



the Parent LINK

Children's Ministry Edition



September 2011

Family Ministries

www.gatheraround.org



Turn to God for Comfort

Because this month marks the 10th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, we'll be bombarded with recaps of the tragedy. Even if your children weren't born yet in 2001, they'll learn about this event and ask tough questions about it. This somber date can be an opportunity to talk to kids about life's challenges and stresses—and how God shepherds us through them.

Whether children are confronted by the illness or death of a loved one, school bullies, parental job loss, or divorce, these stressors all bring uncertainty and anxiety. Take time to reassure children of your constant love for them and of God's promise to never leave us. Be attentive, accepting, affirming, and reliable. As much as possible, maintain the same schedules and rules during crises because structure and boundaries help children feel safe. When changes occur, let children know what to expect. Also encourage your kids to talk openly about their feelings and fears. Most importantly, pray that God will help you all grow closer to him, no matter what obstacles you face.

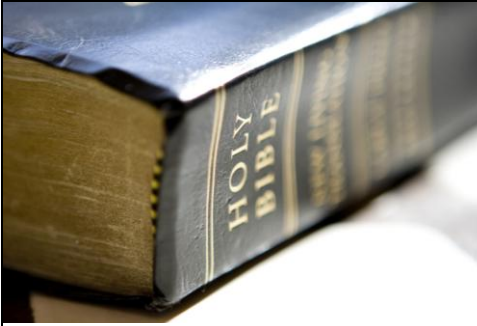
POWERSOURCE

ASK GOD:

1. To guard your family members and their faith during difficult times.
2. To walk with you and make his love real to you when you're confronted by crisis.
3. To help you overcome worry and place your trust in God.

INSIGHTS

- About 25% of young people experience a serious traumatic event by age 16. Children are more vulnerable to trauma because of their age, size, and dependence. *(nctsn.org)*
- About one in 50 U.S. children is homeless.
- Each year, about 3.3 million children are exposed to domestic violence. *(various Internet sources)*



“And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God’s love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God’s love.” (Romans 8:38)

No matter what we face, God is our constant companion, strength, and support. Lean on him always.

TEACHABLE MOMENTS

1. Create a “Smile File”—

Stress is exhausting and can drain the joy out of life. Combat that by creating a file or box where family members can put pictures or notes about God’s many blessings. Look through it whenever your family feels overwhelmed or discouraged.

2. Focus on the Cross—Make this yummy snack as a reminder that Jesus defeated sin and death. Pinch together one and a half heat-and-serve breadsticks to form a cross. Sprinkle each cross with cinnamon and sugar. Grease a cookie sheet and bake the crosses for 10 minutes.

3. Lick Life’s Problems—When life gets crazy, it’s more important than ever to spend one-on-one time with each of your children. Venture out on inexpensive trips (long walks, ice cream outings) so kids feel special and can share their thoughts and feelings.



Have a heart-to-heart chat with your children about life’s struggles. Begin by asking these questions:

1. Why do you think everyone faces tough times? What are some lessons or positive things that you’ve seen come out of them?
2. What are some ways God helps us when we’re sad, lonely, or hurting?
3. How can we, as a family, remind one another to stay full of joy, hope, and faith—even when life is hard?

FAMILY EXPERIENCE

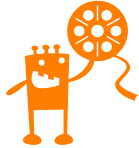
Try these activities to show children that Jesus is our Comforter and Healer during life’s storms and hurts.

• **Comforter Collage—**This activity works well for younger children. Have them wrap themselves up in comforters and blankets. Say: “Jesus was sad when people were hurting or when they died. Jesus said if we’re sad, he’ll comfort us, or help us feel better. Just like this blanket, he helps us feel warm and safe.” Set out a large sheet of butcher paper and supplies such as yarn, cotton balls, bandages, and markers. Brainstorm some of your favorite things or people who help you feel better when you’re sad. Then make your own family “comforter” on the paper. Close by reading aloud Matthew 5:4.



• **A Time to Dance—**Take turns reading aloud the verses in Ecclesiastes 3:1-8. Share some of the “times” your family has laughed, cried, celebrated, and grieved together. Ask: “How can our faith in Jesus help us get through the difficult times in life? How can our faith in Jesus help us be a comfort to other people who are suffering?”

Pass around a piece of burlap and let everyone touch it. Say: “When people in the Old Testament grieved, they wore sackcloth, which feels similar to this burlap. It reminded them of their sorrow and sadness.” Read aloud Psalm 30:10-12. Say: “God promises to turn our tears into happiness or ‘joyful dancing.’ Let’s dance together now, to celebrate that grief is only temporary.” Then play praise music and dance ‘til you drop!



MEDIA MADNESS



MOVIES

Movie:
Dolphin Tale
3D

Genre: Drama

Rating: To be determined



Cast: Morgan Freeman, Ashley Judd, Harry Connick Jr.

Synopsis: In this film, inspired by a true story, a boy befriends Winter, a dolphin who lost its tail in a crab trap as a baby. The boy encourages efforts to save the animal through use of a prosthetic limb. Winter, who plays herself in the film, has become an inspiration for people with disabilities.

Our Take: This heartwarming movie conveys the message that challenges can be overcome. It also shows that children can work to accomplish great things.

MUSIC

Artist:
Selena Gomez

Album:
When the Sun Goes Down



Artist Info: Gomez, star of *Wizards of Waverly Place*, is receiving accolades as one of Disney's most consistent pop hitmakers. She's also been in the news for dating Justin Bieber and for being involved with several philanthropic projects.

Summary: The self-empowerment anthem "Who Says," which has already gone platinum, encourages girls to love themselves just the way they are.

Our Take: Although this album is a bit more mature than the singer's previous work, it's largely clean and is filled with positive messages for preteens.



CULTURE & TRENDS

- Through a federal grant, schools in San Antonio, Texas, are using high-tech cameras to track what students eat—and don't eat—at lunch. Parents then receive customized data about children's eating habits. (*msnbc.com*)
- Kids who want to please their parents tend to do better in school, research shows. Experts advise parents to set and convey high expectations, as well as to be available to teach, guide, and set limits. (*Child Development*)

QUICK STATS

- 36% of parents say volunteering at their children's school should be required. (*Parenting*)
- In the U.S., an estimated 13% of school-age kids experience some form of rejection by their peers. (*LiveScience.com*)



GAMES & SITES

Title	Content	Rating & Platform
<i>GiantHello.com</i>	Kids can connect with friends on this "closed" social-networking site (formerly Facechipz). Games, open to the public, contain ads and questionable content.	Best for kids ages 10-17; requires parental consent for kids under 13
<i>Ben 10 Triple Pack</i>	In these games, based on a popular Cartoon Network show, Ben transforms himself into various aliens and saves the earth. Mild cartoon violence.	E; Nintendo DS
<i>Nancy Drew: The Captive Curse</i>	In this single-player mystery game, kids learn about German culture while solving puzzles and investigating a mysterious creature.	E10+; Windows, Mac

This page is designed to help educate parents and isn't meant to endorse any movie, music, or product. Our prayer is that you'll make informed decisions about what your children watch, listen to, and wear.

