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zion lutheran
grow with us 

Nurture Your Children's Gifts

One joy of parenthood is watching for signs of children's developing talents. Children gain confidence when they become competent at something they enjoy. That's why many parents seek out a range of activities for their budding athletes, musicians, and artists.

Children are blessed with other "talents" that need nurturing as well. All Christians, regardless of age, have spiritual gifts. God gives us certain abilities to serve him and others. Children don't need to wait until they're older to use their spiritual gifts. Like some grown-ups, though, they may need help discovering their gifts.

Use these guidelines as you begin the journey:

Observe your children as they interact with people, activities, and objects. Note how they learn best and what emotional and behavioral traits they display. Keep track of what excites them. Talk to your children about their thoughts and feelings after a new experience.



Dive into the Bible to learn about spiritual gifts. Check out passages such as Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4, and 1 Peter 4. Share special Bible verses with your children and let them know that God has a plan for their lives.

Provide varied opportunities for children to grow passionate about God and service. Encourage children to take an active role in children's ministry programs. Try serving together as a family in a range of roles. Then evaluate what your children liked best and why.

What Are the Spiritual Gifts?

There are different opinions about the number and categorization of spiritual gifts. In Romans 12, the apostle Paul lists these seven:

- Prophecy—Boldly speaking out about your faith.
- Serving—Working to meet the needs of other people.
- Teaching—Helping other people understand Scripture.
- Encouraging—Building up and motivating others.
- Giving—Being generous to others in need.
- Leading—Showing organizational and directing skills.
- Mercy—Showing kindness and compassion to others.

PowerSource 

Ask God:

1. To assure your children that he has made them special.
2. To help you become aware of your children's spiritual gifts.
3. To show all family members how they can best use their gifts to glorify God.

Parenting Insights

In *Children's Ministry Magazine*, author Lisa Stadler offers a questionnaire for discerning your children's gifts and strengths.

1. I feel great when people notice how well I _____.
2. My friends would say one of my best qualities is _____.
3. I get annoyed when I have to _____.
4. If I could volunteer, I'd really like to _____.
5. The two happiest times in my life are _____.
6. If I could change one thing about myself, it would be _____.
7. People would be surprised to know this about me _____.
8. I'd like God to help me in this area _____.

OpenTheBook

"God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another.... Then everything you do will bring glory to God through Jesus Christ."

1 Peter 4:10-11

God doesn't want us to bury or waste our spiritual gifts. Instead, he tells us to "give" them away to other people through service.

Teachable Moments

1. Side-by-Side Serving—

Allow children to shadow you or someone who shares their particular gift. Working together lets children see their spiritual gifts in actions and helps them understand how gifts can be used.

2. Equipped to Lead—

Seek out ways that your children can serve at church or in their children's ministry. Children can do service projects, say public prayers, provide music, be greeters, and so on. Older children can assist in the nursery and in preschool classrooms.



3. Thank the Giver—

During prayer times, encourage children to thank God not just for their physical blessings but also for their spiritual gifts. Ask God for wisdom to use the gifts in ways that honor him.



"So commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these words of mine. Tie them to your hands and wear them on your forehead as reminders. Teach them to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are **ON THE ROAD, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up." Deuteronomy 11:18-19, NLT**

As a parent, you have a unique vantage point to observe your children's growth and gifts. Help children recognize their special God-given qualities by discussing these questions.

1. Why does God give people different talents? How can you tell if something is merely an interest or a special gift?
2. What spiritual gifts (from the list on the previous page) do you think you might have, and why?
3. What are some ways you can use your gifts to serve God and other people? How does it feel when you do that?
4. How can knowing about your gifts help you figure out God's special plan for your life?

Family Experience: Discover Your Talents

Use these ideas from *Children's Ministry Magazine* to lead your family in fun explorations of their spiritual gifts.

- **I Spy a Talent—**Have family members point out the positive qualities they see in one another. Sit in a circle. Ask family members to each look at the person sitting on their right and think about ways that person is especially talented or gifted. After a few minutes, have people take turns sharing what talents or gifts they see in the person to their right. Go around the circle counterclockwise so that the person whose gifts were just revealed speaks next. Discuss how easy or tough it is to talk about other people's gifts and to hear about your own.



- **Chart Your Course—**Read the parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14-30. Give each person a sheet of paper. Have them each draw a grid with four equal parts. In the top left-hand corner, have family members either write or draw one of their talents. In the top right-hand corner, have them write or draw who that talent serves. In the bottom left-hand corner, have family members write what they think they could do personally to improve their talent. And in the last corner, have them write the amazing things that God could do if they allow him to use their talent. Then share your papers. Close in a prayer of thanksgiving for all the special talents God has given your family.



What's Playing at the Movies

Movie: *Race to Witch Mountain* (March 13)

Genre: Adventure, Sci-Fi Thriller

Rating: PG (for sequences of action and violence, frightening and dangerous situations, and some thematic elements)

Cast: Dwayne Johnson, AnnaSophia Robb, Alexander Ludwig, Carla Gugino

Synopsis: This Disney film is a remake of the 1975 movie *Escape From Witch Mountain*. A cab driver meets two siblings who are really aliens with supernatural powers. The trio heads to a mysterious Nevada mountain to search for the siblings' spacecraft. Various pursuers try to stop the trio, who's trying to prevent an alien invasion against the whole Earth.

Discussion Questions: When you hear about aliens, what do you think, and how do you feel? Is exploring this topic harmless or dangerous, and why? What would you tell someone who believes in psychic powers? Explain whether you think God created life on other planets.



What Music Is Releasing

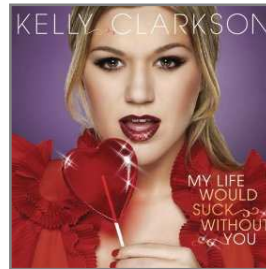
Artist: Kelly Clarkson

Single: "My Life Would Suck Without You"

Artist Info: Clarkson, now 26, won the first season of *American Idol* in 2002. Since then, her albums have sold more than 17 million copies worldwide.

Summary: This is the first single from Clarkson's fourth album, *All I Ever Wanted*, which releases March 10. Already a number-one hit, "My Life Would Suck Without You" is vintage Clarkson, with a pop-rock sound. But her lyrics continue to get edgier, with more adult themes. This song is about a girl who, against her better judgment, takes back a boyfriend who's bad for her.

Discussion Questions: How do you decide whether or not to hang out with someone? Read 1 Corinthians 15:33. What influences do other people have on us? Who are the most important people in your life, and why?



What Games Are Out

Title	Content	Rating & Platform
<i>Princess Debut</i>	Players pick clothing and master dance moves so they can date various princes.	E; Nintendo DS
<i>Viva Piñata</i>	In this family-friendly simulation game, players create a garden to attract colorful candy-filled creatures.	E; Xbox 360
<i>Elebits: The Adventures of Kai & Zero</i>	This adventure game involves parallel universes. Players capture small, pulsing beings to get energy to solve puzzles.	E; Nintendo DS

GAME RATINGS KEY: EC=Early Childhood, E=Everyone (ages 6+), E10+ (ages 10+), T=Teen (ages 13+)



Culture & Trends

What's happening right now that may affect your children and family:

- The number of homeless students is on the rise, so schools have become more of a safety net. In addition to free meals, some schools now offer free backpacks, clothes, and extra tutoring.
- More than half of adults play video games. For families, making music together (via *Rock Band* and *Guitar Hero*) is the hot new pastime.

Quick Stats

- Children exempted from vaccines because of their parents' personal beliefs rose from 1% in 1991 to 2.5% in 2004. (*New York Times*)
- FamilyEducation.com asked almost 3,000 parents: "At what age should kids be allowed to choose their own clothing?" The most respondents (36%) said ages 8 to 11.



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