

# HomeFront

a spiritual parenting resource

MODELING

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



LOVE & RESPECT

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





## A NOTE FROM MICHELLE



HomeFront magazine is designed to help parents and grandparents disciple their children and grandchildren by creating environments in their homes that put God and His character on display. Each issue is created to give practical ways to develop family nights or experiences in your home based on the 10 environments in my book *Spiritual Parenting*. It is vital for our children's and grandchildren's spiritual growth to set aside time on a regular basis to engage in spiritual conversations and activities that are both fun and developmental.

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

The statement that sums up this environment is: "I see Christ in others, and they see Him in me."

The environment of **LOVE & RESPECT** recognizes that children need an environment of love and respect in order to be free to both receive and give God's grace. Innate in 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 because of one's behavior.

The short statement for this environment is: "God fills me with His love so I can give it away."

Dr. Michelle Anthony is the Executive Pastor of Family Ministries at New Life Church in Colorado Springs, CO. Michelle has graduate degrees in Christian education, theology, and leadership and more than 30 years of church ministry experience as a children's and family pastor. She is also the author of *Spiritual Parenting*, *The Big God Story*, *Becoming a Spiritually Healthy Family*, and *7 Family Ministry Essentials*. Michelle loves a good book and a cup of coffee.

@TruInspiration

# HomeFront

## How to Use

- 1 Start by deciding on a day and time that works well for your entire family. It can be an evening around a meal, breakfast on a Saturday, or a break between sporting events. Just commit to "family time" once a week.
- 2 Pick a God's Word devotional, recipe, and one of the other activities titled Create, Game Time, Worship Response, or Serve. At the end of your time together, speak a blessing over your family members.
- 3 There are four weeks of devotionals and activities for each month. When you have a fifth week, let the kids plan the family night. Remember to HAVE FUN! Family night does not have to be perfect. If you spent time with God and with one another, it was a great family night.

## Our Mission

### INSPIRE

parents with ideas to create fun, spiritually forming times in the normal rhythm of everyday life.

### EQUIP

parents to become the spiritual leaders of God's truth in their own households.

### SUPPORT

families to engage their communities and change the culture around them.



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## EDITOR'S NOTE



**May His love fill and refresh you,** and may you be inspired as you model for your children how to follow Jesus and love as He loves.

*Cristi Thomas*

Pears and Brie. Clear blue skies and fresh powdered snow. Good friends and peals of laughter. **MODELING** and **LOVE AND RESPECT**. These are just a handful of examples of the great pairings we experience in life.

The environments of **MODELING** and **LOVE AND RESPECT** complement one another so well. As we pursue Christ and become more like Him, living a life filled with love and respect for others is a natural response of worship to God and blesses those around us.

**The kitchen seems to be the place where great conversations about the day happen.** In this issue you will find fabulous recipes to prepare with your family and create space to discuss the day. January's recipes will put you at the table of a Nicaraguan family as you experience the delicious flavors of their heritage. February brings a simple and tasty hands-on teriyaki chicken recipe your kids can create for the family.

We know that repetition helps us to process and internalize information and experiences. The Blessings for each month are beautiful words of truth and affirmation. **Consider speaking the blessing for each week over your kids at different points throughout the day.** Perhaps you will choose to speak it over them in the morning before they get out of the car for school, and then again at bedtime as you say goodnight.

Families, may you experience the life of Christ in your life in new ways this season.

*Cristi Thomas is the Editor in Chief of HomeFront magazine and Associate Pastor of Family Ministries at New Life Church. She has been a leader in children and family ministries within the local church and parachurch organizations for more than 20 years. Cristi loves music. One of her favorite things is going for a drive, windows down, and singing her favorite songs with all she's got.*

### LET'S BE SOCIAL



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## Discipleship Steps at New Life Church

**Parents are the spiritual nurturers of their children's faith and are the main disciplers in their lives.** We are committed to engaging, empowering, and resourcing our parents and families to succeed in their God-given role. Time and resources make this role challenging in our busy world. At New Life Church, we have created a clear path of discipleship for our parents with convenient times and locations. We hope to see you there!

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

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

**CRITICAL CONVERSATIONS** Evenings designed for parents to discuss tough topics with other parents and hear from leading experts. Held throughout the year.

**HOMEFRONT MAGAZINE** A magazine designed to help you have a successful family night in your home.

**FAMILY NIGHT** An intergenerational family night as the body of Christ.

**PARENT CURRICULUM** A weekly or series handout that shares biblical information, discussion questions, and activities.

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## DID you KNOW

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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# 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 & 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.

**"Follow  
God's**

**example, therefore,  
as  
dearly**



**loved  
children"**

**Ephesians 5:1**



A BLESSING IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK OVER ANOTHER WORDS OF LIFE, HOPE AND TRUTH. PARENTS, TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY EITHER AT THE BEGINNING OR END OF THE DAY TO SIT YOUR CHILD DOWN, LOOK THEM IN THE EYES, AND SPEAK THESE BLESSINGS OVER THEM AS A WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT AND HOPE FOR THEIR LIFE.

## Week One

**(Child's name), may you follow Jesus all your days.** May you seek first the Kingdom of God and trust in His goodness. He is faithful to provide all that you need. May you remember all that He has done for you and learn to recognize His compassion and grace in your life each day.

**(LUKE 9:11, PSALM 111:4)**

## Week Two

**(Child's name), may you always seek to keep Jesus at the center of your life.** May you have confidence in your identity as His son/daughter, and may you not be afraid to approach Him confidently as such. Trust that He is the only one who has the power to save, and He is faithful to do so when you reach out to Him.

**(HEBREWS 4:16, ACTS 4:12)**

## Week Three

**(Child's name), may you love the Lord with your whole heart all the days of your life.** May you learn to recognize the ways He is working in your life and through your life. May His love compel you and empower you to take care of those He has put in your life and show them what it looks like to be a follower of Jesus.

**(MATTHEW 22:37, JOHN 21)**

## Week Four

**(Child's name), may you know that your Heavenly Father loves you.** Make time to be in the presence of the Lord who calls you His own. May you allow Him to teach you what it looks like to be His child as you continually seek His wisdom in how to live the life He has gifted you with.

**(MATTHEW 6:9-13)**

## Week One

### LUKE 9:10-17

(Jesus Feeds the 5,000)

#### GOD STATEMENT

Jesus Provides

**The disciples had just returned from their first journey in twos to spread the gospel and heal people.** When they reunited with Jesus, He took them to a quiet place to rest and pray. The crowds followed them, and Jesus taught them about the Kingdom of God. Jesus modeled to His disciples how to care for the physical and spiritual needs of others.

**Read Luke 9:10-17 together.**

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Read the other gospel accounts of this miracle and discuss the similarities and differences. (Matt 14:13-22, Mark 6:31-44, and John 6:1-14)
- What significance is there to the number of leftover baskets? (Think disciples and tribes of Israel.)
- What did Jesus do before the disciples started passing out the food?
- Do you pray before your meals? Why might that be an important habit?
- Is there room at your table for company? How can you serve others as a family?

#### PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we know You provide for all of our needs. Would Your Spirit help us trust You to do the impossible? May we see the needs of others and be quick to serve them as You have served us. In Jesus's name, Amen.

## Week Two

### LUKE 19:1-10

(Zacchaeus Meets Jesus)

#### GOD STATEMENT

Jesus Saves

**Jesus and His disciples had been travelling throughout Judea, praying about the Kingdom of Heaven, healing the sick, and performing miracles.** Word about Jesus had spread, and multitudes of people gathered to see Him. Zacchaeus was no different. At that time, tax collectors were despised by the Jews because they often took more money than was needed and pocketed the difference. Zacchaeus was the chief tax collector, which meant he was considered a traitor to his nation. Even still, Jesus saw Zacchaeus and had a plan for redemption.

**Read Luke 19:1-10 together.**

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Whom was Zacchaeus hoping to see? Why did he climb the tree?
- How did Jesus surprise Zacchaeus? How did Zacchaeus respond? Why did the people complain?
- In what ways do you "climb a tree" to see Jesus? How do you grow your relationship with Him and learn more about His character?
- How has Jesus forgiven you of your sins?

#### PRAYER

Jesus, thank you for coming to seek and save the lost. Help us live as children of God who are kind to others. Thank you for seeing us and loving us even when we are up in a tree. In Jesus's name, Amen.



## Week Three

### JOHN 21

(Peter Reinstated)



### GOD STATEMENT

God is Worth Following

**"When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?' 'Yes, Lord,' he said, 'You know that I love you.' Jesus said, 'Feed my lambs.' ...Then he said to him, 'Follow me!'" (John 21:15,19b)**

Jesus said these lines to Peter after he had denied Him three times. He wanted to encourage Peter that, even though he made mistakes, Peter still had

an important role to play. Jesus still wants him to follow and show God's love to others. We feed Jesus's sheep by loving them as He loves them. In this way, we show them who Jesus is and how much He cares for them.

Following Jesus isn't always easy. Sometimes we have to choose to show God's love to others even when they aren't being kind. We will all have times when we mess up and don't show God's love to others as we should. But don't be discouraged. Jesus never stops loving us, and He wants us to keep looking to Him, learning to love as He loves.

**Read John 21 together.**

### DISCUSSION

- What does it mean for others to see Jesus in you?
- When can it be hard to show God's love to others?
- What do you find most helpful when reminding yourself of God's love for you?

### PRAYER

Lord, thank You that You are kind and gracious. Please help us follow You even when it's hard and help us show others the same love that You pour into us. We praise You that You are good and faithful, and that You are always for us. In Jesus's name. Amen.

## Week Four

### MATTHEW 6:9-13

(The Lord's Prayer)



### GOD STATEMENT

God Transforms

**Along with teaching us how to live, Jesus also teaches us how to pray.** In this passage, Jesus is showing us the importance of prayer and the form our prayers should take. More than showing us the words to pray, He is teaching us what the posture of our hearts should be as we pray. Prayer is meant to point us to the Father—focusing on His will and His kingdom, relying on Him for what we need each day, and forgiving others as He has forgiven us—to lead us in the paths of righteousness.

Jesus always had the kingdom of heaven in mind in everything He did. In John 5:19 He says, "...the son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does, the Son also does." Jesus had one focus, and through that focus He saw everything and everyone. This is how He modeled the Father to His children. When we pray as Jesus did, by focusing our minds and hearts on Him, we become more like Him, and His light naturally flows out of us to others.

**Read Matthew 6:9-13 together.**

### DISCUSSION

- What is something new you hadn't realized about The Lord's Prayer? In what ways do your prayers reflect a kingdom focus?
- How can your prayer life help you model Jesus to others?

### PRAYER

Lord, thank you that you always hear our prayers. Help us live in a way that is pleasing to you and to reflect your kingdom to others. We praise you for the honor of revealing your character to those around us. In Jesus's name. Amen.

## FAMILY TIME RECIPE



*Tafur Family*



**A**s a child growing up in Los Angeles, these Nicaraguan recipes were the foundation of our family kitchen. My beloved abuela and my mother were very intentional in making our cultural food and the traditions of our heritage a part of our everyday life. They showed us how to make the family recipes and with it came so much love for our heritage. These recipes are staples in our family and are the center of our BIG family feasts. It is our hope to share this love and tradition with you and your family this month.

### SOPA DE COLA (Oxtail Soup)

#### WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 1-2 lbs oxtail meat
- 2 zucchinis
- 1 large yuca or 2 potatoes (peeled)
- 1/4 cabbage (green or any kind)
- 2 carrots (peeled)
- 1 can of Rotel tomatoes (hot or mild)
- Goya all-purpose seasoning
- salt and pepper
- garlic salt
- 1 lemon or lime
- 2 packs of Sazon Goya

#### WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. In a large pot, boil 4 cups of water (medium to high heat) with oxtail meat for 2 hours until the meat is tender.
2. Add all seasoning as meat boils. Shake a generous amount of all the seasoning for flavor.
3. Add all diced vegetables into the pot. Add 3 to 4 more cups of water, shake additional seasoning as needed.
4. Stir and then cover. Reduce heat. Simmer/boil for another hour.
5. Taste the broth. Flavor for additional spice, when all vegetables are soft and flavor is DELICIOSO, DISFRUTA el sabor Sopa de Cola, from my kitchen to yours!



# TORTITAS (NICARAGUAN PATTIES)



## WHAT YOU'LL NEED

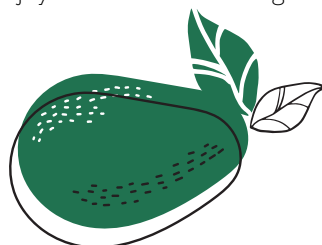
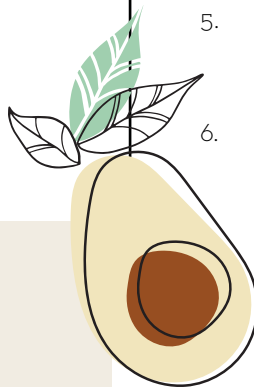
- 1-2 lbs. ground beef (ground beef, turkey, chicken)
- 1/2 cup chopped onion
- 1/2 cup green bell pepper
- dash Worcestershire sauce
- shake of salt and pepper
- shake of Goya all-purpose seasoning
- dollop of ketchup
- 1 egg
- 1/2 cup bread crumbs
- 1 can tomato sauce

## WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Gather the kids for rolling and creating Tortitas. They will love this fun process!
2. In a large bowl, mix all ingredients (except the tomato sauce) together.
3. Roll and create patties with the kids.
4. Spray a skillet with olive oil and transfer the patties to your skillet. Fry the patties until cooked through.
5. After patties are crisp, pour 1 can tomato sauce into the skillet and cover. Simmer for about 15-20 minutes.
6. Enjoy homemade Nicaraguan Tortitas!

## OPTIONAL SIDES

- Rice
- Corn tortillas
- Beans
- Sliced Avocado





## Family Nacho Bar

### WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 1/2 onion
- 1-2 lbs. of ground beef
- 1 can Rotel tomatoes (mild or hot)
- 1/2 cup of tomato sauce
- Goya all-purpose seasoning
- cumin
- salt and pepper
- 1 clove garlic
- Worcestershire sauce
- tortilla chips
- refried beans
- queso, salsa, guacamole
- tortillas (optional)
- shredded cheese (optional)
- sour cream



### WHAT YOU'LL DO

#### FOR THE MEAT

1. In a large skillet, sauté diced onion with olive oil (or oil of your choice) until onions are soft.
2. Add ground beef to the skillet and cook until browned.
3. Add tomatoes, tomato sauce, seasonings and Worcestershire to the skillet. Stir then cover for 15 minutes.
4. Taste. Add more of any seasonings to your taste.

#### BUILD THE BAR

**Have the kids set up the Nacho Bar.** Place the meat in a container in the center of the table. Then, set all toppings and sides in containers down the center of the table. Encourage each family member to build a fun and creative plate of nachos.

## GALLO PINTO (Nicaragua's National Dish)

### WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- long grain rice
- 1 large can black or red beans
- 1/4 onion diced
- cotija cheese
- Goya seasoning pack
- salt and Goya all-purpose seasoning
- olive or vegetable oil
- chicken stock

### WHAT YOU'LL DO

#### FOR THE MEAT

1. In a medium size skillet, pour a dab of olive oil into the center, add the diced onion and fry.
2. Add 3 cups of uncooked rice to fry with onion for 15 minutes. Add a shake of salt and all-purpose seasoning, stir until rice is golden.
3. Pour 3 cups of water and 1 pack of Goya. Stir and cover. Simmer for 15 minutes.
4. Uncover. Add 1 large can of black beans, stir and add one cup of chicken stock, taste. Add salt as needed to taste.
5. Lower the flame and simmer. It is ready when the liquid is absorbed, and the rice is soft.

#### OPTIONAL SIDES

- sliced and fried cotija cheese
- shredded beef
- sliced avocado
- sliced and fried plantains





# EPIPHANY ILLUMINATE SCIENCE EXPERIMENT

## WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- hydrogen peroxide
- baking soda
- several glow sticks
- a clear glass jar
- scissors
- dish soap (optional)

## BEFORE YOU START

**Did you know the 12 days of Christmas start AFTER Christmas?** In fact, the twelfth day is January 6, and is celebrated as Epiphany! Some churches celebrate Epiphany as a single day, but other churches celebrate it from January to Ash Wednesday.

**An epiphany is when you realize something.** It's like a light bulb goes on, and the light helps you see what is really there.

Epiphany is based on when the magi came to visit Jesus. The wise men traveled for a long, long time. They saw the star in the sky, and the light led them to find the house where Jesus and His family were staying. By the time they reached Jesus, He wasn't a baby anymore. We celebrate Epiphany to remember Jesus's life on earth—when He came to show us how to live and worship God with our entire life.

## READ JOHN 8:12 AND ISAIAH 60:1-3

Let's create a fun reminder that Jesus is the light of the world. It's like an epiphany with science!

## PRAY

God, help us walk in the light of Jesus.

## WATCH

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=btOw\\_kzFqYo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=btOw_kzFqYo)

## WHAT YOU'LL DO

- Cut open a glow stick at both ends and carefully remove the inside cylinder. Be careful! It is glass and can be slippery.
- Cut both ends of the glass tube on each glow stick and pour the contents into the jar.
- Add 1/4 tsp of baking soda then 1/4 tsp of hydrogen peroxide.
- Swirl the glass to mix the contents.
- Turn off the lights to watch the mixture glow!
- Optional - add a couple of small drops of dish soap to the mixture to make it glow brighter.

Just like light only comes with a certain combination of elements and chemical reactions, when we realize how much Jesus loves us, we see the world in a new light.

by Rachel Brown, Kids Ministry Director, NLC Midtown



# GUESS THE PHRASE



**Add this fun twist to a popular game for a creative way to help your family imitate Jesus and remember what's important to follow.** The goal is to correctly guess a word or action that describes Jesus, what Jesus did, or a value or virtue of His you would like your children to emulate.

## WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- index cards
- pen or colored marker
- timer

### BEFORE YOU START

Write different words and actions on index cards. For example:

- |                       |                   |             |
|-----------------------|-------------------|-------------|
| • compassionate       | • kind            | • share     |
| • picking up the toys | • forgive quickly | • trust God |
| • generous            | • tell the truth  | • loving    |
| • helping with dishes | • invite          | • serving   |

## WHAT YOU'LL DO

Divide into two teams. Place the stack of index cards face down. Get the timer ready. One team member will pick an index card without looking at the word and place the index card with the word facing the teammates. The teammates can use physical gestures or give verbal cues to help that team member guess the word on the index card. Each team has 60 seconds to guess the word.

**Be creative and have fun!** Playing this game is a wonderful way to model to your children the values of spending time together, having fun, and being intentional.

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by Evie Swart, Family Ministries Discipleship Pastor NLC North

# Being Ambassadors of Jesus to Those Around Us



**Luke 19:1-19 is the story of Zacchaeus meeting Jesus when He came to Jericho.**

Luke 19: 3 says, "He (Zacchaeus) wanted to see who Jesus was." There are people around us who are seeking Jesus, and He is using us to show them who He is. We are ambassadors of Christ; we are an earthly representation of Jesus, and we might be the only representation of Him that people see. Romans 12:1 says "...offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God." When He says our bodies, it implies our lives and talents. All that we do and the way we live our lives is worship to our Lord.

As Ephesians 5 mentions, we follow Him and His example out of knowing who we are—His dearly loved children. When we live our lives knowing we are dearly loved children, it is easy for us to live lives that are reflective of Jesus.

I encourage you and your children to look for ways to model who Jesus is to others by the way you love others. Consider inviting a coworker and their family into your home for a game night. Encourage your kids to invite someone they do not usually talk with to sit with them at lunch. Or, to befriend the kid at school who is often by himself. Perhaps, it is serving together at a soup kitchen or homeless shelter for a day or doing a trash pick-up throughout your neighborhood.

**After each experience, discuss your observations of how you saw God at work and what He is teaching you.** May He use you to show the world His love and compassion.

**“Greater  
love  
has no one  
than this:  
to *LAY DOWN  
ONE'S LIFE*  
for one's friends.”**

**John 15:13**



## BLESSING



A BLESSING IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK OVER ANOTHER WORDS OF LIFE, HOPE, AND TRUTH. PARENTS, TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY EITHER AT THE BEGINNING OR END OF THE DAY TO SIT YOUR CHILD DOWN, LOOK THEM IN THE EYES, AND SPEAK THESE BLESSINGS OVER THEM AS A WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT AND HOPE FOR THEIR LIFE.

### Week One

SCRIPTURE: 1 CORINTHIANS 13

**(Child's name), may you know that your Heavenly Father is so patient and so kind.** Everything that love is, it is because that is the character and nature of your Heavenly Father. God is love. May you know that His love covers every aspect of your life. He delights in giving this love to you AND in having you experience this love. May you respond to Him by putting your hope, trust, and faith in the One who created you.

### Week Two

SCRIPTURE: 2 SAMUEL 9

**(Child's name), may you know that you are a child of the Most High God.** God delights in extravagantly taking care of His children. May you know that you always have a seat at His table. Remember that God has given you His Spirit, which cries out "Abba Father." Your Heavenly Father has brought you out of darkness and into marvelous light. May you walk through life being confident that you are not an orphan, but a son or daughter of the Living God.

### Week Three

SCRIPTURE: RUTH 1

**(Child's name), may you know that God's steadfast love endures forever and that His faithfulness is unending.** May you remember that the good news of the gospel rests within the truth that God always remains faithful. May your hope never rest in what you "do" for God, but in what He has done for you in Christ. May this truth stir up your love and affection for Him all the days of your life.

### Week Four

SCRIPTURE: LUKE 10:25-37

**(Child's name), may you know that God so loved the world that He gave His son's life for you.** God delights in tending to your wounds, purchasing your healing, and giving you new life. May you walk in everlasting gratitude that Jesus has paid it all so that your life may flourish and abound in eternal relationship with Him.

### 1 CORINTHIANS 13

#### GOD STATEMENT

God is Love

**February is the month all about love.** As you and your families discuss Valentine's Day cards, crushes, heartbreaks, even (or especially) the value of being a loving friend, consider spending time together thinking about the source of all love: God. 1 Corinthians 13 is a well-known passage of Scripture full of descriptions about the importance of expressing love in all we do. Paul writes that even if we have many spiritual gifts and have much power, if we do not have love, we are nothing. He goes on to describe the characteristics of love, which are also some of the many characteristics of God. As you read the Scripture and discuss with your families, take some time to reflect on these characteristics and how they are expressed or experienced in your lives.

**Read 1 Corinthians 13 together.**

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What characteristic of love impacted you the most? What is a characteristic you feel you show the most?
- In your family, take some time with each member to appreciate how they express one of the characteristics of love described in 1 Corinthians 13.

Read through 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 again. In place of the word "love", put the name God. How does this exercise help you express gratitude and develop more understanding for who God is?

#### PRAYER

God, thank you for showing us the characteristics of love and reminding us of who You are. Help us see the ways You show us love through others and help us be reflections of love to others. Remind us of Your love throughout this week. In Jesus's name. Amen.

## WEEK TWO

### 2 SAMUEL 9

#### GOD STATEMENT

God is Kind

**2 Samuel 9 tells a lesser-known story in the Old Testament about David and his extraordinary faithfulness to his friends and kindness to his enemies.**

Mephibosheth was the grandson of David's greatest adversary, Saul, but perhaps more importantly he was the son of David's greatest friend, Saul's son, Jonathan. It is a beautiful story of David's generosity and exceptional display of love.

In this second week of February, take some time with your family to reflect on the ways God shows us His kindness and exceptional love. As you read the passage of Scripture and discuss, think about how kindness, forgiveness, and keeping promises are ultimate and timeless expressions of love and reflections of Christ's love for us.

**Read 2 Samuel 9 together.**

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Who is someone you might invite to your table to show kindness?
- Describe a time you kept a promise to a friend even when it may have felt better to get revenge or protect yourself.
- How does David's kindness to Mephibosheth even though he could have classified him as an enemy remind you of God's love and generosity toward us?

#### PRAYER

God, give us hearts that desire to show kindness to others and keep promises to our friends. Show us people in our schools, neighborhoods, maybe even in our own home that we can express Your love and kindness. Help us to be generous and courageous in our love. In Jesus's name. Amen.

# GOD'S WORD

## WEEK THREE

### RUTH 1



#### GOD STATEMENT

God is Sovereign

**The first chapter of Ruth begins a beautiful journey of a young women who tragically lost her husband but remained loyal to her mother-in-law, Naomi.**

Throughout the story, God shows amazing care and love for Ruth by blessing her with a new husband and children. Ruth's descendants would be Jesse and King David. The promised Messiah and His mother, Mary, come from the descendants of King David, which shows us that, even in difficult times, God is good and uses the hard times we go through to do incredible things to accomplish His perfect plan of redemption.

**Read Ruth 1 together.**

#### DISCUSSION

- How does Ruth's loyalty inspire you to love the people around you?
- How does God provide for Naomi in the midst of her grief and suffering?
- How have you seen God use difficult things in your life to help you know Him more?

#### PRAYER

Father God, we thank You that we are never alone, even in the hard times. We thank You that You provide for us through other caring people. Help us trust that, even in the hard times, You are always with us. We thank You that You are sovereign, which gives us hope that You will provide for us and be with us. In the name of Jesus, amen.

## WEEK FOUR

### LUKE 10:25-37



#### GOD STATEMENT

Jesus is Love

**The parable of the Good Samaritan is one of the most beautiful and familiar of Jesus's teachings in the gospels.**

The mercy shown by a Samaritan, who represented a race of people that Israelites despised, stands as a beautiful example of the type of love Jesus calls His people to demonstrate. Perhaps the greatest part of the story is how the Good Samaritan cared for a man who was

mistreated, hurt, and in need of help because it points to the mercy of Jesus and how He cares for us when we are broken and hurting.

**Read Luke 10:25-37 together.**

#### DISCUSSION

- Why is it significant that the person who helps the man is a Samaritan, not the priest or Levite?
- In what ways do you feel beaten down or in need of help in your life? How can your family show you love and care like the Samaritan who cared for the man?
- How is the Good Samaritan an example of the way Jesus shows love for us? How can we learn from Jesus' example?

#### PRAYER

Jesus, we thank You so much for the way You have loved us. Thank you that You gave Your life for us in order to help us when we are broken, discouraged, and hurting. Thank you that Your Spirit is with us to help us know You more and to experience Your love. Help us love the people around us the way You have loved us first. In Your name, Jesus, amen.



# Terrific Teriyaki Chicken

**Teriyaki Chicken is a family favorite around our house.** My 9- and 11-year-old love to cook together and prepare meals for the family. This is a quick, easy, and minimally messy meal for any of my kids to make with me or on their own. We hope this is a fun addition to your family dinners.



## WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 6 chicken legs or thighs
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup sugar
- 1 cup water
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup soy sauce
- 2 cloves crushed garlic
- steamed rice
- 1 chopped scallion

## WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Place chicken in your crockpot.
2. Mix sugar, water, soy sauce, and crushed garlic together.
3. Pour the sauce over your chicken.
4. Cook on LOW for 7-8 hours.
5. Serve over steamed rice and garnish with chopped scallions.

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*by Shannon Baer, Family Ministries Dir. Of Operations and Events, NLC North*



# Valentine's Day Strawberry Shortcakes

## WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 1 pound of strawberries (16oz)
- 1/3 cup of sugar (or coconut sugar)
- 2 tablespoons of sugar
- 2 cups all-purpose flour (or gluten free flour)
- 2 teaspoons of baking powder
- 1 teaspoon of salt
- 1 teaspoon of pure vanilla extract
- 1 1/2 cups of cold heavy cream
- heart shaped cookie cutter (optional)

## WHIPPED CREAM

- 2 cups of cold heavy cream
- 3 tablespoons of powdered sugar
- 1 teaspoon of pure vanilla extract

## STEP 1: PREP THE STRAWBERRIES

1. Slice strawberries into quarters, then put them in an airtight container. Have your kids sprinkle 2 tablespoons of sugar on top of the strawberries. Then place the container in the fridge. (Leave some uncut strawberries aside to use for decoration—instructions to follow later.) *\*I recommend doing this step a day before serving your Strawberry Shortcake, so the sugar and juices can have time to macerate.*

## STEP 2: ASSEMBLE INGREDIENTS FOR THE SHORTCAKE

2. Preheat oven to 425° F.
3. In a large bowl, have your kids pour in the 2 cups of flour, 1/3 cup of sugar, 2 teaspoons of baking powder, 1 teaspoon of salt, 1 teaspoon of pure vanilla extract. Mix well to combine them.
4. Allow your kids to measure out the 1 1/2 cups of cold heavy cream, then add into the dry mixture. Have them stir just until the ingredients combine.
5. Pour mixture in a greased 9-inch square baking pan. Place in oven and bake for 18-20 minutes or until golden brown. *\*You can check if your shortcake has finished baking by inserting a toothpick or skewer into the center, if it comes out clean then it is done.*

## STEP 3: WHIPPING UP THE CREAM

6. While the shortcake is baking, the kids can gather 2 cups of cold heavy cream, 3 tablespoons of powdered sugar and 1 teaspoon of pure vanilla extract. Combine ingredients together using a mixer. Mix until soft peaks form. Place your whipped cream in the fridge, until ready to serve on shortcakes.
7. When your shortcake is done baking, carefully place it on wire rack to cool.
8. Once the shortcake has cooled, use a heart shaped cookie cutter, or cut into 6-9 servings and slice each shortcake horizontally in half.
9. Your kids can get the container of strawberries out of the fridge, with a spoon have them scoop some strawberries onto each of the bottom halves of the shortcakes. They can pour a bit of the juice on each one with a teaspoon.
10. Allow your kids to scoop some whipped cream on top of the strawberries already placed, then add the top half of the shortcake on top.
11. Feel free to add more strawberries on top and add a generous dollop of cream on top.

## STEP 4: HOW TO MAKE STRAWBERRY HEARTS: (OPTIONAL)

12. For the strawberries you set aside, cut your strawberry in half, then slice a triangle out the top of where the stem is—and voila, you have an easy heart shaped strawberry! Encourage your kids to add the strawberry hearts on top of the whipped cream as desired for decoration.

by Alex Newberg, Care Administrative Assistant, NLC North



# Turkey Chili and Corn Bread



## WHAT YOU'LL NEED

### CHILI

- 1 onion
- 2 pounds of ground turkey
- 2 15-ounce cans of pinto beans
- 16-ounce can of kidney beans
- 16-ounce can of black beans
- 2 8-ounce cans of V8
- $\frac{3}{4}$  teaspoon garlic salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon pepper
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- salt to taste

## WHAT YOU WILL DO

1. Chop the onion and place in a pot on medium heat.
2. Add the ground turkey. Cook until browned.
3. After turkey is fully cooked, add beans.
4. Pour in V8.
5. Add seasonings.
6. Stir and let it simmer for a few minutes before serving.

## CORN BREAD

### WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 1 cup of flour (gluten-free all-purpose flour for gluten free option!)
- 1 cup of yellow corn meal
- 4 Tbsps. of sugar
- 1 tsp. of salt
- 1 egg
- 1 cup of milk (unsweetened almond milk, for dairy free option!)
- $\frac{1}{3}$  cup of melted butter (dairy free butter alternative, for dairy free option!)

## WHAT YOU WILL DO

1. Preheat oven to 400° F.
2. Mix in all the dry ingredients.
3. Slowly pour in wet ingredients and stir.
4. Bake for 25 minutes.
5. Let it cool for 10 minutes.

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by Kenzie Massey, Care Ministries Coordinator, New Life North



# FONDUE FUN

## WHAT YOU'LL NEED

### CHEESE FONDUE

- 1 cup chicken broth
- 1/2 lb cheddar cheese, shredded
- 1/2 lb gouda cheese, shredded
- 2 tbsp all-purpose flour
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 1/4 tsp pepper

### FOR THE DIPPERS

#### VEGGIE OPTIONS

- broccoli
- asparagus
- zucchini
- carrots
- cauliflower
- cherry tomatoes
- bell peppers
- celery
- mushrooms

#### FRUIT OPTIONS

- apples
- pears
- grapes

#### GRAINS

- sourdough bread
- soft or hard pretzels
- cooked tortellini

## WHAT YOU WILL DO

1. Prep all of your dippers and set aside.
2. Heat your fondue pot (or pot on the stove) to medium-high. Add cooking wine or chicken broth and bring to a simmer. Turn heat down to medium. Add cheeses 1/4 pound at a time. Stir after each addition of cheese until melted.
3. Stir in flour. When the cheese has melted and flour is incorporated, stir in salt and pepper to taste. Turn heat to low and serve with "dippers".



*Note: If you have little kids and raw vegetables are too hard to chew, you can blanch the vegetables first.*



# Love is Kind Mobile

“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.”

Corinthians 13:4-7

To love the way Jesus loves can feel beyond our ability. Honestly, it is. Something that is helpful for us to remember, all people have been created in the very image of God. That, in and of itself is awe inspiring. He is love and has modeled this love so powerfully and equipped us with His Spirit that we may also love and respect the people He has created. **Loving others is not something we do, but something God does through us.**

Think about some of the ways God shows His love for you, and then use this heart mobile as a reminder of ways you can show God's love to others.

## WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- colored paper
- markers
- yarn or ribbon
- glitter or other craft decorations
- scissors

## WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. On a red sheet of paper draw a heart the size of the paper then cut it out.
2. Write the words “Love Is....” on the heart.
3. On different colored cardstock, cut out eight smaller hearts. Write one of these words/phrases on each heart: patient, kind, not envious, not boastful, not proud, not mean, not self-seeking, not easily angered.
4. Cut one piece of yarn long enough to loop and glue both ends to the top/back of the big heart. Then cut three equal sized pieces long enough to hang from the bottom of the heart.
5. Glue the hearts on the strings equally spaced apart.
6. As a family, talk about what each word/phrase means and pray about how to live this out in your daily lives.

## PRAYER

Dear God, thank You for Your great love for us. Help us to remember this love and choose to love others as You love each day.

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by Jeni Mason, Pastor of Care Ministries, NLC North





# Extreme Mittens and Kisses

## WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- plastic wrap
- mittens
- dice
- Hershey's Kisses (or Valentine's candy of your choice)

## HOW YOU'LL PREPARE

To prepare for this game, you will need to wrap your Hershey's Kisses (or Valentine's candy of your choice) in the plastic wrap several times. I suggest making 10 to 25 layers of plastic wrap, some layers having candy in between them and some not. This will create a ball of plastic wrap with candy scattered throughout.

## HOW TO PLAY

1. Begin the game with all the players sitting in a circle.
2. Once everyone is ready one player will put on the mittens and try to begin unraveling the plastic wrap. While they are doing this, the person next to the left of them is rolling two dice, trying to roll a double.
3. When the person rolling the dice rolls a double, the person wearing the gloves quickly takes the gloves and passes them to the left. The person with the dice also passes the dice to the left.
4. Continue this process until the entire plastic wrap ball is gone and someone has reached the center prize. Each player gets to keep the candy they were able to unwrap during their turn.

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by Lindsay Mendoza, Fam Ministries Operations & Events Coord,  
NLC North





# Gratitude Journal

**God's love is so great that no matter what we do God won't love us any less. God is love.**

This is a well-known statement about God and yet it is one of the most difficult to comprehend. Since we know God loves us, we can be certain He will never leave us or forsake us.

**1 Peter 2:24 explains how we have sinned against God, but He sent His son to take on our sin so we could live in the righteousness of God. We don't need to earn His love; we already have it. God gives us His love to share with others.**

It's so important for us to spend time with God and read His word. In this time we are reminded of who He is and His love. He refreshes our souls and resets our focus allowing us to share His love out of an overflow. **One simple thing you can do every day is spend fifteen minutes alone with God:** five of those minutes to read the bible, five to worship, and five to pray. This is a simple format that can help develop a spiritually healthy habit.

Consider creating a journal of gratitude to use in this time. Then, share this practice with your family. You may choose to use the God's Word passages to read together as a family, discuss and pray together. Share with your family how you are choosing to spend time each day with God. Encourage your kids to begin this practice in each of their days as well.

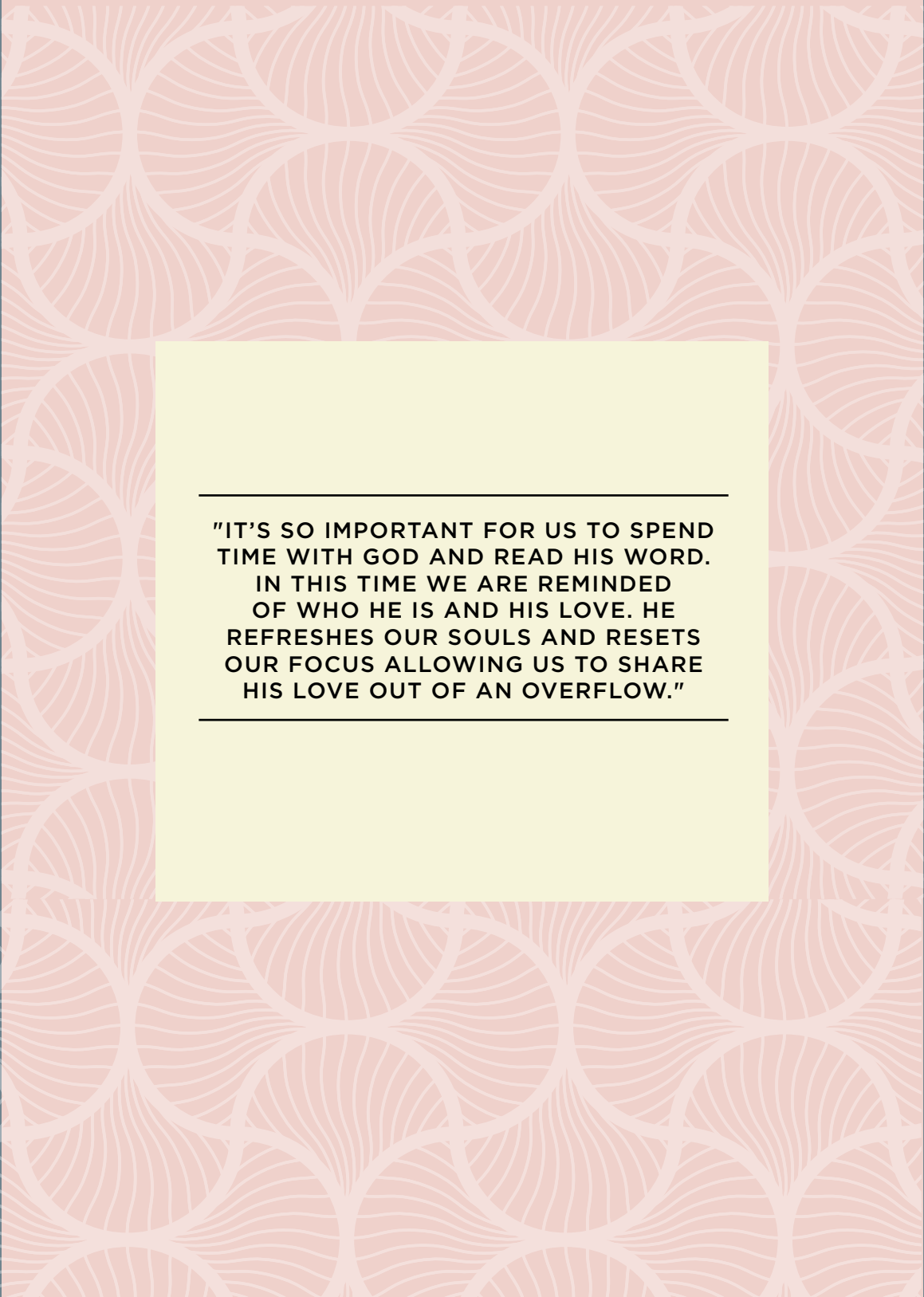
## GRATITUDE JOURNAL

### WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 1 notebook per person or 1 for the entire family
- pens/pencils

### WHAT YOU'LL DO

Give each person a notebook, or have one for the entire family. Gather together at the end of the day and encourage each person to share one to three things for which they are grateful. This could be a fun conversation to have around the dinner table. Try this every day for one month. At the end of the month, share observations of how each person sees God at work in their lives and in the lives of other family members. How has this practice changed things for each person, and the family as a whole?



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**"IT'S SO IMPORTANT FOR US TO SPEND  
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IN THIS TIME WE ARE REMINDED  
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REFRESHES OUR SOULS AND RESETS  
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# Help Club for Moms

Go deeper in your faith journey through the soul-filling Bible Study, "Help Club for Moms."

You will be encouraged and inspired as you discover more about Jesus and gain practical ideas and biblical wisdom to help you grow in your relationship with God and others.

**WHEN:** Jan 26, Feb 9, 23, Mar 9, 23, April 13, 27, May 11

**TIME:** 9:15 - 11:30 am

**WHERE:** North, Student Chapel

**TO REGISTER:** email [Admin@helpclubformoms.com](mailto:Admin@helpclubformoms.com)

## MOM'S CONNECT

Mom's Connect is a community of women who have children ranging in age from birth through high school. Connect with other women as you pursue Jesus together through meetings, activities, mentoring, and authentic relationships.

**WHEN:** Feb 7, 21 March 7, 21, April 18, May 2, 16

**TIME:** 6:30 - 8:30 pm

**WHERE:** North, Student Chapel

**TO REGISTER:** email [parents@newlifechurch.org](mailto:parents@newlifechurch.org)

