

# GOD HUNT

SARAH COWAN JOHNSON | FAMILYDISCIPLES.HIPLABS.COM

## SUPPLIES

None.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- » Choose a time when distractions are limited. Consider stacking this practice on top of a family routine that already works well, such as dinnertime or bedtime.
- » Explain: We are going on a God Hunt. God can be found in so many places if we learn to look for him.
- » Invite family members to share anywhere they may have seen God today. Maybe it was a moment of joy, peace, love, beauty, or kindness. Or even a challenge made bearable by his love.
- » If anyone struggles to locate God in their day, other family members can "hunt" with them. Rest assured, he was there.
- » Close the time by thanking God that he is always present with us.

A PRACTICE TO RECOGNIZE  
GOD'S PRESENCE IN THE  
MIDST OF EVERYDAY LIFE.

## TIPS FOR

### BABIES

Do the practice yourself alongside your baby, sharing your reflections out loud.

### LITTLES

Help them find God in his creation and in reflections of his character.

### MIDDLES

Help them recognize God's presence even in difficult situations.

### TEENS

Engage their questions about how to sense, or trust, God's presence.

### ADULTS

Cultivate this practice into a regular habit and look for patterns.

# FAMILY BLESSING

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## SUPPLIES

None.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- » Choose a time when distractions are limited. Consider stacking this practice on top of a family routine that already works well, such as dinnertime or bedtime.
- » Each family member gets a few minutes in the "hot seat" while the others take turns blessing them.
- » Blessings are affirmations of what is true and good about someone - **not** about their abilities or achievements. Focus on character traits, fruits of the Spirit, and qualities that are unique to each person.
- » For example: "Ian, I thank God for you and bless you for your creativity, your curiosity, and your big heart." Affirm the ways each family member images God.
- » Close the time by blessing God: Invite everyone to tell God what they love most about Him.

A PRACTICE IN WHICH  
WE SPEAK LIFE OVER  
ONE ANOTHER.

## TIPS FOR

### BABIES

Simply bless those cuties for being good gifts from God.

### LITTLES

Ask: "What do you love most about Mom/Dad/your sister?"

### MIDDLES

Help them identify how God uniquely designed each person - even their siblings.

### TEENS

Allow the experience to be one-sided if needed.

### ADULTS

Look for opportunities to bless those closest to you regularly and spontaneously.

# LENT

# DINNER TABLE

# DISCIPLESHIP

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## SUPPLIES

Daily Lenten prompts + Parent Guide, available at [sarahcowanjohnson.com/lent](http://sarahcowanjohnson.com/lent).

## INSTRUCTIONS

- » Set up the calendar, or simply print the daily prompts, and put them on or near your dinner table.
- » Set the expectation with your family that, during Lent, you are going to carve out a few minutes during dinnertime for some "special God time." Aim for 3-5 minutes.
- » Simply follow the prompts on the cards. Read the Scripture passage, do the practice together, then use the conversation starter. That's it!
- » There are three repeated practices, all explained in the guide: 60 seconds of silence, silent confession of sin, and "looking for manna." Sundays are mini-Easters so the practices are intended to help us rejoice.
- » On Maundy Thursday, consider using the foot washing liturgy included in the guide.

## DAILY LENTEN PRACTICES + DINNERTIME CONVERSATION STARTERS

## TIPS FOR

### BABIES

Do the practices yourself alongside your baby, sharing your reflections out loud.

### LITTLES

If dinnertime is simply too chaotic, choose another time of day that works better.

### MIDDLES

Invite them to read the Scriptures, and to lead the family through the prompts.

### TEENS

Practice conversational hospitality; invite but don't force.

### ADULTS

Allow the simplicity of the prompts to open your heart and mind to God.

# PRAYER WALK

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## SUPPLIES

A destination. Could be a loop around your own neighborhood, your daily walk to school or the bus stop, or somewhere specific you'd like to pray.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- » Explain that this is a different kind of walk. When we go on a prayer walk, we ask God to help us see the world the way he does, and then we talk to him about it.
- » Begin the walk with a quick opening prayer inviting God's presence. Then lead your children through the following steps, keeping in mind the age-specific tips to the right.
- » Explore: What do you notice about your surroundings? What do you see, hear, smell, feel, experience?
- » Pray: How do you want to talk to God about what you are noticing? Is there anything to thank God for? Anything that needs his help? Anything he wants to tell you about what you are seeing or experiencing?
- » Process: What did we learn from exploring our world with God's eyes/ears/heart?

TALKING TO GOD ABOUT THE  
WORLD AROUND US AS WE  
EXPLORE IT TOGETHER.

## TIPS FOR

### BABIES

Practice prayer walking as you push the stroller or carry your baby on walks.

### LITTLES

Make it into a prayer scavenger hunt. Provide categories to look for: people, buildings, nature, etc. and ideas of how to pray for each.

### MIDDLES

Invite them to decide how they want to pray for each thing they notice. Let them lead.

### TEENS

Invite them to try this practice without you; then report back.

### ADULTS

Consider how to prayer walk in the midst of your daily routines: shopping, at work, etc.

# SABBATH

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## PREPARATION

As much as you are able, plan ahead to take care of significant household chores, errands, etc. the day before so that you can devote a full 24hrs to Sabbath.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- » During or after the evening meal, light four candles. Each candle represents a Sabbath value: Rest, Reset, Rejoice, and Worship.
- » As you light each candle, invite verbal family members to share how they'd like to embody that value over the next 24hrs. Do your best to honor these ideas - within reason, of course.
- » Tips and ideas:
  - » Establish a special breakfast tradition - pancakes, waffles - to welcome and mark the Sabbath morning as special.
  - » Limit phone use and other electronics throughout the day. Do your best to be fully present to one another.
  - » Invite older children to "police" your phone use, unnecessary housework, or attempts to work.

A PRACTICE BY WHICH WE REST,  
RESET, AND REMEMBER THAT WE  
ARE NOT GOD.

## TIPS FOR

### BABIES

Parent, God sees that your work never really ceases. Be gentle with yourself.

### LITTLES

Create fun Sabbath routines - like the special breakfast - that they will look forward to and associate with Sabbath.

### MIDDLES

Help them understand the purpose of Sabbath, the idea that we are not slaves, and that God works while we rest.

### TEENS

Challenge - or allow! - them to take a 24hr break from homework.

### ADULTS

Notice how difficult it is for you to rest. What tempts you the most to "cheat" and break your Sabbath rest?

# IMAGINATIVE PRAYER

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## OPTIONAL SUPPLIES

Blanket + pillow  
Cozy spot  
Music

## INSTRUCTIONS

- » Invite your child to find a comfortable spot free of distractions. Little kids may want to snuggle up and get cozy with a blanket. Optional: Play some quiet music.
- » Open the time in prayer. Invite your child to picture Jesus in their mind and simply imagine walking or sitting with him somewhere. Maybe it's a favorite spot in real life, or somewhere imaginary.
- » Encourage them to ask or tell Jesus anything they'd like to, just like talking to a friend. If they don't know where to start, "Jesus, how do you feel about me?" is a great question to ask.
- » Invite your child to share anything they saw or heard.
- » Test it against Scripture and what you know to be true about God. As long as it sounds like Jesus' character and doesn't contradict anything you know from Scripture, close the time by thanking Jesus for speaking to your child.

ASKING THE HOLY SPIRIT TO  
INSPIRE OUR IMAGINATIONS  
AS WE INTERACT WITH GOD.

## TIPS FOR

### BABIES

Experiment with this practice yourself as you hold your baby.

### LITTLES

Be flexible. Go with the silly. Correct anything untrue. Encourage intimacy with Jesus.

### MIDDLES

Using a prayer journal to record their experience can be very helpful - try one color pen for their voice and another color for anything Jesus says or does.

### TEENS

Teach them the practice but encourage them to do it on their own.

### ADULTS

Try asking Jesus this question yourself: "Jesus, how do you feel about me?" What does he have to say?

# SPECIAL GOD TIME

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## OPTIONAL SUPPLIES

Worship music	Dolls / Lego people
Instruments	Bibles / Bible story books
Art supplies	Journals
Blocks / Legos	Devotional books

## INSTRUCTIONS

- » Choose the calmest time in your daily routine. If bedtime is a battle, pick another time!
- » Decide on a timeframe ahead of time. Consider starting with just 5 minutes, especially with little ones. Older kids can learn to do 20-30 minutes.
- » Open the time in prayer. Explain that we are going to take [10] minutes to each enjoy time with Jesus in whatever way feels good to us. Explain the various options you've chosen for your kids and let them pick.
- » Set the timer, put on some worship music if you like, and attempt to have everyone operate independently. The goal is simply for each person to enjoy time with God.
- » Aside from extremely disruptive behavior, don't police or micromanage their time with God too much if you can help it. The point is to ENJOY this time.
- » When the time is up, invite everyone to share what they chose to do, and, for older kids, anything they learned about God. Model this by going first.

SIDE-BY-SIDE INTERACTION  
WITH GOD, TAILORED TO  
OUR UNIQUE PERSONALITIES.

## TIPS FOR

### BABIES

Simply allow your babies to be present for this practice.

### LITTLES

Follow their interests. Encourage art, music, dancing, or even acting out stories with dolls or lego figures as legitimate ways to connect with God.

### MIDDLES

Introduce reading material (devotionals, Bibles, other stories) and journaling to the above options.

### TEENS

Focus on unplugging, and even encourage practices like silence and breath prayer.

### ADULTS

What is your favorite way to connect with God? Are there ways you've been limiting your devotional life by trying to fit into a box?

# DO WHAT JESUS DID CHALLENGE

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## INSTRUCTIONS

- » Decide ahead of time on a timeframe for your challenge. You could make it as short as a day or as long as a week.
- » Read this verse together: "If we say we live in God, we must live the way Jesus lived." 1 John 2:6, ERV.
- » Invite family members to describe how Jesus lived. What was he like? How did he treat others? What did he do? For older kids and teens, have a conversation about any differences they see between living like Jesus and living like the world around them.
- » Explain that you have a challenge for everyone (or a "secret mission" for younger kids): Pick one specific way this [week] to do what Jesus did, and then report back and talk about how it went.
- » Share some specific ideas from Scripture - a few ideas are listed below - and let everyone choose. Little kids may need more direction and/or help executing:
  - Love/welcome someone others reject (Luke 19:1-10)
  - Talk to someone about God (John 4:1-26)
  - Pray for someone's healing (Mark 10:46-52)
  - Take care of someone's needs (Matthew 14:13-21)
  - Serve someone unexpectedly (John 13:1-17)
  - Forgive someone (Luke 23:33-34)
- » After everyone completes the challenge, have a second conversation to talk about what everyone did, what it was like, and anything they learned.

ALLOWING SCRIPTURE TO  
CHALLENGE US TO FOLLOW IN  
THE FOOTSTEPS OF JESUS.

## TIPS FOR

### BABIES

Simply allow your babies to be present as you engage this practice yourself.

### LITTLES

Keep it simple and concrete. Celebrate easy wins. Play up the "secret mission" element.

### MIDDLES

Invite them to take a risk that stretches them beyond their comfort zone.

### TEENS

Engage any dissonance or concerns about how living like Jesus makes them different from their peers.

### ADULTS

Reflect on ways that you enjoy imitating Jesus and ways that you resist it. How would you like to grow?

# PRAYER TREE

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## SUPPLIES

- » A bare "tree" - could be a large branch, a tree cut out of poster board, or even a mural.
- » A collection of paper leaves cut out of thick paper or cardstock, and a box or basket to keep them in.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- » Invite family members to write prayer requests on the leaves. These requests should be as specific and time-bound as possible. For example: "an end to the war in Ukraine" vs. "world peace."
- » Spend time daily or weekly interceding for these requests. Pass out the leaves to each family member the same way you deal out cards. Invite family members to pray for the leaves they've been given.
- » As prayers are answered, attach them to the tree and celebrate the answered prayer, no matter how small.
- » There are times when God does not answer our prayers the way we have asked. When this happens, lay the leaves at the base of the tree. Trust God to meet your kids in their disappointment, and invite them to share their honest feelings (lament) directly with God.
- » At Thanksgiving, or a year after you begin this practice, remove the leaves from the tree and read them aloud. Thank God for each answered prayer.

A PRACTICE TO HELP US  
INTENTIONALLY INTERCEDE  
FOR THE WORLD AROUND US.

## TIPS FOR

### BABIES

Simply allow your babies to be present as you engage this practice yourself.

### LITTLES

Non-writers can draw their prayer requests. Other family members can also add drawings for their benefit.

### MIDDLES

Help them think of categories for prayer beyond the obvious and immediate.

### TEENS

Don't be afraid to help them wrestle with questions around unanswered prayer, suffering, and evil.

### ADULTS

Use this visual to increase your own faith that God answers prayer, and to encourage you to pray boldly.

# GENEROSITY CHALLENGE

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## PREPARATION

- » Decide ahead of time on a budget for this challenge. Could be \$10 or less. Could be \$1000 or more.
- » Decide, based on your children's ages, whether you will do this challenge as a family or as individuals.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- » Read Psalm 24:1 (little kids with short attention spans) or Matthew 25:14-30 (older kids). Briefly talk about the idea of stewardship - that everything we have belongs to God, and we are not owners, but stewards.
- » Explain that you've set aside some of God's money to be generous with this month. Explain that this is a group project (little kids) or that each family member will receive a certain amount of money (older kids).
- » Explain that the only rules are that this money needs to be used creatively this month in a generous way (for others) that would make God's heart happy.
- » Brainstorm ideas and come up with plans. If you can, try to encourage ideas that involve active participation in some way, rather than simple monetary donations.
- » Execute on your plans sometime during the month - either as a family, or as individuals.
- » Afterwards, have a second conversation about what it was like to be generous, what everyone learned, and how this practice changes our view of "our" money.

LOVING GOD AND NEIGHBOR  
BY GIVING SACRIFICIALLY.

## TIPS FOR

### BABIES

Use this opportunity to consider what kind of stewardship habits you'd like to practice as a family.

### LITTLES

Invite their contributions to the decision-making process. Involve them in the execution.

### MIDDLES

Give them their own money to steward, but coach them through decision-making and execution.

### TEENS

Delegate 100% of the challenge - from decision-making to execution - to them.

### ADULTS

Check your generosity. Does your spending reflect a stewardship mindset?

# ALTARS OF THANKSGIVING

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## SUPPLIES

Stones (pebbles, river rocks, anything!)  
Bible  
Sharpies (optional)

## INSTRUCTIONS

Note: This practice can be done as a one-time experience (such as around the Thanksgiving table) or as a repeated practice (daily during the month of November, for example).

- » Read Joshua 4:1-9 and help kids to understand the significance: Those stones used to be underwater! How did they get on dry land? God held the water back! So the people built an altar with those stones to remind themselves of what God did, and to remember to give thanks.
- » Invite everyone to choose a stone, and to think of one thing they'd like to thank God for.
- » Optional: use sharpies to label the stones with these thanksgivings.
- » One by one, invite family members to lay their stones on the table/floor (wherever your altar is being constructed) and to give thanks to God out loud as they place their stone.
- » Close in prayer. Thank God for his goodness, power, and provision.

REMEMBERING  
GOD'S GOODNESS +  
FAITHFULNESS TO US

## TIPS FOR

### BABIES

Thank God for things on their behalf - if they could talk, what would they give thanks for?

### LITTLES

Invite them to place adults' stones as adults share their thanksgivings. How big can the pile get?

### MIDDLES

Challenge them to look for God's activity in their life - specific things that ONLY God could have done.

### TEENS

Help them to express gratitude "in all circumstances," even if their day was literally the worst.

### ADULTS

Be mindful of any ways that expressing gratitude to God changes your attitude.

# ADVENT WREATH

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## SUPPLIES

Wooden base

Ikea Candle Pack

Greens - live clippings (preferred) or garland

Purple + pink raffia (3 pink, 1 purple ribbon)

Gold berry stems

Wooden stars

Gold stars or acorns

Natural Pinecones

Metallic Pinecones

Glue dots or Glue Gun

## INSTRUCTIONS

- » Tie the raffia around the candles - 3 purple, 1 pink.
- » Set the candles in the center of the base. Glue down if desired, but not necessary.
- » Fit the greens around the candles and glue down.
- » Glue decorations to the greens.
- » Set aside a few minutes at dinner each night to light the candles - light one candle week 1, two candles week 2, until all four candles are lit the week before Christmas.
- » Use this devotional, or another of your choosing, to help you reflect, connect with God, and mark the time.

MARKING THE TIME  
UNTIL CHRIST COMES  
AMONG US (TWICE).

## TIPS FOR

### BABIES

Simply allow your babies to be present as you engage this practice yourself.

### LITTLES

Help them memorize the call and response in the devotional. Invite them to count the candles each night.

### MIDDLES

Invite them to read the Scripture each night, and to be responsible for lighting the candles.

### TEENS

Engage them in conversation about the differences between Advent and the cultural celebration of Christmas in December.

### ADULTS

Allow this practice to remind you of the reality that we are still waiting for Jesus to come.