A CROSSROADS FAMILY RESOURCE

these are the good ole days

The DIY Family Retreat

A five-day devotional to build faith, fun, and family strengths — wherever your vacation takes you.

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ALLISON RICHMOND SCHOONMAKER, MAMFC, LPC · CROSSROADCOUNSELOR.COM



DEDICATION

These are the good ole days.

For the families who pack too much,
laugh too loud, and love each other
through it all.

WELCOME

Let's slow down and lean in.

Whether you're heading to the beach, the mountains, a theme park, or a quiet cabin, this guide is your invitation to slow down, reconnect, and make your time together truly meaningful.

The DIY Family Retreat isn't about doing more — it's about being more present. It's a five-day journey to help your family celebrate your unique strengths, deepen your faith, and have fun together.

You won't need a workbook full of rules or hours of study. All it takes is about 15–20 minutes a day, wherever your adventure takes you. There's no "right way" to do this — gather around breakfast, talk while waiting in line, or reflect at sunset. The goal is simply to talk, laugh, listen, and notice one another.

The insights here are gentle and accessible — rooted in Christian truth but written for families of all comfort levels. You don't have to have it all together or lead deep theological discussions. You just need a willingness to show up for each other and make a little space for gratitude and grace.

> *Take a deep breath, set aside your phone for a bit, and lean in. This is your time to rest, reconnect, and remember that these moments matter.*

Each day includes

Scripture & Thought
A short devotional reading and reflection.

Family Strengths Focus
A conversation starter about how each person's gifts make your family stronger.

Discussion Questions
Simple prompts to spark connection — with room to jot answers.

Fun Challenge
A lighthearted, location-flexible activity for joy and teamwork.

Closing Prayer
A brief moment of gratitude and centering.

DAY 01

01

Celebrating Our Gifts

“There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them.”

1 CORINTHIANS 12:4

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Celebrating Our Gifts

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SCRIPTURE & THOUGHT

When my son was little, he dumped a thousand-piece puzzle on the floor and said, “Mom, let’s see how fast we can do it.” I started searching for the edges; he was already building the dog’s face right in the middle. Two different strategies — but both were needed to finish the picture.

Families are like that puzzle. One person finds the edges — steady, organized, grounding. Another dives into the fun part — creative, spontaneous, full of ideas. Together you form something beautiful that no one person could make alone.

Sometimes we forget that. The organized one sees the dreamer as scattered; the dreamer sees the planner as rigid. But God delights in variety. His Spirit gives gifts so our differences complete one another instead of compete.

Together: Each person, name one “puzzle piece” you bring to the family — something small but important that helps things fit together.

FAMILY STRENGTHS FOCUS

In counseling, I’ve noticed that families come alive when they stop trying to make everyone alike and start appreciating what’s already working. Strengths aren’t about perfection — they’re about contribution.

Think of the encourager who lightens tension with humor, the fixer who quietly repairs what’s broken, the feeler who notices when someone’s off, or the dreamer who keeps hope alive. When you recognize those roles as gifts, irritation turns into appreciation.

Try this: Turn to the person next to you and finish this sentence: “One thing I count on you for is…”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. **What's one strength or quality you see in someone else here that you want to celebrate today?**

2. **When has that strength helped our family recently — on this trip or at home?**

3. **Which of your own strengths might God be inviting you to use more intentionally?**

FUN CHALLENGE

Strengths in Action Scavenger Hunt

Spot another person's strength "in action" today and call it out — kindly and specifically. ("That was creative!" "Thanks for keeping us calm.") Whoever notices the most gets to choose a fun family reward: the dessert spot, the playlist, or a silly five-minute rule like "everyone talks in rhyme."

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, thank You for shaping our family with different gifts. Teach us to see what You see and to celebrate Your creativity in one another. Amen.

DAY 02

02

The Gift of Encouragement

“Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.”

1 THESSALONIANS 5:11

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The Gift of Encouragement

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SCRIPTURE & THOUGHT

Think about the last time you were having a hard day and someone said just the right thing. Maybe it was “You’ve got this,” or “I’m proud of you.” Those words can stick with you for hours — even years. Encouragement is powerful; it doesn’t cost anything, but it can change everything.

Here’s a picture: you’re running a race, tired and ready to quit, and then you hear your people cheering your name from the sidelines. Do you stop? No — you keep going, because someone believes in you. Families are meant to be that kind of cheering section for each other.

But let’s be honest — sometimes families forget. We’re quicker to notice what’s wrong than what’s right. That’s normal, but it’s not the whole story. God reminds us that encouragement is one of the simplest ways to build each other up and restore joy.

Together: Share about a time someone’s encouragement helped you more than they probably realized.

FAMILY STRENGTHS FOCUS

Some family members are “natural encouragers.” They say kind things often, notice effort, and build people up. Others encourage in quieter ways — by showing up, helping without being asked, or sharing a smile when it’s needed most.

Encouragement can be spoken or shown, loud or gentle, spontaneous or thoughtful — but it always says, “I see you, and you matter.”

Try this: Turn to the person on your right and share one encouraging thing about them. Keep switching until everyone has been spoken to.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. **What's the best piece of encouragement you've ever received — from a coach, teacher, friend, or family member?**

2. **Who in our family is really good at encouragement? What makes them good at it?**

3. **What's one way we could encourage each other more on this trip?**

FUN CHALLENGE

Encouragement Tag

Everyone starts with three "encouragement tokens" (scraps of paper, coins, or just keep count). Each time you give genuine encouragement, you hand over a token. At the end of the day, whoever gave the most gets to set a silly family rule for the next hour — like everyone speaks in pirate voices or calls them "Captain Encouragement."

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, thank You for the gift of encouragement. Help our words today to give life, energy, and joy to one another. Teach us to build up instead of tear down. Amen.

DAY 03

03

The Power of Gratitude

“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts… and be thankful.”

COLOSSIANS 3:15

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The Power of Gratitude

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SCRIPTURE & THOUGHT

There's a story about a family stuck in traffic on the way to their dream vacation. The dad was frustrated, the kids were bickering, and the GPS kept "re-routing." Then the youngest piped up: "At least we have snacks!" Everyone laughed, and suddenly the tension melted. Gratitude did what problem-solving couldn't.

Gratitude doesn't ignore what's wrong; it simply refuses to let negativity have the microphone. Families that practice thankfulness build emotional muscle — they recover faster, laugh sooner, and notice blessings others miss.

You don't have to force it. Gratitude grows through small observations — quiet moments, simple joys, ordinary goodness. It changes the emotional climate of a family, one thank-you at a time.

Together: Each person, name one tiny thing you've appreciated on this trip so far — a smell, a sound, or a moment.

FAMILY STRENGTHS FOCUS

Every family has natural "gratitude spreaders." Some notice beauty. Some speak thanks easily. Others find humor in frustration and reframe what's happening. Gratitude isn't just a feeling — it's a strength that changes how a family moves through the world.

Try this: Choose one family member and tell them a specific reason you're thankful for them today.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. **What changes in you when you focus on gratitude instead of frustration?**

2. **Who tends to lift the family's mood when things go sideways?**

3. **What's one small gratitude habit we could keep doing at home?**

FUN CHALLENGE

Gratitude Snapshots

Each person takes — or points out — five "gratitude snapshots" today. They can be real photos or mental notes. At dinner, share your favorite one. The person with the funniest or most unexpected gratitude moment wins the right to give everyone "gratitude nicknames" for the evening.

CLOSING PRAYER

God, thank You for eyes that see good things even in messy moments. Grow in us grateful hearts that turn ordinary days into worship. Amen.

DAY 04

04

The Joy of Adventure

“You make known to me the path of life; in Your presence there is fullness of joy.”

PSALM 16:11

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SCRIPTURE & THOUGHT

I once counseled a mom who said, “Every vacation starts as an adventure and ends as a checklist.” Her family was so focused on doing everything that they forgot to enjoy anything. Adventure is less about where you go and more about how open you are to wonder.

Adventure invites us to loosen control, laugh at detours, and find God in the unexpected. One person brings the ideas, another keeps everyone safe, another keeps everyone laughing. Together you balance risk and rest, structure and spontaneity.

Together: Share one time on this trip when something didn’t go as planned but turned out okay — or even better.

FAMILY STRENGTHS FOCUS

The adventurous ones push us forward; the cautious ones keep us grounded. We need both. When we respect those differences, we travel lighter — both literally and emotionally.

Try this: Each person, say whether you tend to be “all-in” or “hang-back” when facing something new. Then share one benefit of the other approach.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. **What helps you feel brave when trying something new?**

2. **Who in our family reminds us to have fun?**

3. **Where do you see God's joy showing up on this trip?**

FUN CHALLENGE

Family Adventure Dares

Everyone writes one fun, safe dare: try a new food, compliment a stranger, take a photo doing your goofiest pose. Draw dares from a hat during the day. Whoever's dare gets the biggest laugh becomes "Adventure Captain" for the next activity.

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, thank You for joy, laughter, and courage. Help us find You not just in the planned parts of life but in the surprises. Amen.

DAY 05

05

Building Our Family Story

“In the future, when your children ask, “What do these stones mean?” tell them…”

JOSHUA 4:6–7

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Building Our Family Story

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SCRIPTURE & THOUGHT

When the Israelites crossed the Jordan River, God told them to stack twelve stones as a reminder of His faithfulness. Families need those "stones" too — stories, photos, inside jokes, and traditions that say, "Look what God has done with us."

Every trip, every hard season, every breakthrough becomes part of your family's testimony. The moments you'll retell aren't always the perfect ones — they're the ones that connected you.

Our memories shape who we are. The silly, the sacred, the stressful — they're all part of your family's story, and God is in every chapter.

Together: Share one funny or meaningful story from a past family trip that still gets told.

FAMILY STRENGTHS FOCUS

The storyteller keeps memories alive. The historian takes the pictures. The feeler remembers the emotions. The organizer makes sure it all happens. Together you build a legacy of moments that tell who you are and what matters most.

Try this: Each person, name one thing from this trip you want to remember forever.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. **What story from this trip will we still be telling years from now?**

2. **How have we seen God at work in our family lately?**

3. **What title would you give this chapter of our story?**

FUN CHALLENGE

The Family Story Capsule

Collect one small item from the trip — a shell, ticket, napkin, or photo — and put them in a "Family Story Box" when you get home. Write one sentence each about what it represents. Let the youngest choose where it's kept until your next adventure.

CLOSING PRAYER

God, thank You for the stories You're writing through our family. Help us remember Your goodness and keep adding new chapters filled with love and laughter. Amen.

A CLOSING BLESSING

May this time together remind you that joy is found not only in destinations, but in the faces that travel beside you.

May you notice God's goodness in laughter, in rest, and in the quiet in-between moments.

May you celebrate each person's strengths as gifts, and may your love grow a little deeper each day you walk this road together.

Go in peace, go in play, go in gratitude — and may your next adventure be just as full of grace.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Allison Richmond Schoonmaker

MAMFC, LPC · CROSSROADS PROFESSIONAL COUNSELING

Allison is a licensed professional counselor in Louisiana with two decades of experience. She runs a private practice, Crossroads Professional Counseling, LLC, where she provides therapy and coaching for adults, couples, and families.

Trained in many of the leading therapy practices, she uses evidence-based approaches to help her clients make meaningful change. Her blend of humor, insight, and wisdom builds an uncommonly strong partnership with the people she works with — and she has an uncanny ability to see beneath the surface.

In her spare time she gardens with her family and neighbors, cooks elaborate meals, practices yoga, travels, and is always learning something new.

Allison and her husband, Chad, have a middle-school-aged, soccer-crazed, “will-work-for-V-bucks” son named Sam; a poorly behaved, bottomless-pit beagle named Bubba; and a clumsy golden doodle with more heart than brains named Goldie.

More of Allison’s writing on relational and mental health lives at **crossroadcounselor.com →**