

2020 | March | April

HomeFront

a spiritual parenting resource

JESUS IS THE GOOD SHEPHERD

KNOWING

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

IDENTITY

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



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.



How to Use

HomeFront

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 Utilize this magazine as a workbook to plan your family time. The calendar pages are designed to help you plan ahead. 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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A NOTE FROM MICHELLE



Dr. Michelle Anthony

Michelle 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 25 years of church ministry experience as a children's and family pastor. She loves a good book and a cup of coffee.

 @TruInspiration

HomeFront magazine is designed to help parents and grandparents disciple their children and grandchildren by creating environments in their homes that put God on display. Each issue gives 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 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 **KNOWING** and **IDENTITY**. The environment of **KNOWING** allows you to help kids not only know about God and His character but to begin knowing Him personally in a growing relationship. The environment of **IDENTITY** allows kids to begin to understand their significance and position in the story of God in light of what Christ has done for them. We find our identity in Jesus because He has chosen and adopted us into His family through His love.

My prayer is that you will grow together as a family as you faithfully engage in the contents of this resource.

With blessing,

EDITOR'S NOTE



Holly Newman

Holly is the Editor in Chief of *HomeFront* magazine and Pastor of Parents and Families at New Life Church in Colorado Springs, CO. She has pastored in family ministry for nearly 20 years and written curriculum for other authors as well as developed her own tween and teen curriculum on identity called *Girlltime*. Her passion is for families to create influential, faith-building moments with their children. She has been married to her high school sweetheart, Jared, for 18 years. They have four children: two girls and two boys. In her spare time she loves to get outdoors with her family.

As the snow begins to melt and green grass peeks out of the ground, I can't help but feel hopeful and happy. Warmer weather is right around the corner, and the long, dreary winter is coming to a close. Most of us begin organizing closets, clearing the gutters, and cleaning every inch of the house. A prevailing attitude in spring is "out with the old and in with the new." This same attitude can be applied to the Easter season. The truth of Jesus' resurrection allows us to shed what is old and dead and accept His new covenant of eternal life. While spring cleaning is temporary, Christ's resurrection brings lasting change.

Over the next two months, *HomeFront* magazine highlights the environments of **KNOWING** Jesus intimately and finding **IDENTITY** through His unconditional sacrifice for His children. For March, God's Word (pages 8-9) dives deep into knowing our Good Shepherd by looking at John 10 and then taking time to respond to His voice (page 13). In April, God's Word (pages 20-21) helps children to find their identity through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus and not in accomplishments or occupations (page 25).

I hope you enjoy the new look of *HomeFront* magazine. My goal was to provide easy places for you to write shopping lists, prayer requests, and memories. Tear out the Family Verse to frame or stick on the fridge. Cut out a God's Word devotional to have a family night when on vacation or eating at a restaurant. Look back at God's faithfulness by recording prayer requests, praises, thanksgiving, and special memories. The activities are simple so that you can focus on having fun as you disciple your family. Enjoy!

CONTENTS

MARCH

6
PLANNING CALENDAR

7
FAMILY TIME VERSE
John 10:14-15

8
GOD'S WORD

10
FAMILY TIME RECIPES

12
CREATE
Family Night Box

13
GAME TIME
Who Am I?

14
WORSHIP RESPONSE
In the Quiet

15
SERVE

16
BLESSING

17
REMEMBER AND
CELEBRATE JOURNAL

APRIL

18
PLANNING CALENDAR

19
FAMILY TIME VERSE
Romans 10:9

20
GOD'S WORD

22
FAMILY TIME RECIPES

24
CREATE
Colors of Faith Egg

25
GAME TIME
Two Truths and a Tall Tale

26
WORSHIP RESPONSE
True Identity

27
SERVE

28
BLESSING

29
REMEMBER AND
CELEBRATE JOURNAL



SPIRITUAL PARENTING

HomeFront magazine implements the material from *Spiritual Parenting* by Dr. Michelle Anthony and brings it to life by giving you the tools to create a dynamic family night in your home. Our desire is to create spiritual space, which we refer to as an environment, in which we can put God on display in our homes. Join us for one of the *Spiritual Parenting* classes in the fall or spring semester, take the online course, or read the book on your own or with friends.

1. **STORYTELLING** "God has a big story, and I can be a part of it!"
2. **IDENTITY** "I belong to God, and He loves me!"
3. **FAITH COMMUNITY** "God's family cares for each other and worships God together."
4. **SERVING** "Asks the question, 'What needs to be done?'"
5. **OUT OF THE COMFORT ZONE** "God transforms me when I step out in faith."
6. **COURSE CORRECTION** "When I get off track, God offers me a path of healing."
7. **RESPONSIBILITY** "God has entrusted me with the things and people He created around me."
8. **KNOWING** "God knows me, and I can know Him."
9. **LOVE/RESPECT** "God fills me with His love so I can give it away."
10. **MODELING** "I see Christ in others, and they can see Him in me."

SUPPORT

30

RESOURCES AND SUPPORT

31

**CARPOOL CONVERSATIONS AND
KEEPING UP WITH YOUR KIDS**

32

MOM BLOG
The Power of One

33

DAD BLOG
Hearing Jesus Is Hard

34

MARRIAGE BLOG
The Greatest Gift You
Can Give Your Husband

35

SPIRITUAL GRANDPARENTING
The Moments That Matter

36

TOUGH TOPICS
Family Care

37

STUDENT ID
Finding Treasure

38

ASK OUR PASTORS
COMMENTS TO OUR FAMILIES

39

UPCOMING EVENTS



It is our prayer that homes and churches would create these environments for children to live in so their faith will grow in a community of consistency, common language, and practice. To learn more about how these environments 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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MARCH

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31	1	2	3	4

notes

[illegible]

Shopping List

[illegible]

ideas

supplies

I am the good
SHEPHERD;
I know my sheep
and my sheep
know me—
just as the Father
knows me and
I KNOW THE FATHER—
and I lay down my life
for the sheep.

John 10:14–15

GOD'S WORD

WEEK ONE

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (John 10:11).

As we approach Easter, we rejoice in what God has provided to us through the person of Jesus Christ. Throughout the gospel of John, we get a unique perspective of the character of Jesus Christ through His miracles as well as His direct, bold statements. He states, "I am the bread of life" (6:35), "I am the true vine" (15:1), "I am the resurrection and the life" (11:25), "I am the light of the world" (8:12), "I am the gate" (10:9), and "I am the good shepherd" (10:11). This month, we will focus on Jesus as the Good Shepherd.

Just as a shepherd protects his sheep from wolves or snares, Jesus promises to protect us from the wolves of sin, death, and judgment. John states that whoever believes in Jesus will not perish but will live forever with God and escape judgment (3:16-18).

A shepherd will do anything to protect his flock; the Good Shepherd laid down His life for all His children.

Our Shepherd not only redeems us from sin and death but also offers us abundant life. The use of "abundant" in John 10:10 has a double meaning. It means to exceed in some number (quantity) as well as to be extraordinarily superior (quality). Our abundant, eternal life begins in this life when we come to know the Good Shepherd as Lord and Savior (17:3). And though our Shepherd sacrificed His life for us, He rose again and lives eternally to make intercession for every one of us who follows Him (Hebrews 7:25).

DISCUSSION: Talk about some jobs of an earthly shepherd. How is Jesus like a shepherd for us?

GOD'S WORD

WEEK TWO

"When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice" (John 10:4-5).

A good shepherd can care for hundreds of sheep at a time. We might think, "How does the shepherd keep all those sheep together?" Easy! The sheep know the shepherd's voice or call. In Bible times, the sheep knew their shepherd's voice or commands so well that they would not listen to any other shepherd or imposter.

In Scripture, the word "know" is translated in two unique ways. The first know comes from the Greek word *oida*, which means to understand in a

knowledgeable way. (We will talk about the second translation in the next devotion.) How can we know the voice or commands of our Shepherd? By knowing His words in the Bible! The Shepherd's sheep listen and respond to His Word (John 8:31).

Jesus prayed over His followers that they would be made holy (sanctified) by knowing the truth, and His Word is truth (17:17). When we read Scripture, our faith and ability to recognize His voice grows. So when the enemy or false shepherd tries to lead us astray, we won't listen because we know the voice of the Good Shepherd.

DISCUSSION: What are some other ways to know the voice of our Good Shepherd besides reading the Bible?

GOD'S WORD

WEEK THREE

“I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep” (John 10:14-15).

Some people are familiar with the Word of God and can even quote Scripture but act in ways that don't remind us of Jesus. These people are similar to the Pharisees who knew Scripture but did not know Jesus (John 5:39).

Remember the translation of “know” from last week's devotional? In this passage from John 10:14-15, the word “know” is from a different Greek word, *ginosko*, which means an ongoing personal or intimate knowledge, much like the personal relationship between a husband and wife or best friends.

Jesus once told a Samaritan woman that we must

know God in Spirit and in truth (4:24). God's Word is truth, but what about the Spirit?

After the Good Shepherd resurrected to eternal life, He sent the gift of the Holy Spirit to His sheep (14:26; 20:22). The Holy Spirit confirms to us the truth of Jesus Christ (15:26) and that we are indeed His children (Romans 8:16). The Spirit empowers us to walk in faith, ignore the voice of the enemy, and produce the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). To follow our Good Shepherd, we must know Him intimately. And to know Him intimately, we must know His love and keep in step with the Spirit (Romans 8:5-6).

DISCUSSION: How does it feel to know that your Good Shepherd wants to have a personal relationship with you? What does that require of us?

GOD'S WORD

WEEK FOUR

“I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture” (John 10:9).

The Good Shepherd tells us if we enter through Him, we will not only be saved but we will be safe (John 10:28-29). Unfortunately, sometimes sheep choose to wander away from the shepherd. A sheep away from his shepherd is exposed to attacks, isolated from the companionship of other sheep, and struggles to find food and water to survive. It seems absurd that a sheep would want to wander off from the shepherd.

We can sometimes wander off from the Good Shepherd to follow our own selfish desires. But Jesus said we must be willing to do God's will above following the things of the world or trying to be our

own shepherd (7:17). Chasing the things of this world often seems better in the moment, but following our Shepherd brings eternal life. When we follow Jesus, He promises unconditional love, joy, peace, grace, mercy, forgiveness, and belonging to a heavenly family.

In John 15:5-6, our Shepherd tells us to abide in Him because apart from Him, we can do nothing. Jesus wants to protect us, care for us, and love us generously. Choose this day to follow your Shepherd all the days of your life.

DISCUSSION: What do people experience when they walk away from the Good Shepherd? How often should we choose to follow the Good Shepherd?

March's God's Word devotionals written by Dr. Mark Dawson



COWBOY CASSEROLE

Fried chicken, potatoes, and cheese, oh my! This southern casserole of gooey goodness is bound to be a family favorite. Plus, it is a great way to use up leftovers.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- mashed potatoes (homemade or from the deli work best)
- frozen corn
- shredded cheddar cheese
- crispy chicken (homemade, frozen, or from a restaurant)
- brown gravy mix or barbecue sauce

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Preheat oven to 350° F.
2. Spray a 13" x 9" baking dish with nonstick spray.
3. Spread the mashed potatoes in the bottom of the pan.
4. Top with corn and cheddar cheese.
5. Add the crispy chicken as the final layer.
6. Bake for 30 minutes.
7. Drizzle gravy or barbecue sauce over casserole and serve.



DIRT AND WORMS

Looking for a treat for all ages? This easy recipe brings out your inner child and is sure to please.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- clear plastic cups
- gummy worms
- 1 package of Oreo cookies, crumbled
- chocolate instant pudding (1 package makes 5 cups)

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Make the instant pudding according to package directions.
2. Make cookie crumbs by placing Oreo cookies (no filling) in a sandwich bag and break apart with a rolling pin.

3. Fill the clear cups 1/3 full of pudding.
4. Add a middle layer of cookie crumbs.
5. Fill cups with remaining pudding for top layer.
6. Top with extra cookie crumbs.
7. Arrange gummy worms in the "dirt."
8. For a fun addition, add a homemade garden sign for your child to write her name on and decorate.



MEATBALL SUBS

Family nights are about enjoying a special recipe that isn't part of the weekly rotation. These deliciously messy meatball subs fit the bill and offer a fun option!

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- hoagie rolls
- Italian meatballs
- marinara sauce
- Parmesan cheese
- mozzarella cheese
- dried oregano

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Preheat oven to 350° F.
2. Slice hoagie rolls in half from the top but not all the way through.
3. Place hoagies side by side in a baking dish or rimmed baking sheet. If food tends to stick to your pan, lightly grease it or line it with aluminum foil.
4. Spread a couple of tablespoons of marinara sauce in the bottom of each hoagie roll.
5. Sprinkle grated Parmesan cheese over the sauce.
6. Place meatballs inside each roll.
7. Spread additional marinara sauce over the meatballs.
8. Generously spread shredded mozzarella cheese over each hoagie.
9. Add a sprinkle of oregano.
10. Bake for 15-17 minutes. (If using frozen meatballs and marinara sauce, add about 5 minutes to bake time.)



SHEEP CUPCAKES


While learning about the Good Shepherd, reinforce the devotional by allowing your kids to decorate their own sheep with this easy cupcake food craft.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 1 box chocolate cake mix
- 1 tub vanilla buttercream icing
- 2 cups mini marshmallows
- 2 cups chocolate chips
- candy eyes

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Make the cupcakes according to the instructions on the cake mix package.
2. To make the sheep heads, crumble 4 of the cooled cupcakes into a bowl.
3. Mix in 2 tablespoons of the vanilla frosting.
4. Roll the mixed frosting and cupcake crumbs into 16 ovals for heads.
5. Place the heads on a wax paper-lined plate for about 15 minutes. Then move them to the refrigerator.
6. Melt 2 cups chocolate chips.
7. Taking just 2 or 3 sheep heads out of the refrigerator at a time, drop them in the chocolate and then use a spoon to cover completely. Pull out with a fork and tap each ball on the edge of the bowl to shed excess chocolate. Set on wax paper.
8. Break a mini marshmallow up into thirds.
9. Use the two outer thirds for the ears of the sheep and two candy eyeballs for the eyes. Let dry completely. Repeat with the rest of the sheep heads.
10. Frost the remaining cupcakes with a small amount of frosting, just enough to cover the top.
11. Set a dry sheep head on each cupcake. Then fill in the rest of each cupcake top with mini marshmallows.

A wooden box with metal latches is the central focus. Behind it are several potted succulents in glass jars. In the foreground, a glass jar holds several colored pencils. The background shows a window with wooden blinds.

CREATE

FAMILY NIGHT BOX

A Family Night Box is a great place to store favorite recipes, games, worship responses, and devotionals –but also a way to save our memories. Each and every family night has a special memory, a moment of extreme laughter, or an in-depth discussion worth remembering. Write these down or snap and print a picture to add to your box! Create your Family Night Box by finding a simple, sturdy box and decorating it to fit your unique family. Invite each family member to paint or decoupage a side of the box, or choose a family theme. You may want to think of words that describe your family and then paint pictures representing those words. You can use Scriptures or significant dates. Get creative and involve the entire family!

Store the current *HomeFront* magazine in your box and cut out your favorite recipe cards, devotionals, and activities for future reference. If you are on vacation or at a sporting event, grab a couple of these cutouts to have family night anywhere!

Create idea submitted by the Family Ministry Staff of New Life Church, Colorado Springs, CO

GAME TIME



WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- sticky notes
- pen or marker

BEFORE YOU START

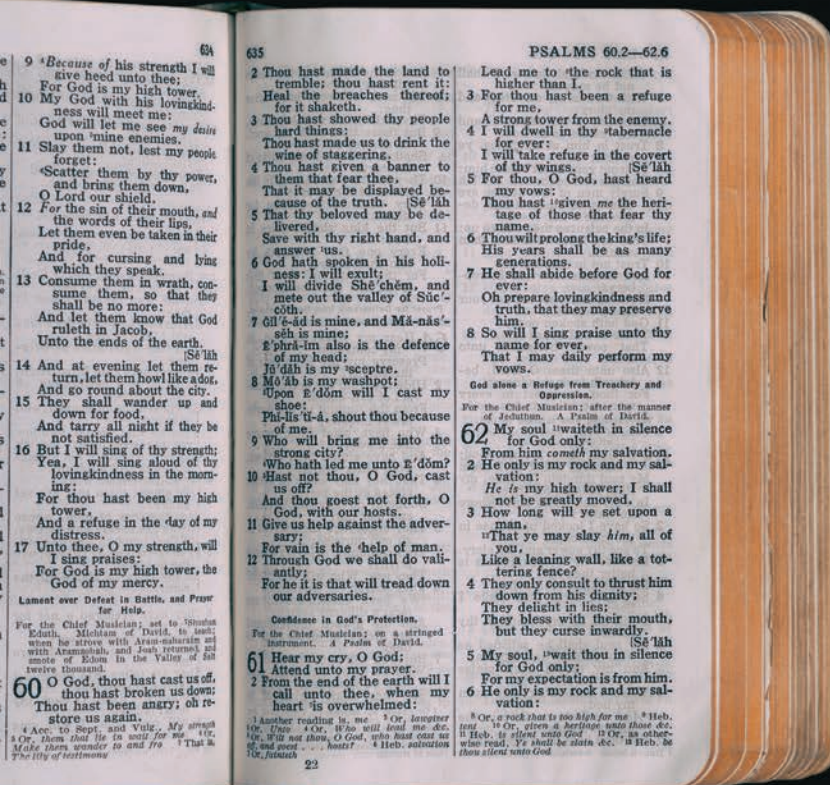
Using one sticky note for each member of your family, write the name of a different Bible person on each note. Keep in mind the age of the child when choosing a Bible person. For instance, use Noah or Adam for the younger kids while using Jonah or Stephen for the older kids.

TIME TO PLAY!

Who Am I is an interactive game where family members can use yes or no questions to guess the identity of a specific Bible person.

Without looking at the name on the sticky note, each player must stick his note to his forehead. Players can ask each other questions to guess the name written on their notes. If played correctly, children can gain knowledge of different stories and people in the Bible. As players correctly identify each Bible person, talk through the different ways we can see God through that part of His story. As we discover more about the Bible, we can truly know God in a new way.

Game Time idea submitted by the Family Ministry Staff of New Life Church, Colorado Springs, CO



One of the most important aspects of the environment of KNOWING is helping our children to genuinely know 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 of knowing God, knowing His Word, and a relationship with Him through Christ. God is holy, mighty, and magnificent, yet He has chosen to make Himself known to us!

In God's Word, we focused on our Good Shepherd through the passage of John 10. As God's sheep, it is critical to know our Shepherd's voice. God often speaks through prayer, His Word, and

through others. It takes practice and sitting still without the distractions of life to hear our Shepherd's voice. As a family, respond to God's voice through the following practices.

WHAT TO DO

1. Open with a prayer inviting God to speak.
2. Sit in silence for about a minute for older kids or 30 seconds for younger kids.
3. Parents, read Psalm 23 over your children. While you read, ask your children to listen for a part of the Scripture that stands out.
4. Sit in silence again as everyone reflects on God's Word.
5. Share with one another something God spoke to you.

Worship Response idea submitted by the Family Ministry Staff of New Life Church, Colorado Springs, CO

SERVE

Homeless Care Kit

My daughter and I were running late to her after-school activity one evening. As we pulled up to a stoplight, we saw a homeless man sitting on the curb with a sign asking for food. My daughter began peppering me with questions about him. I gave her a few general answers, but she was not satisfied. She began searching our car for food. When she didn't find any, she asked if we could go buy him a sandwich. Because we were already running late, I told her that we didn't have time.

Later that evening, my daughter brought up the event and expressed her sadness and disappointment at not providing food for that man. My initial reaction was to tell her about the several homeless shelters designed to help people like him. Thankfully, the Lord helped me to respond in another way that didn't squash her compassion.

Her Good Shepherd was nudging her to help someone in need, and I wanted my daughter to learn to respond. So I asked her if there was something she would like to do next time we traveled that way (which was twice a week). We discussed several factors to consider, like time and money. Eventually, she came up with the idea to have a snack pack in our car that we could easily give to this man or any other person.

Her idea became the Homeless Care Kit. The next day, we went shopping to grab nonperishable food and Gatorade to keep in a container in the back of the car. Any time we passed someone in need, the kids could grab some items from the bin and hand them out the window.

SERVE CHALLENGE

Homeless Care Kits are a great way for your family to meet the needs of others, just like our Good Shepherd meets our needs. Go shopping as a family to pack your own container of nonperishable food items and wrap them with a Scripture or blessing. Throughout March, pass out food to those in need and respond to the Good Shepherd's voice.

Serve idea submitted by the Family Ministry Staff of New Life Church, Colorado Springs, CO



BLESSING

BLESS WITH WORDS

A BLESSING CAN BE A PRAYER OF COMMISSION, A BIBLE PASSAGE, OR WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT. BLESSINGS CAN BE SPOKEN OVER A CHILD FOR THE PURPOSE OF DECLARING GOD'S PROTECTION, JOY, AND WISDOM OVER HIM.

WEEK 1

(Child's name), may you know the Good Shepherd laid down His life for you because He loves you. You can trust that He will protect you and lead you in the right direction. Following the Good Shepherd will lead you to an abundant and lasting life.

(John 10:10, 15; Psalm 23:3)

WEEK 2

(Child's name), may you know that God has given you His Word to help you know the truth and know His voice. The Good Shepherd calls you by name because you belong to Him, and no one can snatch you out of His hand.

(John 10:4, 28; 17:17)

WEEK 3

(Child's name), may you know that your Good Shepherd knows you and sees you. He desires a relationship with you and wants to make Himself known to you. He has given you the Holy Spirit to teach you His ways and to help you know Him.

(John 10:14; 14:26; 1 John 4:19)

WEEK 4

(Child's name), may you know that nothing can separate you from the love of God. Because He loves you, He will never leave you. When you feel lost and scared, your Good Shepherd will find you. As you listen for His voice and trust Him with all your heart, He will direct your path. May you always choose to follow the Good Shepherd.

(Romans 8:31; Isaiah 40:11; Matthew 18:12; Proverbs 3:5; John 10:27)

by Evie Swart

Evie has been in children's ministry for more than 20 years and is the Midweek Director for Family Ministries at New Life Church, Colorado Springs, CO. She enjoys traveling with her family and eating spicy food. She is passionate about teaching God's Word and wants children and families to have life-transforming experiences with Christ.

JOURNAL

remember and celebrate

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prayer

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thankfulness and praise

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APRIL

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
29	30	31	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	1	2

notes

Shopping List

ideas

supplies

If you
declare
with your mouth,
“JESUS IS LORD,”
and believe
in your heart
that God raised
him from the dead,
you will be saved.

Romans 10:9

GOD'S WORD

WEEK ONE

“The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God” (Mark 1:1).

Identity theft has become an increasingly common crime—one in which an imposter steals another’s personal information for his own gain. The negative effects of this type of identity theft can cause many forms of hardships for the victim, be they financial, emotional, physical, or social. As humans we face a more fatal blow spiritually when we are robbed of our greatest identity—that is, who God created us to be as His image bearers and co-rulers of His good world. The assaulting criminals we face in this battle generate from our desire to do what’s right in our own eyes (aka sin [Judges 17:6]) and the spiritual forces of evil (Ephesians 6:12).

With the former type of identity theft, professional authorities recommend ways to combat and hopefully prevent this unfortunate battle for the would-be victim. More gloriously, praise be to God, the latter identity crisis can have more than just a hopeful remedy as Mark confidently proclaims in the

opening sentence of his gospel, “The beginning of the good news of Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God.” Jesus’ identity as the Messiah and Son of God ring throughout the gospel of Mark—Jesus is humanity’s identity remedy who thwarts sin and darkness. In the first chapter of Mark we read about Jesus’ baptism and His Father’s voice from heaven confirming Him as His beloved Son. Jesus’ identity flows into His life’s ministry. He is mighty, powerful, and authoritative as He heals, teaches, forgives sin, and calls others to follow Him. Take time this week to read Mark 1:1-45 as a family and use the discussion questions to spark conversations.

DISCUSSION: How does it feel to have someone steal from you? Talk about identity. What has shaped your beliefs about who you are? Thinking through the Scripture passage, how would you describe people’s identities before and after encountering Jesus? How might your stolen identity be redeemed as you daily say yes to participating in Jesus’ way of life?

GOD'S WORD

WEEK TWO (PALM SUNDAY)

“But what about you?” he asked. ‘Who do you say I am?’ Peter answered, ‘You are the Messiah’” (Mark 8:29).

Jesus did not ask this question because His identity was wrapped up in what others thought of Him. He came to challenge and ultimately heal our defective thinking about who God is and who we are. Back in the garden it only took the snake’s crafty questions to get Adam and Eve to doubt God’s goodness. By choosing to disobey God’s one command, they shunned His wise rule in exchange for their own rule—a rule that was destined to fail.

But Jesus entered Jerusalem on a colt as the crowds shouted, “‘Hosanna!’ ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!’ ‘Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!’ ‘Hosanna in the highest heaven!’” (see Mark 11:1-12). Jesus is the promised Messiah and King who came to restore

God’s wise rule and reign and re-establish His beloved’s identity as redeemed sons and daughters in His Kingdom.

This week, remember and celebrate Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem by reading the account in Mark 11:1-12. For more detailed accounts you may also want to read Matthew 21:1-11, Luke 19:28-44, and John 12:12-19.

DISCUSSION: Why do you think Jesus chose a donkey’s colt to ride? How do you think it felt to be in the crowd shouting, “Hosanna!” and waving palm branches? What is your favorite part about Jesus entering Jerusalem? Why? How can Jesus’ identity as King affect your thinking about who you are?

April’s God’s Word devotionals written by Laurie Bennett

GOD'S WORD

WEEK THREE (EASTER)

“Truly this man was the Son of God” (Mark 15:39).

Have you ever had a plan? Maybe your plan involved a road trip. Maybe you had a plan for a career move. Maybe you had a plan for your child to be successful at a sport. Plans can quickly change in life. For instance, your road trip has to be canceled because of a snowstorm. Your career plans bottom out when your company lays off employees. Your child loses interest in the sport you hoped would win him a college scholarship.

Easter celebrates the victory of God's unchangeable plan—His plan to rescue His family, which He declared to the crafty snake after Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, “I will put enmity between you and the woman ... he will crush your head” (Genesis 3:15).

God's plan did not miss a beat as it unfolded through His covenants with Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David. The fulfillment of God's plan did not hinge on the whim of circumstances nor man's inability to keep His covenants. God's plan was to send His only Son who had

the power to keep covenant and “humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!” (Philippians 2:8).

But wait! Death was not God's ultimate plan—defeating death was—and so God raised Jesus from the dead (Acts 2:32). God's plan was the redemption of all that had been lost in the garden. Celebrate Easter, claim your identity as God's beloved, and declare along with the centurion in Mark 15:39, “Surely this man was the Son of God.” As a family read through Mark 15; 16:1-13 this week. Use the following discussion for a deeper dive.

DISCUSSION: Talk about ways your family celebrates Easter. What is your favorite part about Easter? After reading through Mark 15, what are some things that stood out to you? Share something you learned about Jesus that you hadn't known before. How do you think the women felt when they discovered the stone had been rolled away? (Mark 13:1-13). If Jesus was not in the tomb, where was He? How do you know?

GOD'S WORD

WEEK FOUR

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19).

Growing up is a hard business. As infants we cut teeth—ouch! It's not too far in the near future that we lose our outdated baby teeth to grow adult teeth. As we begin to grow taller we experience aching limbs. Before we know it, our shoes are too small and our pants are too short and perhaps a bit too tight. Parents have to budget in the cost for new clothes and more food.

So what about spiritual growth? That's a hard business too and even harder to measure. As we follow Jesus, allowing the Spirit to grow and form us is painful and costly. Being Jesus' disciple means we cannot ignore His words: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me” (Luke 9:23).

Throughout a 40-day period after Jesus' resurrection, He appeared to His disciples (Acts 1:3).

Wow! His disciples encountered and had access to the newly risen Messiah! That's an intense spiritual growth opportunity! Jesus made them breakfast, taught them, and commissioned them to make disciples of all nations.

Before ascending back to heaven, Jesus promised to give them the gift of the Holy Spirit who would counsel, comfort, and give them power to follow Him. Through relationship Jesus continually infused His identity into the disciples and still does this for us today. Trust Jesus' methods to grow you and the Holy Spirit to transform you. Read Matthew 28 and Acts 1:1-11. Use the discussion prompts below to get growing.

DISCUSSION: How do you know you are a disciple of Jesus? What is hard about following Jesus? What is easy about following Him? What does it mean to make disciples? Think about ways you can help someone be Jesus' disciple.



HOT DOG CHARCUTERIE BOARD

A charcuterie board will make even the pickiest of eaters happy and can be a great way to disguise vegetables. With lots of food options to choose from, you can save the food battle for another night.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- hot dogs in hot dog buns
- potato salad
- potato chips
- fruit
- pickle relish
- mustard
- ketchup
- onions
- cheese
- assorted raw vegetables
- veggie dip

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. In the center of the board, place a large bowl of potato salad.
2. Arrange the fruit in a bowl and the veggies in another.
3. Around the board's edges, lay out the cooked hot dogs in the buns.
4. Place the small containers of dips, onions, and cheese on the board.
5. Fill in the remaining areas with potato chips and serve.



BAKED MACARONI AND CHEESE

While not all kids may not love an Easter ham, they will approve of this baked macaroni and cheese.

This side can be prepared ahead of time and baked at the Easter family gathering.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 1 package elbow macaroni pasta
- 8 tablespoons unsalted butter, divided
- 1/3 cup flour
- 3 cups milk
- 2 cups shredded cheddar cheese
- 1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese
- 3/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/2 teaspoon onion powder
- 1/2 teaspoon mustard powder
- 2/3 cup panko breadcrumbs

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Preheat the oven to 350° F.
2. Cook macaroni as directed on package. Drain pasta and return to pot.
3. Add 2 tablespoons butter and toss until melted. Set aside while making the sauce.
4. In a large saucepan or skillet, melt 4 tablespoons butter over medium heat.
5. Add flour and stir continuously for 1 minute.
6. Slowly add the milk using a whisk to dissolve the paste until lump free.
7. Mix in salt and seasonings. Cook for 5-8 minutes until thickened to a creamy consistency.
8. Remove from stove and add cheese to the cooling macaroni while stirring.
9. Pour the cheesy macaroni into a baking dish.
10. Melt 2 tablespoons butter and combine with the panko crumbs; sprinkle over the macaroni dish.
11. Bake for 25 minutes and enjoy!



EASTER CELEBRATION POPCORN

Dressing up plain popcorn is a delicious way to bring the colorful pastels of the Easter season into a family treat. This yummy popcorn is a satisfying combination of salty and sweet.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 10 cups popped popcorn
- 3 tablespoons salted butter
- 3 cups mini marshmallows
- pastel M&Ms
- pastel sprinkles

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Place popcorn in a large bowl.
2. Melt butter in a medium saucepan.
3. Add the marshmallows. Stir until the marshmallows are melted.
4. Pour $\frac{3}{4}$ of the marshmallow mixture over the popcorn and stir until the kernels are completely covered.
5. Spread the marshmallow popcorn flat onto a cookie sheet.
6. Drizzle the remaining marshmallow mixture over the popcorn on the cookie sheet.
7. Sprinkle the M&Ms and sprinkles over the popcorn.
8. Allow the popcorn to cool completely before serving.



EVERYTHING-BUT- THE-BAGEL CASSEROLE

Does your family tradition include an Easter brunch? This make-ahead casserole consists of yummy breakfast items like eggs, bagels, bacon, and cheese.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 5 everything bagels, cut into 1" cubes
- 8 ounces bacon, cooked and diced
- 2 cups shredded Gruyère cheese
- 8 ounces cream cheese, cut into 1" cubes
- 8 large eggs
- 2 cups heavy cream
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon pepper
- chives for garnish

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Grease a 13" x 9" casserole dish.
2. Layer half of the bagel cubes, half of the bacon, half of the Gruyère, and half of the cream cheese.
3. Repeat with another layer of the remaining bagel cubes, bacon, Gruyère, and cream cheese.
4. In a bowl, combine eggs, heavy cream, salt, and pepper.
5. Whisk until thoroughly combined.
6. Pour the egg mixture over the bagels.
7. Cover the casserole with foil and refrigerate for 4 hours or overnight.
8. When ready to cook, preheat the oven to 350° F.
9. Bake covered for 40 minutes.
10. Remove foil and bake for an additional 15 minutes.
11. Garnish with chives, allow to cool, and serve.

CREATE

Colors of Faith Egg



Between the egg hunts and chocolate, it can be challenging to teach younger children the real meaning of Easter. Using a creative visual can help you engage with your child about faith and Jesus. Make a Colors of Faith Egg to talk through different parts of the story of Jesus and His great love for them. As you place each color on the egg, share with your child that each represents a gift Jesus gives His children.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 2 sheets dark purple construction paper
- 1 sheet yellow construction paper
- 1 sheet pink construction paper
- 1 sheet white construction paper
- 1 sheet light green construction paper
- 1 sheet light blue construction paper
- 1 sheet light purple construction paper
- ribbon
- decorative paper edger scissors (optional)

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Prepare ahead: Draw a large oval "egg" on the dark purple construction paper. Make one egg per person. On the other sheets of construction paper, print or write the following statements on the corresponding colors.
Yellow: God's perfect light
Pink: the blood Jesus shed for us
White: the cleansing of our sins
Green: the new life we have in Jesus
Blue: the baptism that identifies us with Jesus
Light purple: the crown of life
2. Allow each child to use scissors to cut out the Easter egg shape and then each one of the colorful statements.
3. Glue each statement to the front of the dark purple Easter egg.
4. When the glue on the colored paper is dry, glue the ribbon to the back of the Easter egg. Hang the egg on a doorknob or mirror hook.

Create idea submitted by the Family Ministry Staff of New Life Church, Colorado Springs, CO



TWO TRUTHS AND A TALL TALE

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Bible

BEFORE YOU START

This game does not require much prep as it can be played anywhere. Allow each family member to think of two true statements and one false statement about himself for the first few rounds. Participants can also bookmark identity Scriptures for the final round.

TIME TO PLAY!

In this game, each family member takes a turn sharing two truthful statements and one false statement about herself. The other family members try to guess which statement is false. Play a couple of rounds. Oftentimes these statements center on things we do or don't do that define our identity. For the final round, each family member can share two truths about his identity from Scripture, and one lie from the enemy that he is struggling not to believe.

This classic icebreaker can be a fun, insightful game for families to play with one another. As the children share two true statements and one false statement about themselves, you can glimpse their hearts. What are they thinking about? What do they like about themselves? What friends might they be talking about?

REMEMBER!

As sons and daughters of the Most High God, we have been chosen and adopted through Christ. There is nothing we can do to earn His love. When the lies of the enemy come at us, we can stand firm knowing our identity: We belong to God, and He loves us unconditionally. When the game is finished, read this paraphrase of Ephesians 1:4-8 out loud together as a family: "He chose me in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love, He predestined me to be adopted as His child through Jesus Christ. In Him, I have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that He lavishes on me."



True Identity

As followers of Jesus, one of the most important things we learn is who we are in Him. Scripture tells us that we have been chosen, adopted, and redeemed regardless of our efforts (or lack thereof). These truths are our identity because of what Jesus accomplished on our behalf when He died on the cross.

John 3:16 is familiar for good reason. Slowly read this truth: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son.” God loves us so unconditionally that He sent His Son to redeem our relationship with Him. We cannot earn His love or approval. He generously loves us and calls us His own.

Let’s remember and celebrate what Jesus did for us on the cross: Jesus paid the punishment for our sins, and He bought us a new identity. This month, take some time to respond to Him together as a family.

WHAT YOU NEED

- rocks (or pictures of rocks), 1 for each family member
- permanent markers or paint

WHAT TO DO

1. Hand each family member a rock (or rock picture). Share that the rocks represent the firm foundation we have in Jesus Christ.
2. Take some time to quiet your hearts and pray. Ask the Lord to reveal to you who He says you are. He might say you are beautiful, loved, known, kind, or compassionate.
3. Write or color your word on the rock.
4. Take time as a family to share your words or pictures with each other.
5. Keep your rocks as reminders of your identity in Christ.

Worship Response idea submitted by the Family Ministry Staff of New Life Church, Colorado Springs, CO

In today's culture ...

we quickly learn our performance, appearance, and acquaintances can boost our confidence. Praise and recognition can make us feel valued and significant. In the same manner, a negative word, an unkind action, or being overlooked can make us feel insignificant and unloved. Thankfully, God's love is the foundation of our identity. His love is unconditional; it isn't based on our achievements or failures. He generously pours out His unconditional love on His children. Failure and the feeling of falling short are inevitable, and sometimes we need to be reminded of His words. You are enough. You are loved. You are made with a purpose. You are beautiful. You belong to Him.

Jesus said in **John 13:34-35**, **"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."**

As we begin to believe our identity in Christ, we can encourage others to do the same. Out of the love Christ shows us, we can show others His love. We can be a light to someone in pain by reminding him of his identity in Christ.

Grab a stack of blank notecards (or make some out of construction paper). Pray about people you know—friends, coworkers, family members, or teammates—who might need to be reminded of God's unconditional love. Write each person a note filled with truth from Scripture. Don't compliment the people on their performance or achievements. Instead, highlight God's unchanging love. Last, send or deliver the cards anonymously. This way, the "praise" and "thank you" is directed to God.

Enjoy encouraging and loving others the way Christ loves us.

Serve idea submitted by Pastor Holly Newman

BLESSING

BLESS WITH WORDS

A BLESSING CAN BE A PRAYER OF COMMISSION, A BIBLE PASSAGE, OR WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT. BLESSINGS CAN BE SPOKEN OVER A CHILD FOR THE PURPOSE OF DECLARING GOD'S PROTECTION, JOY, AND WISDOM OVER HIM.

WEEK 1

(Child's name), may you know that your heavenly Father loves you. You are His workmanship, created by Him, for Him, to do good works. As you say yes to Him daily, you can show others the goodness of God and reflect His image.

(Ephesians 2:10; Genesis 1:27)

WEEK 2

(Child's name), you are God's special creation! He delights in you and celebrates your uniqueness. May you know that He has given you the mind of Christ to help you fight the enemy's lies. You are a beloved son/daughter of the King. May you find your identity in Christ alone.

(Psalm 139:13-14; 1 Corinthians 2:16; 1 John 3:1)

WEEK 3

(Child's name), may you know that your heavenly Father loves you dearly and sent Jesus to pay the price for your sins. That was part of His plan from the very beginning—to make it possible for you to become part of His family. May you know that He chose you in Christ to be holy and without fault in His eyes. You are now completely forgiven and free.

(John 3:16; Ephesians 1:4; Romans 5:1)

WEEK 4

(Child's name), may you know your Redeemer lives! You can put your hope in Him and experience His joy and peace as you follow Him. You are a part of The Big God Story, made alive in Christ, and His Spirit flows through you. May you know that He has equipped you to tell others about Him.

(Romans 15:13; Ephesians 2:5; Acts 1:8)

by Evie Swart

Evie has been in children's ministry for more than 20 years and is the Midweek Director for Family Ministries at New Life Church, Colorado Springs, CO. She enjoys traveling with her family and eating spicy food. She is passionate about teaching God's Word and wants children and families to have life-transforming experiences with Christ.

JOURNAL

remember and celebrate

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prayer

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thankfulness and praise

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Resources & Support

CARPOOL CONVERSATIONS

get your family talking

WHEN YOU'RE IN THE CARPOOL LINE ...

Most of us spend a significant amount of time picking up and dropping off children at school, sports, and social events. The carpool routine can be a valuable time to connect with your children without interruption. They are stuck with you! Turn down the radio and set this time apart to learn more about your child and deepen your relationship.

1. What was the funniest thing that happened today at school or practice?
2. What can I do regularly to make you feel special?
3. How did you see God move in your day today?



KEEPING UP WITH YOUR KIDS

Colorado Springs family therapist, trauma specialist, and owner of North Family Counseling, Max Ziegenhagen is passionate about helping parents connect with their teens. In his presentation at the Parenting Conversations, he gave some tips on how to raise confident, secure teens.

FIVE THINGS YOUR TEENS WANT TO TELL YOU BUT WON'T

1. They need you to hold your ground. Boundaries are a good thing.
2. They are desperate for your approval, even during times of failure.
3. They want your guidance, not your expectations. If they make a mistake, give them guidance not solutions.
4. They are overwhelmed and confused. There is a constant sea of information and expectations flooding the minds of our teens.
5. They question if they are loved or if they belong. Remind your children they are always loved no matter what they do.

THE POWER OF ONE



I've been thinking a lot lately about the importance of the number one. The power of one person can inspire and motivate another into doing something bigger than either of them can accomplish individually—thus multiplying their effectiveness with a ripple effect on their families, friends, and communities. To be brave. To be kind. To be strong. To be loving. To be thoughtful. To be adventurous. To be excellent.

That is a lot of influence.

However, sometimes we find ourselves slipping into the dangerous act of thinking about the insignificance of being one. The “I’m just ...” way of thinking can sneak into our minds and spread its lies far and wide before we even realize what has happened. The enemy of our souls would like nothing more than to convince us that we don’t make a difference or can’t contribute anything of value. He seeks out any way possible to destroy confidence in our identity as daughters of God.

That is sabotage.

**FOR WE ARE GOD’S HANDIWORK,
CREATED IN CHRIST JESUS TO DO GOOD WORKS,
WHICH GOD PREPARED IN ADVANCE FOR US TO DO.
EPHESIANS 2:10 (NIV)**

The One has created you for His purposes and designed you for things that only you can accomplish. As a woman. As a mom. As a daughter of the Most High. We simply cannot afford to let the enemy convince us of our insignificance. Your identity is in the One who created you to walk in His power and authority. You have a purpose. You have influence. You have favor. You have strength.

The Lord is cheering you on, precious daughter! He sees your faithfulness to the assignment He has given you and is pleased! Some days it may seem menial. Other days, your impact might be more visible. By reminding yourself of who you are, you will more easily recognize your place in the middle of the One’s plan and walk as the one He created you to be. He sees you. He loves you. And He wants you to know ...

You are adored.

by Kelly Morgan

Kelly is the Executive Assistant to the Senior Pastor of New Life Church in Colorado Springs, CO, and creator of YouAreAdored.net. She finds joy in helping others recognize the value they bring to their roles as assistants and, more importantly, as adored daughters of the King. Married for more than 27 years, Kelly and Larry are now enjoying life as nearly empty nesters. They can often be found searching for vintage treasures at thrift stores throughout their beautiful home state.

“MY NATURAL REFLEX WAS TO BEGIN TO TELL HER EVERYTHING LOVELY AND TRUE ABOUT WHO SHE IS, BUT I RESISTED THE FIX-IT-QUICK URGE. INSTEAD, I SAT WITH HER AND EMBRACED A FEW MORE MOMENTS OF SILENCE, AIMING TO BE PRESENT WITH HER.”

HEARING JESUS *Is Hard*

Recently, my wife and I looked at each other and said, “How do we handle this? Dear God, help!” We were trying to navigate a challenging parenting situation, one of the countless scenarios that inevitably arise on the parenting journey and one that was relatively complex. Being a parent is difficult and serious work. It is also a constant reminder that we need God to be intimately involved in the process of helping us parent the kids He gave us. As I prayed for Avery, our almost-10 year old, I sensed the Spirit say, “Beautiful.” I knew God wanted Avery to understand who He created her to be and that He thought she was beautiful.

Weeks later, I was driving Avery to school early one morning when I realized something was bothering her by her demeanor. I asked her, “Avery, you seem upset. What’s going on?” She didn’t respond but looked down to avoid eye contact. I could see her little mind wrestling with whether she wanted to open up and share or continue to ride out the silence. “Dad, kids at school are making fun of me. They are calling me a tiny ant.”

My natural reflex was to begin to tell her everything lovely and true about who she is, but I resisted the fix-it-quick urge. Instead, I sat with her and embraced a few more moments of silence, aiming to be present with her. “Avery, I’m sad because you are hurting,” I said. “And I know that God is not calling you a ‘tiny ant.’ How about we ask Jesus what He might be saying to you?”

“Okay, Dad,” she said, holding back tears. I led her in a short prayer and invited God to speak to her heart and then waited in more silence. **Thirty seconds passed, and I could hear the discouragement in her voice as she said, “Hearing Jesus is hard, Dad.”**

“I know, Avery. It can be,” I responded, assuming that our time of prayer was ending in somewhat of a dead end.

A few more moments passed, and then something remarkable happened. With excitement brimming in Avery’s voice, she said, “I think Jesus just told me something ...”

“What did He say?” I asked, curiosity running wild inside me.

“He told me I’m ... beautiful.”

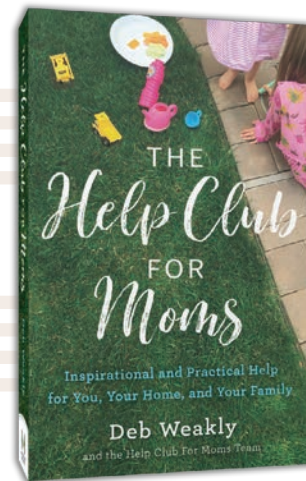


by Gabe Jenkins

Gabe has served on the pastoral staff at New Life Church, Colorado Springs, CO for the last 15 years. He has a master’s degree in Counseling from Colorado Christian University and is the author of the book *Deep Waters*. He and his wife, Ashley, are loving life in Colorado with their three kids: Avery, Sophie, and Owen.

THE GREATEST GIFT YOU CAN GIVE YOUR HUSBAND

I PRAY THAT OUT OF HIS GLORIOUS RICHES HE MAY STRENGTHEN YOU WITH POWER THROUGH HIS SPIRIT IN YOUR INNER BEING, SO THAT CHRIST MAY DWELL IN YOUR HEARTS THROUGH FAITH. AND I PRAY THAT YOU, BEING ROOTED AND ESTABLISHED IN LOVE, MAY HAVE POWER, TOGETHER WITH ALL THE LORD'S HOLY PEOPLE, TO GRASP HOW WIDE AND LONG AND HIGH AND DEEP IS THE LOVE OF CHRIST, AND TO KNOW THIS LOVE THAT SURPASSES KNOWLEDGE—THAT YOU MAY BE FILLED TO THE MEASURE OF ALL THE FULLNESS OF GOD. EPHESIANS 3:16-19 (NIV)



There have been years of emptiness in my life. Years in which I desperately searched for the approval of others, just needing to know I was good enough. What a strange thing it is, looking to other broken people to fill the cracks in our own lives. Who is whole enough to fill us in the ways we need and good enough to love us in the ways we desire?

Inside each of us is an empty vessel we long to have filled with worth. We seek to receive this value from many places. In search of our identity, we turn to relationships, accomplishments, or belief in ourselves. Often as wives, however, we hand this empty vessel to our husbands and ask them to fill it with our worth.

At this point, we become only as good as our husband's performance. When he has a bad day, we are shaken. When he struggles, our value plummets. When he fails to see us through the eyes of Christ, our identity is destroyed. But what if I told you this was never God's plan for you? If you have placed the vessel of your worth anywhere but securely with your loving Savior, you have placed it in the wrong hands. When you attempt to gain your worth from your husband, you become selfish, always needing something from him, preoccupied with your longings and how he isn't fulfilling them adequately. You are not able to love like Jesus or walk in the glorious freedom His love offers!

When at last I was able to see myself through the eyes of my Savior, I could hear His truth about who I am as His child and I was able to allow Him to meet my needs according to His glorious riches. Instead of allowing another imperfect human to determine my worth, I rested in the unconditional, unending love of my Creator, a love beyond anything imaginable. Sister, when you finally surrender your empty vessel to Christ and allow Him to fill you in a way only He can, you gain the freedom to love your husband the way the Lord intended. Only then can you shine the light of Jesus to him in every circumstance and be the friend, lover, and helper the Lord has made you to be. You will be able to love your husband right where he is, struggles and all, and pray for him in a powerful way! Pray Ephesians 3:16-19 over your husband. That is a love that will change everything!

Find more articles by the Help Club for Moms Team, a small group at New Life Church, in their new book *The Help Club for Moms: Inspirational and Practical Help for You, Your Home, and Your Family* available on Amazon and at Barnes & Noble bookstores.

by Deb Weakly

Deb and her husband, Randy, have been married for 28 years and have two grown children, Christie and Jack, and one answer-to-prayer son-in-law named Alex. Deb is also Gigi to a sweet little grandbaby, Aspen! Yay! Deb created Help Club for Moms with one goal in mind: to create a community in which moms help moms to know the love of Christ. Learn more at helpclubformoms.com.

The Moments That Matter

Recently my husband and I visited our granddaughters, Haven and Mary, to celebrate Haven's fourth birthday. The girls always wake up really early when we visit because they know that with the rising of the sun comes a special tradition we have named "Donut Date with Bella and Scout." My husband, George (Scout), and I (Bella) love to take the girls on a date to our favorite donut spot called Peace, Love, and Donuts.

On the morning of our donut date, I woke up early. Mary, still a bit sleepy, came and lay on my lap. As I was holding her and taking in the sweetness of the moment, the Lord prompted me to begin speaking words of life over her. I began to whisper to her, "You are loved. You are incredibly special. You will love the Lord with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength. You have been given spiritual gifts from a Father who adores you." As I shared these words with her, tears welled up in my eyes in recognition of this priceless moment the Lord had given just the two of us.

As I reflect back onto this encounter, I am gently reminded of the identity the Father has also powerfully spoken over me for many years. His words have literally changed the trajectory of my life, healed my heart, given me courage when I was afraid, and brought peace to times when I was in a storm. At times when I felt alone, the gentle whispers of the Lord reminded me of His forever presence. Now, sharing these same words with my 20-month-old granddaughter brought a new awareness of my role as her "Bella."

As a young mom, I struggled to understand my identity in Christ. I felt insecure and wondered if my fragile parenting techniques would really help my children thrive as adults. I thought that I often parented more defensively by making sure they didn't do anything that might harm their tender spirits. I was continually

monitoring books, television shows, or toys that might somehow draw them away from the Lord. Protecting children from bad influences serves a purpose. However, it doesn't fully reveal the truth that God is more powerful than evil, and His love and acceptance can overcome our greatest failures. As I grew spiritually and emotionally, my parenting began to evolve along with my understanding of identity through the lens of Christ. I began to parent differently by intentionally sharing words of life with my children as I guided their paths.

As a new grandparent, I realize the gift of my years of knowing Christ and having His words spoken over my life; now is my time to lavish the same words over my precious granddaughter.

Many times we underestimate the power of our words and our influence in the lives of our children and our grandchildren. Grandparenting is a beautiful way to be an intentional source of grace and wisdom for both our children and our grandchildren.

By capturing these moments, we can bless our grandchildren by pointing them to Jesus, the author and finisher of their faith.

by Stephanie Henderson

Stephanie Henderson, a native of New Orleans, LA, serves as a Senior Executive Pastor of Women, Media, and Communications at New Life Church in Colorado Springs, CO. She is the author of Unforgettable: God's Relentless Heart for His Daughters and Her Heart Is Torn. Stephanie has more than 35 years of church ministry and leadership experience in worship, women's ministry, communications, and executive leadership. Her passion is building and strategizing teams to comprise a healthy church. In her free time, Stephanie enjoys spending time with her family, decorating, and cooking Louisiana cuisine.

TOUGH TOPICS

FAMILY *Care*

We know that the body of Christ, the church, is designed to be a landing place in times of crisis and diverse need ... but how?

Woven into each of our stories are difficult seasons often followed by hope and healing. Maybe you wrestled with your own mental health and found that Jesus was right there in the fight with you. Perhaps your son walked away from his faith and you were left thinking, "How did I go wrong as his father?" and yet discovered how to love him well. Maybe your daughter has become transgender and you have discovered the gift of simply being her mom.

There is nothing more life-giving than being surrounded by those who have walked the same path. Someone to say, "Me too." Someone to listen. Someone to make you a hot meal. This is church.

Family Care exists to provide touch points for New Life Church members to get connected in their time of need. Mental health, parenting, marriage, sexual identity, and specialized needs are only a few of those touch points. If you are in one of those difficult seasons or would like to walk alongside someone who is, please contact us at familycare@newlifechurch.org. *What is your story? Who needs to hear it?*



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STUDENT ID

FINDING

TREASURE

It was third and five, we were on our opponent's 40-yard line, and time ticked away in the third quarter. Before the play began, I knew the ball was coming to me, and I was ready. After the snap I made my move. Not a second later the ball was in the air and so was I ... the pass fell incomplete. It was fourth down and the drive was over and so was my career. I had torn my ACL.

Sitting on the sideline, I watched as the clock counted down: five, four, three, two, one ... my 12 years of playing football had finally concluded. For the majority of my life, I had strapped on the pads. The game consumed me both in and out of season, and, of course, there had always been another season ... until there wasn't one. It was in those final moments of my career that I realized how much of my identity I had placed in a game that was now and forever coming to an end. Football had been my treasure and Christ had often been pushed to the sideline.

Athletes, one day you will face this moment. Regardless of whether it is in peewee or competitive sports, you will face coming to terms with the end of a significant aspect of your life. No longer considered a player, you will be relegated to the role of observer. This transition can be difficult. In **Matthew 6:21, Jesus tells us, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."** **Jesus also states in Matthew 13:45-46 that when we find a treasure, we are to sell all we have to acquire it. These passages in God's Playbook guide us toward what is ultimately valuable. Jesus is our treasure.**

Success on the field, trophies on the shelf, and accolades found in the paper concerning your athletic prowess are all items to be sold, not treasure to be had. It is easy to make a choice to chase that which is fleeting, but in the end, when the clock hits triple zero on your playing days, all you will be left with is a desire for more of what you can no longer have. Thankfully, the real treasure we should be seeking is eternal, and He outlives your time on the field.

by Kyle Windebank

Kyle is a Colorado native. He attended Pine Creek High School where he played football and ran track. He went on to play football for Taylor University. Kyle married Mary Grace Fox and lives in Colorado Springs. Kyle is a lover of the outdoors and is active in the mountains year-round fishing, hunting, and skiing. Kyle currently owns and operates a small construction company in town.

ASK OUR PASTORS

What are some healthy spiritual rhythms to establish for families with young kids?

READING AND DISCUSSING THE BIBLE TOGETHER AS A FAMILY ...

Dwelling in God's presence together as a family (i.e., learning to pray together in a way that isn't purely request-driven but is punctuated by thanksgiving, adoration, and times of silence, and other spiritual disciplines).

BLESSING YOUR KIDS TOGETHER BEFORE BED ...

Taking time for each of your kids—special breakfasts, lunches, and dinners to bless and encourage each one. Intentionally listen about how life is going and laugh or play often.

Answer from Pastor Andrew Arndt

What do you do if your child has a sports game on Sunday mornings during church?

Some people will think I'm being self-serving here because I lead the congregation, but New Life Friday Night has provided a great option for many families who have sports commitments on Sundays. My own children are in club soccer and basketball, so we have occasional games on Sundays. It's helped us to have options both on Friday nights and Sunday mornings. This is a part of the beauty of the multi-congregational model we have at New Life Church!

Answer from Pastor Daniel Grothe



COMMENTS TO OUR FAMILIES

Recently, I participated in an online class with a Dallas Seminary professor who teaches classes on Family Ministry in the church. In a session, the professor stated that every Bible-believing parent has the desire to spiritually lead his/her child. However, parents lack time in their busy schedules and the knowledge of exactly how to disciple. Even though parents want to spiritually disciple their children, they tend to disengage from this role because of time and resources. We want to help you disciple your child through *HomeFront* magazine by giving you a resource that can encourage discussion and help you to relationally connect without requiring too much time for planning. Remember, your time together doesn't have to be perfect. Just start small, do something, and stay consistent. We want to challenge you to commit to a family time at least once a week for the entire month of March and April. You will be amazed at the memories, laughter, questions, and deeper connections that come from consistently setting aside this time.

UPCOMING EVENTS

DON'T MISS OUT

March

4th — First Wednesday

11th — Fourth- and Fifth-Grade Hangout

13th–14th — Junior High Retreat Experience

14th — Family Care: Critical Conversations (9:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.)

15th — Child Dedication Class

19th — Family Night

25th — Parenting Conversations

April

1st — First Wednesday

5th — Child Dedications (both services)

10th — Good Friday (children's ministry available at the 6:00 p.m. service for babies to five years old)

12th — Easter Service (8:00 a.m., 10:00 a.m., and 12:00 p.m.)

19th — Child Dedication Class

Serve as a Family

As parents, it can be challenging to find opportunities to serve as a family, especially with younger kids. While specific seasons such as Thanksgiving and Christmas have several options to serve, it can be more difficult in April. Guess what? The Outreach Department has a few great opportunities to serve as a family.

April 4th — The Outreach Department is hosting a Rodeo Party for the elderly at New Life Church in the Activity Center. Volunteers are needed from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. to serve food and assist with games. Families can help in one area together or split up between stations.

April 25th — Every last Saturday of the month, the Outreach Department joins A New Community to minister and feed the homeless. For 45 minutes, families can pass out food, water, toiletries, and other goodies. Additional information can be found at facebook.com/events/601135740722646/ or by emailing mmerwe@newlifechurch.org.

Anytime — Families can visit the elderly in one of the many homes the Outreach Department partners with throughout the year. Children can have conversations with the elderly, pass out homemade cards, play a game of UNO, or read a book. If your schedule is limited, this is a great flexible option that will bring joy to the elderly.

If you are not local to Colorado Springs, check for service options at your local food bank or a nursing home.



NewLifeChurch

JUNIOR HIGH

RETREAT

EXPERIENCE

A **Retreat Experience** is for Junior High Students, 6th-8th grade, to encounter the Lord in the a deeper way, while breathing in the mountain air and growing in community. Join us at the church Friday night, then at the retreat center the following Saturday. Come be refreshed in His presence.

WHO:
6TH-8TH GRADE

COST:
EARLY BIRD - \$75
*ENDS MARCH 1ST
REGULAR - \$85

MARCH 13/14
*NOT AN OVERNIGHT RETREAT