

# **LOVING YOUR FAMILY**

Your family is a wonder, the unique consequence of countless choices made over generations by all those who came before you- choices that resulted in each of you being here today. Celebrate the special, one of a kind miracle of your family.

Families gather to celebrate holidays, birthdays, anniversaries, special occasions. Use these milestones to create traditions, and use your traditions to build memories and connect hearts.

Remember the sacredness of your family relationship. God created you to be parent to these children, and God created them to be children to you. You bring to each other what no one else can.

Stories weave the fabric of family into a timeless tapestry. Turn off the Tv, CD player, and video games and tell your stories. You'll create your own spoken scriptures for future generations.

Take time at family meetings, at meals, in private chats to talk, to listen, and to understand. Communication builds trust; trust binds.

Laughter is the heart's favorite exercise. Don't take yourselves- as individuals and as a family- too serious. Act silly, tell jokes, and remember funny family stories.

Collect family memories in photos, videos, audio tapes and scrapbooks, and then revisit the past together. Memories are links that join yesterday to today.

Play together as a family. Laughter and excitement release energy that enlivens and renews body and spirit. when the family plays together, everybody wins.

Family means sharing responsibilities. Assign chores according to abilities, preferences and time. Be flexible; rotate, chores for variety. When the whole family chips in to do a big job enjoy the team spirit and celebrate your accomplishment.

Welcome the unplanned moment into your family; leave room for spontaneity and serendipity. The unexpected is where we find some of life's sweetest gifts

Cultivate awe by noticing God's simple wonders and point them out to each other: The delicate strands of a spider web, the tenacious grace of a dandelion, the squishiness of mud. The "wow" that comes from attending to life's fine details is truly a prayer of reverence.

Build family faith by encouraging prayer: Sunday worship, mealtime prayer, informal moments in times of fear, sadness, or joy. Family prayer has the power to transform hearts, heal wounds, and restore peace.

Develop simple family rituals to keep your hearts connected throughout the day. A goodbye kiss, a morning hug, a love note tucked in a lunch box can touch the spirit, generate smites, warm the heart.

Meals feed more than the body. Arrange your schedule to allow your family to come together regularly to share meals. Shared food and conversation is a blessing that nurtures both bodies and spirits.

Loving touch goes deep- all the way to the soul. Use back pats, quick hugs, goodnight kisses, and delicate tickles to reassure, affirm, and comfort. Touch says "I love you" in countless ways.

Each family member is special in her or his own way. Appreciate the differences in ages, development levels, abilities, experiences, and limitations. They give your family variety, richness, substance, character, and strength.

Mistakes, misunderstandings, and disappointments are daily fare in family life. Examine expectations; don't demand perfection. Above all be tolerant A healthy family strives for balance. when the demands of work, school, social activities, and church or civic responsibilities rob you of precious quality time your family needs, everyone suffers. Learn to say 'no' so you can say "yes" to what matters most.

The honors of one family member belong to all family members. Recognize strengths, affirm one another, be generous with praise, and share the spotlight.

Family life, provides sacred opportunities to forgive, and be forgiven. When tempers flare and feelings are hurt, say "I,m sorry" and "I forgive you," and You'll give love a fresh chance.

Every member of the family has a different perspective. Relish, the different feelings and views rather than trying to homogenize, stifle, or ignore them. You'll deepen your own experiences, intensify your awareness, and multiply your joy.

You can still love family members even when you don't like what they've done. At those times, tell them you love them and remind yourself as well.

Tears express who you are in your most intense moments. Let your family be a safe place for tears. Allow them to bring you the gifts of healing, peace, and closeness.

Every family with more than one child experiences sibling rivalry. When a problem arises, let your fighting children sit across a table from each other (to eliminate physical contact) and work it out. When children see that a parent won't pick a side, they learn the value and necessity of compromise.

Plan, set goals, and dream about the future together. Talking about what you'd like to do, where you'd like to go, what you'd like to be as a family deepens your sense of identity, solidarity, and purpose.

Every family has conflict. But if you avoid blame, really listen, and try creative solutions, conflict can bring deeper understanding and appreciation of each members distinctness.

Every family needs help from time to time. Be willing to tap into resources you can't provide for yourselves: read what wise people have written, join support groups, talk to a counselor, seek Professional therapy.

Families become better, wiser, stronger by taking risks. Encourage risk and minimize fear by defining success as learning and growth and by assuring mutual support.

Your time apart from one another is as important as your time, together. Allow family members to take private personal time to be alone with themselves and God. Time alone quiets the mind and enriches the soul, making time together as a family more meaningful.

No family can operate without a budget whether tight or loosely defined. Let everyone know about the budget, to the degree he or she can understand. Sharing information about family finances helps everyone separate 'needs' from "'wants' when setting priorities.

Families change: they relocate, welcome new members, and grieve the loss of those who die. Notice and respect change. Allow expressions of sadness, disappointment, anger and talk about how to adjust. The family that changes together grows together.

Family is at its best in harmony with nature. Become earth- friendly by consuming less, recycling, planting a tree, using public transportation. Your family's care of the earth enhances the future of generations to come

Open your home to friends, both old and new. They'll expand your awareness, challenge your preconceptions, bring you delight.

Personal things and space are sacred. Respect one another's need, right, and privilege to define personal territory. It's one important way individuality takes shape.

Help your family accept and celebrate the diversity of our "world family.," Intolerance, bigotry, hostility, and fear of differences are learned or prevented within the family.

God the Creator brought the gift of family into the world. Celebrate your creator as the very Love that resides at the heart of your family.

This present, never-to-be repeated moment with your family is the moment that matters. Don't miss it.

Use your power as a family to make a difference. Together you can respond to the needs of your neighbors, your community, your country, your world.