

HomeFront

a spiritual parenting resource



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."



HomeFront

How to Use

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

Our Mission

INSPIRE

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

EQUIP

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

SUPPORT

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



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A NOTE FROM MICHELLE



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

The environment of **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.

 @TruInspiration

EDITOR'S NOTE



Cristi Thomas

In the beginning, God created. He made the earth and filled it with all things beautiful. Trees, birds, flowers, animals of the land & sea, and people. Man and woman, He created them, in His image. When God had finished, He looked at all He had created and said it was good.

The people God had created were given the responsibility to care for the earth He had created along with everyone and everything in it. Soon, the people made the decision to disobey God, and sin entered the world. But God is good. **He had a plan to redeem mankind to Himself through the Promised Savior.** With the same grace and provision, God has equipped us to share this good news with the world.

Sometimes the idea of creating a family night can seem overwhelming. **Family night is just a time that is set aside to be together and connect with one another.** It can be as simple as sharing a meal together on the same day each week. You may choose to build on this time by having everyone gather early the following week and prepare the meal together. Check out the Family Time Recipes in this issue for ideas. Then at dinner, say a blessing to each person before the end of the meal. If blessings are a new practice in your family, no worries, we've got you. **There are four blessings each month for this issue that can help you get started.**

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

LET'S BE SOCIAL



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@homefrontsp

Discipleship Steps at New Life Church

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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DID you KNOW

It is our prayer that homes and churches would create environments for children to live in so their faith will grow in a community of common language and practice. To learn more about creating environments that can ignite a transforming faith in your family, we suggest you read:



*SPIRITUAL PARENTING:
An Awakening for Today's Families*

BY MICHELLE ANTHONY

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10 ENVIRONMENTS

The order of the 10 Environments listed coincides with the monthly distribution of this resource.

1 STORYTELLING

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

The power of The Big God Story impacts our lives by giving us an accurate and awe-inspiring perspective into how God has been moving throughout history. It is the story of redemption, salvation, and hope and tells how I have been grafted into it by grace. It further compels us to see how God is using every person's life and is creating a unique story that deserves to be told for God's glory.

2 IDENTITY

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

This environment highlights who we are in Christ. According to Ephesians 1, we have been chosen, adopted, redeemed, sealed, and given an inheritance in Christ ... all of which we did nothing to earn. This conviction allows children to stand firm against the destructive counter-identities the world will offer.

3 FAITH COMMUNITY

"God's family cares for each other and worships God together."

God designed us to live in community and to experience Him in ways that can only happen in proximity to one another. The faith community serves to create an environment to equip and disciple parents, to celebrate God's faithfulness, and to bring a richness of worship through tradition and rituals, which offer children an identity. Our love for each other reflects the love we have received from God.

4 SERVING

"Asks the question, 'What needs to be done?'"

This posture of the heart asks the question, "What needs to be done?" It allows the Holy Spirit to cultivate a sensitivity to others and focuses on a cause bigger than one individual life. It helps fulfill the mandate that as Christ-followers we are to view our lives as living sacrifices that we generously give away!

5 OUT OF THE COMFORT ZONE

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

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

6 RESPONSIBILITY

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

This environment captures the ability to take ownership for one's life, gifts, and resources before God. A child must be challenged to take responsibility for his or her brothers and sisters in Christ, as well as for those who are spiritually lost. Our hope is that the Holy Spirit will use this environment to allow each child to understand that God has entrusted His world to us.

7 COURSE CORRECTION

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

This environment flows out of Hebrews 12:11-13 and is the direct opposite of punishment. Instead, biblical discipline for a child encompasses a season of pain, the building up in love, and a vision of a corrected path for the individual with the purpose of healing at its core.

8 LOVE & RESPECT

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

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

9 KNOWING

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

Nothing could be more important than knowing and being known by God. We live in a world that denies absolute truth, and yet God's Word offers just that. As we create an environment that upholds and displays God's truth, we give children a foundation based on knowing God, knowing His Word, and a relationship with Him through Christ. God is holy, mighty, and awesome, and yet He has chosen to make Himself known to us!

10 MODELING

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

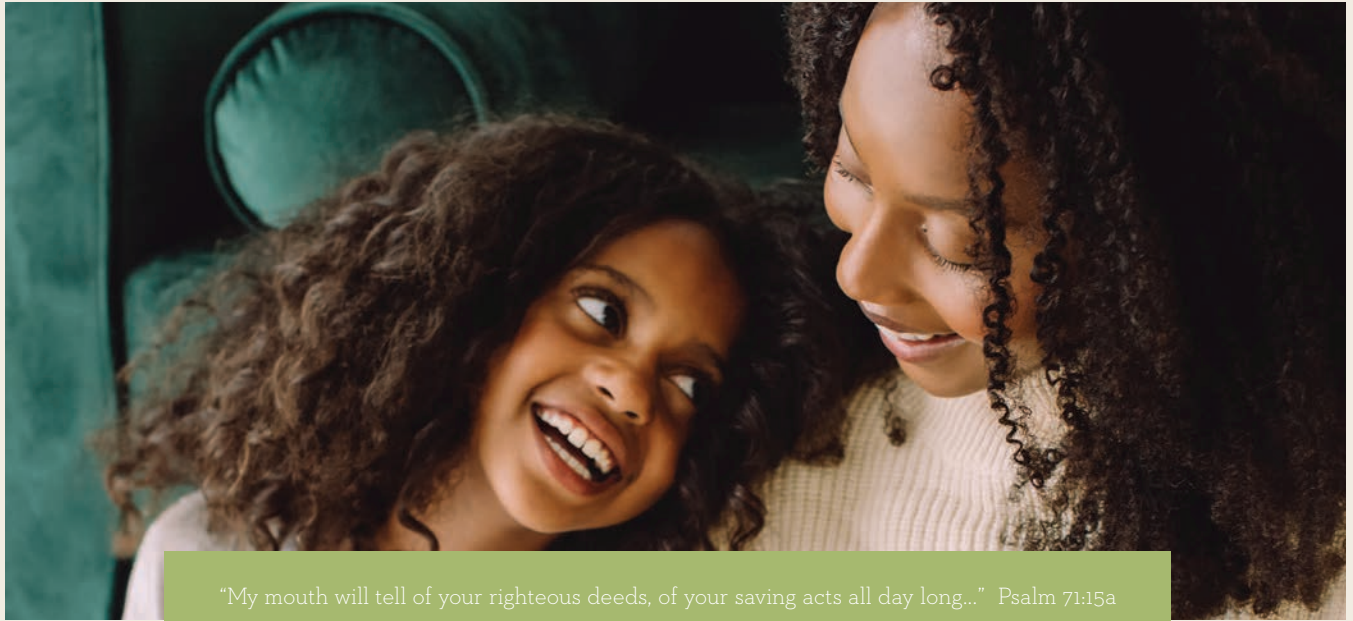
Biblical content needs a practical living expression in order for it to be spiritually impacting. This environment serves as a hands-on example of what it means for children to put their faith into action. Modeling puts flesh on faith and reminds us that others are watching to see if we live what we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



*“My mouth will tell
OF YOUR
RIGHTEOUS
DEEDS,
of your saving acts
all day long...”*

Psalm 71:15a

BLESSING



"My mouth will tell of your righteous deeds, of your saving acts all day long..." Psalm 71:15a

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

Week One

(Child's name), may you see the salvation of the Lord in every aspect of your life. May you know that Jesus came to seek and save the lost. May you walk in a spirit of unity as you tell the story of your salvation and the goodness of God.

(ISAIAH 40:3-5, LUKE 19:10, PSALM 145:9)

Week Two

(Child's name), may you know that you have been called into relationship with your Heavenly Father. He sees you and knows your name. He has chosen you to belong to Him. May you trust in the Lord and follow Him. He is with you always.

(JOHN 15:18-19, MATTHEW 28:19-20)

Week Three

(Child's name), may you always walk with the Lord and delight in His word. May you know that He is kind and compassionate. He gives good gifts. May you believe that He is the Savior of the world and the restorer of your heart.

(PSALM 1:2-3, MATTHEW 11:28-30, JOHN 4:42)

Week Four

(Child's name), may you know that God loves you and gives you grace. He is a good father who strengthens, heals and binds up His children. He is the healing of your heart, mind, body and soul. May you always run to Him and praise His holy name.

(PSALM 147:3, JOHN 1:16, ISAIAH 41:10, LUKE 17:18)

Week One

STORYTELLING

● GOD STATEMENT

Jesus Is Obedient to the Father

● SCRIPTURE

Matthew 3:13-17

Everyone loves a “debut-type” moment—a moment where we can reveal something amazing, or someone can reveal something amazing to us. These are the moments that cause us to pause and pay close attention to what is happening. These are moments like when a bride is about to walk down the aisle, or a child is about to be born. We pay close attention because we know something special is about to happen. The baptism of Jesus is one of these moments in Scripture. A moment where we are to pay close attention because our Heavenly Father doesn't want us to miss it!

READ

Matthew 3:13-17

DISCUSS

- Why do you think Jesus needed to be baptized? What does baptism represent?
- What does this passage reveal about God's heart toward Jesus His son?
- As a follower of Jesus, in what ways does this passage reveal God's heart toward you?

PRAY

Heavenly Father, we thank You that You allow us to pause and pay close attention to special moments. We thank You that You have revealed Your heart toward us in the person of Jesus Christ. Would You help us remember to walk in that truth day by day and to press on in faith, trusting and believing that You are for us and not against us.

Week Two

STORYTELLING

● GOD STATEMENT

Jesus Invites

● SCRIPTURE

Luke 5:5-11

Everyone loves being invited to events. Whether it's a birthday party, vacation with friends or family, or simply going out to lunch, it's nice to be invited. An invitation has its own way of saying “You are wanted!” Jesus is in the business of inviting people to do things with Him. He enjoys having His followers participate with Him in the work He is doing in the world. His invitation is constant and has a unique way of changing people's lives.

READ

Luke 5:5-11

DISCUSS

- What does this passage of Scripture tell you about the power and authority of Jesus?
- Do you think Jesus desires to invite you into the work that He is doing in the world? Why or why not?
- In what ways can you, as a family, respond to the invitation of Jesus today?

PRAY

Heavenly Father, we thank You that You delight in inviting us to be with You. We thank You that You have not forgotten us and that You have chosen not to ignore us. Would You help us say yes to all that You are inviting us into with You. Would You give us faith to trust You and strength to follow You one day at a time.

In Jesus's day, the Jewish people were passionate about maintaining pure racial lines because they saw this as the main reason God had allowed them to be taken from their land into exile. This meant they did not approve of intermarrying with other races and followed strict rules to prevent such events from taking place. When traveling between Judah to Galilee, a direct route was not taken so they could avoid any contact between the people known as the Samaritans.

In John 4, we find Jesus taking what was a tightly held belief of the Jews and turning it on its head. Jesus was inviting anyone and everyone to be a part of His Kingdom. He did not take this indirect route as was customary. Instead, Scripture tells us, "He had to go through Samaria." (John 4:4)

READ

John 4:1-12

DISCUSS

- What would it be like have Jesus tell you everything you have ever done?
- What does Jesus mean by "living water?"
- How does it make you feel to know Jesus knows everything?

PRAY

God, we thank You that You invite us all to be a part of Your story, despite the things we have done that dishonor You. May You help us extend this love and grace to those around us who do not know You. Give us opportunities to share Your love so others can accept your invitation into new life. Amen.

Week Three STORYTELLING

● GOD STATEMENT

Jesus Is the Living Water

● SCRIPTURE

John 4:1-12

(Woman at the Well)

In biblical times, it was believed leprosy was a personal plague rather than a disease. According to Old Testament Levitical law, all who suffered from leprosy or other skin diseases were considered unclean. Because of this, they were isolated from their community and were unable to worship God in the temple. In Luke 17, Jesus responds to the cry of ten lepers with mercy and compassion.

READ

Luke 17:11-19

DISCUSS

- What do you think the men thought when they saw they were healed?
- Why would only one man come back to worship Jesus?
- How has God shown you His mercy, and how can you show mercy to others?

PRAY

Jesus, we thank You for mercy. May we always remember the ways in which You have shown mercy to us, so we are quick to respond the same to others. Empower us to see others the way You see them and give us the courage to invite them in instead of pushing them away. Amen.

Week Four STORYTELLING

● GOD STATEMENT

Jesus is Merciful

● SCRIPTURE

Luke 17:11-19 (Jesus Heals 10 Men with Leprosy)



Instant Pot White Chicken Chili

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 2-3 chicken breasts or tenderloins
- 15 oz. can black beans (drained and rinsed)
- 15 oz. can white cannellini beans (drained)
- 15 oz. can fire-roasted corn with juice
- 10 oz. can Rotel diced tomatoes with green chilis (with their juice)
- 1/2 c. chicken broth or stock
- 1 1/2 tsp. chili powder, or to taste
- 1 1/2 tsp. cumin powder
- Half packet of ranch dressing mix (0.4 oz)
- 8 oz. package cream cheese, cut into 6 pieces

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Place the ingredients into your instant pot bowl in this order: chicken, beans, corn with juice, tomatoes with juice, and cup chicken broth.
2. Add chili powder, cumin, and ranch packet. Stir everything to combine. Be sure to get some of the juice under the chicken to keep it from burning.
3. Cut cream cheese into six pieces and place evenly over the top of chili. Cover and seal with lid. Switch the valve to the "sealing" position and cook for 20 min on manual high pressure. Once done, let it naturally depressurize for 10 min before releasing steam from the vent. Be careful not to burn yourself.
4. Shred the chicken and add it back to the pot. Stir everything together in the pot until the cream cheese is melted. Serve garnished with avocado or cilantro if desired.

by Shayleen Smith, Director of Family Ministry, NLC East

Grandma's German Chocolate Pie

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 1/3 c. coconut flakes
- 1/3 c. chopped pecans
- 1/3 c. firmly packed brown sugar
- 1/3 c. butter
- 1 (9") pie shell
- 1 package (6-serving size) vanilla pudding/pie filling
- 4 oz. sweet baking chocolate, broken in pieces
- 2 1/2 c. milk
- 1 (8 oz.) tub frozen whipped topping

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. In medium saucepan, heat the coconut, pecans, brown sugar, and butter until brown sugar is completely dissolved, stirring constantly.
2. Spread in pie shell. Bake at 450° F for five minutes until bubbly, then cool.
3. In a saucepan, combine all remaining ingredients except whipped topping. Bring to a full boil, stirring constantly until thickened.
4. Cool for five minutes, stirring occasionally.
5. Pour into pie shell. Cover and chill for at least four hours (or until pudding is set).
6. Garnish with whipped topping before serving.

by Debbie Guinn, Children's Pastor, RockHarbor Church



New Life Chicks

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

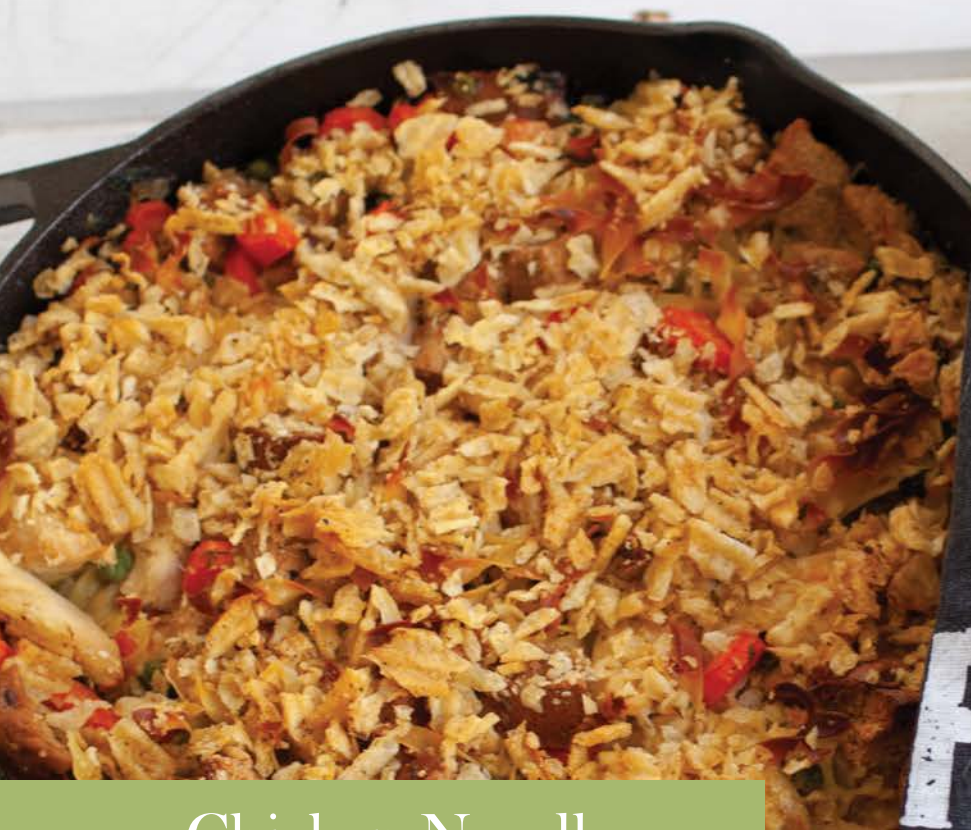
- 1 dozen eggs
- 24 capers
- 6 baby carrots
- 1/2 c. mayonnaise
- 2 tsp. white vinegar
- 2 tsp. yellow mustard
- 1/4 tsp. salt
- black pepper to taste

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Hard-boil the eggs.
No-Fail Hard-Boiling Method: Place the eggs in a single layer at the bottom of a large saucepan. Cover with at least one inch of cold water. Bring to a simmer over low heat and cook for one minute. Cover with a lid, turn off the heat, and allow the eggs to sit in the hot water for 15 minutes. Then pour out the warm water and cover the eggs with cold water. This will chill the eggs and make them easier to peel.
2. Cut a thin slice from the bottom of each egg so it sits flat. Cut off the top third of each egg.
3. Carefully remove the egg yolks and place them in a small bowl; mash with a fork. Add the mayonnaise, mustard, vinegar, salt and pepper; stir until blended well.
4. Spoon mixture into the egg white bottoms; replace tops.
5. Cut 24 feet and 12 beaks from the baby carrots.
6. Gently press the capers into the filling for eyes; add beaks.
7. Place feet in front of chicks.
8. Chill until serving time.



Celebrate spring and fresh starts by making these new life chicks. Allow your children to help with each step in preparing the chicks. Enjoy!



Chicken Noodle Casserole

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 1/2 yellow onion, chopped
- kosher salt and pepper
- 4 tablespoons salted butter
- 2 cloves garlic, chopped
- 3 carrots, chopped
- 1 cup frozen peas
- 2 tablespoons fresh thyme leaves
- 1/2 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1 tablespoon all-purpose flour
- 3 1/2 cups low-sodium chicken broth
- 1 cup whole milk
- 1/4 cup fresh parsley, roughly chopped
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 3 cups cubed whole-grain bread
- 2 cups uncooked egg noodles
- 1 1/2 cups cooked shredded or cubed chicken
- 1 cup crushed potato chips (crispy kettle chips work best)

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Preheat the oven to 375° F. Lightly coat a 9" x 13" baking dish or large round baker.
2. Add the olive oil to a large skillet set over medium heat. When the oil shimmers, add the onion and cook until softened and slightly caramelized, about 5 minutes. Season with salt and pepper. Add the butter, carrots, peas, and garlic, and continue to cook for another 5 minutes. Stir in the thyme and cayenne.
3. Sprinkle the flour over the veggies and cook stirring to incorporate for another minute.
4. Slowly pour in the chicken broth and milk, season with salt and pepper. Bring the sauce to a low boil and then reduce the heat to medium. Simmer for 5 minutes or until the sauce has thickened.
5. Remove from heat and stir in the parsley. Let cool until it is no longer hot to touch, then stir in the eggs.
6. Add the cubed bread, noodles, and chicken; toss to combine. Transfer the mixture to the prepared baking dish. Top evenly with potato chips.
7. Bake for 35-45 minutes or until the filling is bubbling and the top is golden. Let sit for 5 minutes before serving.



God Saves

Saint Patrick, as he is now known, grew up in Wales, a country in the United Kingdom, in the 400s A.D. At the time, it was called Great Britain and was part of the great Roman Empire—the same Roman Empire that ruled when Jesus was born. It was common for the Irish king to send warriors to kidnap teenagers for their slave trade. When Patrick was 16, he was one of them. He was taken to Ireland by ship. Patrick was put to work herding sheep for a chieftain (leader of the town) in Northern Ireland.

Out in the fields, alone with his sheep, Patrick met Jesus. He grew in his faith as he communed with Jesus, which means he talked to Jesus, and Jesus talked to him. After six years of being a slave, God told Patrick it was time for him to go home. Patrick walked 200 miles to the shore because he would be traveling by ship. He persuaded the captain of a ship to take him home, and he was reunited with his family. How happy he must have been! Patrick studied Christianity for many years. After a while, God spoke to him again. **God wanted Patrick to go back to Ireland as a missionary to teach the Irish people about Jesus.** His parents begged him not to leave, but God gave Patrick a love for the Irish people. He learned to speak the language, and he learned how the Irish people lived and returned to Ireland.

Patrick used the shamrock to teach about the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Patrick lived in Ireland for the rest of his life introducing many people to Jesus, and baptizing them in Jesus' name.

Psalm 71:15 says, “My mouth will tell of Your righteous deeds, of Your saving acts all day long....”

God saved Patrick from slavery. And more, He saved him by giving Patrick new life in Jesus. Patrick responded by living a life of faith as he told people of God's righteousness and saving grace. What are some other stories of how God saves? How has God saved you?

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Picture of a shamrock
- Crayons
- Blank paper

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Draw an outline of a shamrock.
2. Color your shamrock however you like.
3. Label it Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
4. On each leaf write one or two things you know about God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
5. Share the shamrock with a family member or friend. Tell them the story of God's goodness and salvation.

by Jan Massey, retired homeschool mom of nine

A RIDE FOR ROSIE

Henry Hunter had been using his wheelchair for about a year, but it was still a challenge for him.

Tight spaces or sidewalks with bumps were difficult and he didn't like how people stared at him wherever he went.

Henry was born with a condition that made his bones very weak. When he was six years old, he needed help to walk. And at the beginning of second grade, he started using a wheelchair. Henry was glad he could still go to school with his friends, but things were different now. He was still a top student in math, and he continued to be the best speller in his class. He recently started playing in a wheelchair basketball league and he loved kayaking with his dad in the lake near his home.

But he couldn't play on a soccer team or go on hikes with his Boy Scout troop. He was unable to run outside when he heard the ice cream truck coming or jump in the waves when his family went to the beach. Henry missed doing those things, and sometimes thinking about them made him sad.

"God has a special plan for you," Henry's mother told him whenever he felt blue. And he tried his best to believe it. **But could it be true? Could God really have something special planned for him? Henry wondered how he could possibly have a place in God's story from a wheelchair.**

One evening Henry's father was late getting home from work. "Henry!" his mom called as soon as Mr. Hunter opened the front door. "Your dad's here! He has a surprise for you!"

Henry pushed on the wheels of his chair and slowly came down the hallway. "What is it?" he asked, turning a corner into the living room. Suddenly Henry's eyes opened wide, and he took a deep breath. "For me?" he asked, a bright smile sweeping across his face. Mr. Hunter was holding the cutest brown and white-spotted dog Henry had ever seen.

"This is Rosie," he said. A beagle-mix, she had huge floppy ears and big black eyes, with a white face and soft honey-colored fur. "Just for you," he told his son letting Rosie gently tumble into his son's lap.

"Where did she come from?" Henry asked, giggling as Rosie licked his chin.

"Rosie is a therapy dog," Mr. Hunter said. "She used to live at the retirement home downtown, a place where older people can go to live. Rosie made them feel happy by visiting with them."

Rosie plopped down on Henry's lap, resting her chin on his thigh. She closed her eyes as Henry gently rubbed the top of her head.

"Therapy animals are trained in helping people," Mr. Hunter continued. "They are gentle animals that can make people feel better just by being around them. But they had to let Rosie go."

"Let her go?" Henry asked.

"Rosie can't see well anymore. She is almost completely blind. Even on a leash she was having trouble getting from room to room. It's very difficult for her to go anywhere."

"So, she still likes to help people," Henry looked down at the sweet dog napping in his lap. "But... she just needs a ride?" Henry asked.

Mr. Hunter smiled. "Well, yes, I suppose she does."

The next weekend Mr. Hunter drove Henry and Rosie to the retirement home downtown. Henry pushed the wheels of his chair down a wide hallway with doors on each side, while Rosie sat quietly on his lap. One by one, Henry entered each room. And one by one, Rosie's old friends laughed with joy when they saw her. Their happiness showed just how much they'd missed her.

After visiting hours were over, it was time for Henry, Rosie, and Mr. Hunter to leave. "See you next week!" a man called to them as they left.

Driving home, Henry smiled as Rosie snuggled on his lap and fell asleep, exhausted from their day. Henry closed his eyes, feeling tired himself. **"Being part of God's story can be a lot of work, can't it Rosie,"** he whispered in her ear. Suddenly Rosie jumped up and started to bark. Then she licked Henry's face and wagged her tail, making him laugh. **"And it can also be a lot of fun."**



PARENTS:

After reading the story with your children ask the following questions:

- Can God use anyone to be part of His story?
- What do we have to do to be used by God?
- What are some ways you can be used by God?



WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT

In Matthew 3:16-17, Jesus is baptized by John the Baptist.

Matthew writes, “And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.’” (ESV)

The words that God speaks about Jesus are words of affirmation and encouragement, which is something all people need, especially from God the Father. As followers of Jesus, we are children of God, meaning that God speaks the same words over us as He speaks about His Son, Jesus.

Gather your family together around the dinner table or in the living room and take a few moments to encourage and speak truth about each person at the table. As you do this, focus on one person in the family for a few minutes. **Encouragements about the person’s gifts, attitude, or special characteristics are great words of affirmation to share.** If someone is not sure what to say, they can use God’s words as an example and tell the person that they are loved, and a son or daughter of God that He is proud to call His child.

“But these are
written that **you**
may believe
that Jesus is the
Messiah, the Son
of God, and that
by believing
you may have life
in his name.”

John 20:31



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

Week One

(Child's name), may you know that faith is a gift that God the Father loves to lavish on those who ask. May you know that Jesus welcomes your honesty, your questions, and your sincerity. No matter how much or how little faith you have, rest assured that you can come to Jesus with any and every request. No question is too great or small for the one who opened blind eyes, calmed wind and waves, and rolled the stone away from the grave. May today be a day you receive new faith to trust and believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God.

Week Two

(Child's name), may you know that Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life who willingly and joyfully laid down His life that you might live in eternal relationship with God forevermore. May the suffering of Jesus remind you that there is no level of pain, rejection, or abandonment that Jesus does not understand. May the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ remind you that God gave Himself so that all who believe would never perish but receive eternal life.

Week Three

(Child's name), may you know that Jesus has risen from the dead! Because the Son of God rose up from the grave, you have hope, joy, and the promise of resurrection. May you know that Jesus overcame death and sin once and for all. May you be bold and courageous to tell the good news of the resurrection for all of your days so that many may come to know the truth that you know, "Jesus is alive."

Week Four

(Child's name), may you know that Jesus has forgiven you. Even when you make mistakes, Jesus still invites you to follow Him and to know Him. May you be reminded this morning that His grace and mercy covers a multitude of sins and mistakes. You are invited and redeemed by Jesus over and over again. May your life be spent following and loving Jesus day after day.

GOD'S WORD

Week One RESPONSIBILITY

● GOD STATEMENT

Jesus Honors Faith

● SCRIPTURE

Matthew 8:5-13
(Faith of the Centurion)

The faith that stunned Jesus did not come from the Jewish community of believers or from those the community looked upon as believers of God. The faith that stunned Jesus came from an ordinary Roman military officer who understood authority and had faith that Jesus held authority as the Son of God. He believed Jesus could speak a word and the Roman officer's servant would be healed. The Roman officer wasn't part of the religious community and wouldn't have known the "right answer" to get Jesus to come heal his servant. Instead, in great faith, he approached Jesus, knowing he was unworthy but trusting Jesus would still heal. In verses 10-13, Jesus goes on to share that many from the east and west would take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven,

while the subjects of the Kingdom would be thrown outside. This complicated verse speaks a warning to those who are part of the Church but don't have faith in God. It highlights that those of us who have become sons and daughters of the Most High God because of our faith in Him will join in His Kingdom.

Read Matthew 8:5-13

DISCUSS

- Why was Jesus amazed at the faith of the Roman officer?
- The officer believed he was unworthy to have Jesus come to his house to heal his servant, but trusted Jesus would heal him. Discuss why we sometimes feel unworthy and how Jesus can meet us in that space.
- There are some that attend church and serve at church but do not believe in Jesus. and others that do. Discuss the difference and ask each member of the family if they want to have faith in Jesus like the officer did.

PRAY

As you discuss as a family, you may sense the conversation going deeper and more personal. This could be a great time to talk about a personal relationship with Jesus and salvation found in Him. Following your family's cues and the leading of the Holy Spirit, lead in a prayer of salvation. **"Jesus, at times I feel unworthy of your love, but I believe in You as my Lord and Savior. I want to be a son/daughter of God. Please come into my life and help me trust and believe in your love. Amen."**

Week Two RESPONSIBILITY

● GOD STATEMENT

Jesus Sacrifices

● SCRIPTURE

Luke 23:1-49
(Trial and Death of Jesus)

This section of Scripture is difficult and heartbreaking to read, but it's important to know what Jesus went through on behalf of our sins. We see many different people represented in these passages: Pilate, Herod, priests and scribes, the crowds, Simon of Cyrene, the women who were following and mourning, soldiers, and the criminals on the cross. So many people were involved in this part of the story; some chose to be part of the death of Jesus and others grieved and mourned what was going on.

Read Luke 23:1-49

DISCUSS

- Why did some people want Jesus to die?
- Have you ever felt rejected and misunderstood? Jesus experienced so much pain and suffering, rejection, and misunderstanding. Why do you think Jesus chose to go through this for us?
- How does reading this make you feel? Take some time to talk to God about how you feel. Ask each member of your family if they would like to respond to what Jesus has done for them, inviting them to pray and ask Jesus to be their Lord and Savior.

PRAY

Pray as a family as you close your time together in God's word.

GOD'S WORD

This week we celebrate Easter and remember He is risen! It is a time of celebration, awe, and wonder. Easter is celebrated all around the world and is a display of God's extravagant love for us. As you reflect on the Easter story as a family, take time to remember how you responded to the good news of Jesus's resurrection. The passage in Luke details a few different responses from the disciples.

The women who went to the tomb saw a miraculous sight where the stone was rolled away. Needless to say, they were surprised! They remembered what Jesus said and hurried to tell the other disciples what they had seen. The men couldn't believe what they were hearing. Peter expressed hope and faith by running to the tomb. Their reaction is the same reaction many of us have today when we hear about Jesus. Some are uncertain, some don't believe, and some run toward the good news just as Peter did. Jesus died and resurrected for all. Because He was resurrected, all goodness, power, hope, peace, and every good thing God promises is available to us. We can celebrate that He is risen indeed!

Read Luke 24:1-12

DISCUSS

- Why is Easter important to you? Thank Jesus for His sacrifice and the good news of His resurrection.
- The women at the tomb had to "remember the words" Jesus spoke about dying and being raised again. Reflect on a time when God promised something, and it happened for you. How did you feel?
- The disciples weren't sure whether to believe the women, but Peter ran to the tomb. Describe a time where you expressed faith even when it made sense to doubt.

PRAY

Jesus, thank You for Your sacrifice and for the cross. We are delighted You gave us Your promises and are true to Your word. God, we ask that You fill our hearts with hope and faith because of the good news that Jesus died and was raised again. Give us joy because of this wonderful truth. Amen.

This week your family have the opportunity to discuss a wonderful passage of Scripture in the book of John which takes place after Jesus is resurrected. Peter was heartbroken after the death of Jesus and his denial of Him. He hadn't yet seen Jesus after He was resurrected, so with a broken heart and uncertain future, Peter went back to doing what he did before—fishing. It was an unsuccessful fishing trip until Jesus showed up. In this beautiful and moving story of reconciliation and redemption, we see how Jesus invited Peter into calling and purpose once again. In this passage, we see Jesus didn't come just to restore people's bodies and push back darkness. We also see Jesus is committed to restoring souls. He helps us live in the calling He has given us. We can celebrate Jesus because of His power and mercy.

Read John 21:1-23

DISCUSS

- Recall a time when you felt restored by Jesus after you did something you were not proud of.
- Imagine Peter swimming to the shore when he saw Jesus after He was resurrected. Name two emotions that describe what you think he felt.
- Read the first account in Luke 5 of Jesus helping Peter and calling him. Compare it to the account you read in John. What is one similarity in the passage, and what is one difference? What do both accounts tell you about Jesus?

PRAY

God, thank You for the truth about Jesus and how He wants to restore us and be reconciled to us. He doesn't push us away after we mess up. He invites us back into relationship with Him. I pray we experience the reconciliation of Jesus and respond to His friendship and purpose for our lives. Amen.

Week Three RESPONSIBILITY

GOD STATEMENT

He Is Risen

SCRIPTURE

Luke 24:1-12

Week Four RESPONSIBILITY

GOD STATEMENT

Jesus Restores

SCRIPTURE

John 21:1-25

FAMILY TIME RECIPE

KIDS LOVE TO HELP IN THE KITCHEN. THE RECIPES FOR THIS MONTH ARE SIMPLE AND AN EASY WAY TO GET KIDS INVOLVED .

Kadence's Chocolate Cake

with milk chocolate frosting

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

Cake:

- Vegetable oil spray
- 1 1/2 c. sugar
- 1 1/4 c. all-purpose flour
- 1/2 tsp. baking soda
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1 1/3 c. bittersweet or semisweet chocolate chips
- 1 c. whole milk
- 3/4 c. cocoa powder
- 2/3 c. vegetable oil
- 4 large eggs
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract

Frosting:

- 1 1/3 c. milk chocolate chips
- 1/3 c. heavy cream
- 8 Tbsp. unsalted butter (let sit on counter till softened)

WHAT YOU'LL DO

Cake:

1. In medium bowl, whisk together sugar, flour, baking soda, and salt.
2. In large saucepan over low heat, combine chocolate chips, milk, and cocoa. Whisk often until chocolate chips are melted and mixture is smooth.
3. Once melted, take off heat and let cool for about 3 minutes.
4. Add oil, eggs, and vanilla to saucepan with chocolate mixture and whisk until smooth.
5. Add flour mixture and whisk until smooth.
6. Scrape batter into greased baking pan and smooth top.
7. Bake in a pre heated 350 degree oven for 30 minutes or until toothpick can easily insert into center and come out with few crumbs.
8. Once the cake is done baking place on counter to cool for about 2 hours to cool.

Frosting:

1. In large bowl, combine chocolate and cream. Melt in the microwave for 1-2 minutes stirring every 30 seconds.
2. Add softened butter to chocolate and whisk to break up large butter piece. Let sit until butter is fully melted, about 5 minutes. Whisk until completely smooth.
3. Refrigerate frosting until cooled and thickened, about 1 hour.
4. Using a mixer beat frosting on medium-high speed until frosting is light and fluffy.
5. Spread frosting over cooled cake.
6. Serve with love.

by Shannon Baer, Director of Events and Operations Family Ministries, NLC North

FAMILY TIME RECIPE



Baking is one of my favorite hobbies. One thing I LOVE about this recipe is that it is quick and easy. Mom almost always has all the ingredients just laying around the house. A big bonus is the cake stays moist for DAYS!! -- Kadence Baer



Pizza Sliders

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 1 package Kings Hawaiian rolls
- 1 c. pizza sauce
- 1 c. shredded mozzarella cheese
- 1 package pepperoni (Or any filling you like)
- 2 Tbsp. melted butter
- Crushed garlic
- Italian seasoning

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

1. Preheat your oven to 350°.
2. Cut slider rolls in half. Place the bottom half in a baking dish.
3. Layer the pepperoni or any topping of your choosing on the cut side of the rolls.
4. Spread pizza sauce on the cut side of the rolls.
5. Cover with mozzarella cheese.
6. Place the top half of the rolls on the cheese cut side down.
7. Melt your butter and mix with crushed garlic and Italian seasoning.
8. Brush the mixture evenly on the tops buns.
9. Place in the oven for 20 minutes.

Sheet Pan Sesame Chicken

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 1 lb. boneless chicken breast cut into 1-inch pieces
- 2 c. of chopped broccoli
- 2 medium red bell peppers; cut into chunks
- 1 c. snap peas
- Rice
- Optional toppings: Sesame seeds and green onions

For the sauce:

- 1/4 c. soy sauce
- 1 Tbsp. Sweet Chili Sauce
- 2 Tbsp. honey
- 2 cloves garlic
- 1 tsp. fresh ginger

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

1. Preheat oven to 400°
2. Using a small saucepan, over medium heat combine soy sauce, sweet chili, honey, garlic, and ginger. Bring to a boil. Once boiling, turn heat down to simmer allowing the sauce to thicken; whisk occasionally.
3. Spray your sheet pan with cooking spray then spread chicken and chopped veggies. Season with salt and pepper.
4. Drizzle half the sauce over the chicken and veggies. Toss to combine.
5. Cook in oven for 20 minutes. Toss halfway through.
6. Pour remaining sauce over the top. Sprinkle any topping you choose on top.



Cheesy Spaghetti

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 1 lb. ground beef
- 1 jar spaghetti sauce (26 oz.)
- 12 oz. spaghetti
- 1 tsp. Italian seasoning
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 8 oz. package cream cheese
- 1/2 c. mozzarella cheese

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

1. Preheat your oven to 350°
2. Brown ground beef in a skillet until cooked all the way through; drain the fat.
3. Add spaghetti sauce to meat and stir.
4. Cook pasta according to the package; drain when done.
5. While pasta cooks, melt cream cheese in microwave. Add minced garlic and Italian seasoning.
6. Combine pasta and cream cheese. Stir until thoroughly combined.
7. Lightly grease a 9'x13' pan. Put spaghetti in the bottom of the pan. Top with the meat sauce. Sprinkle mozzarella cheese on top.
8. Bake in a preheated 350° oven for 30 minutes.



PRAYING HANDS

Spring is my favorite season. I love the change of weather, the fresh bursts of color, and the sound of birds chirping. It is a time of refreshment and new life. This makes it the perfect season to remember and celebrate Jesus's death and resurrection. Jesus died so that we can have new life in Him. When we share what Jesus has done for us, we help to bring new life to others. Jesus loves everyone in the world, and He wants them to know!

Who can you tell about Jesus's resurrection? Consider creating a "praying hands" card to give to the people in your life who may need to know or be reminded of what Jesus has done for them. Take time to think and pray about who you can bless with this encouraging gift.

PRAYER:

May you know that Jesus makes all things new. May you overflow with God's deep love for you so that you can't help but share His life with others.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- skin-colored construction paper
- scissors
- markers
- glitter or other craft decorations

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Fold a piece of construction paper in half.
2. Place your child's left hand next to the fold, with fingers together, and trace around it.
3. Without cutting the fold, cut around the rest of the hand. This should leave you with a praying hands card that can open and close.
4. On the inside of the card, write a note or a prayer reminding others of Jesus's love for them.
5. Decorate the front and inside.
6. Give your card to someone you care about.

by Annie Cribbs, Care Ministries Event and Operations Coordinator

KINGDOM

Kindness



READ LUKE 10:30-37.

The story of the Good Samaritan reveals something significant about the nature of Christ, the kingdom of God, and the role we play in that kingdom.

In verses 31-33, we are introduced to three people: a priest, a Levite, and a Samaritan. When we meet these men, their lives look a lot like yours and mine do: busy. They are running errands and handling everyday tasks when suddenly they each witness a tragedy. They see a man who has been badly beaten and left for dead on the side of the road.

Both the priest and the Levite walk past the hurting man, paying no attention to his pain and suffering, but the Samaritan chooses to respond differently. He bandages the man's wounds, gives him a ride to a safe place, and even temporarily covers his living expenses. And he did this for a Jewish man whom his culture deemed unworthy of his help. This, my friends, is kingdom kindness—an active expression of the love, compassion, and mercy of Christ. This is a glimpse of what the kingdom of heaven looks like. It pauses to identify pain and does something about it.

Luke 10 shows us that the ways of the kingdom look different than the ways of the world. As children of God, we have been entrusted with the responsibility to demonstrate kingdom kindness as we care for humanity's pain. Here are three things the Samaritan teaches us about kingdom kindness. Read these together, then scan the QR code on this page to access a Kindness Calendar. This resource is full of fun, creative ways your family can show love, compassion, and mercy to others.

1. The Samaritan chose compassion over culture. Even though it was not customary for Samaritans to be in fellowship with Jews, he set societal and religious preferences aside to care for a fellow human being.
2. The Samaritan chose helping over hindering. The priest and the Levite both walked away, but the Samaritan was ready and willing to take a stand. He moved his feet even when he was the first and only one to do so.
3. The Samaritan chose action over apathy. It would have been easy to look the other way and to believe that someone else would take care of the hurting man. Not only did the Samaritan choose to help the man, but he went above and beyond to ensure all of the man's needs were met.

Choosing the ways of the kingdom unlocks promises over our lives. I believe the Samaritan knew that when he put kingdom things first, all the other things he needed would be supplied (Matthew 6:33). This is how God's kingdom economy works. **As we bless and care for others, He blesses and cares for us.**



FAITH GROWN IN COMMUNITY



In Matthew 8:5-13, Jesus meets a Roman military officer who has astounding faith. This officer felt he was too unworthy for Jesus to come into his home, yet he knew that Jesus had the power to speak a single word right where he was and instantly heal the officer's servant. The officer teaches us a lot about faith. Asking God for something we think is impossible might seem foolish to others, but the Lord sees that as great faith.

Hebrews 11:1 says that "faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see." It can often feel vulnerable and scary to share the things that we hope for. But sharing with our community and family the things we are hoping to see God do in our lives is one of the greatest ways to build our faith. **As a community of believers, we are called to love one another, pray for one another, and encourage one another. What better way to do this than to walk alongside family and friends as you pray over the things you are trusting God to do?**

Gather your family or a group of close friends together around the dinner table or a cozy fireplace—wherever you feel most comfortable. Take time to go around the room and, one by one, share something that you have not seen yet, but that you are trusting in God for. Have someone write down what each person is believing and praying for. **Once everyone has shared, take time to pray for each individual and the hope that they shared.** At the end of this time, each person can walk away with one hope/prayer request that someone else shared and pray for them throughout the coming weeks.

by Lindsay Mendoza, Volunteer Leader, NLC North



¹⁴ HOW, THEN, CAN THEY CALL ON THE
ONE THEY HAVE NOT BELIEVED IN? AND
HOW CAN THEY BELIEVE IN THE ONE
OF WHOM THEY HAVE NOT HEARD?
AND HOW CAN THEY HEAR WITHOUT
SOMEONE PREACHING TO THEM?

ROMANS 10:14

THE BIG GOD STORY

THE JOURNEY OF OUR FAITH

June 26th-29th

Time: 9am-12:30pm

Who: 5 years (by October 1st) through
6th grade (NEXT school year 2023/24)

Early Bird \$55 // Regular \$65
(begins April 25th)

Where: New Life North

Got Questions? Contact families@newlifechurch.org



**Register
Here**

STUDENT CAMP

Calling all Jr. High and High Schoolers!

June 19th-22nd + June 26th-29th

This summer let's gather for a **TWO-WEEK INTENSIVE** of discipleship, development, and community. The first week we will be focusing on student development spiritually, mentally, and physically while the second week we will be **SERVING AT KIDS CAMP** participating as team leaders! Find out more by emailing students@newlifechurch.org.



NewLifeFamilies