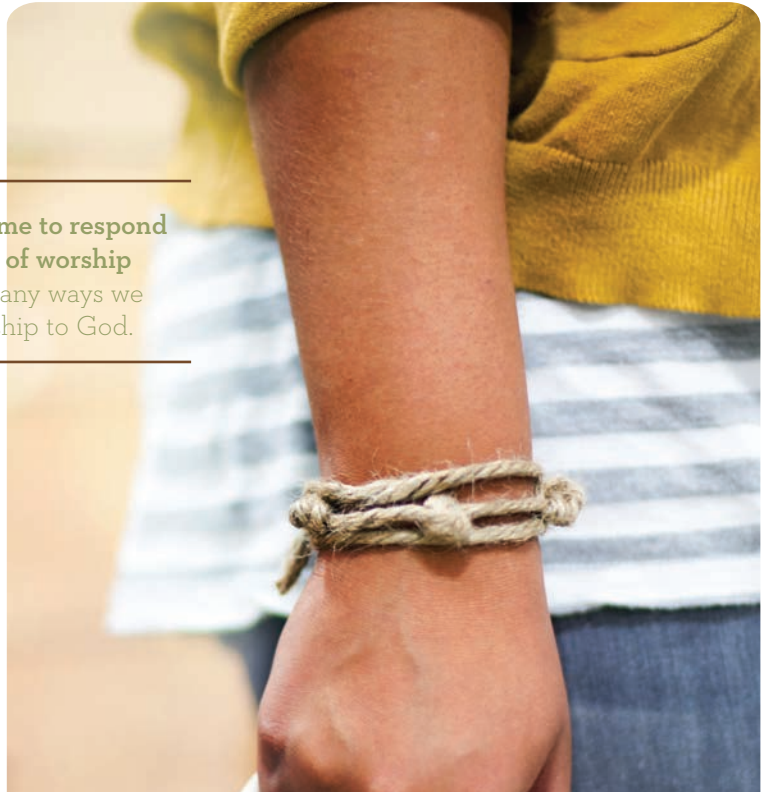
Wear this bracelet for the entire month. Let every knot in the string bring to mind each family member and lift up a prayer to God on their behalf. There is of course no special power in the bracelets or the knots. Use it as a simple reminder to pray for those you love.

A simple prayer for others could go like these: *"God, please comfort Mom. Show her how much you love her and how important she is to you. Lead and direct her with Your wisdom and grace."*

"Dear God, please help my brother with the math test he has coming up this week. Reward him for all the hard work he did by studying and bring the answers quickly to his mind."



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 A Spoken

BLESSING

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 her.

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 37:23

BLESSING: (Child's name), may you trust the Lord to make your path straight. May the Lord delight in your ways and keep your steps firm.

LESSON THREE

LOVE AND RESPECT

1 *No Matter What!* GOD'S WORD

GOD STATEMENT: God is Love

SCRIPTURE: Romans 5:6-8

As a family, read the Scripture and this excerpt from *Spiritual Parenting* by Michelle Anthony and then talk about the discussion questions.

One day after my preteen daughter and I had experienced a bitter battle of the wills, she ran up to her room screaming that she wished she lived somewhere else. At that point I may have agreed with her—just for a moment. **But I realized that my daughter needed my love in that very moment more than she needed to go to her room and think about what she had done and said.**

My flesh wanted her to stay in her room until she felt sorry enough for what she had done and was ready to come to me and apologize. I wanted her to feel the separation of our relationship and to just “sit in it” for a while. After all, she deserved to feel bad, right?

Then, a tender voice inside reminded me of the words from Romans 5:8: “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” It was like a ton of bricks had just hit me! “While we were still sinners” played over and over in my mind as I wrestled with God about what to do.

Slowly, I opened my daughter’s door and walked in. She was sitting on her bed in tears. She barked at me, “What are you doing here?” I recoiled, thinking that she didn’t deserve my love in that moment. But God kept prompting me.

I said, “I’m here because I love you and I want to be with you, even though you have made a poor decision and you’re angry at me.” She was surprised. “How can you want to be with me right now, when I don’t even want to be with me?” she asked through her tears. I sat with her and held her. I told her that although her actions were not acceptable, she was dearly loved and I would always want her in my life—no matter what!

DISCUSSION:

1. Does it surprise you that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us?
2. You are very loved. As a recipient of this great love, how will you show your family love even when things are hard?

2 *Toss the Balloon* GAME TIME

This simple game creates an opportunity for parents to love and respect your children in a way that affirms the grace that God has given to each of us! Stand in a circle. Parents, kneel down on both knees to be at eye level with your children. This gives you the same advantage.

WHAT YOU’LL DO

Toss a balloon up in the air in the direction of someone else in the circle. The goal is to keep the balloon up as long as possible without it ever touching the ground. Continue to toss the balloon back and forth continually among each person in the circle. Once the balloon has touched the ground, start another round.

LET’S ADD A TWIST!

For the older children, or once your family has mastered the basic version, you can add in multiple balloons and/or different sizes. You can also begin to call out a family member’s name and body part, which that person must use to keep the balloon in the air. For example, whoever has the first toss can call out, “Mom, head!” or “Andrew, knee!” Get creative!

REMEMBER!

Encourage your children to be gracious and respectful to those who were unable to keep the balloon up in the air. Remind them that we all fall and make mistakes but that God loves us no matter what. Because of that, we should show the same kind of love to those around us!

3 *God is...*

WORSHIP RESPONSE

Christ died for us even while we were sinners. This amazing truth daily draws new believers to Christ. Believers and nonbelievers continually ask: why would Christ, the Son of God, choose to die for us while we were still sinners?

Spend some time marveling in this amazing truth and mystery. Take a deep breath and praise God that He knows everything about you and loves you, anyway. Praise Him for the fact that He loves you so much that He chose to die for you in order for you to be in relationship with Him!

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

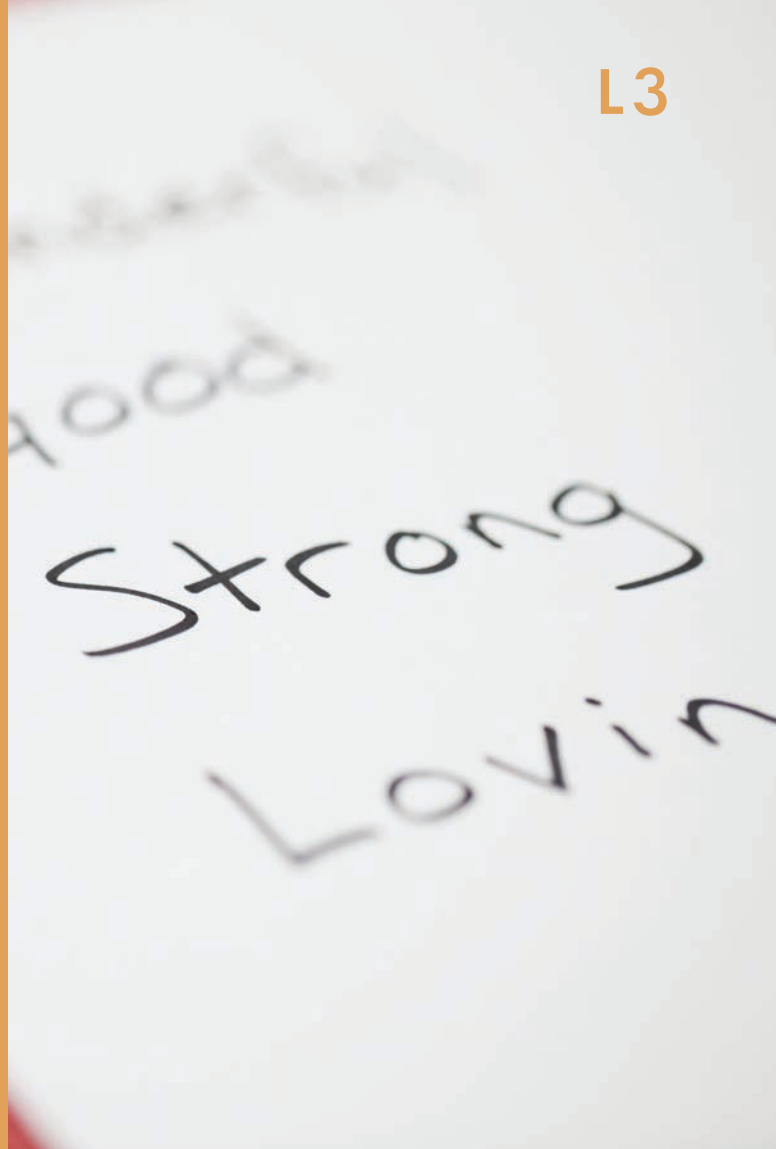
- scrapbook or colored paper such as construction paper. (use colors that represent hair color, skin color, and favorite clothing colors)
- permanent marker
- Bible

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. As an act of worship to this great God who knows everything about you and loves you anyway, write down words that describe who He is.
2. Use permanent markers and make a list on the back of scrapbook paper, magazine pages, or other colorful paper.
3. Help younger kids think of names of God (or words that describe God) such as: Wonderful, Good, Strong, Loving.
4. Encourage each family member to cover a few pages of colorful paper with God's names and characteristics.
5. Keep these in a safe place. You will use these lists for the Worship Response in the next lesson.



L3



4 *A Spoken*

BLESSING

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 her.

SCRIPTURE: John 13:34 & 35

BLESSING: (Child's name), **may you know know God's love and then show that love to others. may you love one another.** Just like God loves you, you love each other. This is how everyone will know that you are His disciples—when they see the love you have for each other.

LESSON FOUR

LOVE AND RESPECT

1 *Three Little Words* GOD'S WORD

GOD STATEMENT: God loves you

SCRIPTURE: 1 Corinthians 13

I love you. When put together these three little words can have a huge impact. In the 13th chapter of 1 Corinthians verse seven tells us, "Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails." This is how God is to us and **when our families hear us say, "I love you" it implies the following:**

LOVE BEARS ALL THINGS:

You would be willing to take on or accept as your own the responsibilities of another person.

LOVE BELIEVES ALL THINGS:

You would accept everything about them as true and trust them with confidence.

LOVE HOPES ALL THINGS:

You would be expectant about their future. Brimming with the desire for all the possibilities of fulfillment that lie ahead of them.

LOVE ENDURES ALL THINGS:

You would be willing to face and withstand with courage all that life brings their way.

LOVE NEVER FAILS:

It never falls short of what is expected. It does not disappoint or prove undependable. It never abandons or forsakes.

Eight letters, three little words, communicate one powerful statement to those whose ears it falls upon.

When we make the effort to tell our families that we love them it provides them with motivation to love others. When we have been changed by love we are more likely to show that love to others.

DISCUSSION:

1. Did you know God loves you in the ways 1 Corinthians 13 talks about?
2. Have you told a member of your family you love them today?

2 *Orange Bread* CREATE

Children are like sponges. No matter what age they are, it's no surprise they really enjoy imitating things they see and hear. We are made in His image and made to imitate Him! This month, as you spend time with your kids, remind them what true love and respect are. You can work together to make this yummy orange bread as you discuss what it looks like to love someone or respect them as God does to each of us.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- ¾ cup sugar
- ½ cup chopped pecans
- 1 Tbls grated orange rind
- 2 cans refrigerated buttermilk biscuits (total 20 biscuits)
- 1 (8-ounce) package cream cheese, cut into 20 squares
- ½ cup butter, melted
- 1 Tablespoon orange juice
- 1 cup sifted powdered sugar



WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Combine sugar, pecans, and orange rind in a small bowl.
2. Separate each biscuit: place a cream cheese square in the center of one half, and top with the remaining biscuit half, pinching the sides together.
3. Dip in butter and roll in the sugar mixture.
4. Stand each biscuit on edge in a lightly greased 12-cup Bundt pan, spacing evenly.
5. Drizzle with remaining butter and sprinkle with remaining sugar mixture.
6. Bake at 350 degrees for 45 minutes or until golden brown. Invert onto a serving platter.
7. Combine powdered sugar and orange juice. Spoon over warm biscuits.
8. Serve immediately.



3 *Made in His Image* WORSHIP RESPONSE

Innate in the environment of LOVE & RESPECT is the value that children (and all of us) are respected by God because we bear His image!

Create a self-portrait of yourself by using the pages you created during the Worship Response last week.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Scrapbook pages you created during the Worship Response section last week.
- Scissors
- Glue or glue stick
- 1 piece of white cardstock for each family member

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Rip up the pages into little pieces and flip them over so that only the colored side can be seen.
2. Arrange them into a mosaic that resembles your face and glue them onto the page.

Hidden behind your self-portrait will be the characteristics of God that you wrote down last week. Though some of these names and traits relate only to God, we know that His Spirit empowers us to live a life that reflects Him and His image. **God created you in His image; therefore, you carry Him around in your life so that God can be seen by others through you!**

4 *A Spoken* BLESSING

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 her.

SCRIPTURE: 1 John 4:7-8

BLESSING: (Child's name), **may you know you are loved simply because you exist**...not based on anything you have done. Because you are unconditionally loved, may you boldly ask God to show you ways you can grow and show respect to those around you.

LESSON FIVE

KNOWING

1 *The Impossible* GOD'S WORD

GOD STATEMENT: God is Miraculous
SCRIPTURE: 1 Kings 17:7-24

God consistently uses impossible situations to bring about good. Even a brief skim through the Bible shows this is true and helps us know Him. **When Abraham and Sarah were too old to have children, God miraculously provided a son.** When Joseph was sold into slavery, God raised him to second-in-command over Egypt. When Moses was leading the Israelites out of Egypt, God parted the Red Sea. When they became hungry and thirsty in the wilderness, God rained down food from heaven and brought water out of rocks. David beat Goliath. Daniel survived a night with lions. An angel appeared in the fiery furnace. **We know that God works in impossible situations to bring about good for His people and to bring glory to Himself.**

These miraculous acts of God did not stop with the Old Testament. When Jesus steps onto the scene, He proves that God is not done working in impossible

situations. He takes a boy's lunch and feeds thousands of people. He heals a man born blind. **The best part is that when Jesus dies—when all hope of His being the promised Redeemer and Israel's Messiah seems lost—God raises Him from the dead!** Jesus' death seemed to His disciples to be an impossible situation, and yet that is what God used to bring about the greatest possible good—our salvation!

One story that may not be familiar to your family is found in 1 Kings 17:7-24. Here, God sends Elijah to stay with a specific widow and her son in the midst of a drought and famine, and as they extend hospitality in giving him a place to stay, they get to see God work in two impossible situations.

DISCUSSION:

1. What was the first impossible situation in this story?
2. What was the second impossible situation in this story?
3. How does the widow know God more after experiencing His miracle?
4. How would you have felt if you'd been Elijah and had seen God do these miracles?

2 *Who Knows Me?* GAME TIME

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Bag of colorful candies (M&Ms, gummy bears, etc.)
- Marker
- Sheet of paper or poster board
- White paper plates

BEFORE YOU START

Pour the candy into a bowl. Create a "legend" by assigning each color of candy a "get to know you" question. For example:

- Red: If you could be an animal, what would you be?
- Orange: What is your favorite kind of weather?
- Yellow: What kind of food do you want right now?
- Green: Who is your favorite friend?
- Purple: What is your favorite movie?

Write a set of these for the first round of the game on one side of the paper and a set for the second round on the other. **Be creative with your questions based on how well all of the players know each other.** Okay—now you're ready to go!

Gather your family. For this game, each person is his own team. Place the bowl of candy in the middle along with the paper plates and a marker. Set the legend to the side where everyone can see it. Talk through the legend with your kids, especially if they're younger, so they know the question that corresponds with each color.

Explain that the first player will cover her eyes and select a candy from the bowl. Help this player match her color of candy with the legend and read the question out loud. The player then picks up a paper plate and holds it on top of her head. Using the marker, she must attempt to draw her answer while the rest of the family tries to guess it. The first family member to guess correctly gets one point. Continue rotating until everyone has answered each question. As players pick a color they have already chosen, have them put it back in the jar and pick again. After you finish the first side of the legend, flip the paper over for round two. The player with the most points at the end of the game wins.

3 *Trust in God*

WORSHIP RESPONSE

As Fall arrives consider taking this family night to the camp ground! Worship response will come alive as you read this scripture and poem.

Parents, share Genesis 15:5-6 with your children:

"[God] took him outside and said, 'Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.' Then he said to him, 'So shall your offspring be.' Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness."

After sharing these verses and discussion how God knows each of our paths, as an act of worship, read this poem about Abraham written by Emily Kozacek. Take your children outside to look at the stars. **Remind them of the promise that God made to Abraham and how God kept His promise.** Share with them that when we know God, we can have faith in Him to always work things together for our good.

"ABRAHAM"

My lovely
Have you forgotten all the promises
I've made to thee?
You've been makin' plans, I see
So won't you lay your plans aside
And come and trust Me?
Won't you lay your plans aside
And come and trust Me?
You and I
Let's take a walk under the stars
You need reminding
That I am not that far away
I am not that far away
Leave the comfort that you seek
It's in the dangers of the waters
You will find Me
Take my hand and I will lead
And know that where I lead
You will not go alone
Please know that where I lead
You will not go alone

4 *A Spoken*

BLESSING

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 her.

SCRIPTURE: Ephesians 1:15-23

BLESSING: (Child's name), **may God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, grant you spiritual wisdom and understanding so that you might grow in your knowledge of Him.** I pray that your heart will be flooded with light so that you can understand the wonderful future He has promised to you. May you realize what a rich and glorious inheritance He has given to you.

LESSON SIX

KNOWING

1 *Gratitude* GOD'S WORD

GOD STATEMENT: God is Good

SCRIPTURE: Romans 5:8

Christianity, is not about bartering or negotiating with God to bless us; it is about gratitude, thanksgiving, and grace. Have you thought about this...we don't do good things to get good things from God; we do good things because God is good. There is a world of difference between these two perspectives. One way leads to performance-oriented religion, exhaustion, pride, and shame; the other way leads to relationship, restful obedience, lasting love, and joy.. Some days we choose the foolish path; other days we walk confidently in our true identity in Christ; **every day we are known** and loved by God in our stumbles, missteps, slips, and falls.

Read Romans 5:8 to your children.

Parents, it might be helpful to discuss the meaning of the word *sin*, since it figures so prominently in this verse. Depending on the age of your child, the concept of sinfulness can be a difficult topic to grasp, but here it helps to know that the term *sinner* comes from a Greek word (*hamartia*) that means "to miss the mark" (as in archery, missing the very center of the bull's-eye).

DISCUSSION:

1. What are some ways that both parents and children have "missed the mark," or been less than perfect in the ways they relate to God and to others?

Discussing this can be a great opportunity to shower grace and love upon your children (and to reflect on how much grace and love God has showered upon you).

Your family can recognize together how good God is—for each confession of "missing the mark" is truly a moment to embrace the fact that Jesus already paid the price for each sin. We are known and loved! Now, how do we respond to this undeserved love?

2 *Heart in the Hat* GAME TIME

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 1 baseball hat
- A deck of cards.
- Tape for the throw line
- Small reward for each player

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Take out the heart cards from the deck. These will be what you play with.
2. Mark a throw line for your players to stand behind.
3. Set your hat 10 feet away from the throw line.
4. Hand the first player one card.. Offer the player a prize if they get the card in the hat.
5. Allow them to toss the card toward the hat. If they miss (it is difficult to get the card to go in) have a parent pick up the card and put it in the hat for them.
6. At the end of the game give the players the reward because of the grace of the parent.

After each family member has an opportunity to play, talk about how difficult it was to get the card in the hat? Discuss how this illustrates that our best efforts to hit God's mark in life will fall short (John 3:16). Then ask them how grateful they were for someone else putting the card in the hat for them. Wrap up by remembering that Jesus does the same for us. We can celebrate KNOWING we are right with God because of Jesus. Salvation is the greatest reward!



3 *Praying Truth* WORSHIP RESPONSE

Together as a family, pray for one another. There is great power in prayer, and inviting your children to pray over members of their family is a wonderful gift. Encourage one another to be a bright light in a world that is far too often dark.

Remind your family members of how much they are loved, even/especially when they “miss the mark.” The terrible lie that God loves us less when we sin is debilitating, shame-inducing, and never results in changed hearts. Only a solid foundation of love (reinforced daily by kind words and actions, reminders of our true identity in Christ, and honest, safe conversations), can ever support and build people up to be the kind of disciples of Jesus who do good things simply because God Himself is good. That is the pathway to true life. Let the journey begin!

4 *A Spoken* BLESSING

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 her.

SCRIPTURE: JOHN 3:16

BLESSING: (Child's name), **may you know the truth of God's goodness.** When you confess your sins to Him, may you know His mercy and grace recognize His amazing gift of love to you. Salvation through Jesus Christ gives you new life!

LESSON SEVEN

MODELING

1 *Paul Models* GOD'S WORD

GOD STATEMENT: God gives us models to follow
SCRIPTURE: 1 Corinthians 4:15-17

God used Paul's words and life to model what it looked like to be a Christian even in difficult times. As the people of Corinth followed Paul's example, they followed Christ.

As a family, read 1 Corinthians 4:12-17

DISCUSSION:

1. What are some ways Paul is modeling how we are to respond in difficult times (verses 12 and 13)
2. Why do you think Paul asked the Corinthians to follow his example (verse 14 and 17).

God used Paul in countless ways to show others who Christ was, in both his words and actions. The way that Paul lived his life helped others around him love Christ more even when it is difficult to follow Him.

It's important to have models in our lives. They give us a path to follow. They show us tangible ways to live out our faith in Christ.

As a family, **ask one another about the models in your lives.** Who are these models? What makes them models? What makes your family a model?

3 *Worth it All.* WORSHIP RESPONSE



Intimidation. Confrontation. Persecution. Our brothers and sisters in China constantly face threats from the government for one simple reason:

THEY CHOOSE TO WORSHIP JESUS.

Christians in China always practice their beliefs under much pressure and scrutiny. This forces them to truly assess their beliefs and ultimately requires them to make a decision to completely commit themselves to Christ.

"They don't have the freedom to waver or to be fickle with what they believe," James says. "Once a decision is made, they know it can be life-altering, if not life-threatening."

This kind of devotion and faith reminds us of what Paul wrote in his second letter to the Corinthians:

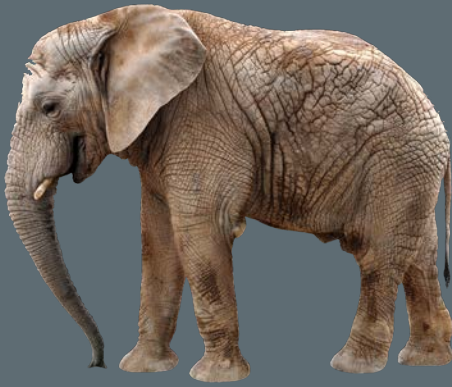
"We now have this light shining in our hearts, but we ourselves are like fragile clay jars containing this great treasure. This makes it clear that our great power is from God, not from ourselves.

We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed. We are perplexed, but not driven to despair. We are hunted down, but never abandoned by God. We get knocked down, but we are not destroyed. Through suffering, our bodies continue to share in the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be seen in our bodies.

Yes, we live in constant danger of death because we serve Jesus, so that the life of Jesus will be evident in our dying bodies. So we live in the face of death, but this has resulted in eternal life for you."

—2 Corinthians 4:7-12 (NLT)

Be encouraged by the believers in China as they like Paul did, model a passionate and fearless devotion to the **Lord**. Embrace the freedom you have in worshipping Jesus whenever, wherever, and however you choose. Create space for your family to worship God, allowing your thankfulness to spill over. Thank Him for your freedom to worship Him. **Then pray together for the people in China. Pray for their protection. Pray for courage and strength.**



2 King Elephant GAME TIME

This silly game reminds us of models in our lives. Gather you family and have everyone sit in a circle. Each seat in the circle will be a different animal. **Designate one person to be the King Elephant, and then assign the other animals.** If you wish, you can let players choose their own animals and invent their own gestures for the animals. Otherwise, have your animals use the following motions:

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Decide each animals action. Below are some ideas.
- **King Elephant:** hold one arm out extended away from your nose.
- **Bird:** join both thumbs together and flap your hands like a bird flying
- **Chicken:** place hands under armpits and flap arms
- **Alligator:** extend your arms out in front of you, with one hand facing up and the other down, and clap them together like an alligator's jaws
- **Bear:** hold out your hands like giant bear claws
- **Lion :** connect your hands above your head to form a circle and make a "growling" face
- **Worm:** wiggle one bent finger

4 A Spoken BLESSING

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 her.

SCRIPTURE: 1 John 4:19

BLESSING: (Child's name), **may you be reminded often of the ways God has loved you** so that you may follow His model and love others in all circumstances.

WHAT YOU'LL DO

King Elephant is a rhythm game in that you must successfully stay on beat. Depending on the chair you are currently seated in, each person adopts an animal gesture (as described above, or you may create a new one). The task is to correctly do your animal signal when called upon, and then to make another animal's signal to try to get that person to make a mistake.

The rhythm to maintain is set by the person who is King Elephant. He or she can alter the speed as desired. Everyone follows the rhythm of a 1-2-3-4 pattern, where 1 is a pat on the knee, 2 is a clap, 3 and 4 are the animal signals. The person does his or her own signal (animal gesture and noise) first, followed by another animal's signal. So for example, a round could look like this:

King Elephant starts rhythm: knee pat, clap, elephant signal, King Elephant signals a different player: knee pat, clap, bear signal, Bear continues: knee pat, clap, bear signal, Bear signals another player: knee pat, clap, fish signal, Fish continues: knee pat, clap, fish signal ...and so on.

When people fail to keep the rhythm or make a mistake on their signal (e.g., do a signal when they aren't supposed to), then they go to the end of the circle and everyone moves up a seat. The goal is to try to be the King Elephant by knocking out anyone in front of you. Be sure to get everyone to make funny animal sound effects when they do their signal too.



LESSON EIGHT

MODELING

1 *A Selfless Act* GOD'S WORD

GOD STATEMENT: Jesus is our example

SCRIPTURE: John 13:1-5 and 12-15

As Jesus prepared to journey to the cross, He was intentional to modeled a loving act for his disciples .

He know they would need encouragement in the coming days!

Read John 13:1-5 and 12-15 as a family.

DISCUSS:

1. How was this act a picture of what was about to happen to Jesus.
2. How do you think this act helped the disciples after Jesus died on the cross?
3. What is Jesus modeling for believers in this passage?

2 *Follow the Leader* CREATE

This weeks fun create is a visual reminder help your children practice putting their faith into action as they follow your example and what you model for them.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- long piece of butcher paper
- Tape
- Various colors of tempera paint (1 color per person participating)
- Paintbrushes
- Paper plates

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Tape the butcher paper to the floor.
2. Pour each color of paint on a separate paper plate, and have each family member pick a color.
3. Gently brush the paint on the bottoms of each family member's feet.
4. Have the parents walk across the paper first, leaving painted footprints for the children to follow. Then have the kids walk across the paper, also leaving their footprints.
5. Observe the footprints displayed on the paper. Talk about how they serve as examples of what it looks like to follow the model set before us by our parents and Christ.

OTHER OPTIONS:

Simply wet the bottoms of your feet with water and walk along dry places of sidewalk to reveal wet footprints on the ground. Or trace each family member's foot on different colored construction paper and display them on the wall from biggest to smallest.

DISCUSSION:

Note that the prints go in the same direction and that the children knew the way to walk because of the example modeled before them.

Remind your children that Jesus modeled the way to walk through life. Where can you hang your creation to remind you of this?

3 *The Jesus Prayer*

WORSHIP RESPONSE

The author of the Jesus Prayer is unknown, but the history of this prayer can be traced back to sometime in the 4th century AD. This prayer has been a part of church tradition ever since and is still used by many today. **How amazing to think about praying words to the Lord that other Christians have been praying throughout history.**

As we model our prayers after others who loved Jesus long before us, we can also be reminded that we are a part of a faith community that has been alive and active throughout history.

This month, take some time to gather your family together and pray The Jesus Prayer. Begin by explaining to your children that you are going to model your prayer after a prayer that Christians have been praying for a very long time. Invite your children to pray the words of the prayer after they have heard you say them.

The words to the Jesus prayer are simply "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner." Tradition is to pray the prayer again and again, taking out a few words each time to focus on the deep importance of each word of the prayer. The beauty of this simple prayer is that it can be prayed quickly and repeated often. Many Christians use it as a way of pausing throughout their day to refocus on the presence and truth of God in that moment.

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Begin by praying "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner." Invite your children to repeat the words.
2. Pray "**Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me.**" Invite your children to repeat the words.
3. Pray "**Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy.**" Invite your children to repeat the words.
4. Pray "**Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God.**" Invite your children to repeat the words.
5. Pray "**Lord Jesus Christ.**" Invite your children to repeat the words.
6. Simply pray the name "**Lord Jesus.**" Invite your children to repeat the words.
7. Pray the entire prayer, "**Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner**" one more time and invite your children to repeat the words

Close your time by explaining to your family that, while the words of this prayer may seem simple, they focus on some very important truths of our relationship with God. We are all sinners and need Jesus' great mercy in our lives every single day.

4 *A Spoken*

BLESSING

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 her.

SCRIPTURE: 1 Corinthians 11:1

BLESSING: (Child's name), may you follow Jesus wherever He may go so others will see and want to know why you follow Jesus. May you be a leader that leads others to Him.



Family Camping

Fall has arrived! Our families are back in school and routines are in full swing with the Holidays right around the corner. Talk with your family or homegroup and think about a mini camping trip to get away and prepare your hearts for the season ahead.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

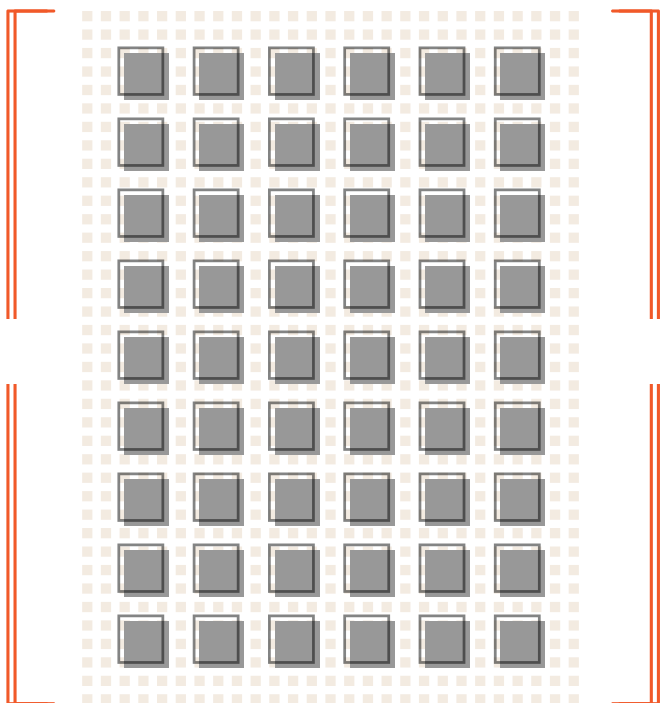
- Decide on a lesson to use during your getaway family night /homegroup.
- Discuss if this will be an overnight camping trip, or a simple day time trip.
- Make your packing list and reserve your camping spot.

WHAT YOU'LL DO

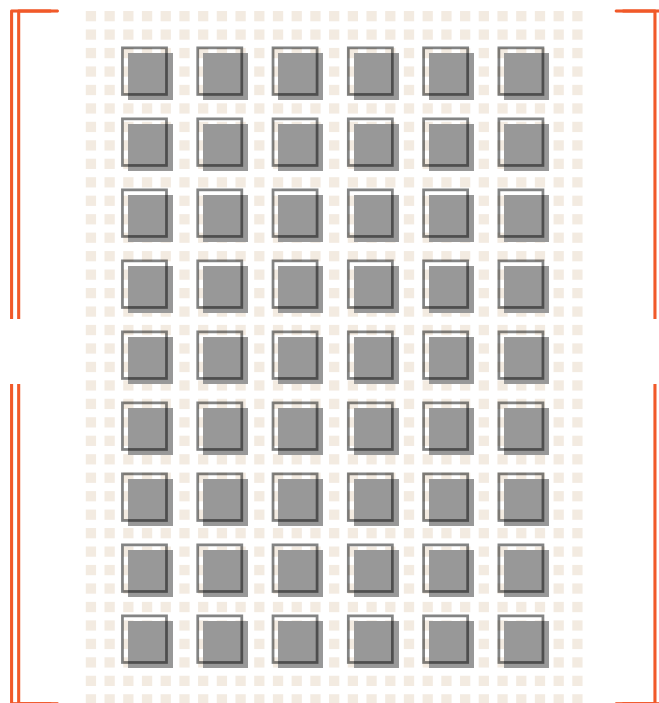
1. Set up camp!
2. Maybe you have a musician in the group. Worship songs around the camp fire are great!
3. Make time to enjoy your chosen family night/homegroup activities. Lesson Five **Worship Response** is perfect for outdoor memories.



START

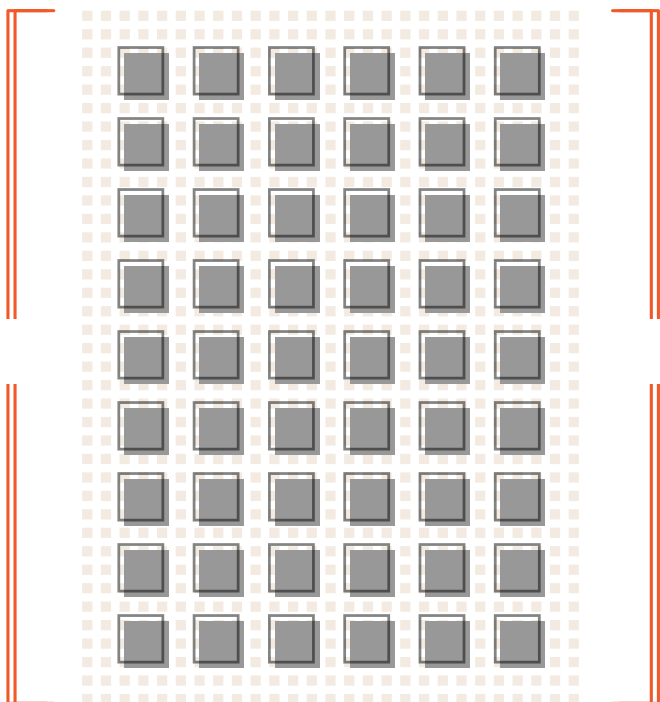


START



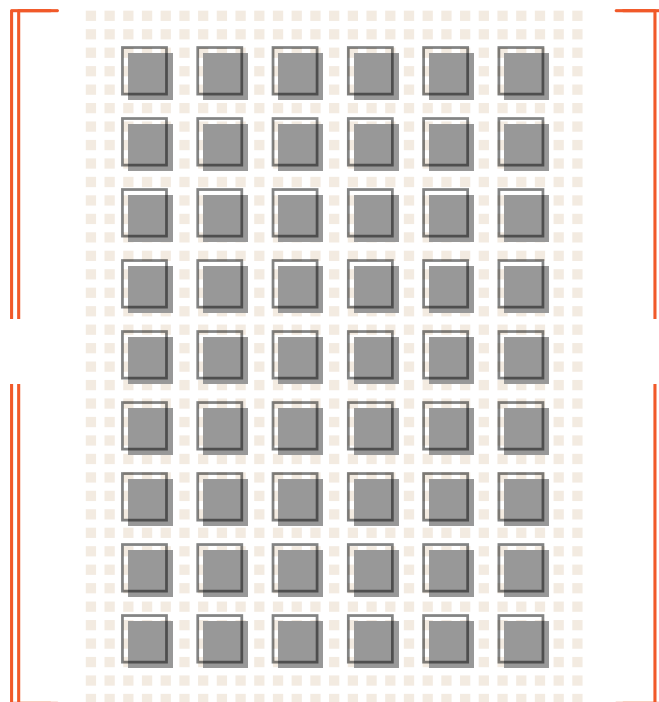
SAFETY

START



SAFETY

START



SAFETY

SAFETY

*But God
demonstrates
his own love for us
in this:
While we
were still sinners,
Christ died
for us.*

Romans 5:8