

October 2017

# Home Front

a spiritual parenting resource

OUT OF  
THE  
COMFORT  
ZONE

# Out of the Comfort Zone

*"God transforms me when I step out in faith." As children and students are challenged to step out of their comfort zone from an early age, they learn to experience a dependence on the Holy Spirit to equip and strengthen them beyond their natural abilities and desires. We believe this environment will cultivate a generation that, instead of seeking comfort, seeks a radical life of faith in Christ.*



“We believe that the Holy Spirit is God’s chosen teacher. It is He who causes spiritual growth and formation when and as He chooses. As such, we have articulated 10 distinct environments to create in your home. We desire to create spiritual space, which we refer to as an environment, in which God’s Spirit can move freely.”

The environment of OUT OF THE COMFORT ZONE recognizes that God transforms us when we step out in faith. Our flesh seeks comfort, but God’s Spirit wants to try our faith in order to grow it.

**As children are challenged to step out of their comfort zone from an early age, they experience dependence on the Holy Spirit, who will equip and strengthen them beyond their natural abilities and desires.** We believe this will cultivate a generation of believers who, instead of seeking comfort, seek a radical life of dying to self and following Christ.

As adults, when we’re in situations where our own resources fulfill what’s needed, we tend to rely on our own abilities. Our kids, on the other hand, don’t have nearly as many personal resources on which to fall back. **Their pure faith often helps them to depend on the Holy Spirit far more readily than we do as adults.**

That’s why James tells us to “consider it pure joy” (1:2) when we encounter trials. Joy in trials may seem like an oxymoron, but when we come to the end of our resources and our strength and we depend on the Holy Spirit, then we’re truly in a relationship with the Almighty. **That’s the place where sanctification happens ... and where we find true joy!**



**Michelle Anthony**  
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## OUR MISSION



**INSPIRE** parents with ideas to create fun, spiritually forming times in the normal rhythm of everyday life.



**EQUIP** parents to become the spiritual leaders of God’s truth in their own households.



**SUPPORT** families to engage their communities and change the culture around them.

## WWW.HOMEFRONTMAG.COM

### Things you won’t want to miss:

- Parent blogs to inspire you
- Mobile-friendly format
- Lots of downloadable giveaways
- Marketplace to purchase article bundles and more!

The website is filled with fresh ideas and creative resources to help you spiritually parent your children.



## EDITOR'S NOTE

**Faith removes fear!** What a great phrase to remind us that faith gives us the courage to move past the roadblock of fear in our lives. But let's be real—it's not that easy to have faith in fearful situations. In fact, if you are anything like me, faith is rarely an initial response. If your child is struggling with fear, it may not comfort him much to hear you say, "You just need more faith!" Don't get me wrong—I believe with all my heart that faith absolutely has the power to remove fear. However our faith muscles need to be developed, and the only way for that to happen is for us to intentionally step out of everything comfortable.

In this issue of *HomeFront* you will be challenged to step out of your comfort zone and face your fears. You will be reminded with our **FAMILY TIME VERSE** (page 5) that you are never alone—God is with you wherever you go. Our **PRAYER** article (page 14) shares Jonah's prayer as he faced fear in a fish belly and obeyed God's directive. In this month's **DAD BLOG** (page 42) one dad recounts his experience of having a son who struggled with anxiety; as they both faced their fears together, God met them and healed them.

Our **FAMILY TIME RECIPE** (page 22) may take your family out of their comfort zone with some creative ways to introduce healthy foods into your family's diet. And the **CONVERSATION STARTER** (page 12) will promote some interesting table topics as your children discuss their fears.

If we allow it to, fear can trap us and hold us prisoner. It will keep us from becoming all God has called us to be. It is a great tool of the enemy and must be fought with the weapon of faith. As we encourage our children to step out of their comfort zone, something beautiful happens as God meets and transforms them. Our prayer here at HomeFront is for this next generation to learn to live lives that boldly proclaim, **faith removes fear!**

**Debbie Guinn**  
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*Debbie is the Editor in Chief of HomeFront. She has more than 25 years of experience working in children's and family ministries. She is passionate about equipping parents to become leaders of God's truth in their own households. Her most cherished time is spent hanging out with her grandkids—they are her favorite people on this planet!*

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## FAMILY VERSE

Memorizing Scripture can be an incredible practice to engage in as a family. But words in and of themselves will not necessarily transform us; it is God's Spirit in these words who transforms. We come to know God more when we're willing to open our hearts and listen to His Holy Spirit through the words we memorize. Have fun with this verse, and think of creative ways to invite your family to open up to God as they commit the verse to memory.



**Consider purchasing an 8" x 10" frame to hold your family memory verse each month!**

HAVE I NOT COMMANDED YOU?

**BE STRONG**

AND

**COURAGEOUS.**

DO NOT BE AFRAID; DO NOT BE

**DISCOURAGED,**

FOR THE LORD

YOUR GOD

**WILL BE WITH YOU**

**WHEREVER YOU GO.**

JOSHUA 1:9

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# LITTLE PUMPKINS

CELEBRATE THE SEASON WITH ONE OR MORE OF THESE FUN PUMPKIN DECORATING IDEAS!

## 1 MONOGRAM

### WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- white faux pumpkin
- black acrylic paint
- stencil of your last name initial
- masking tape
- stencil paintbrush
- clear spray enamel

### WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Center your stencil on the face of your pumpkin.
2. Tape the stencil in place.
3. Using the stencil brush, dab small amounts of paint to fill the inside of the stencil.
4. Remove the stencil and allow the paint to dry completely before spraying with the enamel spray to seal it.

## 2 CONFETTI

### WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- white faux pumpkin
- confetti (packaged, or create your own using tissue paper and a hole punch)
- Mod Podge (matte finish)
- paintbrush

### WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Cover your work surface.
2. Paint the Mod Podge on the surface of the pumpkin.
3. Sprinkle or arrange the confetti on the pumpkin.
4. Gently cover with another coat of Mod Podge.
5. Allow to dry completely. It will dry clear.

## 3 MELTED CRAYON

### WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- white faux pumpkin
- crayons
- clear tacky glue
- blow dryer
- drop cloth

### WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Cover a large area with the drop cloth—this can get messy!
2. Peel paper off of the crayons.
3. Glue crayons to the top of the pumpkin near the stem.
4. Using the blow dryer on high heat, melt the crayons. Aim the dryer at different angles to help spread the crayons.
5. Once these crayons have melted, you may want to glue small pieces of crayon to the areas that need more color and then hit them with the blow dryer to reach your desired coverage.



# STEP OUT

**When I was in third grade, my parents sent my older brother and me to Camp Tejas summer camp. As an introvert, I was not at all excited to be away from home for four days and three nights. Going to camp completely thrust me out of my comfort zone.**

As uncomfortable as it was, I did figure it out. I made a few friends, created our team cheer, ended up being the best swimmer at the pool, and was even involved in pranking the boys' cabin. I was actually having a blast! Now, this wasn't just a fun, "have a great summer" kind of camp. This was a Christian camp where every day we had two chapel services.

I had grown up in church, accepted Jesus at five years old, and been baptized. I had heard all the stories from the Bible and I knew all of the songs. I really didn't need to go to chapel and hear these things again from camp people I would never see again. So, every chapel service I sat in the back drawing in my journal. I sat through every worship song. Every altar call, I sat pretending to read my Bible so no one would come talk me into taking a step out of my introverted bubble. This went on for every chapel the entire week. And then came the final chapel service. We all gathered in the little church room and the service began like every other chapel had. And there I sat in my own little comfort zone. Except this time, I didn't pick up anything to distract me; something in my heart told me to just watch.

Watching felt safe and not so scary, so I watched. I watched the opening worship; it looked like fun! Everyone seemed to have so much joy. Then I watched the pastor speak. He spoke about how God had given the Holy Spirit to us to be our Helper, Friend, and Comforter. The pastor then did an altar call for those who wanted to get to know the Holy

Spirit as a friend and comforter. "Sounds pretty good," I thought to myself, but I still wanted to stay in my seat. I witnessed a few kids go up to the altar and saw the leaders pray over them. I continued to just watch, but then, I found myself feeling uncomfortable in my little bubble in the back of the room. The feeling grew more and more intense until I found myself walking to the front and getting on my knees. Suddenly, I became overwhelmed and started weeping. I wasn't crying because I was sad or upset; I felt so peaceful, warm, and loved. One of my leaders, who was also a close family friend, came to pray for me. He explained that what I was feeling was the Holy Spirit. He said, "God's presence can sometimes be so overwhelming that people can't help but cry—but that it is a really, really good thing!"

Now, as a 25 year old, I have been blessed to go through life without a season of doubt in the Lord because I met Him in a very tangible and real way at Camp Tejas. I arrived that summer closed off in my comfort zone, but I left with a real relationship with my Counselor, my Helper, and my Friend. How thankful I am that He prompted me to step out of my comfort zone!

**This month, gather your family into a spacious area of your home. Discuss together different worship postures:** raising our hands, closing our eyes, kneeling, etc. Then play the song "Trust" by Hillsong Young & Free and put those things into practice—raise your hands, close your eyes, and sing out the words of the song: "Jesus, I will trust You." This may take you a little out of your comfort zone as you worship God with your arms in the air or your knees on the ground, but there is something powerful when families come together in worship. When the song ends, have each person share what he or she felt the Lord saying through that time. Remind your family that oftentimes we must step out of what is comfortable to connect with God!

by Becca Guerra

Becca works at New Life Church in Colorado Springs, CO, as the Creative and Production Coordinator for New Life Family Ministries. She loves bringing curriculum to life, leading worship, and leading her team of "motions kids" in New Life Kids Arts. Becca resides in Colorado Springs with her super-cute husband, James, and their two sweet cats, Moog and Finn.

# WHAT ARE YOU AFRAID OF?

**When I think about October, I think about pumpkins, campfires, s'mores, and sweatshirts—all things that bring me joy as fall is one of my favorite times of the year.** For some, though, October may stir up fear as witches, vampires, and ghouls begin to appear in neighborhoods and local stores. I am not one who has ever been “big” on Halloween, but the decorations for that holiday have never bothered me either. It wasn't until I had kids that I realized just how terrifying this time of year can be!

Last September we received two preschool-aged foster daughters. One Saturday soon after, our family took a trip to Home Depot. With both girls in the cart, we did our shopping, and as we neared the checkout lines we passed the fall decorations. Our five year old loved the scary décor; she laughed and wasn't fazed one bit. But our four year old gripped my hand over the cart handle—until a motion-detector cackling witch sent her completely over the edge. She leapt out of the cart and fully into my arms completely terrified, and her fear didn't leave when we left the store.

That night and the nights following brought up the fear of the witch at Home Depot. During this time, we started implementing a specific phrase into our children's nightly prayer time: “Thank you, God, for making me brave, strong, and courageous. I will not be afraid because God will protect me.” While we wanted our children to know that we would do everything in our power to protect them and keep them safe while they were in our care, we wanted them to know that ultimately God is our protector; He is our source of strength and courage.

**This month, as you spend time together as a family, be intentional about talking with your children about fear and where our strength and courage comes from:**

## GET YOUR CHILDREN TALKING

- What are you afraid of?
- What do you do when you're afraid?
- Read through this month's Family Verse together: Joshua 1:9. Explain that we never have to be afraid because God is always with us.
- What do you think God means when He tells us to be “strong”?
- Was there any time today when you had to be strong and/or courageous? Tell us about it.

**As you ask these questions, your children may talk about physical fears: the dark, bugs, monsters, etc.** If you had a similar fear of something when you were their age, tell them the story and what helped you handle your fear. Remind them that God promises to be our comfort, and He will give us strength and courage when we ask Him! We can always pray and rely on God when we are afraid.

by *Samantha Fugate*

*Samantha is the Special Needs Coordinator at New Life Church in Colorado Springs, CO. She grew up in East Texas but is loving the mountain life. She and her husband, Joseph, are former elementary teachers turned foster parents. Some of their favorite things to do with kids include playing outside, taking the dogs for a walk, and exploring the local hiking trails.*

# WHY WE DO IT

**“We thought it was only a rumor that you were serving dinner to everyone tonight! This is incredible. Why do you do it?”**

Why do we do it? Our family started the tradition seven years ago, hosting a hot dog and chili dinner on October 31 for all our neighbors. It started because my husband and I remembered all too well how excited our daughters were to collect candy treats. They would skip dinner and then, between knocking on doors, have a full sugar meltdown. We wanted to change the storyline for other families on that night. We wanted to offer a place where families could find more than just sugar waiting to fulfill their child’s excitement and rush to get out the door—they could find community.

To be honest, the moment our daughters arrived in our lives only fourteen months apart, they were our everything. We lost track of friendships and neighbors. We were those tunnel-visioned people who entered and exited the garage, never taking in what was around them. Comfort for us was inside the walls of our home, focused on our family, until I heard Reggie McNeal say these words: “To think and to live missionally means seeing all of life as a way to be engaged in the mission of God in the world.”

**Suddenly, for our family, the “comfort of family” became an uncomfortable place.** These words somehow snapped us from our tunnel vision and awakened us to see our neighbors—neighbors who were sending their last child off to college, neighbors who were expecting a surprise third child, neighbors who didn’t speak English well, neighbors who were sick, and neighbors who were brand-new. We wanted to introduce ourselves to them all—even the ones who didn’t live directly around us. So we planned an outdoor party with an open invitation to our neighbors on the one night we knew most of them would show up: Halloween!

Reggie’s words sparked us to see the nearest mission field was right outside the door everyone would soon be knocking on. So we moved from our comfortable spot behind the door to the front yard. Front and center, not for a quick hello but a lingering introduction as we grilled hot dogs, served chili, and toasted marshmallows around the firepit. As neighbors introduced themselves, it was only natural to exchange stories about kids, work, and life. We did a lot of listening. Countless people said thanks for the company, for a place to rest, and for a meal. Suddenly, meeting hundreds of new people on one night felt strangely normal and comfortable.

Over the years, our relationships with our immediate neighbors have become deeply rooted. We host the event together now with four other families serving on average over 400 people from dusk to dark.

**The nonexistent “guest list” has multiplied over seven years because everyone who has ever visited our yard now brings his friends and family.** And they tell someone, who tells someone, who tells someone until, as a guest said last year, “We thought it was only a rumor that you were serving dinner to everyone tonight! This is incredible. Why do you do it?”



Heckert family yard party

by Dawn Heckert

*Dawn is the Children’s Pastor at Christ Community Leawood Campus in Leawood, Kansas. She loves Jesus and the opportunity to share His story with all ages. She spends her free time deep in glitter, crafting, creating, and chasing life with her two teenage daughters and husband.*

# FILL-IN-THE-BLANK PRAYER

**God asked Jonah to step WAY out of his comfort zone.** He wanted Jonah to go and proclaim coming destruction to Ninevah. Instead of listening to God's call, Jonah ran away. As a result, God sent a terrible storm that threatened to break up the ship Jonah was on. Jonah asked the sailors to throw him overboard. Talk about out of his comfort zone! Then a giant fish swallowed him. Alive? Yes. Comfortable? I doubt it. While inside the fish, Jonah realized how desperately he needed God to forgive him and give him the strength to move forward. As a family, read Jonah's prayer in Jonah chapter 2.

God asked Jonah to be courageous and to step out in faith. God asks the same of us! This month, use this fill-in-the-blank prayer to tell God where you have been afraid and to ask Him to strengthen you to step out in faith.

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*by Krista Heinen*

*Krista is a pastor who desires to help the next generation understand its place in The Big God Story. She has her BS in elementary education from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and her MDiv from Bethel Seminary. Krista loves to preach, play board games, and spend time chatting over coffee. She and her husband, Greg, live in Wisconsin.*

“In my distress I called to the LORD,  
and he answered me.

From \_\_\_\_\_ I called for help,  
(A place where you have been when you've cried out to God)

and you listened to my cry.

You hurled me \_\_\_\_\_  
(A place where you felt far from God.)

I said, ‘I have been banished

from your sight;

yet I will look again

toward \_\_\_\_\_.’  
(Where God dwells)

\_\_\_\_\_ threatened me,  
(A situation where you felt alone, scared, or overwhelmed)

the \_\_\_\_\_ surrounded me;  
(The same situation where you felt alone, scared, or overwhelmed)

But you, LORD my God, \_\_\_\_\_  
(How God showed up in the situation you mentioned above)

When my life was \_\_\_\_\_,  
(How your life felt during the situation you listed above)

I remembered you, LORD,

and my prayer rose to you,

to \_\_\_\_\_  
(Same place where God dwells)

“Those who cling to \_\_\_\_\_  
(Something we put before God)

turn away from God’s love for them.

But I, with shouts of grateful praise, \_\_\_\_\_  
(Something you shout to praise God)

will sacrifice to you.

What I have vowed I will make good.

I will say, ‘Salvation comes from the LORD.’”



# WHEREVER | GO

**Kati Barton felt nervous as her teacher, Miss Clark, wrote another name on a long, white strip of paper.**

Miss Clark folded the paper in half and placed it carefully into a large wicker basket with the others. She had already written the names of six parents who wanted to go on the class field trip. And she still had one more name to add: Kati's mom, Mrs. Barton.

When Miss Clark first told the class they would be going on a field trip to the pumpkin patch, Kati clapped her hands with excitement. The students in Miss Clark's second-grade class had been learning about pumpkins since the first day of October, and soon they would get to ride the bus and visit a real pumpkin patch. Kati was thrilled!

For several weeks, Kati's class had listened to stories about pumpkins, learned songs about pumpkins, and recited pumpkin poems. They painted pictures of pumpkins and made miniature pumpkins out of clay. When each student brought a pumpkin to school, the class made a chart comparing all of the pumpkins by size, shape, weight, and height.

Then Miss Clark cut the top off one pumpkin so Kati and her friends could touch the slimy, mushy strings and seeds inside and learn about the life cycle of a pumpkin. Pumpkins start as seeds in the ground and then turn into sprouts, which grow into plants, then flowers, then green pumpkins, and finally orange pumpkins! Now she was going to see a real pumpkin farm with rows and rows of pumpkins growing in a patch.

"I can't wait!" Kati shouted with joy when Miss Clark told the class. "And my mom will love it, too!" Kati's mom had gone on every field trip with Kati ever since kindergarten. Mrs. Barton had visited the fire station, the petting zoo, a dentist office, a grocery store, the pond, two plays, and a museum with Kati.

**"Kati," Miss Clark said, looking rather sad, "I'm sorry, but there isn't enough room for all of the parents to go on this field trip. Only three parents can go, so we will have to pick names out of a basket."**

Now Kati sat at her desk and took a deep breath as Miss Clark dropped the last strip of paper into the wicker basket and swished them around with her hand. Slowly she took out three strips of paper and unfolded them.

"Mrs. Gomez, Tommy's mom," she told the class, "Mr. Johnson, Megan's dad," Miss Clark said, "And ... Mrs. Lu, Brianna's mom."

Kati's eyes started to fill with tears. She felt sad and afraid. Her tummy felt funny. *Oh no*, she thought. *My mom didn't get chosen.* The bus was too big and field trips were too scary to go alone.

That night Kati still felt sad as she got into bed. "I don't want to go to the pumpkin patch," she told her parents when they came into her room to kiss her goodnight.

"Everyone feels scared sometimes, Kati," Mr. Barton told her, giving his daughter a big hug.

"But God has given us a promise for whenever we feel afraid," Mrs. Barton said. "Joshua 1:9 says, 'Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.'"

Kati thought about the verse. "Wherever I go?" she asked.

"Yes," Mr. Barton answered. "Wherever you go."

A few weeks later the day of the field trip arrived. Kati felt nervous as the class lined up and Miss Clark led them to the bus. The three parent chaperones walked with the class. Kati wished her mom could be there, too.

**As Kati took a big step onto the bus, she remembered the Bible verse her parents had shared with her.** Be strong and courageous, she thought.

Don't be afraid. Kati smiled as she chose a seat next to Tommy Gomez and sat down. "I don't have to be afraid, Tommy," she said. "Even on a bus. Even at the pumpkin patch. God is with me—wherever I go!"

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by Kathryn O'Brien

*Kathryn O'Brien writes books for kids and has a heart for moms. She's published five children's picture books, including her latest series (Sit for a Bit), which teaches Bible verses to little ones in a fun and lasting way! Kathryn loves writing about faith and family for several publications and online blogs.*



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O C T O B E R

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

8 9 10 11 12 13 14

15 16 17 18 19 20 21

22 23 24 25 26 27 28

29 30 31

# OUT OF THE COMFORT ZONE OCTOBER

**I don't know about you, but I don't often look for ways to step out of my comfort zone.** I'm very intentional in my pursuit of comfort. As for discomfort, I usually just wait until I find myself in an uncomfortable situation and then allow God to stretch me through it. However, the environment of Out of the Comfort Zone invites us into more than merely responding when discomfort happens to us. It calls us to step out in faith. It's this stepping out that provides the best fodder for God to do His transforming work in our lives.

**This month, create a calendar that outlines one thing your family will do each day to step outside of your comfort zone.** Include a mix of ideas to do individually and together. It may be helpful to first brainstorm a big list of things that scare or challenge you, and then choose 31 from that list. Try to focus especially on things you could do to bless other people. (Sitting by someone at lunch whom you wouldn't naturally be drawn to is a good example. It would be stretching for you and a blessing to that person and kids and parents alike can do this.) Each night (maybe around the dinner table), debrief the day's activity. Talk about what you did, how you felt before and after doing it, and anything that God might have been saying to you in that situation.

**When making the calendar, you can be as crafty or as simple as you'd like.** If you already have a big calendar in your home, you can use that. If you want to search for a blank calendar template online and print out the month of October, that works too. If you want to draw a calendar on a chalkboard or a giant piece of paper, go for it. Or, see my following recommendation for a calendar you could make with clothespins and twine. The most important thing this month is not the look of the calendar but its content!

## WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 12' of twine
- scissors
- 12 nails or pushpins
- cardstock or paper
- 38 mini clothespins
- pen or permanent marker
- red, orange, and yellow pencils or crayons to decorate (optional)

## WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Cut 6 pieces of twine (each about 2' long) and hang them in rows about 2" apart on a prominent wall in your home.
2. Cut out (38) 2" x 2" squares of cardstock or paper.
3. Take 7 squares and write the letters "O-c-t-o-b-e-r" on them. (Decorate these with fall colors if you'd like.)
4. Use mini clothespins to attach these to the first row of twine.
5. Take the rest of the squares and label them 1-31 in the top left corner of each square.
6. Write one Out of the Comfort Zone activity on each.
7. Use mini clothespins to hang the squares in order on the remaining rows of twine (1-7, 8-14, 15-21, 22-28, 29-31).

by Emily Schulz

*Emily is the Family and Women's Ministries Director at New Denver Church in Denver, CO. She has her BA in Christian Ministries from Biola University and her MDiv from Denver Seminary. Emily loves seasonal activities; date nights with her husband, Phil; cooking; playing games; spontaneous song and dance; and creating space for people to be known and loved.*

# FACE YOUR FEARS



## WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- small plastic food containers\*
- paper lunch bags\*
- wet towel or rag
- blindfold (optional)
- assorted foods and objects (see suggestions below)

\*The number of each of these items depends on what and how many foods and objects you choose. Each "wet item" will need a plastic container.

### Dry food and object suggestions

- dried apricots or prunes
- pipe cleaners (cut into pieces)
- dry pasta
- walnuts
- beef jerky
- water balloon (filled)
- raisins
- craft pom-pom balls
- play dough

### Wet food and object suggestions

- cottage cheese
- flavored gelatin
- olives
- slime
- steamed broccoli
- pudding
- cooked noodles
- canned peaches
- diced avocado
- tofu
- glue

## BEFORE YOU START

Place each item in a brown paper lunch bag and roll the top closed. Any wet item will need to go in a plastic food storage container with a lid before going into the bag. Mix up and place all of the paper bags in a central spot on the floor. Keep the wet towel or rag nearby to clean off messy hands as needed.

## TIME TO PLAY!

Invite everyone to join you in a circle around the paper bags.

Explain to your family that you have filled these bags with some pretty strange items. They will take turns selecting a bag, reaching inside, and guessing what the item might be. Be sure to let your family know they don't need to be toooooo scared ... wink wink.

To start the game, select a player to pick the first bag. Once he chooses a bag, he must hand it to someone else (maybe you to begin with). No peeking allowed! Blindfold the player after he has selected his bag. Once the player has been blindfolded, open the bag. If the item inside is wet, take the lid off but leave the container in the bag.

Help guide the player's hand into the bag and allow him to touch the item inside. With the blindfold on, he can make one guess as to what the item is. Take the blindfold off and let the player look inside to see if he was right or not! Set this bag to the side and repeat with another player.

If your family is competitive, feel free to keep score! With every correct guess, give that player one tally mark. The winner will be the person with the most correct guesses!

## REMEMBER

During this game, some nerves probably popped up as your family members reached their hands into these unknown bags. No matter how funny or simple the items ended up being, there is something a little uncomfortable or scary about not knowing. As your family walks through life, you will certainly find yourselves outside of your comfort zone and possibly a little scared. Encourage your children to remember that no matter what comes their way, no matter how uncomfortable or scary something may be, they can rest knowing that God will bring them the strength and courage they need to step out in faith!

*by Heather DePartee*

*Heather has been in children's ministry for seven years and is currently working at The Well Community Church in Fresno, CA, as the Kids Ministry Director for one of their three campuses. She has gone back to school for a degree in early childhood development and is loving every second! She is married to Adam and is crazy about pretty houseplants.*

**As parents, we know our kids need their fruits and vegetables, but getting children to actually eat them presents a never-ending challenge.** Most of us probably don't realize that food avoidance is often based in fear rather than defiance. Kids don't want to put a new texture and flavor in their mouths when it's "good for them." That means it's almost definitely gross! Cooking vegetables the right way is not as simple as boiling or pan frying, which can leach flavor and even nutrients from them. For my daughter, smell is particularly critical for her willingness to take a bite, and healthy foods do not typically conjure up the kitchen aromas that butter and sugar can. Parents who work tirelessly to feed their family a healthy, balanced diet face ongoing rejection and often either have to choose to give up or spend hours at the table. This cycle, meal after meal, is enough to convince you to give in with junk food, but there is a better way that encourages kids to step out of their comfort zone.

Rather than battling them, try to work with the kids to find creative and delicious ways to incorporate healthy foods into their diet. That could mean trying several different preparations for the same vegetable or even the number of ingredients in a dish. My daughter likes salads with finely chopped greens, cucumbers, and olives—that's it—and we can put just about anything in a taco shell, between two slices of bread, or in a smoothie. I also choose my battles; she loves Brussels sprouts and hates broccoli, so Brussels sprouts it is. But the biggest piece of advice I can offer is to be a good role model. Your kids are going to mimic your eating habits, and when our kids see us enjoying eating a healthy meal, it encourages them to do the same. Try stepping out of your comfort zone too and pick up a new vegetable every week.

There is no one-size-fits-all solution, but putting in the effort to find healthy meals your kids will like means you're creating healthy eating habits they will carry for life.

**Try my Baked Sweet Potato and Black Bean Taquitos recipe (page 25), and check out my other success tips for even more ideas!**

1. Get rid of the prepackaged snacks and stock your fridge full of washed and ready-to-eat fruits and veggies. Keep them at eye level—front and center and fast for kids to grab.
2. Let kids help out in the kitchen. Children are far more likely to dig into a new dish if they helped prepare it!
3. Texture can play a huge role, so offer produce in different ways. Try baking, roasting, steaming, or frozen smoothies.
4. Serve fruits and vegetables with every meal and incorporate them into the main dish when possible. Apple-carrot slaw, zucchini muffins, and beet fries are a few of our favorites!
5. Most kids will eat raw veggies if they have a good dip. We always have hummus on hand!

*By Emily Wylie*

*As a mom of two and a former healthy eating specialist for Whole Foods Market, Emily is an advocate for a plant-strong, nutrient-dense diet. She hails from a small cattle farm in western Pennsylvania where she was raised on meals made from whole food ingredients. Over the past 15 years her exploration of food, special diets, and culinary techniques led to a talent for transforming traditional recipes into mouthwatering, healthy alternatives.*





# BAKED SWEET POTATO AND BLACK BEAN TAQUITOS WITH CILANTRO LIME CREAM



A photograph of a lime and a bowl of food on a marble surface. The lime is bright green and sits on the left side of the frame. Below it, a portion of a metal bowl containing a golden-brown, fried food item is visible. The background is a light-colored, veined marble surface.

Prep Time: 20 min. Cook Time: 30 min. Yields: 12-15 servings

\* For an easy metric conversion chart, search the Internet for "metric kitchen."

## WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 3 tablespoons oil
- 1 small red onion, chopped
- 1 sweet potato, peeled and diced into small cubes
- 1 can black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 1/2 teaspoons cumin powder
- 2 cloves garlic, chopped
- 1 cup frozen sweet corn
- 12-15 7" (fajita size) flour tortillas
- 1 1/2 cup Monterrey Jack cheese, shredded
- 1 cup Greek yogurt
- 2 tablespoons chopped cilantro
- juice of 1 lime
- salt and pepper

## WHAT YOU'LL DO

### CILANTRO LIME CREAM

1. In a small bowl whisk together Greek yogurt, lime juice, cilantro, 1/4 teaspoon of salt, and a pinch of pepper. Set aside.

### TAQUITOS

2. Heat oven to 350° F and line a baking sheet with lightly oiled parchment paper.
3. In a large skillet, heat 2 tablespoons of oil over medium-high heat. Add the onion, sweet potato, 1 1/2 teaspoons of salt, and 1/2 teaspoon of pepper and sauté until soft, about 5-7 minutes.
4. Lower heat and add the cumin and garlic, combine, and sauté another 3-5 minutes.
5. Add corn, black beans, and cheese. Stir to combine and remove from heat.

### TO ASSEMBLE

1. Place 2 heaping tablespoons of the sweet potato-bean mixture onto the bottom third of a tortilla and roll up.
2. Place taquito, seam side down, on oiled parchment paper. Continue until mixture is used up, placing taquitos very close together to prevent them from unrolling during baking time.
3. Brush taquitos with remaining oil and bake for 20 minutes. Flip over and bake another 10 minutes or until lightly browned.
4. Serve with cilantro lime cream.



Busy little hands will have lots to help with when you make this harvest-time favorite! Allow your kids to spread the dry ingredients on baking sheets while you make the caramel topping—be sure to invite them to watch when you add the baking soda! This is a great snack to package up and give away to family and friends.

# HARVEST HASH

Prep Time: 20 min. Cook time: 30 min. Yields: 12 cups

\* For an easy metric conversion chart, search the Internet for "metric kitchen."

## WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 1 bag popped microwave popcorn
- 2 cups rice Chex cereal
- 2 cups wheat Chex cereal
- 2 cups corn Chex cereal
- 2 cups pretzels
- 2 cups pecan halves
- 2 cups candy corn
- 1 1/2 cups packed light brown sugar
- 3/8 cup light corn syrup
- 3/4 cup butter
- 1/8 teaspoon cream of tartar (optional)
- 1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla
- 3/4 teaspoon baking soda

## WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Preheat the oven to 300° F.
2. Spread the popcorn, Chex cereal, pretzels, and pecans out onto 2 large baking sheets. Set aside.
3. Combine the sugar, corn syrup, butter, cream of tartar, and vanilla in a medium saucepan over medium-high heat. Stir constantly and bring to a boil for about 5 minutes. Remove from heat and quickly stir in the baking soda.
4. Pour the caramel over the popcorn and stir gently until all the kernels are coated.
5. Bake for 30 minutes, stirring twice.
6. Allow to cool on the pan and break apart large clusters if desired.
7. Add the candy corn.
8. Cover the "hash" tightly once cooled.

# WALK ON WATER

**We live in a culture obsessed with obtaining the most comfortable lifestyle.** God commands us to comfort others, but we would rather comfort ourselves. We even have comfort foods! Comfort isn't necessarily bad, but our ultimate comfort should not be dependent upon things or circumstances but rather upon God.

As we follow Jesus, we discover that He is not as concerned with our continual comfort as much as we are. God is more concerned with our character. God knows that discomfort actually has the potential to help us grow closer to Him, to depend on Him, and it allows God to show Himself strong on our behalf. God tests us, stretches us, and shapes us in uncomfortable ways—ways we would never choose for ourselves. Jesus often led His disciples out of their comfort zone and into uncomfortable, even dangerous, situations.

**One night, Jesus sent Peter and the other disciples away in a small boat, knowing that a raging storm was on its way.** Jesus came to them like a ghost, walking on the dark water in the middle of the sea, unmoved by the wind and the waves. To prove He was Jesus, He instructed Peter to get out of the boat and walk on the water toward Him. This was an ultimate out-of-the-comfort-zone moment! Peter's obedience and quick faith allowed him to walk on the water, but fear almost drowned him when he took his focus off of Jesus.

**Jesus used discomfort to show His miraculous power that night.** Jesus and Peter walked on water, Jesus rescued Peter and the other disciples, Jesus calmed the storm, and He accepted their worship. When we obey God's voice, take steps of faith outside of our comfort zone, and focus on Jesus, miracles can happen. If we recognize Jesus as God, we can trust Him in any situation. Jesus is our Comforter. He has saved us. Jesus deserves our trust and our worship, regardless of our circumstances.

## HEAR IT

**Read Matthew 14:22-33 with your family.** Imagine being one of the disciples in the boat. Discuss the following questions and talk about how this story relates to your lives today.

- If Jesus knew the disciples would be caught in a storm, why do you think He sent them out that night?
- Was Peter comfortable walking on the water? Why did Peter start to sink?
- What happened when Jesus got in the boat? What changed?
- What do you think the disciples learned that night? What can you learn from this story?

## DO IT

**Challenge yourself this month to do something out of your comfort zone that you know would be pleasing to God.** Trust that even if you are uncomfortable, Jesus will show up and uphold you. Suggestions:

**Ask** someone (maybe a neighbor) if there is anything he needs prayer for, and if he does, pray for him right then and there.

**Compliment** someone you think needs some encouragement, or as uncomfortable as it might be, say, "I love you" to a family member who needs to hear it.

**Look** intently for opportunities to help someone. When you see an opportunity, no matter your comfort level, go for it—just like Peter jumping out of the boat!

**Invite** someone to go to church with you. Or maybe join that person for an event she would enjoy that you may not.

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by Trent Armstrong

*Trent lives in Southern California with his wife and four children. Trent studied organizational leadership and holds a bachelor of science degree from Biola University. He currently serves at Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, CA, as a drummer on the worship team and has been involved in music ministry for more than 25 years.*



Trentarmstrong.com



These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you **SIT AT HOME** and when you walk **ALONG THE ROAD**, when you **LIE DOWN** and when you **GET UP**.

Deuteronomy 6:6-7



ALONG THE ROAD

This month, as you journey along the road, sing this rhyme to the tune of “B-I-N-G-O.” Remind your children of our Family Time Verse (page 5), which assures us that we do not need to be afraid because “the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.” Joshua 1:9

To the tune of “B-I-N-G-O”

The Lord your God is always near

So be brave and strong

Do not be afraid

Do not be afraid

Do not be afraid

He’s with you where you go.

---

by Tommy Larson

Tommy has been serving as a pastor at ROCKHARBOR Church for the past 11 years. He was part of the development team of the Tru curriculum. He lives in Costa Mesa, CA, with his wife and two children.



Get the audio recording of this song at [bit.ly/octobertottime](https://bit.ly/octobertottime)

**A BLESSING CAN BE A PRAYER OF COMMISSION, A BIBLE PASSAGE, OR WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT. BLESSINGS CAN BE SPOKEN OVER A CHILD FOR THE PURPOSE OF DECLARING GOD'S PROTECTION, JOY, AND WISDOM OVER HIM.**

**The environment of Out of the Comfort Zone reminds us that we were made for something more than the “status quo.”** Walking with Christ is an adventure. It forces us to confront our fears and anxieties and allows us to see the true Source of our peace and strength in the midst of our circumstances.

When the concept of “blessing” people was first introduced to my ministry team, I definitely wasn't a fan. I felt it put all parties involved in an awkward position. I avoided this part of the service during the first few months of its implementation; it was out of my comfort zone. Time went on and, reluctantly, I began to practice blessing small groups of fifth and sixth grade students. It wasn't long before what I thought was an awkward and uncomfortable setting soon became something my students yearned for in our time together. Students came to me before service just to make sure they would receive their blessing before leaving the church. This struck a chord!

Our students are starving for life and love to be spoken over them on a consistent basis. I learned how rare this is for the young people I minister to. How vital it is for students to know their true identity in Christ Jesus! I realized I could play a role in that simply by speaking words of truth and affirmation over them.

**Christians have been called to live as “salt and light” in a dark and flavorless world.** Jesus called His people to be different. He understands that the only place true growth and maturity can take place is outside of our comfort zone. God designed us for a life full of adventure and excitement and to live in

relationship with Jesus. Some of God's greatest works were put on display when His people stepped outside of their comfort zone. When we can step out in faith, He will do a work among us—far greater than anything we could ever fathom.

## READ

**Read Matthew 5:14-16 over your child:**

You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

## BLESS

**Then, pray this blessing:** [Insert your child's name], may you know that your heavenly Father loves you. May you know that YOU are the light of the world. You are the one He will use to comfort the lost and the lonely. May you know that He has made you for a life full of joy, excitement, and adventure with Him. May you have the faith to trust Him and depend on Him as He calls you to live life outside of your comfort zone.

*by Timothy Shepard*

*Timothy is the Director of the Junior High Ministry at New Life Church in Colorado Springs, CO. He has been married to his wife, Mariah, for the past two years and was born and raised in Colorado Springs.*

# 



## WHY WE EXIST

Erin and John Kiltz have three children. Gracie, their youngest, now 22, was born with Down syndrome. At two, she was diagnosed with the most aggressive form of leukemia. After her 10th round of chemotherapy, she encountered serious complications that left her severely brain damaged, fully dependent upon others, and facing a bleak prognosis. Against all odds, she survived a deadly infection and continues to light up a room with her contagious smile.

After Gracie finished high school, the Kiltz family was challenged with the question “What’s next?” After students with intellectual disabilities graduate from high school, they have few options. This sobering reality launched Erin and John on a mission to find a future with meaning and purpose for Gracie as well as her friends. This search led to the Brookwood Community in Brookshire, Texas, where Erin and John knew they had found what they had been looking for.

## BIG MISSION

To provide an educational environment that creates meaningful jobs, builds a sense of belonging, and validates dignity and respect for adults with disabilities.

## BIG VISION

To build a vocational and residential community where our Citizens with disabilities will continue to learn, work, and live—celebrated and empowered in a God-centered environment as they engage in meaningful work and service.

## WHO WE ARE

“We want to contribute. We have talents and interests. We like to be active. We want to be with friends.”

We believe that life is a gift from God and that He treasures all people just as they are. We believe that everyone is entitled to a life of meaning. Our school system provides a place for those with intellectual and physical



challenges to learn and grow, but unfortunately those supports do not continue into adulthood. Brookwood in Georgetown is an expansion of the successful Brookwood Community in Brookshire, Texas, which has been providing educational, social, vocational, and spiritual enrichment for adults with special needs for almost 30 years.

## WHAT WE DO

“We paint. We plant. We cook. We create. We help each other. We laugh. We earn a paycheck.”

Brookwood in Georgetown has created a safe, welcoming community where our Citizens are able to come together and create marketable items. We have experienced special education professionals providing job training and support so that the Citizens can experience the dignity of setting and achieving work goals.

Currently, our Citizens craft handmade pottery pieces and unique cards and help assemble jewelry. In the kitchen, they make and package homemade granola and “The BiG Cookie.” Outside in the garden, Citizens are learning about planting and growing sunflowers, vegetables, and herbs. These enterprises provide items that are sold in The BiG Shop and in other venues and the proceeds help to sustain the program.

To learn more and see how you can contribute or help, visit:

 <http://www.brookwoodingeorgetown.org>



# WHERE IN THE WORLD IS ...

# ISRAEL?

Israel is located in the Middle East and borders the Mediterranean Sea for 273,168 miles. In the south and southwest, Israel borders the Gulf of Aqaba and the Sinai Peninsula. To the east, it shares a 147-mile border with the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and 189-mile border with the Palestinian Autonomous Area. In the north, Israel shares 49 miles with Lebanon and 47 miles with Syria.



*Awakening a compassionate heart and a global mind-set in children for people beyond the boundaries of their own neighborhoods.*

**NOW THAT WE KNOW WHERE IN THE WORLD ISRAEL IS, LET'S MEET AND GREET ITS PEOPLE.**



**POPULATION**

8,340,776



**LANGUAGE**

HEBREW AND ARABIC



**RELIGION**

JUDAISM 75%  
ISLAM 17.5%  
CHRISTIANITY 2%



There are over eight million people who call Israel their home.



If you went to religious services in Israel, you would most likely go to a Jewish synagogue.



Israel has two official languages. To talk to your friends in Israel, you would speak Hebrew or Arabic.



To greet someone in Hebrew you would say, "Shalom!" This literally means, "Peace upon you!"



If you lived in Israel, you might eat foods Israelites have eaten for generations known as the seven species: olives, figs, dates, pomegranates, wheat, barley, and grapes. This diet is based on locally grown produce and is enhanced by imported spices. Two favorites are falafel (deep-fried ball, doughnut, or patty made from ground chickpeas) and hummus (dip or spread made from cooked, mashed chickpeas blended with tahini, olive oil, lemon juice, salt, and garlic).

**DID YOU KNOW?**

- Jerusalem, the capital city of Israel, is one of the oldest cities in the world. It is also the most attacked city. It has been destroyed twice, besieged 23 times, attacked 52 times, and captured 44 times.
- The Dead Sea in Israel is the lowest point on earth—1,315 feet below sea level at its deepest. People can easily float in the Dead Sea due to its unusually high salt concentration. It's almost impossible to dive into it.
- The first cellular phone was developed at the Motorola facility in Israel.

**In our God's Word article (page 28) we share the story of Jesus encouraging Peter to step out of his comfort zone and walk on the water of the Sea of Galilee.** The sea is located in northeastern Israel near the borders of Jordan and Syria. At 64 square miles, the Sea of Galilee is the largest freshwater lake in Israel. It is known by many names and is referred to by Israelis as the "Kinneret," which is Hebrew for "violin," because people consider the lake to be in the shape of a violin. Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, found in Matthew chapters 5-7, is believed to have been delivered on a small hill on the lake's northwestern shore. It is Israel's largest source of fresh drinking water and supplies about one-third of the nation's annual water requirement.



# GOD IS TRUSTWORTHY

**Taylor is full of life, an includer of people, a confident leader, and you can't be around her without having a good time.** As I have gotten to know this special sixth-grader better, she has invited me to know the inmost parts of her heart—including some places of deep fear.

Taylor struggles with not being able to sleep at night. Every time she goes to bed, fear creeps in and steals her joy, and her imagination is wasted thinking about dark, scary things. Needless to say, fear overcomes Taylor.

One night, while babysitting Taylor for a weekend while her parents went out of town, I went to check on her to see if she had fallen asleep. Creaking the door open, I heard her gasp in relief because someone had come to be with her. In tears, she described the overwhelming wave of fear she was experiencing.

Shortly after, we talked through how big God is. I got the front-row seat to watch her fear diminish as she spoke out loud the truth that He is bigger than her fear and wants to meet her in her scary and unsettling moments. Active trust meant turning to Jesus in prayer. In that moment, Taylor remembered the prayer that her dad prays with her every night before she goes to bed, and she began to pray it out loud.

“I pray you would send guardian angels to guard the windows and doors, and I pray, Holy Spirit, that you will guard my heart and mind. In Jesus, amen.”

**As she began praying, I became aware that Taylor's parents not only profess trust in Jesus but also show it to their daughter on a nightly basis.** They don't just tell her what to do when she is fearful; they actually do it with her. While it would be comfortable simply to give their daughter the right answers, there is something far more profound in watching those answers become a reality—a reality that fights fears.

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and  
courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged,  
for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.  
(Joshua 1:9)

Parents, I know you feel pressure to make your kids courageous, to make them strong, to shake the fear out of them so that they can live fully. But let me remind you, that's not your job. Your job is to model an active trust in God, to walk with Him so closely in your own fear that you will know precisely where to point your kids as they face their own fears. God doesn't call you to fix your kids. He calls you to spend time with them, pray with them, and entrust them and their struggles to the all-powerful God. **As your middle schoolers run to you amidst their fears, may you listen intentionally, come alongside them, and run toward God together. God is trustworthy.**

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by Haley Downey

*Haley is the Associate Director of Junior High Ministry at Grace Fellowship in Costa Mesa, CA. She is passionate about building community and adventuring alongside junior high students as they discover who God is and the gifts they've been given to make His name great.*

 Instagram @haleydowney



# FEAR NOT

**Sometimes parenting high schoolers feels like navigating uncharted waters: uncomfortable and scary!** I remember when my oldest daughter (now in college) wanted to play select volleyball; I had no earthly idea how to go about it. Where do we go? Whom do we trust? I was really out of my comfort zone, but after much trial and error and many phone calls and prayers, we are now seasoned veterans in the area of volleyball tryouts—and those coming behind us even follow our lead. Maybe you are struggling with a house full of rowdy high school boys, wondering how to tame them, or perhaps darker storms are brewing and stirring up your fear. Let me encourage you: You are highly qualified to navigate these waters, even if you don't feel like it, so do not be afraid!

## GOD EQUIPS YOU

Sometimes when I am struggling to parent, I become fearful, thinking, “I don't know what to do here!” But then I stop. “Wait just a minute,” I tell myself. “I have been here before, and I know what to do!” I have spent a lifetime being equipped by my heavenly Father for this very moment! I have experienced (and survived!) all that my teens are facing, from lunchroom drama and peer pressure to hormones and heartbreak, and my unique set of life experiences makes me wise and insightful. God assures us in His Word multiple times that He has equipped us with every good thing for doing His will and leading a godly life. (Hebrews 13:21; 2 Peter 1:3)

Examine your arsenal: What worked for you growing up and what didn't? What did you want in your time of need? A listening ear, some space? Maybe some firm boundaries, counseling, or prayer? Your circumstances may have been a bit different, but chances are the solutions are similar. You have the answers your child needs, and you are who they need. You are enough!

## GOD ENCOURAGES YOU

In Hebrews 11 we read about brave people who, through faith, conquered kingdoms, quenched the fury of flames, and were returned from the dead. We are encouraged to run the race set before us with perseverance, keeping those who've gone bravely before us as our example and hope. I bet you know a few “heroes of faith” who've gone before you, be it your own spouse, parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, friends, or teachers. Their influence in your life gives you access to even more parenting resources.

## GOD EMPOWERS YOU

On top of this deep, rich life experience you possess, the God of the universe is with you and loves you (and your children) more than you can imagine! The Bible reminds us that we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us, that He promises to never leave us nor forsake us, and that when God is with us, no one can stand against us. What good news! Parenting is difficult, and uncomfortable at times, but we are not left to navigate alone. He has given us everything we need.

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by Tami Overhauser

*Tami is a native of Southern California who now lives in Austin, TX, with her husband, Chad, and four children. Tami writes and blogs about tough parenting and building strong families. Her passion is helping others to parent well and encouraging them in their journeys. She believes we are stronger together. When she is not writing, she can be found hanging out in her kitchen with friends and family.*

 Blog [tamioverhauser.com](http://tamioverhauser.com)



## In the Face of Fear

Michelle Lynn Senters

**I've known fear—the kind of fear that loosens joints and weakens muscles, leaving me in an inconsolable heap on the floor.** I've walked the fear of my father leaving me at the age of 12, death threats from an unknown stalker, my own divorce, and single parenting. I've known a fear that brought out the protective momma within me, and made me willing to fight to the death for my children. I've watched in fear as a loved one succumbed to a life of drug and alcohol addiction, and I've crouched in fear during the onslaught of cruel words spoken over me.

I've also known the deceptively small but pervasive fears that threaten to overtake one's life: fear of failure, meeting new people, illness and injury and death, losing my child, being alone, confrontation, a spider, and checking my bank account balance. I have lived a life marked by fear, but more importantly, I have learned to live courageously within the peaceful arms of my Savior.

Fear, in and of itself, is not a harmful emotion. It is a God-given safety mechanism—an instinctual brain function designed to alert the body to danger and trigger a survival response.

Uncontrolled or prolonged fear, however, can have debilitating physical and emotional consequences, including depression, anxiety disorders, sleep deprivation, eating and digestion issues, increased blood pressure, heart problems, headaches, and a decrease in cognitive functioning. Fear at this level affects not only our ability to engage in life but our ability to believe in God as a loving protector and provider. So what should we do when we are afraid?

The apostle Paul teaches us how to cast aside our fear and anxiety in exchange for God's peace:

DO NOT BE ANXIOUS ABOUT ANYTHING, BUT IN EVERY SITUATION, BY PRAYER AND PETITION, WITH THANKSGIVING, PRESENT YOUR REQUESTS TO GOD. AND THE PEACE OF GOD, WHICH TRANSCENDS ALL UNDERSTANDING, WILL GUARD YOUR HEARTS AND YOUR MINDS IN CHRIST JESUS.  
(PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7)

1. **“Do not be anxious about anything ...”** The word *anxious* derives from the Greek word *merimnaó*, which means to be divided, distracted, or to go to pieces. How often do we “go to pieces” under the stress and weight of fear? Take heart. The enduring and all-encompassing love of God allows us to approach His throne with confidence to cast our burdens on Him.

**Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. (1 Peter 5:7)**

We are not instructed to lay our anxiety down gently before the Lord. Rather, we are told to cast our anxiety on Him. The Hebrew and Greek wording for *cast* means to throw, fling, or hurl. To cast our burdens on the Lord requires purposeful and powerful movement. We cast our worry on God—our regrets and shame, our what ifs and should haves, our fears and anxiety— *because He cares for us*.

2. **“... in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.”** After we cast our anxiety on God, we transform our worry into a deeply personal request and submit it to God with a heart of thanks.
3. **“And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”** God does not promise to answer our prayers exactly as we requested, nor does He guarantee us freedom from hardship. Rather, He gives us a peace that transcends all understanding. In exchange for our anxiety, He offers a peace found in Jesus. Taken from the Greek word *eiréné*, peace means to join or tie together in a whole. In essence, when fear pulls us to pieces (anxiety—*merimnaó*), Jesus gives us inner wholeness by mending what was once broken (peace—*eiréné*).

This unmistakable peace of Jesus serves as a nourishing and healing balm against this hurting world, allowing us to endure and even thrive under hardship. It enables us to weep with hope, suffer with love, and die with joy. Most importantly, His peace enables us to lay aside all that hinders so that we may move forward in strength, courage, and the knowledge that our loving God is very near.

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*Michelle Lynn Senters has a message for women, one forged in her own journey and deepened through her years of ministry to single mothers: “You are not alone.” She is the Founder and Director of SEEN, a ministry designed to demonstrate the lavish love of Christ to single mothers. Michelle is a speaker at women’s events, Bible studies, and writers’ conferences. She is the author of The Unseen Companion: God with the Single Mother. Michelle lives in Colorado Springs with her husband. She has three beautiful daughters and two grandchildren. Learn more at [www.michellelynnenters.com](http://www.michellelynnenters.com).*



## Living Boldly

Galal Fajardo

**There was a brief time in my life when anxiety and panic ruled my life.** After working with an incredible therapist, I thought my battle with anxiety was basically over—until I became a dad.

You see, I discovered about the time my son was three years old that traits such as anxiety can be passed to other generations. Talk about a guilt trip! “I gave my son anxiety,” I thought.

My son, Marco, struggled to enjoy soccer because we were sitting too far away from him. Irrational fears had gripped his young mind; he couldn’t just kick a soccer ball around with other five-year-olds.

Had my wife and I failed as parents? Did we cause this because we were too hard on him? It’s easy to fall into these mind traps when you watch your child struggle. We’re all forced to face challenges on a regular basis. We can never avoid challenges, but we can learn to improve how we react.

**That’s a lot to try to live up to as a dad.** I have learned that with each challenge my family faces, it opens an opportunity to teach my children.

**I don't want my children to live inside a comfortable "bubble." I want my children to learn to be bold instead of seeking security.** I want them to break the mold of society so they do not become complacent, because complacency kills.

Be complacent with your wife for a couple of months and see what happens to the passion and love in your marriage. Be complacent with your health for a few months and see what it does to your blood pressure and cholesterol. I believe wholeheartedly that complacency and comfort is the opposite of how God has called us to live.

We embraced the challenge of Marco's anxiety and sought help for our boy to help him increase his courage to play sports, go to sleepovers, and get dropped off at school without being scared.

Fear. It will never go away while we walk in this life. Courage isn't the absence of fear; it's knowing that you're scared and doing it anyway.

What are your kids afraid of? What are YOU afraid of?

Fear pushed me to my knees to depend on God. As a dad, I often feel like I need to be unafraid and strong in front of my kids. Fear forced me to become vulnerable and explain, "Daddy sometimes gets scared, but I pray and ask God to give me courage even when I'm afraid." After this, fear no longer held power over me; instead I chose to embrace the fear, rely more on God, and move forward.

**I encourage you to read the Family Time Verse over your family:** "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:9).

Dads, I challenge you to join me in modeling courage to our sons and daughters every single day.

- How can we model the fact that God wants us to step out in faith?
- How can we become role models of courage and living outside of our comfort zones?
- What can we do to teach our boys and girls that complacency kills and that we must not seek comfort?

I believe with all of my heart that God will bless you for being courageous. As much as I hate that my son has struggled with anxiety, my wife and I are better parents because of it.

Marco improved dramatically and began to enjoy baseball, school, and sleepovers like a boy his age should. I've improved as a dad because I know young eyes are taking my cues on how to tackle challenges in life.

**Dads, join me in living boldly and courageously each day in all aspects of our lives so that we may model a radical life of stepping out in faith in Jesus.**

"COURAGE ISN'T THE ABSENCE OF FEAR; IT'S KNOWING THAT YOU'RE SCARED AND DOING IT ANYWAY."

*Galel is a performance coach who works with entrepreneurs to help them get past psychological barriers so they can live the lives they desire. You can learn more about his practice by listening to his podcast, Improve Daily at [ImproveDaily.com](http://ImproveDaily.com).*



# COMFORTABLE IN THE LONELY

**No one ever said it'd be easy.** In fact, I clearly remember someone advising me against it. "Don't marry someone who is committed to the military. He won't be around much and you'll be lonely." Unfortunately, there is some truth to that. I am lonely, and he isn't around as much as I'd like. However, I wouldn't have our marriage any other way.

My husband is one of the kindest people you'll ever meet. He has an uncanny ability to make a true friend everywhere he goes. He leaves people looking forward to their next time together. Sometimes it's hard being married to a guy like that. I usually find myself on the receiving end of friends truly missing him while he's away on assignment. There's nothing I can do to help them get their friend back.

It's difficult not to respond out of my flesh: "You miss your friend? Well, I miss my husband!" How is that fair? It's not, but as I mentioned, no one ever said it would be easy.

When Korban is out of the country for months at a time, it's up to me to take out the trash, mow the lawn, and change the air filters in our home. (Okay, you caught me ... I outsource the lawn part.) Those tasks are small, but over time they carry a big weight. They serve as a constant reminder that I am doing a task that was his. Countdown: T-minus 154 days ... I can do this, right?

The answer is no. I cannot do this alone. Cue the Holy Spirit; cue my heavenly Father and my Lord, Jesus Christ.

**To say being a military spouse is uncomfortable is an understatement.** However, there are times when I can make myself believe I am quite comfortable in his absence, comfortable in relying on my own grit and perseverance to push through the day. That only lasts for so long before I have to face reality and understand that I am physically alone day in and day

out. The easy thing to do in a situation like this is to find a rhythm and a routine in being alone. The challenging thing, the uncomfortable thing, is to face that I am alone and surrender to the Holy Spirit as He guides me through this time. Not only is that the most challenging decision, it's the most transforming decision. When I find myself in uncertainty or feeling completely abandoned, I have to stop and ask myself, "What do I know to be true about God?" I know that He is a loving, caring, and strong Father. He knows the plans He has for me, plans to prosper me and not to harm me, plans to give me hope and a future (Jeremiah 29:11 paraphrase). I have to make the conscious choice to believe the words I recite on a daily basis. I pray for faith in His promises, faith that I use to trust the truth about my Father.

**So, we have to stop and ask ourselves: "What do we know to be true about our heavenly Father?"** What we actually believe about Him determines the amount of faith we actually have in Him. I have faith that He will continually show up for me. He may not be the one taking out the trash for me on Tuesday mornings, but He is definitely the one who hears my cries, listens to my frustrations, and celebrates my triumphs.

It's much easier to grit my teeth and push forward using my own set of muscles. However, I find intimacy with my heavenly Father when I slow down and exercise my faith muscles. He has plans for me and plans for my marriage. I choose to trust Him in these trials and be glad for them as God uses each and every deployment to do a mighty work in my marriage.

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by Allison Rosenbach

*Allison, a native of the Texas Panhandle, is currently experiencing the excitement of what it means to be a military spouse in Colorado Springs, CO. She and her husband, Korban, enjoy spending time together and spoiling their four-legged son, Yogi. Allison serves New Life Church as the Events Coordinator, can deliver a great yoga class, and has a strong appreciation for coffee.*

# MARRIAGE TAKES COURAGE

**If I'm honest, marriage isn't what I expected.** Now don't get me wrong, there is a lot about it I love, but it is much more challenging than I ever imagined. My husband, Greg, and I became "stuck" pretty fast when it came to working through our differences and handling conflict (just like our premarital assessment had predicted and we never in a million years thought could possibly be accurate). And, after 13 months of marriage, we learned that we were expecting our first child.

Knowing that our marriage relationship was far from being where we desired it to be, we realized our wake-up call had come. We knew it was time to grow up and get some help if we were going to be the type of parents we had always dreamt of being. We knew things had to change—we had to learn how to handle communication and conflict in a more civil manner. It meant being vulnerable and seeking out the help of a marriage counselor and a mentor couple to walk through these roadblocks with us. Our marriage was about to change and so were we.

**As the months passed (and my belly continued to grow), we met weekly with our counselor.** We devoured anything we could find on marriage. Slowly, we began to change individually, and we began to see a very slow and steady difference in our marriage. Before we knew it, the day came, and I called Greg from the hospital, where I'd just finished my last shift as a labor and delivery nurse, to let him know that I was feeling some contractions. A mere 48 hours later, we sat in the same hospital holding our beautiful baby girl. The minute I held her, I knew I wanted to provide the very best for her. And that included loving her daddy and continuing to strengthen our marriage relationship.

As new parents to our little Taylor (who is now 23 years old and married), we experienced many types of changes—sleepless nights, managing the new baby schedule, getting through graduate school—but one of the greatest changes came in our marriage. We realized that we had successfully navigated our first of many difficult chapters in our story as husband and wife. In fact, we began to see that our little family was "pretty good together," and as we now approach our 25th wedding anniversary, we love to help other couples walk through the peaks and valleys of their marriages.

**If you are currently in a challenging season of your marriage like we were early on, here are a few courageous things you can do:**

1. Recognize that you will go through different seasons in your marriage—the mountaintop experiences as well as the valleys. Even through the difficult seasons, there is always something to learn about yourself, your spouse, and your marriage.
2. Don't go at it alone! Seek the help of a licensed professional counselor and/or a mentor couple. Seek out friends who will stand with you during challenging times and will encourage you toward your marriage—not away from it. You can call 1-800-A-FAMILY to get a referral for a counselor in your area.
3. Show up in your marriage as a healthy individual. Two healthy individuals make up a healthy marriage. This means that you must make sure you are well cared for emotionally, physically, spiritually, and intellectually. This includes getting enough sleep, eating well, learning to manage your emotions, and making sure you are continuing to grow spiritually and intellectually.
4. Make sure to look back and reminisce! Looking back and remembering what your story entails can have a powerful, positive influence on your marriage. It's amazing to recognize that "you're pretty good together!"

**After working through several of the more difficult seasons, I can promise you one thing—being courageous and fighting for your marriage and family is worth it. Keep your eyes open for the blessing on the other side.**

by Erin Smalley

*Erin holds a masters degree in clinical psychology and is a former labor and delivery nurse. She works alongside her husband, Dr. Greg Smalley, at Focus on the Family in Colorado Springs, CO, and together they speak at marriage enrichment events around the world. She is an author, speaker, and therapist at Mayfield Counseling. She is both a biological mom and an adoptive mom of three daughters and one son.*

**BE STRONG AND COURAGEOUS. DO NOT BE AFRAID; DO NOT BE DISCOURAGED, FOR THE LORD YOUR GOD WILL BE WITH YOU WHEREVER YOU GO. (JOSHUA 1:9)**



# ESSENTIAL TO THE GOSPEL

Families are enamored by FIRSTS! We record a child's first tooth, smile, word, and haircut. As the child gets older, we record his first day of school, car, job, date, and sometimes even his first kiss.

However, what most will not find in their baby books is any record of a child's "lasts."

I know there was the LAST time I gave my daughter a bath or I tucked my son into bed and read him his favorite story, but I didn't document it or celebrate it, because at the time I didn't realize it would be the last.

We have a brief window of time to invest in our children and influence them in ways that will impact their entire lives. Someone once said that when you are raising children, "The days are long, but the years are short."

## GRANDPARENTS HAVE A PERSPECTIVE ON TIME THAT PARENTS DO NOT.

**Ephesians 5:15-17** reminds us to "redeem the time." To redeem means to "purchase or buy back," and the word time here is the type of time that is "seasonably ripe." In other words, we are cautioned to purchase every opportune moment that is ripe for the picking in our kids' and grandkids' lives.

Grandparents have the perspective that can warn parents to either SPEND their days or INVEST their hours in what matters most.

## GRANDPARENTS CREATE A LASTING PARADIGM FOR GENERATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP.

Pastor Josh Mulvihill at Grace Church in Eden Prairie, MN, suggests that generational discipleship is overlooked because the church continues to define the family unit as a parent and child. Until the body of Christ redefines family to include extended family, grandparents will waffle and future generations will suffer.

The church can't afford to have warm and fuzzy events just to say they are doing something to help

grandparents to influence younger generations. It is vital for grandparents to step outside what is comfortable and help organize intentional events that include all generations.

## EVERY GENERATION IS NEEDED IN FAITH FORMATION.

The current generation of children is in need of spiritual grandparents more than ever before because we have lost our "clan-ness" or "tribe-ness," which used to be normal.

It's upon every generation to contextualize the gospel for the next generation!

**Psalm 71:17-18** says, "O God, you have helped me from my earliest childhood ... now that I am old and gray, don't forsake me. Give me time to tell this new generation ... about all your mighty miracles" (TLB).

## GRANDPARENTS ARE MISSIONARIES TO A GROUP OF PEOPLE AND CULTURE THAT IS NOT THEIR OWN.

It is important for grandparents to learn a new language, adapt to new cultural habits, and understand rites of passages in order to influence and mentor the younger generations with a vibrant faith.

Cavin Harper, author of *Courageous Grandparenting*, says, "We need to train grandparents for battle so this generation will not be lost on our watch."

It's never too late to step out of your comfort zone and begin to spiritually grandparent your grandchildren—the rewards will be beyond measure!

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*by Michelle Anthony*

*Michelle is the Executive Pastor of Family Ministries at New Life Church. Michelle has graduate degrees in Christian education, theology, and leadership, and more than twenty-five years of church ministry experience as a children's and family pastor. She lives in Colorado Springs and loves a good book and a cup of coffee.*



# 10 ENVIRONMENTS

The order of the 10 Environments listed coincides with the monthly distribution of this resource.

# 1

*“God has entrusted me with the things and people He created around me.”*

## RESPONSIBILITY

This environment captures the ability to take ownership for one’s life, gifts, and resources before God. A child must be challenged to take responsibility for his or her brothers and sisters in Christ, as well as for those who are spiritually lost. Our hope is that the Holy Spirit will use this environment to allow each child to understand that God has entrusted His world to us.

# 2

*“God transforms me when I step out in faith.”*

## OUT OF THE COMFORT ZONE

As children and students are challenged to step out of their comfort zone from an early age, they learn to experience a dependence on the Holy Spirit to equip and strengthen them beyond their natural abilities and desires. We believe this environment will cultivate a generation that, instead of seeking comfort, seeks a radical life of faith in Christ.

# 3

*“Asks the question, ‘What needs to be done?’”*

## SERVING

This posture of the heart asks the question, “What needs to be done?” It allows the Holy Spirit to cultivate a sensitivity to others and focuses on a cause bigger than one individual life. It helps fulfill the mandate that as Christ-followers we are to view our lives as living sacrifices that we generously give away!

# 4

*“God fills me with His love so I can give it away.”*

## LOVE & RESPECT

Without love, our faith becomes futile. This environment recognizes that children need an environment of love and respect in order to be free to both receive and give God’s grace. Innate to this environment is the value that children are respected because they embody the image of God. We must speak to them, not at them, and we must commit to an environment where love and acceptance are never withheld due to one’s behavior.

# 5

*“God has a big story, and I can be a part of it!”*

## STORYTELLING

The power of The Big God Story impacts our lives by giving us an accurate and awe-inspiring perspective into how God has been moving throughout history. It is the story of redemption, salvation, and hope and tells how I have been grafted into it by grace. It further compels us to see how God is using every person’s life and is creating a unique story that deserves to be told for God’s glory.

# 6

*"God knows me, and I can know Him."*

## KNOWING

Nothing could be more important than knowing and being known by God. We live in a world that denies absolute truth, and yet God's Word offers just that. As we create an environment that upholds and displays God's truth, we give children a foundation based on knowing God, knowing His Word, and a relationship with Him through Christ. God is holy, mighty, and awesome, and yet He has chosen to make Himself known to us!

# 7

*"I belong to God, and He loves me!"*

## IDENTITY

This environment highlights who we are in Christ. According to Ephesians 1, we have been chosen, adopted, redeemed, sealed, and given an inheritance in Christ ... all of which we did nothing to earn. This conviction allows children to stand firm against the destructive counter-identities the world will offer.

# 8

*"God's family cares for each other and worships God together."*

## FAITH COMMUNITY

God designed us to live in community and to experience Him in ways that can only happen in proximity to one another. The faith community serves to create an environment to equip and disciple parents, to celebrate God's faithfulness, and to bring a richness of worship through tradition and rituals, which offer children an identity. Our love for each other reflects the love we have received from God.

# 9

*"When I get off track, God offers me a path of healing."*

## COURSE CORRECTION

This environment flows out of Hebrews 12:11-13 and is the direct opposite of punishment. Instead, biblical discipline for a child encompasses a season of pain, the building up in love, and a vision of a corrected path for the individual with the purpose of healing at its core.

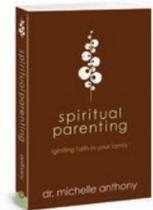
*IT IS OUR PRAYER THAT HOMES AND CHURCHES WOULD CREATE THESE ENVIRONMENTS FOR CHILDREN TO LIVE IN SO THEIR FAITH WILL GROW IN A COMMUNITY OF CONSISTENCY, COMMON LANGUAGE, AND PRACTICE. TO LEARN MORE ABOUT HOW THESE ENVIRONMENTS CAN IGNITE A TRANSFORMING FAITH IN YOUR FAMILY, WE SUGGEST YOU READ:*

# 10

*"I see Christ in others, and they can see Him in me."*

## MODELING

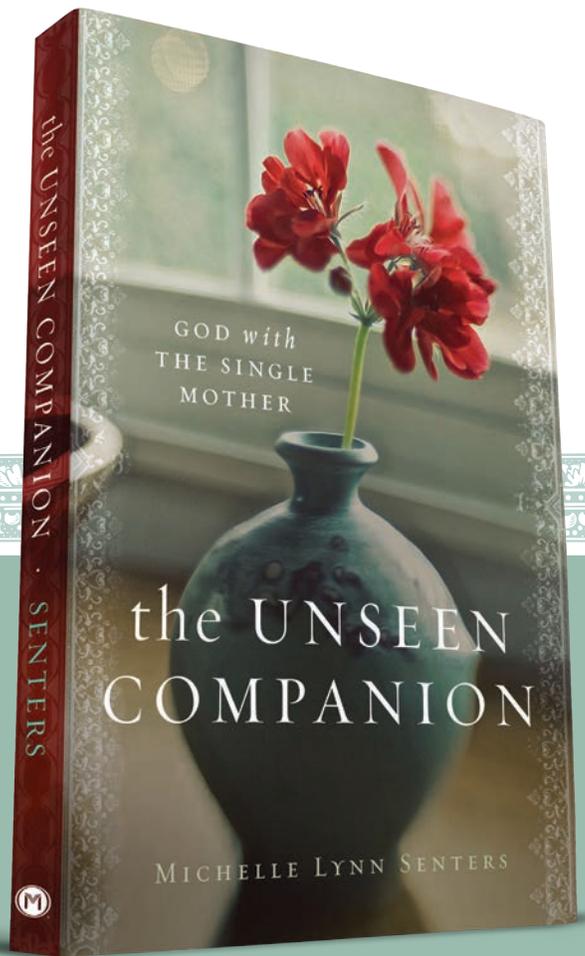
Biblical content needs a practical living expression in order for it to be spiritually impacting. This environment serves as a hands-on example of what it means for children to put their faith into action. Modeling puts flesh on faith and reminds us that others are watching to see if we live what we believe.



*SPIRITUAL PARENTING:  
An Awakening for Today's Families*

*BY MICHELLE ANTHONY*

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## HOPE FOR SINGLE MOMS

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You may feel lonely, abandoned, overwhelmed, and ill-equipped in your life as a single mother, but you are not alone on this journey. God is *with* you, and if you are willing, He will help you build a strong home and legacy for your family.

Find the encouragement you long to hear: *You can do this, God is with you, and He will lead your family in strength.*

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