

A FAMILY RESOURCE

home|front

M O N T H L Y

ENVIRONMENT

love & respect

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

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Illustration by Anne Berry



inspire. equip. support.™

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 talk to a lot of people who have trouble believing that God can truly love them, no matter what. They know in their head that His love is unconditional, but often feel in their hearts there is no way God could love them in their sin. How could a holy, perfect God love them, even when they mess up and are anything but perfect and holy?

Somehow I haven't struggled with this much. Now don't get me wrong, I have plenty of issues and hang-ups, but really believing that God loves me no matter what doesn't happen to be one of them. I think a lot of this has to do with the way my parents loved me growing up. They made sure to tell me they loved me, often. And they made sure to tell me they loved me when I was behaving and when I was misbehaving. I was assured, consistently and often, that the love of my parents was there. I knew they loved me, liked who I was, and wanted me around ... in my best and worst moments. So, as I started to grow more and more in relationship with my Heavenly Father, it seemed pretty natural to believe that He must love me too, no matter what. If my earthly parents, who were flawed, could love me all the time, it made sense to believe that God, who is perfect, must love me all the time.

What an amazing privilege you have as parents to show extravagant love to your children. You get to give them a tiny picture of what God's love for them is like. I hope this issue of HomeFront Monthly gets you excited to move forward in the path of loving and respecting the amazing creations that God has entrusted you with! ☺



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ENVIRONMENT

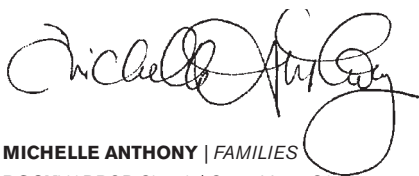
LOVE & RESPECT

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 in 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.

First Corinthians 13 says that if we don't have love, then everything else we do is futile. It's worthless. So, without love, it doesn't matter if we have all the knowledge in the world. It doesn't matter if we're helping kids understand who God is, and we're modeling what that looks like. If we don't do all of it in a way that is loving, then it is simply worthless. Wow! That is a sobering thought. When we create an environment of love and respect, we're helping to identify the image of God in every person.

One of my favorite ways to show love and respect is to actually get down on my knees and look at a child in his or her eyes. If they're telling me a story or something that's really important to them, getting on their eye level and holding their eye contact can be such a valuable act to a child. Often we forget that we tower higher than they are, and coming down to their level is a posture of humility that conveys, "I respect you and what you have to say."

This month, be looking for ways to take the environment of LOVE AND RESPECT beyond your family time with HomeFront. Challenge your family to find opportunities to show love and respect in your every day interactions. 🍓



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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 I am convinced that neither death nor life, ... neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."
Romans 8:38–39

PRES/KINDER VERSE

"Love one another. You must love one another, just as I have loved you." John 13:34 (NirV)

by Cheryl Wong

FAMILY FOOD TIME

DINNER ACTIVITY

During Christmas 2008, my sister and her family were living with us for a period of time. It was also the year when our church decided to try something different. Rather than having numerous church events for families to attend, it provided a resource they could use at home to create traditions and celebrate together.

It was the night of the “Special Plate Affirmation” activity. My sister grabbed onto this idea with delight. We would mark one of the dinner plates on the bottom and whoever received that plate with their meal was to be affirmed. Everyone would then take a turn saying what they appreciated about the “special plate” person. Many times it turned into fits of laughter and other times there were tears rolling down someone’s face. This became one of the highlights of our time together with two blended families, and also became a blessing to our family.

The love and tenderness that flows from this time is precious. In the busyness of life, it is easy to skip eating dinner together or just hurry and eat to move on to the next activity of the night. Affirming each other takes moments, that are too often forgotten, and pausing to celebrate reminds us of the love we have for one another.

Although my sister and her family don’t live with us anymore, there are times when we get together for dinner, and the “Special Plate” makes an appearance. 🍷

Show love to those around your dinner table!

- Tell one person one thing he does that makes you smile or laugh.
- Tell a story about a time when that person showed you love.
- Tell that person how much you love him and why.
- Tell that person what you appreciate about him.



FAMILY FOOD TIME

RECIPE

My aunt has made this dessert for as long as I can remember. It's a family favorite, and I'm sure your family will love it too!

Strawberry Pizza Pie

Prep Time: 30 min. *Cook Time:* about 45 min.

PIZZA CRUST

- 1 ½ cups butter, softened
- 1 ½ cups flour

Combine ingredients with a fork or pastry cutter until crumbly. Pat into 12" pizza pan. (Any prepared crust will do, too.) Bake at 350 degrees for approximately 10 minutes, until just lightly browned. Let cool.

TOPPING

- 1 jar or container of strawberry glaze
- 2 small baskets (about 3 cups) fresh strawberries, sliced

Clean, hull, and slice strawberries. Mix together with glaze. Refrigerate while preparing filling.

FILLING

- 1 (8 oz.) pkg. cream cheese, softened
- 1 cup powdered sugar
- 2 tsp. vanilla
- 1 (12 oz.) container whipped topping

Blend together cream cheese, powdered sugar, and vanilla until creamy. Add whipped topping, blend well.

Spread over cooled crust and chill in the freezer for 30 minutes, then cover with strawberry topping. Return to the freezer.

Thaw for 10–15 minutes before serving. 🍓



by Debbie Guinn

GAME TIME

YOUNGER KIDS

Love, Love, Hug!

This game will provide a tangible way for you and your little ones to show each other love. The format of this game is the same as “Duck, Duck, Goose!” The difference is players say, “Love, Love, Hug!”

How to Play

Gather your children together and sit in a circle. Pick one person to be “it.” This person will walk around the outside of the circle and tap the other family members on the shoulder, one at a time, while saying “love, love, love.” When this person says “hug,” she hugs, then runs around the circle. The person who was hugged must tag the hugger before she sits down in the empty spot around the circle. If the hugger sits down before being tagged, the other person now becomes the hugger. 🗨️



by Stacy Igarashi

GAME TIME

OLDER KIDS

Cup of Beans

Since we were little, my sister has teased me about my ability to come up with the funniest and most random games using household items.

I used to make up games involving floor mats, towels, bowls ... anything I could find! I can't wait to show my sister this game. I'm pretty sure she'll be laughing at me, again!

GAME PIECES: dried beans, large plastic bowl, small drinking cup, spoon, baking tray, stopwatch

Pour at least 3 cups of dried beans into the large plastic bowl. Place the bowl of beans and a spoon at one end of the room or yard. Have your family line up single file behind the bowl and spoon. On

the other side of the room or yard, place the baking tray with the small drinking cup sitting in the middle of it.

The first person in line grabs the spoon and scoops up as many dried beans as the spoon will hold, runs or walks quickly to the other side of the room or yard, pours his beans into the small drinking cup, runs back to the next family member, and passes off the spoon. This relay is meant to continue until your family fills the small drinking cup to overflowing with beans! Use the stopwatch to see how long it takes your family to complete this game. You can then play another round and try to beat your best time.

God calls us to love others because He first loved us. Sometimes it's hard to love others and show them respect without expecting anything in return. But God gives us so much love that hopefully it overflows onto the people around us. After playing this game, talk about some ways God's love can overflow from you to members of your family. Talk about ways to show God's love to your friends and others. 🗨️

STORYTELLING

LEARNING TO PRAY

For as long as I can remember, I've gone about my days in pretty consistent conversation with God. Sometimes I'm telling Him how I feel or asking questions. Sometimes I'm just saying good morning to Him or listening to Him remind me that He loves me.

As I think back over my life, I can honestly say that much of my easy conversation with God began with my parents' encouragement. I know my parents prayed for me while I was growing up, but I also remember doing a lot of talking with God myself. From a young age, my parents gave me the respect of telling me I could talk to God on my own. They recognized that I was a human being, created in God's image, and that I was also capable of talking to God.

I was talking with a friend the other day about praying. He said that he and his wife pray for their children a lot, which is great, but he feels like they haven't consistently empowered their kids to pray on their own. Sure, they pray at meals and before bed, but other than that, he does most of the praying. He sees a need in one of his kids' lives, and he prays for that need. He hears one of his daughters express feeling sad, hurt, or confused, and he begins to ask God to move in that. He and his wife are taking on all of the responsibility of making sure the Lord is hearing the requests of their children.

"I think a lot of parents do this," he told me. "They know that it is important to pray for their kids, so rather than foster conversation between their child and God, they take on all the responsibility themselves of talking to God for their children."

The first memory I have of talking to God, all on my own, was when I was five years old. My first day of kindergarten was really scary. I'm not sure why, but this normally outgoing, chatty, "wants to be the center of attention" girl was terrified to start school. I spent the entire night before my first day crying and asking my parents to let me stay home.

The morning I started school, my dad sat with me at breakfast and gave me a ring with a dove on it. He told me to wear the ring to school everyday and when I looked at it to remember that my daddy loved me, but more importantly, I should remember that Jesus is with me. He said he couldn't come to school with me, but Jesus could. He said whenever

I got scared, was feeling lonely, or even if I was happy, I should look at my ring and remember to tell Jesus how I was feeling.

I remember feeling pretty grown up that day. My dad thought I could talk to Jesus on my own? I knew that he talked to Jesus all the time, but he must really believe in me if he thought I could do that too.

On the drive to school, we prayed the whole way. We made simple requests: "Jesus, I want a nice girl to sit next to me," "Jesus, I'm afraid I will cry when my daddy leaves," "Jesus, help Laura to know that you are with her." I vividly remember talking to God throughout that day. I told Him I was scared, I asked Him for a friend, I told Him the art project had been pretty fun.

As I grew, my parents continued to encourage me to share my feelings with God, to simply talk to Him about the things going on in my head. The day I graduated from high school, my dad gave me a letter he had written to me on that first day of kindergarten (I still have it). He wrote, "More than I want you to know and trust that your daddy loves you, I want you to know and trust that your Heavenly Father loves you. I want you to run to Him and confide in Him even more than I want you to run to and confide in me."

My parents loved and respected me enough to know that I needed my own relationship with Jesus. They loved me enough to acknowledge their love would never be enough. I needed the love of my Heavenly Father. Instead of taking all of the responsibility of praying for me on themselves, they empowered me to do it myself. As a small child, there was something incredibly life giving about being respected enough to be told, "You can talk to God, you are big enough and know enough to do this important thing." 🙏