

ZION'S FAITH AT HOME MINISTRIES NEWSLETTER

theParentLinkSM

September 2009



Take charge of your schedules

School bells bring super-sized family calendars. Even busy toddlers now seem to need their own social secretaries.

We hear a lot lately about children who are hurried, harried, and overscheduled. Research shows that kids—and families—are paying the price for always being busy. Now there's a renewed emphasis to provide plenty of free time and just let kids be kids.

It's possible to grow your children's talents and give them lots of opportunities without injecting extra stress. This newsletter explores ideas for keeping a healthy balance between busyness and rest. Here are a few to spark your thinking:



Sign up with care—Now is the time to limit activities, before you dive into too many. Be realistic about how many activities your family can handle—and about the amount of homework time and sleep that each child needs.

Evaluate talents—Ask each child about his or her preferences. Which sport or activity means the most to each? Which are they willing to cut? Of course, parents make the final decision. Kids can't decide to skip a church activity that you've decided is non-negotiable.

Schedule family time—Block this out on your calendar, just like you would other important obligations. Plan at least a couple of hours a week for together time, and don't let other duties interfere.

Make Family Mealtimes a Priority

In a five-year study conducted at the University of Minnesota, researchers found that in families who ate meals together at least five times a week, teenage girls were much less likely to smoke, drink, or use drugs. Kids who eat more meals with their families also report significantly better academic and mental health than those kids who don't eat with their families. Study author Marla Eisenberg writes that even when other factors are statistically controlled, "eating meals as a family has benefits for young people above and beyond their general sense of connection to family members.

See the next page for some fun mealtime ideas.

PowerSource



Ask God:

1. To help you wisely manage your family's time.
2. To help your children learn to set priorities.
3. To protect your family from busyness and stress—and to help family members cherish time spent with one another

September 13th: Rally Sunday!

Join us in the sanctuary at 9:45 am for our Rally Day kickoff! It will be an opportunity to learn about our ministries, meet with the teachers, and tour the education building and Living Word house, as well as enjoy fellowship and song!

Following second service, please stay for lunch and to help finish some of the special projects for the Habitat house that Zion has been working on! Bring your family, friends, and a willing heart!

See page 2 in the Horizon for full details on *Habitat at Zion's Emphasis Week*, 7/29 – 8/1.

Living Word

Attention 6th–8th Graders

Living Word

is the place for you this fall!

Please pick up a registration letter in the narthex if you did not receive one in the mail and come to the Fellowship Hall on **September 20th at 10:00AM** to hear more about the program.

The focus of *Living Word* is to make Jesus the center of your life. We can do that through:

inWord: Digging deeper into God's Word,
upWord: Living life in daily worship and prayer,

outWord: Serving others in Christ's name and

forWord: Sharing Jesus Christ with other people.

*iPray
Retreat!*



October 3rd & 4th

Focus on **God** and "i" becomes smaller!

More information to follow at the Living Word orientation September 20th at 9:45am in the Fellowship Hall

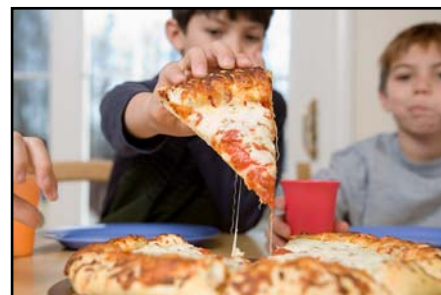
"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God."

Philippians 4:6

Family Experience: Time for Table Talks

Turn your family's dinner table into a refuge from hectic schedules and intruding media. Remember to model good listening skills by hearing kids out, no matter how long their stories get. Start some family mealtime traditions with these conversation starters and activities:

- **Mad, Sad, Glad**—Have family members each share something about their day that made them mad, sad, and glad. This prompt will help everyone reflect on their day and identify feelings with experiences. Before clearing the table, pray together about your experiences. Consider keeping a journal to watch how God is working in your family.



Pop the Question—Before a meal, write questions about each other, about God, or about anything discussion-worthy on slips of paper. (These can be anything from "What is your favorite song?" to "What is the first question you'll ask God when you get to heaven?") Tightly roll each paper to fit inside a balloon. Inflate the balloons and tie off the ends. Before every course of your meal, let each family member choose a balloon. Take turns sitting on balloons until they pop to reveal the question inside. Discuss each question during the meal's next course. Repeat! (Note: This activity works well even without balloons. Also, discard all balloon pieces afterward.)

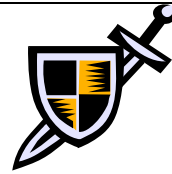


**Focus
on Prayer**

PRAY THAT:

1. God will protect your children against negative peer pressure, poor judgment, and harmful consequences.
2. Your children will use their faith to help them resist temptations and pressures to sin.
3. Your children will be influenced by positive peer pressure and will have godly friends who make wise choices.
4. Your children will be positive examples for other young people who wish to live godly lives.

Shore Up Your Kids Against Peer Pressure



As the parents of a teenager, you've undoubtedly noticed that your influence is fading just as the influence of your child's peers is growing. Teenagers have always sought cues and direction from people their own age and attempted to blend in with the "crowd."

According to youth-culture expert Walt Mueller, peer pressure used to involve verbal invitations to do something you knew was wrong. But today, it "typically takes the form of an unspoken expectation to participate in behavior that the vast majority of the peer group believes to be normal and right." These days, Mueller adds, it's much more difficult for kids to go against the flow when the behaviors promoted are no longer sneaky but celebrated.

Teenagers are prone to peer pressure not just because they want to fit in but because their brains are still developing. The pre-frontal cortex, which regulates self-control, emotions, and judging consequences is the last part of the brain to develop. In other words, your adolescent is not yet an adult, so expect an interesting mix of adult thinking ability tainted by immaturity, impulsivity, and inconsistent logic.

Although teenagers are socially and physically vulnerable to peer pressure, you don't need to stand back, hold your breath, and hope for the best. By communicating with your kids and modeling godly behavior, you can help them stand firm against all kinds of temptations.

*Let your faith be like a shield, and you will be able to stop all the flaming arrows of the evil one.
Ephesians 6:16*

Great Questions to Ask Your Kids

Let teenagers know you're available to talk about the pressures they're facing. Then be ready to really listen. Start a discussion with these questions:

1. What types of expectations do kids have for one another these days?
2. What are some of the biggest pressures you've faced so far? How easy or difficult has it been to say "no" to each, and why?
3. Do you consider yourself to be a leader or a follower, and why? Have you ever pressured someone? Explain.
4. When you're faced with choices, what decision-making process do you follow? Do you consider all the possible consequences?

Senior High News

Sunday School:

Each Sunday, 9th -12th graders are invited to the Faith Café during the education hour to hang out together, pray, and study Scripture. Be sure to visit the Faith Café on Rally Sunday, 9/13, to learn more about specific topics and speakers. Invite your friends!

Small Groups:

High schoolers are welcome to become part of a Small Group. Small Groups are a time to grow deeper in relationships together, with adult leaders, and in God's Word. Applications are available on Zion's website, or the bulletin board outside the Faith Café, and can be turned into the office any time through Rally Day.

Leaders will contact youth the week of September 13th, once groups are formed.

Small Group kick-off bowling event, for high schoolers and their families will be September 20th, 1-3pm. Carpool from Zion at 12:30pm. Leaders will provide more information when they call.

Any questions, please contact Debbie Boyce.

Use these strategies from author Walt Mueller to encourage and equip teenagers in the midst of their pressure-cooker lives:

1. **Recognize that negative peer pressure is a spiritual battle that we all fight constantly.** Our behavior can be baffling (see Romans 7:14-24), but Jesus has overcome our struggle with sin (verse 25).
2. **Model a lifestyle of discipleship.** This shows that following Christ isn't always the easy choice but is always the right choice.
3. **Listen before offering advice.** Teenagers who sense they've been respected and heard are then more prone to hear you out.
4. **Encourage kids to get involved in a positive peer group, such as a church youth group.** Leaders and members of these organizations celebrate the narrow path that leads to life.
5. **Affirm kids' worth in your eyes—and God's.** Remind kids that they're "in process," and show them the grace that God has shown you.

What's Up With Kids

At SimplyYouthMinistry.com, Jane Dratz, editor for Dare 2 Share ministries, discusses the importance of making wise choices:



The questions teenagers wrestle with on a daily basis are incredibly challenging, because these days many choices come with lifelong consequences. Choose poorly in the realm of Internet porn and distort God's blueprint for sex for a lifetime. Go too far and find yourself with an incurable STD or 18 years of child-

support payments. Make a wrong choice about drinking or drugs, and risk arrest and a criminal record that can potentially block you out of future college or job opportunities.

When peer pressure seems unbearable and the urge of the moment is battling to reign supreme, how do you respond? As a Christian, the battle is daunting. But take courage in knowing that you aren't entering the battle alone. If you've made the ultimate choice of all choices, to surrender your life to Jesus and live life to the max for God's glory, then you fight the battle with Jesus by your side, guiding, strengthening, and empowering you to take your stand and fight. A real and vibrant relationship with God that serves as the driving force behind your lifestyle choices is the most powerful motivation you can find for owning your choices and choosing wisely.

And consider this piece of good news: The consequences for *good* choices have a ripple effect as well. Your choice to follow Jesus is a great example of this! Let your relationship with Jesus impact the lives of people around you by sharing his truth and grace with others.

Faith at Home Ministries offers support for parents and youth: September 27th, Susan Thode, M.ED, RMHC, Individual, Couple and Family Therapist, will be leading a video and discussion titled, "Sex has a Price Tag." Because sexuality is a gift from God, Zion is hosting this event to equip and nurture households in ways that promote healthy stewardship of this gift. All middle school and high school youth and their parents/guardians are invited. See page 3 in the Horizon for full details.

Important dates at Zion Lutheran Church



- ✝ September 13th: Rally Day, BBQ & Habitat projects!
- ✝ September 20th: 1-3pm High School Small Group Kick-off bowling event. (carpooling from Zion at 12:30)
- ✝ September 20th: Living Word orientation 10:00am Fellowship Hall.

- ✝ September 20th: 6:00pm Preview of "Sex has a Price Tag" video, open to adults.
- ✝ September 27th: 5:30 pm - 8:00 pm Dinner and "Sex has a Price Tag" video for families 6th grade – 12th grade.
- ✝ Coming October 3rd & 4th: Living Word Retreat, more details to be mailed home.

The offering focus for September and October will be new kitchen items for the Habitat at Zion house. For a list of needed items please see the Faith at Home Ministries table in the Narthex.

