



GROCERIES

By Marilyn Sharpe

No, this is not going to be a column on nutrition, as important as that topic is. This is an opportunity to think about the “faith groceries” we stock for family life together.

Groceries are the raw material for feeding yourself and the others you love. You may have grown some food in your garden or gone to a farmers’ market, purchased a share of a community supported agriculture, or shopped for food regularly, mindful of the tastes and preferences of those you will be feeding. Without food, you would first lose strength, then life itself. Food is essential to life, for all God’s living things.

So, what are “faith groceries,” and why are they important?

First, what? Faith groceries are the resources we use to regularly nurture and feed a life of faith. They include:

- Bibles appropriate to each person in your family circle. Just as you would never grill a steak to feed a six month old, select Bibles that are age and experience appropriate. Plan on developing a wardrobe of Bibles for each age and stage of development, tailored to the life and spiritual experiences of each person. Share favorite Bible stories of God’s love, promises, and faithfulness. Memorize meaningful verses.
- Devotional materials.
- Songs of faith from a hymnal or CDs of children’s songs, praise music, traditional hymns, songs of faith from other cultures, or works of faith-filled, long-dead composers. You and your creative children can make up songs, too.
- Framed and displayed Baptismal certificates and family photos of faithful moments.
- A cross, visible to all, on a wall or on your person.
- Stock a FaithChest®, which may be given at baptism, confirmation, marriage, moving to assisted living, or any faith-filled moment, filled with resources that have shaped or will shape faith.
- For more ideas, go to The Youth & Family Institute website www.tyfi.org

Now, why? Just as we need to provide food so that our children grow, are strong, and live, so, too, faith groceries are essential to growing a strong, vibrant, living faith for our children.

My husband pointed out that it is important to have staples on hand, in case of an emergency. The same is true of faith groceries.

My mother died very suddenly 31 years ago. I was incredibly grateful that this was not the first time I had talked with my four year old about where God is in death, in grief, in the loss of a loved one. That day, it was Alison who delivered the Good News. Encircling me with a hug, she spoke with great assurance. “Mom, we’re going to be sad and miss Gramma for a very long time, because we loved her. But who Gramma is, is with God now. She can see us, even without holes in the roof.” I’ve heard worse funeral sermons!

Many survivors of concentration camps reported that what got them through that horrific, faith-defying time was their own personal library of Bible stories, scripture verses, prayers, and songs of faith, stocked in their minds by homes and congregations that rocked them in the faith.

May all our children be richly stocked with faith groceries.

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

1. Inventory the faith groceries in your home. Are there
 - Bibles appropriate to each person?
 - Devotional materials that speak to the life experiences of each?
 - “Artifacts” of the faith. (Candles, cross, pictures, Milestone Blessing Bowl, photos of faith-filled family times, books, etc.)
2. Fill a devotional basket with a Bible, FaithTalk® cards, Scripture Talk, cards with prayer concerns, newspaper article that raises a faith question, Christmas card photos of those you want to remember in prayer.
3. Plan to feed others. As a family, decide on a family service project. Schedule it. Do it.
4. As a family, plan a gift of faith nurturing resources for a birthday, wedding, baby shower, baptism, or at the time of loss. Keep the list ... and use it.