

THE
VERY BEST,
HANDS-ON,
KINDA DANGEROUS
FAMILY
DEVOTIONS

52

ACTIVITIES YOUR
KIDS WILL NEVER
FORGET

TIM SHOEMAKER

THE 
VERY BEST,
HANDS-ON,
KINDA DANGEROUS
FAMILY 
DEVOTIONS

52
ACTIVITIES YOUR
KIDS WILL NEVER
FORGET

TIM SHOEMAKER


Revell

a division of Baker Publishing Group
Grand Rapids, Michigan

© 2019 by Tim Shoemaker

Published by Revell
a division of Baker Publishing Group
PO Box 6287, Grand Rapids, MI 49516-6287
www.revellbooks.com

Printed in the United States of America

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—for example, electronic, photocopy, recording—without the prior written permission of the publisher. The only exception is brief quotations in printed reviews.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Shoemaker, Tim, author.
Title: The very best, hands-on, kinda dangerous family devotions : 52 activities your kids will never forget / Tim Shoemaker.
Description: Grand Rapids : Baker Publishing Group, 2019.
Identifiers: LCCN 2018045152 | ISBN 9780800735555 (pbk.)
Subjects: LCSH: Christian education—Home training. | Christian education of children. | Object-teaching. | Families—Religious life.
Classification: LCC BV1590 .S56 2019 | DDC 249—dc23
LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2018045152>

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the Holy Bible, New International Version®. NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com. The “NIV” and “New International Version” are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.™

Scripture quotations labeled NLT are from the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2007, 2013, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

All activities and projects in this book are intended to be performed under adult supervision. Appropriate and reasonable caution is required at all times, and the suggested activities cannot replace common sense and sound judgment. Observe safety and caution at all times. The author and publisher disclaim all liability for any damage, mishap, or injury that may occur from engaging in the activities featured in this book.

19 20 21 22 23 24 25 7 6 5 4 3 2 1



To Andy and Laura, Mark and Sarah,
and Luke and Beth

May this book be one more tool to help you teach
the next generation about God,
and the principles he's given us to live by.

“Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things
in your law.” (Ps. 119:18)



**But as for you, be strong and do not give up,
for your work will be rewarded.**

2 CHRONICLES 15:7

CONTENTS

Introduction 19

Ending the Stop and Start Syndrome 21

Let's begin with fourteen tips to help make sure you don't get tripped up and quit along the way.

OBJECT LESSONS AND ACTIVITIES

1. TP Blaster 29

THEME: Holy Spirit control / walking in the Spirit versus living in our own power

We'll convert a leaf blower to shoot toilet paper nearly thirty feet in the air. You'll be laughing so hard the first time you use it you may need a little of the TP yourself. This will launch a discussion about walking in our own power versus walking in the power of the Holy Spirit.

2. Electro-Pickle 34

THEME: Battle between old and new nature / defeating the old nature

When an ordinary dill pickle is connected to an electric current, it lights up and flickers like there's a battle going on inside. This makes a perfect opener to discuss the fight that goes on between our old and new nature—and how to end the battle for good.

3. Frankenstein Factor 40

THEME: Dangers of messing with the sin we're to avoid

We'll look at a trailer from the original classic horror film. The storyline illustrates chilling parallels to the Christian life. When we become obsessed with things that are wrong . . . sin that God has pronounced dead . . . we can bring them to life, creating a monster that can destroy us. We'll talk about the danger of resurrecting sin that is, by Jesus's death and resurrection, dead and buried.

4. Totaled 46

THEME: God forgives, but that doesn't mean there aren't consequences

Get a junk appliance like a microwave oven—or even something bigger, like a car—and gather the family and maybe friends together, arm them with an assortment of sledgehammers, and you'll have one fun party. Obviously, the appliance or whatever will never be the same. This will fast-lane you into a discussion about the things we do for fun or thrills. Sometimes there are consequences—things we can't fix.

5. The Right Combination 51

THEME: There is absolute truth

We'll challenge the kids to open combination locks—without the right combination. The fact that only one sequence of numbers can unlock each lock will open a discussion about absolute truth and unlocking the truth of God's Word.

6. Secret Message 56

THEME: The real you behind the façade . . . especially when the heat is on

We'll try out some "inks" that are nearly invisible—until we put a candle up to the page. This will ignite a talk about the message we're really sending when the heat is on.

7. Take a Stab at Kindness 61

THEME: Talking kindly to and about others

The need to be kind when we talk to and about others comes through loud and clear in a little illustration that shows how our words can cause unseen damage.

8. Slip-Sliding Away 66

THEME: Run from temptation . . . before you get on the slippery slope and can't stop

Plastic sheeting, dish soap, and a garden hose are all that you need to make a great slip 'n' slide for the kids. A running start puts them into a slide they won't be able to stop. That leads to a talk about another type of slippery spot we can get ourselves into . . . like running toward temptation instead of away from it.

9. Safety Line 70

THEME: Understanding how the "fear of the Lord" keeps us safe

A trip to a climbing wall will help the kids reach new heights in understanding the "fear of the Lord" as described so many times in the book of Proverbs. Just like the climbers wouldn't go without a safety line, kids will be reminded not to cut free from the One who truly holds their lives in his hands.

10. Lights Out 75

THEME: Finding God's will for your life

Hide \$5 bills in a dark room—then set the kids free to feel their way around in the dark to find them. After five minutes, help them each find their \$5 with a flashlight. We'll use this to shed some light on finding something of a whole lot more value . . . God's will for their lives.

11. House of the Dead 79 +12

THEME: The danger of pornography—and deliverance from it

A trip to a funeral home will help you bring to life the dangers of pornography. Proverbs 5:5 talks about the whorish woman: "Her feet go down to death; her steps lead straight to the grave." We'll look at how it is essential to avoid pornography like death itself, and how to break free if you're in its grip.

12. Well Done 86

THEME: When life is bad, remember God may be making you into someone better

Get the kids together around a grill and make some burgers just the way they like them. Offer them a choice, the burger cooked to perfection or a mound of raw

ground beef on a bun. Nobody will argue which one is more appetizing. This gets a discussion cooking about the tough things we face in life. Sometimes God has to put us on the grill and turn up the heat to make us better, more appetizing as a person, so we can truly nourish others.

13. Catching Fire 90

THEME: Burning for God with passion versus being passive in our faith

Have the kids make an X on a piece of wood using toothpaste and two other pastes that come in tubes. Then put a lighter to each one—and they'll find only one of them will catch fire. This will ignite a discussion about the kind of person they want to be—one who is unaffected when they hear the Word or one who burns in dedication and obedience to God.

14. Surf's Up 95

THEME: Real friends—how to be one / what to look for in one

Imagine a piece of plywood balanced on top of four balloons. Now get one of the kids to balance on it. Definitely harder than it looks, but with the help of a friend or two, very doable. This starts things off on the right foot for a talk about genuine friends, how they help us stand strong and stay balanced in a society full of hot air.

15. Snow Fort 101

THEME: Doing things that count for eternity

For obvious reasons, this one only works outdoors, in the winter, and in places where you'd get enough snow to make a fort. Piles at the edge of a parking lot work well. Make a snow fort as big and elaborate as you can. Then grab some cocoa and talk to your kids about how everything they labored to build will melt away in a matter of weeks.

16. Christianity and the \$2 Bill 105

THEME: A true relationship with Christ changes everything and should make us inseparable from Christ

\$2 bills are rare, and a closer look should remind us of some important things about the Christian life.

17. Brain Dead 110

THEME: Guarding our minds against anything other than a truly Christian worldview

Make some molded Jell-O brains and have fun with the kids dropping them from a second-story window or tall ladder. Then open their minds with a discussion about their brains—how we're to guard our minds from being deceived.

18. Life Lessons from a Graveyard 116

THEME: Importance /value of building and guarding a genuinely good reputation

A trip to a local cemetery provides the perfect opportunity to talk about how our lives will be summed up someday.

19. Sick Smoothie 122

THEME: Living right for God in gratitude for his love

Make smoothies together, but instead of pure ingredients, mix some nasty stuff in there as well. Not exactly the type of drink you'd want to offer a friend. How about someone who saved your life? This will blend perfectly into a conversation about the kind of life we offer to God, the One who gave his Son to save us.

20. Marshmallow Man 126

THEME: The devastating effects of pride

Marshmallows in the microwave puff up and actually look good at first, but they soon mutate into hideous blobs and will actually catch fire if you let them cook too long. After a little demo, the kids will be ripe for a talk about pride and how it can easily and quickly destroy them.

21. A Real Slimeball 131 **+12**

THEME: Warning girls about guys who want to use them—and reminding guys how to treat a girl on a date

A classic recipe for making your own batch of slime can lead to some fun and messy time with the kids. This will give you a chance to warn girls to avoid "slimeballs"—guys who just want to use them physically—and to remind boys not to become that kind of guy.

22. Fast Freeze 138

THEME: Hard hearts lead to shattered lives

We'll make a supercold, 100-degrees-below-zero solution capable of freezing things rock-solid in less than two minutes. We'll freeze hot dogs and pickles—then shatter them with a hammer. The kids will love this! Then we'll tie in an equally chilling truth about the danger we face when our hearts grow cold and hard.

23. Watermelon Drop 144

THEME: Holding on to purity, integrity, honoring parents, honoring God, and staying true to our faith

There are things the Bible tells us to hold on to and things we should let go. The world often urges our kids to do the opposite. We'll drop some watermelons from a ladder or second-story window to illustrate the consequences in a messy but unforgettable way.

24. Brain Food 149

THEME: Be careful what you watch, read, listen to, and so on; allowing garbage in makes us less usable for God's purposes for us

We'll use that brain Jell-O mold again—but this time to talk about the things we allow in our minds.

25. Easy Target 153

THEME: Going to church helps us stay on fire for Christ . . . avoiding church makes our passion easier to extinguish

A fire and squirt guns will highlight the importance of Christian community.

26. Get a Grip 157

THEME: Keep your hands "clean" if you want to have a good grip on the Christian life

An easy task becomes nearly impossible as we illustrate the importance of living a "clean" life.

27. LEGO Lesson 161

THEME: Building toward the man or woman God wants us to be

A box of LEGOs features a great cover picture of the finished project. But when you open the box, what do you get? Bags of pieces and an instruction manual. This illustrates an important principle of life. We might have a great picture of how our lives will be . . . but they don't come ready-made.

28. Sack of Potatoes 1 166

THEME: We need to forgive others of the wrongs they do to us

Failing to forgive others is a choice we make—and not a wise one. Yet forgiveness doesn't mean we put up with abuse—or trust the person who wronged us. We'll use a sack of potatoes in this two-part lesson to talk about our need to forgive others—even those who don't deserve it.

29. Sack of Potatoes 2 172

THEME: Refusing to forgive others hurts us . . . and our relationship with God

Using the decomposing potatoes from lesson 28, we'll look at how failing to forgive others really hurts ourselves—in a variety of nasty ways.

30. Bogus Bucks 176

THEME: Avoiding the temptation to be a hypocrite

A look at some counterfeit money pays off big when we look at the danger of being a counterfeit Christian.

31. Bean Bag Bucket 180

THEME: Aiming at the kind of character we want to develop

Tossing bean bags in a bucket—then doing it blindfolded—turns into an eye-opening talk about the kind of character we want to develop as we grow up.

32. Give Them a Hand 185

THEME: Does God give us more than we can handle? Yes . . . but he doesn't expect us to handle it alone

Asking the kids to lift something beyond their ability helps them grasp a weighty truth. God often gives us more than we can handle . . . and he doesn't expect us to do it alone.

33. Tug-o-War 190

THEME: Winning over temptation

A simple game of tug-o-war helps kids understand that we will often be in a battle with temptation . . . and it's the side we reinforce that's going to win.

34. Weighed Down 196

THEME: The need for salvation

Sitting one of the kids in a chair and loading them down with weights does more than just keep them still while you're teaching this devotional . . . it illustrates the essential need for salvation.

35. Good Fear 201

THEME: Fear of the Lord

Not all fear is bad. Sometimes good fear can save our lives. A blindfolded walk on a makeshift balance beam will help us get a balanced view of the early church, and how a healthy fear was one of the things that made the church so strong.

36. Messy but Valuable 207

THEME: You still have value—even when your life is a mess

A \$20 bill and a bottle of ketchup will give your kids a priceless lesson about their own value—even if they think their life is a mess.

37. Storm Survivor 212

THEME: Putting God's Word into practice

As a Christian, how do you keep your head above water in the storms of life? You'll help them find the answer by dropping a couple of bowling balls in water. One will sink, the other will float.

38. Mug Cake 217

THEME: Self-esteem and trusting God to make something good of our lives

A handful of ingredients are mixed in a mug and microwaved for under two minutes. Individually, the ingredients aren't very exciting, but in the hands of a "baker," they're all that's needed to make a great little cake. This will open the topic of giving God what they have, even if it doesn't seem like much, and seeing what he can make with it.

39. The Most Dangerous Cake Recipe 222

THEME: Resisting temptation

We'll make a mug cake again, a dessert that bakes in a microwave in less than two minutes. This could be a problem for anyone who wants to watch their weight, especially if they love cake. In real life, we're always just minutes from satisfying nearly any temptation imaginable. We'll talk about the importance of resisting temptation.

40. Pick Your Poison 229

THEME: Dangers of compromising, letting the world seep in

Take the kids to the grocery store and give them fifteen minutes to find as many things as possible with the "harmful or fatal if swallowed" warning on the label. Right in the middle of a store with all kinds of nutritious food, they'll find things that can kill them. This opens the aisle for a discussion about the real world we face—where we find plenty of good things to choose but also many that will poison us if we ingest them.

41. Balance Beam 234

THEME: Forgetting the past and focusing on the future

Set up a board for a makeshift balance beam and time the kids walking across it. Now time them again, but this time they'll hold a mirror in front of them so they're actually looking behind them. This will lead us on a discussion about moving forward in life. It's difficult enough to walk through life while looking ahead. It's much more difficult if we're always looking backward. They'll see how important it is to keep their eyes on Jesus, forget what is behind, and press ahead.

42. Wrong Destination 239

THEME: Genuine repentance and turning an area of your life around

Take your kids on a drive to someplace special for ice cream or a snack, but totally pass your destination. Let the kids worry a little bit, then turn around and go back. This paves the way for a discussion about what we do when we find ourselves in a very different place in life than where we should be.

43. Spudzooka 244

THEME: Anger—its effects, its roots, and how to defuse it

A potato gun can be a lot of fun—especially watching the potato burst into mashed potatoes when you hit a close-range target. This will trigger a discussion about an explosion that isn't so funny . . . anger.

44. Dead and Buried 251

THEME: Truly forgiving involves forgetting

Wrap a pound of ground beef (or, better yet, some fresh roadkill) in plastic and bury it with the kids' help. A week later, dig it up and let them take a good look and a big whiff. Totally sick and nasty. Now your family will be ripe to talk about true forgiveness and how it means we don't go back and dig things up again.

45. Lessons from a Light Stick 256

THEME: Read your Bible regularly

A glow stick looks good in its packaging but won't do you any good unless you take it out and crack it. Bibles come in all kinds of packaging, but unless you crack one open, you'll never benefit from its light either.

46. Kryptonite and Christians 261

THEME: Avoid the things that can weaken or destroy us

Superman avoided kryptonite . . . the one thing that could make him weak and destroy him. What is your "kryptonite," and are you avoiding it or seeing how close you can get?

47. The Seen and Unseen 266

THEME: We can't see the devil and his demons . . . but they exist

Using a black light in a dark room will reveal all kinds of things we wouldn't have seen under normal lighting. This helps us shed light on the spiritual world. Just because we don't see it doesn't mean it isn't there.

48. Not Much to Offer 271

THEME: Give what little you have to God . . . he can make great things from it

A small amount of polymer expands like crazy into "snow" when you add water. Often, kids don't feel they have much to offer. We'll show them that, in the right hands, little things mean a lot.

49. Fiction Filter 276

THEME: The Word is our source of truth in a world of lies

We live in a world where the lines between fact and fiction can easily become blurred. A glass of dirty water and a water-purifying bottle or pitcher is all we'll need to illustrate how God gave us his Word as a filter of sorts to help us discern between the lies and the truth.

50. Pressure Cooker 281

THEME: Do we have an anger problem? Pressure situations are the true test

Put a bar of Ivory soap in the microwave and it won't melt. It expands in all kinds of weird and freaky ways. This paves the way to talk about how we react when we're in pressure situations. Do we freak out and get angry?

51. Barfing Bucket 285

THEME: Being dishonest and compromising instead of doing what we know to be right

We'll use a little chemistry lesson and a bucket to make the point that when we compromise on our convictions and don't tell the truth or do the right things, a whole lot more compromise will gush out to follow!

52. Watch Your Step 291

THEME: The role of parents is to guide and protect their kids. Parents aren't trying to cramp your style . . . they're trying to keep you from becoming crippled

A rattrap maze will lead kids to understand the need to avoid traps in life while helping them understand how God designed parents to help.

A Quick Key for Parents



Activities with this symbol are a little more on the dangerous side and will require some extra caution on your part. Additional safety tips and reminders are also included in these lessons.



Activities with this symbol may not be age appropriate for younger children. Please use your discretion when teaching these lessons.

INTRODUCTION

When my boys were growing up, I took them to a stock car race for a family devotional. Not a NASCAR race, just a regional event for weekend racers.

We did what most guys do at a stock car race. We each picked “our” car on the opening lap and cheered them on once they got the green flag. We totally enjoyed the races . . . the bumping, the action at the turns, and the dramatic finishes. We didn’t talk at all about spiritual things—until the drive home.

“Tell me what you saw tonight,” I said. “Boil it down. What was going on?”

I let them think for a moment.

“A bunch of men driving around in a circle,” one of my sons said. “Trying to get ahead of each other.”

“And most of the drivers ended up right where they started,” another added. “With nothing.”

I couldn’t have asked for a better, more perfect entrance ramp to the things I wanted to talk to them about.

“And that’s how most men live their entire lives,” I said. “They’re going around in circles, trying to get ahead of each other—but in the end they end up just where they started. With nothing.”

I let that sink in for a moment. “You have a choice. You can go the way of the world . . . and if you do, get ready for a lifetime on the oval track. But I want to encourage you to take the journey of life with God. He’s got a plan for you. A person for you to become. He won’t just lead you in circles.”



The same is true for your kids. As parents, we protect our kids, we provide for them, and we prepare them for the future. Teaching our kids spiritually is essential for all three of those things.

I want to help you get on track teaching your kids about God—and the principles he’s given us to live by. More than just get you on the road with this, I want to help you shift spiritual training for the kids into high gear. You can do this. As a mom or dad. As a couple. As a single parent. As a grandparent. You can effectively teach your kids spiritual truth. You’ll find it’s easy. Powerful. And best of all . . . unforgettable.

So buckle up, my friend. Let’s shift into high gear.

ENDING THE STOP AND START SYNDROME

I live in the Chicago area, and every winter our roads get potholes. Hit one of those and you can lose control, knock the alignment out on your car, get a flat, or damage a rim.

Maybe you've hit a few potholes in your attempts to lead family devotions before. You started with good intentions, but somewhere along the line you end up on the side of the road—going nowhere.

I've hit my fair share of potholes and was “stop and start” with family devotions until I discovered how well the kids responded to object lessons and activities like you'll find in this book. Ideally, once you start family devotions, you'll want to be consistent. Let me race through fourteen tips to help you avoid some of the common potholes that can slow you down, make you suddenly swerve off course, or bring your family devotions to a stop.

1. Remember, these are devotionals—not Bible studies.

This book is packed with object lessons and activities—each designed to get a nugget of truth across to your kids. The whole idea is to do something with the family—relatively quickly—and in a way that both you and the kids enjoy. Resist the urge to draw these out into long “sit down and listen” lessons. The kids won't enjoy them, and neither will you. If that happens, the likelihood that you'll quit goes way up.

2. Follow up the activity with a brief tie-in to a biblical principle.

Generally, that tie-in can be done in five minutes. Go longer if the kids ask questions, but avoid the trap of getting repetitive. If you give a speech, you'll lose them. The point is to stop before they get bored and you'll be much more likely to do family devotions next week.

3. Have family devotions once a week, but make them good.

I know, once a week doesn't sound like much. But that's fifty-two nuggets of truth etched in their hearts and minds every year. If you try to do active, object lesson-oriented family devotions daily, you'll likely run out of ideas or skimp on the prep, and the kids won't get as much out of it. Either way, the tendency to burn out and quit is high.

If you're already in the habit of leading the kids in some kind of devotional daily—great. Just add something active and visual, like what you'll find in this book, once a week.

4. Pick a time that works best for their schedules.

If the kids are missing something important to them, it will be hard to hold their attention no matter what you do. If you don't hold their attention, you'll probably quit.

5. If the kids ask a question that stumps you, don't let it stop your lesson.

Whatever you do, don't just guess at an answer. Tell them you'll have to get back to them. Then search the Scriptures, talk to your pastor, or whatever. As long as you get back to them, you're fine. And remember, there are some questions only God can answer.

6. If the kids seem bored, don't give up.

They may be rebelling on the whole thing a bit. Hang in there. Pick short, fun devotionals. They'll come around.

7. If the kids have a hard time settling down, go with the flow.

Avoid ordering them to be quiet. There are worse things than your kids thinking that learning about God can be a fun time.

8. When tying in the lesson, incorporate food whenever possible.

If they're snacking, they'll be more patient. Less distracted. Their hands are busy, and so are their mouths. They'll enjoy the lesson—and so will you. When everyone is enjoying the time, you'll be more likely to keep going with weekly family devotions.

9. Keep this book in front of you when you tie in the lesson.

If you try to do a devotional lesson without the book, you'll likely go long and still miss key points. Your kids' focus will drift, and *wham*—you just hit a pothole. Also, if you try to remember everything, you'll have to put in so much prep time that your chances of quitting go way up. Kids don't mind if you use a book. But here's the key: jot notes in the margins. Highlight sections. The kids need to know you've studied. Prepared.

If they think you're looking at the chapter for the first time as you go over it with them, they'll think the lesson you're teaching isn't all that important to you—or that you think they're not smart enough to notice you didn't prepare. Either way, you've just hit another pothole.

10. Go with the kids you have.

If your kids have friends over, you can still have family devotions as long as you don't embarrass your kids. Keep the devotional activity part fun and your talk time short. Most kids are really open to—even hungry for—some adult interaction in their lives.

And if one of your kids is out of the house for some event, do the devotions with the kids you have. Some weeks you'll never have devotions if you wait until everybody is together. Just catch up later with the one who missed the devotions.

11. Beware of crazy schedules.

Sometimes the potholes are all the activities and sports we sign our kids up for. There's hardly any time left to teach them God's truth. You may want to rethink how many extracurricular activities you allow for the kids.

12. Reinforce the application throughout the week after devotions.

Be smart about it. Don't use this like a club on the kids, such as: "Katy—talk nice to your sister! That's exactly what we were talking about in our family devotions yesterday." Too much of that and kids will think family devotions are just part of your agenda to modify their behavior. A better practice is to call it on yourself. "Hey, kids, did you hear how I just talked to Mom? That was wrong, and it was exactly what I was talking about yesterday." Then tell your wife you're sorry. The kids will learn by your example.

13. If you have multiple ages present, target the oldest.

This is critical. If you try to make sure you teach in such a way that your youngest understands everything, your oldest will think family devotions are "kid stuff." You'll have a really difficult time pulling the older ones in after that. Also, your older kids are closer to the danger, and you have less time to get through to them before they leave the house. For all these reasons, target your older kids with the content of your devotions and how you present it. You can always give a little extra explanation to your younger ones later—or, better yet, let your older kids help explain.

14. Be careful to put the Word into practice yourself.

If you tell your kids how important it is to follow God's principles for living, be sure you're striving to live that out in your own life—especially at home. If you get sloppy—especially with how you treat your mate, if you're married—you'll lose your kids' respect. If they don't respect you, they won't receive what you tell them in family devotions time. You'll sense that, and it will make it *really* hard to keep going with family devotions.

No matter how much you try to avoid the “stop and start” syndrome, likely you’ll run into weeks when life gets in the way and you skip family devotions. Don’t beat yourself up. Get back at it the following week.

Remember, leading family devotions is one of the greatest ways we can *prepare*, *provide*, and *protect* our kids in this stage of their lives—and for their future. Don’t let a pothole stop you.



OBJECT LESSONS
and **ACTIVITIES**





TP Blaster

THEME: Holy Spirit control / walking in the Spirit versus living in our own power

THINGS YOU'LL NEED

- Leaf blower—the more powerful the better, with an oval-shaped snout opening
- Extension cord (25 feet is ideal) and access to electrical outlet if leaf blower is electric
- 4-inch paint roller; pick the smoothest moving one you can find
- Duct tape—or for a very sturdy mounting, a drill, a bit, and two bolts with nuts to attach the paint roller handle to the end of the leaf blower snout
- Flat metal file if the paint roller handle is rounded
- At least six single-ply, thousand-sheet rolls of toilet paper

Advance Prep

If you already have a leaf blower, great. If you're purchasing one, make sure that the end of the snout where the air blows out is oval, not round, so you'll get a more concentrated blast of air directed at the TP.

Buy a really free-wheeling roller. The cheap ones don't spin as easily or quickly, and you don't want anything inhibiting your demonstration. I went to a paint shop to find one. If the handle is rounded, it will be tougher to mount to the snout without it tipping from side to side. Take a metal file and flatten out a spot on the handle. That will keep the roller mounted square—which means the roll of TP will be held in the perfect position.

Now position the roller at the end of the leaf blower snout, and either wrap with duct tape to fasten or drill through both the handle and the snout. Slide the bolts through, snug down the nuts, and you're ready to roll—or better yet, unroll!

Make sure the tube in the TP roll is nice and round for a free-flowing experience. It's a good idea to make sure each of the rolls has been unrolled a few turns before you start. Generally, the manufacturer glues down the leading edge.

Place the tube on the roller. It won't fit snugly—you'll need to hold the blower on a bit of an angle so the TP doesn't fall off. The end of the paper should roll off the tube away from the leaf blower.

Okay—give it a try. Your kids are going to love this as much as you do!

Running the Activity

The TP Blaster should be plugged in and ready to go, but drape a towel over it to keep it hidden for now. Now call the kids over.

Hand a roll of toilet paper to one of the kids, explaining that they'll be in a race to unroll the paper. They can use their two forefingers as an axle to twirl the paper off the tube, or they can use one finger as an axle and use the other hand to pull the paper off the tube. If they choose the second method, explain that if they rip the paper three times they'll be disqualified. Demo this for them so they know exactly how to do it.

If you have enough kids, mention that one of them will work together with you, but you'll have to unload two rolls instead of just one—and you'll use a different method to do that.

Now give the kid unrolling the TP by hand a head start. Once they begin, uncover the leaf blower and hand it to the kid helping you. Load a roll of TP on the paint roller, and show him or her how to hold the leaf blower at an angle so the TP roll doesn't slide off. Now you're set . . . turn on the leaf blower.

Get the next roll ready and pop it on as soon as the first one is done.

Teaching the Lesson

The one unrolling the TP by hand was working as hard as they could, trying not to become disqualified. This is how many people try to live the Christian life. Sometimes we're working so hard, just trying not to mess up.

- To be the kind of Christian we should be
- To be the kind of son or daughter we should be
- To be a good brother or friend or student or whatever

The truth is we don't feel we can do much more than we are doing now. And sometimes even when we try our best, we still mess up—or think we could have done better.

But that's where we need something beyond ourselves . . . the power of the Holy Spirit to help us. The modified leaf blower represents the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. You didn't expect that we'd have something like this leaf blower to unroll the TP—and probably didn't have any idea it would be so effective. And that's how it is with the Holy Spirit. When we give the Holy Spirit control in our lives, he does the unexpected. The unforeseeable. Often, he changes our hearts.

If we really desire to give the Holy Spirit control so he can change us and help us be the person we should be through all circumstances, we need to let him lead.

Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives. (Gal. 5:25 NLT)

Letting the Spirit lead is often as simple as *asking* him to lead . . . and then following when he does.

Why don't we follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives? Sometimes it boils down to us wanting to do whatever it is we want to do.

- If we're in a bad mood, sometimes we don't want to change.
- If we're mad at someone, we don't really want to forgive them.
- If we're lusting after someone, we don't want to turn off the fantasy.
- If we're doing something wrong, sometimes we don't want to stop.

All of these examples are old nature things—the very things the Holy Spirit wants to help us overcome. If we want to experience the power of the Holy Spirit working in our lives, often it means we need to exercise some self-control as well. Sometimes that means controlling ourselves enough to ask God for help.

A person without self-control
is like a city with broken-down walls. (Prov. 25:28 NLT)

Think about ancient times and a city with broken-down walls. How safe was someone who lived in a city like that?

People living in a city without walls were vulnerable to attack. To raiders that would come in to steal and destroy. How are you vulnerable to danger when you don't practice self-control? Can you think of an example?

Sometimes self-control itself is hard. Sometimes we feel we have so little self-control. God can help us with that as well. One of the fruit of the Spirit, one of the things the Holy Spirit produces in our lives, is *self-control*.

But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. (Gal. 5:22–23 NLT)

Living the Christian life to the fullest isn't something God intends for us to do on our own, solely with our own power. He has given us the Holy Spirit.

Summing It Up

We need to give the Holy Spirit permission to work in our lives. To change our hearts. Our desires. To give us more self-control. And we need to exercise

self-control ourselves. This is a real key to helping us live more like a Christian and keeping us out of danger. Without it, we're vulnerable to attacks from the enemy.

So be careful how you live. Don't live like fools, but like those who are wise. Make the most of every opportunity in these evil days. Don't act thoughtlessly, but understand what the Lord wants you to do. Don't be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit. (Eph. 5:15–18 NLT)

So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves. (Gal. 5:16 NLT)

God isn't looking to rob us of fun. God gives us the Holy Spirit to *rescue* us from things that are wrong, from things that can hurt us, from things that come from our enemy, the devil and his demons.

God gives us his Holy Spirit to make changes inside us, in our hearts. He uses the Holy Spirit to do things in and through us that we could never predict. Things that would be impossible on our own.

So when we're struggling with our attitude, or with sin in any way, let's remember to exercise a little self-control . . . and let's remember to give the Holy Spirit permission to make changes in us. As we do that, we'll find that our walk as a Christian will get stronger.

- We won't mess up as much.
- We'll have fewer regrets.

And each time we give the Holy Spirit control, we'll be growing more and more into the person God wants us to be, so we can accomplish the good plans he has for us.