

January Activities

God First



Activity #1 – So Much!

What You'll Need: Three to four tennis balls and a permanent marker

Prepare

Write “God” on one tennis ball with the permanent markers. For younger children write other words that represent distractions on the other tennis balls. For older children, ask them to write words that represent activities they spend their time doing including fun activities and responsibilities that could become distractions. You can put more than one word on each tennis ball except the “God” ball. Do this activity somewhere you can bounce the tennis balls easily, either off the floor or off a table.

Learn

Bounce the “God” tennis ball and ask someone to read Matthew 22:7. That verse says, “Love God with all your heart and soul and mind. That takes some concentration, doesn’t it? I guess it’s pretty easy to keep focused on God, at least for a little while, but what happens when other distractions show up? (Stop bouncing.)

What is a distraction? It is anything that takes your mind off God. For example, if I ONLY play Catan all day long and never talk to God or think about him, then I am distracted.

If you fill your day with lots of great things but do not leave time for God, what do you think will happen? (Start bouncing two balls, one God ball and one other one.) Let’s say that I’m playing Catan all day with my new friend. All I can think about is my new friend—and Catan! (Add another ball and try to bounce all three.) Wow, that’s hard to do! I hope that I can do this. (Try and fail a few times.) I guess that proves it. We have to stay focused on God. That doesn’t mean you can’t have fun. You can! But don’t forget to love God. He loves you!

Follow-up

1. Make time for God each day! Start each day with 5-10 minutes of reading Scripture and praying or set an alarm for a time that works for you. As this becomes a habit, evaluate if you want to add more time with God.
2. Make God a part of your conversations! Do you see God working in your life? Is He answering your prayers? Share with others.
3. Seek God’s wisdom! When you have a question or concern, ask, “What does the Bible say about...?”

Activity #2 – How To Make Everything Fit!

What You'll Need: A clear jar, $\frac{3}{4}$ cup rice or sand, 7-10 large objects (rubber balls, rocks, shells, etc.), tablespoon, paper, and marker

Prepare

(Practice this activity first to ensure the rice to objects ratio fits in the jar.)

List 7-10 things God wants us to do. Pray, Read Bible, Go to Church, etc. Then list 7 - 10 ways we enjoy spending our time. Reading, Computer Games, Toys, etc.

Learn

Start scooping rice in the jar 1 tablespoon at a time until all rice is used. With each scoop, name a way we enjoy spending our time. Going to the movies, shopping, watching movies, etc. Now start adding the balls in one at a time. With each ball, name something God wants us to do. Pray, study Scriptures, respect our parents, etc. Notice NOT all of the balls fit. When we put our wants in front of what God wants us to do God gets left out of our life.

Now pour everything out and separate it. This time, start with what God wants us to do. Start placing the balls in one at a time. With each ball, name something God wants us to do. (Notice they all fit this time). Now add the rice in one at a time until all is in the jar, each time naming a way we want to spend our time. Notice this time everything fits. When we put God first not only does it all fit, there is room to spare.

Activity #3 – Would You Rather?

What You'll Need: A Bible (Mark 12:30), pencils, several 3X5 cards

Learn

Read aloud Mark 12:30.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.

Brainstorm “What if? / Would you rather? / What do you think?” questions inspired by this Bible verse. Encourage your family to be creative, to have fun, and to put each question on a separate card. When everyone is ready, shuffle the cards and take turns discussing your questions.

Sample questions:

- What would you do if awards were to be given to anyone who lived Mark 12:30 at school tomorrow?
- What if next Friday were designated as Love the Lord Day? Which kinds of things could you do? Would you behave differently?
- Would you rather get a phone call or love letter from God each day? Why?
- Would you rather try to obey God by yourself or work as part of a group to encourage each other in obeying God? Why?
- What do you think makes God so special that He deserves all of our love?

Activity #4 – Discussion Time

What You'll Need: Time together

Learn

Discuss the connection between loving God and showing love to others using the following questions:

1. What would be strange about a healthy teenager acting like a toddler?
2. What's wrong with a Christian teenager quoting the Bible and not living according to its godly principles?
3. Why do parents want their teens to mature socially and spiritually?
4. One way to show spiritual maturity is through the way you love others. How would you feel if friends said they loved you but never wanted to do anything with you?
5. How did God demonstrate His love for you (John 3:16)? Since God gave His only Son, how do you think He expects us to demonstrate our love for Him and for others?
6. (Read 1 Thessalonians 1:3 together.) Paul applauds “work produced by faith” and “labor prompted by love.” What have I done for the family that reflects my faith or demonstrates my love? (If your children recognize actions that showed God wasn't first in your life, humbly apologize and then pray together for God's love to be evidenced in your relationships with others.)
7. (Tell your child about something they've recently done that demonstrates their love for God.) What else could we do for friends or family that would model the connection between loving and doing?