

Fellowship...God's fix for the family.

In today's world the family which has not been torn apart is likely drifting apart. God's fix for the family is the same as his fix for the church...fellowship. First is fellowship with God. Have the children take turns saying a meal time or night time prayer. Having the feeling that they are part of God's family will help them understand that no matter what happens to their earth family they still a Father in Heaven who cares for them. A second great step to fellowship with God is a scripture calendar beside each bed...starting and ending each day with a Bible verse. Sharing Scripture gives the entire family a sense of belonging. Earthly fellowship ... learning to appreciate one another... comes in a variety of ways. Following are some of my personal favorites. Try posting them on the fridge or by the TV.

#1 Meal Preparation. The idea comes from a conversation with Margaret Meade world famous Anthropologist who comments that the one thing in every culture in the world that marks a person as belonging to a tribe or family is helping prepare the meal. Anyone can be invited to share the meal but traditionally only family members help prepare it, giving them one thing we all deeply need...a sense of being a contributor.

Our second world famous fan of food preparation is Maria Montessori who starts out having three year olds in the kitchen with her. Each child gets a sturdy child safe serrated plastic knife with which they slice bananas and then peel the slices. So far I have counted 125 toppings for sliced bananas: chocolate chips, ice cream, strawberry jam, mashed avocado, jelly beans with mayonnaise...deserts even a three year old can be proud of preparing. The goal being togetherness, eventually fellowship. The kitchen is a perfect place for bonding and rebonding, for including new family members as well as renewing old ones. After bananas comes cucumbers and apples. After meal preparation comes...sometimes slowly...relationship and healing.

2: Walt Disney had it right: "Whistle While you Work". According to a 40 year study of children raised with every kind of problem imaginable the ONE THING that guarantees a child will never spend time in prison is learning, at an early age to ENJOY work. Show the kids where things belong, then once a day set the timer on the stove and whistle while you work. Make it fun and finish off with a cookie or apple slices. Make household chores into a fun part of the day rather than something that puts you on opposite sides of the fence.

#3: Catch them being Good. Good parents must correct a child who misbehaves but GREAT parents celebrate when they get it right. The child who most needs our compliments could easily be the child who least deserves them. Look hard, be generous God's greatest gift to parents is a child who wants to please. Our job is to help them see the goal and the God who will help them reach it. Accentuate the positive at least four times a day. It's called encouragement.

Finding time for fellowship with our children/spouses is not always easy. We pray this short list helps of activities finds it's way onto refrigerators or under the tv controller. We pray especially for families who do not live in the same house...for children in joint custody...children for whom connecting and reconnecting is a lifelong process. The process begins in heaven with prayer, scripture and sharing a church family on Sunday but the above weekday activities: Time in the Kitchen, Whistle While you Work, and Catch them Being Good are also important, Each offers very special blessings for those who will make them a Habit. May God bless and keep you as you find TIME for one another.

This week's homework assignment, as soon as you get home, is to ask your children to forgive you for all your mistakes...for not being perfect. *Asking forgiveness is not taking the blame for the past. It is clearing the way for the future.* THEN, as God leads, keep asking...once a week or at least once a month. Just as Jesus forgiveness secures our fellowship with God so it is with each other. I find it to be a great tool for parents as well. Offering children mercy and forgiveness instead of punishment...if...they promise to do better. First forgiveness...especially after divorce ... and then restored fellowship.