

Dinner and a Movie

Best Use

As a family activity with any age

Nutritional Value

Good conversation around the movie of your choice

Advance Preparation

- Pack a picnic dinner or order in some of your family's favorite food.
- Rent a movie or choose a family favorite to watch together.
- Make tickets for the movie or have the kids make their own tickets to sell. (Let the have fun deciding the cost, such as 3 hugs and 1 kiss)
- Set up an area to eat and watch the movie together with pillows, drinks, food, popcorn, etc.

Serve it up

SAY: “We are going to have a special night at the movies, only a little different.”

OPTIONAL: You might want to load up in the car and drive around the block to return at your home and show them in to the fun dinner/movie theatre you have created. You can do this as a surprise for the kids or have them help and do it as a surprise for dad or another member of the family. Kids can also make drive-in cars out of large boxes. Have fun, be creative and have a good time together.

DO: Watch the movie while you eat dinner together.

TALK: After the movie is over, spend some time talking through the following questions:

- Who is the central character? (The “hero”)
- Who or what does the main character want? (Conscious and subconsciously?)
- Who or what are the obstacles that must be overcome?
- What was the “ultimate conflict” of the drama?
- What wrong choices were made?
- What right choices were made?
- Can we learn anything from the story?

PRAY: Thank God for your meal and fun time together as a family. Pray together: “e thank you, Lord, that you have blessed us with our family. Thank you for our time together tonight. Help us to grow closer to each other and to you. In Jesus Name we pray, Amen.”

For more discussion ideas on specific films visit

MovieNightchat.com

Dinner By Design

Best Use

At any family meal where you can sit down at a set table

Nutritional Value

Playfully reinforcing the truth that design points to a Designer using everyday examples of order and complexity.

Advance Preparation

- Set the dinner table at a time when none of the kids will see you.
- Gather a few objects to use as clear examples of design/purpose, such as an analog watch, a cell phone/smartphone, a paperclip, or even a stack of ABC blocks.
- Serve a meal that involves mixing ingredients.

Serve it up

SAY: During dinner, say you have something amazing to share. . . “I had stacked the plates, napkins and silverware on the table for dinner, but we left the window open and the wind blew through and set the table!”

ASK: “Do you believe me? What if I said that our meal cooked itself and all the ingredients were measured, mixed and baked with no one’s help. Would you believe me?”

Depending on your childrens’ age, you can continue to develop this line of reasoning (i.e., “So even if you didn’t see the table being set, how do you know a person did it? Can tables set themselves?” etc.)

DISCUSS: “Do things we use in the world (cars, buildings, computers, etc.) ever design themselves without a person(s) involved? What can we learn from this?” (i.e., Design points to a Designer)

SHARE: Bring out the examples you selected and talk about their intended purpose. If using the blocks, you can stack them in an orderly fashion and ask, “Suppose you hadn’t seen me stack these, but just walked into the room and saw them on the table. Would you ever think that they stacked themselves?”

OPTIONAL: Discuss other examples, such as the complexity of DNA, the way our body can repair itself after we’ve skinned our knee, or the planets and stars (maybe even go outside and look at them).

READ: Read Psalm 19:1 together: “*The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.*”

DIG DEEPER: Romans 1:18-20 also teaches this principle. Read it and discuss with older kids.

PRAY: Pray together: “*Thank you, Lord, that we can see you in the beauty of the world you made, from a lovely sunset to an intricate leaf or a tiny cell. Everything points to a wonderful Creator. Thank you for our time together. In Jesus Name we pray, Amen.*”

Eggs-cuse Me?

Best Use

As a breakfast meal chat (or “breakfast for dinner”)

Nutritional Value

Illustrating the Gospel and discussing our true status without Christ

Advance Preparation

- Have enough eggs to make omelettes for everyone, including whatever ingredients you want to add (cheese, mushrooms, bacon, etc.).
- Set apart one egg that will be your “rotten egg” (you can use a regular egg, discolor one yourself, or find an actual rotten egg).

Serve it up

SAY: Share that you have something to confess about the omelettes – “I discovered that one of the eggs was rotten but used it anyway to make sure we would have enough food for everyone.”

ASK: “Who still wants to taste their omelette first?” (Wait for reactions and then reveal that you were just kidding and have everyone begin eating).

ASK: During the meal, hold up your designated “rotten egg” and ask what they would have thought if your attitude had been, “I’ll just mix this rotten egg in with all the good ones and no one will know the difference.”

READ: Read James 2:10 together: *“For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.”*

SHARE: Explain that every sin is like one rotten egg in an omelette, it ruins the whole person.

DISCUSS: Ask if anyone knows the solution to our rottenness (i.e., Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross pays the penalty for our sin).

DIG DEEPER: For further study together on how sin impacts human omelettes see Romans 3:23-24.

PRAY: Pray together: *“We thank you, Lord, that even though we are sinners, you have provided a cure for our rottenness. Thank you for your death on the cross and for providing the way to heaven. And thank you for our time together. In Jesus Name we pray, Amen.”*

Face Your Fear!

Best Use

When trying a brand new dish or style of food

Nutritional Value

Learning about facing our fears by trying out new foods, talking about personal challenges and learning how God's love conquers all.

Advance Preparation

- Option 1: Ask your family what new foreign food or dish they would like to try.
- Option 2: Surprise your family with a new meal or foreign dish (the weirder the name the better). You can even decorate the dining room to match the culture of the new food you are trying.
- Think of a story where you conquered a fear.
- Have enough 3x5 cards for everyone.

Serve it up

DISCUSS: Why do we sometimes resist trying new foods? What are we usually afraid of?

ASK: What is one of your biggest fears right now? (i.e., Afraid of the dark, trying to ride a bike, failing at something, standing up for what's right, speaking up, dying, etc)

DO: Take everyone's fears seriously by noting them & praying for them.

SHARE: Think of a time when you conquered a fear (especially if it's related to one mentioned) and share it with the family.

READ: Read 1 John 4:18 together: *"There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear."*

ASK: How do you think God's love drives out fear? (i.e. We know He is always in control, always looking out for us, always with us.)

READ: Mark 4:40 together: *"[Jesus] said to his disciples, 'Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?'"*

ASK: Why do you think faith conquers fear? (i.e., Because trusting that God is our powerful protector means we don't have to be afraid.)

ACTIVITY: Have everyone write out their own **Victory Verse** on a 3x5 card to carry with them throughout the day or to put somewhere as a reminder. You can pick one verse for the whole family or let everyone pick their own. Some great fear-conquering **Victory Verses** include: Deut 31:6; Josh 1:9; 1 Chron 28:20; Ps 4:8; 27:1; 34:4,7; 56:3-4; Prov 29:25; Isa 12:2; 41:10,13; Matt 10:28; Rom 8:15, 31; 1 Cor 16:13; 2 Tim 1:7; Heb 13:6; Jas 4:7; 1 Pet 3:13-14; 1 Jn 2:14

PRAY: Pray together: *"We thank you, Lord, that we don't have to fear people or our circumstances because we know you are always with us. Thank you for our food, our time together and your promises in the Bible. In Jesus Name we pray, Amen,"*

Follow the Instructions

Best Use

As a family cooking activity

Nutritional Value

Use this activity with any recipe to have fun making a special meal and fostering intentional conversation about the instructions God has for our lives..

Advance Preparation

- Select a simple recipe.
- Write out a recipe card with ingredients listed on the front and instructions on the back.
- Purchase/gather ingredients

Serve it up

SAY: “See what I have here? It is a list of ingredients to make our meal/special treat.”

DO: Read the ingredients together aloud.

ASK: “Do you think we could put these ingredients together to make a good meal? Should we just guess how much we need to use of each ingredient and how long we need to cook them? Would that be easy? Would it taste right? What might make cooking easier and the meal taste better?”

DO: Point out the section of the recipe that gives measurements and instructions.

SAY: “With the instructions, we can put all the right amount of ingredients together to make something wonderful. Just like these instructions on how to make a yummy meal, God has given us instructions for our lives called the Bible. Since God made us, He knows us best. When we follow the instructions for this meal, it is much easier and will taste better. In the same way, when we use the Bible and follow God’s instructions, it is much easier and it always turns out better. When we have to make tough decisions, the Bible helps make it easier. When we wonder what we should do, God’s Word gives us the recipe.”

READ: 2 Timothy 3:16 together aloud, which explains that *“all scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.”*

READ: Psalm 119:105: *“Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.”*

EXTRA: You may want to fix a second, smaller portion of the recipe making a point of **IGNORING** the instructions. Ask which they would rather eat when done. Remind them how much better life “tastes” when we follow God’s instructions.

PRAY: “We thank you, Lord, for your special instructions for our lives. Help us to read the Bible often so we know how to make good choices. In Jesus Name we pray, Amen.”

God's Timing

Best Use

As a morning activity and dinner-time faith chat.

Nutritional Value

Learning about God's perfect timing.

Advance Preparation

- You'll need a slow cook crockpot
- Gather recipe ingredients for taco soup
 - 1 pound ground beef
 - 1 onion, chopped
 - 1 (16 ounce) can chili beans, with liquid
 - 1 (15 ounce) can kidney beans with liquid
 - 1 (15 ounce) can whole kernel corn, with liquid
 - 1 (8 ounce) can tomato sauce
 - 2 cups water
 - 2 (14.5 ounce) cans peeled and diced tomatoes
 - 1 (1.25 ounce) package taco seasoning mix
 - 1 (4 ounce) can diced green chili peppers (optional)
 - 1 package ranch-dip mix (optional)

Serve it up

Start this activity in the morning, at least 8 hours before dinner.

SAY: “Tonight we are going to have a warm, yummy soup for dinner! But, I need help because it takes a long time for this soup to be just right.”

DO: In a medium skillet, cook the ground beef until browned over medium heat. Drain, and set aside. Place the ground beef, onion, chili beans, kidney beans, corn, tomato sauce, water, diced tomatoes, and taco seasoning mix in a slow cooker. Mix to blend, and cook on the LOW setting for 8 hours.

READ: Psalm 5:3 together: *“In the morning, LORD, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait expectantly.”*

SAY: “We have put all the ingredients together and now we must wait expectantly for our yummy meal. God’s Word says to bring our requests to Him and wait expectantly for Him to answer.”

ASK: “Does God always answer our prayers immediately?”

ANSWER: “Sometimes God’s answer is for us to wait. He knows best and has the best plans for us.”

READ: Psalm 40:1 together: *“I waited patiently for the LORD; He turned to me and heard my cry.”*

DINNER PRAYER: Before you eat, pray together and thank God that He is in control and knows perfect timing: “We thank you, Lord, that you are in control. Help us to be patient as we wait for your perfect timing. In Jesus Name we pray, Amen.”

DISCUSS: During the meal, talk about how long it took to cook the dinner. What if you had rushed the meal and eaten it before it was ready? In the same way, we have to wait patiently for God’s timing. We don’t always get everything we want when we want it. We can trust that God knows best.

In His Image

Best Use

As an activity while baking cookies together

Nutritional Value

Understanding how we are created in God's image, yet each of us is unique and special

Advance Preparation

- Gather supplies for baking cookies. (You can choose to make from scratch or use store bought)
- Cookie-cutter
- Optional: Gather supplies for decorating the cookies

Serve it up

SAY: We are going to bake some cookies together. We have a fun shape (cookie cutter) to make our cookies with.

DO: Roll out the cookie dough and start using the cookie-cutter to cut out the cookies.

SAY: Notice that the shape of the cookie cutter is the shape of our cookies.

DO: Put the cookies in the oven to bake.

READ: Genesis 1:27 *“So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”*

SAY: We used this cookie cutter to make the same shape over and over again. It says in this verse that God created us in his image or likeness. The dictionary gives this definition of image: “a physical likeness or representation of a person, animal, or thing, photographed, painted, sculptured, or otherwise made visible.” We used the cookie cutter to make a certain shape, but it isn’t the same as the cookie cutter. In the same way, we are created in the “image of God”. We are not God, but created to be like Him and reflect what He is like.

DO: Take the cookies out of the oven and let them cool.

OPTIONAL: Decorate the cookies together. You can use this time to talk about how we are created in God’s image, but that He has created us each as individuals with different gifts and talents. Read Romans 12:4-8 together.

DO: Get your yummy cookies, a glass of milk and enjoy eating your treat with your family.

PRAY: Thank God for the gift of each member of your family. “Thank you, Lord, for bringing us together. Help us work together as a team to complement each other better than ever before. In Jesus Name, we pray, Amen.”

One of a Kind

Best Use

As a family cooking activity

Nutritional Value

An intentional time to talk about how God has made each one of us unique and special for His glory.

Advance Preparation

- Get one index card per person and write the name of a family member across the top of each.
- Purchase/gather ingredients listed below:
 - Individual pizza crusts for each person in your family (you can make your own or use store bought)
 - Tomato sauce
 - Shredded mozzarella cheese
 - Toppings: Pepperoni, peppers, mushrooms, pineapple, sausage, etc.

Serve it up

SAY: “God made each one of us unique and special. We are going to have fun creating our very own pizzas.”

DO: Preheat the oven to 400 degrees and then put the pizza crust on cookie sheets and lay out all of the ingredients in small bowls. (If making your own crust, create different shapes.)

SAY: “You can pick and choose what you would like on your pizza. Each pizza will be different. You can even make funny faces or use toppings to spell out our initials.”

DO: Once your pizzas have been decorated, place in the oven for about 10 minutes or follow the recommended cooking instructions if store bought crust.

DISCUSS: While your pizzas are baking use the time to talk about how different each pizza turned out. “In the same way, God has created each of us with different strengths and talents. We have different color hair and eyes. We have different talents and gifts. He made us each a one of a kind?”

DO: Take the index cards and go through each family member. Talk about what makes that person unique and why they are special. Be sure that these are all positive and encouraging. Write the items on the index card for them to keep.

READ: Read Psalm 139:13-14 aloud together which talks about how God “*knit us together*” and how we are “*fearfully and wonderfully made.*”

DO: Take the pizzas out of the oven, let them cool and enjoy!

OPTIONAL: Announce contest categories for the pizzas and award each pizza for a different reason such as “Most colorful” or “Funniest” or “Most veggies”, etc. Take a picture of each family member with their winning pizza.

PRAY: Thank God for your meal and for His creativity in each member of your family. “We thank you, Lord, for creating each one of us special and unique. Help us use the gifts and talents you have given us to give you glory. In Jesus Name we pray, Amen.”

Together We're Strong

Best Use

As a family cooking activity

Nutritional Value

Use this activity to make a family spaghetti meal together and discuss how God gives us strength as we stand together.

Advance Preparation:

Gather items to prepare a spaghetti dinner (be sure to get one box of dry spaghetti. You can do a can of spaghetti sauce or make your own.)

Serve it up

SAY: “Tonight we are going to make spaghetti for dinner! I need some help getting the spaghetti ready.”

DO: Give each child one piece of dry spaghetti. Ask them to break the spaghetti in half. It is easy to break one piece of spaghetti when it is all alone.

DO: Now take the whole box of dry spaghetti and ask if someone can break the spaghetti all together. Let each child try. It is very difficult to break. Even if they succeed at breaking the stack, focus on the point that it is much harder than breaking just the one.

READ: Read Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 together: *“Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.”*

SAY: “When we stand alone, it is easier for us to fall or make bad choices. God has given us our family and other Christian friends to stand strong together with.”

ASK: What are some ways that we can help each other stand strong? Answers might include praying for each other, using our words to encourage each other, memorizing God’s Word together when we are afraid or tempted, etc.

DO: Finish making your spaghetti together.

PRAY: Before you eat, pray together and thank God for the strength He gives in standing strong together: “We thank you, Lord, for our family. Thank you that we do not have to stand alone. Help us to stand strong together. In Jesus Name we pray, Amen.”

Young Children

Mealtime Moment

“Merry Heart Meal”

Best Use

As a mealtime discussion tradition

Nutritional Value

Infuse fun into family meals through laughter

Advance Preparation

Have the following supplies ready before mealtime.

- A clean joke book or a few zingers printed from a joke website
- A special dessert
- A classic television comedy DVD such as *I Love Lucy* or *Gilligan’s Island*
- A Bible

Serve It Up

Follow these steps to serve up a great experience.

1. Bring some clean jokes and a Bible to the table and announce that tonight is a “Merry Heart” meal.
2. Invite each child to take turns reading one of the jokes. Whether the joke is truly funny or just kind of silly, the kids will have a blast making everyone around the table laugh together. You might even decide to let the children create their own jokes – but be sure to laugh even if they aren’t funny.
3. Read Proverbs 17:22 which describes a merry or joyful heart as good medicine. Ask each person to tell why they think laughter has a healing effect in our lives.
4. Tell your kids about times when the surprise of joy invaded your life (falling in love, discovering you were pregnant, etc.) and think of a time when the surprise of joy overtook a period of sadness or difficulty (an unexpected gift during hard financial season, etc.).
5. Pray a brief prayer of worship to God as the joy giver.
6. During dessert invite the family into the television room to watch an episode of a favorite classic television comedy available on DVD such as *I Love Lucy* or *Gilligan’s Island* in order to give your children a taste of comedy that doesn’t rely upon crude jokes or unwholesome themes.