

# Serve, Play, and Pray this Fall!

by Cathy Baker



## Creative Ways to Serve Together

- ✿ Host a yard sale and give the proceeds to a church fund, missionary, or charity.
- ✿ Donate to a local missions store. Skip the yard sale and spend time together as a family gathering clothes, housewares, and toys to donate. Make plans to stop by for a treat on the way home.
- ✿ Treat an elderly or disabled friend to a yard cleanup day. Rake leaves, trim shrubs, or pull weeds. Yard work offers service opportunities for all ages. Want to go a step further? Leave a bucket of mums or another fall floral arrangement behind to brighten their porch.
- ✿ Bake pumpkin bread together. Wrap up the loaf and attach a small note with Psalm 34:8, "Taste and see that the LORD is good." It's sure to brighten the day of a lonely neighbor or friend when you hand-deliver it with a smile.

## Creative Ways to Play Together

As a family, brainstorm twelve activities that won't require much prep or money. Write each one on a slip of paper and put it in a "Fall Fun" jar. Draw one slip (or more!) every week and decide the best day to carry it out. Some ideas might be:

- ✿ Take a nature walk to engage your senses. What catches your eye? How does a particular leaf feel? (Steering clear of poison ivy, of course! Leaves of three, leave them be. Thank you, Girl Scouts.) What scent fills your senses? What do you hear? (Silence counts!) As you walk, gather color-coated leaves, rocks, acorns, and evergreen branches to decorate your mantle or tabletop when you return home.
- ✿ Go on a picnic. Choose a lovely location. Maybe it's beside a creek, on a mountain, in a park, or your backyard. Children can help plan the menu and prepare the food for the picnic. Or plan to pick up a bucket of chicken. It's not the food that matters but the memories created. Don't forget a blanket/tablecloth, utensils, napkins, and bug spray.
- ✿ Game night! Whoever chooses this slip of paper can choose which game the family plays. Turn off the TV and turn on the laughter.
- ✿ Popcorn & Puzzles. Create a designated table to work on a puzzle throughout the fall season. On the nights this slip of paper is drawn, plan to serve popcorn, lemonade, or any family favorite food/drink.

## Creative Ways to Pray Together

Teaching our children that meaningful prayer can be simple and enjoyable is a gift they will carry throughout adulthood. Here are a few ways to get the creative juices flowing when praying as a family:

- ✿ Walk & Pray. Before you set out as a family, discuss various ways to pray for your neighbors, such as God's blessings, God's healing, for them to draw closer to God, for wisdom as a family, etc. Perhaps some neighbors need specific prayer. Share how God is the only One who truly knows what each person or family needs but that He honors our desire to pray for them. Then, take a walk around your neighborhood. You can pray quietly as you pass neighbors' homes or silently while keeping your eyes open. This helps children to learn that while closing our eyes during prayer helps us concentrate, it's also okay and biblical to pray with our eyes open.
- ✿ Journal as a family. Purchase or create journals for every person in the family. Set aside a few minutes each night to journal together. Consider lighting gas logs or candles while you write. Younger children will enjoy coloring during their time. Setting aside fifteen minutes each night (or weeknights/weekends only) will help develop a pattern that will bless your children for many years to come.
- ✿ Create a prayer board. Hang a designated "Prayer Request Chalkboard" in an accessible place in your home. When prayer requests arise, write them on the board and pray for them after dinner.