



Whether it's a family pillow fight, a lip-sync competition, or Toilet Paper Olympics, give your family the gift of lifelong memories while having fun, connecting spiritually, and speaking each other's love languages. Enjoy all the benefits of the quality time you dreamed of without all the pressure of advanced planning.

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## THANK-YOU CARDS



**Single out the people who have made a difference  
in your lives with heartfelt notes of gratitude.**

1

### GETTING READY

One of the best ways to encourage the habit of writing thank-you cards is to buy your kids personalized stationery. You can order cards and envelopes with your kids' names embossed on them, in their favorite colors, or with a background or logo that features something they like.

### ADVENTURE TIME

Encourage each of your family members to think of someone in his or her life who deserves a thank you—not necessarily for a specific gift or act of kindness, but for always being a positive presence. Spend some time as a family writing cards to the people you choose.

Encourage your family members to write about specific things their person has done and what it meant to them. For example, if the person made it a point to attend recitals and games, your family member might talk about what it meant to see him or her in the crowd. If your family members have trouble thinking of specific things to write about, brainstorm some ideas as a family that they can use.



## THAT REMINDS ME

List some of the different ways to say thank you in foreign languages. In Spanish, it's "Gracias." In French, it's "Merci." In Italian, it's "Grazie."

In Japanese, it's "Arigato" (ありがとう). In German, it's "Danke sehr." In Chinese, it's "do jeh" (多謝).

Talk about other ways people say thank you. In American Sign Language, you put the fingers of your open hand to your mouth, with your palm facing inward, and then extend them away from your mouth. In the theater, actors take a bow. In sports, athletes tap their chests. Some people simply offer a slight head nod.

Talk about the difference between offering a polite thank you and expressing heartfelt gratitude. A person with good manners may say thank you dozens of times a day. It's a nice thing to do, but it's not necessarily meaningful. A heartfelt expression of gratitude, on the other hand, can make a difference in a person's life. Sometimes kind people need to hear about the impact their kindness has had.



## FAMILY DEVOTIONS

Have someone read Philippians 1:3–5 (“I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now”). Explain that the apostle Paul used these words to greet the church in Philippi, which had faithfully supported his ministry.

Ask, *How does this passage apply to the person you wrote your thank-you card to?* Share your own thoughts first. Talk a little about the person to whom you’re writing your thank-you card. What is it that you thank God for when you think of that person? What is it about the person that brings you joy?

Ask, *How can you become this type of person in someone else’s life?* If no one else mentions it, suggest that it requires an investment of yourself. You do it by giving your time, attention, and resources in order to make the person’s life better.



### LANGUAGE OF THE DAY

This adventure is practically custom-made for someone whose primary love language is Words of Affirmation. If one of your family members fits that bill, write that person a heartfelt thank-you note for the things they do around the house, for the joy they bring to your life, and for anything else you can think of. The more specific you are in your gratitude and praise, the more weight your words will carry.



## ALL THINGS NERF



2

Have some fun with the softest toys in your house.

### GETTING READY

All you need for this quick adventure is a variety of Nerf® products and safety goggles for everyone. If your own Nerf collection isn't enough to sustain an hour-long adventure, see if you can borrow some from your friends and neighbors.

### ADVENTURE TIME

Depending on what you have in your Nerf collection, there are any number of games and challenges you can do.

If you have a Nerf hoop and ball, play a game of “Pig” or “Horse.” Make sure you incorporate your surroundings by bouncing shots off the walls, ceiling, and furniture.

If you have a Nerf football, set up a throwing-skills challenge. At one station, a contestant may have to knock over a stack of aluminum cans. At another station, he or she may have to throw the ball through a tire swing or hula hoop.

If you have two small Nerf guns, holsters, and ammo (plus two safety goggles), try reenacting pistol duels or gunfights from the Old West. Duelists may face each other, draw and fire when someone says, “Go,” or they may stand back to back, take five steps and then turn and fire.

If you have a large arsenal of Nerf weapons, you may want to set up a battle zone in your basement or backyard and declare an all-out Nerf family war.

If you prefer a less confrontational use of your Nerf guns, set up a shooting range, using a variety of creative targets. For example, you might set up a domino chain on a table and then see who can shoot the first domino to trigger the chain reaction.



### THAT REMINDS ME

Say something like this: *One of the reasons Nerf stuff is so fun to play with is that it doesn't hurt when it hits you. Some people say the same is true for words. They quote the old saying, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never harm me." Do you believe that's true?* You may want to break the ice here with an example from your own life when words *did* hurt you. Encourage the rest of your family members to share similar experiences.

Talk about how you reacted to the harmful words. Did you try to hurt the person who hurt you? Did you confront the person and tell him or her how you felt? Did you tell someone else, perhaps a teacher or parent? Did you get emotional in

front of the person? Or did you just ignore it and pretend that it didn't bother you? If you had it to do over again, how would you react? Encourage your family members to talk about their reactions as well. If they had it to do over again, would they react differently?

Talk about the lasting effects the person's words had on you. If no one else mentions it, point out that harmful words are a form of bullying, especially if they continue over time. And bullying can cause people to become fearful or depressed or to lose confidence in themselves.

## FAMILY DEVOTIONS

Have someone read 2 Timothy 1:7 (“For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline”). Explain that when a person accepts Christ as



Savior, God's Holy Spirit enters that person's life and changes it forever. Ask, *What causes people to be timid?* If no one else mentions

it, suggest that fear and a lack of confidence can cause someone to be timid—emotions that are brought on by negative experiences with others.

Have someone read Deuteronomy 31:6 (“Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you”). Ask, *How does God's presence keep us from being scared—or negatively affected by others?* Encourage each of your family members to offer a response.



## LANGUAGE OF THE DAY

If Receiving Gifts is the primary love language of a Nerf-loving member of your family, present him or her with a small Nerf gun or a Nerf basketball hoop as a memento of this adventure.





3

This perennial kids' favorite can be turned into an adventure for all ages with just a few tweaks.

## GETTING READY

How do you prepare for a game of hide-and-seek? You scout ideal locations for the game ahead of time. Your goal is to find an area that's relatively confined so that the seeking doesn't take forever. On the other hand, you want a place that offers plenty of hiding places for people big and small. The perimeter of an empty school building could work, as could a neighborhood park or a small forest preserve.

## ADVENTURE TIME

You probably don't need a lot of instructions on how to play hide-and-seek. One player ("It") gives

everyone else time to hide and then tries to find them. After everyone is found, another player becomes “It” and everyone else hides again.

What you might want to consider, especially if your kids are older, are variations on the game to make it more challenging, fun, or interesting. For example, you might play immediately after a snowfall. Your family members will have to figure out how to hide without leaving tracks in the snow.

Another option is to play in the dark. Let the person who is “It” use a high-beam flashlight when he or she is seeking.

You can also switch things up and play a few rounds in which

- ▶ one person hides and everyone else seeks. This variation is called Sardines. (Hopefully the first hider does not hide somewhere too cramped.)
- ▶ everyone tries to find the *worst* possible hiding place.
- ▶ everyone must hide within twenty yards of one another.
- ▶ once the seeker finds a hider, that hider accompanies the seeker in their search for people. If the hider spots another hider before the seeker does, the caught hider and hider wave at each other, which releases the caught hider and allows them to hide again. This version puts a lot of pressure on the seeker.

If you have a young player who has difficulty seeking, add a “Marco Polo” twist to the game. Every time the young seeker shouts “Marco!” the other players must call out “Polo!” from their hiding places.



## THAT REMINDS ME

One of the harrowing rites of parenthood is trying to find a lost child. If you have a story about losing track of one of your children, tell it. Talk about the impact it had on you—the panic you felt, the guilt you experienced, or perhaps the nightmares you had afterward. Relive the joy and relief you felt when you found your child. It would be interesting to get your child's perspective on the incident, if he or she remembers it.

Point out that the world is a big place. Sometimes people feel like they're lost and don't know where to go or what to do. Assure your family members that if they ever find themselves in that situation, they always have three places to turn. The first is God, and the other two are your church and your family. Emphasize the importance of supporting and encouraging one another.

## FAMILY DEVOTIONS

Summarize the story of Adam and Eve's temptation in the garden of Eden: how God gave them permission to eat from any tree in the garden except one, how the serpent tempted them to eat the forbidden fruit, and how Adam and Eve gave in to the temptation and sinned.

Ask, *When God came to visit them in the garden after they had sinned, what did Adam and Eve do?* Have someone read the answer in Genesis 3:8 (“they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden”). Help your kids understand that Adam and Eve hid from God because they were ashamed.

Say something like this: *King David, who lived many, many, many centuries after Adam and Eve, did some bad things, too. And*

*he thought about hiding from God as well. But then he realized something very important.*

Read together Psalm 139:1–12. Help your kids understand that no one can hide from God because He sees everything. What’s more, because He created us, He knows everything about us. He knows us better than we know ourselves.

And He loves us—even when we do wrong. It hurts Him, but He still loves us.

Read together the Parable of the Lost Sheep in Luke 15:1–7. Ask, *How does it make you feel to know that God will never give up on you?*

Pray together, praising God for His love and concern for us. Ask His forgiveness for the times when you “go astray.” Ask Him to guide your family in making decisions that honor Him.



### LANGUAGE OF THE DAY

You can make this adventure especially meaningful for someone whose primary love language is Words of Affirmation. When it’s your turn to seek, narrate your search by calling out your kids (and spouse) by their accomplishments.

For example, you might say, “I’m looking for the talented young man who played the beautiful French horn solo at the Christmas concert” or “I’m looking for the unstoppable young woman who scored two goals in a playoff game last season.”



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