

RESOURCES



MOTHERING SKILLS



➤ WHAT IS THIS PORTION OF THE CLASS?

The Mothering Skills period of class is the time when the women are able to talk and share ideas and gain new insights from other class members regarding the acquiring or improving of mothering skills. This is the time in class where real bonding begins to take hold and lasting friendships are made. What a wonderful support we women can be to each other!

Your MotherWise Leader, the “shepherd” of the group, will guide you through using the following pages to help you take a deeper look at your mothering skills in a fun and creative way. Mothering skills discussion time is not a lecture (like the Bible study), but rather sharing, discovery, and exploration by the group. The following pages contain topics for mothering skills discussion time during your MotherWise sessions. Included are suggestions on how to interact in these discussions. Your leader may choose whichever topic best fits your group for a particular week.

➤ ENCOURAGING YOUR CHILD'S NEXT STEP TOWARD GOD



In this discussion time, you'll get practical help in leading your child to Christ and in encouraging his spiritual growth.

MOTHERING SKILL

What is your child's next step toward God? What do you perceive to be the next step in your child's journey in walking with God? Is it to be exposed to godly influences? Understand the plan of salvation? Accept Christ? Read the Bible? Pray? Be obedient? Relate common daily occurrences to God? Stand firm under peer pressure? Follow God's direction for their life?

What scares you most about your role in leading him?

What progress in the past six months have you seen in your child's walk with God?

What is your greatest concern about your child's walk with God?

WORDS TO ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILD'S NEXT STEP TOWARD GOD

Tell the truth...about heaven, hell, death and other topics that concern them

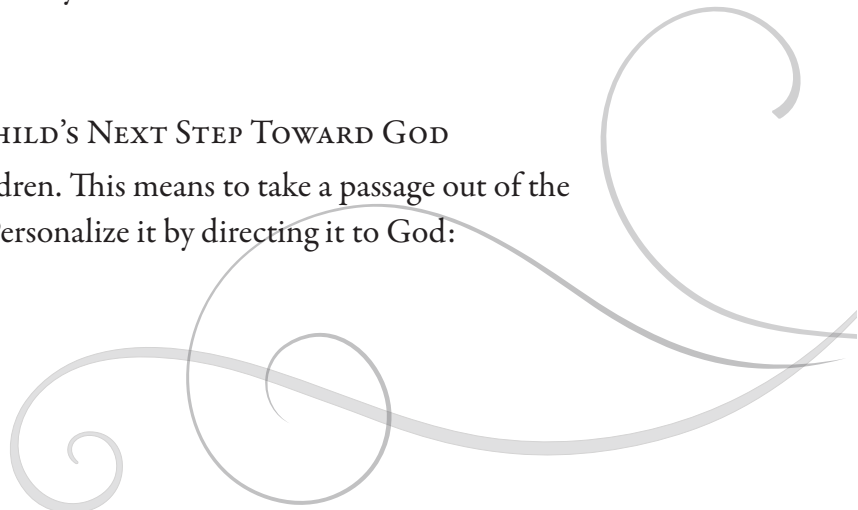
Take advantage of opportunities as they arise

Don't use force or manipulation

PRAYERS TO ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILD'S NEXT STEP TOWARD GOD

Pray Scriptures prayers over your children. This means to take a passage out of the Bible and read it to God as a prayer. Personalize it by directing it to God:

EPHESIANS 1:16-23



EPHESIANS 3:14-21

COLOSSIANS 1:9-14

MATERIALS TO ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILD'S NEXT STEP TOWARD GOD

Your child should have his own Bible

Devotional books

Christian biographies and fiction

Christian music

EVENTS TO ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILD'S NEXT STEP TOWARD GOD

Children's and Youth activities at church

Vacation Bible School

Christian summer camps

Christian music concerts

Christian retreats

Possibly consider Christian school or homeschool

YOUR LIFE CAN ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILD'S NEXT STEP TOWARD GOD

The single most important thing you can do to influence your children to follow Christ is to live in absolute surrender to God yourself. They are watching you, imitating you, scrutinizing your motives and behaviors. If God is real in your life, they can't miss it!

LEADING YOUR CHILD TO CHRIST

The most awesome privilege for parents is to introduce their children to Jesus Christ and to give them an opportunity to accept Jesus as Savior. While we cannot make the decision for the child, neither should we have a "hands off" attitude. I strongly encourage you to read the little book, *How To Lead a Child To Christ*, by Daniel H. Smith, Moody Press, Chicago, 1987. (Still available at www.amazon.com)

From the day you find out you are pregnant, begin praying for the salvation of your child or grandchild.

Teach your child how very much God loves him and has a plan for his life.

Help your child have an awareness of sin—that is when he chooses to deliberately disobey. Teach your child that when anyone (including you) deliberately chooses to disobey God, they have sinned. But be careful here. Don't use this as an opportunity to use guilt and scare tactics to force your child to "make a decision for Christ" before he is ready.

Answer your child's questions about God in simple, straightforward language.

When he is old enough to understand, explain how Jesus died on the cross to pay the cost of his sin. Then tell him that if he asks Jesus to forgive him of his sin and to come into his heart, Jesus will immediately come to live inside him. Also, he will live with Jesus in heaven someday. Continue to answer his questions and pray for him.

Wait on your child to respond in his own time. Do not hurry your child to "make a decision for Christ." You are not your child's Holy Spirit. Let the Spirit do the work of convicting your child. Just be available to the Lord to be used as a vessel in God's hand to speak at the right time and to be silent at the right time.

Little children want to please. Don't use "making a commitment to Christ" as a way for your child to please you. When children know the truth about sin, heaven, hell, death, Christ's love, and His plan to pay for our sins, they can, and many do, respond on their own to Christ. I am seeing children, who are very young, understand and respond to the gospel.

When he is ready to make the decision to become a Christian, don't put it off. Don't wait to talk to a minister. Lead him to Christ in that moment when his heart is tender and ready.

Pray a simple prayer, letting him repeat your prayer. You might have him pray,

"Lord Jesus, thank you for loving me. I know I am a sinner and I need you. Thank you for paying for my sins by dying on the cross. Please come into my heart now. I want to be your child. I give you my whole life. In Jesus holy name I pray. Amen."

Then have him pray whatever is on his heart. Don't help him with the second part of the prayer. It is very important that he pray on his own, expressing himself to God. Then tell him the angels are rejoicing in heaven because now he is God's child!

ENCOURAGING YOUR BELIEVING CHILD

If your child is a born-again believer in Jesus Christ, you have the awesome privilege of helping him throughout his life in taking his next step in walking with God.

WHILE THEY ARE LIVING AT HOME:

You have direct influence over their:

- church attendance
- Bible training
- encouraging their prayer life
- relating daily life occurrences to God and His Word.

WHEN THEY LEAVE YOUR HOME:

You still have a big job, Mom.

- Your work is to pray continuously for your child.
- Invite your children to events that will inspire them.
- Occasionally provide materials to stimulate their spiritual growth
- If your relationship allows, ask them questions about what God is currently teaching them
- Keep your mouth shut most of the time and pray, pray, pray, pray....

THESE ARE QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF IF YOUR CHILDREN ARE STILL AT HOME.

How often does your child attend church? Why or why not?

What sort of Bible training is your child receiving?

When does your child hear you pray? When do you pray with your child? Do you ever hear or know that your child is praying?

At our house, some of the most important times of encouraging our children's spiritual growth came in the everyday occurrences of life. When our children were in a crisis—like losing a friend, doing poorly in school, not making the team, being rejected by peers, or making a foolish mistake—we tried to listen, talk it through, and ask ourselves and our child what God is trying to communicate to us through this event. Then we prayed with our child right then as openly and honestly as we knew how. During these times, we learned more about our children and more about God. It was a “next step toward God” for all of us.

➤ TOYS AND TECHNOLOGY: TOTS TO TEENS



MOTHERING SKILL

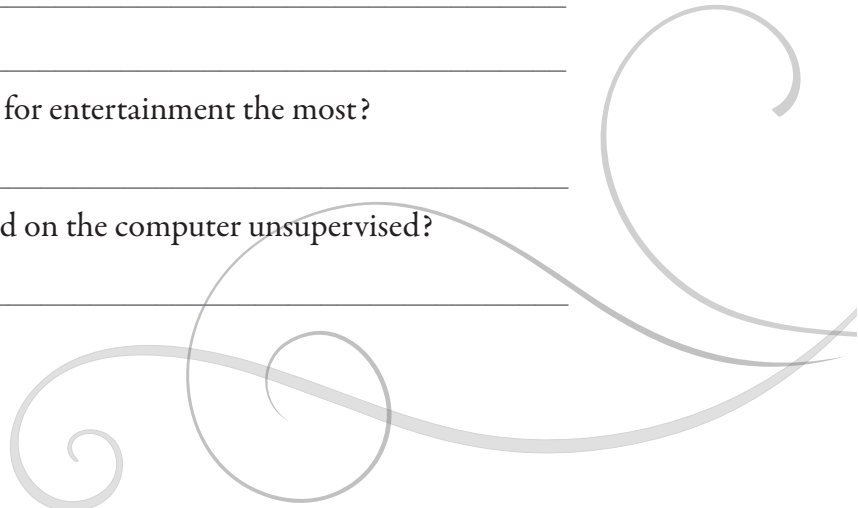
The fact that the topic of discussion for today is toys and technology says a lot about our society. Most of us can afford luxuries for our children that would have amazed our grandparents. But do all these gizmos and gadgets really deliver the promised “goods” to our kids?

Name the top five “toys” your child uses to entertain himself/herself. (Older children and teens have “toys”—just as adults do—like iPods, fancy cell phones, etc.)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

What is the one thing your child uses for entertainment the most?

How much time does your child spend on the computer unsupervised?



To provide your children with fun, consider some of the following forms of entertainment:

FOR YOUNG CHILDREN:

More unstructured toys than structured toys-dolls, balls, blocks, boxes, blankets, tents, sand shovels, pails, water, clean paint brushes, crayons, paper, scissors,

FOR SCHOOL-AGED KIDS:

Outdoor toys: bikes, skates, trampolines, jump ropes, sidewalk chalk, frisbees, balls, hoops, musical instruments.

FOR PRE-TEENS AND TEENS:

Sports equipment, art and craft materials, camera

STRUCTURED AND UNSTRUCTURED TOYS

Toys can be divided into two main categories: structured and unstructured. Structured toys can only be used one or maybe two ways. A jack-in-the box is an example of a structured toy. It doesn't use the imagination. You can only play with it in one way. Some structured toys are good and can teach important pre-reading and pre-mathematical skills.

For instance, toys that require a child to do things in a certain order teach "sequencing." This is an important pre-reading skill because in reading comprehension you must be able to keep up with a story's sequence of events to understand it. Toys that help a child to understand one-to-one ratio (you only count to one when you have only one apple) teach a pre-math skill that is necessary to understanding addition. Puzzles that provide these two experiences create great exercises for little brains.

Too many structured toys, however, inhibit the spontaneous, free, imaginative play we want to see in our children. Therefore, I recommend that children play with as many unstructured toys as possible.

Unstructured toys are different from structured toys in that they can be enjoyed in a variety of ways. They usually encourage the use of the imagination and/or the intellect. A ball is probably the most classic example of a good unstructured toy. Every age and stage of child/adult can enjoy playing with a ball. Even tiny children can roll balls. The ball can be used in a variety of games that can be made up by the players.

Examples:

Most dolls are unstructured toys. Baby dolls, in particular, are a good example of unstructured toys because they engage the imagination and can be played with by little girls in every culture.

Although teen dolls are an unstructured toy, I am not fond of giving little girls teen dolls. I think it promotes teen behaviors—like dating, driving, wearing make-up, etc.—in little girls who grow up too fast in our society.

Blocks are another wonderful example of unstructured toys. They stir the imagination and the intellect (it takes elementary engineering to play with them) and can be played with in many ways. Even an old blanket, some folding chairs and some “costumes” made of your old high heels and beads and your husband’s old ties, hats and shoes can serve as great unstructured toys.

Older children and teens often turn to structured “toys” like iPods, TV, movies, and computers for their entertainment. But when encouraged, some enjoy more creative forms of leisure. They may want to get involved in crafts of some kind. Some teens are artistic and just need to be supplied with good materials to work with. I’ve known some kids who took up photography and became really good at it. Some play musical instruments. Our youngest daughter spent most of her leisure time in high school playing the piano. All three of our children especially enjoyed puttering in the kitchen experimenting with recipes during their teen years.

When purchasing forms of entertainment for our children, we need to stop and ask ourselves some questions:

Will my child use his/her imagination with this toy?

Will my child use his/her intellect with this toy?

For young children: Will my child learn to sequence with this toy?

Will he/she learn one-to-one ratio?

Does this toy promote family unity or disharmony?

Will this toy encourage physical fitness?

Is this going to provide “good clean fun?”

Although most of us know the advantages of the vast knowledge now available on the Internet, many moms have learned too late that it is a “toy” that needs much supervision. Much has been written about the dangers of the Internet. If your children are old enough to sit at a computer, you need inform yourself about how to protect your child from the pedophiles and pornographers that lurk there. If you have teenagers, particularly teen boys, you will need to help them avoid internet pornography.

We suggest using Kid Zui. It’s a free downloadable Internet screener for kids. Our grandchildren are only allowed on the Internet if they use it. Kid Zui sends the mom regular email updates on their Internet activity. It’s great! By the time you read this, there will probably be other wonderful tools to screen the accessibility of the computer.

Another important consideration is to have the computer always in a public place in the house and discourage giving a child his or her own computer. We have heard from friends who attribute much of their wild teenage daughter’s connection with the wrong crowd—which led to alcoholism, drugs, and jail time—to private, unsupervised time on the computer. The danger is not just in pornography—it’s all the people available to your children online!

You’ll need to learn about *Facebook*, *My Space*, and other places your children might be meeting others. You’ll want to set up some ground rules for use of the computer.

Never give out personal information or use a credit card online without your permission.

Never share their password, even with friends.

Never arrange a face-to-face meeting with someone they met online unless you are present.

Never respond to messages that leave them feeling confused or uncomfortable. Encourage them to ignore the sender, end the communication, and tell you or another trusted adult immediately.

Be cautious in assuming that the people they meet online are who they say they are.

➤ MUSIC, MOVIES, MEDIA AND YOUR CHILD

MOTHERING SKILL

Do you know what your kids are watching? Are you concerned about the impact the media is having on your child? Do you have a sneaking suspicion that your eight-year-old is acting like an eighteen-year-old because of what he/she is listening to and watching on a regular basis? Are you confused about how to decide when is a child too young for certain programs? When should you allow your child to make choices on his own? This is the topic for this week's discussion in MotherWise.

What are your main concerns as a mom about the media and music consumption habits of your children?

What has your family found to be the best way to make responsible decisions about media and music?

DISCERNMENT

The skill we want to learn as mothers is how to have discernment concerning media choices for the family and how to teach our growing children to have discernment regarding their own media choices.

The first step in discernment is to know the "good" very well. When bank tellers are taught to catch counterfeiters, they are taught to know what a "good" bill looks like. They know every intricate detail. So when a "bad" bill comes across their desk, they can spot it immediately. It is the same with media. If you know God's Word very well, your discernment about what you see and hear will become razor sharp.

But does that mean we all should throw out our entertainment centers, never go to a movie and make our children read the Bible all day? If we do, does that mean our kids will never see anything "bad?"

Moms, let's face it. Most of us cannot be with our children every minute of the day, everywhere they go and today's media does provide some fun, family-oriented

entertainment. But we do need to protect our children's minds by teaching them to have discernment in their media choices. Help is available for Christian mothers and fathers who are seeking to teach such discernment and to walk the narrow path of spiritual and moral responsibility when it comes to decisions about movies, TV, and multimedia. Go to your Christian bookstore and check out the resources available.

The Media-Wise Family, by Ted Baehr teaches practical ways for parents to protect their children from inappropriate entertainment. He also provides a guide to a child's cognitive development and at what ages and stages he should be allowed certain forms of entertainment and why. I highly recommend his book. His ministry, the *Christian Film and Television Commission*, produces *MOVIEGUIDE*, a ministry that evaluates current movies. Visit their great website at www.movieguide.org.

In *The Media-Wise Family*, Baehr gives such practical advice as this quote from a ten-year study by Dr. Sally Ward who "cautions that infants under one year should be exposed to no television while preschoolers should be limited to one hour a day." Baehr urges parents to teach their children discernment by watching and listening to media and music with them and asking questions. Here is a sample of some of the discussion we should have with our children before they watch or listen:

Talk about the title, images and ideas about the plot.

Predict the character types and action in the film.

Ask what your children know that they can bring to the film.

Use MOVIEGUIDE's "In Brief" as an introduction to the film.

QUESTIONS

First, ask questions that analyze the media product according to its separate parts: the message that the writer, director and producer were trying to get across, the point of view and worldview portrayed, how the setting, lighting, and music helped to communicate the message.

For younger children, the questions might be, "Who was the good person in the story?" "Who was the bad person?" "How did you know which one was good and which one was bad?" "Did this story have any part about worshipping God or Jesus?" "Did the people in the story worship anything else?"

For older kids ask, "Who was the hero?" "What kind of person was the hero?" "Were they morally right?" "Who was the villain?" "Why did you know that?"

“What kind of a message does the character of the villain communicate?” “Is religion, the church, people of faith, and/or Christians in the mass media product?” “How are they portrayed?” “How is the family portrayed in this story?” Second, ask your children (and teach them to ask themselves), questions that hold up the media product to the light of God’s Word.

For younger children, ask, “Did the people in the story do anything that God says is wrong?” “What did they do?” “Where does it say that’s wrong in the Bible?”

For older kids ask those same questions, plus, “Does the premise of the media product agree or disagree with the Christian worldview? For example, “Does good triumph over evil?” “Why did the story end the way it did?”

If you will begin by watching and listening with your child and asking these questions, you will be started on the road to teaching them discernment about their choices of movies and TV.

What about music? Some of the same questions listed above can be applied to music. There is a website you and your teens might want to check out. It’s www.crosswalk.com. It is titled the “ultimate Christian music experience on the web.” There are artists profiles, samplings of current CD’s, album reviews, concert schedules and the opportunity to buy online.

➤ SETTING APPROPRIATE BOUNDARIES



MOTHERING SKILL

We have a big job. The work of mothering is vast in its scope. But one of the most critical arenas of mothering is that of establishing boundaries for our children and enforcing those boundaries. Wise mothers discipline their children according to God’s standards. But how do we practice it? This is the topic for today’s discussion.

What area of discipline and boundary setting gives you the most challenge? Getting your child to obey your instructions? Getting your child to show respect to you and other authorities? Establishing bed times? Curfews? Food and clothing choices? Manners? School and house work? Choice of friends? Attitudes? Entertainment?

Why do you think you struggle with that area?

List some age-appropriate boundaries for each of your children.

Child 1:

Child 2:

Child 3:

Child 4:

THESE ARE THINGS TO CONSIDER AS YOU CREATE BOUNDARIES FOR YOUR CHILDREN:

Boundary Number One:

Establish authority over your child while he still depends on you. He or she needs to obey you. It is your job to set that boundary and to enforce it. This boundary is based on **EPHESIANS 6:1**.

Boundary Number Two:

Children must respect their parents. Honoring parents starts with an attitude and proceeds to action. This boundary is based on **EXODUS 20:12**.

Boundary Number Three:

Children must relate to others in an acceptable manner. These boundaries have their foundations in the last five of the ten commandments in **EXODUS 20:13-10** and the further explanations of them by Jesus in **MATTHEW 5-7**.

Boundary Number Four:

Children must follow the boundaries set that are unique to your family. These include decisions about bedtimes, curfews, eating and dressing habits, cleanliness, entertainment, friends, church attendance and acceptable attitudes.¹

Your child will learn his boundaries when he receives consequences for operating outside the boundaries, when he takes ownership or responsibility for his own actions, and when he deals with the boundaries of others.²

Part of training a child to understand his boundaries is establishing and enforcing clear, fair, appropriate boundaries for your child and part of his understanding of boundaries comes as you become a boundary for your child.³

AGE-APPROPRIATE BOUNDARIES

You may be asking, “What can I expect of my child? How do I set standards and boundaries that are age appropriate?” Where no two children are alike in their growth and maturity rate, some very basic and general guidelines are helpful if you won’t get legalistic about them. Remember, God made your little Suzy or Johnny unique. These are some boundaries for young children to school aged kids based on an excellent resource for parents, *The Complete Book of Baby and Child Care for Christian Parents*, by Grace Ketterman and Herbert Ketterman (still available in used books from amazon.com)

Sometime in the first year to year and a half, most children can learn to accept limits and obey your simple, clear instructions. They can learn to avoid dangerous situations. However, Mom, children under two need constant adult supervision. It is inconvenient and tiresome, but it is what is right for your child. This is the time for some serious bonding with your little one. Relax and enjoy it because before you know it you’ll have to make an appointment to spend time with him.

Between two and three, children can learn to pick up their toys with some help. He can obey your instructions if you make them simple. He/she will more often stay within the boundaries you set for him if he faces immediate, consistent consequences. During this stage a child learns to use the toilet, dress himself, play within safe limits and he starts to be considerate of others. He/she can be a big “helper” for mom and dad.

By the time he is four to five, most children can button, zip and tie on their clothing and shoes. They can eat with fewer messes. Most of them have the ability to be cooperative in a group as they can submit their personal wishes to larger group's agenda. Since children at this stage are very trusting, they need help in knowing who they can trust and who they cannot.

To preschool or not to preschool is a major concern for many parents. Take it to the Lord in prayer first! Ask the Lord for wisdom and discernment. Get counsel from godly parents in your church.

Then take an honest look at the maturity level of your child. Do they obey your simple instructions? Could they take instructions from a teacher? Can they focus their attention and sit still for short periods of time or are they "all over the place?" Do they still need long afternoon or morning naps? Do you have an eager beaver who talked early and whose mind is a little sponge? Do you have a quiet little one who loves to be home with mom and hates crowds and noise?

Look at your financial picture. Can you afford tuition and uniforms? Would it be best to home school up to a certain point?

We went through all those scenarios with each of our children. We did different things with each one because each situation was unique. Schooling for your child is a big decision, but it's not life and death. Whether or not they go to preschool will not usually decisively alter the course of their lives!

When children enter school, they enter a new world. They have a new adult authority figure every year, they are in a competitive peer environment and want to please their parents with school success. If you have a school-age child that does not know basic obedience and responsibility start now. Set clear boundaries and enforce them.

Many school-aged children respond to charts that help them develop responsible habits. Often the chart is placed on the refrigerator and stars or stickers are used to reward success for each task accomplished. Some duties that might be on the chart are:

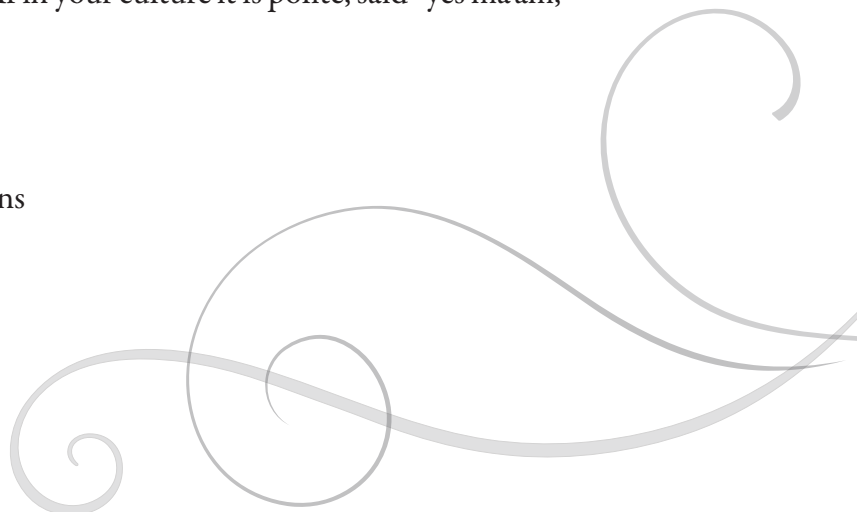
CHORE CHART

Wake self with an alarm clock
Make the bed
Brush teeth
Take a bath
Get dressed on time
Do homework on time
Feed pets
Help with garden and yard work
Help with sweeping
Help with dusting
Take out the trash
Put groceries away
Set the table
Clean up messes after eating
Take dishes to the sink
Help fill the dishwasher
Put dirty clothes in hamper
Answer the telephone appropriately
Tell parents whereabouts when playing
Go to bed on time the first time you are told

ATTITUDE CHART

An attitude chart to be filled out at the end of the day could have some of the following categories:

Addressed parents appropriately (If in your culture it is polite, said “yes ma’am,” “no ma’am” or “sir” to father.)
Used polite table manners
Did not whine
First time obedience to instructions
Did not interrupt conversations
Thoughtful of others



- Kind to others
- Honest and truthful
- Generous
- Not lazy; worked hard
- Not bragging or boastful

The teen years bring on new challenges in setting boundaries. These years become a balancing act for you as you begin the process of letting your child have more and more responsibility and less and less directives from you. The goal is to send your eighteen-year-old out into the world equipped to take over his life with maturity and responsibility with internal boundaries in place.

I suggest that you set up a form on your home computer (or copy mine). Adjust the categories to fit your family. If you have a compliant teen, you may want to whittle the list to only a few important points. If you have a very belligerent teen, trim the list to only the battles that you are willing to fight and win.

➤ COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR CHILD



COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR CHILD SKIT

NARRATOR:

Sometimes, moms communicate in a way that harms their children instead of helping them. Take a look at a scene from the Miller family. The family is at little Emily's basketball game when Mrs. Miller discovers that little Emily has not brought home the math progress report from the teacher. In fact, Emily has forged her mother's signature on it, and turned it in to the teacher. Mrs. Miller climbs over the bleachers to grab Emily on the sidelines of the game. In front of all Emily's teammates and her coach, Mrs. Miller yells....

MRS. MILLER:

Emily!! I just found out that you signed your own math progress report! You did not bring it home! You did not show it to me! You lied, you forged my signature, and you have let four days go by without telling me!!! Emily! You are a liar!! You are a cheat!! (Shaking Emily's arm) I have had just about enough of this bad behavior. You have been bad before, but this tops it all!! Young lady, you have embarrassed me in front of the whole MotherWise class. And I'm a prayer group leader!!

All my friends know what you have done! I cannot believe I have a liar for a child. Shame on you, Emily!! Shame! Shame! (Shaking Emily all the way out the door.)

NARRATOR:

And Mrs. Miller drags shame-faced Emily off. Now, was Emily right? Of course not. She did the wrong thing, but her mother ruined any lesson that might have been taught. Now Emily will only remember the shame of her mother's embarrassing behavior in public. Now Emily has a target for her feelings. She is no longer feeling guilty for her sin. Now, Emily will target her mother with all her emotions, and this time, those emotions will be ANGER! And all that anger is directed at her mother!

But let's look at this scene with a new, changed Mrs. Miller who has been taking her mothering to the cross. The new Mrs. Miller gets the same news of Emily's transgression, but this time, her reaction is very different. First of all, she waits until after the ballgame, when they are safely at home. And while she waits, Mrs. Miller is asking the Lord to empty her of her prideful and rejecting flesh, so she can express the life of Jesus to Emily. She is asking God to discipline Emily through her, in order to bring Emily to repentance and restoration.

MRS. MILLER:

(On the phone: 'Hi Honey. Yeah, I hate to bother you at work, is this a good time to call? If not, I'll call back when you have about 5 minutes...okay, well I'll tell you quickly. I need your prayers and wisdom. Emily has been caught signing her own math progress report at school and hiding it from us. Could we pray right now for her and for what I should do and say?...Lord, we lift this situation to you and we ask that You would pour wisdom through me, In Jesus' name. Amen. Thanks Honey!)

Emily! I need to speak to you for a few minutes. Come into my bedroom.

NARRATOR:

Mom waits in her bedroom while wide-eyed Emily comes in looking frightened.

MRS. MILLER:

Emily, I heard you signed your own math progress report and turned it in, hiding this from your dad and me. Your teacher showed it to me today at the ballgame. I have the evidence right here. What do you say?

NARRATOR:

Mrs. Miller wisely waits for Emily to speak. She doesn't rush the moment.

COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR CHILD SKIT 2

EMILY:

Mom, I didn't mean to, it was an accident. What I mean is, everybody else in the class was doing it too, I wasn't the only one. Hey mom, did I ask you to be driver for the field trip the class is taking. They need moms to go. Could you do that, mom?

MRS. MILLER:

Emily, we are talking about what happened at school with the progress report. You need to ask me to forgive you. What you did was very wrong.

EMILY:

I...I....

(Mrs. Miller looks very intently into Emily's eyes.)

EMILY:

Mom, I'm sorry. I don't know why I did that. I am really sorry.

MRS. MILLER:

Emily, what did you do wrong?

EMILY:

I lied. I wrote down a lie when I signed your name with my handwriting. Mom, I'm so sorry. (Emily cries into mother's arms.)

MRS. MILLER:

I forgive you, Emily. I know you're sorry. Thank you so much for telling me. (Hugs Emily) Now, I think we need to pray. Let's hold hands and I'm going to let you pray on your own. You need to ask God to forgive you, Emily.

NARRATOR:

(while Emily and Mrs. Miller “pray”) While Emily is praying, Mrs. Miller is again asking God to give her wisdom to discipline Emily in the best way.

MRS. MILLER:

Emily, I have been thinking about the right kind of discipline for what you have done. We are going to do two things. First, we are going to make sure you have enough time to do all your math homework every night. So there will be no TV at all for the next 7 days. No one in the family will be watching TV. We will all be helping you stay focused on remembering to do your homework. Dad and I will help you to make sure you understand the assignments. The second thing we need to do is ask forgiveness from one more person. We are going to go to the school so you can ask Mrs. Dalton to forgive you.

EMILY:

Oh no! Mom! I can't do that!! No, Mom, don't make me. (Emily starts crying.)

MRS. MILLER:

Sorry Em, but we must go to the school. What you did was not a mistake, it was a sin. And when we sin, we must ask those we've hurt to forgive us. You must go to Mrs. Dalton and ask her to forgive you for lying to her. Hop in the car.

NARRATOR:

And with a will of steel, not caving in to the cries of her daughter, Mrs. Miller takes Emily back to the school to apologize to the teacher even though it hurts her own pride to do so. And this trip will mean she cannot do the three things she had on her list to do before dinner tonight.

MRS. MILLER:

Hello, Mrs. Dalton. Emily has something she wants to say to you.

EMILY:

Mrs, uh, Mrs.....Mrs. Dalton,...oh Mom, I can't do this!

MRS. MILLER:

Emily, I will not say it for you. Tell Mrs. Dalton what you came to say.

EMILY:

Mrs. Dalton, I'm sorry, would (sniff sniff) would you forgive me?

NARRATOR:

Now we enter the home of the Smith's. Mrs. Smith's daughter Lisa has just broken up with the son of the pastor of their church. And Lisa did it in such a mean way. She embarrassed him in front of his friends by breaking up with him rudely. Now she is "gloating" over her victory on the phone with another girl from church. Mrs. Smith walks in to hear part of the conversation, and Mrs. Smith doesn't communicate very well with her teenager.

LISA:

Yeah, it was so cool the way I just told him, "We are through. I don't know what I saw in you anyway. For crying out loud, you didn't do anything right! I'm too mature for a guy who acts like he's still in Jr. Hi!"

MRS. SMITH:

Lisa!! Let me have that phone! (Tries to grab it away in the middle of the conversation. And of course, Lisa rebels.) Lisa!! You did what to the pastor's son!! I am so embarrassed! (Grabs phone and hangs up on Lisa's friend.) Young lady, I don't care what he is like, you should have been glad anyone paid attention to you! How are you going to get another boyfriend! Look at you! You don't dress right, your make up isn't right! All the other girls are so thin! Lisa!!

NARRATOR:

Lisa goes from being angry to being hurt and then to going into silent rebellion. She sulks. There was another way to handle this delicate situation with her child. Let's take a look at what Mrs. Smith could have done when she caught Lisa gloating about breaking up with the pastor's son.

MRS. SMITH:

(Tapping Lisa on the shoulder) Lisa, I need to speak with you, could you please hang up with Melissa?

LISA:

Yeah, yeah, Mom, just a minute. (And ignores her mother.)

NARRATOR:

Mrs. Smith writes a note to Lisa giving her exactly 5 minutes by the digital clock to end the conversation. This gives Lisa time to end the conversation without causing her embarrassment (which we have learned is very important in keeping communication open with our children).

(Lisa ends conversation when she sees her mother counting down “5, 4, 3, 2, 1”).

MRS. SMITH:

Lisa, when you break up with a boy, it is really important that you guard his feelings, just like you want me to guard yours. It is always a good idea to show respect to a guy, even when you're letting him know the relationship just isn't working out. Be gentle and kind and respectful. It doesn't take any more effort to be nice. I'm going to ask you not to talk about him behind his back, because I know you would hate that if you found out guys in the youth group were doing that to you. That's all I wanted to say, Sweetheart. You are my precious girl, and you are lovely inside as well as out. I just want to remind you to act like who you really are. Dinner will be in about 30 minutes, okay?

NARRATOR:

And Mrs. Smith goes on her way. She doesn't need to raise her voice, or pound it into Lisa. Lisa got the message. Now Mrs. Smith has to trust God is hearing her prayers and working inside Lisa's heart.

At every age and stage of mothering, we communicate with our children. From the day we give birth to the day we take our last breath, we want to have great communication with our kids. But how can we talk in a way they will listen? How can we listen and really hear their hearts? When are we sure that the important messages we are sending are getting through?

How would you describe the quality of communication in your family? Hot? Cold? Lukewarm?

What is the best time to communicate with your child?

What is the best place to communicate with your child?

When do you have difficulty with communication?

Do you have more trouble talking or listening?

Does your child have more trouble talking or listening?

If you could dream up a perfect world, what would the present and future communication with your child look like?

The development of language through the listening and talking that goes on in family conversation is one of the most important building blocks of learning. In fact, the better children are at using spoken language, the more successful they are in learning to read and write and the better they will function in school and work. With that kind of motivation for communication, we want to make our family conversations meaningful. But how?

DINNER TABLE TALK

Use the time at the evening meal to look each child in the eye and ask about their day. Ask specific questions about classes they are taking or activities in which they are involved. Turn off distractions, like the television and loud music, and focus the conversation with each family member. Avoid unpleasant subjects like nagging about unfinished tasks, dealing out punishment for misbehaviors and hashing out problems.

Encourage your children to swap stories, talk about what they are reading or share the best part of their day. Brainstorm answers to questions like, “What do you think the world will be like in 20 years?” Talk about current events in the news. Include even the youngest members of the family in conversations by allowing them to share an event from their day and teaching them to listen quietly to others without interrupting.

BED TIME

Sit down on the bed beside your child and chat before bedtime. This is especially effective with kids between the “little child stage” and the teen years. Most middle

school girls and some guys respond to this invitation.

While your teenage daughter is taking off her make-up at night, go stand in the bathroom. Even if it's very late, take the time. You will have to sacrifice your sleep to have good communication with most teens. The most meaningful conversations I've had with my teens and young adults were after midnight.

With young children, even babies, speak with gentleness and love, but don't always use baby talk. Baby talk is fine when expressing love and affection. But when you are teaching them the names of objects and giving simple directions, use the correct names of objects and events.

Be specific when giving directions to your children. Instead of "clean your room" say, "Please pick up the toys and clothes off the floor and put them in the drawers where they belong."

Play board games or work puzzles as a family to stimulate times of conversation.

In the car, play games like "I Spy" with license plates and road signs to get the family talking.

With teenage daughters, make an appointment to fix tea in the afternoon and find a quiet place to sip and talk. You might take your teen son to a good steak house or fishing hole for casual conversation.

These ideas are just starters. Brainstorm with your group about ways to get your family talking! Take notes on what you learn.



➤ GET THEM TO THE CHURCH ON TIME



Most of us have to admit that getting the whole family dressed and ready for church can be a challenge. This week, brainstorm with your group on how to make that process easier.

VISUAL AIDS:

Hair rollers

Bath robe and slippers

Iron and ironing board

Child's Sunday dress

Baby doll in real high chair

Jar of gooey baby food

Chair for "front seat of car"

Packed diaper bag if your group has mothers of young children

A packed bag with "church readiness" stuff in it — nail polish, hose (one pair with a run and one without), soap (to show bath the night before), outfits (to show they should be laid out the night before), offering envelopes (filled out the night before), Bibles; Easy recipes for Sunday breakfast and dinner; etc.

SKIT: SUNDAY MORNING SCENARIO

CHARACTERS:

One mom and One dad

Dad is sitting in a "car" made of chairs representing the family car. Mom is wearing bath robe and slippers and is ironing child's Sunday dress, at the same time she is trying to feed her baby gooey baby food. Baby won't "eat," she burns her hand, just when "Dad" starts "honking" the horn and yelling at her from "outside" to come and get in the car for church. She makes a mean face and yells!

➤ READY FOR BED

MOTHERING SKILL

VISUAL AIDS AND SKIT:

“Unprepared Mom” and “Rambunctious Kids” - two “children” in dirty play clothes, hair messed up, jumping and screaming and fighting while mom sits watching a movie, eating popcorn...she looks at her watch and realizes it is past bedtime and tells the kids to go change into pjs with no bath and get themselves to bed.

“Good Mom” and “Good Kids” - two clean “children” dressed in pjs, reading Bible storybook with mom quietly with soft guitar praise music playing in background.

NARRATOR:

Which of these kids are most likely to get the rest they need?

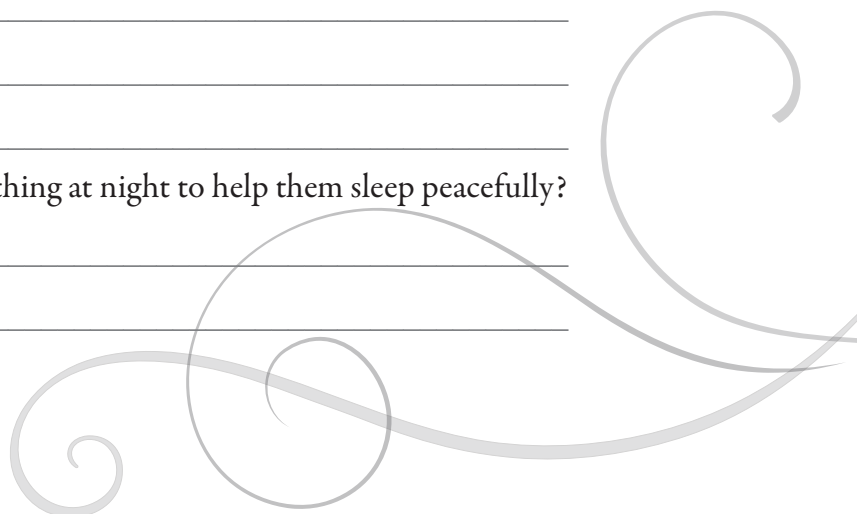
Experts tell us that ritual is essential for most children to be able to get the sleep they need. Having a regular pattern of activities to follow gives kids permission to follow their bodies’ lead into sleepiness.

Brainstorm ideas to begin your discussion on bedtime routines and what works for you child to help them get to bed.

What can you do 30 minutes before bedtime to help your child wind down and relax?

What bath time routine works best for your family?

What do you do with your child last thing at night to help them sleep peacefully?



IDEAS FOR BED TIME:

Create a calm atmosphere in your home at night with music and candles

Take a warm bath

Dab on nice-smelling powder

Clean ears

Comb hair

Brush teeth

Change into favorite cozy pj's

Avoid stimulating physical and emotional activities right before bed.

Play quietly in room 15 minutes before bedtime

Dim the lights in the house at bedtime

Pick out a favorite book

Choose clothes for next day

Arrange all stuffed animals and toys for sleep

Lay down with mom or dad and talk/pray

Listen to a story or song

Parent's tell stories from their childhood.

Look at pictures and make up stories

Let children tell a make-believe story

Talk about the day's events and help them grow from them:

For example- "I like how my drawing looked when I finished. Next time I will spend even more time working on my art projects." "I felt frustrated in math today. Tomorrow I want to have more patience with myself and ask for help if I need it." "The new girl in my class seems nice. Tomorrow I will talk with her and offer to be her friend."

MAKE A DREAM PILLOW

2 - 4x6 pieces of cotton fabric

½ cup dried chamomile flowers

½ c dried lavender flowers

½ cup dried rose petals

4 drops lavender oil

Stitch 3 sides together, then fill and complete stitching.

➤ NOURISHING THE FAMILY



MOTHERING SKILL

DISPLAY:

Collection of junk food and a collection of healthy foods

INTRODUCE THE TOPIC USING THE DISPLAY:

One group takes four minutes to brainstorm on why we feed our families food from the 'junk' group even though we know it's not good for them.

The other group takes the same four minutes to brainstorm on why we don't feed our families food from the healthy group even though we know we should.

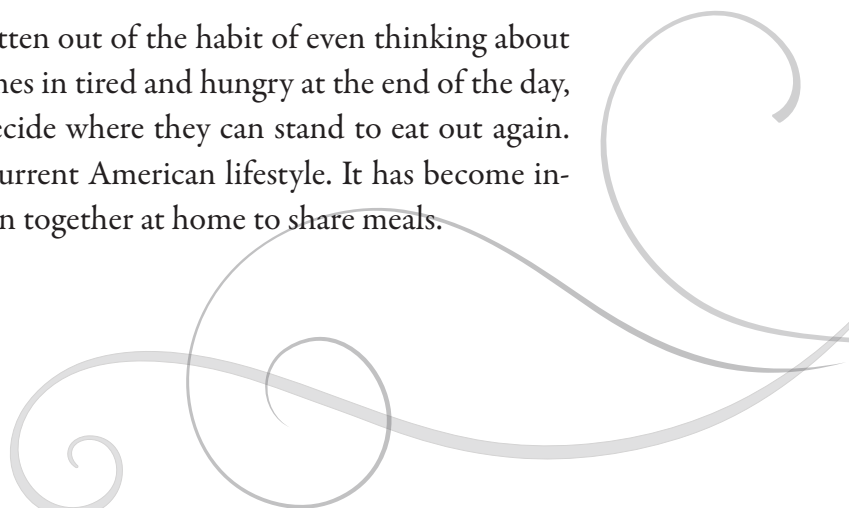
Or:

PLAY A GAME:

Have three mothers go "shopping" for their families. Your leader will provide a table full of both healthful and junk foods and ask the moms to shop to provide a healthy meal: Mom #1- Breakfast, Mom #2- Lunch, and Mom #3- Evening Meal.

One mother recently told me that she has a real problem with establishing a family dinner time. Her husband works late and didn't grow up in a home where the family ate together. They have two preschoolers who eat and go to bed early, and the mom hates to cook and eat alone.

Another mom admitted that she's gotten out of the habit of even thinking about cooking dinner. When the family comes in tired and hungry at the end of the day, they look at each other and try to decide where they can stand to eat out again. These scenarios are common in the current American lifestyle. It has become increasingly hard for families to sit down together at home to share meals.



Do you think it is important for families to sit down at a table at the beginning or end of the day to eat and talk? Why or why not?

What is your family's greatest problem in eating together?

What is your biggest difficulty in providing nourishing food for your family?

There is a famous "homemaker" on television who cooks everything from "scratch," whose house is decorator perfect, whose yard is wonderfully manicured and who has plenty of time for handmade baskets full of homemade goodies for her friends. Every meal is a delight and every dish exquisite. She also has a full staff of secretaries, chefs, yardmen, designers, and housekeepers. I could do all that too with that kind of help.

So what can real moms with real families do to keep good, wholesome food on the table at a reasonable hour and get the family to come eat it? Share your best mothering hints for getting the family together to eat at least one meal each day.

Share your best recipe for a dinner entrée that is nutritious (low fat, low sugar, low salt) and tasty.

When do you grocery shop? How do you keep grocery bills low, food quality high and keep food preparation simple? Share your best secrets.

HERE ARE SOME HINTS WE'VE GATHERED OVER THE YEARS:

- Grocery shop just before the weekend to have ingredients on hand for cooking larger quantities of main entrees. Serve leftovers on busy week nights.
- If you are a stay-at-home mom, start dinner right after breakfast. That way you won't get to the 5:00 p.m. crazies and end up eating out.
- Cook one of your husband's favorite dinners at least once a week. Call him at the office in the morning and tell him what you are cooking.
- Shop around the edges of the grocery store. The refrigerated units and the produce units are around the edges so they can be plugged into electricity and water sprayers. The freshest, most nutritious foods are around the edges of the store. Foods that are canned or boxed with lots of preservatives are sitting on shelves in the middle of the store. If it can be stored for four years in a can, how healthy can it be??
- Cook simple dinners. Cook a meat, a green vegetable (don't count corn or pasta, which are grains), a bread or other whole grain (like rice or pasta). Serve fruit for dessert. Voila! You have a simple, nutritious meal.
- Buy a new cookbook for healthful eating.
- Buy a wok and experiment with stir-frying chicken and vegetables that your family likes (or at least will try). We like stir-frying chunks of skinless, boneless chicken breasts, thin slices of onion, fresh broccoli and carrots. We serve it with brown rice and sprinkle on a little soy sauce. Yum!
- Experiment with Mexican spices like cumin and chili pepper and use tomatoes and green chilis. Try them in chicken and rice soups and ground meat and corn tortilla casseroles.
- Try out some Italian spices like oregano on sauteed chicken pieces, mushrooms, carrots and zucchini served over whole grain pasta with bottled pasta sauce. Make a salad and warm some French bread to complete the meal.

CLOSING:

The first and most crucial mothering skill involved in nourishing our families is taking responsibilities as mothers to provide nourishing food. This week provide one healthy sit-down dinner for your family at home.

FINANCIAL FINESSE FOR FAMILIES



DISPLAY:

Toy cars, boats, teen-type doll clothes, latest craze toy, magazine with a cover about glamour and fashion, play money or real bills

Today we're going to watch some skits and discuss how to have Financial Finesse in our families. (your leader will explain and assign the skits)

1) A 17-year-old daughter wants to go to the mall and get a \$75.00 hair cut. She expects her mother to pay for it because she lives under her roof.

DISCUSSION:

If this were you, you would:

- a) You pay for her haircuts, but feel you can only afford \$30. haircuts for yourself.
- b) You tell her no. She can cut her own hair.
- c) You give her percentage of the budget amount for hair cuts for the family and tell her she can either stay within that budget or supplement it with money of her own.

2) A five-year-old wants the newest toy he has seen advertised. It is very expensive.

DISCUSSION:

If this were you, you would:

- a) You tell him your family doesn't waste money on junk like that.
- b) You use the opportunity to start an allowance for him and explain savings, spending and tithing. Tell him the cost of the item and how much both you and he will need to contribute to split the cost of the toy. Ask him if he is sure he still wants that toy or would he like to choose another that's less expensive

and would take less of his savings.

c) You pull out your credit card and get the toy as soon as possible.

3) A twelve-year-old wants to spend every Saturday at the movies and mall with friends. He asks for \$40. to spend each time.

DISCUSSION:

If this were you, you would:

a) You give him the money because he's been struggling with popularity and you want him to have friends. You're afraid if you don't give it to him, he's going to be an outcast.

b) You tell him, "Absolutely not!" and remind him of how much \$40. would buy in your day.

c) You offer to pay him for Saturday chores that are to be done before socializing can take place. You establish ground rules for friends, movies and the mall. If he earns the money and stays within the ground rules, you let him go.

4) Some school-aged children have just come home from the funeral of their beloved grandmother. They want to know who they will go live with if their parents die while they're still home:

DISCUSSION:

If this were you, you would:

a) You tell them to stop talking about it because nothing bad like that will happen while they are children.

b) You let them know they would go live with Aunt Judy (because that's who is named in your will as their guardian in case of your death). Then you call Judy and ask her to verify for the kids that she will take them in case something happens to you. You remind her about your life insurance coverage and the children's college accounts.

c) You tell them that it's all worked out and not to worry about it.

5) A teenage daughter has earned her own money at a part time job at the mall and comes home with the most hideous looking clothing from her earnings. The clothing is not immodest, but is in terrible taste.

DISCUSSION:

If this were you, you would:

- a) You bite your tongue and use body language to communicate your displeasure.
 - b) You tell her to take it all back and sit her down to explain good taste from bad taste.
 - c) You tell her how proud you are of her for working. You ask to see her outfits and find something to compliment. You honestly say that her taste is different from yours but that she can wear anything she buys that is not immodest and doesn't break school or work dress codes.
- 6) A mom is tired of the clothing in her closet and has been feeling down. She needs a lift. She goes to the mall and picks out the most darling outfit that exactly matches her hair and eyes. Her husband blows up when he hears what she paid for it.

DISCUSSION:

If this were you, you would:

- a) You put it back in the sack with the receipt and take it back the next day. You don't speak to your husband for a week and even then the air is icy between you.
- b) You apologize to your husband and offer to take back the outfit. You express your need for a clothing budget amount every month so you can save toward purchases.
- c) You fix your husband a great meal, offer him sex and hope he forgets about the expenditure.

I think the best answers are:

- 1) c
- 2) b
- 3) c
- 4) b
- 5) c
- 6) b

What do you think?

What financial issues are you working through with your family?

CLOSING:

We want our families to be financially free. When we recognize that God is the owner and we are the stewards of everything we own, it helps us put things into perspective. This week, take one step toward financial finesse by either tithing, saving or requiring your child to delay gratification of one desire until he has earned the money to obtain it.

➤ **FAMILY DEVOTIONS**



DISPLAY:

Picnic equipment, frisbee, basketball, large concordance, coffee table-sized large family Bible, Greek and Hebrew dictionaries, if possible

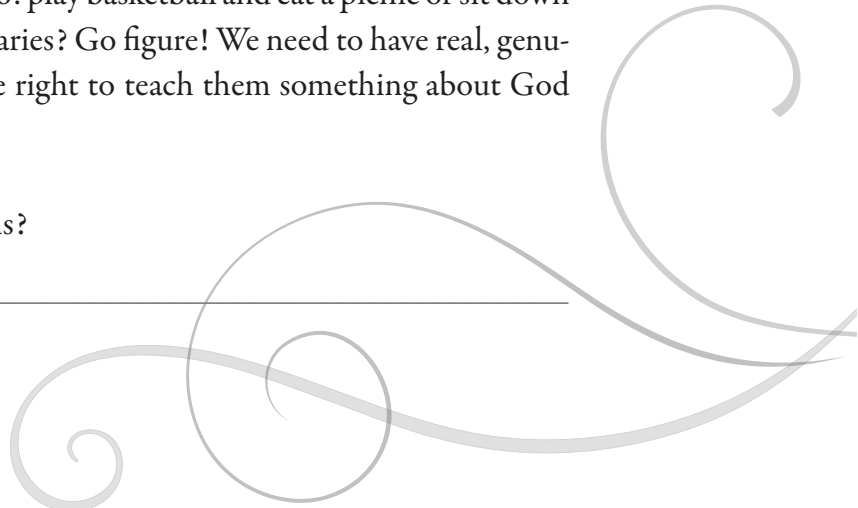
GROUP MANAGEMENT:

Divide moms by ages and sex of children.

INTRODUCE THE TOPIC USING THE DISPLAY:

“Which would your children rather do: play basketball and eat a picnic or sit down and study Greek and Hebrew dictionaries? Go figure! We need to have real, genuine fun with our kids first to earn the right to teach them something about God and His Word.”

What is your goal for family devotions?



What did you like/dislike about the devotions your family did or did not have as you grew up?

What will be the greatest challenge you face in trying to establish or maintain family devotions?

SOME POINTS TO REMEMBER ARE:

- Make a rock solid commitment to your family time. Be creative as you work around your challenges. Don't let illness or fatigue keep you from Family Night.
- Keep it light-hearted and fun for at least 75% of the time. Start with the fun stuff.
- Use variety in the places you eat (backyard, living room, out to eat, bedroom, fireplace—if you have one).
- If the kids suggest something unique for Family Night, let them lead. Go along with their plan, if at all feasible.
- Get each of your children their own copy of the Bible and get the same version for everyone in the family.
- Form a circle with the family when it's time to share and talk about spiritual things. Each person needs to be able to see the others.
- Keep a folder in the file cabinet or on the computer for Family Night ideas. Keep your eyes open to new ideas. These will come at odd moments, so have a place to store them for future reference. You may find great stories in Christian magazines that would be a good opener for family discussion.
- Name your family devotions. Ours was called "Family Night." You might name yours something else. But it needs designation. When the name is mentioned, it should evoke memories in each family member's mind. Have a theme song. We had several. They were "Open Our Eyes, Lord," "This Little Light of Mine," and "Jesus, I Adore You." We sang them for years as a family. I still get misty

when I hear them because I envision three little girls' faces shining in candlelight sweetly singing the melodies.

- Family time is a way to communicate to our children. “We belong to one another. We’re in this together. We can face anything if we face it as a united group. You are a part of something special.”

CLOSING:

Planning an evening of fun for your family is the first step to a meaningful family devotion. When the time set aside for your children begins with laughter and ends with prayer and sharing you know you’ve had a successful family devotion. This week plan a time for your family that includes good food, good fun, and sincere worship.

➤ MAKING MEMORABLE MOMENTS (AND RECORDING THEM)



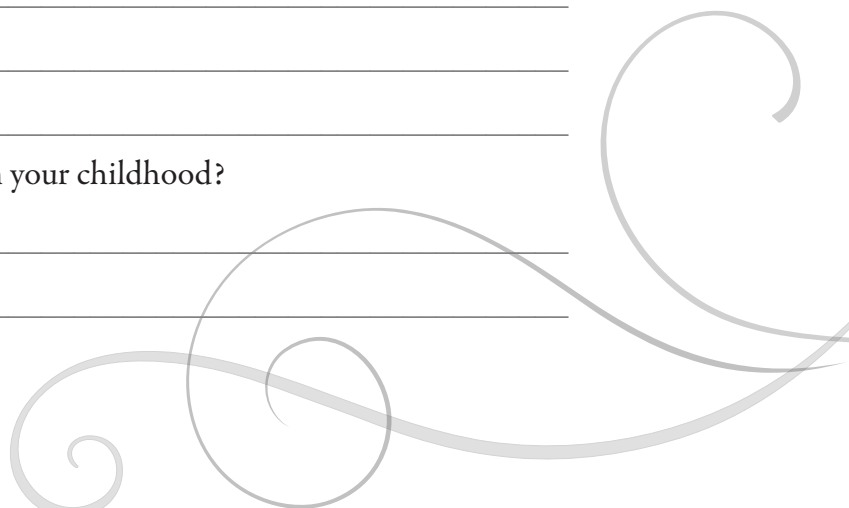
DISPLAY:

Picture boxes and albums, home videos—perhaps one playing on the VCR, homemade cookies on a special plate, mud pies in a foil plate, gift wrapped like Christmas and one wrapped for a birthday

Most of us have stacks of pictures that aren’t in albums and samples of our children’s art wrinkled under mounds of magazines. How do we create happy “Kodak moments” for our families and then capture them for posterity? How do we handle family traditions at birthdays and holidays?

What one legacy of memory do you want to leave with your children or grandchildren?

What is the best family memory from your childhood?



What tradition does your family observe regularly?

What memory-making moment would mean the most to your husband and children?

How have you solved holiday hassles in a creative way?

Memorable moments with your family can be as simple as watching a sunset and as elaborate as a long family vacation. I suggest that you ask your family what memories they have from your family get-togethers and make this a dinner time conversation starter to see what you learn from each family member.

Then ask how each person would like to save those memories. Do they like to look at pictures? Can the family invest in a video camera? Do they want to draw pictures or write stories? Would they like to make a cassette tape of a happy memory some night at dinner?

Several companies have formed recently in the business of keeping memories in scrapbooks. Some families love to invest time and money into these projects. Others like to keep pictures in a box for simple filing. How do you like to keep memories?

One way our extended family created a lasting memory and recorded it was at one particular Thanksgiving holiday. My ninety-year-old grandmother was very alert and spunky. We created a “set” with some wicker chairs and plants, gathered her great grandchildren, turned on the video camera and I “interviewed” her so she would start telling her stories. She had a phenomenal memory and could even remember an incident that happened when she was two years old.

She began to weave her tales of coming from Kentucky with her family of ten in a covered wagon all the way to Texas. She told us about Indians who came to their homestead and scared them to death. We all sat spellbound as she remembered events we had only read about in our history books. We will never forget that holiday. Now that she is gone, we have the videotapes to replay and pass on to our grandchildren.

CLOSING:

It's nice to have a camera to record special moments in your families' life, but it doesn't take special equipment to have fun with your family and create memorable, meaningful times with them. To most kids, making a mud pie on a sunny afternoon or eating a warm sugar cookie accompanied with a hug are the memories that stick for a lifetime.

