

StrongFamilies.com
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For our Prestonwood Baptist Friends!

Thank you for visiting StrongFamilies.com. Here is the “PDF” for family nights, including some instructions on how to do them. I pray these can help you start doing Faith@Home Times in a fun and intentional way! There are 2 Degree ideas on building faith and building a StrongFamily!

Thank you again for carving out precious time to be at the conference, and let us know how we can be of help to you here at StrongFamilies.com!

Dr. John and Cindy Trent
StrongFamilies.com

(P.S. If you do one of these “Family Nights” that really goes well, send me an email and let me know how it went! Or if you come up with an *even better* way of doing one of the “Family Nights” we have listed, let us know as well. I’d love to get your improvements so that we can make these even better for other families.

Finally, if you’re the creative type, and you come up with your own “Family Night” experience that YOU TRY AT HOME AND IT WORKS (NOT JUST AN IDEA, BUT AN IDEA YOU DID AT HOME AND YOUR KIDS LOVED IT AND GOT A LOT OUT OF IT), then I’d love to be able to post and share YOUR FAMILY NIGHT with others as well!

Please give me you your permission to share your family night with others and send one in. Also, if you share an idea, please include a family digital snapshot!

We will give your family credit for coming up with a great Family Night idea, with your picture and a heading like, “The Smith’s Family from Plano, Texas, shares a Great Family Night idea on how doing an egg relay race with your kids can teach them about walking wisely!” My email is jtrent@strongfamilies.com.

Faith@Home “2 Degree Difference” Ideas for Doing a Fun Family Night at Home!

FIRST, WHAT IS A FAMILY NIGHT AGAIN – AND WHY DO WE NEED TO BE DOING SOMETHING LIKE THIS IN OUR HOME?

Remember at the conference, I talked about how small 2 DEGREE CHANGES can begin to change everything. Also, you heard or saw a video clip of Kurt Bruner and I talking about the need for taking faith home. Here is a way to put both of those concepts together! You're already at an awesome church! The two hours you are at church each week is not the issue. The church is doing better than ever in making the time we are there as family an outstanding experience. Rather, the issue when it comes passing down our faith to our kids is what happens at home.

Here are some ideas that can help you become the spiritual trainer in your home – even if you are like me and you did not come from a strong spiritual heritage. Obviously, there are lots of other things you can do with your kids from doing a Bible study with your child, to going to AWANA'S, Royal Rangers, or a hundred other things. One thing we would HIGHLY RECOMMEND you start doing, outside of these Family Night activities, is something we call a BEDTIME BLESSING. (I showed you the picture of the cover of the book *Bedtime Blessings* at the conference and it is in your workbook).

You do not have to buy the book that's at our web store at www.StrongFamilies.com, but consider praying for your kids each night, and putting a short Blessing on them before they and you hit the sack. If you are married, it is not a bad thing to do with your spouse as well! So in between family nights (which I recommended doing once every other week), a short Bedtime Blessing for each child at night is a great way to put that “coin” you received into action. We still do this with our daughters, and one is in college and one has her MBA!

Below, you will find a list of the Family Nights I mentioned I would

send you at the conference. This includes details on the three I did as a demonstration in my talk. Lord willing, we will be adding more ideas from families like yours in the days to come! (Just come back to the same place where you downloaded this PDF and look for the link that says, “More faith@home ideas!”)

Remember, YOU CAN DO THIS if you can squeeze a toothpaste tube or blow up a balloon, you can be the spiritual trainer in your home!

*Are you the kind of person who wants an entire book on doing Family Nights? There's Faith Launch, by Dr. Trent that's available at our online bookstore and that's got several great ideas on being the spiritual trainer in your home. There is a wonderful series called Family Night Tool Chest by Kurt Bruner, Jim Weidmann, and Del Van Essen – available from Focus on the Family that will give you 60+ different family night ideas, if you get the whole set.

Let's start with some specifics for every time you do a family night!

Step One: Pick your own Family Time Theme Song! Choose something you are going to play every time it is time for faith@home!

Every time you do one of these faith@home family times, have an older kid (or a parent) play your theme song! (Yes, this is important – music makes a difference in getting everyone in a positive frame of mind for family night!) Our song started out as “Hamster Dance” and it never failed that our girls would come running out of their room just to see Dad doing the hamster dance.

Thankfully, we went to the Superman Theme, which didn't involve quite as much poor dancing. Having the kids – and even mom and dad -- jumping around to whatever song is blaring is a good thing when you start your family time! You are getting together as a family! This is a fun and big deal!

Step Two: After everyone is there, stop the music and open in prayer. Here is an example of a prayer – Dad or Mom or an older or verbal

kid can pray (just a short prayer is great):

“Everyone grab hands. Let's pray as we begin. Lord Jesus, thank you so much for pulling us together as a family. Teach us something fun and cool about You in the next few minutes, and help us to always remember that You love us, what You did for us causes our lives to shine for others, and that You are always there for us. Amen!”

Step Three: Read that week's Scripture: Tell them that you are all going to get a “picture” of something important in God's word.

Step Four: It's time for your activity!

Step Five: Close in prayer and enjoy a Family Time Snack! (Food is always a good thing for Family Time!)

That is it! How easy is that?

There is no specific order to the Family Night Examples that follow. Just read through them and pick the one that sounds like, “I bet that will work with my family!” All are “family tested” so have fun – and don't forget to let us know how to make them even better (your own wrinkle or recipe for a snack that goes with a Family Night) or share your own family night with us!!!

Family Night #1

How an Old Penny can teach Your Child about Spiritual Transformation!

You will need some preparation ahead of time for this one:

On the kitchen or an outside table, have a small, clear glass and a lemon (already sliced and put back together) for each person in the family.

*Ahead of time, you will need to dig in your change drawer or

purse and get a number of pennies out. THE DIRTIER THE BETTER! You should get six or seven really dirty pennies for each person. Be sure to COVER THE GLASSES, LEMONS AND PENNIES WITH A SHEET OR TOWEL SO THEY CAN'T SEE WHAT IS AT THE TABLE WHEN THEY GET THERE.

Step One: Time for your Family Theme Song!

Hamster Dance time!

Step Two: Open in prayer when everyone is gathered around.

Step Three: Your Family Activity! (Part 1)

Tell the kids you are going to be doing a cool experiment. Now take off the sheet or towel and show them the glasses, lemons and pennies. Tell them that everyone needs to squeeze their own lemon into their own glass. (Obviously, you may need to help the younger ones squeeze out all the lemon juice from their lemon into their glass). You will need one sliced lemon per person. USE STRAIGHT, NON-DELUTED LEMON JUICE. Now set aside the lemons and have them pick out several "dirty pennies." (Get a digital camera and have them hold up their "dirty pennies" so that you can have a record of what they looked like dirty).

Now have them drop their pennies into the glass with lemon juice on the bottom.

It is going to take 5 to 10 minutes for the lemon juice to really do a good job, so, that is when you tell them that you are going to COVER UP THE EXPERIEMENT. PUT THE TOWEL BACK OVER THE GLASSES and then go do something fun as a family.

Family Activity (Part 2):

By "fun" you pick something that is fun to do that does not take a ton of time (You can take more than 10 minutes... just do something for at least 10 minutes or the "experiment" will not work well). For example, go on a quick bike ride. If you live near a park, head over there for a little while. Take the dog for a walk. Pick out a favorite family game that doesn't take too long to play. It doesn't have to be a big deal. A lap or two around the block with the dog

will thrill Rover and set up what is next.

Step Four: Read the key passage

All these family night ideas center around a key passage in scripture. SO MAKE SURE YOU HAVE YOUR BIBLE NEARBY (A KIDS VERSION IS OK, AS LONG AS IT GETS THE SAME POINT ACROSS AS THE BIBLE). Get everyone back to the table and then tell them,

“Before we look at our experiment, I want us to read a verse, “2Corinthians 5:17.”

“If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things have passed away, behold all things have become new.” (Feel free to pick your own favorite Bible translation).

Ask them if they would like to “see” something that pictures what that verse is about? And NOW IT'S TIME TO TAKE OFF THE TOWEL AND LOOK AT YOUR PENNIES!

**** NOTE: You may need an old rag to scrub them a little, but most of them (unless they're before 1938) should really shine up in the lemon juice! We had an old toothbrush that we used to finish “scrubbing” them which helped a lot).

Get a picture of everyone with their new penny – and holding a penny that did not get cleaned! It is a pretty significant difference in most cases! Be sure and “connect the dots” by saying to them, “Kids, that is what Jesus does when He comes into our lives. All those crummy feelings or hurtful things we have said or done... Jesus makes all things new. His love makes all things new.

BONUS QUESTION! If you've got an adventurous group, then ask them, “Do you guys want to do one more experiment? But only if you are brave!”

Most will say yes, and that is when you tell them that you're going to have a contest on who can take a lemon section, and bit into it, and leave it between their teeth the longest! (Please do not write me if you're a dentist – just do not do this with your kids! (<) It should not take too long for people to either not do this, or to spit out the lemon. (And have some water on hand so that people can rinse

out their mouth).

When everyone has calmed down, now ask them, "Was that easy to do?" And they will say, "No!" (except for the one kid who likes lemons). Then tell them, "Biting into a lemon isn't easy or very fun. Talk for just a minute about the fact that Jesus loved us so much, that He did something really hard – He died on the cross for us. Sucking on the lemon was bitter! Going to the cross was bitter! But because of what Jesus did in dying on the cross we get to be new inside! We get to become "new" and become all God wants us to be. Just like that lemon juice made the penny "new," Jesus loves us so much, He did the tough part in making all things new in our life – ***just like a shiny penny.***

Close by reading the key verse again, 2Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things have passed away. Behold, all things have become new." And then, just...

Close in Prayer and have a Fun Snack to close! Close in prayer. Say something like, "Jesus, thank you so much that you make all things new in our life. Even when we do things wrong, or if our lives get dirty, you can clean us up from the inside out, so that we reflect your love to our family and our friends and your world. Thank you again for loving us, and for doing the very hard thing of dying for us on the cross. And thank you, Lord, for _____ (use each child's name each time), and for this time to be together as a family. And thanks for this snack we are about to enjoy too!"

SNACK TIME!!! Then have lemonade and lemon bars for everyone!!!!

If you have someone who does not like lemon anything, it is OK to have something else for them. A fun snack is always a great way to end a Family Time!!!

Family Night # 2

Bungie Bear Teaches Your Child That God's Love is With Them – No Matter How Far Away they Go!

What you will need ahead of time:

Like you saw me do with the Beaver at the conference, you will need one long (or several shorter cords that make up a long) Bungie cord. If there's an ACE hardware store near you, you can find Bungie cord that comes off of a spool! (I have not been able to find actual Bungie Cord for sale at Home Depot, but even with ACE, call and ask before you drive all over. It is worth the drive to get eight or ten feet of thin Bungie cord that comes off a reel that they have to cut for you. If not, do what I did at the seminar and link several shorter Bungie cords together).

Depending on how big your back yard is, get a ten foot or longer Bungie cord! Also, be sure and **get permission** to use one of the kid's stuffed animals, or pick one up at a garage sale that is specifically going to become Bungie Bear! (We learned the hard way that if you have a Golden Retriever child, you do not want to just use their stuffed bear without asking in advance!)

Time for your Family Night Theme Song!

Remember to have the kids take turns turning on the song – We learned that the hard way to let them take turns!

Open in Prayer:

Tell them you are all going to be learning a lesson in God always being there for us... not matter where we go or what goes on in our life. Then open in prayer.

Sample prayer: "Lord Jesus, thank you so much for pulling us together as a family. Teach us something fun and cool about You in the next few minutes, and help us to always remember that You love us, and that you are always there for us, no matter where we go in

life! Amen!"

Read them the key scripture:

It is actually two for this one. Read Matthew 28:20 (or if you have an older child, let them read). Jesus promises us, "I am with you always, even to the end of the age. And Hebrews 13:5b "For He Himself (Jesus) has said, "I will never leave you, nor will I ever forsake you." And tell them after reading those verses, what they're saying is (or ask them what they think they're saying) that no matter what, and no matter where they go, God's love will always be there for them!!!! Then say, "Let's do something fun that illustrates a little of what that verse is saying!"

Step Three: Family Activity – BRING OUT BUNGIE BEAR!

Just like you saw me do at the conference – take your stuffed bear and tie one end of the Bungie cord to your bear. Then get a "strong" volunteer to take the bear and just walk like two steps (Not enough to pull the cord tight). Then say, "OK, take two more steps! Then two more feet, until they are at the end of the cord! Then remind them that no matter how far away we go, Jesus' love is always there for us – it always brings us back to Him! And then tell them to "let go of Bungie Bear!" and BE CAREFUL! Unless you are a professional baseball player, that Bear can come at you extremely FAST! If your kids are old enough, they can all try walking away, or trying to get out of the way of Bungie Bear – but again, the bear can come smoking fast at you, so do not ruin a great family night by having little Billy get plastered in the face by a Bungie Bear!

Step Four: Review and Snack!

After everyone has had fun shooting Bungie Bear around, then have them sit down, serve the Family Time Snack (how about Pop Rocks or get a candle that shoots sparks and put it on a cupcake). Then after you serve the snack, and before they start digging in, remind them of the verses you read, and what they learned. God's love and His Son will never leave them or forsake them, then...

Close in Prayer and enjoy your snack and your second family time!

Family Night #3- Example

(This is the one you did at the conference, or saw demonstrated at the conference with the toothpaste tube!)

Preparation:

You will need a tube of toothpaste (Dollar Stores have big ones for.... \$1) and a plate for each person. (Yes, a full tube per person works best – not the tiny travel size ones.)

Play your Family Night Theme Song!

Family Activity!

Tell them that tonight, you are going to have a contest during Family Time, and pull out a new \$1 Bill from your pocket. Whoever finishes this contest will get a brand new \$1 bill! (So what if you have three dollars if you have three kids? They are going to remember a priceless truth from God's word for years after this. That is worth three bucks in my mind!) With kids, I usually do it as a contest, but every "finisher" wins. Otherwise, the older ones will always get the money, and the younger ones are frustrated.

Now, with a paper plate near them, have them take off the cap and the winner is the one who can get the toothpaste out of the tube the fastest!

Do not tell them about "Part 2" yet, like you saw at the conference. Just say,

"OK, everyone who can get every bit of their toothpaste out wins, so ready, set, go!" And be sure that you've got a digital camera or a video camera going!

They are going to get messy, so have paper towels. And cheering is always encouraged!

Once they are done, and everyone has celebrated getting a \$1

bill then tell them about Part 2.

“OK, we’re going to do another contest and this time – there is only going to be one winner who gets a \$20 bill! (That will motivate most kids and get their attention when you hold up a \$20 bill!).

“Whoever can get all the toothpaste back in the tube, without cutting the tube open, in the next five minutes, gets the \$20! Ready, set, Go! Get it all back in the tube!”

Encourage them to try and push it in with their fingers or to put it in their mouth and spit it in (which is really funny when you watch the pictures later!).

Obviously, it is impossible to get the toothpaste back in the tube. Now calm people down, and clean them up, and then tell them it is time for their snack.

Sharing the key verse and point of the competition:

After they are all cleaned up and as you get ready to serve the snack, read them this passage from Scripture:

James 3:5 “So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things. See how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire!”

And, these verses from Proverbs:

Prov. 16:24 “Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.”

Prov. 16:27 “A worthless man digs up evil, while his words are like scorching fire.”

Then tell them, “Kids, everyone looks at the tongue of the person next to you!” (Pretty funny when they stick out their tongue, particularly if they are in the middle of eating their snack and it is blue!!!). Now say, “What does James mean by the tongue being small, but being like a small fire in the forest?” And then say to them, “We can say good words like honey or bad words that burn like fire. But once we say something...”

*** We can't get back what we say to others – good or bad. ***

Once the toothpaste is out of the tube, you cannot put it back in either. That's why it is so important for us as a family, that we do not say something mean or angry or *burning* to our brother or sister or mom or dad. Because once you say something, you cannot get those bad words back."

That's it!

Time for Closing Prayer and Snack!

Family Night #4 - Example

Preparation: You will need a balloon ahead of time for each child (Please WATCH CLOSELY YOUNGER KIDS AROUND BALLOONS. They can be a choking hazard).

Time for your Family Night Theme Song!

Crank up the music!!! It's Family Night time!

Family Activity:

Tell your kids you are going to do something to help answer a really important question this week. That question is, ***"Is God real even if you can't see him?"***

Of course, we know as Believers that the answer is "YES" – but there are 80 years olds who are still asking that question! (And if we are honest, maybe we've asked ourselves a time or two!). What a great thing to give your kids an answer to this question – before a godless friend or teacher gives them a different answer than what is true!

Anyway, ask your kids, "Is God real, even if you can't see Him?" And then ask,

"OK, are there some other things besides God that are real, even though you can't see them?"

(OK with little ones, you might have to do some coaching here – but you are looking for things like electricity, or that water from the faucet in our house come from somewhere -- but we can't where it comes from unless there's a pipe that breaks outside!)

Tell them that you are going to help answer that question, "Is God real even if we can't see Him" right now, and pass out a balloon to everyone! Everyone gets to blow up their balloon and hold it. (Help the little ones or anyone who simply can't do balloons – well, like me).

When everyone has their balloon blown up, and is holding the end tight so that no air escapes, talk about "air." Air is real, even if you can't see it. It has "strength" to push the balloon bigger and bigger – and it has "power" that can move things around. And to prove that something you can't see has strength and power – now have everyone at the count of three let go of their balloons!

Again, your three year old might not be able to comprehend all that is going on with balloons flying around – but he or she is going to know it has something to do with God – and it's fun – and I love being with my family!

Time for Snack and Scripture Verse:

After doing the balloon blowing up as long as you have breath to do so, sit them down and tell them the "end of the story."

Read them a verse, Colossians 1:15, which says, depending on your version: **"He (Jesus) is the visible expression of the invisible God."**

In other words – Jesus helps us see what God looks like, because He is God. And then read them one other verse quickly. Let them know that there was a guy named Thomas (one of the Disciples) who loved Jesus – but did not really believe that He was God. That is until Jesus came back from the dead and spoke with him. Then read the verses,

John 20:29, Jesus *said to him, "Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed."

Close your time by saying, “Jesus says that we are blessed when we believe in Him, even if we can’t see him. **So always remember kids – God is there – just like air.**”

And then it is time for closing prayer and snack!

Close in Prayer and have your Family Night Snack!

Family Night #5

How Baking a Cake can Help you have a Stronger Faith and Family!

Goal and what you will need ahead of time! You are going to do two things that take ingredients so read closely please:

First, you are going to bake two small cakes. For that you will need to buy a box of cake mix, **but split it in half**. That is because in a minute you are going to see that you are going to “follow the directions” on baking one cake – but not on the other – and the difference is going to be pretty eye opening for your kids!

Second, while the cakes are baking (the main point of the Family Night time) you’re going to be making some “homemade” Play Dough that your kids can play with while you are waiting for the cake to bake.

Keep reading to find out the “hows” and “whys.”

Start the Music! It is “Faith@Home Family Time!”

Open in Prayer

Family Activity:

Now share what you will be doing that night. You are going to

bake a cake as a family! In fact, you are going to make two cakes!

Tell them that when you're done making both cakes – you are going to have a “taste test” and see which one is the best cake ever!

Start off with “CAKE #1” and let them know that with this cake, you're going to follow all the directions “to the T.” Let them help all you can in doing all the mixing, breaking eggs, any way you can involve them.

When that batch of ingredients is ready, **set it aside for a minute, and tell them it is time to make the mix for Cake #2!**

Only, this time you are not going to follow the directions on the box! In fact, you are going to “leave out” several things or even add some things that are not on the directions! (i.e.: put in half the water, no vegetable oil, no eggs or something in the kitchen that is not normally in the cake.) *Instead, add dirt or leaves. Dirt and leaves, mixed in with the mix, really do help make the point! (And yes, a dirt and leaf cake will bake in the oven!)

Go ahead and pre-heat the oven and put the “cakes” in to bake when you have got them both done. Now go on to Phase Two while you are waiting for the cake to bake!

You are now going to make non-bake play dough as a family as a special fun time while you cakes bake! Here's a recipe for this: (Or please feel free to use your own recipe or find another one on Google like I did.)

2 c. flour

2 tbsp. cream of tartar (Or you can use Alum)

1/2 c. salt

3 tbsp. salad oil

2 or 3 drops of their favorite Food coloring

Mix all this together and then carefully add 1 cup of boiling water to the dry ingredients and stir until blended. This will make “moldable” dough.

After you have made this first “workable” batch with all the right ingredients, then make another batch and add extra flour, or cut the water in half (or both). And feel free to add in dirt and leaves if you want to the “not going to be a good thing” batch!

When you are done, give each person a chance to make something with the first “working” batch – and then they get to try to make something with the second batch (where you didn’t follow the directions). When you follow the directions, things turn out better and you can actually make something fun. When you don’t follow directions – IT MIGHT BE OR SEEM LIKE FUN ADDING STICKS AND LEAVES – but it is not going to work the way it was supposed to work!

Play with the play dough until it is time for your cakes to come out! (Cleaning up ahead of time might be a good thing so you are ready to ice and eat the good cake).

Get ready for Snack and Scripture Time

- A. Tell them that the cakes will be coming out soon (or already have), and that each person (when the cake cools down) will get to put their own icing and sprinkles on their piece of the cake.
- B. Ask them what happens when you “leave out” certain important ingredients or put in bad ones with play dough? Ask them what they think might happen to the two cakes you made? (One, following directions, one not).
- C. Read 1 Corinthians 13:4 – 8. It’s a good list of “ingredients” that make up a loving home. Tell them that you have decided that “As for me and my house” you will serve the Lord, and put good ingredients in our home – not bad ones.
- D. *Now it is time to look at the two cakes (Yuk for the second one if you have done it right!) and to decorate their piece of the good cake! By the way, you can still put icing on the bad cake. And if you have a boy or girl who’s silly, let them take a bite of that second cake. Even the icing won’t make the cake good to eat or good for you to eat. That’s a good thing to share.

Close in Prayer and you have done another Family Night!

It is easy to add bad things to a recipe and have it not turn out well. But when we follow God's plan and word and promises, we get to enjoy the best life has to offer – like the cake!

That is it for now! Look for more Faith@Home activities under the "Other Family Night Examples" on the website, www.strongfamilies.com -- click on the button you did to download this and look for another link!

Lord Bless,

**John Trent, Ph.D.
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