

Dinnertime Discussions

Dinnertime is a great time to learn about your children's day. In our home we go around the table, one person at a time, and share what made us happy and sad that day. One time I learned that our young son had been hurt on the playground.

He hadn't



mentioned the incident when he came home from school, and I might not have known at all if we hadn't talked at dinner. Another time my daughter said eating the dinner made her really happy. I hadn't realized she loved the meal, and it made me feel good to know that at least someone liked my cooking!

Our dinner table tradition has

sparked some great conversations, allowing us as parents to gain greater insight into our children's lives.

Stephanie Nixon, Florida

Just the Friend

My children love going to church, but they struggle to sit still in sacrament meeting. Quiet books, coloring books, snacks, and toys never held their attention for long, and they often quarreled over them. I even tried practicing a "reverence time" with them during the week. Nothing seemed to work. Finally, I stopped bringing extra activities in my

church bag. Instead, I gathered a collection of past *Friend* magazines for them to look at after the sacrament. They can each have a pen to write in the magazines. They can also look through the hymnbook or sit quietly. Those are their options. For us, this change simplifies our sacrament meeting experience each week and helps us to focus more on the Savior.

Jenny Hartzog, Alabama

Keyboard Course Kit

Musically challenged? You don't have to be. In my calling as stake music chairman, I have taught classes in conducting music and in playing the keyboard, using materials the Church provides. The Keyboard Course Kit (item no. 33620; U.S. \$19) is a great resource that includes a manual, an audiocassette, music note cards, a cardboard keyboard, and *Hymns Made Easy* (also available separately; item no. 31249).

I also teach private piano lessons and have encouraged my LDS students to become competent accompanists for Church meetings. My beginning students have benefited greatly from using the materials in the kit. Even before they learn music notation, they can match their hands to the pictures showing positions on the keyboard and follow the finger numbers.

Some of my students have progressed to the *Hymns Made Easy* version and are accompanists for Young Women and priesthood meetings. Teaching people to play the piano is now one of my main assignments as a senior sister missionary serving in Texas. The goal is to help my students serve in music callings, and the Keyboard Course Kit has been a valuable resource.

Sylvia Salisbury, Texas McAllen Mission

Ready Letters

When missionaries leave home, everyone promises to write. But this enthusiasm frequently wanes in the coming months, especially if there are several missionaries in the ward. To make it a little easier to correspond, each missionary's family might provide a supply of prepaid, addressed airmail letters. Obviously, postal needs will vary in each country, but the idea is to get everything ready to send. All the ward members have to do is write a note and mail it. In our meetinghouse these "ready letters" are available on the announcement board so everyone can help themselves.

Moira Dodkins, England



LEFT AND RIGHT: ILLUSTRATIONS BY SCOTT GREER; UPPER RIGHT: ILLUSTRATION BY BETH WHITTAKER

FAMILY HOME EVENING HELPS



From the Heart

Do you ever wonder if your children like each other, much less love each other? When

our children were young, I had days when I wondered. One year, shortly before Valentine's Day, I encouraged everyone to make a card for each member of the family. My husband and I participated too. Using various craft items, we made our cards during the week. Then on the Monday night before Valentine's Day, we each took turns giving our

cards one at a time and telling the recipients one reason we loved them. At first my request brought a few moans and groans, but then everyone's hearts softened with warm, positive feelings.

Years later the tradition continues in my children's families. For us, Valentine's Day is another reminder to express our love for one another.

Gail Porter, Utah



Study Tips from Sharing Time

Our family enjoys studying the gospel each morning, and we've found a method that works well for us. We simply refer to the outline for sharing time and the children's sacrament meeting presentation. A new outline is available each year at Church distribution centers, or you can simply duplicate a Primary leader's copy. The material suggested in the outline is easy to follow. Monthly themes are listed,

followed by weekly gospel principles. Each week we study one of these principles. Using the suggested themes, I find corresponding stories, talks, and activities from the *Friend*. Usually it's easiest to access them online at www.lds.org. With a week's worth of study material in hand, we're ready for our simple morning routine. Together we review the theme, practice saying the listed scripture, sing any recommended songs, and enjoy a simple lesson focusing on the topic.

Our children are better prepared for what they'll learn on Sunday, and our growing testimonies are nurtured by the simple truths taught in Primary.

Maralee Turner, Idaho