

2022 | July | August

HomeFront

a spiritual parenting resource

Creating Rhythms of & Rest

STORYTELLING

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

RESPONSIBILITY

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



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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.

PARENTING CONVERSATIONS An every-other-month evening for parents to discuss tough topics with other parents and hear from leading experts.

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.

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. When you have a fifth week in the month, 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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NLC Family Min

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A NOTE FROM MICHELLE



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

In this issue you will be focusing on the environments of **STORYTELLING** and **RESPONSIBILITY**. The environment of **STORYTELLING** allows our children to understand the great narrative of the Bible with its emphasis on redemption. When we and our children know the story of God, we start to see that we are also a part of this story and desire to find our place in it. We further understand that God is asking us to share our stories of redemption with others so they in turn will be able to find their place in His story.

The statement that sums up this environment is: "God has a big story and I can be a part of it!"

The environment of **RESPONSIBILITY** reminds our children that God has commissioned us to be His ambassadors of grace and good news to those who don't know about the gift of God's love and forgiveness. Responsibility is a critical step in allowing our children's faith to become more about others and building God's kingdom than simply being a Christian for our own benefit.

The statement that sums up this environment is: "God has entrusted me with the things and people He created around me."

*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.*



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EDITOR'S NOTE



Summer is the season of celebration, vibrance, play, and rest. The rhythms of our lives change in the summer. Days are longer. Streetlights come on later. Sprinklers water children as well as plants. Summer is a good time to explore and possibly discover rhythms of rest in Sabbath. God has set the pace for rhythms of life, and models for us how He has designed us to live within these rhythms.

Take a moment and read Exodus 20:9–11. We are instructed to work six days and rest on the Sabbath as God Himself has done. Sabbath is a day that is holy; set apart to be unlike any other day. It is a time for us to pause from work, chores, and errands to reflect on the goodness of God and celebrate all He has done and who He is. It's a time to eat great food, laugh, play, enjoy family and friends while giving thanks to the Lord God who is so good and faithful.

In this issue we are looking at the environments of **STORYTELLING** and **RESPONSIBILITY**. When we know God's Grand Redemptive Narrative (The Big God Story) and realize that we have a part to play, we can then take the responsibility that has been entrusted to us—caring for the world and people God has created—and live lives in response to Who God is. We can take the good news into the world and become active ambassadors of His love and forgiveness through the power of His Holy Spirit. In God's Word for the month of July you and your family will be able to explore God's big story together and discover the part He has for you to play. August's Create helps us to pause to look at what it means to Sabbath and the importance of resting in the Lord. He is our source of strength, inspiration, and restoration. In Him we have all we need to do all He has planned for us.

Dear Families, may this summer bring you much joy and rest. May you know that God has chosen you to tell His story—passing it on to the next generation and championing them to take His love, care, truth, and hope into all the world.

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.

CONTENTS

HELPING YOU HAVE A SUCCESSFUL
FAMILY NIGHT IN YOUR HOME.

July *Storytelling*

6
FAMILY TIME VERSE
Psalm 9:1

7
BLESSING

8
GOD'S WORD

12
FAMILY TIME RECIPES

14
CREATE
Remembering God's
Goodness

15
GAME TIME
The Big God Story
Scavenger Hunt

16
WORSHIP RESPONSE
Stories of Gratitude

17
SERVE
All We Need is Love

August *Responsibility*

18
FAMILY TIME VERSE
Philippians 2:4

19
BLESSING

20
GOD'S WORD

22
FAMILY TIME RECIPES

24
CREATE
Rest and
Responsibility

25
GAME TIME
Showers of Blessings

26
WORSHIP RESPONSE
Remember & Celebrate

27
SERVE
Blessing Bags

HomeFront

Resources & Support

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FOR MORE

- ROAD TRIP CONVERSATIONS
- ELEMENTARY
- STUDENTS
- MOM BLOG
- DAD BLOG AND MORE



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.

5

OUT OF THE COMFORT ZONE

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

As children and students are challenged to step out of their comfort zone from an early age, they learn to experience a dependence on the Holy Spirit to equip and strengthen them beyond their natural abilities and desires. We believe this environment will cultivate a generation that, instead of seeking comfort, seeks a radical life of faith in Christ.

8

LOVE & RESPECT

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

Without love, our faith becomes futile. This environment recognizes that children need an environment of love and respect in order to be free to both receive and give God's grace. Innate to this environment is the value that children are respected because they embody the image of God. We must speak to them, not at them, and we must commit to an environment where love and acceptance are never withheld due to one's behavior.

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.

JULY FAMILY VERSE

**I WILL GIVE
THANKS TO YOU,
LORD, WITH ALL
MY HEART; I WILL
TELL OF ALL YOUR
wonderful
DEEDS.**

PSALM 9:1

Bless with Your Words

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

HEBREWS 13:8, PROVERBS 3:5-6

(Child's name), may you know that **God is writing your story**. Nothing you can say or do will stop Him from completing His perfect plans. May you know that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever, so you can trust Him in all things and with all things. May you know God is always with you and He is for you, He is with you in the good and hard times, so take heart and do not be afraid- God is the giver of life!

WEEK TWO

GENESIS 2:1-3, MATTHEW 11:28

(Child's name), may you know that **God is the giver of holy rest**. May you know Sabbath is holy, God will bless your rest as you remember and celebrate all He has done. God rested on the seventh day and tells us to do the same—it is a gift from Him. May you find peace and comfort in Him every day.

WEEK THREE

ZEPHANIAH 3:17, PSALM 149:4

(Child's name), may you **pause and celebrate all the Lord has done**. May you find the space to pause and rest in God who is the giver of good gifts—rest, laughter, peace, and joy. May you know that God loves you and has chosen you for such a time as this. So be strengthened, knowing God is always with you and He delights in you.

WEEK FOUR

PSALM 139:13-14, ACTS 4:31

(Child's name), may you know that **God is the same God at the beginning of time and for all eternity**. God sees you and created you fearfully and wonderfully. May you know that your part of the story is valuable and can point people to Jesus. May God give you courage and boldness to share the love of Jesus with others. May you find joy in knowing that God has promised to always be with us through the Holy Spirit and will always provide us with what we need each day.



Week One

GOD STATEMENT: God Is Love

SCRIPTURE: Gen. 1:1, Gen. 6:5, Gen. 9:11, Gen.9:13

PREPARE AHEAD:

This month in God's Word you are going to be creating a timeline. You may choose to use a magnetic surface and magnets, or a string with clothespins as your timeline. **Be sure to download the Big God Story characters using this link:** homefrontmag.com

Cut out the characters. Gather the remaining supplies and set aside.



God is love. He has so much love to give that He decided to create a beautiful world filled with wonder. His favorite part of His creation? You and me. People. When the first people disobeyed God, He made a way for us to have a relationship with Him because of His great love for us. Gather your family together, get out your Bible, and dig into God's Word together.

The Storytelling portions of the story are for you to read aloud to your family.

STORYTELLING:

Let's start at the very beginning and find Genesis 1 in our Bibles. *Ask a family member to read Genesis 1:1.* In the beginning, God created the heavens, the earth, the rivers, the oceans, the animals, and—last of all—He created the first man and woman: Adam and Eve. *Find the Adam and Eve picture and place at the beginning of your timeline.* God created the first people to be in relationship with Him and to live in a beautiful garden. Sadly, Adam and Eve decided to disobey God, which broke their relationship with Him. They had to leave the garden. But God promised that one day a Redeemer would restore that relationship and provide salvation for everyone.

Only a short time passed before the world became so evil that God decided to destroy all of mankind with a flood. *Ask a family member to read Genesis 6:5 while everyone follows along.* Only one man remained righteous: Noah. *Add Noah to the timeline.* Noah worshipped God. It rained for 40 days while Noah's family was in an ark. Then, God made a covenant with Noah to never destroy mankind with a flood again. A covenant is a very special promise, and when God makes a promise, He keeps it! *Ask someone to read Genesis 9:11 and 9:13.* Later, another man received a covenant from God. His name was Abraham. *Have family member add Abraham to the timeline.* God told Abraham he would have a son and the nation of Israel would come from his family. Israel would show others the love relationship between God and mankind so other nations would want to know God and worship Him.

DISCUSSION:

- Why did God create people?
- What is a covenant?
- What promise did God make in the garden?
- What is the special love relationship between God and people?
- How do you experience God's love?

PRAYER:

Lord, thank you for giving us the beautiful land, sky, and animals that surround us. You are such a great God. Most of all thank you for sending a Savior to save us from our sin, and for providing us a way to have a special relationship with you.

by Fran Thompson, Kid's Coordinator, Woodmen Valley Chapel, Monument Campus

Week Two

GOD STATEMENT: God Is Powerful

SCRIPTURE: Gen: 21:1-2, Gen. 45:4-5, Exodus 6:6-8

PREPARE AHEAD:

Gather the timeline and characters.

God is powerful. He is faithful to complete what He promised He would do. His power reaches across generations and miles to accomplish His plans. Throughout storytelling, the exceeding greatness of God's power is evident. Gather your family together, get out your Bible, and discover God's Word together. The Storytelling portions of the story are for you to read aloud to your family.



STORYTELLING:

Abraham and his wife, Sarah ([Add Abraham, Sarah and Isaac to timeline](#)), waited years for God to fulfill His promise to give them a son. Ask a family member to read Genesis 21:1-2. God kept His promise with the birth of Isaac. Abraham and Sarah knew God was worthy of their worship. When Isaac grew up, he had a son named Jacob ([Add Jacob to the timeline](#)), whose name God eventually changed to Israel. Israel had 12 sons. One of the sons was sold into slavery by his brothers. His name was Joseph. ([Add Joseph to the timeline.](#)) Joseph was taken to Egypt. There, God raised up Joseph in power under Pharaoh, the ruler of Egypt. A famine, or a time without food, came and Joseph's entire family came to Egypt to find food. Little did they know that the man in power over the storehouses of grain was their brother! [Have someone read Genesis 45:4-5](#). God took what some people intended for evil and used it to save Joseph's family and many others. God is so good! He turns bad things into good in His story.

Later, the Egyptians made the Hebrews their slaves. The Israelites cried out for the Redeemer. God chose

Moses ([Add Moses to timeline](#)) to lead the Israelites out of Egypt and into the Promised Land where they could worship God. While the Israelites were out in the wilderness, God made a covenant with Moses and His people to make them His treasured possession and be their God. [Read Exodus 6:6-8 together](#). He gave them commandments for how to live. God's people spent 40 years wandering in the desert. During this time, a new generation grew up learning to respect God and His power and responded to Him in worship. God miraculously provided food called manna each day, and He guided the people through the desert through a pillar of cloud during the day and a pillar of fire at night.

Joshua ([Add Joshua to the timeline](#)) responded to God and led this new generation of Israelites. And, after years of battle, God conquered the Promised Land for His people, and the Israelites settled down to raise families. During this time, God gave Israel leaders called judges. The Israelites were faithful to God, but then they disobeyed; then they returned to God again, and again disobeyed. This time of the judges lasted for more than 450 years.

DISCUSSION:

- How did you see the power of God in Sarah and Abraham's lives?
- How can we see God's power in the way He worked in Joseph's life?
- How did the Israelites learn to respect and worship God? Explain.
- In what ways do you see God's power in your life?

PRAYER:

Lord, help us to always respect and worship you.

May we seek you in all things and choose to obey you as we trust you each day. Help us to always remember your magnificent power. Jesus, we love you.

by Fran Thompson, Kid's Coordinator, Woodmen Valley Chapel, Monument Campus

Week Three

GOD STATEMENT: God Is Good

SCRIPTURE:

PREPARE AHEAD:

Gather the timeline and characters. This week you will also need blank index cards and crayons or markers.

God is good. Throughout the Grand Redemptive Narrative of Scripture (also referred to as The Big God Story), people have struggled with unbelief and defiance. The good news is the actions of humankind do not change or hinder God's plan for our redemption. He protected the line of the promised savior and worked through the events of history for our good.

Gather your family together, get out your Bible, timeline supplies, and discover God's Word together. The Storytelling portions of the story are for you to read aloud to your family.



STORYTELLING:

God's people continued in their disobedience by demanding a king even when God had told them He was their king. (Have someone draw a crown on an index card and attach to your timeline.) Saul became the first king of Israel (Choose a family member to add King Saul to the timeline), but God soon rejected him because of his pride and disobedience. God then anointed David as the rightful king. (Add David to the timeline.) David was a humble shepherd who knew and loved God. (Have someone draw a sheep on an index card and attach to your timeline.) His son, Solomon (Add Solomon to your timeline), became the last king of the 12 tribes of Israel. (Choose someone to draw an outline of a country on an index card and attach to your timeline.) During the reign of Solomon's son, God allowed rebellion to happen, and the nation split in two. (Draw a line splitting country in two.) The family tree of the promised Redeemer now followed the tribe of Judah in the south.

The northern kingdom of Israel had evil kings, and God let this kingdom be captured by Assyria.

The southern kingdom of Judah disobeyed God and became captured by the Babylonian Empire. The city of Jerusalem was destroyed. (Draw a destroyed building and add to the timeline.) But even in Babylon, some of the people of Judah worshipped God. Babylon fell to the Persian Empire, and Esther—an Israelite—became queen of Persia. (Add Esther to the timeline.) God used Esther to save His people from death. Also, the king of Persia paid for Nehemiah (Add Nehemiah to the timeline) to rebuild the city of Jerusalem and its walls. (Draw walls and add to the timeline.)

Lower the lights in the room for effect. Then, something strange happened. Turn the lights off. God was silent. (Write "Silence" and add to the timeline.) He still worked in the lives of His people, but He chose not to speak through a prophet, priest, king, or judge. Nearly 400 years passed before the opening words in the New Testament. (Write the number "400" and add to the timeline.) *Slowly fade the lights back up.* We know that God isn't finished. He is good and will complete His plan.

DISCUSSION:

- What tribe of Israel had the line of the Redeemer (the promised Savior)?
- How did God protect His people while they were in the Persian Empire?
- Who helped God's people to rebuild the city of Jerusalem?
- What do you know about God from this part of The Big God Story?

PRAYER:

Lead your family in a time of prayer. Pause and remember the goodness of God in the life of your family. Encourage each family member to pray and thank God for one way they saw God's goodness in their life today or this week. Close with words of praise and celebration.

by Cristi Thomas, Assoc. Pastor Family Ministries New Life North



Week Four

GOD STATEMENT: God Is Faithful

SCRIPTURE: Gen. 21:1-2, Gen. 45:4-5, Exodus 6:6-8

PREPARE AHEAD:

Gather the timeline and characters. This week you will also need blank index cards and crayons or markers.

God is faithful. He made a promise in a garden long ago to restore the relationship between Himself and the people He created. As we look back throughout time, we can see the ways God has kept His promises. Because of His love, strength, goodness, and faithfulness we can once again walk in daily relationship with the God of all creation.

Gather your family together, get out your Bible, timeline supplies, and discover God's Word together. The Storytelling portion of the story are for you to read aloud to your family.

STORYTELLING:

God broke His silence in the very first pages of Matthew and Luke. We can read that the promise God made in the Garden of Eden finally happened in a town called Bethlehem. (Ask a family member to read Luke 2:10-11.) Jesus, the Redeemer, was born on earth! (Add Jesus to the timeline.) Jesus grew up and never sinned. Then, when He was 30 years old, He began His ministry. He called 12 disciples and taught them about who He was and how they should live. He cared for the poor, healed the sick, raised the dead, and saved the outcast. (Have someone draw a heart and add it to the timeline.) He offered people God's kingdom on earth. But Jesus' main purpose in coming to earth was to be the perfect sacrifice for our sins. (Draw cross and place on the timeline.) His death on the cross redeemed God's people and restored their relationship with Him!

The story doesn't end there. Jesus rose from the dead! His love is so powerful that death can't hold Him! (Write and cross out word "Death" then hang on the timeline.) Then Jesus returned to heaven and the Holy Spirit came. (Write the words "Holy Spirit" have someone hang on the timeline.) The Holy Spirit gives us the power to follow God, and He works in each of our lives, allowing us to be a part of His story until He returns.

One day Jesus will return in victory riding on a white horse (add the white horse to the timeline) to show He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He is worthy of our worship! Those who love God and have accepted His Son, Jesus, will live with Him in heaven, forever in relationship with God—the way it all began in the garden. (Point to start of mural/timeline.) The way it should be. And from that day on and for all of eternity, we will be with God our Redeemer, worshipping Him forever and ever. Amen! (Write the word "Amen" and place on the timeline.) **Parents, share a personal story of when you first heard The Big God Story and how you made the decision to respond to God.**

DISCUSSION:

Lead your family in a time of discussion. Allow space for kids to respond to all they've heard. Below are some questions to help facilitate this time together.

- Who is the Redeemer?
- How has God been faithful to His word?
- What is God teaching you about Who He is?
- How can we be a part of God's big story?

PRAYER:

Lead your family in a time of prayer thanking God for His faithfulness. Thank Him for sending Jesus and making the way for us to be with Him forever.

by Cristi Thomas, Assoc. Pastor Family Ministries New Life North

FAMILY TIME RECIPES

CAMPFIRE MEALS

There's just something about cooking a meal outdoors that screams summer! This is a basic foil-pocket campfire recipe that can be adjusted and allow you to play around with your favorite combinations of meats, veggies and seasonings. Use our campfire recipe below as a guideline, but don't be afraid to make adjustments to please your taste buds (or picky campers).



WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- smoked sausage, fully cooked chicken or polish
- 4 medium potatoes
- 1 medium onion
- 4 large carrots
- 2 ears of corn
- salt and pepper
- canola or vegetable oil
- heavy-duty aluminum foil

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Divide heavy-duty aluminum foil into 4 large squares.
2. Drizzle canola or vegetable oil on the foil.
3. Slice sausage.
4. Peel carrots and cut into large pieces.
5. Wash skin of potatoes and cut into wedges.
6. Chop onion into large pieces and divide into 4 equal parts.
7. Cut corn in half, creating 4 small pieces.
8. Evenly divide all ingredients between foil packets, starting with potatoes on the bottom.
9. Salt and pepper to taste.
10. Wrap and seal the aluminum foil creating packets. Leave room in the packet to allow air to flow through as it cooks.
11. Cook on hot coals for 15 minutes, flip and cook another 15 minutes.
12. Serve in the foil packets. Open with caution—there will be a lot of steam.



BANANA BOATS

Banana Boats are a fantastic recipe to make with kids. They can prepare their own "boats" easily. And because the ingredients are few and the cooking process is easy, this dessert can be made while camping or while barbecuing in the backyard.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED OPTIONAL ADDITIONS

- 4 bananas
- 1/2 cup chocolate chips
- 1 cup mini marshmallows
- aluminum foil
- nuts: almonds, pecans, or walnuts
- peanut butter
- peanut butter chips
- butterscotch chips
- caramel
- graham cracker crumbs

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Put a banana on a sheet of heavy-duty aluminum foil or two sheets of regular-weight foil.
2. Using a sharp knife, slice the banana down the center being careful not to cut all the way through.
3. Pack it full of marshmallows, chocolate chips, and any other extras. The kids can handle this assembly step quite easily.
4. Wrap the stuffed banana with the aluminum foil and crimp the edges. Put it on the coals of a campfire or on the barbecue. (If you do not have a campfire, you can put it in the oven at 400° F.)
5. Cook for about 6 to 8 minutes—if you're using a campfire, check it more frequently, as you can't regulate the temperature.
6. Carefully remove the foil packets and allow them to cool for a few minutes. When opening, be careful of the escaping steam.

NANA'S CHICKEN CASSEROLE

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 4 chicken breasts, boiled and shredded or cut in small pieces
- 2 cans of cream of chicken soup
- 8-ounces of sour cream
- 1 1/2 sleeves of Ritz Crackers, crushed
- 1 stick (1/2 cup) of melted butter
- salt and pepper to taste

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Preheat oven to 350° F.
2. Combine the soup, sour cream, salt, and pepper. Mix well.
3. Add the prepared chicken and stir well.
4. Pour into a 9" x 13" baking dish.

FOR THE TOPPING

1. Crush 1 1/2 sleeves of Ritz Crackers.
2. Add 1 stick of melted butter and mix well.
3. Pour over the chicken mixture, making sure to cover the casserole completely.
4. Bake at 350° for 45 minutes.



FAMILY TIME RECIPES



ONE-PAN SKILLET COOKIE

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 1 stick (8 Tbsp.) unsalted butter
- 1 1/2 c. granulated sugar
- 1/2 c. light brown sugar
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 1 egg
- 1 1/2 c. unbleached all-purpose flour
- 1/2 tsp. baking soda
- 1/4 tsp. kosher salt
- 1 cup chocolate chunks or chips

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit. Melt butter in an eight-inch cast iron skillet over medium-low heat.
2. Stir in sugars and vanilla and remove from heat. Let rest until pan is warm but not hot, about five minutes.
3. Crack an egg onto the butter and sugar mixture and use a fork to whisk it well into the mixture.
4. Place flour, baking soda, and salt on top, and very carefully stir into the mixture until smooth and well-mixed
5. Stir in chocolate chunks or chips.
6. Bake for 15 to 20 minutes or until the cookie starts to turn golden on the top and around the edges. It will still be soft in the center.
7. Serve with vanilla ice cream.

Remembering God's Goodness

HOW IS GOD REVEALING THE PART YOU ARE PLAYING IN HIS BIG STORY?

Summer can be a wonderful time of fun, laughter, and rest. A time where we can enjoy life's simple pleasures. While vacations and get togethers can be restorative in themselves, we also want to remember the importance of just being. When we allow ourselves to rest, we have a better awareness of God's presence. Resting in God's goodness helps renew our energy and focus, and often excites us for what God has next. This intentional rest brings joy to the heart of God. Invite God into these moments of rest and thank Him for the good things He has brought into your life.

Consider creating a scrapbook that it is meant to highlight God's goodness. While it will still capture moments, it will focus more on capturing the moments of God's hand in the life of your family this summer. This can be a reminder for years to come of how God has shown up in your daily lives and drawn you to Himself.

Add to your scrapbook weekly with pictures and mementos of God's goodness this summer. The pictures can be of a flower, a trip, a new experience, a person you're blessed to have in your life, etc.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Scrapbook or an assortment of blank pages
- Scissors
- Tape
- Photos
- Craft supplies, such as ribbon, colored paper, or markers

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Decorate the cover.
2. Take pictures over the summer that remind you of God's goodness through celebration, play, and rest.
3. Use these pictures and other craft supplies to decorate each page.
4. Write a short description next to each picture sharing how you found God in this moment.
5. Look back on your scrapbook throughout the year to reflect on God's goodness and celebrate all He has done.

by Annie Cribbs, Family Care Administrative Assist. New Life North



GAME TIME

The Big God Story SCAVENGER HUNT

Each week during the month of July you will have the opportunity to read through a portion of **The Big God Story** together as a family. “Storytelling” will open the door to conversations about God’s plan of redemption for His creation, starting from the very beginning to right now! This game will be a fun review of what you are learning.

WHAT YOU’LL NEED

- Index cards
- Big God Story timeline (optional) Visit homefrontmag.com to download this resource.
- Pen or markers

WHAT YOU’LL PREPARE

- Print a copy of the Big God Story timeline characters, cut them out and attach the images/characters listed below onto an index card. If you are not using this resource, use your markers to draw the individual images onto the index cards using the list of the items listed below:

WORD CARDS:

- | | | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| • Bible | • Ten Commandments | • New Testament | • Redeemer |
| • Old Testament | • King | • Bethlehem, manger, | • Savior |
| • 40 days and 40 nights | • South-good kings | • 12 disciples, | • Heaven |
| • \$\$\$ | • North-bad kings | • forgiveness | • worship Him forever |
| | • #400 years | • Holy Spirit | • Amen |

PICTURE CARDS:

- | | | | |
|----------------|-------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| • Genesis | • rainbow | • pillar of clouds | • King Solomon |
| • Earth | • rain drops | • pillar of flames | • God was silent |
| • sun and moon | • Abraham | • Joshua | • Jesus |
| • apple | • Sarah and Isaac | • judges | • cross |
| • Adam & Eve | • Jacob | • crown | • heart |
| • Noah | • Joseph | • Saul | • empty tomb |
| • arc | • Moses | • David | • white horse |
| | • Exodus | • sheep | |

Create a key list of the picture/word cards you are using to be located on the search.

WHAT YOU’LL DO

When you and your children know God’s story, you can start to see that we are all a part of His story. This game can be played with individual players or in teams. Hide the cards around a large room or yard. Give each player or team a key with a list of the items they are to find. Set a timer and see who can find the most cards within the designated time frame.

For an added bonus or for older kids, once they have collected all of the images, have the teams put the cards in chronological order.

WORSHIP RESPONSE

STORIES OF



Gratitude



Stories are powerful. They can bring us to tears, make us laugh out loud, and inspire us to grow. The Bible itself is a story: The Grand Redemptive Narrative. We all get to play a part in God's story, each getting to play a specific role. What an amazing gift!

PSALM 9:1 SAYS, "I WILL GIVE THANKS TO YOU, LORD, WITH ALL MY HEART; I WILL TELL OF ALL YOUR WONDERFUL DEEDS."

This month, in response to who God is and what He has done, create a gratitude jar.

WHAT YOU NEED:

- Jar
- Paper (to write or draw on)
- Pens and markers

WHAT YOU'LL DO:

Throughout the week, have each family member write something for which they are grateful to God. This may be a story of how they saw God at work, a picture, something He is doing in their life, or a way He has provided for them. Once they have finished, each person can drop it into the gratitude jar. Choose a time when you can all gather to remember each story and celebrate God together.

If you need help getting started here are some prompts:

- Grateful for things in nature
- Grateful for things in the home
- Grateful God made...
- Grateful God is...

by LaJean Hertel, Family Care Volunteer Director New Life North



All We Need is Love

Throughout the Bible, God's thoughts about those who are poor in body and spirit are very clear. For instance, in Luke 5:17-26, there was a man who was unable to walk and needed healing. Seeing that there was no way to get him through the doorway of the house where Jesus was teaching, his friends lowered him on his mat through the roof. When the man was before Jesus, He forgave the man of his sins, healing him spiritually first and then healed him physically. **Jesus is the Good News and offers forgiveness and restoration to all who come to Him.**

As we follow Christ, we are invited into a new way of living—being a part of God's plan to redeem and restore humankind to Himself. How can you testify to the good news of Jesus?

I John 3:18 says, "Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth." Living the Gospel can be practical actions that put God on display by showing His kindness and love to others—letting your life tell His story in every way possible.

The month of July we are focusing on the environment of **STORYTELLING**. This month, use this Serve opportunity to share God's story by visiting residents within a Senior or Assisted Living facility as a family.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- A storybook Bible. We suggest *The Jesus Storybook Bible* as it tells the story of Jesus as one Grand Redemptive Narrative.
- Cards (buy or make your own)
- Ingredients to make your favorite cookies or brownies
- Another family to join you

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Find a Senior or Assisted Living facility in your area to visit.
2. Connect with another family to share in this experience together.
3. Call the facility ahead of time to check visiting hours. Also, make sure to information gather regarding the facilities rules and let them know you are bringing food. This will help your family and those you are visiting have the best experience.
4. Make a plate of cookies or brownies as a family to share with the residents.
 5. Make cards of encouragement to share with residents. Draw pictures and add Scriptures/phrases of who God is.
 6. Read from *The Jesus Storybook Bible*.
 7. Pick a few songs you can sing with the residents.
 8. Ask residents if you can pray for them.

by Laurie Bennett, Kids Director New Life North

**“None of you
should look out
just for your own
good. Each of
you should also
look out for the
good of others.”**

Philippians 2:4 NIV



Bless with Your Words

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 1

MATTHEW 11:28-30

(Child's name), may you know that you are invited to bring all of your burdens to Jesus. May you remember that He delights in allowing you to always rest in His goodness and grace. May you learn from Him day-by-day as He teaches you His rhythms of life.

WEEK 2

EXODUS 33:14

(Child's name), may you know true rest can only be found in the presence of your Heavenly Father. Jesus is Immanuel, God with Us. He has not asked you to endure this life alone but has decided to send His presence with you. May you remember that God has taken the responsibility of your salvation and life upon Himself. May you rest in the truth that your Heavenly Father sustains that good work.

WEEK 3

PSALM 37

(Child's name), may you be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him. May you cease to strive and perform and choose to rest in the finished work of the cross of Jesus Christ. May you know that your good Father loves and cares for you. He will never leave you or forsake you. Put your trust in Him and hold fast to His promises. He will give you everything that you need to persevere.

WEEK 4

PSALM 25

(Child's name), may you know that God will teach you His ways and show you His path. May you know that He will guide you in His truth and that His steadfast love endures forever. May you take hope in the truth that God delights in instructing His children and showing them the best way for their lives to flourish. May you remember His mercy and His love and turn towards Him in times of weariness. God is faithful.

God's Word

Week One

GOD STATEMENT:

God is Kind

SCRIPTURE:

2 Samuel 9

As the children of God, we have the privilege of showing others the amazing breadth of Jesus' generous and embracing love. We get to care for the needs of others. And by doing so, we put the love and heart of God on display. King David gave a great example of this in 2 Samuel 9. In the years preceding this passage, David, and Jonathan (son of King Saul) made a covenant of peace and friendship that was to last through the generations between their families. At the opening of this passage King David asks, "Is there no one still alive from the house of Saul to whom I can show God's kindness?" At this time in history, when a new family took the throne, it was common for the new king to have any remaining family of the former royal line killed. For this reason, upon the death of his father, Jonathan and grandfather, Saul, Mephibosheth was taken into hiding. Instead of offering brutality, David showed kindness and took responsibility for Mephibosheth. He found Mephibosheth and poured abundant blessings over him.

Read 2 Samuel 9 together as a family.

DISCUSSION

- How did King David care for Mephibosheth? What was Mephibosheth's response?
- In what ways did his life change when the king brought him to his table?
- When was a time that you experienced God's kindness?
- How might God want to use you to show His kindness to another?

by Zach Alvey, Volunteer Student Ministries New Life North

Week Two

GOD STATEMENT:

God Loves Unconditionally

SCRIPTURE:

Luke 10:25-37

I remember when I turned 13 thinking, "Yeah, I'm not a little kid anymore!" I was ready to hang out with the teenagers. I thought I was too good for my younger friends. In Luke chapter ten, the priest and the Levite passed by the hurt man without helping him. They thought they were too good to help. When I look at my own life, I'm doing the same thing all the time. God wants us to love everyone, but a lot of times I just care about those who care about me, the people that I like, and those who can do things for me, and I choose to not truly love some who are right next to me. God tells us to love everyone, even our enemies. No one is too good, or even too bad to show God's love because He loves every single one of us without condition.

May you remember that no matter who you are, God loves you. And no matter what you've done, no matter how old you are, He calls you to show His love to everyone you know. May you know that the Lord gives the strength to love others.

DISCUSSION

- What do you think it means to love someone?
- How does God show us that He loves us?
- Why should we love our neighbor?
- What is one way, and who is one person you can love better this week?

by Teddy Chesebro, Sophomore student, New Life North Student Ministries





Week Three

GOD STATEMENT:

God Blesses

SCRIPTURE:

Matthew 14:13-21

In our Scripture reading this week we see that the multitudes have followed Jesus to a remote place to hear from Him and to be healed. As the day fades to night, we can imagine that the disciples are getting hungry and grumpy. They tell Jesus to send away the crowds so they can go find their own food for dinner. I would assume they were ready for their own dinner and needed a bit of a break. Jesus responded by telling the disciples to feed the crowds with the food they had! Isn't it interesting that Jesus told them to use the food they have in their hands?

Often, as we look at what we hold in our own hands it never seems like enough. We think we don't have enough to give away, or maybe we are just too tired to give it. The disciples brought Jesus the bread, He blessed it, and broke it to be distributed to the crowds. With this seemingly small offering of five loaves and two fish, Jesus fed a multitude. After everyone had eaten and was satisfied, the disciples collected the twelve baskets and found that what was left was more than the two fish and fives loaves they started with.

God has entrusted us with gifts, talents, finances and so much more. As we bring Jesus what we have in our hands, even when it doesn't seem like it's enough, He is able to do exceedingly more than we had hoped or imagined. He has blessed us to be a blessing.

DISCUSSION

- How has God blessed you this week?
- What has God entrusted to you so that you can be a blessing to others as well?
- How might Jesus bless what is in your hands, multiply it and provide enough for you and those around you?

by Jeni Mason, Family Care Pastor New Life North

God's Word

Week Four

GOD STATEMENT:

Jesus is the Good News

SCRIPTURE:

Matthew 28

The environment of RESPONSIBILITY reminds us that God has commissioned us to be His ambassadors of grace and good news to those who don't know about the gift of God's love and forgiveness.

Matthew 28 closes the book of Matthew. In it we find the Great Commission. At the beginning of the chapter, Mary and Mary Magdalene witness a miracle. After a violent earthquake, the tombstone was rolled back by an angel whose appearance was like lightening. He encouraged the women not to be afraid and commissioned them to go tell the disciples the good news that Christ had risen and gone ahead of them to Galilee. Then, in Matthew 28:19, Jesus told the eleven disciples to "Go and make disciples of all nations..." This commissioning was for the disciples, but it is also for us. We are to go into the world, sharing the good news that Jesus is the risen savior. We are to teach and model to people how to worship and follow Jesus. As well as baptizing those who choose to trust and follow Him. Our job is pretty straight forward. We get to give testimony to and share how we have experienced God at work in our lives and how we have seen Him work in the lives of others.

DISCUSSION

- Is there someone that God is asking you to "GO" to and share His good news?
- Write down that name and begin to pray for them. Then, when you feel that it is the right time, go to them and tell them how the good news of Jesus has affected you!

by Jeni Mason, Family Care Pastor New Life North

FAMILY TIME RECIPES

MINI S'MORES

S'mores seem to go hand in hand with summer. This easy and delicious twist on a classic s'more provides the perfect way to get your kids helping in the kitchen.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 7 whole graham crackers, finely crushed
- 1/4 c. powdered sugar
- 6 tbsp. melted butter
- 4 chocolate candy bars, scored into sections
- 12 large marshmallows

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Mix the graham cracker crumbs, powdered sugar, and melted butter together until crumbly and evenly mixed. Put a small scoop of crumbs in each cup of a mini muffin tin and press down and up the sides to form a little "cup." Bake at 350° F for four or five minutes or until the edges are bubbling.
2. While the cups are baking, cut the marshmallows in half (scissors dipped in cold water works well for this) and break the chocolate into squares. Set aside a square or two of chocolate to melt later.
3. Remove the cups from the oven. In each cup, put a square of chocolate and a marshmallow half. Return to the oven for one or two minutes or until the marshmallows are just slightly puffed.
4. Cool in the pan for 15 minutes before removing the cups. (Make sure they're completely cooled.)
5. Melt the chocolate squares you set aside earlier—one to two minutes in the microwave works well—and drizzle over the tops of the cups. Let them sit for about an hour to "set" the chocolate.
6. Store in an airtight container for up to a week. Warming these in the microwave for *few* seconds makes them beyond delicious.



SUMMER SALAD

Share the love with family and friends by inviting them over for this simple and beautiful summer salad—it feeds twelve and can be made ahead and kept in the refrigerator overnight.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

SALAD

- 2 heads iceberg lettuce, chopped
- 8 ounces baby spinach, washed and dried
- salt and pepper to taste
- 8 hard boiled eggs, chopped
- 16 ounces bacon, cooked and chopped
- 4 tomatoes, chopped

- 1 bunch green onions, thinly sliced
- 8 ounces cheddar cheese, grated
- 1 bag (10 ounces) frozen peas, partially thawed
- fresh dill for garnish

DRESSING

- 3/4 cup mayonnaise
- 3/4 cup sour cream
- 1 tablespoon sugar

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. In a clear glass bowl, layer salad ingredients in the order they appear above, concentrating ingredients around the perimeter of the bowl and filling in the center with lettuce, if needed. End with the layer of peas.
2. Combine dressing ingredients in a separate bowl and mix well. Pour over the top of the peas and spread to cover, bringing dressing all the way out to the edges of the bowl. Sprinkle with fresh dill.
3. Cover and refrigerate for up to 8 hours. Toss just before serving.

FAMILY TIME RECIPES

GUMMY WORM POPSICLES

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 1 can lemon-lime soda
- 2 cups of gummy worms
- popsicle molds* (6)

*If you do not have popsicle molds you can use small paper cups and popsicle sticks as a substitute.



WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Drop about 1/3 cup of gummy worms into the popsicle molds. This is the fun part for the kids—allow them to pick which colors they want for their treats!
2. Fill the molds a little over 3/4 of the way with the lemon-lime soda covering the gummy worms, and leaving enough room for the popsicle to expand while freezing.
3. Place mold sticks or popsicle sticks into the molds.
4. Put the popsicles into the freezer and wait until they are completely frozen through—about 45 minutes.
5. Once frozen, run under hot water for a couple seconds to loosen them from the mold.



BAKED ZITI

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 16 oz. ziti pasta
- 16 oz. ricotta cheese
- 3 c. shredded mozzarella cheese, divided
- 4 links of fully cooked Italian chicken sausage (or another sausage of choice)
- 1 tbsp. extra virgin olive oil
- 3 c. red pasta sauce, divided
- 3/4 c. shredded Parmesan cheese

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Preheat oven to 350° F. Boil pasta until almost al dente; drain.
2. In a large mixing bowl combine pasta, ricotta cheese, and 1 1/2 cups mozzarella cheese.
3. Chop sausage links into bite size pieces; stir into pasta mixture.
4. Coat bottom of a large baking or casserole dish with extra virgin olive oil.
5. Pour and spread 1 1/2 cups of pasta sauce on the bottom of the dish.
6. Add pasta mixture to baking dish, spreading evenly. Pour remaining sauce over the pasta mixture.
7. Cover with the remainder of the mozzarella and Parmesan cheese.
8. Bake for 25 minutes or until bubbling. Remove from oven and let stand 5 minutes before serving.

COMFORT
FOOD

Rest and Responsibility

Sabbath. A day when you pause from the work and the things you normally do and rest in who God is and all He has done. Chores or anything you consider work is paused for one day. Instead, it is a time to create space to rest.

There are times when we look at all we must do and all those who have been entrusted to us. Pausing doesn't seem like an option. I am reminded of the story, "The Starving Baker." There was a baker in a quaint town who baked and sold bread all day. He took pride in his job—he was responsible for helping feed the townspeople. But while he baked, the baker never ate. He did this for many days. As you can imagine he started to slow down and get tired. Because he was not feeding himself, he could no longer take care of all that was entrusted to him and there wasn't a baker in town to help feed the people. Like the baker, you must feed yourself before you can feed others. This can be difficult. Resting can feel like it goes against the values of hard work and caring for others, but we must remember we are able to give to others when we are filled up, rested, and restored. Taking time to truly Sabbath allows for this. If we work and work, wanting to serve God and others, and never pause for Sabbath, we have emptied ourselves without pausing and being filled from the source—God.

God's Word tells us, "Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God." Exodus 20:9 & 10. **Part of our responsibility is to rest and to honor the Sabbath.** Resting is a part of taking care of what needs to be done. God fills us with His blessings so that we may also bless others. We are blessed to be a blessing.

Read Exodus 20:9 & 10 together as a family.

Share with your children the meaning of the Sabbath—pausing from all work, resting as you

remember all God has done and celebrating those things together. Then, brainstorm different ways you can spend a day of Sabbath. For example, doing things that are fun and bring you joy, making a meal together and inviting friends over to share it with, taking a nap, reading a good book, or playing in the sprinklers.

Consider creating a mural with all the ideas you came up with to create a picture of your family's plan for a day of rest.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Poster board or butcher paper
- Coloring pencils, crayons, or markers

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Place a large sheet of butcher paper or poster board on your workspace.
2. Encourage each family member to draw a picture of how they would like to spend a day resting in the Lord.
3. Once the mural is complete, take turns sharing ways you have seen God at work this week.
4. Encourage each person to create a God statement about what they shared and write it on the mural. For example, you were able to find additional funds to pay a bill unexpectedly, God is Provider. Or maybe you were able to calmly work out a disagreement with your brother or sister, God gives Peace.
5. Pray together thanking God for the things He has done and the ways He has provided.

by RuthAnn Massey, Student Ministries Administrative Assistant New Life North

Showers of Blessings

Summer days are long and hot. This water game will be a fun and refreshing way to engage with your family.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 1 Play Day Pump Blaster per person (\$0.98 each @ Walmart)
- Plastic pool or tub
- Water hose
- Beach towels

HOW TO PLAY

Prepare the play space. Encourage your family to do this together. As you are filling the pool with water, encourage each family member to share some of the ways they have seen God's blessings this week. Once the pool is filled, begin to fill your play day pump blaster. As you are filling your water blaster share the game instructions with your family by modeling for them. **We are kind of like the water blasters. God fills us with His love and blessings, and then we can give them away.** Shoot your water blaster in the air. Allow the water to fall on everyone participating. There will be squeals of laughter! **What happens when we share what God has given us?** Allow kids to answer. **That's right, other people are blessed. Let's pretend the water is a blessing and we are sharing our blessings (water) by shooting them up into the air. What happens?** Kids answer. **Other people get blessed.** Next as a group, fill your water wands from the pool. Standing together in a group, on the count of 3 shoot your water high into the air. Allow the water to fall freely down on everyone and enjoy this refreshing together.

Grab some beach towels and dry off when you are finished. Sitting together, talk about ways that you can share God's love with others. A smile, a word of encouragement or simple act of kindness are some of the best ways to share with people as you look for ways to shower others with blessings.

by Christy Thomas, Nursery Coordinator New Life North



Remember & Celebrate

EXTRAVAGANZA

In the Old Testament God commanded His people to stop and remember who He is and celebrate what He had done. As followers of Jesus, this practice is important for us to participate in as well. When we pause to remember God's faithfulness and all He has done, we are reminding ourselves of who He is. This is cause for celebration. When we celebrate something, we share the experience with others. We can invite others into celebration by sharing the gift of God's love and forgiveness to those in our lives that God has entrusted us with.

Philippians 2:4 says, "None of you should look out just for your own good. Each of you should also look out for the good of others." (NirV) The end of summer is upon us, and a new school year is on the horizon. As a family, take time to plan and host a Remember & Celebrate Party of your own this month. Ask the Lord who in your sphere of influence He would have you invite. Maybe your neighbors, close family friends, or people in your church community. Take time during your party to Remember & Celebrate who God has been during this season- telling stories, worshipping, and getting to know one another.

WHAT YOU NEED:

- A night to celebrate
- Family and Friends
- Good Food
- Fellowship

WHAT YOU'LL DO:

- Remember & Celebrate
- Eat
- Tell Stories
- Worship
- Pray

by Kendra Baker, PreK/K Discipleship Coordinator New Life North



Blessing Bags

"Mom, do you have any change in your purse?" my son asked with a tone of urgency. My son's attention was on the man standing at the side of the road with a sign that said, "anything helps." How often have I been in that situation, wanting to help but finding myself unable to do so because I don't have cash in my purse? How often have I been tempted to convince myself that any money given would be used for anything other than food? I realize that not everyone standing at the side of the road is a panhandler; some find themselves in dire situations and in need of mercy.

I am reminded of Jesus' response to the Pharisees' questions about doing good to others on Sabbath in Matthew 12. While the Pharisees were often fixated on following the letter of the law, Jesus was more concerned about heart matters. Jesus said, "If you had known what these words mean, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the innocent. For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath" (Matthew 12:7-8). **Jesus wants us to be merciful and kind to those in need and suffering.** Jesus is not interested in our religious performance. He wants our hearts to be tender, having affections for God and mercy for others.

These opportunities can become teachable moments to help our kids understand that as followers of Jesus we have a responsibility to become conduits of His refreshment and rest to those who are hurting. **We can help our kids understand that acts of mercy and kindness allow others to taste and see the goodness of God.** Acts 10:38 tells us that Jesus went everywhere doing good. Jesus said that we are blessed when we are merciful to others (Matthew 5:7).

This month, spend time as a family, thinking of ways to show the mercy and love of God to others. Here is one practical suggestion - packing a blessing bag together.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- Gallon-sized Ziplock bags
- Water bottles
- Hard candies
- Granola bars
- Lip balm or Chapstick
- Travel-sized toothbrush kits
- Bars of soap
- Crackers
- Wipes
- Deodorants
- \$5 or \$10 gift cards to Subway (optional)
- Home-made notes

WHAT YOU WILL DO:

1. Purchase supplies and set aside time together to pack the blessings bags.
2. Have kids create notes of encouragement to be placed in each bag.
3. Choose Scriptures of encouragement together as a family and talk through how the passages and blessing bag will reflect the heart of God to whoever will receive it and the importance of showing mercy to others.
4. Pray for the blessing bags together, asking God to orchestrate divine opportunities to hand out the bags.
5. Place bags in your car and look for the opportunities God brings your way.

by Evie Swart, Family Ministries Discipleship Pastor New Life North

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