

A FAMILY RESOURCE

home|front

M O N T H L Y

ENVIRONMENT

modeling

*I see Christ in
others, and they
can see Him in
me!*

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How to Use this Resource

It's as easy as 1 ... 2 ... 3 ...

1 Start by deciding on a day and time that works well for your entire family. It can be an evening, afternoon, or morning. Just commit to building this time into your family's natural rhythm. (It's usually best to build this time around a meal!)

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

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

Editor's Note

This issue of HomeFront Monthly is all about modeling ... the practical, real life examples your children pick up as you live out your faith. When I think of good models, I automatically think of my own parents.

I realize a little more each day that I am a lot like both of my parents. Sure, some of those things make me cringe. I interrupt way too much ... just like mom. And thanks, Dad, for the procrastination skills!

But, overall, I am so proud of who my parents are. I feel profoundly honored to be able to carry pieces of them in me. Looking back, my parents definitely modeled a Christ-filled life through their words. I think what impacted me the most significantly were the things I saw them do.


Mom always made a point to know and love all of our neighbors. Last year, when we moved into a new house and I found myself knocking on the new neighbor's door to introduce myself, I remembered that my mom used to do this all the time.

Dad apologizes quickly and easily ... he is a humble man who never hesitates to admit that he is wrong. While there is a lot I don't get right, my husband will tell you that if we get in a fight, I am

usually quick to apologize and admit that I messed up. I could literally go on for pages with examples of the kind, humble, and generous lives I watched my mom and dad live.

Following Jesus will cost a person everything. I'm often surprised by how easily I accept this fact. I'm pretty sure it has a lot to do with the fact that my parents modeled sacrifice for Jesus to me daily. They probably talked to me about it a few times along the way, but it is their actions and choices that sit the most heavily with me. Watching them live their lives profoundly affects the way I choose to live my life as an adult.

Thanks, Mom and Dad, for showing me I should expect to give up nothing less than everything as I chase after Jesus. ☺



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

ENVIRONMENT

MODELING

Biblical content needs a practical living expression in order for it to be spiritually impacting. This environment serves as a hands-on example of what it means for children to put their faith into action. Modeling puts flesh on faith and reminds us that others are watching to see if we live what we believe.

Ephesians 5:1 says, "... be imitators of God ... as beloved children." We know children love to imitate, so what do we as parents want them to imitate? As a parent, one of my deepest desires is for my kids to imitate God's Truth. Modeling, then, becomes an expression of that. We become living representatives of what the truth means, whether as a parent or a volunteer.

We are people who have experienced God's love through Christ and God's forgiveness in the model of Christ. He was and is our living example. The environment of MODELING serves as a hands-on example of what it means for both our children and us to put this faith into action.

THIS MONTH, as you model for your family what it looks like to live out a compelling and authentic faith, our prayer is that your view of God's Truth and love would be on display for others. ☺



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VERSE OF THE MONTH

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

ELEMENTARY VERSE

"Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.'" John 14:6-7

PRES/KINDER VERSE

Jesus answered ... "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father." John 14:9b

FAMILY FOOD TIME

RECIPE

Cooking together is always fun. Especially making desserts! This recipe is easy for all ages. Kids can help mix, pour, and sprinkle ingredients.

Frozen Strawberry Dessert (SERVES 6-8)

Prep Time: 20 min. Cook Time: about 2 hours

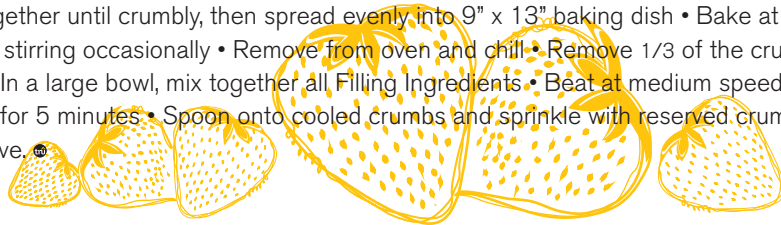
Crust Ingredients

1–1 ½ cups flour
 1/3 cup brown sugar, packed
 ¾ cup chopped nuts
 ¾ cup melted butter

Filling Ingredients

1 10 oz. package frozen strawberries, partially thawed or 2 cups fresh strawberries, sliced
 ¾ cup sugar
 2 egg whites
 2 tbs. lemon juice
 1 12 oz. carton Cool Whip
 1 tbs. vanilla

Mix crust ingredients together until crumbly, then spread evenly into 9" x 13" baking dish • Bake at 350 degrees for 20 minutes, stirring occasionally • Remove from oven and chill • Remove 1/3 of the crumbs to be used for topping • In a large bowl, mix together all Filling Ingredients • Beat at medium speed for 5 minutes, then on high for 5 minutes • Spoon onto cooled crumbs and sprinkle with reserved crumbs • Freeze until ready to serve. 🍓



FAMILY FOOD TIME

DINNER ACTIVITY

Making Dinner Together

During the summer, my husband and I decided to be pseudo parents for a week and have our five-year-old niece stay with us. Several times throughout that week, she and I made dinner together.

Similar to when I was a child, my niece loves being in the kitchen and helping cook. It gives her a sense of importance and responsibility. She gets to crack the eggs, gather the ingredients, and stir the pot. It is also fun for me because I get to teach her something new and spend quality time with her.

Preparing dinner together is a great family activity. Each person can play a special role, even the younger kids. Assign one person to make the salad, another to stir the spaghetti sauce, and yet another to make dessert. With the entire family contributing, mealtime will not only be quicker, but the whole experience will be a great opportunity to bond together as a family. You also get to model to your children the importance of carving out time for each other. 🍓

MAKE IT A TRADITION IN YOUR HOME!

GAME TIME

YOUNGER KIDS

A Twist On Some Classics

When the topic of modeling comes up, there are a couple of games that come to mind. “Simon Says,” “Follow The Leader,” and “Mother, May I?” are great games that help teach young kids to follow directions and to repeat what they have seen modeled for them.

A great way to use this during your family time is to start with the classic game, but once everyone gets the hang of it, try it with things that are more involved than a simple “Put your hands on your nose.” For example, you might want to

transition from the classic “Simon Says” to a time of prayer. Choose a friend, neighbor, or family member, say a little prayer for them, and then ask your child to do the same. You will be modeling prayer to your children, and at the same time playing a fun game! 🎮

GAME TIME

OLDER KIDS

Family Trivia

I love watching my boyfriend’s family interact with each other. Without knowing it, my boyfriend and his sisters have learned to talk to their parents about pretty much anything.

There is a spirit of blunt honesty in their family, which is quite refreshing. The dinner table is always loud, as they talk over each other. I love to just listen, observe, and laugh, as it can get pretty comical. It’s quite the contrast from the way I grew up. As I’ve spent time with his family, what I’ve clearly noticed is that his parents are the models. Because they have chosen to maintain an open line of communication with their kids, it has provided the family a safe place to talk openly and honestly, even as grown adults.

One very simple way to model for your kids is by playing together. Here’s a homemade version of the old classic trivia game. It’s a fun game, and you get to learn a little more about your family history.

What You Need

- colored index cards and pens
- optional: family videos, photos, other mementos

How To Play

1. Before play begins, family members write down several trivia questions that only relatives might know: “How did Curtis lose his front tooth?”; “What did mom and dad do on their first date?”; or “How did Grandpa become a Christian?” For a multimedia effect, cards can also ask questions about accompanying photos or videos. The game can then be played in any number of ways—individually or in teams.
2. If you choose to play in teams, have one member draw a card and read the question to his team. If the team can answer the question correctly, they keep the card. If they answer incorrectly, they cannot keep the card. (If you draw the card you wrote, then draw a different card.)
3. The team with the most cards wins. 🎮

STORYTELLING

MODELING THE TRUTH

I often refer to my childhood as similar to a “Mary Poppins” experience. Our home was loving and warm, and my parents were married and happy.



We had plenty of toys, good friends, lots of love, a cat, a dog, Halloween costumes that were handmade by our mom each year, and warm cookies waiting for us after school. It was as close to paradise as a kid could ask for. Both my brother and I clearly remember feeling safe, loved, and cared for. Our parents did a great job of physically caring for their children.

I remember hearing my parents talk about God only occasionally. When my brother and I put our minds together, we vaguely remember them taking us to church, so I think we might have been CEO's (Christmas and Easter only). Growing up, I remember hearing the word “Christian,” and my parents were certainly nice people. I recall them saying they loved God. I even remember a few prayers at bedtime, but by the time I was in late elementary school, I was quite frankly, a bit confused by some of what I was hearing and seeing.

An example that comes to mind is the phone ringing, particularly at dinnertime. One of my parents would answer and say, “Oh, I'm sorry she (or he) is not here.” Although I did not know who a “solicitor” was then, I knew that whoever was calling was asking for the Mr. or the Mrs. of the house, and my parents would lie and say they were not home. In my young mind, I remember thinking that it must be “okay” to lie under certain circumstances. Another time I remember us accidentally leaving the grocery store with an item that we did not pay for. One of my parents wanted to go back to the store and let them know what had happened and either return the item or pay for it. My other parent said that it was “not that big of a deal,” that “we shopped there plenty,” and the store was not going to close down over a pack of gum. We would just pay for it the next time we went in to shop.

Thinking back to my childhood, I internalized the image or perhaps the message of my parents not telling the truth when a solicitor would call at dinnertime (as well as quite a few other “white lies” along the way). The modeling in their real life behavior was confusing for me and led me to

believe that there are times when the truth is optional. One can imagine what I did with that “truth bending” concept in high school.

Now that I am a parent of three adult children and have navigated the waters of child rearing, I realize the practical expression of our faith is so important. Once our children know the truth of who God is, they need to be shown *how* to follow Him ... they need a model. They need living representatives of what that truth looks like in everyday life.

The Apostle Paul says to “Therefore be imitators of God ... as beloved children” (Ephesians 5:1). He knew children love to imitate. So what do we want them to imitate? We want them to imitate God's Truth. Modeling becomes an expression of that. In our home, as inconvenient as it has been to get caught on the phone with a solicitor, we make it a point to tell the truth and simply say, “this is not a good time to talk” (or we just don't answer during a meal). We also stop and take the time to return an item that may have been missed at the grocery store checkout. If we hurt someone's feelings, we make sure that our children see us model humility by apologizing.

These seemingly simple everyday choices are vital because after we share the mind-blowing Truth of knowing a Holy God, the Truth needs a practical expression. We need to be living examples for our children. We need to model the truth of God's Word. 📖

GOD'S WORD

As parents, we are called to model God's Truth to our children. But, more importantly, each and every one of us is called to look to Jesus as our model. In Him, we find the perfect example of what a life lived for God truly looks like. As you approach God's Word with your family this month, come eager to learn alongside your children. We are all on this journey together as we move toward being more and more like Christ. Let Jesus model for each of you what it looks like to live a holy life.

Jesus showed us how to live for God through His gentleness, Truth telling, stories, and practical living. He loved the unlovely, received the worst of the worst, and fully relied on and trusted the wisdom of the Father. As Jesus' time on earth was coming to an end, He modeled prayer in a way that was both intense and intimate beyond description. We can learn a lot by looking at the posture of prayer that Jesus modeled throughout the Gospels.

Read Matthew 26:36–39 and as a family discuss:

- Why do you think Jesus had a few of His disciples come with Him rather than going alone?
- Why was Jesus so full of sorrow?
- What was Jesus talking about when He asked for "this cup [to] be taken from me"?

Jesus knew it was essential at this time to be on His face in prayer before the Father. He shows us how important prayer is, even in the hardest of moments. Jesus was willing to do what the Father knew was best even though it would be hard. Wow! Are we willing to give up our own thoughts or ways of "how it should be" and submit fully to God's will? This passage is not saying we can't ask—but it is saying that we should be ready to do God's will. This passage also shows us Jesus needed emotional support in His greatest time of need, and He was hoping to receive that from his disciples. In our times of need, we also may need support.

Read Matthew 26:40–44 and as a family discuss:

- Why do you think the disciples could not stay awake?
- Do you think it was okay for Jesus to ask the Father for the same thing two more times?

This passage is so amazing because it shows us the humanness of Jesus (who is God!) and of His disciples. Some commentaries say the

disciples could not stay awake because they were so overwhelmed with the deep sorrow that was affecting Jesus, an anguish so deep and so intense they went to sleep. Don't we all wish at times we could just go to sleep and wake up to find everything okay? Unfortunately, that's not reality.

A Truth I love in this passage is that Jesus went to the Father with a repeated prayer; three times Jesus went

"HE LOVED
THE UNLOVELY,
RECEIVED
THE WORST
OF THE
WORST, AND
FULLY RELIED
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TRUSTED
THE
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and asked for the cup to be removed, but would honor His Father's will. Rather than Jesus praying, walking away, and not thinking any more about it (really, how could he not be thinking about this nonstop?), He went back again in prayer. He went to the Father in confidence and with determination. He was serious.

Throughout all of these verses, we see the One (Jesus) who had the most intimate of relationships with the Father had a prayer that was not answered the way He wanted it to be. Can you believe it?! Hebrews 5:7 says that His prayers were heard. But the answer was not what He was asking for. The prayer of Jesus in this passage shows us that we can be close to God, live a holy life, pray with faith, determination, and confidence, and still not get what we ask for. Above all else, this models an attitude toward prayer that is not about manipulating God but is about submitting to the will of God.

Look back at verse 39. As a family, remind each other that God always hears our prayers, but we have to trust Him for the right answer. He is the one who sees the big picture—He knows what is best, even when it is the hardest thing we may ever have to do. Take some time now to pray and encourage each other in trusting the Father for His perfect will.

You may also want to look back over the last few months and review your family prayers. Does anyone feel God answered their prayer differently than they expected? Talk about the answers God gave. (These are sometimes hard to see when the answers are different than what we originally asked for). What were the results of these answers? You may find that you are really glad you submitted to His will. ☺

“THE PRAYER OF JESUS IN THIS PASSAGE SHOWS US THAT WE CAN BE CLOSE TO GOD, LIVE A HOLY LIFE, PRAY WITH FAITH, DETERMINATION, AND CONFIDENCE, AND STILL NOT GET WHAT WE ASK FOR.”

by Tommy Larson

WORSHIP

A WILLING PARTICIPANT

My wife and I recently attended a gospel concert at a nearby church. On our way there, I began to wonder how open or available I would be if I was asked to worship in a way I felt was unusual. We arrived at the concert a bit late, but I was quickly overtaken by the incredible response coming from the audience. The room was overflowing with a desire to worship, and no one seemed to even care who was leading it. It almost felt like the concert was taking place in the audience.

Two rows ahead of me, a mother used one arm to hold her toddler on her hip, while her other arm was raised high to the sky in worship. The woman's child began to watch and study what was happening with her mother. Slowly, the child raised her arm and closed her eyes and attempted to sing a song she didn't know.

As I observed this gathering of people, my heart became inspired by what I was witnessing. I wanted nothing more than to take part in the corporate worship happening all around me. I was no longer just a spectator, but a willing participant. That night I learned God uses people around us to help teach and inspire us to worship—even when we are least prepared to do so.

This month, spend some time entering into worship as a family. Set time aside to lead a prayer time with your family that is separate from the "prayer before your meal," or your usual "good-night prayer." Lead a prayer time with your family that focuses only on praising God, and not so much on your immediate needs.

If you have older children, choose a weekend church service to attend together. If you have younger children, consider having them join you for the worship time in the adult service you attend. ☺

HAVE YOU
EVER VISITED
YOUR CHILD'S
SERVICE?
CONSIDER
TAKING TIME
TO VISIT
PRESCHOOL,
ELEMENTARY,
MIDDLE
SCHOOL, OR
HIGH SCHOOL
SERVICES. GOD
MAY SURPRISE
YOU BY USING
YOUR OWN
KIDS AS A
MODEL OF
WORSHIP FOR
YOU.

by Laura Weber

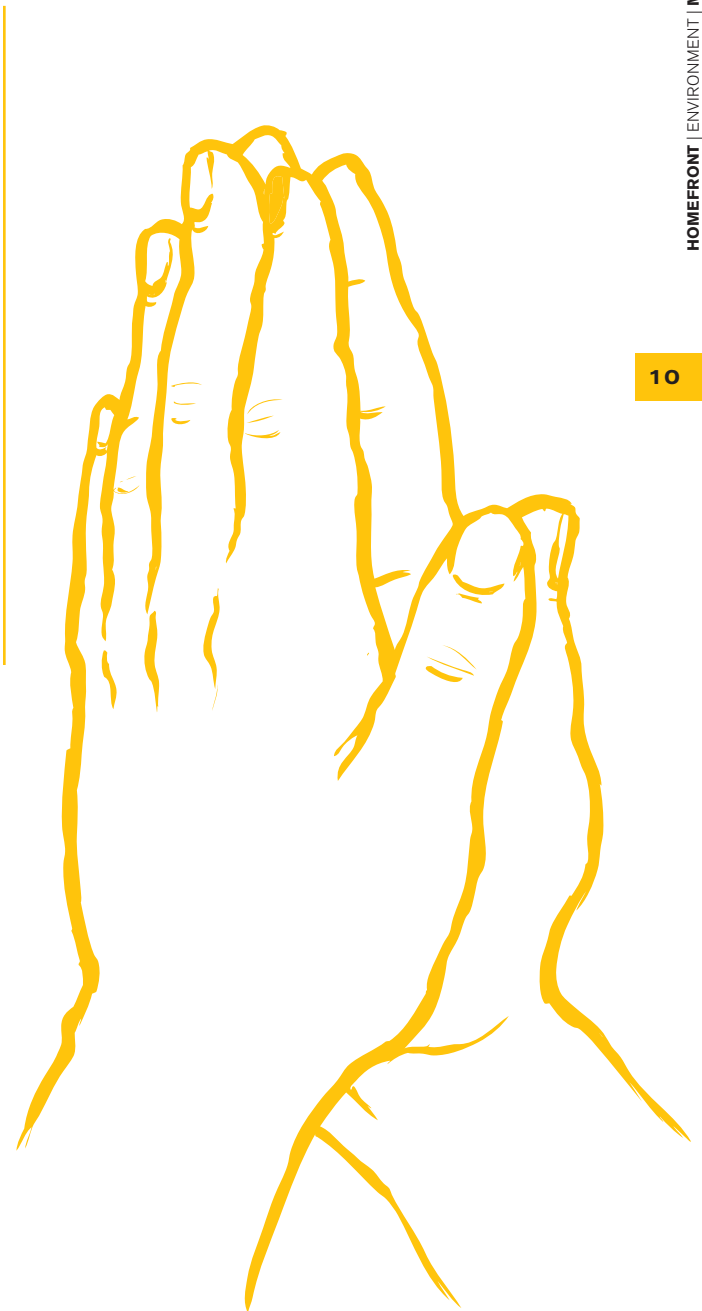
PRAYER

This issue of HomeFront Monthly talks a lot about prayer. I love that several of our contributors mentioned prayer in relationship to the environment of MODELING. Prayer is such an important thing to model for our children. In prayer, children learn to communicate with God. They learn to hear from Him, learn to express their feelings to Him, learn to depend on Him, and learn how to surrender and trust Him. How amazing it is to model so many important aspects of prayer to our children as we enter into it with them! As you pray with your family this month, make sure to check out the great suggestions in our “God’s Word” and “Worship” sections.

Another creative prayer time option (if your children are old enough) is to spend an evening modeling your prayers after some of the Psalms of David. David shows us a picture of what it looks like to worship God in all seasons. In Psalms, we see honest words that express both David’s joy and frustration with God.

Gather your family together and read a few of the Psalms out loud (e.g., Psalm 100, 91:1–2; 92:1–5; 103:1–4 are great). After you have read, have each family member spend some time writing his or her own psalm of worship to God. After everyone has finished, spend some time in prayer together. Invite each family member to read his or her psalm (sacred song) out loud as a prayer to God. End your time by thanking God for giving His Word, filled with beautiful prayers. Thank Him for modeling what it looks like to worship Him. ☺

INVITE EACH
FAMILY
MEMBER TO
READ HIS OR
HER PSALM
OUT LOUD
AS A PRAYER
TO GOD.



by Karen Eaton

MARRIAGE

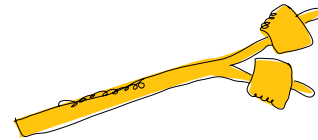
When it comes to relationships, one of the most important things parents can model for their children is a healthy and growing marriage. By carving out time to focus on your spouse, you communicate to your children that marriage matters. You are saying that caring for and paying attention to your spouse is important. One way to really show your kids that you value marriage is to make sure you have regular date nights.

As challenging as it might be to find the time and energy to get out of the house with your spouse after a busy day (not to mention arranging for a sitter, etc.), it is one of the most valuable things you can do for your marriage.

When my first child was only a few weeks old, I remember reading in a book about the importance of going on a date with your spouse every week after the baby is born. I honestly thought the author was nuts! First of all, I was exhausted from taking care of a newborn. And who can afford to go out every week anyway? But as my baby grew older (and I was less tired), I knew we had to make "dating" a priority in our marriage.

Since we could not afford to go to a restaurant for a romantic dinner every week, we set aside one night each week to spend quality time with each other after the kids went to sleep. Whether time was spent watching a movie together on the couch, playing games, or having a conversation (without being interrupted), it definitely brought us closer, and it is still something we look forward to every week. I hope and pray that every quality moment you spend with your spouse will reignite your marriage and the love you have for one another! 🍷

1.



2.



For a fun at home date try ...

- building a fire in the fireplace or on the barbecue and making s'mores together
- having a scrabble tournament
- finding a new recipe and making a gourmet, candlelight dinner at home
- making fun finger food and appetizers for a picnic on your living room floor
- watching a movie you and your spouse saw together while dating, and talking about some of your favorite memories in your relationship

3.



4.



by Ashley Otani

CREATE

As a kid, I loved play dough. (What kid doesn't like play dough?) Whether by myself or with friends, I enjoyed creating all sorts of things: butterflies, pizzas, snowmen, flowers, and anything else I could think of. But I enjoyed play dough times with my mom or dad the most. Not only was it fun, but they were a lot better at making the really detailed shapes. When they created something amazing, I would ask them to show me how to make it.

One day, when my mom was playing with me, she made a person with her play dough. After I saw what she made, I wanted her to show me how to make it, too. She proceeded to show me step-by-step how to make all the different pieces and how to put them together to create my very first play-dough person. As she molded the play dough into hands and feet, I tried my best to copy her. My mom had taken the time to patiently model her play-dough skills as I watched her every move.

This month, teach your family to do something new. If your kids are at the play dough age, sit down and do some play-dough modeling. If your kids are too old for play dough, try creating your own family cooking show. Gather double the supplies for a simple recipe and pretend you are on camera. (Try the recipe on page 4.) When TV chefs have a special guest on their shows, they usually have supplies for their guest to create the meal at the same time. Have your family cook alongside you as they follow your lead and you model some new cooking techniques. The next time you make that recipe, your family may want to take part in cooking it or make it on their own because you took the time to teach them through modeling! 🍪

READY, SET ... COOK!

by Brian Rotttschafer

TRADITIONS

MORNING COFFEE TIME

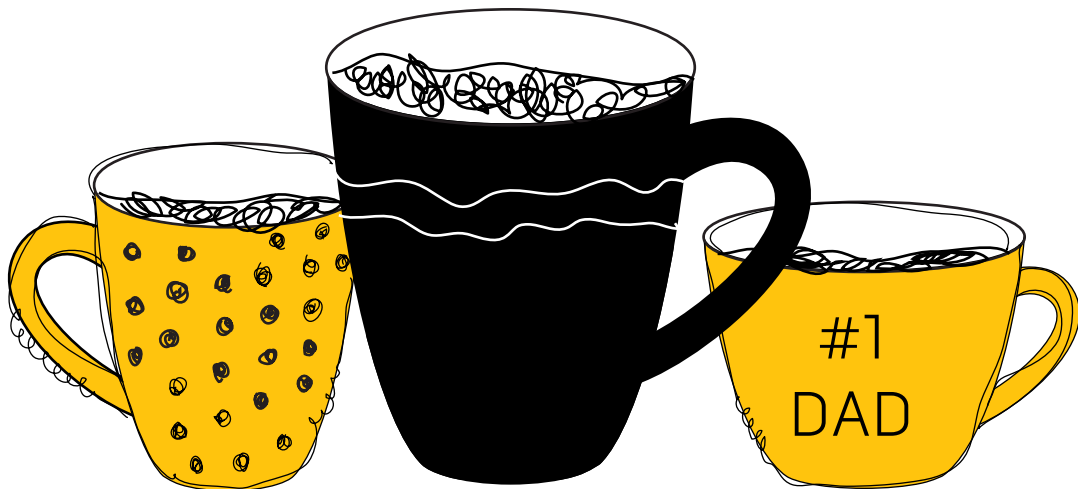
I love quiet mornings. For several years, I've been in the habit of starting my morning off by enjoying a cup of coffee and reading my Bible. Now that I have a two-year old, quiet mornings are harder to come by.

Instead of giving up this precious time, I've started inviting my son, Wylan, to join me for my morning ritual. What I thought might be chaotic or simply unproductive has turned into time with my son that both he and I look forward to daily. Once I've gotten my boy up each morning, he and I head into the kitchen for what he calls "Wylan coffee time." I start my coffee, I make Wylan hot chocolate (in a coffee cup, of course, so he can be like daddy), and we read our Bibles at the table. I usually read a Psalm while Wylan pages through his kid's picture Bible. When he gets restless, we talk about what we each read (or what pictures he looked at) and then review his Remember Verse for the month.

These morning coffee times are short (keep in mind the two-year-old attention span), but have become so valuable. Every morning, I have the chance to model the importance of Scripture reading and time with the Lord for my son. The simple act of inviting him to join me for coffee in the mornings has begun to open his little heart to the practice of regularly spending time with God.

If you already have a regular time set aside for Scripture reading, try inviting your children to open up their own Bibles and join you. If you don't regularly read Scripture, now might be a great time to start a new family tradition. Try beginning or ending your day with a few minutes of simply being with the children as you each read. Once you're finished, talk about what each of you read. ☺

WHAT A GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO TRULY MODEL PRIORITIES FOR YOUR CHILDREN AS YOU PRIORITIZE TIME SPENT WITH GOD!



BLESSING

If you're anything like me, part of you hears the word "modeling" and thinks, "Yikes, I'm pretty imperfect. I mess up all the time. How can I be a practical, living expression of Jesus to another person?" And there's truth in that. We're all pretty broken people, but that just might be the most important part of modeling.

BLESSING

"We have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience," Colossians 1:9b-11

Jesus calls all of us to be humble before Him, recognizing that we alone cannot do much. It is in Him that we are strong. It is in Him that we are made holy. It is with the filling of His Holy Spirit that we are able to model a Christ-like life—a life that says "I won't always get this right and that's okay. I will continually turn to Jesus and ask Him to make me whole."

As you bless your children this month, remind them that they do not have to be perfect. But if they turn to Jesus, He will show them How to live. His Spirit will fill every believer and help them to be

more like Jesus. Tell them that the most important thing any of us can do is depend on Jesus and ask Him to model our hearts and our lives after His.

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



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