



September 2008



Take charge of your schedules

School bells bring super-sized family calendars. Even busy toddlers now seem to need their own social secretaries.

We hear a lot lately about children who are hurried, harried, and overscheduled. Research shows that kids—and families—are paying the price for always being busy. Now there's a renewed emphasis to provide plenty of free time and just let kids be kids.

It's possible to grow your children's talents and give them lots of opportunities without injecting extra stress. This newsletter explores ideas for keeping a healthy balance between busyness and rest. Here are a few to spark your thinking:



Sign up with care—Now is the time to limit activities, before you dive into too many. Be realistic about how many activities your family can handle—and about the amount of homework time and sleep that each child needs.

Evaluate talents—Ask each child about his or her preferences. Which sport or activity means the most to each? Which are they willing to cut? Of course, parents make the final decision. Kids can't decide to skip a church activity that you've decided is non-negotiable.

Schedule family time—Block this out on your calendar, just like you would other important obligations. Plan at least a couple of hours a week for together time, and don't let other duties interfere.

Make Family Mealtimes a Priority

In a five-year study conducted at the University of Minnesota, researchers found that in families who ate meals together at least five times a week, teenage girls were much less likely to smoke, drink, or use drugs. Kids who eat more meals with their families also report significantly better academic and mental health than those kids who don't eat with their families. Study author Marla Eisenberg writes that even when other factors are statistically controlled, "eating meals as a family has benefits for young people above and beyond their general sense of connection to family members." See the next page for some fun mealtime ideas.



PowerSource

Ask God:

1. To help you wisely manage your family's time.
2. To help your children learn to set priorities.
3. To protect your family from busyness and stress—and to help family members cherish time spent with one another.

Slow Down Your Kids

David Elkind, author of *The Hurried Child*, warns that too-busy kids miss important childhood experiences. These include:

1. **Open-ended playtime**—Unstructured time offers children a chance to play in natural ways. This builds their creativity and helps develop their personalities.
2. **Relationships with extended family**—Packed schedules make it harder for children to build a network of social support. Contact with extended family gives kids a sense of who they are.
3. **Self-awareness**—Activities such as reading, drawing, dreaming, and building help kids explore their interests. Too many programmed activities can limit vital experiments in self-discovery.

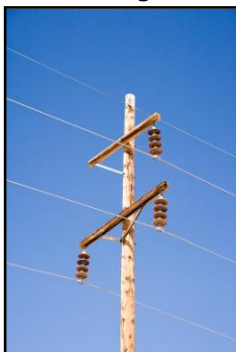
OpenTheBook

**"My dear Martha, you are worried and upset over all these details! There is only one thing worth being concerned about."
Luke 10:41-42**

Unlike her sister Martha, Mary was able to clear her schedule when Jesus visited. Jesus uses this lesson in priority-setting to remind us that time with him is what really matters.

Teachable Moments

- 1. In With the Good**—Give family members each a card with Philippians 4:8 printed on it. Think about the activities you each do the most, and place the cards where you do the activities. Challenge family members to think about the positive side of their favorite activity.
- 2. Self-Sacrifice**—Ask family members to each sacrifice something they enjoy during the week to help someone else (Philippians 2:3).
- 3. Cross Challenge**—Play a seek-and-find game during the week. Try to find as many crosses hidden in everyday life as possible (telephone poles, signposts, etc.). Share your findings at dinner each evening.



"So commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these words of mine. Tie them to your hands and wear them on your forehead as reminders. Teach them to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are ON THE ROAD, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up." Deuteronomy 11:18-19, NLT

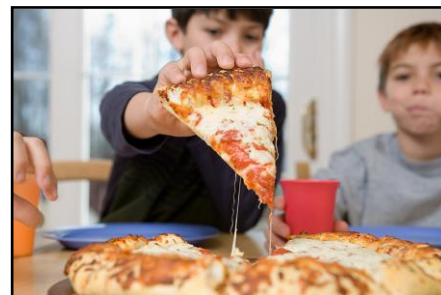
When families get too busy, relationships and priorities get out of whack. Discover how your children feel about spending time by asking them these questions:

1. Talk about a time you were really busy. What did you like and not like about it?
2. What are your favorite activities to do alone and as a family? What do you wish we'd do together more, and why?
3. If you could spend more time doing any one thing, what would it be, and why?
4. How do you think God feels when we're busy? Is it okay to be busy doing things for God and the church?

Family Experience: Time for Table Talks

Turn your family's dinner table into a refuge from hectic schedules and intruding media. Remember to model good listening skills by hearing kids out, no matter how long their stories get. Start some family mealtime traditions with these conversation starters and activities:

- **Mad, Sad, Glad**—Have family members each share something about their day that made them mad, sad, and glad. This prompt will help everyone reflect on their day and identify feelings with experiences. Before clearing the table, pray together about your experiences. Consider keeping a journal to watch how God is working in your family.



- **Pop the Question**—Before a meal, write questions about each other, about God, or about anything discussion-worthy on slips of paper. (These can be anything from "What is your favorite song?" to "What is the first question you'll ask God when you get to heaven?") Tightly roll each paper to fit inside a balloon. Inflate the balloons and tie off the ends. Before every course of your meal, let each family member choose a balloon. Take turns sitting on balloons until they pop to reveal the question inside. Discuss each question during the meal's next course. Repeat! (Note: This activity works well even without balloons. Also, discard all balloon pieces afterward.)



What's Playing at the Movies

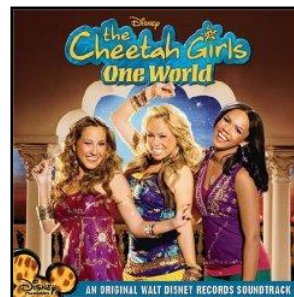
Movie: *Beverly Hills Chihuahua* (Oct. 3)
Genre: Adventure/comedy
Rating: PG (for some mild thematic elements)
Cast: Drew Barrymore, Salma Hayek, Jamie Lee Curtis, Andy Garcia, George Lopez, Cheech Marin
Synopsis: A pampered, diamond-clad Chihuahua named Chloe relishes her lifestyle and hardly notices tough-looking Papi. While vacationing in Mexico, Chloe gets lost on some tough streets. Then Papi joins forces with a motley crew of animals to rescue his true love.



Discussion Questions: How are people alike or different from each other? What characteristics do people use to separate themselves into groups? How do you treat people who seem different from you? Talk about a time you discovered you had a lot in common with one of these "different" people.

What Music Is Releasing

Song: "Cheetah Love"
Artist Info: The Cheetah Girls originated after their first Disney movie was an unexpected success. The trio consists of Adrienne Bailon, Sabrina Bryan, and Kiely Williams. (Raven Symoné was part of the original movie but then pursued a solo career.) So far, the group has released five albums and three movies. The marketing target audience is pre-teen girls.



Summary: This is the first song from the group's new made-for-TV movie *One World*. The upbeat dance track deals with maintaining strong, loyal friendships, even when people don't always see eye to eye.
Discussion Questions: What are the most important characteristics of true friends? How loyal are you to your friends—and vice versa? Think of a time you and your friends didn't see eye to eye: How were you able to resolve the issue? How did your relationship change as a result?

What Games Are Out

Title	Content	Rating & Platform
<i>Wonder World Amusement Park</i>	This interactive park has 35 rides and games, including target-shooting. The carnival host can be crazy and rude.	E; Wii
<i>MLB Power Pros 2008</i>	In this baseball game, strategy advances along with the levels. Graphics are cartoony, but all ages will enjoy the game.	E; Wii
<i>Space Chimps</i>	While on a mission, players confront an evil king. The game has animated blood, crude humor, language, and mild fantasy violence.	E10+; Nintendo DS, Wii, PS2, Xbox 360

GAME RATINGS KEY: EC=Early Childhood, E=Everyone (ages 6+), E10+ (ages 10+), T=Teen (ages 13+)



Culture & Trends

What's happening right now that may affect your children and family:

- With the tough economy and high gas prices, stay-at-home moms are truly staying home. Women report cutting back on errands and feeling more stressed out and socially isolated. (msnbc.com)
- 45% of American adults expect their children's standard of living to be better than theirs is; 20% say it will be the same; and 28% say it will be worse. (gallup.com)

Quick Stats

- 11% of children ages 12 and younger complain of being tired during the day "often" or "always."



- 15% of children told their parents that they had fallen asleep at school during the past year. (sleepfoundation.org)

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FAITH FORMATION PARENT ORIENTATION (FOR FAMILIES NEW TO PARISH OR NEW TO PROGRAMS) 12:30 PM PARISH HALL			GR. 1-5 FF CLASSES BEGIN 5-6 PM 6:30-7:30 PM EDUCATION WING	GR. 1-5 FF CLASSES BEGIN 4-5 PM 5:30-6:30 PM EDUCATION WING		
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CATECHETICAL SUNDAY PRESCHOOL/KINDERGARTEN CATECHIST ORIENTATION MEETING 12:30 PM ROOM 202			GR. 1-5 FF CLASSES continue	GR. 1-5 FF CLASSES continue		
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