

When You Are Away

By Christy Huffman

Before a family member, especially a parent, leaves on a trip, take time to ask how everyone in the family feels about the upcoming separation and to answer questions about the time apart. Make a plan to stay connected and to hold one another in prayer.

For

Young Family

Season

Winter

Needed

Wall calendar, pen, road atlas or computer

Prepare in Advance

Before a parent or other family member takes a trip, gather the itinerary information and have a family conversation.

Activity Plan

1. Say this prayer aloud to begin.

Loving God, thank you for our family. Thank you for the love we have for one another, even when we are apart. Be with [family member] while she/he is traveling and with the rest of us here at home. Give her/him safe travel and a joyful homecoming. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

2. Point out the departure and return dates of the upcoming trip on a wall calendar. Count the total number of days the traveling family member will be gone. Write a reminder to pray for the traveler by writing "Pray for [name]" on the square for each day he or she will be gone.
3. Have the traveler tell what he or she will be doing while away from the rest of the family. Locate the traveler's destination on a road atlas or online map. Invite family members to ask questions about the trip.
4. Plan specific ways for family members to stay in touch. Some ideas:
 - Schedule times for phone calls or video chats and note them on the calendar. Perhaps the traveler can participate in bedtime prayers or story time via phone or video chat. During this time, have each family member tell one thing he or she is thankful for that day.
 - Look at the calendar and identify any special events the traveling person will miss. On the calendar, mark a later date when your family will celebrate these events together.
 - Plan a special meal when everyone is together again.
 - If the traveler will be gone for an extended period or will be in an area without phone access, plan how to keep in touch through email messages or letters.
5. At the end of the conversation, have family members bless each other—make the sign of the cross on the other person's forehead while saying: *God, keep watch over [name] today and always. Amen.*



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