

PHASES

Young Children

Mealtime Moment *“Merry Heart Meal”*

Best Use

As a mealtime discussion tradition

Nutritional Value

Infuse fun into family meals through laughter

Advance Preparation

Have the following supplies ready before mealtime.

- A clean joke book or a few zingers printed from a joke website
- A special dessert
- A classic television comedy DVD such as *I Love Lucy* or *Gilligan's Island*
- A Bible

Serve It Up

Follow these steps to serve up a great experience.

1. Bring some clean jokes and a Bible to the table and announce that tonight is a “Merry Heart” meal.
2. Invite each child to take turns reading one of the jokes. Whether the joke is truly funny or just kind of silly, the kids will have a blast making everyone around the table laugh together. You might even decide to let the children create their own jokes – but be sure to laugh even if they aren't funny.
3. Read Proverbs 17:22 which describes a merry or joyful heart as good medicine. Ask each person to tell why they think laughter has a healing effect in our lives.
4. Tell your kids about times when the surprise of joy invaded your life (falling in love, discovering you were pregnant, etc.) and think of a time when the surprise of joy overtook a period of sadness or difficulty (an unexpected gift during hard financial season, etc.).
5. Pray a brief prayer of worship to God as the joy giver.
6. During dessert invite the family into the television room to watch an episode of a favorite classic television comedy available on DVD such as *I Love Lucy* or *Gilligan's Island* in order to give your children a taste of comedy that doesn't rely upon crude jokes or unwholesome themes.