



Metro Lutheran
Positive Parenting
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LOVE, IN THE TIME OF NEED

Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action.
1 John 3:18

This is a time of acute fear and anxiety. Economies worldwide are in the tank. Individuals are facing layoffs, foreclosures, and desperate economic straits. Children sense our anxiety and fear, and don't know what to do. They mirror the tension of their most beloved adults.

So, how do we love our children through this time? In this month when we celebrate Easter, Jesus' triumph over the world's greatest darkness, let's explore a few simple, practical strategies for imbuing all of life with the hope, peace, and presence of Jesus.

This is the time, in the words of the writer of 1 John, to love with more than words; to love with our actions. We can do this through the Four Keys, simple faith practices that braid into daily life and infuse all of life with the holy.

CARING CONVERSATIONS The one gift God has given all of us in equal measure is time. I know how rushed and busy you are, but dedicate part of this gift of God to just being present with one another and with others who need you to talk to them and to listen to them. This is how we build the relationships that are emotional life vests in the midst of life's roiling waters and storms.

FAMILY DEVOTIONS Keep God at the center. Help children name and claim the presence of God in all of life. Pray together. Open God's word (and it is perfectly okay to use a children's Bible) together and wonder aloud what God's living word is for you today. Share it with others. Drench all of life in gratitude. Keep on the lookout for blessings. Thank God for all of them.

RITUALS AND TRADITIONS Light a candle when you share a meal (and it can be macaroni and cheese or fast food), remembering that Jesus is the Light of the world, the light that no darkness can overcome. Tuck in your children, say a prayer, listen to their delights and concerns, and make the sign of the cross on each beloved forehead. Say your love out loud, over and over and over again. Slip a caring note into a lunch bag. Laugh at family jokes. Tell family stories. Celebrate joys together.

FAMILY SERVICE Our Native American brothers and sisters have timeless wisdom to share with us. For them, wealth is measured, not by what you have or keep, but by what you give away. Create a family treasure chest, decorating a little cardboard box or basket. Keep it where it is visible to all. As a family, brainstorm, "What do we have to give away?" Write each item on a slip of paper and put it in the treasure box or basket: "stuff," things no longer used or outgrown, extras, something another might use; time and attention; something you can teach another;

helping with a project; lending tools or dishes or toys. Or, try some of the family activities below:

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

1. Pray the newspaper. Take a first section of the newspaper. (It doesn't have to be today's.) Tear it down the vertical fold and give everyone one piece of it. Ask them to skim both sides of their sheet for three things: 1. What would delight God? 2. What would sadden God? 3. What can we do? Then, pray for what you named.
2. When grocery shopping, add one extra item to the cart. At home, add it to a bag for a food drive or food shelf. Take the whole family when you donate it. Talk about why we share food.
3. For Christmas or a birthday ... or as a random act of kindness, give a few hours of childcare as a gift to a frazzled parent, a close friend who needs some time out, or parents in your congregation who need time away.
4. As a family, pack zippered plastic bags with non-perishable food in individual portions: dried fruit, juice box, cheese or peanut butter crackers, chips, beef jerky or meat stick. Be creative. Say a prayer over the bags, that they might feed a hungry person, as God feeds all of our hungry. Keep a supply in your car to give to those on freeway off ramps whose signs say they are hungry or homeless.
5. Volunteer as a family at a soup kitchen, not only to prepare or serve food, but to sit with guests and talk and listen. On the way home, discuss how the people you met served you.