

RESOURCES and SUPPORT

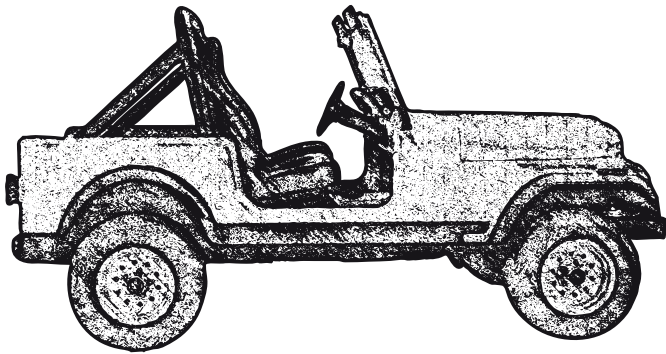


RESOURCES AND SUPPORT

CONNECTING CONVERSATIONS

get your family TALKING

If you find yourself in a car on a long road trip or passing a few hours in an airport, consider playing Would You Rather with your children. You might learn something interesting and insightful!



WOULD YOU RATHER ...

- Live in a tree house or in a castle?
- Ride a camel or an elephant?
- Travel by boat or by train?
- Eat popsicles or ice cream?
- Experience an epic waterslide or an epic zip line?
- Camp in the mountains or close to the ocean?
- Visit a national monument or a national park?
- Read a book or paint a picture?
- Eat 25 hot dogs or 25 scoops of ice cream?

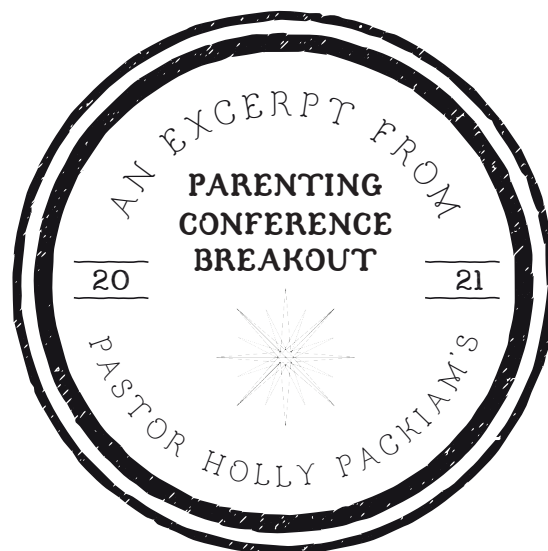


Summer often includes outdoor adventures, creating memories, late night barbecues, and vacations. Summer can also include lots of idle time for children. While idle time often sparks children's most creative ideas, it can also lead to sibling squabbles and more screen time than is good for them. Parents can help by sprinkling in some fun activities throughout the summer months. When children have things to look forward to, they are more likely to be productive in daily tasks or chores. Encourage your children to dream, create, explore, and learn this summer.

HERE ARE A FEW IDEAS TO GET YOU GOING:

- Go to a thrift store or garage sale to let each child pick something fabulous for his or her wardrobe or room.
- Stargaze from the roof or sleeping bags out in the yard.
- Invent a new type of sandwich (peanut butter and salami?).
- Make up a new dance together as a family.
- Write and produce a film or play with your friends or family, film it, and watch it on the TV.
- Learn a new board game.
- Make and fly a kite.
- Plant a garden.
- Go on a city scavenger hunt.
- Bury a time capsule filled with dated items to dig up when a child graduates high school.
- Build an obstacle course.
- Create a family summer bucket list of places to visit, people to see, and things to do.

Technology AND Today's Family



When we hear the word *technology*, we often think, “Help!” We love how tech makes our lives easier—how our kids can be quickly absorbed in a show while we make dinner. When I was growing up, most of my free time was not spent with a screen in front of me but rather outside playing until the late hours of the evening. Road trips were spent reading or playing the alphabet game. Today, most children spend several hours a day in front of a screen. There is a constant temptation to hand our child a phone while we wait in the doctor’s office, pass back an iPad on long road trips, or a set a child in front of a television so we can get things accomplished. I find myself longing for the simple days when the only options for kids were to play outside or make up an imaginary game.

A recent Barna group survey asked, “**Why is parenting more difficult today?**” **Sixty-five percent of parents said the challenges of technology and social media.** While technology in itself is not evil, it needs to be properly managed. This means asking ourselves, “What do I want for my family life, family culture, and family priorities?” In terms of building lasting fruit as we disciple our kids, we have to prioritize conversations, reading, listening, being together, laughing, and playing together over technology.

“Because technology is devoted primarily to making our lives easier, it discourages us from disciplines, especially ones that involve disentangling ourselves from technology itself,” says Andy Crouch, author of *The Tech-Wise Family*. If we want a better or different life, we have to choose it. Technology can benefit our families if used in the following ways:

1. **Technology is in its proper place when** it helps us bond with the real people we have been given to love. It’s out of its proper place when we end up bonding with people at a distance, like celebrities, whom we will never meet. For instance, it is always delightful to FaceTime a grandparent or a best friend who has moved away. Thankfully, technology allows relationships to deepen even when we’re apart.
2. **Technology is in its proper place when** it starts great conversations. It’s out of its proper place when it prevents us from talking with and listening to one another. Sharing the facts of an article, an interesting podcast, or a Scripture from a Bible app can initiate great conversation and discussion face-to-face.
3. **Technology is in its proper place when** it helps us take care of the fragile bodies we inhabit. It’s out of its proper place when it promises to help us escape the limits and vulnerabilities of those bodies altogether. Have you ever used a workout app? Or a sleep-monitoring app? There are many apps that make resources, information, and tools readily available to help us live healthier lives.
4. **Technology is in its proper place when** it helps us acquire or develop skills such as cooking, writing, fitness, decorating, and other hobbies.
5. **Technology is in its proper place when** it helps us cultivate awe for the created world we are part of and responsible for stewarding. Have you ever watched a Planet Earth video or engaged in a virtual reality walk on the moon?
6. **Technology is in its proper place only when** we use it with intention and care. If there’s one thing I’ve discovered about technology, it’s that it doesn’t stay in its proper place on its own; much like children’s toys, it finds its way underfoot all over the house and all over our lives. If we aren’t intentional and careful, we’ll end up with a quite extraordinary mess. Boundaries and rules are good things.

Find this sample rule agreement online at:
bit.ly/Sampletechandmedia

Sample Technology and Media Rules

- ☐ If a computer or a phone is in your room, the door **MUST** be open.
NO LOCKED OR CLOSED DOORS WHILE ON PHONES OR COMPUTERS.
- ☐ Phones and computers need to be turned in by 9:00 p.m.
- ☐ No phones, computers, or tablets allowed in the bathrooms.
- ☐ Television or movies on the weekend.
- ☐ One hour or less of video games per day on Saturday and Sunday.
- ☐ Two hours of television or movie watching on the weekend unless with the entire family or friends. **NO YouTube, TikTok, Snapchat, or surfing on Instagram.**

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Before you get on social media, respond to your friends, play a video game, or watch TV, ask yourself these questions:

- Have I spent time reading the Bible?
- Have I spent time talking with God?
- Have I asked the Holy Spirit to lead me today?
- Have I been active and physical today?
- Are my actions honoring and pleasing to God?
- Am I in a good place to respond to friends in love and kindness?

by Jared and Holly Newman

PHILIPPIANS 4:8 - FINALLY, BROTHERS AND SISTERS, WHATEVER IS TRUE, WHATEVER IS NOBLE, WHATEVER IS RIGHT, WHATEVER IS PURE, WHATEVER IS LOVELY, WHATEVER IS ADMIRABLE—IF ANYTHING IS EXCELLENT OR PRAISEWORTHY—THINK ABOUT SUCH THINGS.

IDEAS FOR HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

1. Consider adding screen time parameters. One idea is to focus on other ways of connecting as a family during the week and to limit screen time usage to two hours on weekends. Find a block of time during the week when all devices are turned off to worship, feast, play, and rest together—maybe the dinner hour or a Sabbath day.
2. Try not to touch devices first thing in the morning or at night. Have a quiet time, pray, or go for a walk before you touch a device. As you end the day, place devices out of reach as you go to sleep.
3. Aim for no screens before children are 10 years old. The American Academy of Pediatrics says to limit digital media to no more than one hour per day to allow children ample time to engage in other activities important to their health and development.
4. Screens should be used for a purpose and in community rather than using them aimlessly or isolated in a bedroom.
5. Instead of using devices in downtime or car time, utilize these moments for conversation and discussion.
6. Parents should have access and passwords to all children's devices to check on a regular basis. This is not an infringement on their children's privacy; rather, it is an act of love and protection.
7. Before engaging in devices, have a discussion with your child about the responsibilities and expectations of managing this privilege.

by Holly Packiam, Pastor of Parents and Families Downtown

Read this story to your young children before Mother's Day.

Jackson's Mother's Day

Jackson ran down the street toward his house. His mom was waiting for him on the front porch.

"You're really fast," she said.

"I know, Mommy. I'm going to keep running every day and build up my strength so I can run a big race and WIN!"

"You sure will," Mommy agreed.

"Mommy, I love you!"

"I love you, too, Jackson."

Jackson went into the house to play with his Lego bricks. There was music playing. He sang along: "Waymaker, Miracle Worker, Promise Keeper, Light in the Darkness, My God, that is who You are." Jackson made a really cool plane out of his Lego bricks. "Mom, is this the kind of jet Daddy flies?"

"Something like that."

"Mom, when will Daddy be home again?"

"Well, Jackson, you know Daddy is deployed right now. He had to go help people far away because of his job. He won't be back until after your birthday next fall."

"I miss him."

"I do, too."

After the song, people on the radio started talking. There was a commercial about diamonds. "This Mother's Day buy your mother a beautiful diamond necklace. She deserves it." Jackson stopped what he was doing. **Mother's Day? He sure loved his mother.** He wondered about diamonds and how much they would cost. He thought about it and decided that he wouldn't be able to go to the store by himself to buy a diamond to surprise her. He had some money in his piggy bank, but he didn't think it would be enough to buy a diamond. His mom deserved something really special because she was such a good mommy. She read him stories, she tied his shoes, she gave him big hugs, and she always made him breakfast. Breakfast! Maybe Jackson could make breakfast for his mommy for Mother's Day. What could he make, though? He wasn't allowed to touch the stove.

He kept thinking all day about how he could surprise his mom on Mother's Day. He had some quiet time in his room that afternoon. He kept thinking. If his daddy were home, he knew he would help him. Jackson started humming the song from the radio. "Even when I don't see it, you're working ... Waymaker ..." **He started to pray, "Jesus, You can do anything. Will You help me surprise Mom? Please?"**

He lay on his bed and looked around his room. There were some art supplies on his desk. He thought **Jesus might be giving him a good idea.** Jackson walked over to his desk and found some beads and a long piece of yarn. He could make a necklace. It wouldn't have diamonds, but the beads were really pretty colors. He found some blue ones. Mom's favorite color was blue! He made a pattern with the prettiest beads. He found a piece of paper and drew a picture of his whole family, Mommy and Jackson and Daddy. He drew a giant heart around them. He thought Mom would like that.

Jackson felt so happy that Jesus had given him some good ideas to make a special day for his Mommy. He put the necklace and the picture under his pillow so he could keep it a surprise.

The next morning, Jackson woke up early. He could hear birds singing and the sun was shining. He tiptoed into the kitchen. Jesus had given him one more idea. He put a piece of bread in the toaster. After it popped up, he slathered peanut butter all over the toast. Mmm, his mommy loved peanut butter toast. He climbed up to the cupboard to get out her favorite plate and took it to his mommy. **"Mommy, happy Mother's Day! You're the best mommy in the whole wide world!"**

"Jackson! What a happy surprise!"

"Mom, you sit here and eat your toast. Don't look! I'll be right back."

Jackson ran to his bedroom and lifted up his pillow. There was the pretty necklace and the picture he had colored. The picture was a little wrinkled, but he knew his mommy wouldn't care about that. He ran back to his mom. **"Mommy, Jesus helped me think of how to make a special Mother's Day for you!"**

Mommy started crying.

"Oh, no! Did I make you sad?"

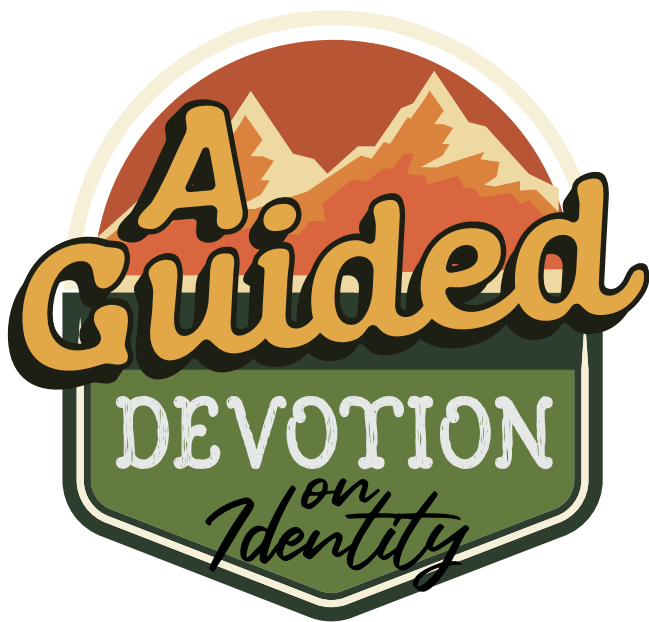
"No, Jackson, you made me very happy! These are happy tears." She gave him a great big hug.

"Happy Mother's Day, Mommy! You're the best mom in the whole wide world!"

by Mindy Harrington

Mindy remembers a Mother's Day when her kids made her peanut butter toast for breakfast all by themselves. She loves peanut butter. She lives in Colorado Springs with her husband, Dave, and works with kids at Woodmen Valley Chapel. She is grateful that Jesus helps her figure things out.

RESOURCES AND SUPPORT ELEMENTARY



Identity is a hot topic in today's culture. A quick Google search will reveal great confusion on what a person's identity is and who determines it. Identity as defined here is the essence of a person: how a person perceives himself/herself and, as a result, how that person is perceived by others. Our self-identity determines our personality and behavior. We act according to how we perceive ourselves. The big question is: Who determines our identity? And then, how do we parents help our children have healthy identities?

As believers, we know that the ultimate source of our identity is God. And we discover who we are in God's Word. Genesis 1:27 says that we are created in God's image. So, having a right view of God is essential to understanding our identity.

WHO IS GOD?

Our children need to understand that God is the Creator of everything, so He's in charge. God is our heavenly Father because He made us and He knows what is best for us. He is perfect in justice, so He has to judge sin. But He is also merciful, so He forgives our sins when we repent. His love is unconditional, which means there is nothing we can do to make God love us more or less. He just loves us all the time. God is all-knowing, all-powerful, and always with us. We need to teach our children to trust God, even though we can't see Him.

Action: Read Psalm 145. List some characteristics of God you find in this psalm.

Discuss: What are some of your favorite things about God? Why is God worthy of our worship?

WHO ARE WE?

As image bearers of God, every person has value established by God. He alone has the right to decide who we are, our purpose, and our destiny. God says that before we were born, He knew us and set us apart (Jeremiah 1:5). We are all born with a sin nature of rebellion that separates us from our loving heavenly Father. However, when we receive God's gift of salvation in Jesus, we become new creations. In Christ we are adopted as God's children, accepted, righteous, free from sin and spiritual death, holy and set apart to do God's will, and able to receive all of God's promises including eternal life with God!

Action: Read Ephesians 1 together and make a bookmark of some of the benefits of being in Christ to keep in your Bibles.

Discuss: How does it make you feel to know that you are adopted as God's chosen child? What are some of God's blessings for which you can thank Him?

WHAT CAN WE DO?

Just because we know who God is and have received Jesus as Lord doesn't mean we don't have any personal responsibility in living out our identity. Faith without action doesn't produce anything. God allows us to choose to know Him and follow in His ways. Thankfully, God helps us when we ask Him. With the Holy Spirit, we can do the good works that God has prepared in advance for us to do.

Ultimately, we need to live beyond ourselves. I like the expression that we don't need to think less of ourselves, but we need to think of ourselves less. Our true identity is found as we spend time with God and become more like Him in loving and serving others. Let's help our children learn and understand these truths so they can be confident in their true, God-given identity.

Action: Pray as a family and write down prayer requests and answers to prayer to build your faith. Attend church and worship God in your homes and serve in community with others. Commit to reading the Bible together as a family, and encourage your children to read God's Word on their own. For example: have everyone read the book of James by sections (each chapter has two or three).

Discuss: What are some difficult things that you need God to help you overcome? What are some ways you can show God's love by serving others?

by Jill Nardini, Elementary Teacher

RESOURCES AND SUPPORT
STUDENTS

THIS CHANGED EVERYTHING

A Devotion for Students

What if you fully understood the truth that the God who created heaven and earth is the same God who created you? What if you comprehended the fact that He intentionally formed you and gave you a purpose for life? What if you lived each day knowing you were made in the image of God? What would that change?

For me, it changed everything.

Back in middle school, I wanted everyone to like me. Imagine cute little Cath, with dirty blond hair, very awkward hugs, straight-across bangs, who lived with the desire to be seen, known, and loved. That was me! I wanted to be seen by the boys and girls, loved by moms and dads, and known by teachers and parents. I wanted to make my dad happy and my mom laugh. I wanted to be a good big sister and an obedient daughter. I wanted my friends' parents to like me, to be a good influence on those around me, and to get good grades—all with a smile on my face. I wanted my friends to invite me over, to laugh at my jokes, and to be there for me. Everything in me longed for the approval of these people because I loved them and sought out their validation through my striving. None of this is necessarily wrong; however, it wore me down because I put my identity and value in what others thought of me instead of in who God declared me to be.

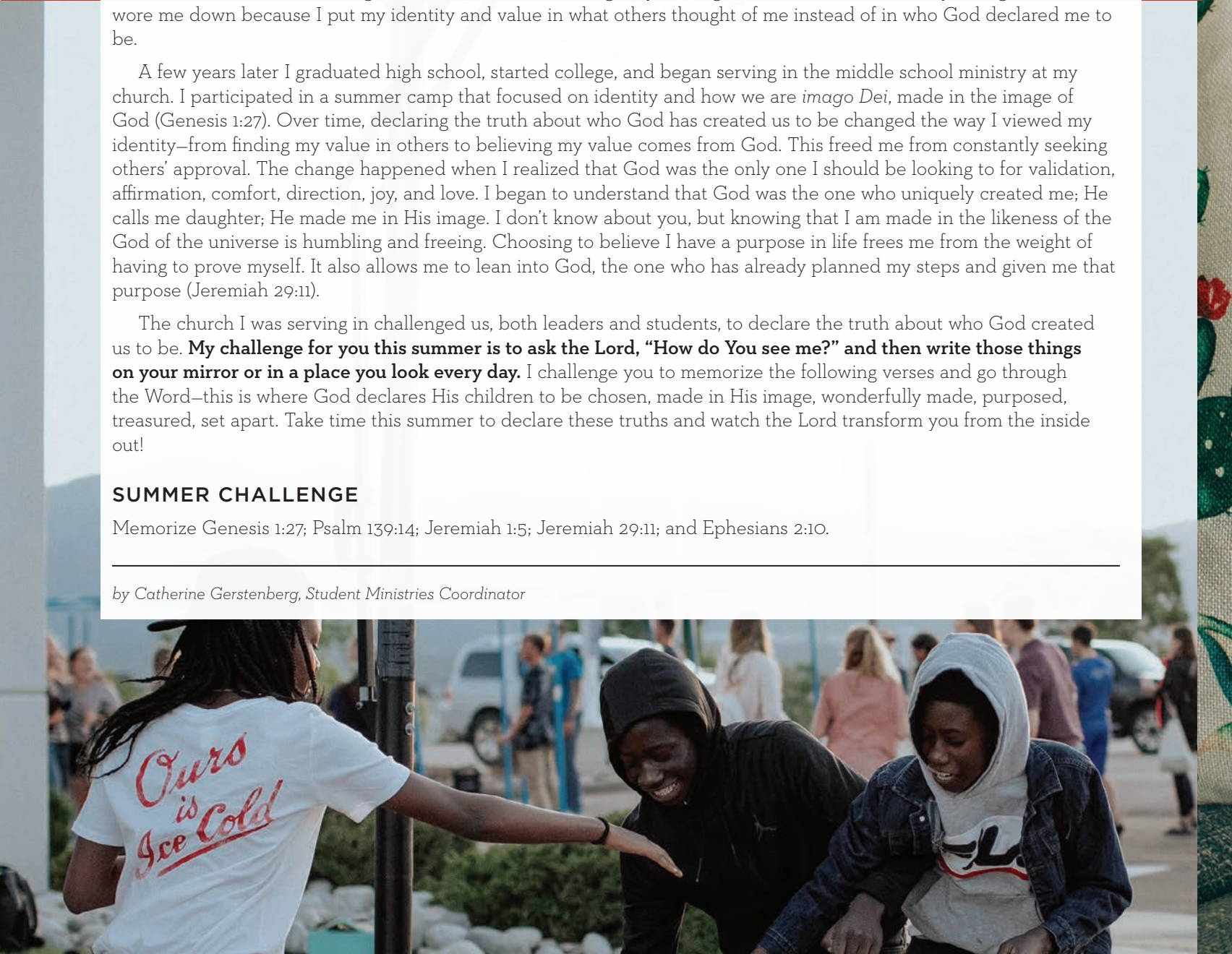
A few years later I graduated high school, started college, and began serving in the middle school ministry at my church. I participated in a summer camp that focused on identity and how we are *imago Dei*, made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). Over time, declaring the truth about who God has created us to be changed the way I viewed my identity—from finding my value in others to believing my value comes from God. This freed me from constantly seeking others' approval. The change happened when I realized that God was the only one I should be looking to for validation, affirmation, comfort, direction, joy, and love. I began to understand that God was the one who uniquely created me; He calls me daughter; He made me in His image. I don't know about you, but knowing that I am made in the likeness of the God of the universe is humbling and freeing. Choosing to believe I have a purpose in life frees me from the weight of having to prove myself. It also allows me to lean into God, the one who has already planned my steps and given me that purpose (Jeremiah 29:11).

The church I was serving in challenged us, both leaders and students, to declare the truth about who God created us to be. **My challenge for you this summer is to ask the Lord, "How do You see me?" and then write those things on your mirror or in a place you look every day.** I challenge you to memorize the following verses and go through the Word—this is where God declares His children to be chosen, made in His image, wonderfully made, purposed, treasured, set apart. Take time this summer to declare these truths and watch the Lord transform you from the inside out!

SUMMER CHALLENGE

Memorize Genesis 1:27; Psalm 139:14; Jeremiah 1:5; Jeremiah 29:11; and Ephesians 2:10.

by Catherine Gerstenberg, Student Ministries Coordinator





Let's Go Build a Fort

Have you ever wondered where the childlike “dreamer” in you goes when you get older? A cursory look at our adult lives may yield the realization that we've grown up and grown boring. However, the two don't have to be synonymous. No, we can't play in the sandbox all day; bills don't pay themselves. But let's be careful not to allow paying the bills to steal our ability to dream up new possibilities for loving our spouses.

When we allow the mundane to dull our imaginations, we grow bored and tired of creatively moving toward our spouses—and boredom is the breeding ground for letting our love grow cold. **My wife, Katie, and I have been married for only three and a half years, but the pull to “boring” is just as real as it will be at thirty years.** It's our natural bent as fallen beings, but it doesn't have to be our permanent.

God made us to be like Him, and He's wildly creative—I mean, have you seen mandarin fish or the glasswing butterfly?! **And we are made in His image.** So, when Jesus said we need to be like children to enter His kingdom (Matthew 18:3), perhaps He was talking about their wild imaginations and ability to dream impossible dreams. After all, the Father has a way of making the impossible possible. **Children model God's creativity and are more in tune with their identity as children of the Creator than most adults.** So, if we want to rediscover this part of ourselves, we need to make space for creativity.

Marriage is the perfect place for God to help us cultivate the creative, imaginative parts of who He designed us to be. **We don't have to sign up for a class or drive across town to meet with experts.** Every day we get to wake up next to our opportunity to learn how to dream again—our spouse. Let loving him/her become the avenue through which God can breathe fresh life into your imagination, restoring a childlike wonder for the world. Here's a simple way to start!

Blanket forts were my favorite way of imaginative play as a child, so I asked my wife “out” on a date, and we jumped in to creating the most fantastical cushion castle we could make.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR LOVE WHILE IN THE “FORT”

- Pick a night this week.
- Gather the following items: String, clothespins, large sheets and blankets, all the pillows and cushions you own (yes, all of them), favorite snacks, and a source of light.
- Put the kids to bed or send them on a playdate elsewhere (earlier the better!).
- Build like you're a kid (aka, don't worry about the mess or orderliness of it!).
- Gather your snacks and enter your creation!

Questions to Ask Your Love While in the “Fort”

1. Where in your personal life do you feel like you've lost an ability to dream?
2. What were good things we did or patterns we had at the beginning of our marriage that we've lost?
3. Where have we gotten “boring” in our love for one another?
4. What is one way we can cultivate being creative together as a couple the rest of this year? As a family?
5. Should we leave this up until morning so the kids can see it ... and clean it up?

by Chase Windebank, Pastor of Student Ministries Discipleship



Created for a Purpose

It was a beautiful, warm summer morning. I gathered snacks, helmets, and water bottles and helped my four little ones onto bikes and into the double stroller. It was a perfect day for a trek to the neighborhood park!

As I pushed the playground swing, my thoughts wandered. I heard my daughter's delighted giggle as she swung higher and higher. My sons laughed out loud as they ran past us in a game of tag. My heart was full; this was the life I had always hoped for! No, life wasn't perfect, but in that moment, all was good and right in the world, and I was grateful!

I thought back to an unsettling interaction at the park just a month earlier. There was another child and her parent, and something just didn't feel right. My heart wanted to ask questions to follow up and make sure the girl was OK, but as they walked away, I wasn't sure how to respond to the stirring in my heart. I felt helpless and ill-equipped. I remembered a robust, yet naïve, proclamation I had made at a church event years ago in college: "I want to change the world!" At the time, I had big plans—visions for what changing the world looked like in my youth—but there I stood, uncertain and feeling too small to make a difference in one child's life. As I contemplated my options, the Holy Spirit came in close and clearly spoke to my heart. He prompted me to look over at the children He had graciously placed in my life. He reminded me that the little ones right in front of me, the four precious ones He had entrusted to me and asked me to shepherd, teach, and serve, were the world He'd asked me to change!

Dr. Seuss has been credited with the simple yet eloquent quote: "To the world you may be one person, but to one person you may be the world." Jesus showed me in that place of uncertainty that He had chosen me to be my children's mother, and through that sacred calling He had plans to change the world one little life at a time! He knew my heart and my desire to make a difference in the world around me, and He kindly reminded me that making a difference began with small acts of service right in my very own home and family.

In Ephesians 2:10 Paul tells us that we are God's workmanship, "created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." Jeremiah speaks of the same truth in his book. The Lord says in chapter 1, verse 5, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you." Psalm 139 expresses the splendor of the Lord knowing us in the most intimate way, including writing each day of our lives in His book before even one comes to be! Wow! What beautiful and encouraging truths. God uniquely formed each of us to fulfill a distinct and prepared role in His story!

The Lord used my unsettling encounter at the park to graciously show me that it wasn't my job to "change the world" but rather to look to Him for my true identity and in turn my purpose in each and every moment of daily life. He kindly revealed to me that I belong to Him, that each person in this world belongs to Him. He loves each of us more than we could ever imagine! He has an incredible plan for redemption and restoration, and we can listen for His voice to guide us as we live and move and fulfill the good works He has chosen for us to do! He called me and appointed me to be the mom each of my children need, and He has purposed to change the world one little person at a time!

As I reflect back on our days at the park more than a decade ago, my heart is full of gratitude once again. I am privileged to be living in a harvest season of parenting as I watch my teens and young adults graciously change the world around them now through small and large acts of service. They are discovering their unique identities, purposes, and callings. No, life isn't perfect, but in this moment, all is right and good in the world, and my heart is grateful!

by Lori Welch, Family Care Coordinator

Peace and Quiet Is Not Always a Good Thing

As a dad, peace and quiet is a double-edged sword. Why? Because while you want to be at rest, when the house is still, it could be because the kids are playing happily—or because they are cutting their own hair. So being undisturbed is a blend of wonderful with a splash of terrifying.

I experienced this mix several weeks ago when my wife had to step out for a meeting and I was at home with our four kids. Everyone was doing his or her own thing. I was reading in my favorite spot, our older daughters were upstairs in their room, our youngest daughter was napping, and our son, Zion (6), was in the basement. It's rare for him to free play like this; Zion (we call him "Z") prefers to have his day filled with planned activities. But today, Z was on his own in the basement. After an hour or so, he walked by me rolling a small child's bike. As he clunked down the stairs, I heard him yell, "Don't worry, Dad! I have my helmet down here for safety!"

"Awesome!" I replied.

Wait a minute. The terror started to creep in. What is he doing down there?

Eventually, I made my way to the basement and saw that Z had pulled together a mix of wood and old mattresses to create a ramp that started at least four feet off the ground, and he was lugging the bike to the top and flying down. In our basement. While mom was at a meeting. Z put couch pillows on the side of the ramp "just in case." But looking at this dangerous invention, the words of comedian Jerry Seinfeld came to mind: "At some point, the helmet was wearing him for safety."

And here's where I became convicted as a dad. First, I was convicted that my first thought was how much trouble I was going to be in with my wife. Second, I was convicted by my character defects. Over the last couple of years I've spent time digging into my own hurts, habits, and hang-ups and have learned that one of the things I struggle with is selfishness. **Selfishness as a dad leads me to crave and engineer peace and quiet when I could be building relationship with my kids.** Maybe you've done the same thing. This journey has led me to ask tough questions like, "What do I want? To be undisturbed so I can pursue work or reading or hobbies? Or to connect with my kids?"

In the moments where I'm being most honest with myself, I've not only been selfish as a dad but also lazy. Because when things are quiet in the house, it's easier. When everyone is calm or playing on their own, it's less work. But I think as a father I'm being called to something deeper.

Perhaps God wondered what His Son, Jesus, was doing down on earth sometimes. But one thing is clear from Jesus' story—His purpose was to connect. **In fact, Jesus is given the name Immanuel. It means "God with us."** We know this name because it shows up in the Christmas season. We read the name in the prophecy of Isaiah and see it fulfilled in the gospel of Matthew. Yet Immanuel is more than the reality that God put on flesh but that He came to earth to be with His creation, to build a personal relationship with us. The presence of God in His story sets the story apart from all other stories. And the name Immanuel reminds us that, regardless of our situation, we are never without hope.

God's commitment to connect with creation is the whole point of His story. And as dads, our connection to our kids is vital. But, Houston, I have a problem. I'm distracted. I'm selfish. I'm on my phone. I'm constantly checking in on my device. Or I'm focused on correcting behavior.

Dads, we can do better, and our kids will notice the difference. Connection is at the heart of how God relates to us and how He has called moms and dads to relate to their children. And I'm learning more and more to invest in relationships with my kids so we become deeply connected—and this kind of love reflects God's love for me.

So, I'm going to put away my laptop for now and go help Z build a new ramp. Maybe we'll get five feet off the ground this time.

by Matt Guevara

Matt is a humbled follower of Jesus and a father of four amazing humans in Rockford, IL (ages 5-16). The Guevara family loves to make each other laugh- which is easy when Matt shares the glorious wonder of 80's and 90's Christian music.



MOVING PAST LOSS

It's finally spring! I don't know about you, but there have been times I have wondered if we would ever get out of being locked down in our homes. Our family, and many that we know have suffered loss and tragedy during COVID-19. The losses are varied: lost time with friends, lost graduations, lost vacations, lost special events, and lost time with extended family. Hardest of all has been when we've lost family members or friends to death and haven't been able to be with them or attend their funerals.

As adults we've felt these losses on many levels, but so have our children. It is tempting with summer on the way to try to just move on. **But if we don't allow ourselves to lament and grieve what we've lost, we will find that the emotions we need to release will eventually catch up with us.** In a recent New Life Family breakout session, Dr. Mark Mayfield shared that there are no bad emotions. Our children need to know that emotions are hard sometimes, but it is not bad to have hard emotions.

Modeling is our environment this month, and in our Create section you'll find a fun activity to do with your children to model how to find the good in each moment—in both the easy and the hard. Another way we can model emotional health is by talking about the easy and the hard as a family. Admitting to our children when we are struggling is important so that they know they can also share their emotions with us.

One time when my daughter was little, I was crying over a difficult situation and she walked in. I immediately started to dry my tears and tell her that Mommy was okay. She responded by commenting, "Mom, it's okay to not be okay. We all have to cry sometimes."

What wisdom from a young child! **I've learned that our children and others in our lives need us to be authentic about our emotions so they can be authentic about theirs.**

Lastly, it is vital to model that going to see a counselor is a healthy practice. We can attend counseling as a family, individually, or with our children in order to gain the tools we need to find healing for the losses we've felt over the last year and at other times in our lives.

Our Family Care team is here to walk alongside you and your loved ones in diverse times of crises and need. If you are in need of a counselor, we would be happy to send you our counseling referral list. If you are struggling with depression or anxiety that leads to suicidal thoughts, please call New Life Church at (719) 594-6602 so we can pray with you and support you in finding the help you need during this time.

by Jeni Mason, Pastor of Family Care