HOW TO USE

HomeFront

Each issue highlights an environment your family can create in your home. This month looks at OUT OF THE COMFORT ZONE. Each magazine is divided into two sections: Family Time and Inspire, Equip, Support.

Family Time articles are created to equip you to engage with your children on a regular basis.

Inspire, Equip, and Support articles are parenting stories, devotions, and ideas to encourage you as you spiritually lead your household.

USE THIS GUIDE TO GET FAMILY TIME STARTED.
IT’S AS EASY AS 1, 2, 3 …

1 Start by deciding on a day and time that works well for your entire family. It can be an evening, afternoon, or morning. Just commit to building this time into your family’s natural rhythm—perhaps around a meal.

2 Look through HomeFront to see what stands out. Choose two or three experiences you would like to incorporate into your family times this month. Don’t feel burdened to complete all the activities—just do what fits your family best. This resource provides more than enough experiences to create transforming environments in your home throughout the month.

3 Remember to HAVE FUN! Strive to make each gathering unique to your own family as you enjoy spending time with God and one another.

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We believe that the Holy Spirit is God’s chosen teacher. It is He who causes spiritual growth and formation when and as He chooses. As such, we have articulated 10 distinct environments to create in your home. We desire to create spiritual space, which we refer to as an environment, in which God’s Spirit can move freely.

The environment of OUT OF THE COMFORT ZONE recognizes that God transforms us when we step out in faith. Our flesh seeks comfort, but God’s Spirit wants to try our faith in order to grow it.

As children are challenged to step out of their comfort zone from an early age, they experience a dependence on the Holy Spirit, who will equip and strengthen them beyond their natural abilities and desires. We believe this will cultivate a generation of believers who, instead of seeking comfort, seek a radical life of dying to self and following Christ.

As adults, when we’re in situations where our own resources fulfill what’s needed, we tend to rely on our own abilities. Our kids, on the other hand, don’t have nearly as many personal resources on which to fall back. Their pure faith often helps them to depend on the Holy Spirit far more readily than we do as adults.

That’s why James tells us to “consider it pure joy” (James 1:2) when we encounter trials. Joy in trials may seem like an oxymoron, but when we come to the end of our resources and our strength and we depend on the Holy Spirit, then we’re truly in a relationship with the Almighty. That’s the place where sanctification happens … and where we find true joy!

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.

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***HomeFront Subscriptions Available***

An individual issue of HomeFront can be delivered directly to your doorstep for as little as $4.16 each month. Need multiple copies per month? Order a bulk print subscription and save 20% to 35% off of the individual issue price. Simply choose your quantity—price includes shipping.

We also offer individual and bulk digital subscriptions. The bulk digital subscription is perfect for printing your own copies of HomeFront to hand out at your church or organization.

Consider gifting HomeFront to friends and family as a way to equip parents and grandparents to create fun, spiritually forming times in their homes!

Go to homefrontmag.com/store to check out all of our subscription options.

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**HomeFront magazine is a nonprofit ministry of New Life Church in Colorado Springs, CO.**

If you are passionate about this resource and the families it equips, please consider making a one-time or monthly donation to allow this ministry to continue to reach thousands of homes.

Please go to pushpay.com/pay/nlcministries and choose “HomeFront” from the Giving Type to make your tax-deductible donation. Thank you for helping HomeFront minister to families around the world.

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**A NOTE FROM MICHELLE**

The website is filled with fresh ideas and creative resources to help you spiritually parent your children.

Things you won’t want to miss:

- Parent blogs to inspire you
- Mobile-friendly format
- Lots of downloadable giveaways
- Marketplace to purchase article bundles and more!

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**OUR MISSION**

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

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

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

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**HOMEFRONTMAG.COM**

**PARTNERSHIP**

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Nothing takes me out of my comfort zone more than waiting. Give me a direction, even if it’s difficult and not my first choice, and I’ll get right on it. But make me wait? Leave me in limbo? I do NOT do well! As difficult as it is, it’s important to remember that God does not call us to comfort. It’s not that He doesn’t care; the truth is He actually cares too much to let us step out before the timing is best. So, we wait. And what does He tell us to do while we wait? Psalm 27:14 in the New Living Translation says, “Wait patiently for the LORD. Be brave and courageous. Yes, wait patiently for the LORD.” This issue of HomeFront is filled with articles and ideas that help us in the waiting—even when we’re uncomfortable.

Our WORSHIP (page 12) and CREATE (page 20) articles go hand in hand this month—writing and storing our prayers as we wait, and then displaying them to celebrate when God answers. This month’s STORYTELLING (page 18) article is written by my 10-year-old granddaughter, Grayson. She shares a simple story that relates a profound truth—God is always with us when we step out of our comfort zone!

Megan Marshman reminds parents in STUDENT ID MIDDLE SCHOOL (page 36) to lean into their relationship with God and pay attention to the moments that make them feel uncomfortable. And TOUGH TOPICS (page 44) shares three great ways to react when we feel God is silent.

Our prayer is that this issue will encourage you to wait upon the Lord—to be patient, brave, and courageous in your wait. And then, when the timing is right, to step out in faith, depending on the Holy Spirit to equip and strengthen you and your family beyond your natural abilities and desires as you seek a radical life of faith in Christ.
If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.

James 1:5
Out of the Comfort Zone

CAPTURING THE SEASON

SUMMER SILVERWARE CADDY

WHAT YOU’LL DO

1. Make sure all your cans are clean. Glue residue left from the label is okay—it won’t show.
2. Start by spray-painting the insides of the cans. Let dry between coats and apply 2 to 3 coats total.
3. Spray outside of cans a different color. Be careful not to allow this paint inside the cans.
4. If you choose to stain your wood, put on some gloves and dip an old towel into the stain. Then rub into the wood. Let stain soak in and completely dry.
5. Measure the length desired for a handle and cut the belt. Pre-drill holes and attach the strap to the top of the wood with screws and washers for better durability.
6. You can use what is left of the belt to make labels or simply write directly on the cans. Each leather label measures 2 ¼ inches in length. Write descriptions using a white paint pen or permanent marker.
7. On the side of the can with the glue residue, pre-drill holes for your screws. Widen the hole just big enough for your screw to be able to turn in smoothly. Then screw the screws in.
8. Lay the cans out evenly on the board and push gently on each screw to mark the board where you will be drilling holes for these screws. Once you’ve pre-drilled the holes you can use your screwdriver to secure the screws in place.
9. Use strong or hot glue to attach the labels. Then use a rubber band to secure them while drying.
10. Fill with silverware, flowers, or crayons and markers—then get outside and celebrate summer!

WHAT YOU’LL NEED

• wood approximatly measuring 9 1/2” x 6”, 3/4” thickness
• stain (optional)
• 2 colors of spray paint (1 for inside the cans and 1 for outside)
• leather belt (can be purchased at thrift store)
• 2 washers and 2 (3/4”) screws
• 6 (1/2”) screws
• scissors
• drill
• screwdriver
• 6 aluminum cans
• strong or hot glue
• white paint pen or permanent marker
This attractive and easy-to-make Summer Silverware Caddy can be used for all your outdoor meals this summer. But don’t just limit it to silverware— you can also fill it with markers and crayons and cover your picnic table with paper for drawing, or even fill the caddy with fresh flowers to add a bit of nature’s beauty!
Recently, our 11-year-old daughter came to us frustrated because she was locked in conflict with another girl on her swim team. Normally, she can navigate these situations, but, unable to overcome this on her own, she was particularly emotional.

We shared some ideas on how to resolve the situation, but that only seemed to make matters worse. After weeks with no breakthrough, the tipping point came during an incredible conversation about the story of Moses and how he had to confront Pharaoh—easily one of the most feared men of his time. Moses stood on the promise that as he faithfully stepped out of his comfort zone, God would give him wisdom and instruction when the time came.

It was beautiful to watch our daughter asking God for His guidance while also struggling with wanting to take matters into her own hands. She was learning how to step out in faith and listen to the voice of God at the same time. Our church has been going through the book of Luke, and sure enough, chapter 6 verse 35 spoke to our daughter: “Love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High.”

As our children grow, it may be our greatest gift to teach them how to hear the voice of God.

by Casey and Meygan Caston

Casey and Meygan are the cofounders of Marriage365, a nonprofit committed to building resources that help couples connect. They are reaching millions of couples worldwide by providing innovative tools for couples from engagement through marriage, from hurting to happy. Their most recent book, 365 Connecting Questions for Families, is a unique way for parents to engage with their kids and have deeper conversations. To learn more about these resources,

marriage365.org
What do you think the voice of God sounds like? Can you imitate it?

What do you think God says when He talks?

When was a time you felt like you heard the voice of God in your life?

Is there a situation in your life right now where you need more wisdom and understanding?

Are there any worries or fears you need to talk to God about?

How do you deal with a friend who is hurtful or in a bad mood? Is there anything you can do to cheer him or her up?

Have you ever had to do something that made you feel nervous, worried, or uncomfortable? What was it?
WORSHIP

While You Wait

I hate to wait. Turns out that in our instant-everything generation, I’m not the only one. We insist on instant internet, instant information, instant food, instant friends, and instant gratification. No wonder it has become such a struggle for us to wait on the Lord and His timing. However, the Bible is filled with places where people wait. There are tons of verses that encourage us to wait for the Lord (Lamentations 3:25; Psalm 27:14; Psalm 37:7, etc.), but waiting is actually out of our comfort zone. It is uncomfortable to wait. It is uncomfortable to be still and trust that the Lord is moving.

This month, let’s practice waiting on God together. On page 20 there are directions for creating your own Prayer Boxes. You can use these Prayer Boxes to worship while you wait. Find a time when everyone can gather together as a family. Start by sharing some of the prayers you have been lifting up before God. What are things you are still waiting on God for? They can be small prayers or huge prayers. Then have your family members write their prayers on pieces of paper and put them inside their boxes.

ASK

Why is it hard to wait?

What are the things that you are most longing for in your Prayer Box?

What are some ways we can worship God even while we wait?

Then, take some time to worship. God is worthy of our praise/awe/worship even while we are waiting. Before we have His response, we can worship Him. If your family came up with some ways to worship, try one of those. If not, consider praying together and praising God. Find a song your family loves and sing it together, have everyone write out a thank you card to God, or put on some worship music and have a dance party.

Throughout the month, find times to gather together with your Prayer Boxes. Take out the prayers inside. Are you still waiting? Have any been answered? Thank God for the places where you have seen Him work. Put any unanswered prayers back in the boxes and worship again as a family. Worship in the waiting.

by Krista Heinen

Krista is a pastor who desires to help the next generation understand its place in The Big God Story. She has her BS in elementary education from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and her MDiv from Bethel Seminary. Krista loves to preach, play board games, and spend time chatting over coffee. She and her husband, Greg, live in Wisconsin.
ANSWERED PRAYERS

Stones of Remembrance

Looking for a fun way to celebrate your answered prayers? Try making these stones of remembrance. In Joshua 3 and 4, the Israelites were able to cross the Jordan. God worked in a powerful way. After they had crossed, God instructed the Israelites to put up stones to remember what God had done for them. Like the Israelites, we can remember God with these stones. When God answers a prayer from your box simply display that prayer request on one of these stones as a way of recognizing how God has shown up.

WHAT YOU’LL NEED

- rocks (that lay flat on a surface)
- 20 gauge jewelry wire
- needle-nose pliers
- scissors or wire cutters
- acrylic paint
- paintbrushes
- Mod Podge
- marker (for wrapping wire)

WHAT YOU’LL DO

1. Start by painting the rocks using paintbrushes and acrylic paint. You may need a few coats to fully cover the rocks.

2. While you are waiting for the paint to dry, use the needle-nose pliers to wrap the end of the wire a few times around the marker. Straighten out the wire beneath the marker. Slide the marker out of the wire coil.

3. Once the paint on your rock is dry, apply a layer of Mod Podge to the rock. This will form a nice coat over the paint and keep the paint from flaking off.

4. After the Mod Podge is dry, take the wire (2”-3” below where it is already coiled) and wrap that section around the rock. Leave the 2”-3” standing straight up.

5. Cut the wire and use the needle-nose pliers to secure the end to the wrapped wire.
Out of the Comfort Zone Bucket List

After the constant onslaught of activities at the end of the school year, I’m tempted to spend the whole summer lying poolside with a good book or Netflix and chilling with the sweet, sweet air conditioner. And while I do end up spending a lot of time relaxing, we’ve always had a family tradition of creating a summer bucket list with a twist—we challenge our family to learn or experience new things. What better time to step out of our comfort zones than during the dog days of summer?

My mother started the ritual of summertime lessons during my childhood. She would sign me up for a handful of summer classes. I’ve done sculpting, sewing, line dancing, and even hula lessons! She said I was a “go-getter” and needed some extra summer stimulation. Now that I’m a mom myself, I know she just needed a break. (I was an active kiddo!) I remember getting our city’s summer parks and recreation catalog in the mail and poring over the classes with my mom. I could pick anything I wanted no matter how silly or impractical.

Picturing myself in out-of-the-box classes as an artist or chef set me up for a lifetime desire to step out and learn new things. I still get excited when the parks and rec catalog comes! Although I didn’t become an artist or a chef (my family can attest to that), I do have a better understanding of the world around me because of these unique experiences. And I often think pushing out of my comfort zone as a child has helped me become more adaptable to change as an adult.

A two-hour drawing class might not seem like much, but to a young child it could be a huge step of faith. Walking into a class of strangers to learn the hula can be a small practice of trust. Sticking with a difficult baking class can help build strength and even cultivate a love of something we’ve never thought of trying before.

Your Out of the Comfort Zone Bucket List doesn’t have to include formal classes. You can challenge your kids to cook dinner once a week or pick up a craft kit and binge on some YouTube tutorials. We are so blessed with countless resources at our fingertips with the internet and the local library. Summer is also a great time for your family to try a family service project together! This summer my sons are learning how to whittle with YouTube, one of my daughters is learning how to decorate cakes, my other daughter is taking a sewing class, and they are all learning to knit. I’m learning how to watercolor and how to care for bees.

On the next page is a short list of ideas to get your Out of the Comfort Zone Bucket List creative juices flowing.

by Kara Noel Lawson

Kara Noel is a chicken-loving, tea-drinking, fiction-reading seeker of grace who is savoring small moments everyday. Kara homeschools her four children and writes from the heart on her blog Small Things Are Big Things. You can find her speaking at moms groups about how the small things in our lives can make a big impact.
SUMMER Bucket List

• Read a book aloud as a family (*The Wingfeather Saga* is a great place to start!)
• Make goodies for your neighbors
• Ask friends and family to teach their talents (an aunt might teach you how to crochet, a cousin can teach you how to change a tire, or a grandparent can pass down a family recipe)
• Learn how to draw (we love *artforkidshub.com*)
• Identify the flowers and trees at your closest park
• Commit to doing one activity from *HomeFront* every other week during the summer
• Make Blessing Bags with your family and deliver to homeless people in your area
• Make salsa, cookies, brownies, bread ... ANYTHING from scratch
• Purchase butterfly caterpillars and wait for them to become butterflies
• Write a short play for your family to perform for the grandparents
• Grow a summer garden (June is a great time to plant your fall pumpkins)
• Learn to play an instrument (*yousician.com* is a great FREE resource)
• Serve in your children’s ministry (often substitutes are needed because of summer vacations)
• And don’t forget to look at that parks and recreation catalog!
I am not very good at waiting. Maybe I’m just impatient, or maybe I don’t always trust that God will come through on my behalf. So, when I have to wait, especially on God and His timing, I STRUGGLE. I start to doubt God’s goodness, faithfulness, and promises …

However, when I take time to reflect back on all God has done and remember His faithfulness, His unchanging character can shift my doubt to hope. Scripture is full of people who have wrestled with their ability to trust God to be faithful to keep His promises. For example, David was anointed king as a young boy but would have to wait years for the fulfillment of that promise. David would be hunted, persecuted, and forced to live in caves while he waited on the Lord. Through all of these trials, David poured out all of his heart’s laments, questions, and praises to the Lord. And the Lord provided for and sustained David until He fulfilled His promises.

Our God is a faithful God. He is always with us and working in the places we don’t see. As parents, one of the hardest things to explain is that even when we are uncomfortable and things don’t seem good, God still is. When we bring our prayers and petitions to Him and we don’t see answers, our God is still faithful.

This month’s prayer activity can be a fun way to help your kids understand the character of God, even in our times of discomfort and waiting.
IT IS GOOD TO REMEMBER

Get our free download of these verses and more to remember God’s promises.

He will always forgive you, and He redeems your life. (Psalm 103:2-5)
He will meet all of your needs for His glory. (Philippians 4:19)
He is fighting for you; you need only be still. (Exodus 14:14)

WHAT YOU’LL NEED
• God’s Promises downloaded from HFJuneGodsPromises
• mason jar or small container
• label or paint pen
• ribbon
• scissors

WHAT YOU’LL DO
1. As a family, write the words “God Promised” on a label or directly onto the mason jar or small container using a paint pen. Then tie a ribbon around the top of the container.
2. Download and cut out God’s Promises and place them in the container.
3. Take time each day to pray as a family.
4. When you find yourself out of your comfort zone and struggling to believe that God is good, or you feel that your prayers aren’t being heard, pull a promise out of the God Promised jar.
5. Look up the Scripture and read it together.
6. Spend some time reframing your prayer around that promise. For example, “I trust that God is good. He has promised to be with me always, to love me no matter what, and to work all things for good, whether I understand it or not. Because of this I can be confident that He hears my prayers and is working even when I don’t see it.”

When we can be confident in who God is and reflect on His promises, we can have hope for the future and trust that He will always be faithful.

by Amanda Visser

Amanda is the Family Ministries administrative and ministry assistant at New Life Church in Colorado Springs, CO. She enjoys running, painting, and a strong cup of coffee.
Hi, I’m Confident Courtney.

This is a story about my brother, Fearful Freddy. I don’t really like calling him that because, you see, Freddy hasn’t always been so fearful. It all started two months ago.

I was picking him up from school one day and some boys had him cornered and were talking bad smack about him. It scared him! When we got in the car I could tell he wasn’t the same. He seemed fearful for the first time and not his normal self.

I talked to our mom and dad about this, and they said, “We will talk to him.” So, they did, but it didn’t seem to help at all. Freddy, my little brother who was never afraid, became fearful of everything! Every sound. Every shadow. Every person. And even afraid in our own home!

I told Freddy he shouldn’t be afraid in our home because it is a safe place filled with happiness, hope, and the Holy Spirit. I reminded Freddy that God is with us wherever we go even when we don’t see Him or hear Him.

Then a couple of months later something amazing happened. Ring, ring! Oh, that’s my timer. “Time to go pick up Freddy from school,” I told myself. Oh no! There are those boys again—I’d like to teach them a lesson. I felt God tell me, “Courtney, I’m going to teach them a lesson. Let Freddy do this himself or he will always be afraid!”

Freddy was fearful and shaking, but he remembered what I had told him about God being with him. He walked straight up to those boys and said, “Hey, I didn’t like what you said to me a couple of months ago!” The boys looked very surprised, but they turned to him and said, “We are sorry! We weren’t thinking. Will you forgive us?”
Freddy agreed to forgive them and made them promise they wouldn’t do it again to him or anyone else. The boys all agreed with a big, “I promise!”

That night at dinner, when our parents asked Freddy about his day, he replied, “I had a great day!” I could tell at that moment he was changed! He was back to being Freddy.

Thank You, God!

Parents: This is a simple story written by a 10 year old that might be fun for your children to read to you! After reading it, talk together and ask them if they have ever had anything happen to make them fearful. Remind them that God is always with them and will give them courage to step out in faith.

by Grayson Guinn

Grayson is 10 years old. She lives in Georgetown, TX, with her dad, her little brother, and her grandma, Mimi. She loves art, playing with friends, playing tennis, and eating cheeseburgers. She knows a thing or two about being a “Confident Courtney” because she has had to overcome some difficult situations of her own, but she does so by remembering God is always with her.

Illustrated by Kathryn Swagger
Often, waiting to hear from God can take us out of our comfort zone, but remembering His faithfulness gives us hope and a reason to celebrate. These adorable Prayer Boxes go hand in hand with this month’s Worship article (page 12). As you think of things to bring before the Lord, write your prayers and petitions and keep them in this box as you wait for Him to answer. Once your prayers are answered, follow the directions from the Worship article to create Stones of Remembrance to display them. Allow these answered prayers to encourage you as you wait upon God for other requests.
WHAT YOU’LL NEED

• Prayer Cards download (found at bit.ly/HFPrayerCards)
• Verse download (found at bit.ly/HFPrayerCardVerse)
• scrapbook paper
• round corner punch
• 3 3/4” x 2 1/2” metal tin
• foam brush
• scissors or paper cutter
• decorations (buttons, more paper, ribbon, beads, stickers, etc.)
• craft glue
• Mod Podge

WHAT YOU’LL DO

1. Download, print, and gather your supplies.
2. Cut out the verse and use Mod Podge to attach it to the inside of the lid. Brush a coat of Mod Podge on the top of the lid and place the verse cutout on top of the adhesive. Once dry, brush another coat of Mod Podge over the top of the paper to seal it. Allow to fully dry.
3. Cut two panels of scrapbook paper to fit snugly on the top and bottom of the tin. You can use a rounded corner punch to give the paper a more finished look if you want.
4. Use the Mod Podge to attach one paper panel to the bottom. Brush over it with a coat of Mod Podge. Allow to fully dry.
5. Adhere the other paper panel to the top of the tin. Brush more Mod Podge on top of the paper to seal it. Allow to dry.
6. Decorate your tin.
7. Once the tin is decorated and completely dry, cut out the prayer cards and place inside.

by Debbie Guinn

“Allow these answered prayers to encourage you as you wait upon God for other requests.”
Hanging Donuts

WHAT YOU’LL NEED
- 1 round glazed or cake donut per person
- baker’s twine or ribbon
- scissors
- rope (see below to determine length)

BEFORE YOU START
Find an open space outside to hang the rope like a clothesline. The rope needs to be strung higher than the players’ heads. You may tie the rope from tree to tree, fence to tree, patio pole to patio pole, tree to someone holding the other end, etc. Get creative with the space you have! You can also have two adults (one at each end) hold the rope up high once it’s time to play. The rope should be long enough for each player to stand under with a little elbow room.

Cut a piece of the baker’s twine, string the twine through the center hole of the donut, and tie the twine off. The twine should be long enough for your children’s mouths to reach the donuts as they hang from the rope. Once all the donuts have been strung, hang them from the rope you have set up.

TIME TO PLAY!
Invite your family over to the game space. Explain to the players that they will be competing to see who can eat her donut the fastest (I’m sure they will be VERY disappointed, wink wink).

Let players know that they may not use their hands and may only use their mouths to grip, move, and chomp on the donut. Emphasize that no matter how weird or uncomfortable it may feel they must follow this rule!

The first person to finish eating his donut, without it falling off the twine, wins!

REMEMBER!
Eating hanging donuts hands-free may not be your typical go-to breakfast in the morning. However, the reward at the end of this game was sweet and delicious, no matter how uncomfortable it may have felt! This game creates an opportunity for you to talk to your children about the real ways in which they may be or have been called outside their comfort zone. In these times, it is important to lean in to our dependence on the Holy Spirit, not just for wisdom to know what to do but for the courage and boldness to act. Remind your children that existing outside of our comfort zone can be hard but is a big part of our faith. No matter how uncomfortable we may feel, we can rest knowing that our obedience is furthering the kingdom of God, even if we do not receive an immediate and tangible “donut” at the end.

by Heather DePartee
Heather worked in children’s ministry for seven years and recently earned her degree in early childhood development. She is now working on her Multiple Subject Teaching Credential and MA in teaching at Fresno Pacific University in Fresno, CA. She is in love with her husband, Adam, and all of their adorable houseplants!
Pizza on a Skewer

PREP: 20 min. COOK: 6–8 min. YIELDS: 6 servings

WHAT YOU’LL NEED

- 6 tablespoons olive oil
- 1/2 teaspoon dried oregano
- 2 cloves garlic, smashed with the side of a knife
- salt
- 1 (13.8-ounce) tube refrigerated pizza dough
- 3/4 cup shredded mozzarella cheese
- 2 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 cup warm marinara sauce
- skewers

WHAT YOU’LL DO

1. Put the olive oil in a small saucepan with the oregano, garlic, and a pinch of salt. Warm over medium heat just until the garlic turns golden and then turn off the heat and let steep while you prepare the dough.
2. Preheat an outdoor grill over medium heat.
3. Unroll the pizza dough and roll it so it stretches out an additional 1” in every direction.
4. Slice into 6 equal pieces. Stretch and press each piece into an approximately 11” x 2” rectangle.
5. Sprinkle 2 tablespoons of mozzarella down the center of each rectangle and then fold the dough over the cheese and pinch the seams to seal, making 6 cheese-filled dough tubes.
6. Thread each tube onto a skewer like a snake, alternating after every turn with slices of your favorite toppings.
7. Lay the pizza sticks on a parchment-lined baking sheet and brush all over with the garlic-oregano oil.
8. Grill the pizza skewers uncovered, turning every couple of minutes so that all sides make contact with the grill, until the dough is fully cooked, about 6 to 8 minutes.
9. Transfer to a serving platter. Sprinkle with the Parmesan cheese and serve with warm marinara sauce on the side.

* For an easy metric conversion chart, search the Internet for “metric kitchen.”

by Debbie Guinn
Kick off summer with pizza that may take you a little out of your comfort zone! This Pizza on a Skewer is easy to make, and all ages will enjoy adding their favorite toppings to personalize their own skewers!
S’mores Pizza

This “pizza” will most assuredly challenge your typical expectations of pizza as you combine pieces of chocolate, marshmallows, and graham crackers to create this ultimate ooey gooey cookie treat!

**WHAT YOU’LL NEED**

1. 1 stick unsalted butter, melted
2. 1/2 cup granulated sugar
3. 1/2 cup packed brown sugar
4. 1/2 teaspoon vanilla
5. 1 large egg
6. 1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
7. 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
8. 1/2 teaspoon salt
9. 3/4 cup semisweet chocolate chips
10. 2 graham crackers, broken into large pieces
11. 1 chocolate bar, broken into large pieces
12. 4 large marshmallows, cut in fourths

**WHAT YOU’LL DO**

1. Preheat oven to 400° F. Spray a large pie plate or cast-iron baking dish with nonstick cooking spray.
2. In a large bowl, use a rubber spatula to stir together the butter and both sugars until combined. Let stand for 5 minutes.
3. Stir in the egg and vanilla.
4. Add the flour, baking soda, and salt, stirring until mixed well.
5. Fold in chocolate chips.
6. Divide the dough into 2 equal sections.
7. Press half of the dough into the bottom of the prepared pan.
8. Allow your children to add the chocolate bar, graham crackers, and marshmallows on top of the dough.
9. Flatten out the remaining dough and place on top of the s’mores ingredients, pressing to seal the outside edges.
10. Bake for about 15 minutes or until the edges are slightly browned.
11. Let cool for a few minutes before serving.

* For an easy metric conversion chart, search the Internet for "metric kitchen."

**PREP:** 15 min.  **COOK:** 15 min.  **YIELDS:** 6-8 servings  **TOTAL TIME:** 30 min.

by Debbie Guinn
God has big plans for your life—but they aren’t always easy. In fact, sometimes His plans require you to do something scary or difficult and you may feel inadequate for the job. But if you trust in God, He is faithful to help you.

God asked Moses to do something very scary and difficult one evening as he was tending his father-in-law’s flock of sheep. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw a bush on fire—only it wasn’t burning up. As Moses hesitantly approached the burning bush, he heard the voice of the Lord calling his name: “Moses, Moses.” Moses answered quickly, “Here I am!” Before Moses could come any closer, God gave him specific instructions to remove his sandals.

God doesn’t have an issue with shoes or stinky feet. Instead God used this moment to establish His holiness. He said, “I AM the God of your father, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”

God had heard the cry of His people in Egypt and decided to send Moses to tell Pharaoh, the most powerful man in Egypt, to let His people go. Moses was immediately filled with doubts and fear. How could he stand in front of Pharaoh and deliver this message from God without losing his life? Even though Moses came up with several excuses for why he was the wrong man, God showed patience by revealing His power, allowing Moses’ brother to speak when Moses couldn’t find the words, and sending a group of elders so Moses would not be alone.

Moses knew he had to obey and trust God. Although he was filled with doubts and fear, God would be with him every step of the way.

HEAR IT

Read through the story of Moses and the burning bush in Exodus 3 and 4. Moses desired to honor the Lord with his life, but he was also a timid, fearful man.

He was just the man for the job. Why? God knew that Moses would be dependent on Him and give all glory and honor to Him.

AFTER READING THE PASSAGE, DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

• When God told Moses to go speak to Pharaoh, how did Moses respond?
• When Moses expressed fear and doubt, how did God respond to Moses?
• To bring assurance to Moses, what did God do or provide for Him?
• Have you ever had to do something that caused you fear or uncertainty? Did you trust God? How did it turn out?
• When God told Moses to say, “I AM” sent Him, what do you think that meant? What does this name show us about the character of God?

DO IT

When we have feelings of doubt, inadequacy, or fear, God is I AM. He is bigger than our doubt. He is bigger than our fear, and through Him we can do all things. All we have to do is trust in Him. We can trust in the great I AM. He is big, powerful, magnificent, and other. Take time as a family to write true God statements about the great I AM. In your fear and doubt, what do you know to be true of God? When God calls you out of your comfort zone to the uncertain, what do you know to be true of God?

by Holly Newman

Holly is the Pastor of Elementary and Spiritual Parenting at New Life Church in Colorado Springs, CO. She has written children’s curriculum as well as developed her own tween and teen curriculum about identity called Girltime. Her passion is for family ministry that leads others to create influential, faith-building moments with their children. She has been married to her high school sweetheart, Jared, for 17 years. They have four children: two girls and two boys. In her spare time, she loves to get outdoors with her family.
These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you SIT AT HOME and when you walk ALONG THE ROAD, when you LIE DOWN and when you GET UP. (Deuteronomy 6:6-7)

As you tuck your little one into bed, sing this call and response rhyme to the tune of “Frère Jacques.” Remind your son or daughter that God wants us to come to Him with things that are hard and uncomfortable in our lives. He hears our prayers!

Jesus hears you
Jesus hears me
When you call
When I call
You can share your burdens
I can share my burdens
Big or small
Big or small
He will answer
He will answer
When you pray
When I pray
He will give direction
He will give direction
For each day
For each day

Get the audio recording of this song at bit.ly/junetottimerhyme2019

written by Chad Coltman
Chad is the Creative Director at 454 Creative, a digital marketing agency in Irvine, CA. Along with his wife, Kelli, and three kids, Lainey, Katie, and Liam, Chad attends Rockharbor Church in Costa Mesa, CA, where he’s worked for almost two decades. Most days you can find him dreaming about Sidecar Doughnuts and an iced latte from Portola Coffee Roasters.

sung by Chad and Katie Coltman
Katie is a spunky eight year old who lives in Irvine, CA, with her mom and dad, brother and sister, and three guinea pigs: Charlie, Chase, and Marshmallow. She loves riding her bike, reading, and making her own comic books!
“I just don’t like this day,” Abigail said, referring to the storm brewing outside. Storms involve lots of things my four year old dislikes—dark, loud, scary, can’t play outside—so, needless to say, it wasn’t her favorite day.

When she woke up from her nap, she made her way to the back door and saw the sunshine. She opened the door and exclaimed in the sweetest voice, “Oh, my gosh, it feels amazing!”

I couldn’t help but think Abigail’s reactions to the day are a lot like my reactions to life. During the storms and dark times, I often question where the good is, where the beauty is, where the light is. Where is God in this? But when the stormy seasons in my life pass, when God brings me through the darkness, how glorious it will be!

When I look back and see what God was doing during those stormy days, I recognize how He never failed me. And never will. How He always provided just what I needed in the moment I needed it. Imagine the beauty that can be reaped during these times if I am willing to receive these teachings from the Lord, no matter how uncomfortable!

It is important to remind ourselves daily that although it may seem like God isn’t at work, He ALWAYS is. While we rest in Him, the storm will subside and sunshine will emerge. Not because of anything we do but because of what He does.

As parents, we have the privilege of teaching our children what it means to trust and lean into God, His Son, and the Holy Spirit to guide us during times that cause us great discomfort. Our greatest and unimaginable strength doesn’t come from us; it only comes from our heavenly Father.

**BLESS WITH YOUR 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.

**Read**

**JOSHUA 1:9**

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.”

**Bless**

SPEAK THIS BLESSING OVER YOUR CHILD

(Child’s name), may you know how steadfast your heavenly Father is. Even in the moments when you may not be able to see the goodness the Lord your God is bringing, I pray that you will cling to His Word, His Spirit, and His truth. May you be reminded that your heavenly Father will never fail you and will always be with you wherever you go. In your deepest moments of discomfort, may you feel strong and courageous knowing that God is working on something glorious!

by Charlotte Manas

Charlotte was born and raised in central Texas and is currently serving as a MOPS Coordinator for her local chapter. For the last three years she has been a stay-at-home momma to her four-year-old daughter and is a certified health coach specializing in families and children.
STARTING A MOVEMENT

There are millions and millions of orphaned children in the world. How did we get here? What does this mean? If we are truly going to get to the bottom of the orphan crisis then we must inspire a movement where people will no longer stand for this catastrophe.

When many of us think about caring for orphans we automatically think adoption. Adoption, although wonderful and needed, is only one way of caring for orphaned and vulnerable. Adoption is usually a result of deeper root problems such as poverty, war, disease, lack of education, government policy, and the breakdown of the family. If we can inspire more people to address some of these issues, then we can prevent a child from becoming an orphan in the first place. That is orphan care!

This is why The Archibald Project exists. We are using storytelling to spark and expand a movement of people to care for orphaned and vulnerable children in creative ways in order to combat and end the global orphan crisis. This approach is leading to more holistic and ethical care for children and over time will lead to long-term solutions that will help eliminate the orphan crisis.

AND TOGETHER WE END THE ORPHAN CRISIS!

The Archibald Project is using videos, writing, photography, podcasts, and social media to tell inspiring stories about caring for vulnerable children from all over the world. We are then presenting these stories on our different media outlets to an audience of over one million people. Our stories are inspiring people to get involved in ways they never imagined possible.
THE MOVEMENT

Our stories are starting a movement that is beginning to catch wind. When a movement gains momentum, it makes getting involved seem less risky. A movement reshapes what we hold to be normal or acceptable in our society. A movement holds the power to bring about large-scale change, and movements are fueled by stories …

Through our stories we have influenced multiple families to start the foster care process, inspired new families to start the adoption process, inspired college students to change majors to gain a foundational education in humanitarian aid, influenced people to become passionate about family preservation, helped raise hundreds of thousands of dollars for ethical orphan care organizations, and--this one is new for us--inspired an adult adoptee to find her heritage, find the orphanage she was adopted from, and then go volunteer there--and she is now adopting from there!

We are so excited because we believe that over time this will lead to the end of the orphan crisis as we know it. Join the movement and help us change the world.

TAKE PART IN THE MOVEMENT: thearchibaldproject.com
WHERE IN THE WORLD IS ...

BURKINA FASO

Burkina Faso (formerly Upper Volta) is a landlocked country in West Africa. It spans an area of 105,869 square miles with a length of 542 miles. Bounded on the east by Niger, on the southeast by Benin, on the south by Togo, Ghana, and Côte d’Ivoire, and on the west and north by Mali, Burkina Faso has a total boundary length of 1,983 miles.

Awakening a compassionate heart and a global mind-set in children for people beyond the boundaries of their own neighborhoods.
If you lived in Burkina Faso you would most likely eat a dish called tô. This dish consists of cooled polenta-style cakes made from ground millet, sorghum, or corn. The tô is served with a sauce made from vegetables such as tomatoes, peppers, sumbala, and carrots sometimes supplemented by a piece of meat like mutton or goat. Eaten by hand, this traditional dish is the staple of the Burkinabè diet.

NOW THAT WE KNOW WHERE IN THE WORLD BURKINA FASO IS, LET’S MEET AND GREET ITS PEOPLE.

There are over 20 million people who call Burkina Faso their home.

If you went to religious services in Burkina Faso, you would most likely go to an Islamic mosque.

Religion: Islamic 60.5%, Christianity 23.2%, Indigenous Beliefs 15.3%

If you lived in Burkina Faso you would speak French. To say, “Hello” in French, you would say, “Bonjour” (pronounced bohn-ZHUR).

If you lived in Burkina Faso you would most likely eat a dish called tô. This dish consists of cooled polenta-style cakes made from ground millet, sorghum, or corn. The tô is served with a sauce made from vegetables such as tomatoes, peppers, sumbala, and carrots sometimes supplemented by a piece of meat like mutton or goat. Eaten by hand, this traditional dish is the staple of the Burkinabè diet.

Some websites claim that Burkina Faso, a small country in West Africa, is the fourth-poorest country in the world. And where you have extreme poverty, you have vulnerable families and orphaned children, often in excessive numbers.

This past April The Archibald Project (Taking Action, page 32) spent eight days in this desert country, sweating in the 107-degree weather and learning as much as they could about Burkina Faso’s orphan crisis. Eight days may not seem like a lot of time to the average person, but The Archibald Project has spent the last five years developing a keen sense and particular knowledge in the world of ethical orphan care. They know the questions to ask and the signs of dishonesty or corruption. They found that the people and organizations in Burkina Faso are honest, ethical, and incredibly needed. Not the type of “need” that pushes its way into a community, unwelcomed and shouting how to “change.” Rather, these organizations are coming alongside the government, local Burkinabè leaders, and communities and partnering together, hand in hand, and they are doing their best—even in the face of little aid and lots of struggle.

One of these helpful organizations is Streams of Burkina Faso. They are raising up local villagers to foster and care for orphans. They are not an orphanage but rather find families willing to care for vulnerable children until each child can be safely resettled back with his or her biological family!

If you would like to get involved with Streams in Burkina Faso, go to streamsinburkinafaso.com.
Meet Norm. Norm abides and Norm obeys. Norm is a retired Coca-Cola truck driver who steps out of his comfort zone consistently.

One afternoon, Norm was eating lunch at Jack in the Box when in walked an out-of-control man yelling at strangers and causing a ruckus (perhaps similar to how your preteen sometimes acts?).

Norm’s initial response to the crazy man in Jack in the Box was to pray. Is that your first response to crazy? It’s not likely because it’s not natural. What a contrast though: one person out of control and loud and the other quietly praying to God. Might I add, acting like Jesus will most of the time be quite the contrast to your surroundings and human nature. No wonder it’s uncomfortable.

God’s response to Norm’s prayer was to give him compassion. Norm kept praying for the man. The man continued in bursts of anger. Norm kept praying. His heart grieved this man’s current state of life as he prayed, “God, this is not your best for this man.”

Norm tackled chaos with prayer. Rather than judging the crazy person (cue thoughts on the crazy you’ve experienced with your children), he embraced his Father’s perspective.

Norm continued to pray quietly with his head bowed. He abided* and asked God for direction. Within moments the man turned his fits of anger toward Norm. The two quite literally stepped outside. Not for a fight, but for Norm to be obedient to God’s promptings. Norm shared the gospel. And the man walked away with no interest in Jesus.

While it may seem like a disappointing, failed attempt at evangelism, this isn’t the end of the story. But sadly, I can’t tell you everything else that happened because I’ll never know. The rest of the man’s story has been entrusted back to God. Norm obediently played his “little” part. God calls us to obedience, not results.

Parents, lean into your relationship with God this week and pay attention to the moments that make you feel uncomfortable. God is inviting you to abide and obey. He may or may not let us in on the eternal results, but He invites us to play our part, not His. We get to abide and obey: to listen, love people, share good news, be filled with compassion, and step out of our comfort zone. Then, we get to entrust God with the transformation. And not just for those in Jack in the Box but also for those crazy people in our homes. In the moments you’re most uncomfortable I empower you to remember to abide, to lift them up in prayer, to ask God for His compassion and His direction, and then, like Norm the retired truck driver, to obey. Play your part—let God play His.

*Read John 15 for clarity on what it means to abide.

by Megan Fate Marshman

Megan loves God and delights in overflowing His abounding love to others. She leads the Women’s Ministry at Hume Lake Christian Camps in Hume, CA, shepherds young adults at Arbor Road Church in Long Beach, CA, and shares Jesus around the world. She recently released her second book titled SelfLess, which will leave you thinking less ABOUT yourself and more OF yourself at the very same time. Megan currently lives in Long Beach with her husband and two sons.
The summer following my high school graduation, I had the opportunity to go on a weeklong mission trip. It fit exactly in the middle of my “Best Summer Ever” plans. It would be my final hoorah with my high school youth group, and I would still have a month to spend time with friends before heading to college. What could be better?

Throughout the trip, I sought every chance to serve others without holding back, knowing that I would be on a plane home within seven days. Run a sports camp for children? Check. Provide meals and have genuine conversations with people living on the streets? I’m in. Scrub dirty toilets? Gross, but sure. Each day was more tiring than the day before, but each day also became a clearer picture of what sacrificial love looks like. God was using the trip to mold my heart to look more like His.

The day before we were scheduled to leave, I told a friend about what I was processing: “I believe God is calling me to come back to serve here. Maybe I can return for a week or two during my winter break.”

This felt like a valid, honorable response to what God was doing in my heart. But, God had other plans.

“What if you stayed here for the rest of the summer instead?” she asked. I immediately laughed, acknowledging that her question couldn’t be a serious suggestion. My friend’s eyebrows rose and her head tilted in a way that ensured I would listen. “What if you’re supposed to give up some good things this summer in order for God to remain the greatest thing in your life?”

Do you know the feeling of a room spinning because of a single question? The moment where all of your desires, expectations, and hopes are unexpectedly laid out in front of you? This was supposed to be my summer. Staying an extra month would mean having to let that go. I was uncomfortable.

After praying through the decision and making a few phone calls, 24 hours later I was waving goodbye to my team. I didn’t fully understand why it was best for me to stay, but the Lord made clear that this was where I needed to be. Giving up some good things was worth following the greater One.

During Jesus’ ministry, He encountered a young man who desired to follow Him. The man asked what he needed to do to follow Jesus, and Jesus responded with the challenge to sell everything he owned and to give it to the poor. What a difficult moment! Imagine Jesus walking into your house and asking you to get rid of everything for Him. This was a tall order. Upon hearing this from Jesus, the man walked away because it was too much for him to give up.

This story wasn’t a commentary on money being evil; rather it reveals Jesus as the greatest thing above any other. Jesus wanted the young man to understand that following Him is worth more than any amount of good things one can accumulate. He gives true joy and everlasting life. Nothing compares. He is the greatest thing.

Parents, how are you actively displaying that Jesus is greater than the good things in your life? I
imagine one of your most sincere hopes for your high schooler is that he chooses to follow Jesus over the good things the world has to offer. As the primary discipler of your children, you exemplify what it looks like to follow Christ. Are you willing to ask the Lord to help you recognize Him as the greatest thing in your life? What if you invited your high schooler to ask the same question alongside you? What a powerful opportunity for God to work in your lives as you are uncomfortable together. God desires to help us revolve all of our desires, expectations, and hopes around Him. Our plans may change, yet God will remain the greatest thing through it all.

by Tony Landini
Tony serves as the high school pastor at Arbor Road Church in Long Beach, CA. He is convinced that God desires to use students to impact His kingdom, so he is dedicated to helping students realize it themselves. Odds are you can catch Tony at a local coffee shop, playing basketball, or spending time at home with his wife, Natalie, and his dog, Poptart.

5 MOST INFLUENTIAL TEENS ON ALL FORMS OF MEDIA
1. Marley Dias
2. Rishab Jain
3. Marsai Martin
4. Millie Bobby Brown
5. Storm Reid
*Center for Parent/Youth Understanding

SLANG TO KNOW
Bae (b-aye): (n) “Before All Else”/ Another word for “baby” or a term of endearment for someone.
“I love you; you’re my bae.”
*netsanity.net/teen-slang-parents-guide/

QUICK FACTS
62.2% of tweens and 70.5% of teens experienced cyberbullying (as a bully, victim, or witness).
*Bark’s 2018 Children & Teen Cyber Fact Sheet

FAMILY CHALLENGE
At your next meal together, ask your family which apps on their cell phones they spend the most time on. As a family, challenge each other to delete those apps for one month. Parents: You are not the exception; join in! If this is not stepping out of your comfort zone, I don’t know what is!

EQUIPPING RESOURCES OF THE MONTH
Your Teenager Is Not Crazy: Understanding Your Teen’s Brain Can Make You a Better Parent by Dr. Jeramy Clark and Jerusha Clark
What It Is, What It Means is a youth ministry/pop culture podcast in a rapidly changing world. Join Jeff and Shara Bachman as they navigate through the complex world of music, movies, media, and tech to tell you what it is and what it means for you, your family, and your ministry. You can find What It Is, What It Means on ITunes podcasts or wherever you listen to your favorite podcasts.

by Haley Downey
Haley is the Associate Director of junior high ministry at Arbor Road Church, Long Beach, CA.
As moms, we can daily relate to the heartache, frustration, hurt, and defeat around our children’s choices. These choices often reflect taking the easy path over the right path—staying in their comfort zone rather than stepping out. Inexplicably a preschooler will begin lying not to disappoint, an elementary student will allow an idol to shape her language and behavior, a middle school-aged student will bully out of pride, and a high schooler will turn to drugs, alcohol, or self-harming as a release to fit in or mask his differences from others. God’s story reflects the treacherous path of His children to replace what is right, and possibly challenging, with the facade of easy. This facade leads toward a path of self-reliance, destruction and loneliness and ends in isolation. Since we were made for community, isolation is a terrible fate—a place cut off from the hope that God can rescue us and love us again. We are a forgetful people,
born into a long lineage of forgetful people—from Adam and Eve, who forgot God’s voice in the face of Satan’s temptation, to Abraham, who forgot that God keeps His promises even if it takes a long time. Then the Israelite descendants, who passed down unbelievable stories of rescue from Egypt, the Red Sea, and the wilderness, were doomed to become amnesiacs again, reverting to their old ways and emotions. The covenants and laws reminded God’s children that He is the faithful provider, even when they rebelled or became lost in their forgetfulness. Each covenant beautifully builds upon the last—from one man to one family, to one nation, and, finally, to all people. This narrative, when told from the beginning in Eden to the incredible ending of a new heaven and new earth, represents the faithfulness of God to provide a way.

Moms, you are not alone. You have a perfect parent, God, who knows the cost of raising generations of children who have walked away from a loving environment due to forgetfulness. Our children are daily reminders that you are still growing in doing what is right, even when it is hard and out of your comfort zone. As champions of your child’s spiritual faith, you stand on the front lines, constantly repositioning your child to be on a path toward God. Weary as you may feel, moms, you must be strong and courageous, daily strengthened in Christ—looking to Scripture for words of wisdom, humbling yourself in intercession and prayer, and, above all, seeking the will and provision of the Father. God has demonstrated His love as a Father and His faithfulness as a provider—the uncomfortable part is in the waiting.

“WE ARE A FORGETFUL PEOPLE, BORN INTO A LONG LINEAGE OF FORGETFUL PEOPLE—FROM ADAM AND EVE, WHO FORGOT GOD’S VOICE IN THE FACE OF SATAN’S TEMPTATION, TO ABRAHAM, WHO FORGOT THAT GOD KEEPS HIS PROMISES EVEN IF IT TAKES A LONG TIME.”

“YOU HAVE A PERFECT PARENT, GOD, WHO KNOWS THE COST OF RAISING GENERATIONS OF CHILDREN WHO HAVE WALKED AWAY FROM A LOVING ENVIRONMENT DUE TO FORGETFULNESS.”

by Dawn Heckert

Dawn is the Children’s Pastor at Christ Community Church Leawood Campus in Leawood, KS. She loves Jesus and the opportunity to share His story with all ages. She spends her free time deep in glitter, crafting, creating, and chasing life with her two teenage daughters and husband.
The Day I Started to Fight

Every year on April 2, our family celebrates World Autism Awareness Day—mainly because we are blessed with a 13-year-old son who has autism. Raising Jackson has been a long road of learning, accepting, appreciating, and everything you would assume when life doesn’t go as you had expected. As part of our celebration, for the past few years, I have posted on our social media that we are a part of the autism family because of our son and all that he means to us. Usually I start my World Autism Awareness post by saying, “Today we are blue (as in the recognized color for World Autism Day), but we aren’t sad.” But one day, that was not a completely honest statement. On that day, I was sad—and mad, and annoyed, and more than anything I hurt for Jackson and how difficult his journey is sometimes.

I have been a youth pastor for 27 years, and, though I am no parental expert, I have spent my fair share of time with teenagers. The job comes with a few occupational hazards. One is a steady stream of pizza always being available. Another is knowing the really good qualities about students as well as what can potentially go wrong. Our son’s first year in junior high has exposed him to a world that isn’t nearly as kind as the elementary school he came from. Like I said, I knew it was coming, but I’m never prepared for my kids to suffer. Not everyone who comes in contact fully “gets” Jackson, and he has typically struggled socially with his peers. That has been compensated by the fact that his elementary school community
knew him and knew how to support him. The junior high world is bigger and more unknown. Kids have said things to Jackson that I wouldn’t say to my worst enemy. I feel powerless, and, ultimately, I hurt for my son—because I can’t fight every battle for him, especially as he grows into adulthood.

And yet, in my pain, I watch him shake himself off, get back up, and fight again. He fights with kindness. He fights with grace. He fights with a level of bravery I can’t always muster. It is part of what’s so beautiful about him and how autism plays out in his life. He doesn’t hold a grudge for long! So, on that day, April 2 and beyond, I too started to fight. I fought to celebrate my son for showing me how to live in a world that is sometimes cruel. He finds the beauty and hope so my celebration deepens daily. I am reminded that not everyone is the same.

And that’s good. I celebrate because 1 out of every 68 children are on the autism spectrum and they see the world in a way that most people can’t. God gave them to us as a gift, and we live in a broken world that gets to learn from them—if we take the time to.

by Jeff Bachman

Jeff has been in youth and family ministry for 26 years and is currently working at Mariners Church Mission Viejo in Mission Viejo, CA, as the student ministry pastor. He is passionate about getting a glimpse of the eternal though the lives of the people he works with. Jeff has had the privilege of communicating with thousands of students and young adults through preaching and teaching at his own church, at camps, and at national and international student events. He has been a contributing writer for Download Youth Ministry, Interlic, Journal of Student Ministries, and David C. Cook publishing. Jeff has his master’s degree from Western Seminary in evangelism and equipping. He and his wife of 17 years, Shara, have three children: Jackson (12), Isabella (10), and Charlotte (8). Jeff loves music, cooking, traveling, comic books, and sitting over conversation with a beverage.
When God Is SILENT

Have you ever asked God for wisdom about something and then just had to wait? Maybe you had a big decision to make or a difficult situation to navigate. Maybe you’re in this hard place right now.

When we come to God with questions or problems, we hope for Him to answer right away. Sometimes when God answers, He might ask us to do or think or say something that forces us to rely on Him more deeply. Other times, it is God’s silence that pushes us out of our comfort zone.

We know that God hears us when we pray. We know that He’s with us and that He cares. And yet, sometimes, God chooses not to answer our questions. Sometimes He does not reveal direct guidance to help us with our problems. We know God can speak to us in a shout or in a whisper, but sometimes He simply does neither. So how do we move forward? When we’re out of our comfort zone because we’re asking and waiting on a God who’s become silent, what are we to do?

I have a few suggestions for when you find yourself in this tough place.

When God is silent, first of all, turn to Scripture. As Christians we believe that God has spoken to us through the Bible, which is His Word. When we’re listening and waiting for God to speak, we sometimes forget the many things God has already said. Second Timothy 3:16 says, “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,” and Psalm 119:105 says, “Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.” When we come to God and don’t sense Him speaking directly to us, it’s good to ask the question, “Does Scripture have something to say about this?”

Secondly, when God is silent, utilize the wisdom He has already given you. This month’s Family Time verse is James 1:5, which says, “If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.” This verse doesn’t say that God will always give answers. It says He’ll give wisdom. God has given us good brains and the capacity to make decisions that are in line with His will. Sometimes I think God doesn’t directly speak because, if we’re honest, we already know what He would say and what we should do!

Finally, when God is silent, turn to wise people. Proverbs 13:20 says, “Walk with the wise and become wise; associate with fools and get in trouble” (NLT). In any decision or with any question, it helps to get the input of wise people. God often speaks through others who know Him and are attuned to the Holy Spirit.

Believe me, I wish that when we came to God with our questions we’d get an instant response every time. Wouldn’t that be nice? But God isn’t Google, and sometimes He’s silent. Next time you’re in that uncomfortable place of asking and waiting, I encourage you to turn to Scripture, use your brain, and seek the counsel of wise people. You may just find that God has something to say to you after all.

by Emily Schulz

Emily is wife to Phil and mom to baby Eva. She serves as the Family Ministries, Women’s Ministry, and Discipleship Pastor at New Denver Church in Denver, CO. Emily has her MDiv from Denver Seminary and her BA in Christian Ministries from Biola University. Her current hobbies are the same as Eva’s: all she wants is for someone to feed her and let her sleep!
Marriage is ... work. That's probably not the description you were expecting to read. You may prefer a more affectionate descriptor like love, happiness, bliss, or fairytale. Those descriptions aren't wrong. They're just lacking. If you walk into a marriage expecting every day to be filled with cozy snuggles and minty morning breath, you may be in for a surprise! (Although my wife's breath is always minty fresh!)

Let me be clear: I love marriage! And I love my wife! But I would be lying if I said marriage isn't work!

There's no room for passivity in any marriage. It takes work ... hard work. Not each person bringing 50 percent, but each person bringing 100 percent. I know the proportions don't add up but the principle sure applies.

In order for your marriage to move toward greater intimacy, you must be willing to step out of your comfort zone.

Think about it. Your marriage relationship is at its current state because you took steps out of your comfort zone. When you first asked her on a date, you were stepping out of your comfort zone. When you said, “Yes!” to his request for a date, you were stepping out of your comfort zone. When you took her to meet the parents, you were stepping out of your comfort zone. When you agreed to marry him, you were stepping out of your comfort zone.

Each and every time the relationship with your spouse moved toward greater intimacy, you were stepping out of your comfort zone.

So why stop now?

Marriage isn’t something you did. It’s something you’re doing! Even now, whether you’ve been married five months, five years, or 50 years, there are things you should do to step out of your comfort zone.

1. DON’T QUIT THE SMALL THINGS.

When things were starting out, you went out of your way on the small things. You opened the door for her. You sent him sweet little notes. You surprised each other. However, somewhere along the way life got busy, the relationship got comfortable, and you quit the small things.

I dare you to reverse that trend. I dare you to persevere through the busy schedule to make time for the small things. A note, a kiss, a Reese’s Cup on the bedside table are small things you should never quit doing.

2. DON’T QUIT THE BIG THINGS.

You can probably go back to a point in your marriage when you weren’t afraid to try the big things. Hey, getting married is a big thing! After that, maybe you bought a house, took an extravagant vacation, went on a big mission trip, and, perhaps the biggest thing of all, you had kids! Maybe you were wild enough to have multiple kids!

When was the last time you took a big adventure in your marriage? If you can’t remember, it may have been too long. Before you start with the excuses of how there’s no time and no money and you can’t afford to take the big adventure, let me lovingly say, “You can’t afford not to!”

Big things don’t have to cost big bucks. Maybe it’s a one-day adventure to a nearby city or a pajama day with movies or your favorite book. Start planning the next big adventure with your spouse.

3. DON’T QUIT THE HARD THINGS.

It’s easy to persevere in the good times, but let me dare you to persevere in the hard times. Don’t quit doing the hard things you need to do to make the marriage thrive. When you invest time and energy in the hard things, the dividend is greater intimacy with your spouse.
I can hear some responses already: “But Andy, that’s hard work!” You’re absolutely right. Marriage is ... work.

It’s the most rewarding and fulfilling work, though, so have at it! Persevere by not quitting the small things, the big things, or the hard things.

by Andy Comer

Andy is the lead pastor of Antioch Georgetown, a new church in the Austin, TX, area that launched January 2018. He and his wife, Erin, have three daughters, and they enjoy an eclectic mix of ministry, graphic design, and making old things new.

🌐 andycomer.org
As a mom I felt pretty “comfortable” when my children grew to be people who loved, knew, and walked with God. I experienced a deep joy in watching them share Him with others. But, when my son experienced difficult times and turned from his faith, I no longer felt “comfortable.” I felt great sadness. I know I’m not alone in this—many parents and grandparents have shared the pain of their loved children and grandchildren no longer walking with God.

There’s a lot of praying and waiting when your children and grandchildren aren’t walking with God; the grief absolutely pushes you out of your comfort zone. But, while I never expected to be here, I find great comfort in the true accounts of people in the Bible as they prayed, waited, and watched God answer.

The Scriptures tell us about Hannah. She wanted a child. She prayed and waited but still had no child. She could’ve stopped praying and become bitter, but she didn’t. She asked God to remember her; He did and gave her Samuel. Read 1 Samuel 2 to see Hannah’s response.

The Bible is filled with true accounts of people who stepped out of their comfort zones and waited for answers from God—David, Joseph, Jehoshaphat, and Elisha to name just a few.

As God’s story has continued, many notable people have experienced waiting for answers from Him. Look at Billy Graham, Joni Eareckson Tada, and Corrie ten Boom. George Müller is another man of God who believed in the power of prayer. Over his lifetime, he raised and gave away $7,200,000 to run 117 schools and numerous orphanages, all without going into debt or asking for money. He cared for 10,024 orphans and schooled 120,000 children. He said, “Never give up praying until the answer comes.”

I’m blessed to have friends who know, love, and walk with God. Many experience difficult situations and yet choose to trust God and wait for His answers. One friend found himself in an Egyptian prison for being a Christian; the guard said he’d never see
the sun again. The man called out to God and God answered by freeing him. Another friend watched her loved son die; the doctors and all tests showed he was dead, but God answered her prayers and today her son is living as if he had never been dead.

These true accounts encourage me. God hears and answers prayer. We may have to wait, but just because we do not see what God is doing today doesn’t mean He is doing nothing. God has promised to answer our prayers, and He always keeps His promises. If you need to be encouraged, take heart. You may be experiencing a season of waiting, but trust God. Step out of your comfort zone. Ask Him to show you He’s there and keep record of what He does. Then, tell your children and grandchildren how God is working—the little and big ways He shows He is there. You never know what God may use to bring your loved ones back to Him!

by Lynda Freeman

Lynda met her husband on a volcano. She has a daughter, son, daughter-in-law, and three grandsons who fill her heart with joy! She is one of the founding members of the Legacy Coalition, is one of the founders of Grandmas with Heart, writes their daily blog, and is the author of It Is Impossible to Spoil Grandchildren.

“I’M BLESSED TO HAVE FRIENDS WHO KNOW, LOVE, AND WALK WITH GOD. MANY EXPERIENCE DIFFICULT SITUATIONS AND YET CHOOSE TO TRUST GOD AND WAIT FOR HIS ANSWERS.”
10 ENVIRONMENTS

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

1. 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.

2. Out of the Comfort Zone

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.

3. 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!

4. 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.

5. 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.
“God knows me, and I can know Him.”

6

KNOWING

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!

“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.”

7

IDENTITY

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.

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

8

Course Correction

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.

“God’s family cares for each other and worships God together.”

9

Faith Community

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.

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

10

Modeling

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.

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SPIRITUAL PARENTING:
An Awakening for Today’s Families
BY MICHELLE ANTHONY
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