**FOCUS ON FAMILY**

**2021**

**GROWING TOGETHER AS A FAMILY:**

**Breaking Bread House to House**

A row of houses

Description automatically generated with low confidence

**Based on the book, *Building Family Ties With Faith, Love, & Laughter*, by Dave Stone**

***“And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,”* Acts 2:46**

**WHAT YOU WILL FIND IN THIS STUDY GUIDE**

This study guide reviews excerpts from the book **“Building Family Ties With Faith, Love & Laughter”,** by Dave Stone**,** to **examine the family structure as God originally designed it. It shows practical ways in which individuals and families can overcome obstacles and uses humor and personal stories from a biblical perspective to highlight ways to create a godly atmosphere in your home and family.** It is our prayer that this study will touch hearts and homes and bring people to a better understanding of God’s plan for the family.

**I Background Info on the Book**

**II Weekly Discussion Material**

**Week 1 (August 4): The Christian Family: An Endangered Species**

**(Ch. 1)**

**This lesson will address what a family is (as God designed it) and those**

**things that threaten to destroy God’s original design**

**Week 2 (August 11): Which Way From Here: Establishing A Family**

**Mission Statement (Ch. 2)**

**This lesson will explain what is a Family Mission Statement and examine**

**the purpose of having one**

**Week 3 (August 18): Maintaining Family Stability (Ch. 3, Ch. 7)**

**This lesson will show why security and stability are important to building**

**a strong family environment**

**Week 4 (August 25): Working Together Through Difficult**

**Situations (Ch. 4, Ch. 10)**

**This lesson examines the importance of family supporting one another**

**III Additional Applications**

**These are hands-on lessons that can be done individually or as a family to**

**put into practice ways to strengthen family ties**

**IV Suggested Family/Date Activities**

**A list of fun, creative, and inexpensive games and activities couples and families can**

**do together to strengthen family ties**

**FOCUS ON FAMILY**

**GROWING TOGETHER AS A FAMILY: Breaking Bread**

**House to House**

***“And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart***,” **Acts 2:46**

**BUILDING FAMILY TIES WITH FAITH, LOVE, & LAUGHTER**

**FAMILY TIES:** bonds or connections between blood relatives

In order to build a solid structure we must have a good plan, the right tools, the right building materials, the right skills, and a solid foundation. To build a strong Christian family tie we must begin with God **(Psalms 127:1). He is our foundation (Psalms 18:2), He has the plan (Jeremiah 29:11), and He provides us with the tools, materials, and skills we need to succeed (Philippians 4:19).**

**GROWING:** undergoing natural development by increasing in size and changing physically.

Families grow stronger by studying God’s word together

**FAITH: Hebrews 11:1 says “**faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Without faith it is impossible to please God **(Hebrews 11:6). God, the original designer of the family structure, created man and woman to be joined together as one, to have dominion over the earth to care for it, and to multiply and replenish the earth.**

In order to build strong family ties it is crucial that we first have faith. Before we can obtain the love and the laughter we must have a goal (know what it is we hope to achieve) for our family. Unfortunately Many couples come together without a goal in mind or one that is purely physical (house, car, reputation, material possessions, the perfect family). Because of sin, the perfect family does not exist, and material possessions cannot fill the void left by sin and man’s separation from God.

Faith calls us to seek and to depend on God for what we need. We must believe that God is and that He is a rewarder of those that diligently seek Him (**Hebrews 11:6b**). All that we need to build strong family ties can be found in God and God’s Word.

**LOVE:** Love is one of the Fruit of the Spirit (**Galatians 5:22-23**). It is a decision to be committed to the well-being of others without any conditions or circumstances. Godly love is not based on emotions or feelings.

The greatest commandment given in **Matthew 22:37-40** is “love”. As Christians, we are to imitate God. Since God is love, we are also called to be love and to show love to one another (**I John 4:7**).

**LAUGHTER:** When we are experiencing difficult times, it helps to laugh (find humor) even while our hearts are breaking and despite the circumstances around us. There are many scientifically documented benefits to laughter (**Proverbs 17:22**).

**BREAKING BREAD:** Food has a way of bringing people together. There are many events and gatherings centered around food/eating. As Christians, the bible urges us to not take it lightly when we come together to “break bread” (**Hebrews 10:25**). Bread has both a physical and a spiritual (Word of God) connotation. Gathering together and partaking of both the physical and spiritual bread strengthens individuals, family ties, churches, communities, and the world.

This study will show how following all these components brings individuals and families together, strengthens their bonds, keeps them closer and the Lord adds to the church (**Acts 2:47**).

**OUR CHALLENGE TODAY**

**God’s original design for the family (both the individual and the church family) is under serious attack** by those who wish to minimize it or exchange it with a more “inclusive”, acceptable one (**Ephesians 6:12**). Lies, distorted truth, and desperate people hungry for answers to life’s questions all make the perfect ingredients for a society of misinformed, misguided, “me-focused” individuals. Today, people appear to be more interested in catering to the image society dictates rather than the image God’s Word commands (**Romans 12:2**).

**Relationships first began with God** in the Garden of Eden when God declared that ***“it is not good that the man should be alone”*** (**Genesis 2:18**). In order to know how to successfully choose and maintain healthy relationships and how to avoid unhealthy ones, it requires that God’s people consult (and submit to) God’s infinite and unfailing wisdom and guidance.

God’s call to the individual, to the family, and to the church has remained constant. It is within the safety and security of the family that we first learn what that call is and how it applies to us.

***“Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.”* Psalm 127:1**.

**The home is more than a roof and four walls.** It is a sanctuary, a refuge to retreat to when the cares and concerns of life become too heavy to bear. It is a place to learn and to prepare for what lies outside its doors.

The home is a place to share our deepest fears and a place where our darkest secrets are forgiven.

The home is a place where we find comfort and a place where we are challenged and stretched beyond ourselves. It is a place where broken hearts are mended, and broken dreams can be reimagined.

The home is a place where we celebrate our accomplishments and find encouragement to try again when we fail; a place that simultaneously grounds us while teaching us to fly.

The home is a place where we are loved and accepted for who we are, yet pushed to grow and develop into who God has created us to be.

The home is a place where we are encouraged to learn new skills and try new things to determine what we like and what we don’t like in order to set and achieve our desired goals.

Without proper focus on what God desires for us, it is impossible to accomplish or to sustain all these things for ourselves and our family.

Without strong individuals, the family becomes weak. Without strong families, the church becomes weak. Without strong churches, the community becomes weak. Without strong communities, our cities, nations, and the world become weak. Without God, none of this is possible.

**The home is more than a roof and four walls;** it is more than a place to lay our head or grab a meal. **The home is what we make it when we intentionally come together with Faith, Love, and Laughter.**

**FOCUS ON FAMILY**

**GROWING TOGETHER AS A FAMILY: Breaking Bread**

**House to House**

***“The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”* John 10:10**

**WEEK I**

**THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY: AN ENDANGERED SPECIES**

**(Ch. 1)**

**KEY SCRIPTURE:**

**John 10:10**

**LEARNING GOALS**

**\*To understand what is a family; God’s original design for family**

**\*To show those things that endanger God’s design for the family**

**\*To look at other family structures**

**\*To demonstrate ways to protect and strengthen the family against**

**those things that endanger it**

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**WEEK I**

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**(Ch. 1)**

**John 10:10**

***FAMILY DEFINED:*** a group of one or more parents and their children living together as a unit.

**1) Why is the family important?**

In **Genesis 2:18, 21-24** God designed, ordained, and instituted the first family when He created Adam and Eve; the parameters for families were set by God and were very specific. Made in God’s image, Adam and Eve were placed in the garden to take care of it and to be fruitful and multiply (replenish it).

**We (all believers) are members of God’s Family**. What affects one individual can have a tremendous impact on the entire family. (**2 Timothy 3:1-9, 12-17; Proverbs 6:23; Proverbs 15:10**).

(**John 8:32**).

***ENDANGERED DEFINED****:* seriously at risk of extinction (having no living members)

**There are 10,000 animals and 9,000 plants that are currently in danger of becoming extinct.** When there are no more individuals of a particular species alive or able to reproduce, then that species will cease to exist.

**2) How is the Christian family becoming an endangered species?**

**The thief cometh not, but to steal, and to kill and to destroy (John 10:10). Although**

**the family has not ceased to exist, we have drifted away from God’s original design**

**for the family, causing it to no longer exist.** There are several issues that impact God’s

original design. Sin is the number one culprit; other issues may be an indirect result of sin.

-children born out of wedlock

-couples living together without commitment (marrying)

-believers unequally yoked with unbelievers

-divorce

-same-sex unions

-distractions & diversions of this world

-abuse

-busy schedules/lack of time together

-unforgiveness/intolerance

-distance from extended family

-disobedience/rebellion

-health, illness, death

**Marriage is a covenant between two people, confirmed in the presence of God.** God’s original design for the family was marriage (man and woman) followed by children, in order for couples to work out their differences and become as one (**Genesis 2:24**).

**Q: Why did Adam and Eve have a perfect marriage?**

**A: He didn’t have to hear about all the men she could have married, and she didn’t have to**

**hear about the way his mother cooked (unknown)**

**3) Are you ready for marriage/ a relationship?**

Marriage paints a simple picture of the relationship that is ultimate; our relationship with God (**Revelations 19:7-9**). The reality of starting a relationship with someone can be frightening. Couples bring a lot of “emotional baggage” into a relationship. If left unresolved, it can greatly affect current or future relationships. For couples dating or contemplating marriage, there are several questions to consider to determine whether or not you are ready for marriage (a relationship): excerpted from the article *“I Wasn’t Ready For Marriage”*.

-**Am I Ready to Be Hurt?**

-**Am I ready to Be Molded?**(**Ephesians 5:31**)

**-Am I Ready to Be Loved?(Romans 5:8; I Peter 4:8).**

**-Am I Ready to Die?** (**Galatians 2:20**).

**RISKS OF COHABITATING**

Today, many couples reject the concept of marriage. Coming from broken homes, they have a deep emotional fear and suspicion about the value of marriage altogether. **70% of U.S. couples now cohabit before marriage**: the major reason given is that **it enables the couple to get to know each other better** and to see whether they get along well enough to embark on marriage.

Many studies have found that **premarital cohabitation is associated with**

-increased risk of **divorce**

-a lower **quality** of marriage

-poorer marital **communication**

-and higher levels of **domestic violence**

**COMMON REASONS FOR DIVORCE**

According to a study conducted on 4,000 couples by the *Austin Institute for the Study of Family and Culture*, **approximately 50% of marriages end in divorce**. Most couples usually divorce within the first 7 years of marriage; as couples move closer to their 10th year of marriage, marital satisfaction increases.

**Top 10 Common Reasons for Divorce were**:

-**infidelity** (anger and resentment were common underlying reasons why people

cheated,

-**financial incompatibility**

-different spending habits or financial goals

-one spouse making considerably more money causing a power struggle

-difference in how much money each partner brings into the marriage can

lead to power plays

-**lack of communication** (yelling, not talking, or making nasty comments: lead to

frustration and resentment, which impacts all aspects of marriage)

-**constant arguing**

-**weight gain**

-**unrealistic expectations**

-**lack of intimacy**

-**lack of equality**

-**not being prepared for marriage**

-**physical and emotional abuse; no-one should tolerate abuse and should**

**safely remove themselves (and their children) from an abusive relationship.**

**3) What was your parents’ relationship like?**

**4) What happens if the Christian family no longer exists?**

**Families provide love and support and a framework of values to its members.** Our mental growth, well-being, and stability all depend on our family. Children brought up in healthy families are able to form better bonds outside their home and become better, productive, contributing citizens in society.

**God provided the family as a way for those needs to be met within its confines.** God’s Word sets forth the commands for parents to raise their children.

-**Exodus 20:12** - **Proverbs 1:8**  - **Matthew 15:4**

- **Deuteronomy 6:6-9** **Proverbs 22:6** -**Ephesians 6:2, 4**

Adjusting to marriage is difficult on its own; children bring a whole other level to the equation. **Parenting is a huge responsibility**; **parenting is a full-time job.**

According to data from the*Relationship Research Institute in Seattle,* parenting

-changes you as a person

-changes the dynamics in your household

-can increase stress

-can change your perspective

-helps you become less selfish

The world looks to the church (God’s people) for a sense of direction (**Matthew 5:13**). As followers of Christ we are commanded to be set apart from the world (**Romans 12:2**). Our lives should be a reflection of God. *“Charity (love) begins at home and is spread abroad”*, is an old adage that suggests that the first learning should take place in the home. Lessons are better “caught” than “taught”. Love, being the most basic lesson, should begin in the home.

Although God is able to fill the void caused by sin, a lot of heartache, pain, suffering, and needless consequences can be avoided when we surrender our lives to His Will.

**TYPES OF FAMILY STRUCTURES**

TheFamily structure has changed dramatically over the last 50 years. Gone are the

“Leave It To Beaver” families depicted on television.(Article: **Mental Health**

**Professional** by Michelle Blessing). The lines are less clear. **As laws and norms**

**change, so do family structure.** Man-made laws and norms seek to redefine the family

structure and endanger God’s original design for the family.

A**ccording to**[**2010 U.S. Census data**](https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/data/datasets.2010.html), almost 70 percent of children live in

a [nuclear family unit](https://family.lovetoknow.com/advantages-disadvantages-nuclear-family).

-**Nuclear Family**

-**Single Parent Family**

-**Extended Family**

-**Childless Family**

-**Step/Blended Family**

-**Grandparent Family**

-**Pets as Family:**

Not all adults are meant to be parents nor have a desire to be parents. But all adults have a

God-given purpose which they are created and called to fulfill.

**5) Most people would claim that family is their number one priority. How do we show that something is a priority?**

**Matthew 6:21** says that *“where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”* If family is truly our number one priority, then shouldn’t more time be spent cultivating that treasure?

***PRIORITY DEFINED:*** the fact or condition of being or treated as important.

**6) If family is their number one priority, why don’t more children feel important to their parents? Why don’t more families spend more time together?**

## No time for the family? You are not alone: Parents and children spend less than an hour with each other every day because of modern demands

By [JAYMI MCCANN](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/home/search.html?s=&authornamef=Jaymi+Mccann) (Daily Mail.com)

**PUBLISHED:** 13:48 EDT, 14 July 2013 | **UPDATED:** 02:33 EDT, 15 July 2013

* **Families spend just eight hours a week together on average**
* **Weekend is best with two hours twenty mins devoted to the family each day**
* **During the week the amount of time shrinks to just 36 minutes on average each day**

### REASONS FOR NOT GETTING ENOUGH QUALITY FAMILY TIME

**Top ten reasons for not getting enough quality time**

**1. Myself or my partner work long hours**

**2. We spend our evenings/weekend keeping up with household chores**

**3. The children are at school when I'm not working**

**4. The children are often watching TV**

**5. Myself or my partner work anti-social hours**

**6. The children are often playing computer games**

**7. The children are at an age where they don't really want to spend time with us**

**8. The children are often out with friends**

**9. The children spend their evenings studying**

**10. We spend a lot of time at various sports/after school clubs separately**

# **7) What Makes Your House a Home?**

That desire for “home” may look like a person, a place, a smell, certain belongings, the

decor. But as wonderful as those homey things are, they are but an echo of our true home.

(**Psalm 127:1**). The home we were all created for is God’s presence. Our homes can

include fun ways of reflecting the specific glory He put in each one of us and the story

He’s writing for us.

**NATURE vs NURTURE**

**Ephesians 6:4** commands fathers to **“***provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”*

The expression “nature vs. nurture” describes the question of how much a person's characteristics are formed by either “nature” or “nurture.” **“Nature versus nurture” was used by English scientist Francis Galton.**

“**Nature” means innate biological factors (**namely [genetics](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/genetics)**), while “nurture” can refer to upbringing or life experience** more generally.

Sometimes it appears that no matter how much time is devoted to *nurturing* our children (born of the same parents and raised in the same environment (*nature*)), each child emerges differently, independent, and sometimes may even wander away from what they have been taught.

Today, most scientists who carefully examine the ever-expanding research base have come to appreciate that **the nature and nurture domains are hopelessly interwoven with one another.** Genes have an influence on the environments we experience. At the same time, a person’s environment and experience can directly change the level at which certain genes are expressed.

As Christians, we know that God is sovereign and He reigns supreme. Although the laws of nature have been set into motion, God is greater and in control of them all. God calls parents to follow His word and to trust in Him despite how things might appear **(Proverbs 3:5-6)**

**8) What was your family life like growing up?**

**9) How would you feel/what would you do differently if today was the last day you had with**

**your family?**

Many Christians have fallen prey to the traps and snares of this world. They have become

interested in “appearing to be happier than others”, while behind locked doors things are

totally different. They have become more focused on the *perception* others have of them

rather than what is *really* going on in the family.

**10) How do we make family a priority?**

If Christ dwells in us, we should be distinct from the world (**Philippians 2:15**). Christians

should be intentional about their plan and purpose for being; carve out time together.

There should be a purpose behind planning and engaging in activities.

-mealtimes

-family nights

-date nights

-vacations

-family devotions/worship

-special times together (sporting events, recitals, etc.)

-volunteering/serving others together

-establish a family mission statement that guides and directs what you do

**11) How much time does your family spend together? What is your favorite activity as a**

**family?**

Most families today require both parents to work outside the home in order to provide

their basic necessities. Outside activities drastically reduce the amount of time families

have to spend with each other. The amount of time is not so much important as the

“quality” of time spent together. Families should make the most of the time they have

together.

Abundant life happens in us. **Our day-to-day attitudes with our families grow out of an internal relationship with Jesus**, not the external circumstances of life (**John 10:10**).

-unbridled joy

-family unity

-fun times

-close relationships

-laughter

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**GROWING TOGETHER AS A FAMILY: Breaking Bread**

**House to House**

***“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. 6In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”* Proverbs 3:5-6**

**WEEK II**

**WHICH WAY FROM HERE: ESTABLISHING A FAMILY MISSION STATEMENT (Ch. 2)**

**KEY SCRIPTURE:**

**Deuteronomy 6:6-9**

**Proverbs 3:1-7**

**LEARNING GOALS**

**\*To show that God (God’s Word) is our ultimate guide**

**\*To understand the purpose of a mission statement**

**\*To demonstrate how to develop a mission statement**

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**Deuteronomy 6:6-9**

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***“You will learn about life when you play The Game of Life”***went the original television advertising jingle for Milton Bradley’s Game of Life. In 1960 the Milton Bradley Company enlisted independent inventor Reuben Klamer to come up with a game that would commemorate the firm’s 100th anniversary. Klamer took the “Life” name from the 1860 predecessor but created a completely new game for a new era. The Game of Life has also been translated into at least 20 languages.

Playing the popular board game, The Game of Life parallels a person’s life in several ways. Players must choose between “college” and “business” early in the game. Payday comes sooner for the businessperson, but college may mean higher paychecks in the end. Marriage and children usually occur during the game. Players in 1960 could end up in the Poor Farm or land happily in Millionaire Acres.

**ROAD MAPS, GPS, ATLAS, COMPASS**

For avid travelers these items are all essential tools to have on hand. Having a pre-determined destination in mind is also essential. Before embarking upon a trip, there are many factors to consider.

***“If you don’t know where you’re going, any road will do”***, a famous line from Alice In Wonderland.

Parenting is much like a journey; one that does not take place over night. Parenting isn’t for cowards; it is a delicate balance of teaching/disciplining and preparing children for adulthood. Not having the proper information or equipment or relying purely on luck can derail the journey or make it extremely unpleasant. In **Genesis 12** God sent Abraham on a journey. God gave Abraham instructions and a promise; and Abraham obeyed God.

**1) Does parenting come with an instruction manual?**

When we think of instruction manuals, we think of “how to”, or specific things to do or not do. Children and families are so varied; one size (instruction manual) “does not” fit all.

Most people learn how to parent by how they were parented. However, parents are far from perfect and often make mistakes. Some mistakes may be easily overcome; others not so easily. **Frantic and frenzied schedules seldom add character or depth to a family.** The heart of the problem for many families is lack of direction; not sure which way to go.

However, God, in His infinite wisdom, has given parents an instruction manual to use when raising their children. The Bible (**B**asic **I**nstructions **B**efore **L**eaving **E**arth) gives parents a compass on which to focus and steps to guide them along the way (**Psalm 119:105**). God is intentional in His doings. Before God created man, He had a plan in mind. He created everything man needed to survive. God even knew that man would sin; so He had a plan to redeem man back from sin and to restore/reconcile man back to Himself.

Rather than turning to the world’s method of raising our children, God wants parents to trust that He knows what’s best. Humility is a powerful ally. If not recognized or properly applied, it’s repercussions can become very damaging to individuals and families.

-**Matthew 24:35 -Deuteronomy 6:6-9**

-**Jeremiah 29:11 - Psalms 22:6**

-**II Timothy 3:16 -Ephesians 6:4**

**DETERMINING YOUR DIRECTION**

**2) Why did you get married? Choose your mate?**

**3) What are you/your family passionate about?**

In the **Purpose Driven Life**, Pastor Rick Warren describes passion as the “heart”; the thing that motivates you. Even when things may become difficult along the way and we feel defeated, discouraged and want to give up, our passion drives our commitment and helps to keep us on track. Jesus was passionate about his commitment to do the Will of His Father (**John 4:34**). The bible repeatedly reminds us to love the Lord and to serve the Lord with all our heart (**Deuteronomy 11:13; 13:3; Joshua 22:5; Jeremiah 29:13**). By keeping God as our focus, we understand that our lives are not our own; God is the one who ultimately guides us (**Galatians 5:13**).

**4) How does your passion guide other areas of your life?**

-health

-financial security

-education

-serving others

God is the one who gives us our passion, gifts and abilities. Our presence in the world should be that of a light that points others to Christ. We may not always understand how God will use our passion to help us or to guide us in helping others, but when we trust God and submit to His Will He will always lead us in the right direction, help us to avoid going in the wrong direction, and help us to appropriately utilize what He has placed inside us.

**5) Have you thought about what is your family’s mission/purpose?**

God has created each of us for a specific purpose and He has promised to guide us if we

acknowledge Him.

-**Psalms 37:23**

-**Proverbs 3:6**

Unfortunately, like playing the Game of Life, many couples haphazardly stumble into marriage without much thought as to what they hope to accomplish.

***MISSION DEFINED:*** an important assignment carried out for political, religious, or

commercial purposes.; a vocation or calling of a religious organization

***MISSION STATEMENT DEFINED:*** a clear vision for the family

**God’s desire is that all believers work together and that all needs be met within the confines of the family and church.** It requires a work of the Spirit to fill us with courage to be vulnerable with others in order to receive and give the love we’ve been given in Christ.

**“Teamwork makes the dream work”;** a mission statement serves as a road map, atlas, compass, GPS, or playbook (gives direction) and is the foundational principle for every job, decision, change, or dollar spent. It helps you to focus on what is meaningful, set priorities, and drop things that don’t fit. Everyone on the team understands the mission and works together to accomplish the mission. A mission statement may be written or implied.

**The Mission Statement is repeated and woven into the fabric of daily life and results in joy, direction, and confidence for the family.** It provides a rallying point, focus, center of gravity that holds the family together.

**6) Does your family have a mission statement?**

You can’t get to where you want to be until you know where you want to go

There are countless examples in the bible of men and women whom God called to

fulfill specific assignments

-Abraham was called to be the father of many nations (**Genesis 17:5; 21:5**)

-Noah was called to build the Ark to preserve God’s creation (**Genesis 6:13; 7:5; 8:1;**

**9:1**)

-Solomon was called to rebuild the temple (**I Kings 1; 4:1,21, 29-34; 6:2-51; 9:1-2**)

-Esther was called to save her people (**Esther 2:8-9, 15-17; 4:8-17; 5:1-8**)

-Jesus was called to save mankind (**Isaiah 53; Matthew 1:1; John 10:10; Luke 4:18**;

**Hebrews 5:5-10)**

**7) What are your family values and how might they be reflected in your mission statement?**

**DEVELOPING A FAMILY MISSION STATEMENT**

**A mission statement is a family project.** Family values should be reflected in the mission statement. Everyone needs to “buy in”, everyone takes ownership, everyone is invested in the outcome. There is no right or wrong way to go about it. **The mission statement is crafted around the way your family is wired.** It will be different from any other family’s mission statement. Is your family invested in addressing climate change? Your faith community? The great outdoors? Is there a particular scripture, phrase or family saying you use to describe your family to others? These are all clues to your family’s purpose.

-pray for God to give you all clear direction and unity

-discuss principles and goals that are important to your family

-talk about how you’d like the family to be remembered years from now

-write down several possible statements

-narrow it down to the best one, then pray about it for several days

-reconvene and determine your family mission statement

-make it short so it is easy to remember and repeat

-schedule a regular time for the family to pray and evaluate your progress

Your family purpose may be the same across the board, but for each family member it will play out differently.

**8) Does your family have set goals for the future?**

Aiming your children toward a godly purpose when they are young can help direct them toward using their gifts for God in adulthood.

**SET SHORT-TERM “S.M.A.R.T.” GOALS**

**S-Specific:** instead of setting a goal for your 10-year-old to be “nicer” to someone, set a goal with him/her to say “Hi, when they see them

**M-Measurable**: are easy to track and evaluate

**A-Achievable:** not too big or not too many to tackle at once

**R-Relevant:** should fit with your family’s mission

**T-Time Bound:** While family missions don’t need to have an end date, SMART goals do. Make sure that it is reasonable and that everyone agrees on. If for some reason someone may be struggling with achieving their goal within the time limit, you might consider extending the deadline.

**EVALUATING HOW YOUR FAMILY IS DOING**

Every now and then you need to make certain that you are still on the right path and moving closer to your destination. Schedule a “check-in time” (bring the team back into a “huddle”) to evaluate how well you are accomplishing your mission. Celebrate some victories and determine some ways to improve. Reviewing your mission statement keeps it central to the family by keeping your family’s purpose before them.

-how did we treat one another?

-did we show God’s love?

-did we spend time with God?

-what can we work on?

-did we make someone’s day better?

-how can we pray for one another?

Occasionally life throws a curve ball, well-planned goals sometimes may run into major obstacles, which can sometimes knock you off course. When you encounter a “set-back”, it’s important to stop and think things through. When new circumstances intrude, our expectations of what we can realistically accomplish may have to change too

-do we need to recommit to our mission or purpose?

-do we need to change our goals? Set new Goals?

**9) How do you stay on track with your mission statement?**

By personalizing your mission statement and connecting it to daily decisions and choices

you remind everyone how to live as individuals and as a family.

-frame it

-place it in a prominent place so it becomes a frequent reminder to everyone

-discuss it during dinner or on your way to or from special events

-celebrate moments when you notice someone carrying out the mission

**THE JESUS MISSION**

**10) How can you know if your children have grasped what you are trying to teach them?**

The litmus test is whether or not the ones you’ve trained are able to pass on to others what they’ve learned.

Jesus had a mission when he came to earth (**Luke 19:10**). Jesus intentionally spent time teaching his disciples the priorities of life. He trained them how to reach others. And then He turned things over to them. Jesus was excited and filled with joy when His disciples were victorious in their mission.

Joy comes when you accomplish your mission. Purpose follows passion. The secret behind why some families appear more joyful than others is because they have painstakingly taught and trained their children. When their children grow up and have children of their own the chain will not be broken; their children are able to transfer what they were taught to their own children.

The earlier you establish your mission, the easier it becomes to define who your family is and determine the choices you make.

Passion leads to purpose. Purpose grows into mission. Mission results in joy.

**FOCUS ON FAMILY**

**GROWING TOGETHER AS A FAMILY: Breaking Bread**

**House to House**

***“He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence; I shall not be greatly moved.”***

**Psalms 62:2**

**WEEK III**

**MAINTAINING FAMILY STABILITY**

**Maintaining A Sense of Security (Ch. 3)**

**I’ve Got Your Back-Keeping Each Other’s Secrets (Ch. 7)**

**KEY SCRIPTURES:**

**Psalms 62:1-2**

**Hebrews 13:5**

**LEARNING GOALS**

**\*To understand basic human needs**

**\*To show how security impacts our basic needs**

**\*To show how God fills the voids**

**\*To understand the importance of supporting one another**

**\*To understand when it is and when it is not okay to keep secrets**

**FOCUS ON FAMILY**

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**WEEK III**

**MAINTAINING FAMILY STABILITY**

**Maintaining A Sense of Security (Ch. 3)**

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**UNBREAKABLE MAINTAINING A SENSE OF SECURITY: (Psalms 62:1-2)**

In order for a family to experience joy, there needs to be a firm foundation of security. **Only God (and family members) know what actually goes on in the household behind closed doors.** In order for “good fruit” to be manifested, it needs to be cultivated in the right soil and the right environment.

According to an article written by [**Paul Dunion,**](https://www.huffpost.com/author/pjdunion-656) Author and Psychological Healer , 06/21/2016 04:58pm EDT | **Updated** June 22, 2017 there are several experiences of feeling secure:

-Milk and cookies at Grandma's (assuming Grandma is a nurturing soul)

-Sitting around a crackling fire during a winter storm

-Cuddling with a puppy

-An education

-A promotion

-Financial investments doing well

-Feeling loved by someone

***SECURE DEFINED:*** free from apprehension and free from danger; based on your

psychological reactions to both risks and countermeasures

**Abraham Maslow** developed a classification system called **Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs** to study how humans intrinsically partake in behavioral [motivation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Motivation).

This means that **in order for motivation to arise at the next stage, each stage must be satisfied within the individual themselves**. Additionally, this hierarchy is a main base in knowing how effort and motivation are correlated when discussing [human behavior](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_behavior).

**1) How do you build security in the home?**

Security starts with the parents. Abuse (physical and emotional), divorce, inappropriate family secrets, and illness and death can chip away at a family’s sense of security. Children need to see their parents communicating and working out differences in their relationship. Daily maintenance keeps couples from having to make major overhauls in their relationship (**Ephesians 4:26**).

-own your mistakes

-honestly share your feelings and fears with each other

-let your children know your marriage is important enough to invest in for the long haul

-let them know that “disagreement” does not mean “divorce”

**FLYING SOLO**

Raising strong healthy families when both parents are present is difficult enough; there may be circumstances, however, when flying solo (single-parenting) becomes inevitable.

-divorce

-death of a spouse

-unwed parenting

-parent who is physically present yet emotionally detached

If you are divorced or estranged, you have to work harder to try to get along with your ex. Even though you may be a single-parent, your home can still be a secure haven; you are not alone. You may feel judged by the church, abandoned by family members, or stressed from trying to be both parents. God has promised that He will never leave you nor forsake you (**Hebrews 13:5**); He can fill the gap. Your ex may have left you, but God never will.

**2) What are some practical ways you can give your children a sense of family security?**

-pray with your children for the other parent and be genuinely thankful for him/her

-do your best to work through conflicts without involving the children

-seek out an older Christian couple who can come alongside and invest in the life of your

kids

You may need to put dating on the back burner for a while. Keep standards high when dating.

**PARENTING 101: FEAR OR TRUST**

**3) Are you a “first generation Christian” Parent?**

First generation Christian parents did not grow up in a home where Christianity was

practiced or encouraged; going to church, studying God’s word was not a priority in the home. More and more people today are finding themselves in this category as even those who were raised in the church have walked away from it.

First generation Christian parents face particular challenges. The bible speaks about believers being unequally yoked with unbelievers (**II Corinthians 6:14**). Couples who are not on the same page with their parenting beliefs can cause confusion and friction in the home, particularly if the husband (who is called to be the head of the household (**Ephesians 5:23**)) is a first generation Christian.

First generation parents tend to:

-parent out of fear (rubber band/flashback to their own behaviors and mistakes)

-have a lack of biblical principles model from their own parents

-rely on world standards of parenting

**4) How did you feel when your children approached their teen-age years? How do you feel when you anticipate your children’s teen-age years?**

When first generation Christian parents ‘children become teens they freak out. As their children begin to venture away from home, driving, hanging out with friends more, and dating, some parents reflect back to their own teen-age years and fear starts to take over. Fear brings torment (**I John 4:18; II Timothy 1:7**).

**5) How can you avoid feeling panicky when your child reaches their teen-age years?**

One way to avoid panicking is to plant the right seeds in your children early; before they reach their teen-age years and trust that the seeds you plant in your children’s lives will come to fruition (**Proverbs 22:6; I John 5:14-15**).

Parents must also understand that all children will have areas of temptation and weakness. Parents should not blindly assume that their child is able to navigate through on their own.

-get involved

-become proactive

-share with them ways to overcome temptations

-know who your children are spending their time with

-make your home an inviting place for your children to bring their friends

-be approachable so that your children feel they can come to you (not their friend)

**WHEN TO TRUST AND NOT TO TRUST**

Satan is a thief who comes to steal, kill, and to destroy (**John 10:10a**). One thing that Satan steals are dreams, goals of what God has planned for His people. Parents must be careful not to set their children up for failure. Children don’t always think about the future (what could happen). As parents, it is your job to think about possibilities and help your children avoid unnecessary situations that could lead to traps (**Matthew 26:41**).

-consequences of sexual sin are much greater than being late for curfew or blowing off

Homework

-assure your children that you trust them to make wise choices; you believe in them

-don’t intentionally place them in settings where they will be intensely tempted

-children must prove themselves worthy of more freedom (not just because all their

friends are allowed to do certain things)

-don’t lower your expectations; adopting the world’s deceptive thinking

-guide your children through loving boundaries; set parameters

**FREEDOM TO FAIL**

**6) How do you respond to your children’s mistakes?**

Mistakes are a part of growing and learning. Parenting is a delicate balancing act. Setting boundaries doesn’t mean you become a “helicopter parent” hovering over your children all the time. Hovering causes the opposite reaction. Instead of children becoming responsible, they become rebellious; waiting for the day when they are free from the bondage of your watchful eye.

-don’t expect perfection from your children; expect respect, communication, and a desire

to obey. Be confident in your planning and preparation.

-how you handle the tremors caused by your children’s mistakes will reveal how

secure your home is

-remember that your worth and identity is in being a child of God; not in being a “perfect

parent” of “perfect children”

The only sure way not to make mistakes is not to try; which is a mistake in itself. Parents are children’s first teachers. **Romans 3:23** reminds us that we are not perfect (that includes parents). When your children make mistakes, lovingly help them to work through their mistakes and to come up with better solutions (**Proverbs 15:1**). Parenting requires time, patience, and humility. When parents humble themselves and extend grace to their children, it teaches them how to extend grace to others.

**CLINGING TO THE ROCK**

**7) How is your relationship with your children?**

We live in an age of fear, deadbolts, lo-jacks, spy-cams, and home security systems. The bible already tells us what the source of our security (**Psalms 62:1-2**). As children mature, the goal should be to become less dependent on their parents. However, there will be times when your children will need to cling to you

-they will look to you to be the rock and fortress as God is for you

-your love, time, and wisdom can buoy them when the waters of this world become

choppy and frightening

-conflict, when approached with commitment and resolved with compassion actually strengthen the foundations of the family relationship

**I’VE GOT YOUR BACK (Proverbs 17:9)**

**8) Loyalty isn’t “taught” as much as it is “caught”. Should families have an unswerving allegiance to their loved ones?**

***ALLEGIANCE DEFINED*:** loyalty or faithfulness, especially to a person or cause.

When it comes to the family, you are a team. Team members

-defend one another

-stick up for one another

-have a common goal

When a family refers to itself as a “team” it says they are in this together (**teamwork makes the dream work**). However, there are circumstances when loyalty to the family may be challenged.

**9) How does your family support one another as a “team”; show their allegiance?**

There are certain factors required in order to build a team

-promote allegiance by sharing stories

-the family name is only as strong as the weakest link

-repeated explanation (of your mission) to your toddler, ongoing clarification to your

kids, and constant reinforcement to your teens

**10) Accidents will happen. How does your family respond to them? Does your family extend grace or guilt; assurance or embarrassment (Matthew 6:15; Matthew 18:21-35)?**

**THE TOP PRIORITY (Luke 14:26)**

**11) What is your number 1 priority?**

-family

-work

-recreation

-material possessions (house, car, etc.)

-self

All these things are important, some may be necessary for living; however, none of them should be placed above or before God. God has promised that when we make Him our top priority, all the other things will be added (**Matthew 6:33**).

**12) When choosing between a church related function, a sports activity, dance recital, or a**

**night out on the town, which takes priority?**

What you devote your time (make your priority) to reveals where your heart is **(Matthew**

**6:21).** Working together as a team and remaining faithful to God’s Will is a delicate

balancing act**.**

In **Luke 14:26** Jesus said “*If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.”* Jesus didn’t stress “hate” in the way we understand it. Jesus meant that nothing should come before God. Until we understand that concept, we are not truly His disciples.

If you want to raise joyful, genuine Christian kids, you must be totally sold out for Christ. The strong positive feelings for your family (and yourself) pale in comparison to your love for the Lord (**Matthew 22:37-40**). Our love for God should supersede any other love. The ultimate priority ought to be our relationship with God. Love for your family and loyalty naturally follows your love for God.

**SACRED MOMENTS**

Our society could benefit from lessons in “loyalty”

-high divorce rate

-broken homes

-out-of-control children

-cynical grown-ups

-broken promises (empty promises)

-unpaid debts

-unreturned calls

-weak excuses

Relationships thrive in an environment of acceptance, transparency, trust, promises “made” and promises “kept”. Nothing will destroy a relationship quicker than a broken confidence.

**13) When you promise that you will do something do you honor that promise?**

**14) How much thought do you give towards what you are promising to do?**

Many parents, out of frustration, make promises to their children they never intend to keep. They hope that their children will eventually forget what they were promised. This is seldom the case.

Keeping promises (when possible) or explaining to your children why things changed is important in building trust in a relationship.

Nothing will build a relationship like honoring the “sacred moments” of life.

**Sacred Moments** are the private and personal situations that should not be shared outside the circle, in this case, the family circle.

Children need to be taught the meaning of **confidentiality** (**the keeping of another person or entity’s information private.**)

-some conversations or embarrassing moments are private family matters

-protect siblings rather than ridicule them or rat them out

-treat discipline issues and humiliating moments with siblings as sacred

**15) When should secrets be shared?**

Sometimes there may be family secrets that need to be shared; abuse thrives in privacy. The cycle of abuse is passed down from generation to generation when certain “secrets” are kept.

Parents, must first understand the difference between a healthy and an unhealthy

relationship.

-teach children what is “fair game” and what isn’t

-teaching children what stays private and what can go public is an ongoing challenge

**POSITIVE PEER PRESSURE**

**16) Is it better to reward good behavior or to punish bad behavior?**

-Loyalty lubricates the hinges of your relationship and opens the windows and doors so

that the Spirit can come in.

-Loyalty gives purpose and confidence to each member of your team (family)

*-In a society that turns up its nose at the concept of delayed gratification, it’s wise to*

*hang some carrots in front of your kids*

-gives them a goal to shoot for

-helps them establish habits that will serve them all their lives

-siblings can offer support to one another

**Family loyalty could be described as “positive peer pressure”**

-kids stuck with the plan because of who they had become

-along the way a higher purpose becomes the goal and helps kids avoid some of

the typical teenage pitfalls

**IN YOUR CORNER:** It must be evident to each family member that you are in one another’s corner. The home must be a safe house for family members to retreat to, be themselves, and to know they are accepted, defended, and protected.

**FOCUS ON FAMILY**

**GROWING TOGETHER AS A FAMILY: Breaking Bread**

**House to House**

***“My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;”***  **James 1:2**

**WEEK IV**

**WORKING TOGETHER THROUGH DIFFICULT SITUATIONS**

**Laugh Like You Mean It (Ch. 4)**

**Plotting For Joy (Ch. 10)**

**KEY SCRIPTURES:**

**Proverbs 17:22**

**James 1:2-4**

**LEARNING GOALS**

**\*To understand why humor is important**

**\*To understand the difference between happiness and joy**

**\*To demonstrate ways to create lasting memories**

**FOCUS ON FAMILY**

**GROWING TOGETHER AS A FAMILY: Breaking Bread**

**House to House**

***“My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;”***  **James 1:2**

**WEEK IV**

**WORKING TOGETHER THROUGH DIFFICULT SITUATIONS**

**Laugh Like You Mean It (Ch. 4)**

**Plotting For Joy (Ch. 10)**

**LAUGH LIKE YOU MEAN IT-BREAKING DOWN DEFENSES (Proverbs 17:22)**

According to *“Useless Trivia Questions For Teens*” the average person laughs 13 times a day. The famous Walt Disney considered laughter to be **America’s number 1 export**.

There are documented scientific benefits of laughter

- is good for the heart

-releases chemicals into the bloodstream that relax blood vessels

-reduces stress, blood pressure, and heart rate

-improves your immune system

**1) When choosing people you like to be around, what is the first thing you look for?**

A sense of humor is consistently one of the top characteristics desired in friendships, among coworkers, and in a spouse (relationship).

***HUMOR DEFINED*:** the quality of being amusing or comic

In order for something to be funny it must always have one of three elements

-exaggeration

-truth

-surprise

Love and laughter can break down the strongest of defenses

**TAKE A LESSON FROM JESUS**

Jesus had a sense of humor **(exaggeration)**

**-Matthew 7:5**

**-Matthew 19:24**

**- Matthew 23**

**-Hebrews 1:9**

*When behaviors are already ridiculous, sometimes the truth can be downright side-splitting.*

A common thread of families who enjoy spending time together is “goofiness”. Even those who aren’t exactly known for being hilarious or entertaining, sometimes let their hair down around family members.

***SPONTANEOUS DEFINED:*** doing something on the spur of the moment

**2) When was the last time you did something on the spur of the moment?**

If you want to get your family laughing, you’ve got to get out of the rut (be spontaneous; change things up).

The older the child gets, the more reluctant parents are to risk doing something spontaneous

-fear of having crazy whims backfire

-struggle to keep up with what kids like “this week”

-even when you get it right, your teens may never let on that they’re really having fun

**PLANNED SPONTANEITY:** surprise your children by doing something unexpected

-take one at a time with you on a business trip

-spend one-on-one time with your children

**3) When was the last time your family spent time together?**

In order for your family to have fun together, they must “spend time together”

**CREATE MEMORIES THAT LAST**

**4)What are the memories that meant most to you? Your family?**

-game nights at home or a neighbor’s home

-family night

-Christmas gift delivery and caroling

-stopping at your favorite restaurant unexpectedly

-camping out (in the backyard or on the living room floor)

-Sunday dinner

**5) Do you have a purpose behind the activities you choose?**

Every experience can be both a teaching opportunity and a bonding time for your family.

-teaching (instilling/reminding them of family values, social awareness, etc.)

-bonding (connecting with your family/ help them connect with God)

Be intentional about your activities whether it is an annual activity or a spur of the moment surprise.

You can have fun without a tv, computer, i Pad, or other electronic device.

Laughter and joy should not be guests in your house; they should be permanent residents in your everyday life.

**Humor is a lot like gasoline**: the right amount used at the right time and for the right purpose can be a great blessing and resource. But if used improperly or as a weapon, it can start a fire that is tough to extinguish. -laughing “with” someone is exhilarating; laughing “at” someone is disrespectful, hurtful, and potentially harmful.

Kids’ egos are fragile during adolescence; at times a child’s self confidence will be shaky; criticism and ridicule tear at the fabric of the family. Laughter which leads to joy will refresh and not wound (**Proverbs 26:17-22**).

**LAUGHTER STARTS NOW**

Now is the time to “get serious” about “having some fun”; step into your child’s life. Your effort at family time will not be forgotten by your kids. It will pave the way for more smiles, giggles, and laughter. Make time to enjoy one another while you can.

-get out a blanket and set sail on the living room floor

-find a box of old clothes and play dress-up

-ask your teen to teach you how to play their favorite video game

-go get ice cream together

**PLOTTING FOR JOY-FACING ADVERSE SITUATIONS (James 1:2-4)**

Pain and suffering are inevitable. Many believers think that once they become Christians they become immune to pain and tragedy; the bible teaches us that this is not the case (**Matthew 5:45**).

It’s not easy to laugh when the world around you seems to be crumbling down. Illness, death of a loved one, a wayward child, divorce, financial woes can reek havoc on a family. According to John Piper, *“in all the setbacks of your life as a believer, God is plotting for your joy*”; sometimes it’s hard to see God’s plan (**Jeremiah 29:11**). But we can trust that God is working things out for our good (**Romans 8:28**).

Happiness comes from what is going on around us. Joy, another Fruit of the Spirit (**Galatians 5:22-23**), is not based on circumstances. Joy comes from who you know and whose you are (**John 14:27**). It comes from God’s Spirit residing in you as you believe in Him and obey His commands (**Psalms 16:11**).

**WE DO JOY**

*Our day-to-day attitudes with our families grow out of an internal relationship with Jesus; not the external circumstances of life.*

No matter what happens to us, abundant life is what can happen in us. It may seem hard to find joy when everything around you appears to be falling apart, but Jesus promised us joy and abundant life (**John 10:10; Luke 4:18**). When we look to Him instead of our circumstances, we can find that joy and abundant life He promised (**Psalms 126:5**).

**6) What was/is the most difficult thing you have had to face in your life?**

**7) What was your/your family’s reaction when you received bad news?**

-sadness

-disappointment

-hurt

-anger

-joy

**8) How did you/your family handle the situation?**

You would not be human if these emotions were not part of your initial reaction. We can learn to be joyful in the midst of adversity **(Romans 5:3-5; Philippians 4:12).** The Apostle Paul learned to be content in all situations because his overriding goal in life was to know Christ.

Our relationship with Christ changes how we view sadness, sufferings, setbacks, and sickness. Trials, tragedies, and temptations can destroy a family or they can strengthen their bonds.

Unresolved issues can creep up in relationships when faced with difficult situations. We should definitely cry out to God when we are faced with adverse situations and trust that God is working on our behalf.

**9) How has that situation impacted your relationship with each other?**

Bouncing back after a difficult situation is not easy. When you are faced with a difficult situation it is best to step back and evaluate it; try to look at it from a different perspective. A strong support system can help you to see things differently. Family is designed to be your strongest support system. However, when the entire family is impacted by the situation, it is not always easy to rely on one another for the support needed. Tragedy can impact how people communicate with each other. Sometimes when people are hurting they will lash out at others (even those who may be trying to help. The closer you are to someone, the more difficult it can be to see the situation clearly. Emotional wounds can linger long after the incident has occurred. Strong Christian friends and counselors may be an alternative support to consider when the entire family is impacted.

**9) What does your home/family do?**

Beliefs shape behavior; attitudes affect actions; character controls conversation; Joy flourishes when our focus is on “purpose” rather than “possessions” (**Colossians 3:2**).

**THE STONES**

IN THIS HOME…

We do second chances

We do grace.

We do real.

We do mistakes.

We do “I’m sorrys.”

We do LOUD really well.

We do hugs.

We do family.

We do love.

**SOMEDAY IS SOONER THAN YOU THINK**

If you want to have a home that’s marked by peace and joy and family togetherness, you have to take to heart the expectations of being a positive and purposeful parent. You have to start now.

You may think you’ve got all the time in the world; someday they’ll leave home. Children grow up fast. Before you know it they will be walking, talking, starting school, starting middle school, high school, driving, dating, leaving home, going off to college, contemplating marriage. You will look back and wonder where the time went.

It’s a lot easier to release your children when you put into practice the lessons you want them to learn.

-laugh with them

-cry with them

-rejoice with them

-dream with them

-pray with them

-let them go

When your children come down the driveway to see you, you can know that the only reason they are coming is because they want to see you.

**THE LONGER VIEW**

You and your family will face adversity. You may think there is no earthly way your family can find joy and fulfillment in the face of trials. There is not “earthly” way; there’s a “heavenly” way.

People without Jesus take a short-term view when they encounter trials because the world is all they have to live for. The Christian has a long-term view, an eternal perspective.

No matter what life looks like on the outside, God is behind the scenes, plotting joy on your behalf (**Philippians 1:6**).

-no family situation is so dire that God cannot intervene

-no dynamic to dysfunctional

-no past too painful

-no depression is too deep

The joyful Christian family can make a comeback; its influence can be widespread and revolutionary. You/your family can be an agent of transformation

-in your home

-in your neighborhood

-in your church

-in your community

-beyond

***“With faith, love, and laughter, you have all you need to build a family that can change the world.”***

**FOCUS ON FAMILY**

**GROWING TOGETHER AS A FAMILY: Breaking Bread**

**House to House**

***“****I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.****”***

**Acts 20:35**

**ADDITIONAL APPLICATIONS**

**SHARING WHAT WE HAVE WITH OTHERS**

**Cultivating Contentment (Ch. 6)**

**Servant Power (Ch. 9)**

**KEY SCRIPTURES:**

**Acts 20:35**

**James 2:14-18**

**Galatians 5:13**

**LEARNING GOALS**

**\*To show that we have been blessed**

**\*To understand the importance of being content with what we have**

**\*To understand that our blessings are not just for us**

**\*To demonstrate ways we can use our blessings to help others**

**FOCUS ON FAMILY**

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***“****I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.****”***

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**ADDITIONAL APPLICATIONS**

**SHARING WHAT WE HAVE WITH OTHERS**

**Cultivating Contentment (Ch. 6)**

**Servant Power (Ch. 9)**

**CULTIVATING CONTENTMENT- Acts 20:35**

***CONTENTMENT DEFINED:*** a state of satisfaction

***CULTIVATE DEFINED:*** to prepare; try to acquire or develop

**1) Have you ever felt, thought, or said “I want my children to have it better than what I had”?**

One of the most damaging things you can do as a parent is to give your children the best of everything (**Matthew 16:26**). Providing nice things for your children is not wrong, but there must be a balance; some parents go overboard.

If you want your kids to mature and derive joy through giving rather than keeping; to become generous, giving and gracious people, it all starts with you.

When we try to keep up with the Jones rather than rejoicing over their blessings, we send the message that material possessions are more important than spiritual riches.

When we act as if joy is dependent on what we have, where we live, and how we feel, we model self-centeredness for our children.

When we hang on to what we have rather than sharing it with others, we shout, loud and clear, that it’s all about “me”.

Instead of giving your children everything they “think they want”, help them to be content with what they have

-teach them the value of working, saving, and giving

-show them by example, the blessings that come with sharing what you have with others

-let them see that joy isn’t dependent upon what you acquire, but who you are in Christ

**2) Do you have friends, relatives, or God-Parents who constantly buy or give your children everything they want?**

Parents should not indulge their children nor allow anyone else to spoil them either.

-encourage grandparents (& others) to offer the kids love and support

-intangible gifts are much more valuable and will help to reinforce your priorities with

your kids

**THE STARTING POINT**

**3) Have you ever watched a commercial and suddenly had a strong desire for what was advertised?**

We are all bombarded with over a thousand ads everyday (subliminal suggestions). We are conditioned to want, want, want.

Parents can teach their children (& themselves) self-control and contentment

-contentment must be modeled; your children need to see and sense that you are happy

and at peace with life as it is, not constantly striving for more

-your children need to understand that real joy comes when we recognizes God’s gifts

and open our hearts to share them with others

-simple ways to communicate those truths to your children

-you are not always going to get something when we go to the store

-we’re shopping for what we need, not what we want

-you have a lot of toys you don’t play with, is there someone you could give those

to who would enjoy playing with them?

-let’s sort through our closets and give away the things we rarely wear

Parents should be intentional about teaching their children the difference between a “want” and a “need”. Once we understand the difference, we can begin to move toward true contentment.

Once you and your children grasp the concept of streamlining and simplifying, you may find that you’re actually having fun living that way. The more “stuff” you have, the more you have to take care of.

**4) Have you ever given someone something or done something for someone and they did not say “thank you”?**

**GROWING IN GRATITUDE**

One way to help your children grow in contentment is to teach them to be grateful- if they don’t say “thank you” they don’t get to keep the gift (**Ephesians 5:20**). If someone cared enough about you and was willing to take the time, energy, and forethought to do or give something, then the appropriate response is to thank them. Saying thank you tells them that you appreciate their effort/gesture.

-good motivation

-impresses on them to be “other-focused”

-gives them a practical outworking of the biblical teaching that we should honor others

above ourselves (**Romans 12:10**)

**5) How often do you say thank you to your children or your spouse when they do something for you?**

Teach your children to express thanks for anything and everything.

-big stuff

-little stuff

-things they’ve always taken for granted

In time it will become second nature.

The earlier you begin, the sooner thankfulness will become a habit that takes root in the lives of your children. Children forget sometimes, so don’t get upset if you have to remind them. The end goal should be developing a spirit of thankfulness in their young heart, not guilt trips or legalism.

**THE ROOT OF ALL EVIL**

**The love of money is the root of all evil (I Timothy 6:10).** The heart of American culture beats for money and things. Most young people today have grown up with a sense of entitlement.

**6) Where do children get the idea that they can have what they want when they want it?**

The problem with today’s Christian family is our desire to “fit in” rather than stand out **(Romans 12:2).** Instead of following God’s word, we allow the world’s priorities to dictate how we live and how we parent.

Happiness is based on circumstances; when things change, the good feelings change too.

-getting the dress at a great price

-your favorite team wins

-the home front is peaceful

-you got the pay raise

-you got an A on your test

-your date with a special person

Joy is more than happiness

-it comes from the inside

-is derived from your purpose

-not dependent on your possessions

The Lord calls His followers to a counter-cultural lifestyle. Having or desiring to have nice things is not wrong (**I Timothy 6:17**). When those things become our focus and we lose sight of our God-given purpose and begin to trust in riches rather than God, then we must take note of that and ask God to change our focus.

**COMFORT vs CONTENTMENT**

*“Money is like seawater; the more a man drinks the thirstier he becomes”.*

It’s a challenge for 21st century, Western Christians who have so many creature comforts to not become focused on money and things. When Jesus said that it was easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God, He was speaking about how difficult it is to let go of worldly possessions (**Matthew 19:24**).

When Jesus left earth, He promised that the comforter would come. Our lavish lifestyles chip away at our dependence upon God.

**7) Why would we need to experience the Comforter if our lives are already comfortable?**

What the world gives is temporary and superficial, and can vanish overnight. Real contentment isn’t contingent on finances, status, or possessions. The kind of comfort we find through a life of luxury does not offer the deeper level of contentment and joy fond in a relationship with God **(Matthew 6:20).**

**8) How much of what you have been blessed with do you give back to God?**

If you have been blessed financially, then make certain you use your position and possessions for the purpose of bringing glory to God.

-examples of Godly men and women who used their blessings to bring glory to God

-Abraham

-David

-Job

-Nicodemus

-Joseph of Arimethea

-Lydia

**THE GENEROUS HEART**

**8) How many times have you heard people say “it is more blessed to give than to receive”?**

Most people repeat this quote when they are on the receiving end. Generosity goes against the grain of our desire to stockpile our stuff (**Acts 20:35**).

When your children see you sharing with others, giving freely, and anonymously to people in need, they will absorb (catch) those lessons.

Gratefulness leads to contentment, which leads to generosity, which produces joy (**Philippians 4:11-12**).

**SERVANT POWER- James 2:14-18**

**9) When was the last time you served others alongside your children?**

A faith that is alive is concerned about the needs of others. We are all part of God’s family (**Ephesians 3:14-15**). We all have different functions, roles to fulfill within the body. Serving alongside your children demonstrates to them how they can utilize their gifts in the body of Christ (God’s family).

**MORE THAN WORDS CAN SAY**

We live in a culture where words don’t mean much

-you’ll be the first one I call if I get an extra ticket

-the check is in the mail

-I’ll never do that again

-I’ll get to it right away

Actions speak louder than words. Time will tell is those are simply words or if they are backed up by actions. “Life service” means more than “lip service”. Our actions should also not be just for show, but should stem from our love for and desire to please God. Jesus was the example of both words and actions. He cautions us that those who only give “lip service” may not make it into the kingdom (**Matthew 7:21**).

**GOOD-BETTER-BEST**

A method designed to continually raise the bar and help your children learn how to improve on their responses.

If your child rolls their eyes and gets huffy when you ask them to put away their clean laundry; this gives you a teaching moment; “what would be a better way to respond next time?”

-Good-have a positive attitude; with no eye rolling

-Better-to take the clean clothes upstairs and put them away without being asked

-Better-volunteer to help fold the clothes when they see mom or dad getting the clothes

out of the dryer

Parenting is an ongoing opportunity for strengthening and maturing your children.

**MAKING A DIFFERENCE**

The earlier you develop the discipline of service in your family, the less it will seem like a chore

-allow children to come up with their own ideas of how to serve others

-permit them to take ownership of their ideas

-work together as a team to make it a reality

**10) Do you choose to serve or choose to be a servant?**

We must see the difference between choosing to serve and choosing to be a servant. Our goal as Christian parents should be to teach our children the difference between choosing to serve and choosing to be a servant. Jesus chose to be a servant (**John 13:12-17**).

-when we choose to serve we are still in charge: we decide who and when we serve

-when we choose to be servants, we give up the right to be in charge, we surrender the

right to decide who and when we serve; we become available and vulnerable

**SERVING UP MEMORIES**

When you serve with your family you make memories that will last forever

-force our of your comfort zone

-become better individuals

-experience some of the greatest laughs

**HONORING OTHERS**

Sometimes serving is simply the act of honoring others above yourself

-listening instead of talking

-leaning in instead of spouting off

Taking a genuine interest in others makes the difference between selfishness and selflessness.

**PURE HEARTS AND FILTHY FEET**

Jesus abandoned words and put servanthood into action

-it’s good to see Jesus’ example of serving

-it’s better to understand the call to servanthood

-it’s best if you do it

**SERVICE WITH A SMILE**

**11) Have you ever gone to a store or a restaurant and the person behind the counter looks like they swallowed a sour lemon?**

Whatever we do should be done to God’s glory. We never know how we might impact someone around us, just by our response. As Christians, we are placed in the world to impact the world for and to be a reflection of God’s kingdom (**Colossians 3:17**).

How does service play out in our culture today?

-the mom who stays up late to help her child finish the school project he postponed until

the last minute

-the family who does the yard work at the home of an elderly person

-the husband who hears the baby cry in the middle of the night and, instead of pretending

to be asleep, gets up with the baby so his wife can rest (and doesn’t make a big deal

about it the next morning)

-the older sibling who helps their younger sibling do their chores so that they can both

start playing sooner

In the kingdom of God there is no ladder of greatness to climb, no spiritual One-upmanship, no humility trophies to earn.

-**Matthew 10:42**

-**Mark 10:45**

**KEEPING THINGS IN PERSPECTIVE**

Service is a disarming discipline. When your family places the spotlight on others, the result is a contagious joy that permeates your family. When service emerges, selfishness evaporates.

**RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS**

When you choose to be a servant; it becomes purposeful, it become who you are, what you do everyday.

**12) What simple ways can you/your family show kindness to others?**

**FOCUS ON FAMILY**

**GROWING TOGETHER AS A FAMILY: Breaking Bread**

**House to House**

***“****Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching****”***  **Hebrews 10:25**

**ADDITIONAL APPLICATIONS**

**MORE THAN A MEAL**

**The Hour of Power (Ch. 5)**

**Word Power (Ch. 8)**

**KEY SCRIPTURES:**

**Proverbs 18:21**

**Hebrews 10:25**

**LEARNING GOALS**

**\*To show the importance of spending time together**

**\*To understand how powerful words are**

**\*To demonstrate ways we can spend time together**

**FOCUS ON FAMILY**

**GROWING TOGETHER AS A FAMILY: Breaking Bread**

**House to House**

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**ADDITIONAL APPLICATIONS**

**MORE THAN JUST A MEAL**

**The Hour of Power (Ch. 5)**

**Word Power (Ch. 8)**

**THE HOUR OF POWER- Hebrews 10:25**

**1) What is the one thing parents can do to help their children be successful?**

Shared meals are essential for a healthy family. What takes place today while your family

is seated around the table will bear more fruit than you could possible imagine

-teach manners

-model principles

-discuss topics

-honor God

Separate studies confirm the profound effects of dinnertime together

-gives parents and children time to talk and relate to one another without distractions

-children do better in school (and in life)

-children are more stable, less apt to get into trouble

**2) What types of discussions do you have around your dinner table?**

The leading common denominator among high achievers is eating dinner together as a

family. The dinner table is a great opportunity to instill knowledge and to learn

information that has been absorbed by family members.

**SOUP AND SALAD: Getting Started**

**Saying Grace**

**3) Do you say grace before your meals?**

When you pause to pray, you are establishing a healthy habit and expressing thanks both

to the One who provided the food and to those who prepared it.

The dinner table provides a setting for you to show your dependence on God (**James 1:17**). Fasting can teach appreciation for food. Remember that not everyone has a good meal on the table or a table to put it on.

It’s important to remind your family that part of our calling as followers of Jesus is to care for those who are hungry and hurting (**James 1:27**)

Take turns praying; teach young children that the meal begins with gratitude

-say one thing you’re thankful for that day

-hold hands for a quiet meditation moment

-sing a familiar chorus that expresses your thankfulness

-don’t fixate on “flowery” or “big” words

**The Place To Be**

You may have to establish some mealtime guidelines

-don’t allow children to rush through to get to something else

-be patient and stick to your principles

Through intentionality you can create an awesome environment that makes children want to be there.

**Three Words**

**4) What three words describe your dinnertime together?**

-interactive, humorous, relational

-laughter, relaxing, joy-filled

-family, fellowship, fun

Ask family members to describe your dinnertime in three words and discuss the responses

**MEAT AND POTATOES: The Basics**

**Making The Time Productive**

**5) How can you make mealtime more than just a time for eating?**

If you want to see fruit from your family gatherings, you’ll need to put some effort and thought into dinnertime

-it doesn’t really matter what your cool of bring it in

-there are more important things that deserve your attention

-brief conversations during dinnertime can make huge deposits in the family “security”

Account

**The Talking Bowl**

A small bowl that sits in the center of the dinnertable where everyone in the family puts in a question during the week. Each time you gather for dinner, pull out one of the questions and discuss it. May be serious or silly. There are no right or wrong questions. Everyone has a voice

-what do you think heaven is like

-what’s your greatest hope for the future

-what would it feel like to be a cloud

-what does the family dog (pet) dream about while he sleeps

You may learn a thing or two about the people you thought you knew

**High/Low**

Have each person tell about the lowest moment in their day. Then tell about the highest point of their day

**-**allows you and your family to open the door to your hearts and your loved ones to peek

inside and see what brings you joy or pain

-a great opportunity to let payer requests emerge from the lows and then to speak to how

God is beside you in the mountains and valleys of life

-teaches family to take an interest in one another

**Celebrate Good Times**

**6) How do you celebrate one another’s accomplishments as a family?**

Periodically choose to honor one family member who has achieved something significant

-driver’s license

-promotion

-test score

Serve the honoree’s favorite dinner (homecooked or carry out); decorate and make mealtime fun and interactive.

The **keys to creating an atmosphere of anticipation** around mealtime together

**7) What is the atmosphere like around dinnertime at your home?**

-positivity

-acceptance

-variety

-good tasting food

**Fun at Restaurants**

Mealtime does not always have to take place at home. Make mealtime special by going out to eat at your favorite restaurant.

-go out to eat occasionally (drive through doesn’t count)

-find out which restaurants offer kids-eat-free nights

-find a restaurant that call out the name and allow members to take turns giving their

names (or fake names)

-keep it simple

-make it fun

-good training for your children

-doesn’t have to cost a fortune

**FRUITS AND VEGETABLES: What’s Good For You**

**From “Me” to “We”**

**8) How can you change children’s focus from “me” to “we”?**

Involve the children in the dinner process; teach them that family works best when they work together

-cooking

-setting up

-cleaning up

-creating an interesting centerpiece (can become a topic of discussion)

Part of maturing is learning to be aware of others and sensitive to their needs. Sitting around the table affords opportunities for children to work on areas of

-obedience

-communication

-selflessness

Prep children beforehand when you invite guests to your home or when you are invited to someone else’s home

-have a couple of specific questions for them to ask

-encourage an outward emphasis instead of “everything revolves around me” mentality

Changing from “me” to “we” is a huge step in transitioning from child to teen to from teen to adult. Dinnertime is the perfect setting for fostering that maturing process

-how to hold a conversation

-how to show interest in others

-how to share the spotlight with those around

-gives family members a sense of belonging

-helps them to realize that what they do affects the people they love

**Share the Joy**

**9) Who do you invite to join your family for dinner?**

**10) How do you decide who to invite for dinner?**

Encourage your children to invite a neighborhood friend to dinner occasionally.

-adds to the conversation

-gives the chance to teach children how to ask insightful questions that focus on the guest

And not on themselves

-enables your children to reach out to their friends

-show them how to steer conversations in a spiritual direction

-Make guests feel special

-serve guests’ meal on a specially decorated plate

-pray sentence prayers and thank God for something you appreciate about the

guest

-a simple, but effective way to plant spiritual seeds in the lives of your children’s

friends

**Priorities and Mission**

Dinnertime gives you a regular time to discuss current events and hear about your family’s day

-check on struggles or progress at school

-learn what kinds of challenges they’re facing

-keep priorities front and center

Dinnertime is a perfect opportunity to talk about your family’s mission statement

-repeat the mission

-review how everyone is doing

-reinforce the purpose behind it (the mission)

-reward those family members who recently modeled the mission

This could be a regular weekly exercise

-remind one another of your values as a family and the ways you’ve determined God is

leading you

-make connections between your mission statement and your everyday lives

-validate your family’s direction

**Q & A**

**11) How comfortable are you talking to your children about difficult topics?**

Role play certain scenarios to challenge and prepare your children for adversity and opposition before the situation arises.

-ask one family member a particular question

-allow other family members to play the role of others in the scenario

-talk about responses to questions (what is the right/appropriate response; ways to

improve response)

-match scenario to what you think would be the next set of temptations for your children

-be proactive to teach before the situation arises

**Protecting Dinnertime**

There will be more obstacles to interaction around the table as your children grow older and become more independent. Busy schedules may keep you from eating together every night.

-choose a different mealtime that fits your schedule better

-stress to your children that face-to-face is more important than Facebook (make

dinnertime a “technology-free” zone)

**DESSERT: Making Sweet Memories**

Making memories at dinnertime extends beyond your immediate family

-the family table can be a place of deepening relationships

-sharing encouragement

-laughing uncontrollably

-create an appetite not just for dinner, but for dinnertime

Dinnertime will fulfill relational needs as well as physical cravings

-is an hour of spiritual power

-sets the stage for

-praying together

-developing a family mission statement

-learning to confront challenges

-truly enjoying one another

***SUGGESTIONS FOR FAMILY FUN TIMES***

# 37 Family Outdoor Activities Everyone Will Love [**<< First15 Devotional**](https://www.crosswalk.com/devotionals/first15-devotional/)

By [Kristin McCarthy](https://www.lovetoknow.com/member/8882~kristin-mccarthy)M.Ed.

  Fun Family Outdoor Activities Start With Camping

**Families that play together have stronger relationships and share values more closely,** and there are many fun family outdoor activities that family members of all ages can enjoy in all seasons. Camping is one of the most popular activities, whether it is at a campground or just in the backyard. Hikes, a campfire, and roasting marshmallows are all part of a family camping experience that everyone will remember for years to come.

## Hiking

A family hike, whether for an hour or a full day, is a fun activity and great exercise. Investigate different nature trails and parks for hiking routes. Learn where local and regional scenic spots such as waterfalls, overlooks, hidden groves, or colorful cliffs may be located so you can hike to them and enjoy your own corner of the planet.

## Giving Back

Turn fun family outdoor activities into opportunities to give back to the community by planning a family litter pickup or similar activity. See which family member can find the most unusual piece of trash or award the person who fills their trash bag first. Other options include volunteering to help out with local events as a family or helping out a sick or elderly neighbor with lawn and garden care.

## Birdwatching

Birdwatching is an easy and entertaining activity that all family members can participate in. Pick up a field guide from a local bookstore or library and see how many bird species you can find in your neighborhood or even just in the backyard. Keep a running list of the birds that you have come across, adding to the master list whenever you go on a birdwatching adventure.

Take On Some Watersports

Renting a canoe or kayak is a fun activity for families to partake in. Use the canoe to explore a local lake or river, or make it part of a camping trip. Be sure to follow all safety precautions, however, and all family members should wear life jackets. Other great watersports for the whole family include river rafting, swimming, fishing, and boating, tubing, and water skiing.

## Winter Outdoor Activities

A family can enjoy outdoor activities even in the winter. Look for winter sports parks where sledding, tubing, skiing, ice skating, and snowboarding are all available, or stay home and build a family of snowmen or a snow fort to enjoy together. Other great winter activities include snowshoeing and winter hikes. Cap off an afternoon outdoors with a mug of [hot chocolate](https://cooking.lovetoknow.com/recipe-homemade-hot-chocolate).

## Get Your Bike On

Bike rides are economical, environmentally friendly, and great exercise for everyone. Be sure that the bikes are in good repair, have appropriate helmets for everyone, and choose a biking route that even the youngest or most inexperienced member can safely navigate. Biking can also lead to a fun picnic or other outdoor activities at the end of the ride.

## Be Beachcombing Buddies

A day at the beach is great fun for every family member, and there are many outdoor activities that are perfect for the beach, such as searching for seashells, examining tide pools, swimming, surfing, or playing beach games such as Frisbee, volleyball, and flag football. Building sand castles, enjoying a picnic, and just taking long walks are other great options.

## Gardening With Your Gang

Gardening is a fun and productive outdoor activity for the whole family. Whether it is planting flowers or [tending vegetables](https://garden.lovetoknow.com/wiki/Vegetable_Garden_Layouts), this can be educational for everyone, and children can learn the value of their hard work leading to tasty rewards when they enjoy what they've grown. The produce or flowers from a garden can also be shared with an extended family or neighbors, or even sold at a local farmers' market.

## Sidewalk Drawings

Colored chalk is inexpensive and can be hours of fun for the entire family. Children and their parents can draw game boards, murals, or meaningful pictures on the sidewalk or driveway. Working with chalk is a great means for practicing handwriting or alphabet lessons, making this activity as educational as it is fun.

Plan Playground Visits

While a local playground can become predictable and boring after just a few visits, it is possible to find new and exciting playgrounds to enjoy with just a bit of searching on a city's parks and recreation website. Many towns and cities offer educational playgrounds or playgrounds adjacent to ponds and nature trails, giving a family several varying outdoor activities to enjoy in one location.

## Try Out an Outdoor Festival

Outdoor festivals can provide great family fun. Hot-air balloon festivals, state and county fairs, sandcastle building competitions, organized nature walks, fireworks shows, kite flying festivals, and more are all superb options for the family to enjoy. No matter where you live, there are bound to be a few events held during the year.

## Fun Photography

Spend the day outdoors capturing the beauty of nature through a lens. Visit a nature preserve, walk the streets of your city, or find farm life and capture images of what you see. Later, you can develop these pictures and turn them into a beautiful book of memories for all to enjoy.

## Build a Family Fort

Hunt for the perfect tree, round up some boards, nails, and various supplies, and build a family tree fort. If tree forts feel too challenging, gather sticks, ropes, sheets, and other supplies and fashion an on-ground hut to hang out in. Building forts is a timeless outdoor activity that will provide families hours of fun during construction and afterward.

## Have a Bonfire

Build a campfire, gather round, and enjoy s'mores and one another's company for an evening. [Bonfires](https://party.lovetoknow.com/Outdoor_Bonfire_Party_Games) are an excellent outdoor family activity when done safely. Make sure to build your fire far away from any brush or structures, always have enough water nearby to put the fire out, and keep it to a manageable size.

## Create a Family Picnic

Choose a warm, sunny day to hold a family picnic. Pack up a blanket and all of your family's favorite snacks and head outdoors for lunch. You can take your meal to a park, a riverbed, a nearby park, or simply set up a spot in your backyard to picnic. Spread out in the grass and dine al fresco.

Do a Christmas Light Tour

During the holiday months, load the family up in the car and drive around the town, gazing upon the Christmas lights displays. Bring along snacks and hot cocoa and put some classic holiday tunes on the radio. This favorite yearly activist might just become a [family tradition](https://family.lovetoknow.com/about-family-values/importance-family-traditions-strong-connections) over time and something that your children will remember and cherish for years to come.

## Attend an Air Show

Air shows are a fun and exciting way to spend time outdoors. Do a simple internet search to discover when and where air shows will be performing near you. Warning: this activity can get loud, so prep your family, and bring noise-canceling headphones if you think that will help make the experience more enjoyable.

## Go Fishing

Pack up the fishing pools, bait, and some snacks, and scout out a local watering hole. Even if you don't catch anything, kids will have fun learning how to bait their pole and cast their lines. Should you get lucky and hook something, reel in the big one and capture the image on camera or video. It will make for a lasting memory for sure.

## Stare at the Stars

During warmer weather, head into the clear night with your family and spend some time gazing up at the stars. Bring a blanket, a telescope, a flashlight, and a guidebook to the stars. Locate common constellations above and discuss the vast world outside of the one in which we live.

## Host a Lemonade Stand

Set up a table and chairs, fashion a "Lemonade for Sale" sign, and [whip up a batch](https://vegetarian.lovetoknow.com/How_to_Make_Lemonade_with_Lemon_Juice) of sweet and sour goodness for the neighborhood. Holding a lemonade stand will keep kids busy for hours while teaching them a bit of consumerism as well as customer service skills. This is a great activity to set up if you have ample yard work to tackle or a garage to clean out.

## Hold a Garage Sale

Have a family [garage sale](https://cleaning.lovetoknow.com/Organizing_a_Garage_Sale) and involve the entire family in the process. Children can gather up unwanted items of their own and help sort everything that is for sale. Ask older kids to put price tags on everything and request that younger kids put their design skills to the test, making signs to put all over the neighborhood. Consider using the money that you make to purchase something for the family or treat everyone to a fun night out.

## Have A Carwash

Make signs advertising your car wash. Purchase soap and necessary cleaning supplies and head into the sunshine to get your clean on! Work as a family, or invite friends to aid in your cause and help run your carwash. Take the earnings that you make during the day and donate them to a good cause.

## Partake in an Outdoor Scavenger Hunt

Find a list of items to scavenge for and set to your task. Work in teams to see who can complete the [scavenger hunt](https://kids.lovetoknow.com/kids-activities/unique-outdoor-scavenger-hunt-ideas-kids) first. Set aside a small prize for the team who makes it through the list first. Celebrate the hunt with a treat, like cocoa in colder months or popsicles in the warmer weather.

## Spend the Day at a Farmers Market

Farmers markets are fun, seasonal activities. Browse the unique stalls and choose healthy, local ingredients. Then, head home and create a fun meal for everyone. Spend some time buying up soaps, clothing accessories, art, and other fun items that you can later give to family and friends as birthday or Christmas gifts. End the day with a locally crafted sweet treat.

## Bubble Fun for Everyone

Kids love bubbles! Find an easy [DIY bubble recipe](https://kids.lovetoknow.com/kids-activities/how-make-bubble-solution) and whip up your own solution. Take your mix outdoors and experiment with various bubble wands, making all sorts of shapes and sizes of bubbles. See who makes the largest one, the longest lasting one, or the most interesting one.

## Make a Homemade Watering Can

Tending to plants is something that the whole family can help with. Kids learn the importance of caring for living things and recognize how their contributions to the family aid in the common good with simple chores. Make a [homemade watering can](https://www.pbs.org/parents/crafts-and-experiments/diy-no-drip-watering-can) together. Take your creation outside and water plants in warmer weather.

## Cloud Creations

There is so much beauty and wonder in the world around you, and sometimes you simply have to stop and notice all that surrounds you every day. Go outside with a large blanket. Lie down with your loved ones and watch the clouds pass by. Discuss what they look like and what they remind you of. Many of the ideas that your kids come up with will have you giggling through the entire afternoon.

Stuffed Animal Parade

Little kids especially will have a blast creating their very own parade. Dress up an array of favorite stuffed animals or dolls and load them into wagons or other pull toys. Play some catchy, parade-inspired tunes on your phone and take everyone (toys included) for a spin around the block.

## Build Fairy Houses

Fairy houses are fun and whimsical and can be made with just about anything found in nature. Collect leaves, moss, twigs, rocks, and sticks and create fairy houses in your backyard. With a bit of glue and paint, boring old stumps and plain-looking birdhouses can become places of magic and wonder for children.

## Be Part of a Bug Hunt

Bugs are big hits with kids. They love to learn about the creepy crawlers in their world. Check a book on bugs out from the local library and read up on what can be found hiding under logs and rocks. Take a notebook, pencil, and your bug identification book outdoors and see what you can find. When it is time to come inside, follow this outdoor activity up with an extension art activity like [bug origami](https://origami.lovetoknow.com/origami-slideshows/bug-origami-kids).

## Rock Painting

Rock painting is a fun and inexpensive [outdoor craft](https://crafts.lovetoknow.com/wiki/Outdoor_Craft) that just about anyone can do. All you need are the proper paints, a paintbrush, clean stones, and a fun and creative idea in mind. Rocks can be made into animals, contain inspirational messages, or be covered with funky designs. Anything goes in rock painting, and the only rules are to have fun and be creative.

## Map Maps of Your World

Mapmaking and map reading are interesting hobbies that kids might find fascinating. Look at existing maps and think about how they are made. Take to your surroundings and together, have your family create a map of your neighborhood. Maps can be simplified and created to showcase your backyard or get extremely intricate, including identifying landmarks, streets, and buildings in your town.

## Mud Pie Making

No childhood is truly complete without spending at least some time getting dirty in the backyard. Reserve an afternoon for making mud pies. Fashion pies in all sorts of shapes and sizes. Decorate them with berries, twigs, leaves, and small stones. Hold a Prize Pie contest and award a winner for the most creative or pretty pie.

## Backyard Boat Races

If you live near a small stream, or know where to find one, try holding a Family Boat Race Day. Use household items to build small boats and then send them downstream. Watch them race for several yards, marking off a finish line. Celebrate the end of the race by splashing in the stream.

## Get Into Geocaching

Geocaching is an especially entertaining activity for older children and teens. Geocaching is like a giant, local treasure hunt where GPS devices are used to track down a hidden geocache. To add an extra layer of challenge to the activity, give your family a set time limit and see if you can crack the codes before time runs out.

## Trampoline Wars

If you have a trampoline, hold an evening event where each family member showcases their very own trampoline routine. Throughout the day, every family member who is participating spends an allotted amount of time on the trampoline putting their jumps, flips, and bounces to song. After everyone has created and practiced their routine, hold a performance. Set up chairs and a means to play routine music and enjoy everyone's creativity.

## Have Fun as a Family Outdoors

Fun outdoor family activities can bring a family together. So gather your littles and make some great family memories by spending time together in the great outdoors.

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# 62 Fun Family Night Ideas and Activities

By [Michele Meleen](https://www.lovetoknow.com/member/8398~michele-meleen)M.S.Ed.

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Family night ideas include fun games and activities any family can enjoy together at home or in their neighborhood. Whether you've got toddlers or grandparents to entertain, family nights are the perfect [family bonding activities](https://family.lovetoknow.com/family-activities/family-bonding-activities).

## Family Night Ideas With Toddlers

When you've got little kids, learning how to have fun with your family at home is priceless. Babies, toddlers, and preschoolers don't stay up too late and often get cranky at night, so finding fun in and around your home is often the best option.

**Free and Cheap Family Night Ideas for Little Kids**

[Free and fun family activities](https://family.lovetoknow.com/family-activities/free-fun-family-activities) are great for this age group because little kids already require a lot of money for things like diapers. Toddlers especially enjoy things they aren't supposed to do or play with, so give them novel experiences and they'll be thrilled.

* Play flashlight hide-and-seek in the house.
* Create an indoor drive-in movie by pushing the couch aside and sitting in pillow-lined laundry baskets to watch a show.
* Use painter's tape to map out a road all around one floor of your house, then play cars together.
* Make indoor outline people by outlining each other with painter's tape on the floor. Find clothes and accessories to lay on top of the outlines to complete the people.
* Craft and serve custom drinks by giving your child small cups of a few different drinks like juice, pop, and lemonade. Each family member can make and name a new drink, then everyone votes on their favorite.
* Start a family band using items from around the house like pots and pans. Let the kids pick their favorite song, then try playing and singing it together.
* Play a play dough guessing game where you each mold things out of play dough and guess what each other made.
* Have a dance party using a speaker with built-in light show or a disco ball and make up new dance moves to teach each other.
* Watch a movie somewhere weird like while sitting in the empty bathtub together or laying under the bed.
* Set up your own bowling alley using 16-ounce plastic cups or empty pop bottles as your pins and any softer toy ball.

### **Elaborate Family Night Ideas for Little Kids**

If you've got a little more spending money, kids who don't get too cranky in the evening, or aren't afraid to make a mess, you can try out some more elaborate family night ideas.

* Go on a holiday decoration scavenger hunt in your car by driving around town looking for great displays at Christmas or Halloween.
* Head to the nearest railroad tracks and watch for trains to pass by. Bring snacks and train-themed coloring pages to keep kids busy while you wait, then count the cars when one appears.
* Create your own indoor water park if you have one of those large walk-in showers. Throw on your bathing suits, turn off the lights, and bring glow sticks and water toys into the shower to play.
* Build a teepee out of sticks and branches in the woods, then sit inside and play a traditional Native American or colonial game.
* Spend the night at someone else's house, like a close friend or family member who is out of town.
* Use snow tools like brick molds to make an igloo in the backyard.
* Fill water balloons and squirt guns with colored water and create snow art by playing with the water toys in the snow-covered yard.
* Use a kit to build a simple rocket that launches using baking soda and vinegar, then take it outside to launch again and again.

## Family Night Ideas With School-Aged Kids

Kids ages five to 10 have very definite ideas about what they like, so look for family night ideas that incorporate their interests. Since they're older, you'll be able to try out activities that take up more time.

### **Free and Cheap Family Night Ideas for Young Kids**

Willing parents are pretty much all kids need to have fun as a family. Think outside the box and look for activities that are really fun and funny.

* [Invent your own family board game](https://boardgames.lovetoknow.com/Create_Your_Own_Printable_Board_Game) and play it.
* Have a fun family photo shoot where each person gets the chance to create the backdrop and choose everyone's outfits.
* Make a family trip wish list in a notebook or on a map of all the places you'd like to visit together.
* Set up a S'mores buffet using your fireplace or gas stove to cook the marshmallows. Make each other unique S'mores by replacing the chocolate bar with other candy bars and try to guess what's in them.
* Play a group phone game that gets you moving like Pokémon Go or Wizards Unite.
* Have a real water war in the yard where each person has a home base and you use water balloons, squirt guns, and even buckets of water.
* Have a Nerf gun fight indoors or outside. Make sure you stock up on Nerf darts and keep them in buckets around the play area.
* Make a ninja warrior course inside or outside using furniture, kiddie pools, and other DIY obstacles.

### **Elaborate Family Night Ideas for Young Kids**

Kids in this age group like to feel independent and want a say in how they spend their free time. Let the kids help plan your family night to make it more appealing.

* Host a "Chicken Challenge" dinner where each person create a dish featuring chicken and anything they can find in the pantry. Everyone will try each other's and vote for the best.
* Support a local sports team by attending a game or special fundraising event.
* Do some tandem sledding at a local ski resort or by tying your inflated sleds together as you slide down a local hill in winter.
* Sleep over at a museum, aquarium, or sports stadium when they host one of these events.
* Take apart an old piece of electronic equipment, like a VCR or broken DVD player, then rebuild it.
* [Make homemade dog treats](https://dogs.lovetoknow.com/wiki/Dog_Biscuit_Recipes) or accessories, like doggie scarves and [tied blankets](https://crafts.lovetoknow.com/wiki/No-Sew_Fleece_Blankets), then deliver them to a local animal shelter.
* Host a dollar store challenge where each person has the same amount to spend in the dollar store, but the goal is to buy more individual items than anyone else.
* Create an at-home spa complete with a bathtub foot soak you can all enjoy together and wash-off facial masks you do while wearing big, comfy robes.

## Family Night Ideas With Tweens and Teens

Teens and tweens aren't always excited about family nights, but this kind of family bonding time is crucial to their emotional and mental health. Include them in the planning to ensure they come willingly and have a good time.

### **Free and Cheap Family Night Ideas for Teens**

Use your interests or your older kid's interests to help you decide which family nights will be most enticing. Show your tweens and teens that they're never too old for fun with free and cheap family night ideas.

* Take a night bike ride through town together. Make sure everyone's got a light on their bike or is wearing reflective clothing. Have more fun by decorating your bikes with glow-in-the-dark materials.
* Upcycle clothing or jewelry together by each cleaning out your closet and working together to turn the old into something new.
* Host a family ping pong tournament complete with a poster board bracket where you can track the winners.
* Have a cemetery picnic and tell ghost stories.
* Use the pieces from your existing lawn games to invent a cool new lawn game.
* Make a home movie inspired by your family's favorite TV show, book, or movie.

### **Elaborate Family Night Ideas for Teens**

Kids in this age group will appreciate the chance to do things that might be a little more novel and sometimes more expensive.

* Complete a ropes course together.
* Head out to a virtual reality (VR) gaming site where you can all play a cooperative VR video game together.
* Take turns setting up fake crime scenes that your other family members will have to solve.
* Buy a couple laser tag sets and play in your home or yard.
* Head out to the nearest trampoline park for a competitive game of dodge ball.
* Host an in-home paint night where you each create a painting that matches up with the next person's when they are hung side-by-side.

## Family Night Ideas With Mixed Age Groups

[Fun family night out ideas for all ages](https://family.lovetoknow.com/family-activities/fun-family-night-out-ideas-all-ages) are great for families with kids in different developmental stages. Whether you choose to go out or stay in, look for activities that will be fun and doable for everyone. If you like to include Grandma and Grandpa or your siblings and their kids in your family nights, you'll want to find great large group activities.

* Play costume charades where you have to find clothing, accessories, and costume pieces from around the house to dress up as whatever you're supposed to portray.
* Play a game of Family Guess Who? where you each write down three to five things you have done that others might not know. Take turns pulling papers out of a bowl and guessing who did that thing.
* Host a family favorites TV marathon where each person gets to choose one show to watch an episode of with the whole family.
* Host a family craft night where you lay out all your craft supplies on one table and everyone can create their own craft while sitting together at another table.
* Challenge each other to brain games such as [logic puzzles](https://kids.lovetoknow.com/wiki/Printable_Logic_Puzzles_for_Kids). Set up a point system to assign each person an IQ at the end of the night.
* Play [Minute to Win It style games](https://kids.lovetoknow.com/kids-activities/minute-win-it-style-games-kids). Pretend you're on the game show and assign one person to host.
* Play Our Family Feud by polling all family members on several [Family Feud style questions](https://fun.lovetoknow.com/weird-strange/family-feud-game-questions), then playing a DIY game of Family Feud.

## Make the Most of Family Nights

Whether you're looking for [summer family fun](https://family.lovetoknow.com/about-family-values/photos-summer-family-fun) or great winter family nights, there are thousands of activities to choose from. Get creative and look for activities that will be new experiences for your kids or your entire family.

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**Here are the 10 best unique date ideas:**  *via: Unsplash / Jan Paweł Bochen* **1. Rock Climbing Wall** Show her you have an adventurous side and take her rock climbing. You'll be able to show off your **2. Go To An Amusement Park** Let out your inner child together and head to that good 'ol [amusement park](https://thebeachouse.com.au/why-we-love-theme-parks-and-you-should-too/) your parents used to take you to. **3. Test The Limit Of Your Compatibility In An Escape Room**  Not only is this a great date idea, but you will be able to test your team work in fun and interesting situation too! **4. Stargaze At A Planetarium** Gaze into the known universe at a planetarium and, if she is up to it, get into a [deeper conversation](https://www.mantelligence.com/deep-conversation-topics/) about our planet and maybe life on others. **5. Become Amateur Photographers** Photography gives you a great opportunity to document all of your time together and re-live it later on in life. **6. Go Back To Where It All Began** This is perfect for a couple who has been dating for awhile. Go back to the first place you met or that first date spot. It's a great way to reminisce. **7. Take A Helicopter Ride**  One of the more "expensive" dates on the list, but if you have the means, it could make for the most memorable experience you share together. **8. Explore A New Coffee Shop** Spend some time having a really [good conversation](https://www.mantelligence.com/conversation-starters/) over a great cup of joe at your new favorite coffee shop. **9. Visit The Casino** If you are feeling really adventurous, try your luck at the casino. When one of you hit it big, take a trip to a place you've always wanted to go. **10. Take A Segway-Riding Tour** You'll both be able to laugh at each other while wearing those silly helmets AND you will also be learning something new together.

**Here are 6 unique first date ideas:**

#### **1. Breakfast Date** Instead of your standard "dinner date," try taking her out for everyone's favorite meal: Breakfast. Get to know her over a hot cup of coffee, bacon and eggs; sunny-side up.

#### **2. Find A Weird Museum To Go To** World's Biggest Pencil Museum? The Dog Collar Museum? There are a variety of weird museums to experience together. One thing is for sure, she will never forget this first date.

#### **3. Hit The Slopes** Love to ski/snowboard? Radical. It's okay if she doesn't know how, take this opportunity to teach her. It'll be a date she never forgets.

#### **4. See What You Can Find At The Flea Market** Thrift store and flea markets are all the craze nowadays. Try playing a game of who can find the most unique item at the market.

#### **5. Take A Boozy Tour** So many big cities have bicycle beer tours or pub crawls. Find one in your local area and take her on a tour of the city while enjoying a few cold ones.

#### **6. Take A Peek At Homes In Your Community During Real Estate Open Houses** Feeling a bit more daring? Pretend to be a rich couple looking to buy a new home in a prominent area. That is sure to get your hearts racing.

**Here are 6 unique second date ideas: 1. Attend A Podcast Taping** If you both share an interest in podcasts why not see how one is made? It could make for an interesting experience that she has never done before. **2. Impress Them With Your Karaoke Skills** Can't sing? That's okay. She is sure to be impressed by your bravery to get on stage. It'll be worth it; those few embarrassing moments of scream singing "[Don't Stop Believing](https://www.theguardian.com/music/2010/dec/16/dont-stop-believin-2010)." **3. Celebrate The Sports With Food** Are you both avid fans of your hometown sports team? Perfect! Grab some great food and cheer them on together, whether on the couch, at the bar or at the game itself, it's the perfect way to show each other your team spirit.

#### **4. Head To A ~Secret~ Music Gig** You hear about them all the time: a great band, playing a small intimate show somewhere in your town. Find out where and share an amazing first concert together, one she will never forget.

#### **5. Instead Of Dinner Out, Cook Something Easy Together** Save some cash and spend some quality time together by cooking at home. There are endless options for you to make and she will appreciate a more thought out and intimate evening over dinner out any day.

#### **6. Check Out A Baseball Game (The Cheap Seats Will Do)** Even if they are "nosebleeds," it'll be fun to get outside and sing "Sweet Caroline" during the 7th inning stretch.

To spice things up even further, try going on a double date. This will add more back and forth throughout the group and should keep things light and interesting.

If **you** are planning the date, you are going to want some killer [**double date ideas**](https://www.mantelligence.com/double-date-ideas/) to impress everyone attending. Blow them away with some of these options.

**Here are 8 unique double date ideas: 1. Play Laser Tag** One of the best ways to get moving and to keep everyone involved right off the bat. **2. Build A Tree House** If you have the time, take team building to the next level by assembling an old fashioned treehouse. Not only will you be able to reminisce on those fun clubs or hideouts you had as kids, you will also have a new hangout for everyone to enjoy together when you are finished. **3. Visit An Auction** A perfect chance to play a game of who can win the most ridiculous item. Or simply try and win some cool stuff that you could all use together in the future. **4. Play As Teams On Board Game Night** One of the classics, but a great chance for everyone to get to know each other in a more intimate setting. **5. Sign Up For A Murder Mystery Dinner Theater** Generate your inner Sherlock Holmes and work together to find out "who done it?"

**6. Compete In A Bar Trivia Night** Put your heads together and try to walk away winners of a local trivia night. You might just find that someone has a very in-depth knowledge of 80's pop culture. **7. Hit Up The Renaissance Fair For A Medieval Good Time** Dress up, grab a turkey leg and watch some good old-fashioned jousting in honor of the Queen. It's okay to get a little goofy as you relive the days of yore. **8. Get ~Spooky~ At A Haunted House** Forget how afraid you were of Freddy Kruger growing up, because this is the perfect opportunity to comfort her as you make your way through the dark and creepy house.

#### **Here are 5 unique date night ideas:** via: Unsplash / Taylor Rooney

#### **Think Seasonal By Carving Pumpkins Or Going To Look At Lights** Get into the holiday spirit and carve some pumpkins or take a stroll to look at Christmas lights in your town. Use the season to your advantage and plan a date accordingly.

#### **Chuckle At A Comedy Show** [Laughing is good for the soul](https://www.selfgrowth.com/articles/smiling-and-laughing-is-good-for-the-soul). So is laughing together.

#### **Check Out A Live Music Venue** Search around for a great live music venue in your city and make a habit of checking out the live music.

#### **Play At Target** Remember playing with all the toys you could find at the department store while your mom was shopping? Now is your chance to relive those moments of pure joy as an adult.

#### **Embrace Your DIY Side** Build something together. Whether it's simple crafting or building furniture, spending the quality time working together is sure to grow your relationship.

**Here are 5 unique cheap date ideas:**

#### **1. Admire The Masterpieces At An Art Gallery** If there is an [art gallery](https://coverhound.com/insurance-learning-center/picture-perfect-4-types-of-art-galleries-and-how-they-operate) in your local town chances are it is free or relatively cheap. This is perfect for a day trip out of the house and you both get a little culture as well.

#### **2. Play In The Snow** It might seem childish, but playing in the snow (snowball fight, sledding, etc.) is some of the best fun you can have during the winter season. Plus, you can find everything you need right in your backyard.

#### **3. Yoga In The Park** You can both work on building lean and healthy bodies together while becoming more in tune with each other's spirit as well.

#### **4. Volunteer At A Soup Kitchen** Get together and give back to those less fortunate, you'll both walk away feeling like you did some good in the world.

#### **5. Try Ice Fishing** Ice fishing will give you the opportunity to keep each other warm in the cold weather while also catching dinner for the evening.

If going out seems like a lot of work, that's because it is. Sometimes the best date nights happen right at home.

You might not think that there are any [**at home date ideas**](https://www.mantelligence.com/at-home-date-ideas/) that would be exciting enough for the both of you, but you would be surprised.

**Here are 7 unique at home date ideas: 1. Redo A Room** Have you been wanting to redo your spare room for awhile? Well now is the perfect opportunity to change the whole thing and make it a perfect shared space. **2. Interview Each Other** A perfect way to learn some things you you might not already know. Plus, this could open doors to wonderful conversations with a variety of topics. **3. Decorate A Christmas Tree Together** Another perfect date for the holiday season, decorating the tree can be a fun intimate way to spend time together. **4. Have A Video Game Night** Pull out your old Nintendo 64 and test your skills in Mario Kart. Video games have become widely accepted by the all genders and ages.

**5. Write Out The Story Of How You Met (And Fell In Love)** Not only a great way to make a date night more meaningful, but you will also have those stories to share with your families for years to come.

**6. A Year In Review**  Take this opportunity to look back on your year together, highlighting your favorite moments.

**7. Catch A Sunrise (Or Sunset)** What a romantic way to start (end) your day. Be sure you share some thoughts of why she is so special to you in that special moment.

**Here are 5 unique anniversary date ideas:**

#### **1. GO “SKYDIVING”** Are you or you S.O. afraid of heights? Use this time to conquer your fears and show her you'd do anything for her... even jump out of a plane.

#### **2. Stay At A Bed And Breakfast** Even if it's one in your town, a cozy BnB can be used as the perfect anniversary getaway.

#### **3. Revisit Your First Date Spot** Surprise her with a walk down memory lane and reminisce on how nervous you were during your first date.

#### **4. Head To The Archery Range** Guns not your thing? Let out your inner Robin Hood at a nearby archery range. Make it a fun competition to see who can get a bullseye, or split two arrow like Robin Hood.

#### **5. A Romantic Cabin At The Top Of The Mountain** Get away from technology for a weekend and focus on the beauty of the nature around you.