



# The Encircling Stage

The **Encircling Stage** (ages 4–8) is a season of wonder and growth where children begin exploring the world beyond your immediate reach. Though they are stepping out in new ways, they still look to you for safety, comfort, and guidance. This is a crucial time when your love and consistency help shape how your children will come to understand God’s presence and care.

In this stage, your steady support models God’s abiding love and begins to root their faith. As they engage with daily rhythms and relationships, they learn to see beyond themselves and build meaningful connections with others. Your consistent presence lays the foundation for lifelong faith.

“I am the vine; you are the branches.”

**John 15:5**

## Tips for Caregivers

- Don’t underestimate the power of simple, silly moments together. By connecting with your child through fun and playful moments, you create an avenue for joy and reinforce your child’s sense of safety and belonging.
- Look for small opportunities throughout the day to connect—like reading, joking, or cooking together—because these moments shape your child’s view of love.
- Laughter is a powerful tool. It relieves stress, builds emotional resilience, and reminds children that joy is part of God’s design.
- When your child tries something new, celebrate his or her effort before the result. This teaches perseverance and confidence.

## Growth Model



### Plant

Your child begins to experience life outside of your constant care and starts noticing how others interact and show love.



### Root

As your child tries new things and experiences success, he or she begins building confidence in his or her growing abilities.



### Growth

Through repetition and encouragement, your child learns what works, repeats positive behaviors, and grows in independence.



### Fruit

Your child begins taking initiative to show love, joy, and kindness toward others—living out the early fruit of a faith that has taken root.

# Activity: Family Fun

## STEP 1 (The Why)

Joy builds trust.

Laughter relieves pressure.

Shared fun creates lifelong memories.

You don't need elaborate outings or big plans—simple moments of fun at home can have the most lasting impact. When you take time to laugh, play, and be fully present, you're teaching your child that love isn't just steady—it's joyful. These small moments plant seeds of connection and help your child experience the delight of being loved.

## STEP 2 (Activity Directions)

### 1 **Make Time for Spontaneous Fun**

- Consider trying one of these at home tonight:
  - Have a dance party (Tip: Kitchen utensils make great microphones!)
  - Play an active game like freeze tag or sardines
  - Try to juggle random fun objects, like some favorite plushies
  - Build a fort with blankets and eat snacks inside
  - Have a picnic meal on the floor
  - Go for a nighttime walk in pajamas
  - Blow up balloons and let them fly around the room
  - Make up rhymes using family members' names
  - Put on your child's favorite songs and bake or make a meal together

### 2 **Affection and Affirmation**

- End these moments with verbal affirmation, such as "I love spending time with you." Be especially intentional about doing this when things don't turn out quite how you expected, such as when cooking together. This simple affirmation helps your child connect joy with love and belonging.
- This helps your child to anchor his/her heart in love and encouragement, reminding him/her that the process is more important than the result and he/she is loved no matter the outcome.

## Encouragement

Even five minutes of silliness can plant a seed of love. When you join your child in play, you're not just having fun—you're building trust, deepening your bond, and teaching your child that family is built on love and joy. These moments remind your child, *"I'm safe, I'm loved, and life with my family is worth celebrating."*