

Summer Game Plan

by  FamilyLife®
A Cru Ministry





Home Run Family Fun Ideas

1. Backyard campout—don't forget the s'mores!
2. Plan a week of themed days (pajama day, superhero day ...).
3. Create a family dance video.
4. Team off for a round of backyard baseball—winners pick dinner!
5. Get the kids involved in planning and cooking a fancy dinner party at home.
6. Pretend you're tourists in your own town, walk the town square, bike ride past historical homes.
7. On a rainy weekend, plan a movie marathon (introduce the kids to some family classics!).
8. Water fun day! No pool? No problem—use sprinklers, water balloons, and a good ol' fashioned water hose.
9. Tackle a home project together—paint the playroom, let the kids plant their own small container garden, or spruce up those flower beds.
10. Putt-putt in the yard—use old coffee cans, anything resembling a golf club and ball, and a little ingenuity.
11. Have an international-themed day. Pick a country and plan food, movies, and activities around it. (French fries, anyone?)

12. Lend a hand—Elderly neighbor need their yard mowed? Soup kitchen need food sorted?
13. Start a family book club.
14. Video-gaming marathon (take it old school with some PAC-MAN).
15. Go berry picking or check out a farmers' market.
16. Learn a new game together (chess or snap?).
17. Take an online painting class together.
18. Hike a different state park (or national forest) each week.
19. Have a silly, family photo shoot (crazy costumes not optional) or photo booth.
20. Plan a scavenger hunt for the kids (have a small treat like popsicles at the end).
21. Family baking challenge—a gingerbread beach house, perhaps?
22. Tech-free day—turn phones on silent, no TV, no tablets. Brainstorm ideas of how to fill the time.
21. Kids plan day!
22. Read *We're Going on a Bear Hunt* by Michael Rosen. Then go on a teddy bear hunt around the house.
23. Kids cook day! They plan and cook a meal (with minimal help).



Spiritual Training 101

BY LAUREN MILLER

There are many ways to make summer fun, and getting to know the Bible is one of them. Becoming friends with the Bible is a good way to invest in your kids' lives in a living, lasting way.

"Yeah..." you're saying. "But my 15-year-old shrinks six inches every time I even hint at a family devotional. My youngest can't focus on anything. And I don't know the last time I opened up my own Bible. This is not going to work."

Let me fill you in on a little secret: No one knows what they're doing, especially at the beginning. We're all just trying our best while trying to get our kids to eat mashed potatoes with a fork.

Baby steps—that's all it takes.

Want to help your kids get comfortable navigating the Bible independently? Want them to start the next school year with a greater love for Jesus?

Here's a game plan of fun, you've-got-this ways to familiarize your kids with God's Word this summer:

1. Help them memorize the books of the Bible.

Songs are a great way to memorize almost anything. I mean, really, how many of us learned 26 letters by heart through the "alphabet song" when we were in preschool? Memorizing the 66 books of the Bible can be fun and simple when paired with a little tune! Just open your Bible, flip to the table of contents, and help your kids creatively come up with their own tunes to match with the book names. If this is too big a challenge, they can look up ready-made "Books of the Bible" songs on YouTube or from ministries like Seeds Family Worship.

Your kids can reference these songs for the rest of their lives!

2. Teach them how to look up Bible passages.

When your kids know how to find verses in the Bible, it's like handing them a treasure map. Do your kids know what "John 3:16" is referring to? Describe it as a verse's "address." "John" = book. "3" = chapter. "16" = verse. If you flip anywhere in any Bible, you'll find the same format.

And now's the time to strengthen those verse-finding muscles with an easy competition. You can help your kids get comfortable finding verses by quizzing each other. Who can find Ephesians 2:14, John 15:1, or Genesis 1:1 first?

3. Get your kids in a Bible-reading rhythm.

Don't discount this one even if it's been awhile since you picked up your Bible. There's no shame for falling off of—or never getting on—the Bible-reading wagon. We all do it at some point.

And it's not difficult to hop back on or start fresh, for you or your kids! One of the easiest ways to get regular refreshment from the Word of God in your life is picking a YouVersion devotional or an online Bible reading plan—or even an app that reads the Bible to you, like Bible.is. Having a little structure and accountability never hurts, right?

Or if you're not ready to commit to an extensive plan, set doable goals—and keep each other accountable. It's easy if this is at the same time of day. What if you read a Psalm or Proverb a day before bed? Or a chapter of the Gospels after dinner?

For your younger ones, think about buying the Jesus Storybook Bible to read aloud.

If you're ready to pump this up a bit, take your cue from preschool ministries and check Pinterest for super-simple, all-you-need-is-a-paper-plate kind of ideas for crafts, snacks, or songs. Maybe you eat bread and fish crackers when you read about Jesus feeding the 5,000. Or let the kids design an ark on cardstock while you read about the flood, complete with puff paint or sequin "rain." You could even find a recipe for foods people might have eaten in Bible times.

And get into it with them! Not only because kids may follow your enthusiasm—but because we want meaningful relational connection around the Bible with our kids.

Devotional time even with your older teens is still a good idea. They need it. This is prime time for them to explore how they best connect with God and His Word: on a hike, through a study with friends, through art or music or going on a long, prayerful run with worship music, or an audio Bible.

It's a big deal for older kids to have their own Bible—one they can write in, underline in, and break in all on their own. Some might like a creative journal-studying Bible—especially kids who might like drawing and hand-lettering.

As kids grow to study the Bible on their own, keep sitting down with your own Bible, so your kids can see the value you place on your time with God.

4. Surround them with Scripture.

Sometimes it's the parent's job to teach with a little gusto. What if you printed out a number of Bible verses, cut them into strips, and hid them all over the house? Bathroom mirrors, fridge doors, and stuffed within books are ideal locations. Maybe kids get a small reward when they find a new verse!

5. Buy them a journal.

Having a place to express prayers and spiritual lessons can be a life-giving, lifelong spiritual discipline. A journal is a place for creating comic strips of today's Bible story, writing prayers to God, drawing designs next to memory verses, or writing their own worship song lyrics based on Scripture. It's your child's personal space to express themselves to God in a physical way.

Prompt your kids to begin using their new journal by asking them to draw the Bible story as you read it slowly. Then have them "read" it back to you from their drawings.

6. Bring in Scripture-based music.

Christian artists like Christy Nockels, Sherri Youngward, For King and Country, and Phil Wickham bring direct quotes from Scripture into their lyrics. And there's always classics like the older VeggieTales ditties and Christian Kids Music playlists. Don't be shy. Sing and dance with them! Worship the Lord by letting those inner dance moves—brought on by your own delight in God—shine.

You don't have to only listen to Christian music, but to leave it out entirely is a missed opportunity. Considering how quickly melodies stick in our minds, it's a wonderful way to help your kids love the Lord.



Scripture Memory Challenge

Have each pick one of the printable cards below from a jar. Challenge them to have their verse memorized by a certain day and offer a “prize” when they recite it to you (ice cream sundaes for dessert? Picking the Friday-night movie?).

Anyone who belongs to Christ is a new person. The past is forgotten, and everything is new.

(2 Corinthians 5:17 CEV)

And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

(Philippians 1:6)

The LORD is faithful in all his words and kind in all his works.

(Psalm 145:13)

Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

(Luke 12:32)

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.

(1 Corinthians 13:4 NIV)

But you are a God ready to forgive, gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love...

(Nehemiah 9:17)

*Give thanks to the Lord of lords, for his steadfast love endures forever; to him who alone
does great wonders...*

(Psalm 136:3-4)

*Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in
glorious deeds, doing wonders?*

(Exodus 15:11)

Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

(Ephesians 4:32)

*I will praise the LORD. Deep down inside me, I will praise him. I will praise him, because his name is holy.
I will praise the LORD. I won't forget anything he does for me.*

(Psalm 103:1-2 NIV)



10 Ideas for Building Strong Bodies and Homes

BY MARY MAY LARMOYEUX
AND LISA LAKEY

It feels like the past few months have been spent indoors—homeschooling, watching Frozen II for the 378th time, living off fish crackers and chicken nuggets. I didn't think it would be possible, but I don't think my kids can take much more (or me for that matter).

We're all thankful for the sunshine and warmer temps (but if I mention just going outside to my oldest, I'm quickly met with "But that's boring." Ah, the joys of teens.)

But our bodies crave movement not just for the physical benefits—like those extra pounds I may or may not have gained recently. Exercise also strengthens (and connects) us emotionally. And we could all use more of that right now.

So instead of just sending the kids outside to play, let's join them. **Here are 10 ideas to help your family strengthen their bodies and their bonds this summer.**

1. Just add water.

Drop the water hose or sprinkler over the trampoline net or slide, add bubble bath to the kiddie pool, have a water-balloon war, or just run through the sprinkler with your kids.

2.

Make an obstacle course in the backyard.

Include objects to jump over, tires or hula hoops to jump through, and end the course with several laps across the perimeter of the yard. You may want to purchase a small trophy to rotate between weekly winners.

3. Teach your kids your old playground games.

Red rover, Mother, may I?, and sharks and minnows are just a few.

4. Organize a family field day.

It could include sack races (use old pillow cases), three-legged races, running events (four-times-to-the-fence dash), hurdles (jump over plastic buckets), etc. Add inexpensive awards (printed certificates or ribbons) and homemade ice cream to make this a winner for everyone. See if you can anticipate events that would allow each child to succeed.

5. Swing a jump rope for the kids.

Yep, this is totally old school. But it could also be a great way to practice those Bible verses. If you have older children, they could swing the jump rope for mom and dad (does anyone still double dutch?).

6. Schedule regular family dance parties.

What was your generation's signature dance? (Macarena or Thriller?) Turn up the music and be as silly as you can.

7. Go on family walks around the neighborhood.

For younger kids, make it a scavenger hunt by jotting down a few things (or you can find free lists online) for them to check off as you walk—animals, kids playing, etc. For older kids, use it as a time for some deeper, undistracted conversation. If you live near a state or national park, you may be able to trudge through some woods or up a mountain. As a bonus, double your walk with an act of service: volunteer to walk the dogs of elderly neighbors.

8. Plan a backyard treasure hunt.

Include movement in your "clues"—run around the yard twice to ask Dad for the next clue, hide one at the top of the slide, etc. Bury or hide a small prize for the kids to find at the end.

9. Play a game of night tag.

After dark, give everyone glow-stick necklaces and bracelets for a trickier game of tag. Give a flashlight to the person who's "it."

10. Brainstorm fun physical activities with the entire family.

Riding bicycles, playing hide-and-seek, training for a 5K or another family fitness goal, are a few to get you going. You could even talk through creating your own personal training routines. Write these ideas on slips of paper and put them in a jar. Regularly draw from it, and do the activity you choose.





You Can Do It!

(O N Y O U R O W N)

We see you. We know what it's like to constantly play cruise director for people under four feet tall. You adore your kiddos but sometimes wish about 27 less sentences per day started with "I'm bored!"

Every parent needs a break. What if you considered sectioning off a daily, two-hour, technology-free "independent time" for the whole family? Whether kids escape to their rooms, their beds, or the backyard, your kids can foster their imagination and even learn to fix boredom on their own.

I promise. It will be good for them. And for you.

Print off this list and tape it to the fridge for your kids to reference over the summer.

Read

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> My Father's Dragon by Ruth Stiles Gannett | <input type="checkbox"/> Carry On, Mr. Bowditch by Jean Lee Latham |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The Ramona Quimby books by Beverly Cleary | <input type="checkbox"/> From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler by E.L. Konigsburg |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Charlotte's Web by E.B. White | <input type="checkbox"/> The Chronicles of Narnia by C.S. Lewis |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The School Story by Andrew Clements | <input type="checkbox"/> The Hobbit and The Lord of the Rings by J.R.R. Tolkien |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A Wrinkle in Time by Madeleine L'Engle | |

Play

- **Write a play or skit for the whole family to perform later.**
Start with a scenario like “Running a bakery on the moon” or “Making a movie starring Captain Hook and Elsa” to get your juices flowing.
- **Construct a house of cards with as many playing cards as you can.**
- **Complete free printable Sudoku page.**
- **Come up with your own commercials for random household items** (toilet paper, perhaps?).
- **Master the Rubik’s cube.**
- **Prepare for a sock-ball war.** Take turns coming up with a different set of rules.
- **Master Solitaire, Spider Solitaire,** or make up your own card game.

Create

- **Everyone gets a ball of string and scotch tape. Who will be the most creative?**
Make a maze or booby trap. Or alter your materials: Could you use toothpicks as pegs to make a picture?
- **Make friendship bracelets.**
- **Design paper airplanes for a competition of flight length, height, spin, creativity...**
- **Sketch items or landscapes visible from your location. Or draw a self-portrait.**
- **Build forts with cardboard or mini ones with toilet paper rolls**
(you ought to have a few). Think real-life Minecraft!
- **Paint small rocks from the backyard to give to specific people.**
- **Make homemade ice cream in plastic bags.**
Pro tip: shake it while jumping on a trampoline.

Move

- ☐ Listen to music and dance Clean (keep that music going).
- ☐ Choreograph a new dance video for Tik Tok.
- ☐ Organize a closet or stash of nostalgic notes and keepsakes.
- ☐ Work out to a kid exercise video (or an old aerobics video).
- ☐ Play hopscotch, jump rope, skip-it, or hula-hoop.
- ☐ Mow the lawn.
- ☐ Practice your soccer, basketball, or other sport skills.
- ☐ Ride a bike.
- ☐ Walk or play fetch with the dog.



Game of Life

(SKILLS THAT IS)

We get it. Schools out. Teaching the kids something else after having to relearn Algebra I this semester isn't high on your list of summer fun. But consider this a lesson in life. And—bonus—you already know how to do most of this stuff!

In between the fun stuff, consider this checklist of life skills you want your kids to have:

Car Care Basics

- ☐ Checking oil, other fluids, and tire pressure
- ☐ Pumping gas
- ☐ Jump starting a battery
- ☐ Changing oil (for older kids)

Home Maintenance

- ☐ Change the air filter
- ☐ Plunge a toilet
- ☐ Fix a running toilet
- ☐ Tighten screws on drawer knobs
- ☐ Change a washer on a faucet

Other Life Skills

- ☐ How to build a campfire
- ☐ The art of writing a thank-you letter
- ☐ How to sort, wash, & fold laundry
- ☐ Cooking: Plan, shop for, and cook a meal
- ☐ Job interview skills
- ☐ How to read a map

Finance Basics

- ☐ Create a budget
- ☐ Open a savings/checking account
- ☐ Balance a checkbook
- ☐ Write a check
- ☐ Save for a purchase