



June 2015

parenting CHRISTIAN kids



**St. Michael
Lutheran Church**

hope@stmhc.us



Maximize Summer Break

POWERSOURCE
ASK GOD:

1. To strengthen your family's relationships with one another and with God.
2. To help you safeguard plenty of uninterrupted family time this summer.
3. To show your kids the value of spending time with God.

Trying to fill the summer months with meaningful activities that bring your family members closer to each other and to God can seem intimidating. But summer offers great opportunities to establish practical "together time" and faith-boosting habits.

Try these easy ideas to make the most of family time this summer. Use them to develop habits you can continue long after you pack away the flip-flops!

- **Family Mission Statements**—At the beginning of summer, discuss your purpose as a family. Begin with short-term goals, letting each family member contribute. Next, brainstorm big-picture, long-term goals. Ask: "What does our family

stand for? What are our values, and how will we live them out?" Then commit to live according to your family's mission statement.

- **On-the-Go Togetherness**—Road trips provide family members with lots of undivided attention. Enjoy long conversations, play games, and sing along to Christian music. Pray aloud for residents of towns you pass and for road crews making repairs.

- **The Wonder of Worship**—Add variety to your routine by worshipping in different ways. Try a new style of worship, or look for places outside of church where you can spend time with God. Take children to vacation Bible school at local churches, and invite friends and neighbors to come along.



TEACHABLE MOMENTS

Destination Heaven

Use your bodies to form statues representing something at a favorite vacation spot. Ask: **What's the best thing about that place? How long would you want to stay there? Why?**

Say: **There are many great places to visit, but none compares to our ultimate destination. Heaven is a perfect place to live forever.**

Have family members line up along a wall. Instruct them to get to the other side of the room without touching the floor in any way. Afterward, ask what was needed to get across the room.

Say: **You needed someone else's help, and getting to heaven is the same way.** Read Romans 10:9. Say: **The way to heaven is by believing that Jesus is Lord and that he rose from the dead.**

Share what you're each looking forward to about heaven, and close in prayer.

Summer Faith-Builders

Fancy trips and high-tech gadgets aren't required for first-rate family memories. In fact, some of the best experiences occur during "down time," when you can have quiet conversations about family and faith. Encourage kids to share thoughts about how you spend time together. Use these questions as a springboard for insightful conversations: "What are family times that are most special to you, and why? What do you wish we did more of together? What do our favorite things to do as a family say about us? How can we demonstrate our faith in God during these times together? Why does Jesus like us to spend time with him?" Here are more faith-building family activities tailor-made for the summer months.

Nature Hunt—For younger children, make picture-based checklists of things found in nature, and go outside to find each item listed. Kids can mark off the items with a pencil. Afterward, talk about what you noticed about God's creation. Then take some time to praise God together for making all the things you found.

Express Yourself—Use sidewalk chalk to declare your love for one another and for God. Fill your driveway or sidewalk with special messages, family "portraits," and short Bible passages.

Swim, Jonah, Swim!—If your kids are good swimmers, play a game of Tag. The person who's It is the Big Fish and tries to tag someone else. Afterward, talk about Jonah and why it's important to obey and follow God.

Go for "Some More"—Set out ingredients for s'mores and make them together, assembly-line fashion. As you eat, ask: "When has God done 'some more' for you? Why do you think God wants us to do 'some more' for others?"

Let It Shine—Place floating candles in a kiddie pool, and then use squirt guns to try to extinguish the candles. Talk about how we can

shine our light for God, no matter what tries to put it out.

Come to the Water—Experience Jesus' forgiveness by having family members stretch out their hands and think about anything they need to confess to God. Pour some water from a bucket onto all the outstretched hands, and then gently dry them with a towel. Pray together, thanking Jesus for always forgiving us.

Bubblin' Over—On a sidewalk (or tarp), place plastic bowls of bubble solution mixed with washable paint. Give each family member a straw to blow bubbles in the mixtures. Then place paper atop the colored bubbles to create designs. When dry, fold the papers in half to make cards, and write the message "God's love is bubbling over for you" on the outside. Give the cards to people who need encouragement this summer.

Seed, Seed, Grow!—Play a game similar to Duck, Duck, Goose. The person who walks around the circle is the Gardener and carries a full watering can. He or she taps heads and says "seed"—until sprinkling someone's head with water and saying "grow." Afterward, talk about the parable of the growing seed (Mark 4:26-29).

Direct your children onto the right path,
and when they are older, they will not leave it.
—Proverbs 22:6

MEDIA MADNESS



MOVIE

Title: *Inside Out*

Genre: Animated family comedy

Rating: PG

Cast: Amy Poehler, Diane Lane, Mindy Kaling, Bill Hader

Synopsis: When 11-year-old Riley must move to a new home, the emotions of Joy, Anger, Disgust, Fear, and Sadness compete for control of her mind. This film offers an “inside” look at the topsy-turvy feelings kids experience when facing life changes.

Our Take: Turning emotions into actual characters was a complicated animation task, but the intriguing concept should lead to lots of great conversations. After seeing the film with your kids, talk with them about constructive ways to handle a range of emotions.



BOOK

Title: *Just Jake: Dog Eat Dog*

Author: Jake Marcionette

Synopsis: In the second book of his humorous “Just Jake” series, a Maryland teenager faces issues such as bullying, popularity, friendship, and sibling struggles. The pages are heavily illustrated, with many pop-culture references.

Our Take: Jake’s drive is impressive. At age 12, he made cold calls to land his own literary agent. He credits his writing success to his mom, who made him write 90 minutes a day during summer vacation. As a result, he decided to write some middle-school fiction based on his own experiences. Jake—the character—seems arrogant at times but gives the overall impression of being genuine.



CULTURE & TRENDS

Crayon Alert!—Coloring books aren’t just for kids anymore. Two titles by Johanna Basford are intricate collections that encourage adult creativity. They both made Amazon’s best-seller list in April, 2015. “Coloring gives hard working grown ups the opportunity to play and to indulge themselves in an activity which likely reminds them of more carefree days,” Basford says. (usatoday.com)

How Do You Feel?—According to an Ohio State University study, many people in the Western world actually feel less healthy in spite of medical advances. Researcher Hui Zheng suggests reasons for this can include increased diagnosis of “new” diseases, such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), depression, or autism; overdiagnosis; and increased expectations of good health. (news.osu.edu)

Games, Sites & Apps

Buddy Quest

This game app from Group helps kids learn and practice biblical virtues as they make decisions and go on virtual and real-world quests. A companion app keeps parents in the loop and lets them offer their kids support. The game is free, with optional features to buy.

KidsReads.com

Need some good recommendations for your child’s summer reading list? This website offers reviews of books for all reading levels and genres—including Christian fiction, Christian faith, and Christian growth.

ChoreMonster

Parents determine a point value for different chores, and then kids use points they earn to “buy” items (money, toys, outings, etc.). The app also can encourage other behavior, such as reading or learning Bible passages. The free app does contain some potty humor.

QUICK STATS

Dear Dad—Despite research showing the benefits of a child staying in contact with his or her father, 40% of kids with divorced parents haven’t seen their fathers in a year. (psychpage.com)

Passed By?—With earlier-onset puberty, more kids are outgrowing their parents by age 11 or 12. But just because your kids are taller than you doesn’t mean their maturity has caught up to their bodies, experts caution. (today.com)

© Group Publishing, Inc., 2015

parenting
CHRISTIAN kids

Group
Real. Bold. Love.

This page is designed to help educate parents and isn’t meant to endorse any movie, music, or product. Our prayer is that you’ll make informed decisions about what your children watch, read, listen to, and play.