

# WHAT'S FOR DINNER?

RECLAIMING  
THE DINNER TABLE AS  
THE BEST PLACE EVER



20 FAMILY MEALS  
IN 40 DAYS!

FAMILY  
NAME:

# WHY FAMILY DINNER?

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## COMMUNICATION

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As we tell stories and catch up on the day's ups and downs, children are invited to listen and share their ideas, dreams, and opinions. This builds their muscles of communication.

## CONNECTION

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We eat facing each other. It's the sitting face-to-face, inviting interaction, give-and-take, that matters most.

## DISCIPLESHIP

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As we discuss events of the day, we will naturally weave in faith and explore what it means to honor Christ in each situation.



## IDENTITY & BELONGING

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When we're sharing a hearty meal and a heartfelt conversation, we're developing a sense of who we are as a family.

## LEARNING

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Planning and preparing meals together teaches kids real-life skills.

## RESTING

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In the fast-paced, tech-saturated culture a slow meal around a table with people we care about takes off the stress, replenishes the joy, and renews the strength.



# HELPFUL TIPS

1

Make it a priority, put it on the schedule, and just do it.

2

Shut off the TV. Do not bring phones or any types of screens to the table.

3

Make dinner time special by introducing table linens and cloth napkins.

4

Light candles to give family dinner a sense of formality and wonder.

5

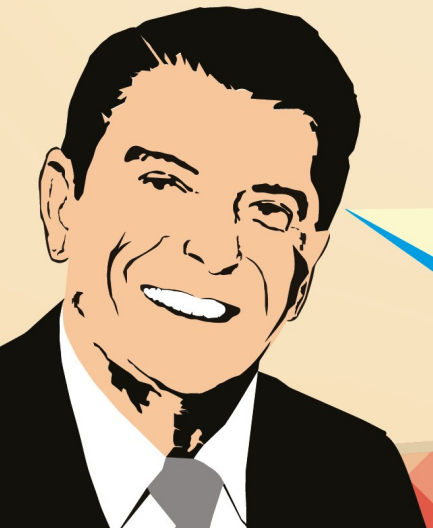
Have everyone come to the table at the same time. (It's not about being hungry, but about being together.)

6

Feed their bellies with food and nourish their souls with conversation. The idea is to create a safe place—a place where everyone feels free to say whatever is on his or her mind.

7

Slow down and savor the process. Dinnertime is not a project to push through; it's a celebration of life and family, and the Giver of them both.










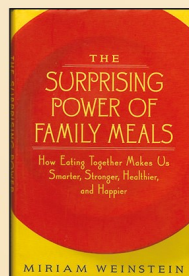
**ALL GREAT CHANGE IN AMERICA  
BEGINS AT THE DINNER TABLE.**

— RONALD REAGAN

# QUESTIONS TO ASK

Each completed activity = 10 points.

-  Kids, do you know what your parents' first jobs were? ..... ☐
-  Ask your parents to describe the first car they ever owned. .... ☐
-  What is the most important lesson your parents have taught you? . ☐
-  What do you like most about the person on your right? ..... ☐
-  What is one thing you want to do before the year ends? ..... ☐
-  If you could adopt a trait from each person at the table, which traits would you pick? ..... ☐
-  If you could change one thing about the last year, what would it be? ☐



All quotes, unless otherwise stated,  
are from Miriam Weinstein's book  
**The Surprising Power of Family Meals.**

**Supper is as much about talking  
as it is about eating.**



# GAMES TO PLAY

Each completed activity = 10 points.



Using a wooden baking spoon or silver spoon, say, "Magic spoon, magic spoon, if I had three wishes I'd wish for..." Take turns going around the table waving your magic spoon and naming your three wishes. ....

☐

Everyone takes a drink of milk and makes his or her best milk moustache. Then vote on who made the biggest milk moustache. The biggest milk moustache in town wins! .....

☐

One person hums a melody; the others try to name the tune. First one to get it right goes next! .....

☐

Going around the table, everyone takes part by continuing this pattern: One cow, two ears, on a farm // Two cows, four ears on a farm and so on. Whoever breaks the pattern takes a sip of milk and starts the game over. (You can also add "four legs" to the pattern—if you dare.)

☐

**Family dinners foster togetherness and impart meaning and joy into family life.**

# STORIES TO TELL

Each completed activity = 10 points.



Tell the stories of your children's birth or adoption. .... ☐



Tell your salvation story—the time when you opened your heart and life to God. .... ☐



Tell your love story. How did you meet? What did you like about each other? Where was your first date? How did you propose? What was your wedding day like? .... ☐



Tell the children about your childhood. Make sure to talk about a memorable ... Christmas, vacation, school teacher, pet, gift you had received, toy, collection, sports game and so on. .... ☐



Tell about some fears you had as a child and how you overcame them. ☐



With your words paint a picture of the future you envision for each of your children. It will do them good to hear about the dreams you have for them. .... ☐

**Dinnertime conversations are a major source of family knowledge. Hearing the family tales again and again over time anchors our sense of who we are, and gives us a feeling of belonging and hope.**



# RIDDLES TO SOLVE

Each riddle you work on as a family = 10 points.

COME IN, WE'RE CLOSED ..... ☐

A sign in the coffee shop window said OPEN, but when a customer pulled on the door, it was locked. Why?



## CLUES:

- [1] The manager didn't forget to turn over the OPEN sign.
- [2] He didn't forget to unlock the door.
- [3] Other people were in the coffee shop.
- [4] People didn't need a key to get inside.
- [5] The customer saw the OPEN sign but missed a different sign.

ANSWER: The door wasn't locked. The customer just needed to push it and not pull it.

# GAMES TO PLAY

Each completed activity = 10 points.



Each person tells two stories that happened to them that day, one that is true and one that is made up. Everyone guesses which story was true, and which was not. ....

☐

I Remember When... Everyone completes the sentence. Decide whether the sentence will be something about yourself, or something about another person at the table. As in, "I remember when I couldn't stop hiccupping in class." Or, "I remember when Mom locked the keys in the car and made us miss The LEGO movie."

☐

At the count of 3, everyone puts one fist out toward the center of the table with their thumb either up or down. If everyone but one person has a thumb up (or down), that person must take a drink of his or her milk (water). (In other words, the odd person out, drinks milk, eats vegetables or says something nice about the person on their left.) If everyone does the same thing with their thumb, or your family is split, count to 3 and try it again .....








☐

The dinner table is a calm spot in the day.



# QUESTIONS TO ASK

Each completed activity = 10 points.

-  What is the best job in the world and why? What job would you never want? ..... ☐
-  What accomplishment are you most proud of? ..... ☐
-  Would you rather travel 50 years forward or 50 years into the past? ☐
-  Which teacher or coach has had the most impact on you and why? ☐
-  What do you think is the greatest invention of all time? ..... ☐
-  What big ideas or dreams do you have right now that you would like to see come true someday? ..... ☐
-  Which historical figure would you want to meet? ..... ☐

**Without shared meals, a home  
is just a place to stay.**

# RIDDLES TO SOLVE

Each riddle you work on as a family = 10 points.

## DROPPED CALL .....



Amy was in the middle of a conversation that she wanted to continue, so why did she purposely hang up her phone?



### CLUES:

- [1] No one else was involved other than the person Amy was talking to on the phone.
- [2] Amy's cell phone was fully charged, and Amy didn't have an incoming call.
- [3] Although she hung up her phone, her conversation wasn't interrupted.

ANSWER: Amy hung up her cell phone because she met the person she was talking to and continued her conversation in person.



# THINGS TO TRY

Feel free to do these activities as many times as you wish,  
but you can only get one set of points for each activity.



Cover your dining table with a big piece of craft paper. Put out crayons, water paints, and pens. Have the children draw the fanciest, fun, or craziest table settings, flower arrangements, and name cards right on the paper. **[ 25 points ]** ..... ☐



Instead of starting your dinner with a prayer, start it with a song! The Doxology is a perfect way to celebrate God's goodness and greatness. Not familiar with the Doxology? Sing along with Anthem Lights' version on YouTube. **[ 20 points ]** ..... ☐



Fancify your water! All it takes is a cinnamon stick, a few mint leaves, cucumber slices, or wedges of citrus, and suddenly tap water becomes thirst-quenching spa water. **[ 15 points ]** ..... ☐



Beforehand, write-down after-meal chores and one special surprise (like an extra book at bedtime, extra dessert, special family game, etc.) on pieces of paper. Tape these randomly to the bottom of the dining chairs. (You can also place them in a bowl and pass it around.) After dinner, everyone peels the paper from his or her chair and reads what it says. While everyone else gets to work, one lucky person gets an extra piece of pie or extra screen time. **[ 25 points ]** ..... ☐

**Meal time isn't about eating; it's about  
sharing with the people we care about most.**

# ABOVE AND BEYOND

Feel free to do these activities as many times as you wish, but you can only get one set of points for each activity.



One evening surprise your kids by serving breakfast for supper.

**[ 40 points ]** .....

☐

One evening finish your dinner the way Jesus did in John 13. Bring out a basin and a towel. Wash your children's feet, and while you're doing that, tell the child whose feet you're washing something unique you like about them. This is one night when children will not be expected to help with the clean-up. **[ 50 points ]** .....

☐

Encourage your child to host an open house. Invite friends, neighbors and newcomers, especially children who usually aren't invited to activities. As you prepare for the open house, discuss ways to welcome others and share what God has given your child — his home and belongings. Talk about giving up favorite seats, offering beverages, letting guests go first in activities and listening attentively. Then pray for each person who will attend. Enlist your child to prepare snacks, decide on games to play and make welcome packs. Include a card and pen for guests to write down prayer requests. They can drop them in a basket by the door as they leave. **[ 200 points ]** .....

☐

When Jesus himself wanted to explain to his disciples what his forthcoming death was all about, he didn't give them a theory, he gave them a meal. – N.T. Wright



# JUST FOR PARENTS

- ? What do you recall of **YOUR OWN** childhood suppers?
- ? How did they **SHAPE YOU**?
- ? What would you like to pass along; what would you **DEFINITELY CHANGE**?
- ? When your children are your age, **WHAT MEMORIES** will they have?



**WHAT COUNTS IS THE SITTING AROUND TOGETHER IN A RELAXED SETTING,  
SHARING LIFE, ENJOYING EACH OTHER, DOING WHAT FAMILIES DO.**

# PRAYERS TO PRAY

*For food in a world where many walk in hunger;  
For faith in a world where many walk in fear;  
For friends in a world where many walk alone;  
We give You thanks, O Lord.*

*Blessed are you, O Lord God, King of the  
Universe, for You give us food to sustain our  
lives and make our hearts glad.*

*Lord, thank You for the food before us,  
the family and friends beside us and the  
love between us. Amen.*

*Bless the Lord, O my soul, And all that is within me, bless His holy name.  
Bless the Lord, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits.  
Blessed be God, eternal king, for these and all His good gifts to us.*



**Jesus didn't run projects, establish ministries,  
create programs, or put on events. He ate meals.**

**— Tim Chester**



# 4 FOUR QUESTIONS TO ASK AROUND THE DINNER TABLE



1. What was the **BEST** part of your day?
2. What was the **WORST** part of your day?
3. Where did you see **GOD** at work today?
4. What **MISTAKE** did you make today?

# TRACK YOUR PROGRESS

Give yourself 50 points for each family meal.



YOUR TOTAL  
**SCORE**