

## **JUST FAMILY NIGHTS**

### **Activities to Keep Your Family Together in a World Falling Apart**

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A book/workshop/resource from our colleagues and friends at Institute for Peace and Justice and Parenting for Peace and Justice

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#### **A Book**

This recently published book contains 60 "Family Night" formats that individual families or small groups of families can do in their homes. Themes include:

- UN Day: We Are a Global Family
- Family Fighting and Forgiveness
- Videos and Values
- My Grandma's Grandma: Exploring Our Ethnic Heritage

#### **A Workshop**

To encourage families to consider having a regular family night, and to offer an abundance of suggestions and tips, an introductory workshop is available. The workshop addresses topics like:

- Why add one more thing to our family calendar?
- How rituals and symbols deepen our family life
- How to get started and motivate participation by the rest of my family
- How to adopt themes to a variety of family circumstances.

#### **A Resource**

##### **For Families**

- Who are experiencing a hectic pace of life and a growing number of commitments that pull them in many different directions
- Who are looking for creative ways to grow in unity, justice and peace

##### **For Extended Families**

- Who want to revive the tradition of family night fun and sharing
- Who want to counter the culture's encroachment of interpersonal violence and consumerism

##### **For Teachers and Directors of Religious Education**

- Who want a resource for families to use in their homes
- Who are looking for activities to use with children in classrooms and special events.

## Just Family Nights Excerpts

### Many Faiths | World Religion Day | January 19

**Opening:** Gather family outside and invite them to gaze at the sky and contemplate how all this came to be. Or gather family inside, light a candle and ask the family to ponder the source of life and power in our world.

**Theme:** Talk about how one's religion is a very personal, deeply held conviction. Emphasize that we may be very committed to our own religion and see it as a positive force in our lives, others are equally committed to their religion. Present the idea that each religious tradition seeks to help its members understand human experience and the nature of life and the universe. Learning about religions other than our own can help us recognize that some beliefs and values are universal and can help us see which beliefs and values are unique and essential to our own faith. Our goal is understanding and respect for the faith traditions of others.

**Family Response:** Tie eight knots in a rope at regular intervals, at least 6" apart. Each represents 500 years with the first knot being 2000 BCE and the eighth knot being 2000 CE. Cut out the *Religion Cards* for each of the world religions and attach each symbol to the approximate founding date of the religion. Take turns talking about the various symbols, holidays, founders.

**Treat:** Make pancakes in the shapes of religious symbols and enjoy eating them.

### My Grandma's Grandma | St. Patrick's Day | Any Day

Consider inviting your oldest relatives living near you to join you.

**Opening:** Gather the family and light a candle. Ask family members to think quietly about their own grandparents (what they looked like, typical sayings, etc.)

**Theme:** Talk about the travel-in-time which you all are going to take. Tell them that you'll try to get a taste of life 100 years ago (when grandma's grandma was a child) and work backwards, generation by generation. Our goal is to learn some of the unique heritage/customs of the countries of our ancestors.

**Family Response:** If you don't already have a family tree, make a simple one. Talk about each individual as you add his/her name to the tree. Share family stories, sayings, idiosyncrasies, personalities, physical resemblances and values. Then continue your travel backward through time. Talk about how your family home and life would be different in the 1940s (no TV), 1920s (no automobiles), 1890s (no electric lights/stove, telephone). Ask a member of the older generation to describe ethnic artifacts and their use or meaning (Irish lace, German steins, African ivory, Ukrainian Easter eggs).

**Treat:** Make a traditional ethnic dessert or eat something fresh from the garden or orchard.