

A MINIVAN JOURNAL

Fruits & Field Trips





Filled Up with Love

“There really are places in the heart you don’t even know exist until you love a child.”

- Anne Lamott

SCRIPTURE TO SHARE:

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)

“Through love be servants of one another.” (Galatians 5:13)

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

What does it mean to love each other?

What does it mean to love God?

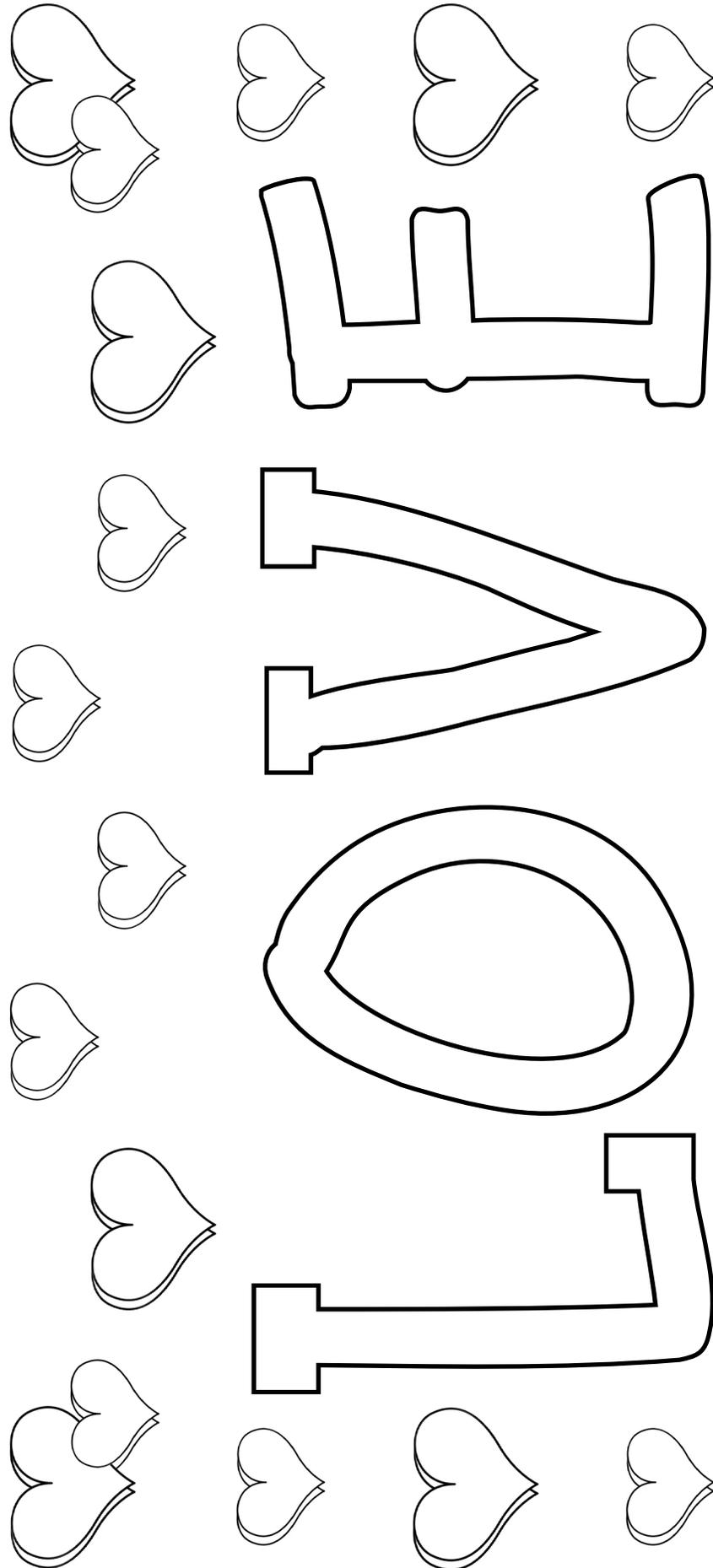
How can we show more love in our home?

ACTIVITY:

Brainstorm ways you can show God’s love to each other, someone in school, or a total stranger today. It can be simple things like helping mom with the dishes, saying “hi” to a new kid in class, or taking some food to a local food pantry. Pick one as a family and plan to do it today.

THINGS TO REMEMBER ABOUT TODAY:

○ MINIVAN JOURNAL ○



○ FRUITS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT ○



Car Songs of Joy

“Joy is a net of love by which you can catch souls.”

- Saint Teresa of Calcutta

SCRIPTURE TO SHARE:

“Rejoice in the Lord always, again, I will say, Rejoice.” (Philippians 4:4)

“The joy of the Lord is your strength.” (Nehemiah 8:10)

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

What things make you feel joy?

What’s the difference between happiness and joy?

Can we be joyful even when things go wrong? How?

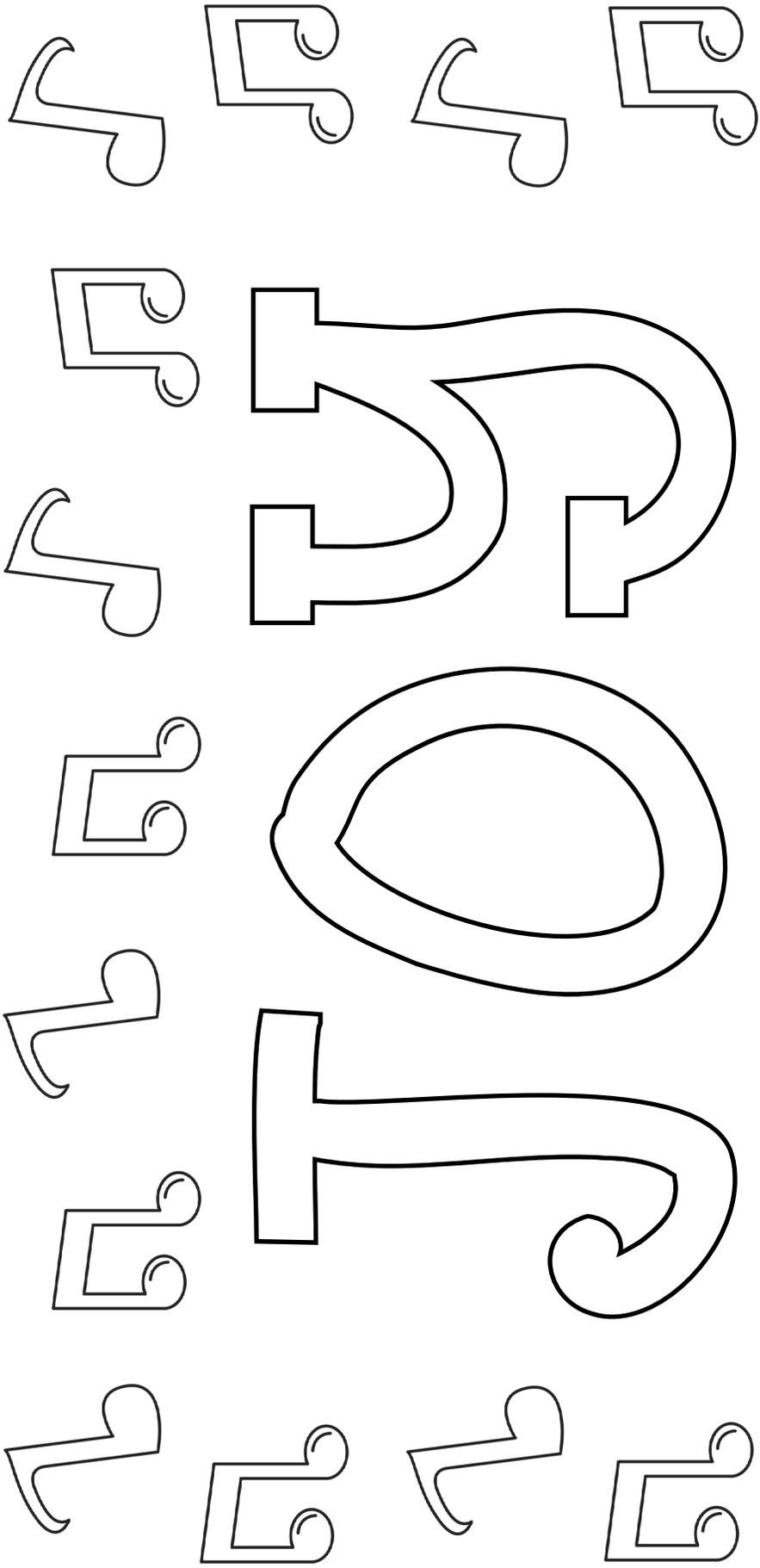
How can being helpful bring us joy?

ACTIVITY:

Sing songs of joy! Check out this [Spotify Playlist](#) created just for you by the author of *Death By Minivan*, Heather Anderson Renshaw. She suggests listening to it on shuffle.

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○ FRUITS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT ○



A Peaceful Ride

“I never know what to say when people ask me what my hobbies are. I mean, I’m a mom. I enjoy trips to the bathroom alone, and silence.”

- Unknown

SCRIPTURE TO SHARE:

“Cast all your anxieties on him, for he cares about you.” (1 Peter 5:7)

“Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4: 6-7)

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

What is the opposite of worry?

What are some things you worry about?

When we’re worried or afraid, what can we do to find peace?

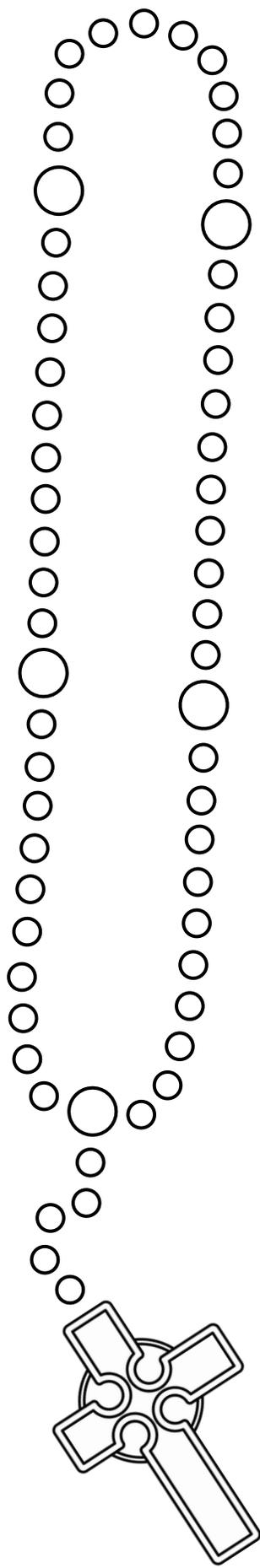
ACTIVITY:

Pray together! Prayer is a great way to find God’s peace in our hearts. Here are a couple of ideas:

- Pray at least one decade of the Rosary on your way to school or between stops
- Each person share one worry with one another and say a Hail Mary for each one

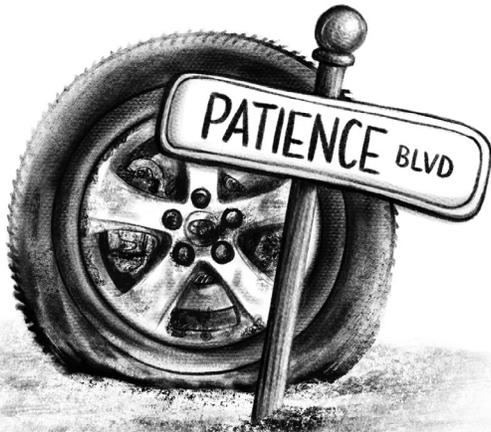
THINGS TO REMEMBER ABOUT TODAY:

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PEACE

○ FRUITS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT ○



Are We There Yet?

“Patience: What you have when there are too many witnesses.”

- Unknown

SCRIPTURE TO SHARE:

“But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.” (Isaiah 40:31)

“The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in mercy.” (Psalms 103:8)

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

When is it hard for you to be patient and wait?

What does it mean to “wait for the Lord”?

What can you do to be calm and wait?

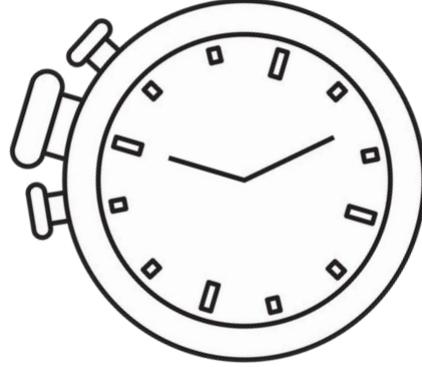
ACTIVITY:

Here are two ideas to help us all work on being patient:

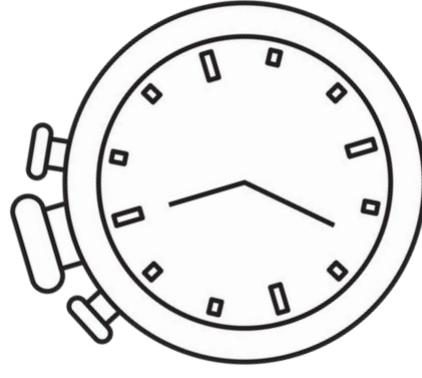
- Play the minivan waiting game: using Mom’s phone, set a timer for 3 minutes. Whoever can be quiet and wait gets a car treat!
- Have an older sibling or a parent who isn’t driving read a story book aloud. Listening is a great patience activity!

THINGS TO REMEMBER ABOUT TODAY:

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PATIENCE

○ FRUITS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT ○



Yielding to Others

“If it wasn’t for people, we could all be holy.”

- Mother Angelica

SCRIPTURE TO SHARE:

“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (Mark 12:31)

“And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.” (Ephesians 4:32)

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

Try and remember when someone was kind to you. How did it make you feel?

When was a time you could have been kind but weren't. How should you have behaved instead?

How do you think God has been kind to you?

ACTIVITY:

Perform an act of kindness! Here are some ideas:

- Make a stop in a fast-food drive-through as a family and offer to pay for the car (or minivan) behind you.
- Become “kindness ninjas” and do kind things in secret for members of our family.

THINGS TO REMEMBER ABOUT TODAY:

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KINDNESSES

○ FRUITS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT ○



Careful Driver

“Life, deal gently with her ... Love, never desert her.”

- Lucy Maud Montgomery

SCRIPTURE TO SHARE:

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” (Matthew 11:29)

“A gentle tongue is a tree of life.” (Proverbs 12:4)

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

What is the opposite of gentle? What would happen if you weren't gentle with your favorite toy?

What happens when we aren't gentle with each other?

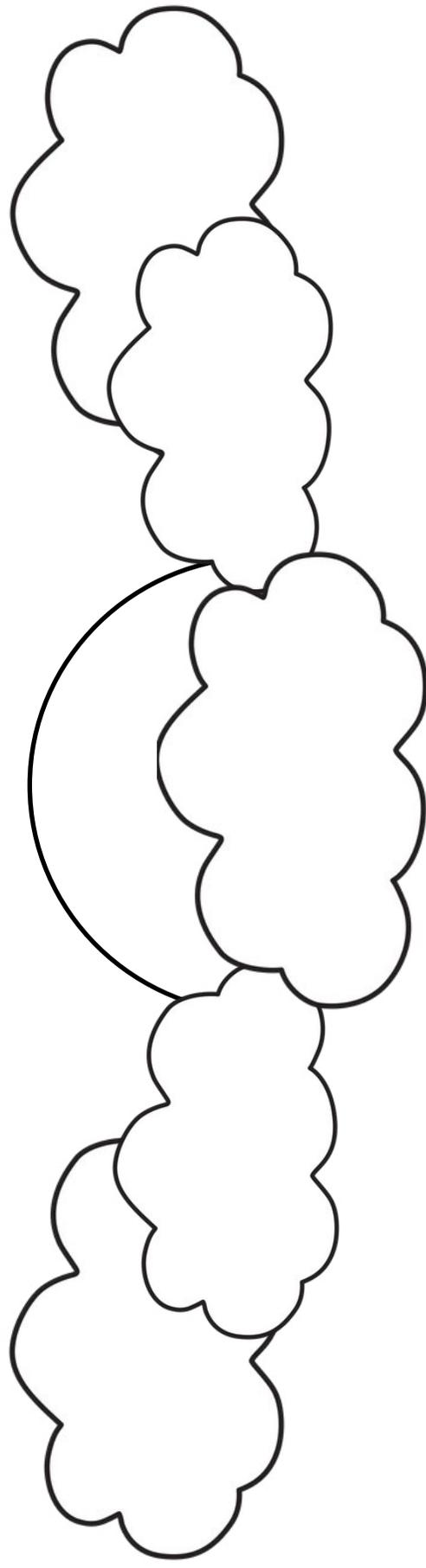
How do you think God is gentle with us?

ACTIVITY:

Play “gentle or not, here I come!” Everyone in the minivan watch out the window and spy things that are either gentle or not gentle. For example, a fluffy cloud seems gentle, while a concrete truck seems hard. How many gentle things can you spy?

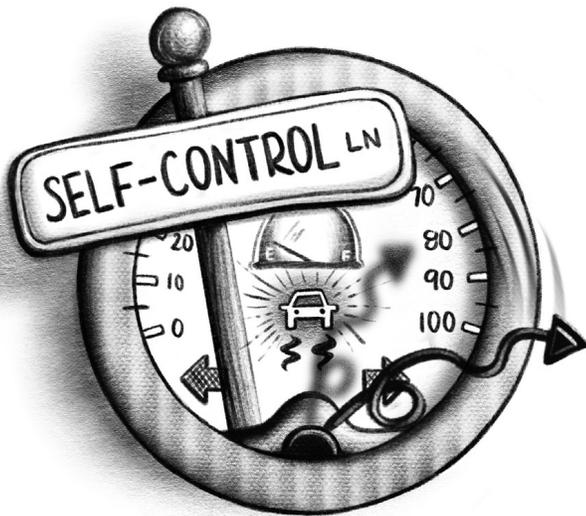
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GENTLENESS

○ FRUITS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT ○



Choosing the Right Road

“I always say if you aren’t yelling at your kids, you’re not spending enough time with them.”

- Reese Witherspoon

SCRIPTURE TO SHARE:

“I can do all things in him who strengthens me.” (Philippians 4:13)

“For God did not give us a spirit of timidity but a spirit of power and love and self-control.”
(2 Timothy 1:7)

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

What does it mean to have self-control? Who do you know who has really good self-control?

What times or places do you find it hard to control yourself?

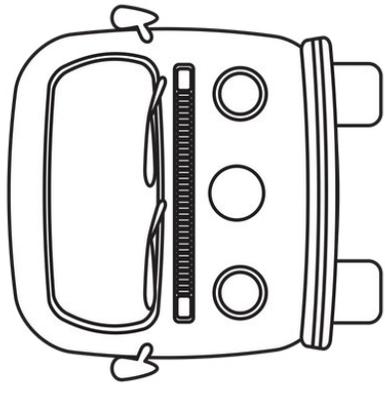
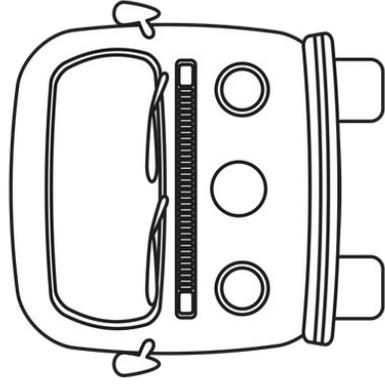
How can God help you when you are having a hard time controlling yourself?

ACTIVITY:

Play “minivan Simon says.” Have Mom, Dad, or an older sibling be “Simon” and give instructions everyone in the van has to follow. For example: raise your hand, stick out your tongue, smile really big, etc. If you follow the instructions you are safe. If you don’t, you are out. Practice self-control by listening!

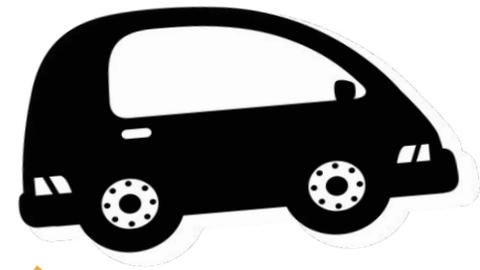
THINGS TO REMEMBER ABOUT TODAY:

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SELF -
CONTROL

○ FRUITS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT ○



Notes to Moms From the Author

“May today there be peace within. May you trust God that you are exactly where you are meant to be. May you not forget the infinite possibilities that are born of faith. May you use those gifts that you have received, and pass on the love that has been given to you. May you be content knowing you are a child of God. Let this presence settle into your bones, and allow your soul the freedom to sing, dance, praise, and love. It is there for each and every one of us.”

- Saint Teresa of Avila

Not long ago, I felt nearly paralyzed under the weight of my vocation as a wife and mother. I wondered if all the sleepless nights, dirty diapers, whiny toddlers, testy teens, mountains of laundry, loads of dishes, and logging hundreds (and hundreds) of miles in my overworked minivan was worth anything. I mean, I loved my kids more than life itself, but ... was this path really supposed to help me be ... holy? To get me to heaven?

Overwhelmed, exhausted, and not a little bit frustrated, I found myself wondering: What kind of a mom — what kind of a person, really — did I want to be?

It wasn't long before I came across Galatians 5:22-23. There, staring up at me from the pages, was a lifeline. As I read the list of the fruits of the Holy Spirit, it was like a lightbulb turned on in my heart — this was the sort of mom I wanted to be! More loving, patient, gentle, kind, self-controlled, and all the rest. I also knew I wanted to be humble, grateful, forgiving, and keep laughing at stuff, because humor (and coffee) is how I roll.

And so began **DEATH BY MINIVAN**.

Regardless how many miles you've logged on your journey in the mother'hood, or even if you've yet to cross the starting line, it's never too late — or too early — to pull over and take a closer look at the destinations St. Paul lists in his letter to the Galatians.

LOVE: It's pretty easy to love well-behaved, obedient children who give us hugs and don't talk back, right? But what about when it's been a long day, or you're sick, and the kids are playing whack-a-mole on your very last nerve? Consider a time when you chose to demonstrate sacrificial, Christ-like love, even when you were too tired or cranky to do it without supernatural help from the Holy Spirit. What fruit came from this choice? How can you be more unconditionally loving with your children? How about with yourself?

JOY: Nehemiah (8:10) tells us that the joy of the Lord is our strength. I don't know about you, but juggling the details and demands of family life sometimes leaves me feeling anything but strong. If God is offering strength through his joy, sign me up! So, what is the joy of the Lord? And how can you practically inject more strength-building joy into your vocation?

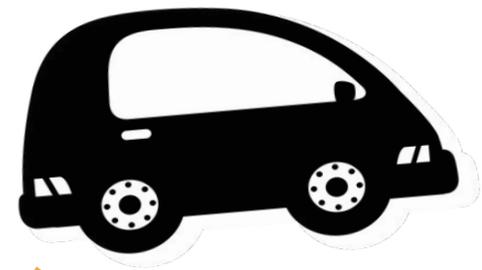
PEACE: Maybe you are a pretty calm, peace-filled person. Or, maybe, like me, your brain is NOISY and life is LOUD. Perhaps you crave the "peace that surpasses understanding" that Paul talks about in Philippians, but you're not sure how to get there from where you are right now. What is the peace that Jesus gives that the world can't? Have you ever experienced it? How might you abide in that peace today?

PATIENCE: Having children forced me to admit what an impatient person I often was/am. I was happily used to doing things my way in my timeframe; unfortunately, our children didn't get the memo. Maybe you can relate, if only a little. What are some ways you can practice being even more patient with your children? Are you able to be patient with yourself as you learn and grow?

KINDNESS: It's been said that kindness is love in action. Most moms I know are a veritable whirling dervish of service to their families and communities. Yet as you've likely heard, it's not how much you do, but with how much love you do it that matters. What would happen if, the next time you're running around like the Tasmanian devil, you stopped for a moment and did each thing with the intention of expressing great love? What is keeping you from being more kind?

GENTLENESS: I've never known so gentle a mother as the Blessed Virgin Mary. And yet, as I journey toward gentleness, I get discouraged because I am *sooo* not the Blessed Virgin Mary. It can be agitated, irritated, and angry; harsh and loud; and quick to act or speak before thinking, let alone praying! If you'd like to be more gentle with your children, why not ask the Blessed Mother to help with this intention? She's your Mama. And I bet she'd love to hear from you.

SELF-CONTROL: Of all the destinations on our map, self-control is arguably the most crucial (I will also accept "love" as #1), because, without self-control, we can't choose to be loving, gentle, kind, patient, good, faithful, etc., when we don't want to. Without self-control, our feelings and passions can run roughshod over our lives. Proverbs tells us: "A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls" (25:28). Is there any area in your life where you lack self-control? Do you spend, scroll, yell, eat, gossip, or _____ too much? What would cultivating the fruit of self-control look like for you, and how might it help you fulfill your vocation?



Soul Food & Tunes

“If evolution really works, how come mothers only have two hands?”

- Milton Berle

EASY-PEASY SNACKS:

- Hard Boiled Eggs
- String Cheese or Colby Jack Cheese Sticks
- Low Sodium Beef Jerky
- Mandarin Oranges & Dried Fruit

Heather Anderson Renshaw's Trail Mix Recipe

NOTES:

Here's my favorite “trail mix,” which has something everyone will like. (And those who don't like something, can just give theirs to the sibling who does.) I throw equal parts of each ingredient together, and we hit the road!

INGREDIENTS:

- Cheerios
- Gold Fish Crackers
- Dried Fruit
- Mini Pretzels
- Mini Chocolate Chips or M&Ms
- Mixed Nuts

CHILL TIME WITH JESUS:

The author of *Death By Minivan*, Heather Anderson Renshaw, put together this praise and worship **Spotify Playlist** for you to use when you need some alone time with Jesus. Put the little ones down and turn this on while you put together your own trail mix & easy-peasy snacks.

Here's a bit of advice, mom to mom...

Throw down the keys, kick the toys into a corner, and sit down with a cup of coffee (or glass of wine) to read ***Death by Minivan***. And buckle up — because with this book, you'll be on the road to a more joyful, more peaceful, more faithful motherhood.

Author Heather Anderson Renshaw, mother of five, is a lot like you. She knows all about the wild, crazy, and often hilarious experience of motherhood. As she shares in these pages, motherhood isn't a trip that's meant to be taken alone. God's got this, and the more we let him lead, the more we find the fruits of his Holy Spirit taking root in our hearts and in our families.

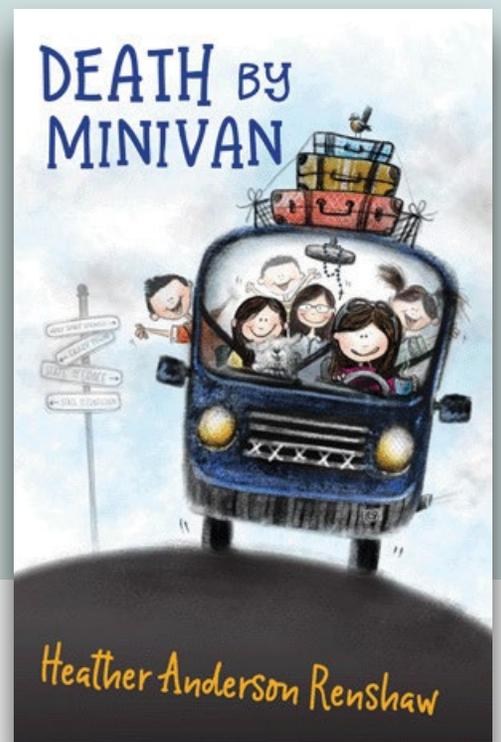


"Insightful and fun for individuals and even better for group study, this book should be required 'driver training' for busy moms navigating family life."

—Lisa M. Hendey, Founder of CatholicMom.com and author of *The Handbook for Catholic Moms*

"Heather Renshaw writes with humor and candor to remind us that we're not alone, and we can do this. This book will be a breath of fresh air for any mom who's ever felt like she's failing at her most important job."

—Jennifer Fulwiler, radio host & author of *One Beautiful Dream*



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