

The Family Forum

Growing Together in Faith and Family Life

September 2010

From My House To Yours

Back-to-school time seems to mark the beginning of a new year for me, instead of January 1st. Every fall there is this sense of reflection for me. I look back on the months behind, the years behind, and I reflect on goals we've achieved in our family and memories we've made. I also look to what's coming, what I hope will happen, what I dream about for the next four seasons of our lives.

Last fall my youngest son started school and once the reflections started, they went **way** back, to being pregnant with my first son, to the stillbirth of our middle son, and to the utter joy of bringing home our third son from the hospital. It all came to mind, and with it came an intense time of putting away memories and lessons learned in my treasure box of motherhood, of learning

to let go in a big way of the full-time job of caring for a young man.

In the coming years there will be a whole lot more letting go to do. The question that always brews in my heart is *What are they taking with them as they go, as they grow, as they become the men they were made to be?* There's so much I want to put into their years at home, and for me that means a lot of intentionality and discipline (not normally my strong points!)

I'm on a journey of constant discovery. What does a healthy family look like? What does it mean to have a strong marriage? How do I build faith in my home - both for us parents and for our kids?

I'd love to share the journey with you, and so The Family Forum is



Josiah-9, Anna-Me, Elijah-5

born - to share what I'm learning, what you're learning - successes, failures, stories, ideas and resources. A forum for families who are on the same journey.

The newsletter will provide a written account, a place to record the journey.

The [website](http://thefamilyforum.ca) will provide a place to connect with others and learn more about the journey.

I'm ready to take the first step. Won't you join me? - *Anna Sklar*

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Family Library

Find our September 2010 Amazon.ca picks at

thefamilyforum.ca

We create sample orders of about \$39 - that means free shipping for you!

Connection Points - Ideas For Building Community

MEN - Josh Sklar

Wings, my friends, it's all about wings. *Wild Wings* restaurant boasts 100 different kinds of wings - from Honey Garlic (my personal favourite) to Szechwan to 5-Alarm-Hot. Every guy I've told wants to know a) where is it? and b) when can we go? And why is that? Because somehow chicken wings are part of our genetic make up and BBQ sauce runs in our veins. We might not say much as we empty the plates and down antacids, but not much needs to be said. It is enough that we sat at the table as brothers and that we joined the sacred fraternity of deep-fried. Wings bring us together as no other food can. So call the team, call the boys, and call me. I'll see you at the pub for wing night!



WOMEN - Amy Phillips

After a wonderful time of fun in the sun over the summer months, it's time to get back to schedules and routines.

In all the hustle and bustle of a new school year don't forget to mark an important date on your calendar... Girl Time! After the first few weeks of school have come and gone, choose a time to settle in with some of your special girlfriends to reconnect, update and just plain relax. Choose a park or an area by the lake and roll out a picnic blanket. Have each woman bring her favourite snack and some pictures from the summer to share. This casual and welcoming atmosphere is also a great way to introduce a new friend to the group.



FAMILIES - Anna Sklar

There's still plenty of great BBQ weather to enjoy during the autumn months of the year!

So heat up the grill and call a family or two, or a few. Ask each family to bring their own meat and a side dish of their choice. Your family can provide the drinks for the group.

Spend some time playing outdoor games with the kids, and spend some time chatting with the adults. You could ask each family to share their best memories from the summer.

Make time to enjoy some good food and good friends this month!



Contributions Needed!

Here's what we need for the October issue:

- *Your Family Favourite Recipe*
- *Connection Point for FAMILIES (about 100-125 words)*
- *Your idea for Reaching Out (about 100-125 words)*

Deadline is September 15th

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Health - Back To Basics

Keeping your family healthy can seem a little overwhelming at times. There are new studies conducted all the time that seem to contradict each other and it can be hard to know what to do and where to start.

But there are some things that never change when it comes to health, so let's get back to basics, shall we?

Let's focus on the tried and true facts that have stood the tests of time and research. These are the facts we've all heard a million times, the ones that we've all got stored away in our memory files. →

- **FOOD** - 5 to 10 servings of fruit and vegetables per day (dark orange and green vegetables are especially important), lean meat and fish, whole grains, less sugar
- **WATER** - 8 glasses per day - juice, pop and caffeinated beverages are not the best substitutes
- **SLEEP** - 7 to 8 hours per night for adults, 10 to 12 hours for children
- **EXERCISE** - 30 to 60 minutes per day for adults, 60 to 90 minutes for children

We'll be going over ideas and resources for getting back to basics during the first year of this newsletter. Looking forward to enjoying better health with you and your family! Next we'll look at getting in 5 to 10 servings of the good stuff every day.
- Anna Sklar



Family Activity



As your calendar fills up with another school year, why not schedule family time first? Make appointments for 1-on-1 time with your children, eat as many meals together as you can, plan weekly family nights, volunteer together, exercise together, visit local attractions, book PA Days off if possible, attend practices/games & school events.

Most of all - HAVE FUN TOGETHER!

Family Favourite Recipe - Anna's Muffins

1½ cups unbleached, all-purpose flour
1 cup whole wheat flour
1 tbsp ground flax seed
1 tbsp baking powder
½ tsp salt
½ tsp cinnamon
1 egg
1½ cups milk
1/3 cup vegetable oil
Flavouring

- Preheat oven to 400 °F
- Mix dry ingredients in large bowl
- Mix wet ingredients in small bowl
- Add wet to dry
- Stir just until dry ingredients are moistened (but still lumpy)
- Add more milk if necessary
- Spoon into 12 greased muffin cups, or paper cups, or ungreased silicone cups
- Bake about 21 minutes or until golden brown

OUR FAMILY'S FAVOURITE FLAVOURINGS:

Chocolate Chip: ½ cup chocolate chips

Fruit: 2 tsp grated lemon or orange rind, 1 cup of fresh or frozen fruit

Glaze for Fruit Muffins: 1/3 cup icing sugar, ½ tsp grated lemon or orange rind, 2-3 tsp lemon or orange juice. Mix in bowl and spread on top of muffins.

Finances - Creating a Budget Part 1: Variable Expenses

Budget is not a comforting word for some families. Some might feel trapped or stressed or even afraid of that word. Maybe it's been a while since you took a serious look at your finances, or maybe you've tried a budget many times and failed many times. Discouragement may have settled in a long time ago.

There is always hope. The hard part is to keep trying - believe me, I get that. Over the next few months we'll be looking at building a budget because it is so key to financial success for your family.

The first step is to start tracking and listing your variable expenses - those that seem to change all the time - food, gas, clothing, entertainment, etc. Keep all your receipts and start making a list of what you're spend-

ing **each month**. Also keep totals for things like utilities, gasoline and car maintenance.

For our family's variable expenses, I simply keep a hand-written list going. (See the list included at the end of this article.) After I've done some shopping, I grab the calculator and update the totals. Sometimes I have to break down the receipts into different totals because I've bought food items and presents and hygiene items all at the same store. Tracking receipts gets easier with practice!

You might learn a lot about your spending habits. The point is to become aware of where your money is going and communicate openly and honestly about your spending within the family.

Next month we'll look at fixed expenses, and I'll share with you how my husband saved us

\$700 a year in one afternoon. Together we will slowly but surely learn the basics of budgeting. Then we'll build a budget that will help your family accomplish goals and realize dreams.
- Anna Sklar

Our family's variable expenses:

Utilities	Presents
Long Distance	Entertainment
Cell Phone	Kid's Activities
Food	Postage
Gasoline	Books, Magazines
Car Maintenance	Office/School Supplies
Household Items	Dental
Haircuts	Hygiene
Clothing /Shoes	Medical
Dry-cleaning	

Marriage: How Do You Handle Change?

HE SAYS... I've been using Colgate toothpaste for as long as I can remember. When we got married, Heather was a Crest girl... we bought two separate tubes of toothpaste, until I finally converted her. There are some things that just shouldn't change. But then



there are some that should. You can run from change or you can welcome it with open arms... or you can argue with it, philosophize with it, analyze it, and think deep thoughts about it as I tend to do. One of the most important things I've found in dealing with change as a couple, is the need to put yourself in your spouse's shoes. You need to see with their eyes and hear with their ears. This is the first step towards clear communication, a shield against the unpleasant aspects of change. Change disrupts expectations and generally reveals the character qualities of the people in the midst of it. My goal as a husband is to do whatever it takes to keep communication strong through times of change and uncertainty - to express humility as we are confronted by decisions that signal change for the family. - Todd Anderson

SHE SAYS... Todd and I have been married for 3½ years. Four cities, 2 degrees, 5 rental places, 2 jobs and 2 kids later, here we are and definitely no strangers to change. We love change. We welcome it. At least I do. Without it I think I would get bored. And maybe a little too comfortable. Some-

times it's good to throw a curve ball... or get one thrown at you. Because when your circumstances change, you change and you get a chance to tackle something new as a couple. All the changes we've been through together have only made our marriage stronger. How do we deal with change? We remember the CONSTANT. We know that God is constant and circumstances are in His control. We don't fear change as much when we attribute that change to a greater power, knowing that God is teaching us, guiding us and refining us throughout it. We also remember that we are constant. No matter where we go, or what we are doing, we know that we are doing it together. We tackle change as a team. Together, we celebrate change - bring it on!

- Heather Anderson

Relationship Challenge:

Change it up! For one week, keep track of the recreational time that you and your spouse spend doing separate things. The next week, spend that same amount of time (or more!) doing things together.

Here's a fun idea for a date during your second week: gather up all your loose change (you can start saving in anticipation beforehand) and then go blow it all doing something you wouldn't normally do - like playing arcade games, or buying slurpees from the convenience store.

Marriage Prayer:

Father God, We know that you are unchanging and good. We know that you are in control of all circumstances. We often feel uncertain in times of change, but we are thankful that peace can be found in you. Thank you that you are not done with us, but that you continue to change our hearts to look more like your Son Jesus Christ. Help us to accept the changes that you bring and to glorify you through them. In His Name, Amen.

Faith At Home - The Journey

My Faith At Home journey started a few years ago. I would read Bible stories to my sons - mostly at bedtime, I would pray with them - mostly at mealtimes, and I would teach them about God - mostly when they asked me questions.

Things changed in 2008. My oldest son was now 6 and we had covered all the Bible stories, watched all the Veggie Tales videos, attended church regularly, and were plugged into a wonderful christian community. We were doing our best to do everything "right". Then I came across the Shema - the words of scripture found in Deuteronomy 6:5-9.

Verse 5 says "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength." I knew almost instantly that I'd just been going through the "faith" motions with my sons. Did I really love the Lord with all my heart, soul and strength? And how was I living that out in front of my children? My Faith At Home journey suddenly took a sharp turn.

I'm sure there are a few more sharp turns coming as I continue to answer the same question over and over in all areas of my life: What does it look like to love God with all my

heart, soul and strength? What does it look like in my marriage, my parenting, my health, my finances, and my community?

The next few verses - Deuteronomy 6:6-9 create an image of families growing in faith together - reading and memorizing the Bible, teaching children about God, talking about faith anytime and anywhere, and living out that faith in our families and in our world. I'm sure prayer was a big part of this image.

I WANT this for my own family - doing all these wonderful things together. When I look back at the years spent raising my children, I want my fondest memories to include learning from the Bible and living for Christ.

In the coming months we'll touch on the Shema, devotions in the family, memorizing the Bible and becoming a praying family.

- Anna Sklar

Family Prayer: Lord, I give my family to you. Thank you for the wonderful words of the Shema in Deuteronomy. Let them sink into our lives and become a part of our family. Guide us as we grow in you. In Jesus name, Amen.

Preschool Idea:

Ask your child(ren) to draw a picture of your family. Share with them how Jesus is a part of your family, and that He loves everyone in your family. Then add Him to the drawing.



Elementary-Age Idea:

Check in with your children about their faith. Ask them what they know about Jesus and if they have any questions about God or the Bible.



Teen Idea:

Is your teen plugged into a good youth group? Get a feel for what they're doing and learning in the group. How can you get involved? Would your teen be open to this? Youth group is fun for both young and old!



In The Garden - Fall Bulbs

The gardening season is coming to an end, but there is still some work to do!

If this time of year makes you sad to see your garden begin to “sleep” here are some ideas to help you focus on the “awakening” of springtime:

Choose a site, till it over and plant a few bulbs that will sleep through the winter and be the first to burst awake in spring.

Daffodils are usually the largest and need to be about 6” deep. Cover them with ½” of soil mix. Above these plant Tulips about 4” down and cover these with ½” of soil mix. Last to plant are Grape Hyacinth (Muscara), about 2” down, just under the surface.



Cover these with a layer of soil mix. Water the site thoroughly and finally cover with a layer of leaves to insulate your bulbs for the long sleep.

Now wait for spring!

Impatient? No problem. I like to plant pansies at this time of year for winter interest in my garden. They thrive during light snowfalls and reappear as soon as the snow starts to melt.

Enjoy the best thing in your winter garden - the children in your life!

God bless and Go Play Outside!

- Lynne Collier

ganaraskagardens.com

Reaching Out

Making a difference can be so simple. Just one click from you can accomplish all this:

www.thehungersite.com

Give 1.1 cups of food

www.thebreastcancersite.com

Help a woman get a free mammogram

www.thechildhealthsite.com

Help a child in need get healthcare

www.theliteracysite.com

Help a child in need attain literacy

www.therainforestsitesite.com

Help protect 11.4 sq. feet of rainforest

www.theanimalrescuesite.com

0.6 bowls of food to rescued animals

These sites are linked - click on one and click on them all! Make it your homepage and make it easy to remember!



SEPTEMBER 2010 Unique Holidays

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Be Kind to Editors & Writers Month	Rice Month	Children's Good Manners Month	Library Card Sign-Up Month	Coupon Month	Women's Friendship Month	Childhood Cancer Awareness
			1 No Rhyme (Nor Reason) Day	2	3 Lazy Mom's Day	4 Newspaper Carrier Day Oatmeal Day
5 Be Late For Something Day	6	7 Neither Snow Nor Rain Day Salami Day	8 International Literacy Day Responsible Dog Ownership Day	9 Wonderful Weirdos Day	10 Swap Ideas Day	11
12 Grandparent's Day Video Games Day → Line Dance Week	13 International Chocolate Day Boss/Employee Exchange Day	14	15 Felt Hat Day	16 International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer Mayflower Day	17 Citizenship Day	18 Hug a Greeting Card Writer Day Chiropractic Founders Day
19 Talk Like A Pirate Day Wife Appreciation Day → Child Passenger Safety Week	20	21 International Day of Peace World Alzheimer's Day	22 Elephant Appreciation Day Hobbit Day National White	23	24 Love Note Day Hug A Vegetarian Day	25 Museum Day Boys and Girls Club Day Family Health and
26 Gold Star Mother's Day Good Neighbour Day	27 Ancestor Appreciation Day World Heart Day	28 Fishtank Floorshow Night	29 Women's Health & Fitness Day	30		