

The Family Forum

Growing Together in Faith and Family Life

February 2011

From My House To Yours

I have been very impacted by the seasons lately. Not the weather seasons, but the seasons of life and the seasons of love.

My sons are growing up. There are no more preschoolers in the house. I have conversations with my oldest son that leave me with more questions, more to discover, more to figure out. My younger son doesn't need much help with daily tasks and plays very well on his own. I even get about an hour of quiet time in the mornings to read my Bible, pray and jot down a few thoughts. It's a whole new season in life. Bittersweet. Often I miss having young ones in the house. It is a constant choice to hold onto the good memories from the last season and let them carry me into anticipation for this new season of motherhood.

Josh and I have been married

more than a decade. I remember vividly the man who waited for me, wearing a kilt, his long curly hair in a ponytail, as I walked down the aisle to him on our wedding day. That man has changed, grown, learned and matured. He has seasoned. And so have I. I am not the same woman I was then. But sometimes when we laugh or share a glance, I know those two newlyweds still exist, they always will. Our love has changed, grown, learned and matured. Our love has seasoned.

Seasons mean change, and they can't be stopped. As surely as winter comes, so spring will follow, then summer, then fall, then before you know it another winter. This might encourage you if you are living through a hard season. Knowing that this season won't last forever may be



The seasons of life and love...

a great comfort to you. Or this might bring sorrow. You might be living in the best season of your life. Knowing that this season won't last forever may bring you anxiety or concern.

No matter what the season, whether hard or easy, happy or sad, grab hold of all you can from this time, knowing another season is on its way.

Be encouraged as YOU season.

Feel free to visit my blog:
annasklar.wordpress.com

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Connection Points - Ideas For Building Community

MEN - Josh Sklar

Hey guys, why not get together this month and make a big difference globally?

Come up with some wild and crazy fundraiser and grab a catalogue from World Vision to send funds around the world.

Get sponsors for a polar bear dip, go for a night out at a restaurant and pool the cash, or any other wild and crazy ideas to have a blast and save some lives around the world... change can happen if you are willing to work for it!

[Click here to download the catalogue.](#)

Go to worldvision.ca for more info or call 1-800-714-3597.



WOMEN - Anna Sklar

Let's put a different spin on an old idea...

You've heard of women getting together to do a little bulk cooking, right? Then distributing those meals amongst themselves?

How about women getting together with one meal already prepared and delivering those meals to people in need.

Have a few friends make a list of people they know who could use a little act of kindness.

Make a yummy meal for delivery day. Get together as a group and deliver those meals to the people on your list.

Include a Valentine if you like!



FAMILIES - Anna Sklar

Host a Valentine's party for some of the families in your life.

Ask everyone to bring a snack that's either red or heart-shaped, or both. Strawberries are a great example, and healthy to boot. But don't forget the chocolate for dipping the strawberries!

Set up a special basket or box for the children to drop in valentines for each other at the party, then distribute the valentines as everyone is leaving.

Have everyone wear something red. Or what about everyone bringing a small Valentine's gift for an anonymous gift exchange?

Have fun with the ideas!



Contributions Needed!

Here's what we need for the March issue:

- Your Family Favourite Recipe
- Your ideas for Connection Points (about 100-125 words)
- Your idea for Reaching Out (about 100-125 words)

Deadline is February 15th

Email contributions or ask for more info:

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Family Library

Build your library at home with some of the books highlighted in our [Store](#) on our [site!](#)

Health - The Benefits of Chocolate!

If you're a chocolate lover, I've got news you will really LOVE!

Researchers continue to discover *more* health benefits of regularly eating dark chocolate!

The cocoa in dark chocolate, like wine, tea, and many fruits and veggies contains healthful compounds called polyphenols, a class of antioxidants.

The darker chocolates provide the most cocoa and antioxidants. It appears to lower blood pressure, reduce formation of plaque in arteries, inhibit formation of blood clots, improve insulin resistance, reduce blood

cholesterol (lowering the bad and increasing the good), reduce the risks of cancer, and even improve the skin.

Experts recommend savouring an ounce of dark chocolate with a minimum of 70% cocoa each day. Now that's a recommendation that we can all embrace!

Just be sure to take into account its fat, sugar, and calories so your total daily intake remains the same.

A good plan might be to choose dark chocolate as your "dessert" of choice, knowing that you are actually doing some-

thing good for your health.

Now that's SWEET!

- Wendy Lempner, R.D.



Family Activity



Exchange Valentines!

Whether your children are gray or growing, be sure to send a little love their way with a valentine that tells them all the great things about them. Heap on the praise, fill their hearts to the brim! And encourage them to do the same for other family members.

If your children are younger, you can make this into a fun, creative time with them and teach them about encouraging others.

Family Favourite Recipe-JELL-O Creamy Layers

1 package raspberry Jell-O
2 cups Cool Whip
1½ cups boiling water

This dessert was a hit at our house last Valentine's Day! Light and delicious...

1. Dissolve 1 package (85g) JELL-O Jelly Powder, any flavour, in 1½ cups boiling water.
2. Whisk in 2 cups frozen Cool Whip Whipped Topping.
3. Pour into individual serving dishes. Chill until set. Top with additional thawed Cool Whip Whipped Topping.

Makes 4 servings, 2/3 cups each.

Recipe found inside a raspberry JELL-O box!



Finances - What Am I Saving For?

I'm starting to understand why it's great to have savings instead of putting every extra penny towards debt repayment. What a great feeling to pay cash for needed items or emergencies instead of pulling out the credit card!

I read the book *America's Cheapest Family Gets You Right On The Money* by Steve and Annette Economides. They go over every aspect of a budget and I learned a lot from their section on Savings. This really is a great resource and I highly recommend it!

There are two kinds of savings—one for emergencies and one for expenses that you know are coming up in the future.

Emergencies would include things like unexpected travel expenses, home repair, car repair or unemployment.

Here's the breakdown on what to start saving for those categories:

Emergency Travel—How many people are in your family and how much money would it cost approximately to fly them wherever you'd need to go to visit family unexpectedly? Our family has $4 \times \$500 = \2000 .

Home Repair—About 1% of your home's value. Our family needs about \$1800.

Car Repair—About \$1000-\$1500 per year above gas and maintenance.

Unemployment—3 to 6 months worth of pay.

Realize that these savings could take years to build up (!), and that's OK (breathe).

Now for the expenses you know will come up sooner rather than later—car replacement, property tax, kid's activities, even CAA and

credit card fees. (We only have a card with fees because we collected a bunch of Aero-plan miles from the home renovations. We might cancel this card soon, but we earned enough points for Josh to fly to Chicago 5 times to finish his Master's degree!)

Assign a value to each of your upcoming expenses, put it in the budget, and start saving! It feels great to watch the savings grow and the debts shrink. - Anna Sklar

Click on the image to access our → Updated Budget Worksheet with Savings categories included.

Marriage: Excerpt From *The 5 Love Languages* Website

Words of Affirmation

Actions don't always speak louder than words. If this is your love language, unsolicited compliments mean the world to you. Hearing the words, "I love you," are important—hearing the reasons behind that love sends your spirits skyward. Insults can leave you shattered and are not easily forgotten.



missed birthday, anniversary, or a hasty, thoughtless gift would be disastrous—so would the absence of everyday gestures.

Acts of Service

Can vacuuming the floors really be an expression of love? Absolutely! Anything you do to ease the burden of responsibilities weighing on an "Acts of Service" person will speak volumes. The words he or she most want to hear: "Let me do that for you." Laziness, broken commitments, and making more work for them tell speakers of this language their feelings don't matter.

Physical Touch

This language isn't all about the bedroom. A person whose primary language is Physical Touch is, not surprisingly, very touchy. Hugs, pats on the back, holding hands, and thoughtful touches on the arm, shoulder, or face—they can all be ways to show excitement, concern, care, and love. Physical presence and accessibility are crucial, while neglect or abuse can be unforgivable and destructive.

- From 5lovelanguages.com. Gary Chapman has written several books (including *The 5 Love Languages of Children*). Free study guides & assessments are also available!

Quality Time

In the vernacular of Quality Time, nothing says, "I love you," like full, undivided attention. Being there for this type of person is critical, but really being there—with the TV off, fork and knife down, and all chores and tasks on standby—makes your significant other feel truly special and loved. Distractions, postponed dates, or the failure to listen can be especially hurtful.

Receiving Gifts

Don't mistake this love language for materialism; the receiver of gifts thrives on the love, thoughtfulness, and effort behind the gift. If you speak this language, the perfect gift or gesture shows that you are known, you are cared for, and you are prized above whatever was sacrificed to bring the gift to you. A

Relationship Challenge:

Let the idea of Love Languages really settle into your marriage. Read the book if at all possible. Observe and learn your spouse's love language, and then start speaking that language! If this is new territory, be patient with each other. Even small steps are much appreciated if they are moving in the right direction. New habits will form if practiced consistently.

Marriage Prayer:

Lord, thank You for love. Thank you for the different ways you gave us to show love for one other. Help us learn how to show our love to each other so that we KNOW beyond a doubt we are loved. Help us build each other up in love and enjoy all ways of showing love. Let our differences bring us closer together instead of keeping us apart.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Faith At Home - Becoming A Praying Family

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.
- *Philippians 4:6-7*

These verses holds many great truths - we don't have to be anxious about our kids, we are invited to pray about everything, we can petition God, thank Him and make requests to Him about anything.

And when we do, we are promised that peace will be ours. Even if the answers are years down the road, or life is truly overwhelming - we are free to have peace now. All it takes is a good chat with God. That same peace is available to our children now and as they grow up.

Prayer really is just talking to God. And it's never too early to start talking to God. We can talk to Him about whatever we want, whenever we want, wherever we want, and however we want.

From peaceful thank-you's to screaming and ranting - He wants it all. And He wants the

same thing from our children. Their prayers are just as powerful as ours, and all are music to the ears of the One who loves us most.

It's all about relationship, and it's not much of a relationship if you're not on speaking terms, or if you're not honest and real with one another.

The best way to encourage the prayer life of our kids is to model it for them. I've started praying at different times - on the way to school, before play dates, as an ambulance races by, as we drive by the mission, when a beautiful rainbow appears, when we see an answer to prayer, when we hear someone is sick, or when my boys share a problem with me. The trick for me is to remember to pray out loud, so they can hear the example I'm trying to give them.

The more I put this concept of continuous praying into action, the more it takes root in me. The benefits go beyond my children, to my own relationship with God.

It's wonderful how that works. My kids help me grow in God as I help them grow in God. And slowly but surely we become a praying family.

- Anna Sklar

Here's a list of some of the wonderful prayer resources by Stormie O'Martian. I've been using her books in my own family for years:

- The Power of a Praying Woman
- The Power of a Praying Wife OR Husband
- The Power of a Praying Parent
- Prayers and Promises for My Little Boy (OR My Little Girl)
- What Happens When I Talk to God - The Power of Prayer for Boys and Girls (ages 3-7)
- The Prayer That Makes God Smile (ages 3-7)
- The Power of a Praying Kid (ages 8-12)
- The Power of a Praying Teen

Family Prayer

Lord, thank You that we can come and talk to You anywhere, anytime, about anything. Thank You for listening, thank You for answering. Help us to become a family that prays together. Help us to leave all our worries with you. Grant us Your peace that passes all understanding. Help us to bring all our praises to You. Grant us hearts full of thanksgiving. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Green Living - Hold On to the End

I have a hard time letting go sometimes. I just bought a new winter jacket this week. I had my old one for 11 years!! Finally I had to admit it was coming apart and needed to be replaced.



Part of the reason I have a hard time letting go is that I see worth in things that still work. (I'm also frugal, but that's a whole other article!) Even though my old jacket was dated and starting to fray, it still kept me dry in the snow, it still did its job.

It's so easy to throw away something that's not new and perfect anymore. Our society screams at us to have the newest, best, most fashionable items we can get our hands on. It can be an expensive mindset to keep. For us and for our environment.

The more "new" we have, the more "old" there is to store somewhere, often in the garbage.

Hold on to what you have as long as you can, ignoring the prompts to more, newer, better or trendy. Make use of items without becoming a hoarder.

There IS a time to let go. If that time has come, see about selling the items, or donating to second-hand stores. Make them into something else if you have time for a project. Keep them out of the garbage if you can.

If it's time for you to get something new, try browsing the second-hand stores or websites. You never know what treasures you'll find!

- Anna Sklar

Reaching Out

There are many nursing homes and retirement lodgings in our towns and cities. Maybe you know someone who lives in one of those places. Maybe you don't. It's easy to get to know someone who lives there - just ask your church for a name.

Whether you bless one person or 100 people, connect with those in your community who are shut-in and closed-off from the world.

If you have trouble coming up with ideas, ask the homes what you can do for them.



Try to repeat the process every month or two, and bring the children along if possible. Children have a tendency to bring joy with them wherever they go!

FEBRUARY 2011

Feel free to use this calendar for your family - hang it up to keep track of schedules, appointments, anything!

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2 Groundhog Day	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14 Valentine's Day	15	16	17	18	19
20	21 Family Day	22	23	24	25	26
27	28					