

**AMAZING ADVENTURES
CREATIVE CONNECTIONS
AND DARING DEEDS**

40
IDEAS THAT PUT FEET TO YOUR FAMILY'S FAITH

TIM AND ALISON SIMPSON

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For Sam and Anna

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INTRODUCTION: A PLACE TO EXPERIENCE JESUS

What if your family became a place where you could experience Jesus?

We wrote this book to help your family do just that. While churches can be terrific places to find community and support, the way we live out our faith comes mostly from within our homes. What we learn at church pales in comparison to what we learn at home through what family members say and how they behave.

The concept of this book sprung from an “accident.” One year we learned that a friend of ours was going to spend Christmas alone, and we just couldn’t let that happen. We invited our friend over and bought presents and filled a stocking for our special guest. We learned what a gift it was for us to celebrate our Savior’s birth with someone who would not have done so otherwise. Our family wasn’t intentional when we reached out to our friend, but because of that, we began to explore other ways we could intentionally grow in our faith and reach beyond ourselves . . . to “put feet to our faith.”

Whether your family is just beginning your journey of following Jesus or is further along that road, whether it has two parents or one, is comprised of grandparents taking care of grandchildren, or is a group of singles who are your family of friends, the family

is your number one teacher. The discussions and adventures in this book provide the opportunity to live out Jesus' teachings and to experience loving, caring, and giving together in family life. All of the activities can be adapted to fit your needs. Feel free to be creative and adjust them to something that will work better for your situation.

Each chapter has a “Reaching In” activity that draws you into the subject. These are designed to be active and creative, so go all out! Next, the “Reaching Into the Word” section explores what the Bible has to say about the topic and how your family can apply it to life. This section also has age-appropriate questions; however, the age specified is only a guideline. Feel free to use different questions depending on your children's development. The final section, “Reaching Into the World,” takes what you've just learned and moves your family out into your community at large, where you'll reach out to others in innovative and meaningful ways.

Don't be surprised if over time, as you serve, give, and love together, you begin to see those Christlike qualities spill over into your family's everyday routine. You may also find that doing life together through these amazing adventures dramatically brings your family closer together—the way Jesus meant for your family to be.

THE BIG GIVE

And he said, “I tell you that this poor woman has put in more than all the others.”

— LUKE 21:3 (CEV)

With mortgages to pay, high energy costs, taxes, and countless other financial obligations, families can find it difficult to give generously. Regardless of these pressures, a family that sacrifices and gives generously will reap dividends far beyond whatever monetary loss it experiences. When children see their parents selflessly giving of their money, time, and resources, they learn to orient their own lives the same way. Parents will experience the joy that giving can bring to their own individual souls, and to the collective spirit of the family. When a family learns to put others first and to give, it beautifully transforms the culture of the household.

REACHING IN

Gather your family and ask everyone to find their most prized possession and bring it back for “show and tell.” If it’s impractical to bring the item to the meeting place (such as a car or backyard pool), have the family member bring something to represent it, such as car keys or a swimsuit. Then have everyone show their prized possession and answer the following questions:

- Why did you choose this as your most prized possession?
- How difficult would it be to give it away to help someone in need?

We don’t like to think about giving up the things we love most because it often feels as if we’re giving up security, status, and comfort. Ironically, doing so can move us toward a greater reliance on Christ, who gives us true and ultimate security, status, and comfort.

REACHING INTO THE WORD — LUKE 21:1-4

Look up Luke 21:1-4 and read the story. Then answer the following questions:

For ages 4–7

- What did the widow do that impressed Jesus so much?
- What are some ways you can give?

For ages 8–10

- Why did Jesus think the widow had given more than the others?
- How can you give like the widow?

For ages 11–13

- What point did Jesus make about giving?
- Why is it sometimes hard for people to give like the widow?

For ages 14 and up

- What does this story teach us about the difference between sacrificial giving and other kinds of giving?
- How does sacrificial giving change us?

Look again at the prized possessions you gathered earlier. Imagine what it would be like to sacrifice those things if you believed Jesus was asking you to do so. How would it feel to lose them? What would it feel like to keep them in spite of Christ's call to sacrifice them? Do you think that as a family you are open to letting go of anything Jesus asks you to? Explain your answer.

REACHING INTO THE WORLD

Most towns have a place to donate food for redistribution to the poor and hungry. You'll often find different businesses or organizations setting up food drives and asking people to bring in cans of food or some other nonperishable items. Your family's mission is to pack up and give away every bit of nonperishable food in your house. That's right, *all of it*. Pack up all of your canned goods and unopened boxes of food and take them as a family to your local church or another organization that runs a food distribution center.

After the delivery, ask God to use the food given to further His kingdom. Ask Him to continually teach your family to be sacrificial givers and to give you the faith to do so when this stretches your finances.

Sacrificial giving can bring your family closer together and teach you to be selfless with each other and the world, which is what the Christ-centered life is all about.

BFF (BEST FRIENDS FOREVER)

*A friend loves at all times,
and a brother is born for adversity.*

— PROVERBS 17:17

In the movie *Cast Away*, Tom Hanks' character, Chuck Noland, is stranded on a deserted island after a terrible plane crash. In his desperation for companionship, Chuck creates a friend out of a volleyball, which he names "Wilson." Chuck paints a face on the ball, gives it hair, and carries it everywhere. He constantly discusses options and decisions with the ball. It's the only way he can cope with his loneliness.

While we might chuckle at the idea of relating to a ball as if it were our friend, this movie illustrates a universal truth: People need people. Everyone needs friends. They make us laugh, and they

help us through challenges. They cry with us when we're sad, and they listen to us when we need to talk. They support us and work together with us, and as a result, we are stronger. When we have friends, it makes the bad times a little easier and the great times even better.

REACHING IN

Send your family members on a quest through your house to gather pictures of friends. Bring them to your kitchen table, living room, or wherever you have the space for this activity. Spread out all your pictures and take a minute to look at them. Share with each other any memories the pictures might remind you of. Talk about what makes those people special to you.

Next, answer these questions:

For ages 4–7

- Who is your best friend?
- How do best friends treat each other?

For ages 8–10

- How do you make friends?
- How do you keep a friendship strong?

For ages 11–13

- How do you know when someone is a real friend?
- How have you been a real friend?

For ages 14 and up

- What are the qualities of a good friendship?
- Why is it sometimes difficult to be a good friend?

Pair up with another member of your family and act out something (like you might while playing Charades) that shows one quality of a good friend. See if the others can guess what you're acting out. Do as many as you have time for.

REACHING INTO THE WORD — PROVERBS 17:17

The book of Proverbs is a collection of ancient Hebrew sayings thought to be wise words to live by. It's filled with advice for both young and old, rich and poor, powerful and helpless. It also has something to say about friendship and families.

Take a look at this paraphrase of Proverbs 17:17 from *The Message*: “Friends love through all kinds of weather, and families stick together in all kinds of trouble.”

Everyone—big and small, young and old—needs friendship. However, this verse isn't just talking about “fair-weather friends”; it's talking about the people who help you through hard times and challenges. That's the kind of friend we all need.

Put the pictures of your friends on your refrigerator. As you do, say a one-sentence prayer for each person. Leave up the photos as a reminder to always be a Proverbs 17:17 friend and to pray for your friends on a regular basis.

REACHING INTO THE WORLD

Plan a BFF party that honors all of your friends for their support and love. Serve great food, plan fun games, and display pictures of times you've shared with them. Put together gift bags for everyone and include a personal note, thanking each person for specific ways he or she has meant so much to your family.

THE GIFT OF DIRECTION

Show me your paths and teach me to follow.

— PSALM 25:4 (CEV)

Whether you are doing something as simple as driving your car or as life-altering as making a career change, knowing what direction to go takes a real load off the brain. On the flip side, not knowing which way to go, or being lost, can bring on stress, confusion, anxiety, fear, and panic.

God created us to follow Christ's direction. When we go against the way He designed, we can experience, in the most profound way, all those terrible emotions that go along with being lost. We've all been there from time to time. We've all tried to find our own way and have ignored God's direction for us.

Many of us have been blessed by a friend, a mentor, or even a stranger helping us get back on the right path of trusting Jesus and following His lead. As a family, you can do the same for someone else.

REACHING IN

Find a road map of your town, state, or country. Sit down as a family and find a place you enjoy going or would like to go. Use a highlighter to mark the best route for getting there. Discuss the following questions:

- What would it be like to find a place you've never been without a map?
- How does God act as a map for us as a family?

REACHING INTO THE WORD — PSALM 25:1-10

Those who don't walk with Christ are "lost" in life because they are without His direction. To better understand what this is like, have everyone find a pillowcase or some other cloth to use for a blindfold. Take turns blindfolding each other and then trying to walk around your home with no help. Then take turns again, this time with someone guiding you. When you are finished, read Psalm 25:1-10 and answer the following questions:

For ages 4–7

- How does it feel when someone guides us?
- How does it feel when God guides us?

For ages 8–10

- How does it feel to be guided instead of trying to do something alone?
- What are some ways we can trust God and let Him guide us?

For ages 11–14

- Why do people sometimes refuse the guidance of others?
- Why do people sometimes refuse to trust God to guide them?

For ages 14 and up

- When have you stumbled without guidance and wished someone had reached out to help you?
- In the Scripture passage, the psalmist asked God for guidance. Why is it sometimes hard for you to do that?

Feeling lost and alone is a horrible feeling. We panic, make poor choices, and grasp desperately for anything that looks safe, even when it's not. This isn't just true for individuals, but also for families. Seeking guidance from Jesus won't automatically give you a clear picture of what to do, but He will take care of you and keep you on the right track. Pray for God to guide your family and for you to have the faith to rely on Him.

REACHING INTO THE WORLD

More than any other age group, teenagers typically are seen as the ones most in need of guidance. Yet, often they are also the most difficult group to convince that they need guidance. What can your family do to help the teens whom you know?

Think of a teen in your church or community who might be in need of some guidance or a family to connect with. Go shopping for a gift for him or her, such as a Christian CD. Then invite that teen out for dinner or to your house for a home-cooked meal. Spend the evening playing games and visiting, and present the gift to the

teen. End the evening by praying together with the teen, thanking God for him or her and for the fun time you had together, and asking for direction in the teen's life.