

# home|front

M O N T H L Y

ENVIRONMENT

## *faith community*

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

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# How to Use this Resource

## 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. (It's usually best to build this time around a meal!)

**2** Look through the HomeFront Monthly and see what stands out. Choose one or two experiences that you would like to incorporate into your family times this week. Don't feel burdened to complete all the activities at once, but carefully select which ones will fit your family best. Each month of curriculum provides more than enough experiences to last you throughout the month.

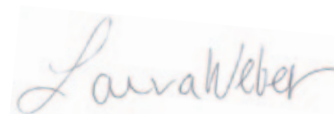
**3** Remember to **HAVE FUN!** Strive to make each gathering unique to your own family as you enjoy spending time with God and each other.

### Editor's Note

I spent every summer of college working at a summer camp in Santa Cruz, CA. It was a pretty great summer job, but what has stuck with me the longest is the friendships I made over those summers. In an act of grace far greater than I could ever deserve, God put me in a community with 11 other girls over those summers. Through a lot of laughter, tears, and commitment the 12 of us have stuck it out as a faith community that I know will stay with me for the rest of my life.

I could go on for hours about the fun times I've had with these women ... there are endless stories. But what has transformed my life the most is the willingness each of them has continually had to push me toward Jesus. When I have not believed in myself at all, they have reminded me that my worth comes from the Lord. When I have struggled to find confidence, they have reminded me that I am beautiful. When I have felt far from Jesus, they have lovingly pointed me back to Him and reminded me that He is still near. Through all the ups and downs this faith community has chosen to see me as the best version of myself, as the person that the Lord truly created me to be. And that is what has given me the courage to actually become that person.

We were never created to do this journey of faith alone. We need people around us. This month, may you and your family invest significantly in those around you and may you feel the Lord's pleasure as you enjoy life in community. ☺



**LAURA WEBER** | EDITOR  
the Tru Team | Costa Mesa, CA

## ENVIRONMENT

# FAITH COMMUNITY

God designed us to live in community and to experience Him in ways that can only happen when we are 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.

In this issue we explore the environment of Faith Community. The Bible refers to this community in many ways: the body of Christ, the believers, and those who walked in faith. Since God designed us to live in community, there are experiences with Him that can only be had within the context of relationships with others. In those relationships, we experience new characteristics of God, we receive a fuller picture of who we are, we get new pictures of what our Father's love looks like, and we learn to embrace our true identity in Christ as it is affirmed and called out by those who love us. May you and your family be blessed by exploring God together, and may you be encouraged to participate in greater ways in the faith community found around you. ☺

### VERSE OF THE MONTH

Memorizing Scripture can be an incredible practice to engage in as a family. But words in and of themselves will not necessarily transform us; it is God's Spirit in these words that transforms. We come to know God more when we are willing to open our hearts and receive His Holy Spirit through the words we memorize. Have fun with these verses and think of creative ways to invite your family to open up to God as they commit these verses to memory.

### ELEMENTARY VERSE

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, ... And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." Isaiah 9:6

### PRES/KINDER VERSE

"Cheer each other up with the hope you have."  
1 Thessalonians 5:11 (NIRV)

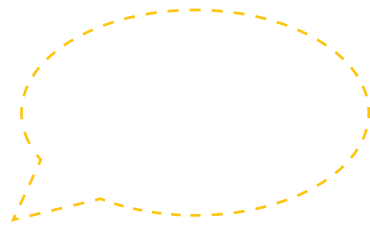


**MICHELLE ANTHONY** | FAMILIES  
ROCKHARBOR Church | Costa Mesa, CA

by Tracy Carpenter

# FAMILY FOOD TIME

## DINNER ACTIVITY



Every year, on the Sunday before Thanksgiving, my friends and I have a Thanksgiving meal together. Everyone brings food, we have a “best turkey” contest, and we have so much fun just laughing and being together.

We started this tradition as a bunch of single friends and roommates. Our first thanksgiving meal included about 20 people on the rooftop of an apartment building. As we've all grown and gotten older, our group has grown too. Spouses, kids, and new friends get added every year. Last year, as we began to organize, we realized that 75 people were coming. There was no way we were all going to fit in anyone's house. So, we relocated to the cul-de-sac in front of two friend's houses. Long tables were set up, several fire pits were lit, the friends all arrived. And then something unexpected happened. The neighbors started coming out to see what was going on. So, we invited them to join us. Our faith community of old friends grew that night as neighbors from up and down the street joined the party. Right there, on their own street, families who didn't know Jesus were able to jump right in and experience what it was like to be part of a faith community. What a great night.

The simple act of relocating a meal or a party to outside can open up the invitation to new friends and neighbors. As a family (or with a few families), why not try welcoming others into your faith community by hosting a street potluck? 🍷

**Here's how it will work:** As a family, make invitations using crayons, markers, stickers, or anything else you find around the house. Assign each home a different part of the meal. For instance, house #16 will bring a salad, house #17 will bring an entrée. The week or two prior to the event, pass the invitations out together to your neighbors, but don't split up! Go as a family.

The day of the event, you and your family can decorate the street together. Your kids might even have their own ideas for how the night should look, so remember to allow them to be a part of the planning. As people arrive, encourage family members to spread out to welcome people and make some new friends!

# FAMILY FOOD TIME

## RECIPE

Amish friendship bread is not only delicious bread that you can make and eat, but also a recipe that is designed to be passed on and shared with friends and neighbors. What better way to share food within the faith community this month than with this delicious friendship bread! Here is the recipe for the starter AND the bread:

This simple recipe is quick, easy, and can include a couple extra hands while preparing. So take that time and tell them a great story.

## Amish Friendship Bread Starter

*Prep Time:* 20 min. *Cook Time:* 15 min.

- 1 (.25 ounce) package active dry yeast
- 1/4 cup warm water (110 degrees F/45 degrees C)
- 3 cups all-purpose flour, divided
- 3 cups white sugar, divided
- 3 cups milk

1. In a small bowl, dissolve yeast in water. Remember to avoid using metal containers and utensils. Let stand 10 minutes. In a 2-quart glass, plastic, or ceramic container, combine 1 cup flour and 1 cup sugar. Mix thoroughly or flour will lump when milk is added. Slowly stir in 1 cup milk and dissolved yeast mixture. Cover loosely and let stand at room temperature until bubbly. Consider this day 1 of the 10-day cycle.
2. On days 2 through 4, stir starter with a wooden spoon. Day 5: stir in 1 cup flour, 1 cup sugar, and 1 cup milk. Days 6 through 9: stir only.
3. Day 10: stir in 1 cup flour, 1 cup sugar, and 1 cup milk. Remove 1 or 2 cups to make your first bread. Divide the rest of the batter into one cup measurements, and pour each cup into a separate, one-gallon storage bag.

Give each bag of batter to a different friend, along with the recipe, so that he or she can make bread and pass it along to more people. Store the remaining starter in a container in the refrigerator, or begin the 10-day process over again (starting with step 2). You can also freeze this starter in 1 cup measures for later use. Frozen starter will take at least 3 hours at room temperature to thaw before using. 🍞

# Amish Friendship Bread Starter

## 10 Day Cycle

**Day 1** - This day you receive the batter. Do nothing.

**Day 2** - Mush Bag

**Day 3** - Mush Bag

**Day 4** - Mush Bag

**Day 5** - Add 1 cup flour, 1 cup sugar, 1 cup milk.

**Day 6** - Mush Bag

**Day 7** - Mush Bag

**Day 8** - Mush Bag

**Day 9** - Mush Bag

**Day 10** - Pour batter into large bowl and mix in 1 cup flour, 1 cup sugar, and 1 cup milk. Stir and pour four 1 cup starters in 1-gallon storage bags. Keep one starter for yourself and give the others to friends with these instructions.

## Directions

To remaining batter add the following ingredients and mix well. Then divide and pour batter into 2 large greased and sugared (use a little cinnamon sugar) loaf pans. You can sprinkle most of the cinnamon/sugar mix inside the pan and save a little for the top. Bake at 350° for 50–60 minutes. Cool for 10 minutes and remove bread from pans. Makes two loaves.

- 1 cup oil
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 tsp. cinnamon
- 1 ½ tsp. baking powder
- 3 eggs
- 1 large package instant vanilla pudding
- ½ cup milk
- ½ tsp. baking soda
- 2 cups flour
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- ½ tsp. salt

by Angelina Pavone

# GAME TIME

## YOUNGER KIDS

### Travel Game

This week, as you are in the car with your children, take some time to play this game with your kids and get them thinking about their brothers and sisters in Christ.

Start by saying, "I'm thinking of a person who ..." and finish with characteristics about that person (remember to go first so your kids have an example of how to play). It doesn't have to simply be physical features, but you could also give context by letting them know where they often see that person, what family he or she belongs to, etc. Feel free to let your children ask questions to try and figure out who the person is, and when they figure it out, spend some time talking about how God has worked in that person's life. Then take some time to pray for him or her. ☺

TAKE AS MANY TURNS AS YOU CAN BEFORE YOUR DESTINATION, AND **HAVE FUN** ON THE ROAD!

by Justin Fox

# GAME TIME

## OLDER KIDS

### Toast to Jesus!

One of the ways our culture remembers and celebrates a person or occasion is with a "toast." You may have seen this at a wedding or a formal meal of some kind; someone will stand up, raise his glass of whatever he's drinking, say something like "To the bride!" and that's the signal for everyone to clink their glasses with each other and take a sip of their drinks.

I was thinking of this custom the other day while getting ready to celebrate a Sabbath family dinner with candles, special blessings, and grape juice. As each of us began to share things that God was teaching us through the week, or things He's helped us with, it seemed completely natural to want to make a toast to Jesus after each story! So as my youngest daughter finished talking, I raised my glass of grape juice and declared,

"Let's have a toast: To Jesus!"

"Yay, Jesus!" everyone echoed. Then we clinked our glasses together and took a drink. It was so fun, we decided to do it after each person shared. There were lots of toasts to Jesus that night. He deserves it more than anyone!

This month, instead of playing a game, gather your family together for a fun toasting experience like this one. Allow everyone to think about the things that they are grateful for and then simply take turns sharing stories as you go around the table and offer your toasts to Jesus.

P.S. One polite element of toasting is to make sure you look the person in the eye you are clinking your glass with, so that you not only get to remember and celebrate Jesus through this activity, you also get a chance to connect with each other as a faith community, too! ☺

by Tyler Carroll

# STORYTELLING

The passage out of Acts 2 in the God's Word section of this issue sounds like an amazing version of something many of us choose to be a part of on a regular basis: a small group! When my wife and I first got married, we prayed together that God would bring a group of other married couples into our lives who we could simply “do life” with.



After only a few months, we were invited to a small group meet-and-greet at our church, and 20 different couples showed up! The leaders determined that the 40 of us would split into four life groups, so we hung out for a few weeks, saw where groups naturally formed, and started down a new path together.

This group consisted of couples who had all been married for less than five years at the time, some of whom my wife and I had attended college with, and one of the husbands I had actually known since high school. We were all just starting out in our respective careers, with some of us working office jobs, some working in the ministry, some perpetually

As we were living life together, God began to inspire some couples to dream bigger, and they began to look outside of Arkansas (where we were living at the time) to see what God could have in store for them. God slowly but surely began to open doors for three different couples to move to California.

My wife and I were determined to stay in Arkansas, but our spiritual family was growing smaller and smaller. As we prayed and asked God to provide community for us, He began to make it clear that He wanted us to move to California as well. So, with a new job offer and friends waiting for us, we headed to our new home to reunite with the faith community who had become so dear to us.

WHATEVER YOU DO, FIND A WAY TO DO LIFE WITH OTHERS.

unemployed, and one guy even working to produce a short film. We decided to meet weekly, with each of us bringing a part of the meal and discussing whatever God seemed to be putting on our hearts that week. Some couples were having a rough go of it, some were coasting along, while others were seeing great success, both in their marriages and careers. We were all in very different places, but every week we would come together and do life.

This very quickly became our family, and our weekly get-togethers would often turn into two or three nights each week with at least a few couples hanging out over a meal or doing various other activities in the community. We began to serve together, asking the question “What needs to be done?” I cannot remember how often we helped each other move, but I can tell you that every time someone needed to move across town, we were all there and ready to work! We got so good at moving, in fact, that when my wife and I bought our first house, the whole move only took us a little over an hour!

Our old group got right back into the swing of things and it has been an amazing experience to begin a new phase of life with this spiritual family beside us.

Whatever you do, find a way to do life with others. Maybe your church offers small groups that you can join. Maybe you have a group that you already meet with and just need the encouragement to stick with it. Or maybe you need to create community by grabbing some families that you already know and initiating a weekly time to get together to share a meal and talk about what God is doing in each of your lives. ☺

# GOD'S WORD

## HEAR IT

Have you ever wondered when church began? Think about it ... when did people first start gathering together to learn about God, to serve others, and to sing and worship together? Was it when God created the earth? Was it after the flood?

To find out when the first Christian church began, read Acts 1—2, as a family. In Acts 2:42–47, what does it say the faith community was doing together?

## DO IT

After you have read the verses above, talk as a family about what things you do together with the faith community. Do you share meals with other believers? Go camping? Participate in church activities? Serve together? Pray together?

What have you done in the past year with other families who believe in Jesus?

What do you think you could do together in the next few weeks to connect with the faith community?

For a great idea on connecting with the faith community in your neighborhood, see this month's Family Food Time Dinner Activity on page 4. 🍴

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.” Acts 2:42–47

# PRAYER

With the craziness of life it seems hard enough to sit down and eat together as a family, let alone find quality time to be in community with other families. But God has designed us to live in fellowship with other believers.

When we share life together, eat together, and pray together we experience God in new and unique ways. We experience the fullness of relationship with God when we seek Him alongside others.

This month, create some space to experience God with another family. Invite another family over for dinner and be intentional with the time you have together. As you eat dinner, invite everyone to begin to share what God is doing in their lives right now ... big and small. After you have eaten, continue the conversation by praying together about the things everyone has shared. Thank God for the ways He is moving, invite Him into the things going on in each person's life, and offer any requests that were brought up as you talked.

Make sure to give the kids an opportunity to pray as well! They will learn what it looks like to live in community as they watch you. As you show them that it is normal and comfortable to talk about God and pray with others, they will begin to see that this is something they can do in their own relationships. ☺

WHEN WE SHARE LIFE  
TOGETHER, EAT  
TOGETHER, AND **PRAY**  
**TOGETHER** WE  
EXPERIENCE GOD IN  
NEW AND UNIQUE  
WAYS.

by Matt Barnes

# TRADITIONS

Faith Community is one of my favorite environments. Ask anyone who knows me ... I am a people person. I am always the last to leave the party because I love my social time. This is especially true when it comes to spending time with those who share my faith.

I think it has something to do with seeing God expressing Himself in a variety of ways. You see, each one of us who has the Holy Spirit in him becomes a unique expression of the God he serves. And when we come together, it is always fun to see how God "shows up." Sometimes, we come together in fun celebrations. Other times, we support someone else in the community through a rough time. In any case, being in community gives us the opportunity to learn more about who God is and who He's created us to be.

This month, as you consider creating a new tradition for your family, make a list of the unique characteristics God has given your family. These are the unique ways He expresses Himself through you as a group. Maybe your family is friendly and easily makes outsiders feel comfortable, maybe you have been blessed with a generous heart, or maybe all of you are comfortable reaching out to those less fortunate than you. Whatever your gifts, spend some time talking about how your family can contribute to the faith community with what God has given you. Maybe it's inviting another family over once a month to join you for Family Night. Maybe it's hosting an annual party for the other families in your neighborhood. Or maybe it's making meals for other families who are in need. (And, instead of just dropping the meal off, make enough for both of your families and make a fun night out of it!) ☺

WHATEVER IT IS  
THAT YOU DECIDE  
TO DO, MAKE SURE  
THAT IT SOMEHOW  
**UNIQUELY**  
**REPRESENTS**  
**YOUR FAMILY,**  
AND THAT IT'S  
SOMETHING YOU  
CAN MAKE INTO  
A TRADITION  
THAT BUILDS  
AND SUPPORTS  
THE FAITH  
COMMUNITY.

# MARRIAGE

Research shows that couples who have a strong support system of family and friends do better in their marriages. Couples often contact me when they are in dire situations, and time and time again, I have found that these couples have a lack of “community” involvement.

I will ask them what their support looks like, and I find they are doing life without others to come alongside them. Godly friendships are extremely important in a marriage. I urge the premarital couples I counsel to join small groups and to try to find relationships that they can build their marriages around.

My wife and I have a group of people that we share life with on a regular basis. When there is a problem, we are right there for them and they for us. We meet together weekly to share our “pits” and “peaks” of that week, and always look forward to having that time together.

Some couples feel that they don't spend enough time with their own children, but research suggests that if they themselves don't find community with other couples, their children may not do as well as they think.

Researcher Ellen Galinsky has found that “couples need to sustain supportive networks of friends and family. Most children don't want to spend as much time with their parents as parents assume; they just want their parents to be more relaxed when they are together.”

So work on keeping your relationship with your spouse more relaxed and get out there and commit to regularly spending time with and sharing life with other couples. 🍷

WHEN WAS A  
TIME YOU MET  
WITH ANOTHER  
COUPLE, “**SHARED  
LIFE TOGETHER ...  
BROKE BREAD, ATE  
TOGETHER, AND  
PRAYED?**” ACTS 2:42b

WHAT DID GOD DO  
THROUGH THIS TIME?  
SPEND SOME TIME  
THIS MONTH PRAYING  
AS A COUPLE, EITHER  
THANKING GOD FOR  
THE SUPPORT AND  
FRIENDSHIPS YOU  
HAVE OR ASKING  
HIM TO PROVIDE  
RELATIONSHIPS FOR  
YOU.

# CREATE

Who is in your faith community? I don't know about you, but I am a visual person, and I love to have pictures all around to remind me of special events, God's creation, and family and friends. I live with three other girls and we all share one refrigerator.

Over the last year or so, we have collected quite a collection of pictures of friends and family. They are a constant reminder of who those people are and the significance they have in our lives!

Who is on your refrigerator? For this month's Create, get out your old photo boxes, or gather your family around the computer, and look through pictures of people who are in your faith community. Either pull them out of that photo box, or get them printed. Then, give each person in the family a picture (or more than one) and some bright paper. Allow everyone to glue their pictures onto the paper and cut the paper into fun shapes. When everyone has finished their pictures, spend a few minutes praying for the people in your pictures and then put them up on the refrigerator for a visual representation of your faith community. 🍷



# WORSHIP

This month, examine what it means to be in community with one another. You're a family, so you already do life together, but what does it mean to intentionally grow in your faith as a community? What sorts of activities does your family do together that strengthen your immediate faith community? Do you have any family traditions or rituals? Where did they come from and how did they start?

**For example, does your family do any of the following?**

- Saturday morning breakfasts
- Weekly family bike rides, walks, or hikes
- Evening bedtime stories

Now, ask yourself what these traditions would look like if you intentionally invited God into them. What would your weekend hike look like if you turned it into a worshipful experience for your family? Perhaps as you and your family take your next walk you can make a point to open your eyes to God's creation. At the end of that walk, pray together as a family, thanking God for everything you noticed in His creation, including each other.

God desires each of us to grow individually as well as communally. He also requires worship. As a family, you can give Him that worship simply by altering or refocusing some of your oldest traditions. If you get stuck, invite the whole family into the process.

**Ask each other:** "How can we invite God into and worship Him through our tradition of \_\_\_\_\_?" You just might be surprised at the suggestions of even your youngest children. 🍷

# BLESSING

Community can be incredibly rewarding. I have had some of the most fun, the longest laughs, and the richest experiences with the Lord with my faith community by my side.

But, community can also be hard work. I have also had some of the hardest talks, biggest conflicts, and most frustrating experiences with my faith community by my side. Throughout the good and the bad, God calls us to love. He calls us to love even when it feels hard, when it might feel like the last thing we want to do. This month, as you read the blessing over your children, remind them that we are called to love others through the good and the bad. True community means we stick with those around us no matter what. Deep, God-centered

relationships are work and at times they require sacrifice ... but they are worth it. May you and your children be moved to love extravagantly, to be set apart by the unexplainable love you continually offer to your community.

Each month, you will see a different blessing in HomeFront Monthly. This will be your blessing for the entire month. Take the time to speak this blessing into the lives of your children at different times throughout the month. You can do this on the way to school, before bed, or while you eat as a family. Just make sure that you have your children's attention. Look them in their eyes and pray the blessing over them. Affirm your love for them by placing a hand on their shoulder or holding their hands. Remember, God's Spirit is at work; He will bless and care for the growing and tender hearts of your children. ☺

## BLESSING

“Love is patient. Love is kind. It does not want what belongs to others. It does not brag. It is not proud. It is not rude. It does not look out for its own interests. It does not easily become angry. It does not keep track of other people’s wrongs. Love is not happy with evil. But it is full of joy when the truth is spoken. It always protects. It always trusts. It always hopes. It never gives up. Love never fails.”

Corinthians 13:4–8 (NIRV)



# home|front

**Don't forget the HomeFront Weekly:** A resource to get parents and kids talking about God's Word together.