

Five Ways to Connect with Your Son...and Five (*Five Ingredient or Less!*) Recipes to Help Get You There

*Because your son needs (and, trust me, **wants**) a relationship with you at every age and stage of growing up...and **the way to a man's heart is through his stomach.***

Moms, by nature, we are connectors. Nurturers. We love our kids deeply, and we innately want to stay in a healthy relationship with them.

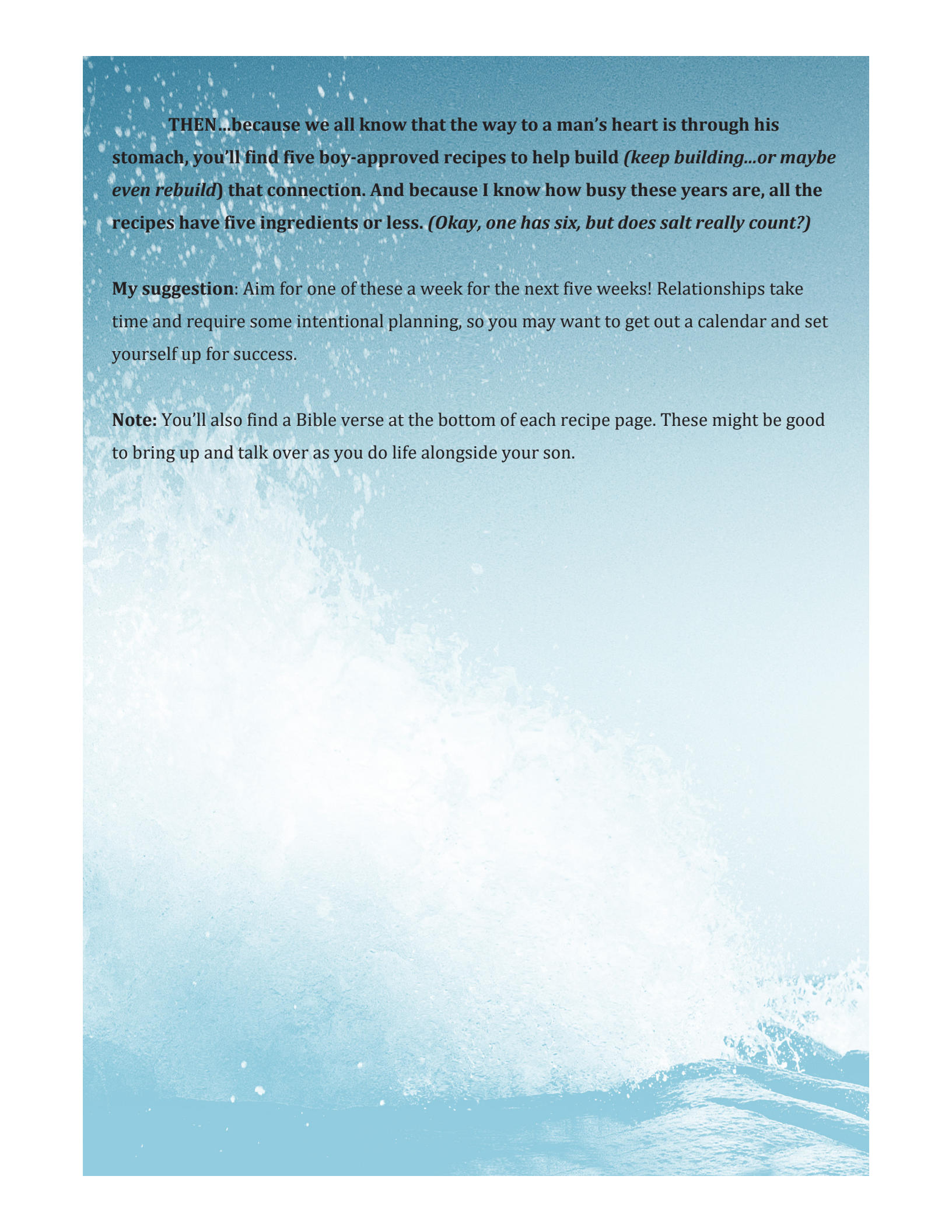
But this doesn't always happen as naturally as we would like. We might have boys who are wild or distracted or **just so very boy** that we wonder if we'll ever really feel that bond.

Or we may start with a healthy connection with our son when he is young but then begin to feel him pulling away as he grows into more independence. It could be happening in a healthy way (like wanting to spend more time with Dad). Or you might be concerned that he spends most of his time in his room or away from the house with friends. Either way, it can be hard on a momma's heart.

So moms often ask, "How do I let him go without losing him completely?" "What are some ways I can build a connection with my son, even in his growing-up years?" And we all have moments of wondering, *Does he even want to spend time with me?* If we're honest, we can't help but question if our growing sons need us anymore (at least for anything other than food and laundry and a taxi service).

Well, Momma, I'm here to tell you that, **yes**, your son does need you! And I'll even be so bold as to say that he desires a relationship with you. *At every age.* He may not know how to show it, *but he does.* Our growing boys are complex creatures, yes. But they are, and always will be, our sons. And with a little intention we can build healthy, strong relationships with our sons that will last a lifetime.

In this download I share five suggestions for practical ways you can work toward building a healthy connection with your son, at any age. There's nothing magical here, and hopefully these will be a springboard to many more creative ideas you can add to the list. But these are five things *I do with my own boys* that have been effective over the years. I think they are very doable and can be a lot of fun too!



THEN...because we all know that the way to a man's heart is through his stomach, you'll find five boy-approved recipes to help build *(keep building...or maybe even rebuild)* that connection. And because I know how busy these years are, all the recipes have five ingredients or less. *(Okay, one has six, but does salt really count?)*

My suggestion: Aim for one of these a week for the next five weeks! Relationships take time and require some intentional planning, so you may want to get out a calendar and set yourself up for success.

Note: You'll also find a Bible verse at the bottom of each recipe page. These might be good to bring up and talk over as you do life alongside your son.

1. Plan a Dinner Date

You may think your son doesn't want time with you, but offer to take him to his favorite pizza, burger, or sushi place (if your kid has expensive tastes like some of mine do) and it's unlikely he'll turn you down. This is as easy as asking him straight up, "Hey, buddy! Can we set aside a couple of hours on _____ night to grab dinner together?" Hopefully he'll be happy to do it, but don't be offended if he acts too busy or like this is a chore. Be patient with this process. Then set a date and make it happen. While you are out, make it a fun and lighthearted time. Don't dive into conflict or heavy topics. Put your devices away and *just enjoy him*. If he's quiet, don't stress, and try not to fill in the space with too many words of your own! (I've been guilty of that.) Show him that you just like being with him, and he'll want to be with you more. Order dessert, or go home and have dessert ready in the fridge (the rest of the family can share that way too). Below is an easy recipe for my boys' favorite apple crisp.

SIMPLE (HEALTHIER) APPLE CRISP

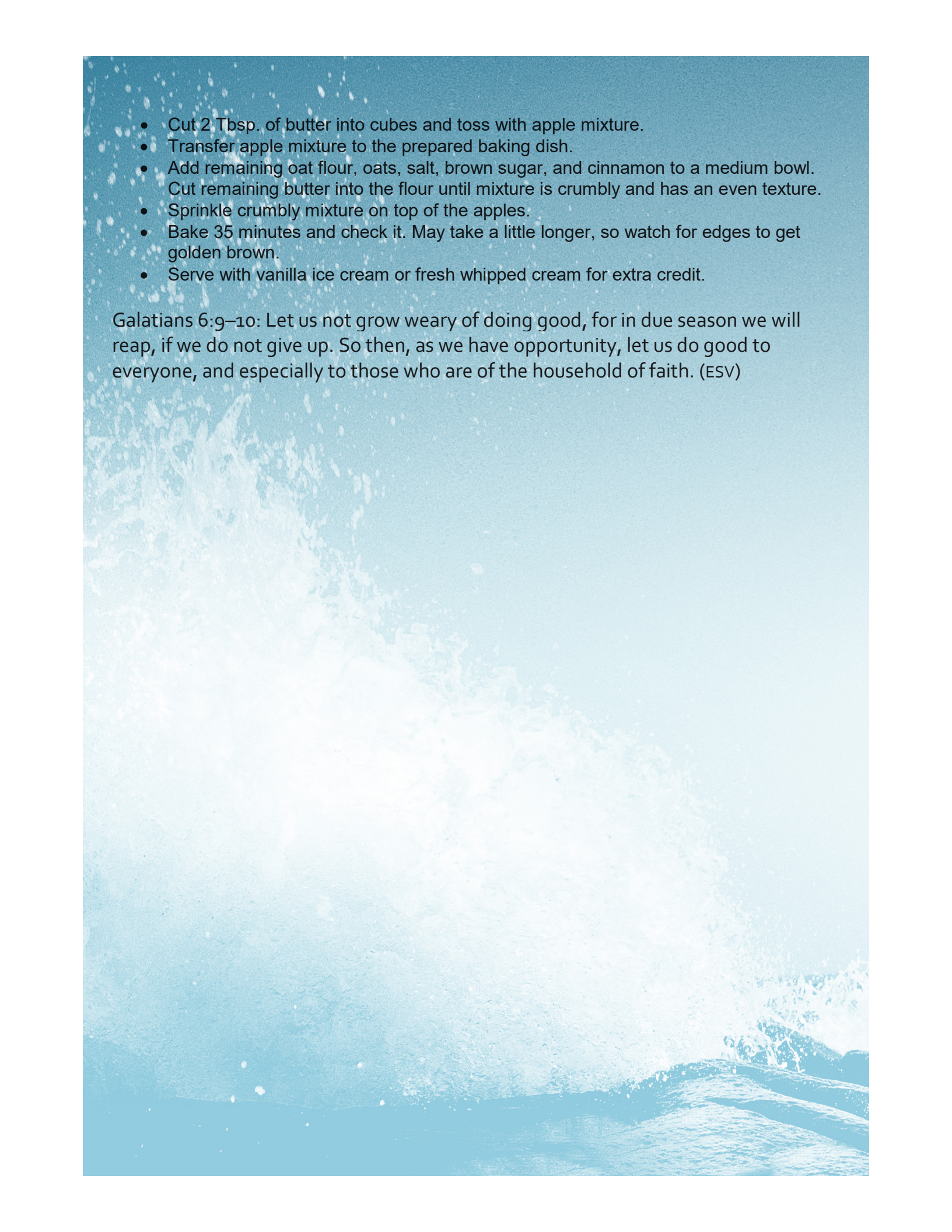
(serves 4 to 5; wisdom would say to double this recipe)

INGREDIENTS

- 6 cups peeled and sliced apples (I prefer Granny Smith, but really any apple will work!)
- 2 cups rolled oats, divided (quick-cooking oats are fine)
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup + $\frac{1}{3}$ cup packed brown sugar
- 6 Tbsp. unsalted butter, slightly softened and divided
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. kosher salt, divided
- 1 tsp. ground cinnamon

INSTRUCTIONS

- Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
- Coat a small baking dish with cooking spray or butter.
- Blend one cup of oats in a food processor or blender until it is fine.
- Toss apples with cinnamon, 2 Tbsp. of the blended oats, $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. salt, and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup brown sugar.

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- Cut 2 Tbsp. of butter into cubes and toss with apple mixture.
 - Transfer apple mixture to the prepared baking dish.
 - Add remaining oat flour, oats, salt, brown sugar, and cinnamon to a medium bowl. Cut remaining butter into the flour until mixture is crumbly and has an even texture.
 - Sprinkle crumbly mixture on top of the apples.
 - Bake 35 minutes and check it. May take a little longer, so watch for edges to get golden brown.
 - Serve with vanilla ice cream or fresh whipped cream for extra credit.

Galatians 6:9–10: Let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith. (ESV)

2. Get Back to Nature

Find something—it can be almost anything—to do with your son outdoors. Boys typically open up more when they are shoulder to shoulder (rather than eye to eye), and one of the best ways to make that happen is by getting outdoors together. Plan a hike, a bike ride, or even an evening walk together. (My boys love to shoot hoops or challenge me to a healthy game of horse.) If you have the time, make it an event—hiking with a picnic, or bonus points for a real live campout. Something special happens when you get out of the house and into the open air with your son. This may be a time for deeper conversations to flow. *Or not.* Either way, **enjoy your time.** Try not to put pressure on either of you for it to look a certain way. Just get outside and have some fun with your son! To help really score points with your son, I am sharing my boys' favorite Peanut Butter Oatmeal Bar recipe below. (Psst: it has four ingredients and takes only five minutes to make these!)

PEANUT BUTTER OATMEAL BARS

INGREDIENTS

- 1 ½ cups peanut butter or nut butter of choice
- ¼ cup real maple syrup
- 1 ½ cups uncooked oats
- 1 ½ cups flake cereal of choice (I use Special K)

INSTRUCTIONS

- Combine all ingredients and spread into an 8x8 inch pan lined with parchment paper.
- Press down and refrigerate for at least one hour.
- Cut into squares and ENJOY
- If you are taking these on a hike, I recommend a cooler bag! ☺

Psalm 89:11: The heavens are Yours, the earth also is Yours; the world and all it contains, You have founded them. (NASB)

3. Extend New Morning Mercies

Maybe your son has been through a rough patch, had some disappointments, or is just exhausted from a heavy load in school or sports. Maybe you went to bed feeling lousy for losing your cool at the kids or feeling mom guilt over _____ (just about anything). Well, one of my favorite Bible verses is out of Lamentations, and it reminds us that God gives us second chances all the time, even suggesting that His mercies are “new every morning.” I know I need that one often, and maybe you do too.

Well, we get to be an extension of God’s love and mercy to our kiddos, and a delicious breakfast is a great way to do exactly that. Plan a morning with your son—something other than the normal daily routine (which is often cold cereal if you’re in my house). Your son might love to be taken out to his favorite pancake house, or if he’s a teenager like mine, he might be up for coffee and doing devotions together. Or, more typically, he might just love a free pass to sleep in and have breakfast waiting. (Who wouldn’t?!) In the morning, things are different. The day is fresh and new. It’s a great time to talk over plans and dreams and concerns or even struggles. Before you have this time, I suggest you pray for the chance to connect in a special way. Perhaps over breakfast you’ll have some life-giving words to speak into your son—affirming character qualities developing in him, encouraging him in an area he might be challenged, or celebrating a recent success. Be intentional with this time, and enjoy your bed-headed, wonderful son.

*If you want to wow your son at home, try my boys' favorite Puff Pancake recipe. It’s easy, and it makes you look really good!

EASY PUFF PANCAKES

INGREDIENTS

- 1 ½ cups milk of choice
- 4 eggs
- 1 cup flour

- 4 Tbsp. butter
- (Optional but suggested add-ons: fresh fruit, a sprinkle of sugar, syrup, or powdered sugar)

INSTRUCTIONS

- Preheat oven to 425 degrees. While it is heating, place butter in the bottom of a 9x13 inch pan and place in oven for the butter to melt.
- Combine eggs, milk, and flour and mix until it has a smooth consistency.
- When the butter has melted, remove pan and pour the mixture into it.
- Optional: top with berries, sliced peaches, bananas, or other fruit and a sprinkling of sugar if you like. My boys love to top it with sugar and no fruit, but I trust their tastes to mature one day... 😊
- Cook for 16 minutes and check it. Edges should be puffed up fabulously and slightly browned. If not, leave it another minute or two and check again.
- Pull it out of the oven and let it sit for just a minute or two to cool slightly.
- Cut into large pieces and serve with powdered sugar or syrup. (A squeeze of lemon is also great!)
- ENJOY! PS: This is also delicious served cold later without topping. Think of it as a thick crepe! 😊

Lamentations 3:22–23: The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. (ESV)

4. Team Up in the Kitchen

Time working side by side in the kitchen can make for some good, healthy bonding with your son. Cooking, like outdoor activities, is a great way to connect without putting your son in that (agonizing!) predicament of having to be eye to eye. I don't recommend doing this the first time with guests coming or if you're in a rush but instead for a meal that is simple, relaxed, and not on a strict timeline. I recommend you plan a meal in advance and get your ingredients ready. Then ask your son for an hour of his time to work with you in the kitchen. Not only is this good for him (our boys need to have a few cooking skills by the time they launch!), but he'll be so proud when the family loves his cooking. Play some music, wear your aprons (they set the mood, and also kids are messy!), and have fun with it! A simple recipe to make your son look like a pro? Roasted sausage, potatoes, and veggies. (Bonus: This is a recipe he can adjust and use for the rest of his life!)

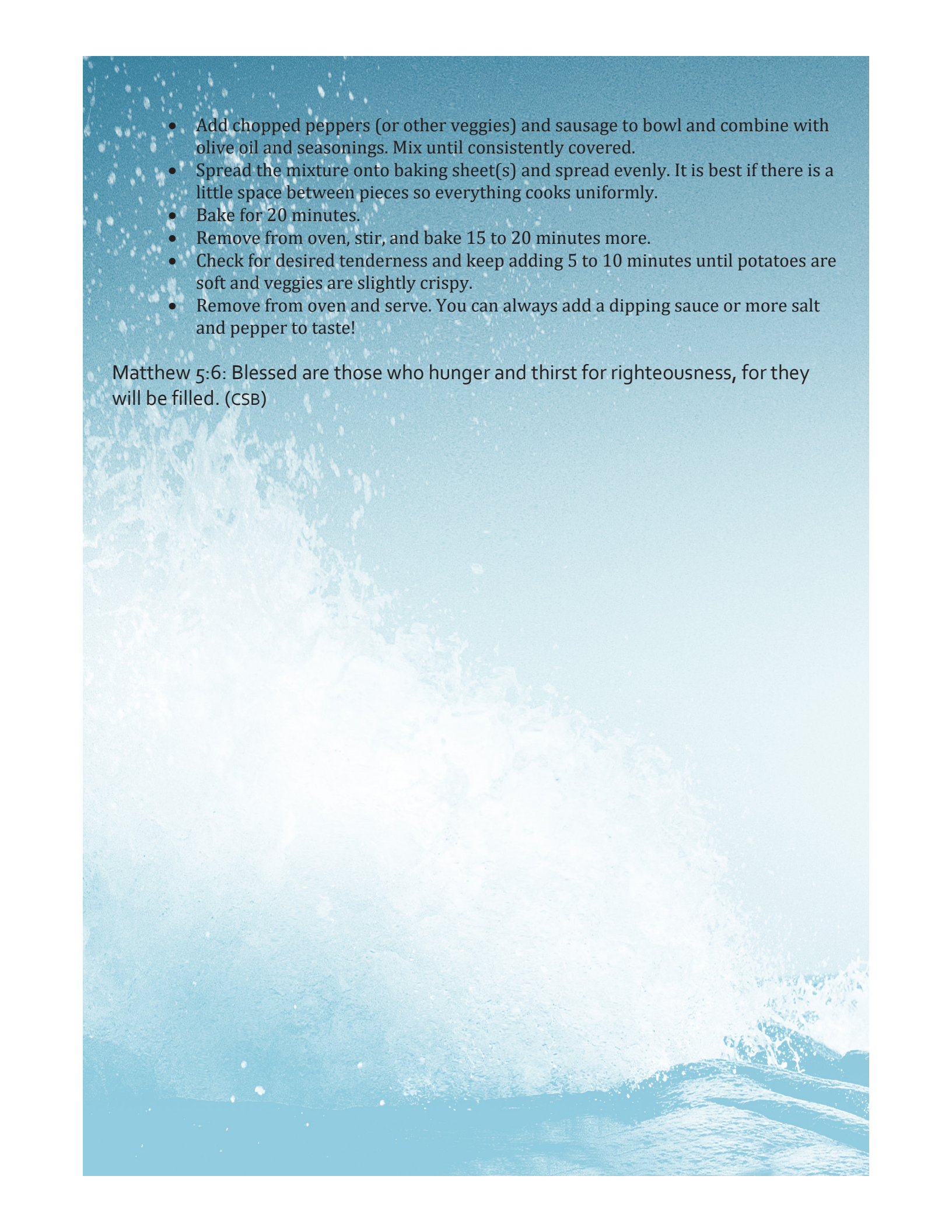
ROASTED SAUSAGE, POTATOES, AND VEGGIES

INGREDIENTS

- 5 to 6 cups small red potatoes cut into 1 inch pieces (sweet potatoes are a healthy and delicious option)
- 1 12-ounce package of sausage cut into ½ inch pieces (I like to use organic chicken sausage, and there are many varieties to choose from!)
- 4 cups bell peppers cut into chunks (can also use other veggies of your choice—carrots, green beans, broccoli, and cauliflower are some we use)
- 2 Tbsp. olive oil (or swap out for coconut or avocado oil if you prefer)
- Seasoning to taste (I use salt and pepper, garlic salt, and sometimes rosemary and thyme)

INSTRUCTIONS

- Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Spray 2 baking sheets (or one extra-large sheet) with cooking spray. I like to use aluminum foil for easier cleanup.
- Place cut potatoes in a large microwavable bowl and microwave on high for five minutes.

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- Add chopped peppers (or other veggies) and sausage to bowl and combine with olive oil and seasonings. Mix until consistently covered.
 - Spread the mixture onto baking sheet(s) and spread evenly. It is best if there is a little space between pieces so everything cooks uniformly.
 - Bake for 20 minutes.
 - Remove from oven, stir, and bake 15 to 20 minutes more.
 - Check for desired tenderness and keep adding 5 to 10 minutes until potatoes are soft and veggies are slightly crispy.
 - Remove from oven and serve. You can always add a dipping sauce or more salt and pepper to taste!

Matthew 5:6: Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. (CSB)

5. An Old-School Game for the WIN

Okay, so hear me out: playing a game—an old-fashioned board or card game—with your boy can be one of the most fun, bonding experiences ever. Games are great because they level the competitive playing field. As our sons get bigger and stronger, we often can't keep up with them athletically, yet there's still hope that we can take them down with a game of Chinese Checkers or Scrabble (you've probably got more modern games than these!). This does not have to be time consuming (unless you choose Monopoly; then you have been warned). Most games require only fifteen to thirty minutes and can provide a great environment for you to have light conversation, some friendly bantering, and a few good laughs. A smoothie is a great complement to game time, so follow my family's favorite Tropical Smoothie recipe below.

TROPICAL SMOOTHIE

(serves 2 with a little extra for refills)

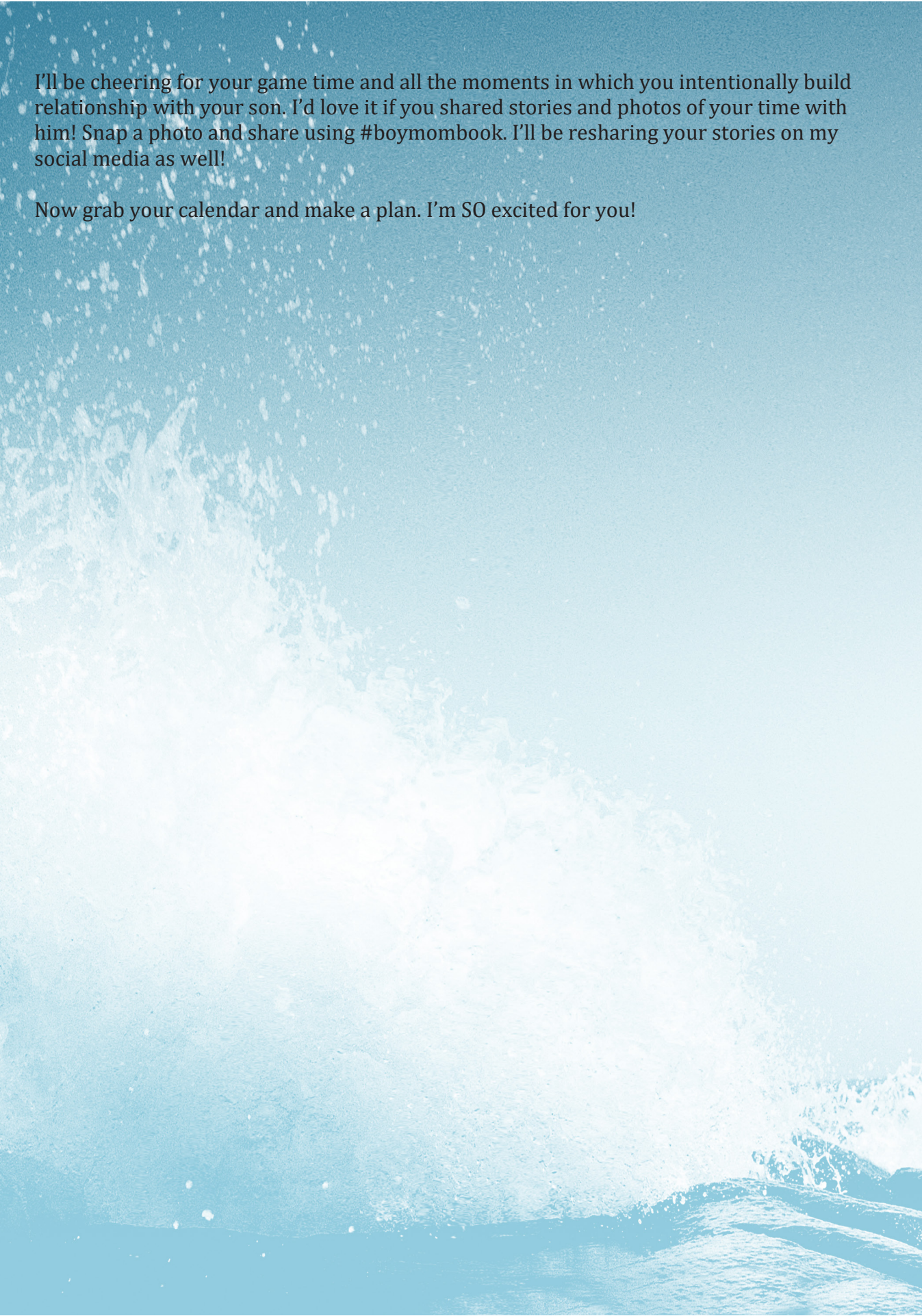
INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup pineapple cut up (fresh is best but canned will do!)
- 1 ½ cups coconut milk (can substitute any milk)
- 1 ripe banana, peeled and sliced
- 1 cup frozen mango
- ½ cup orange juice
- 2 to 3 cups ice
- optional: a good squeeze of honey or agave nectar and 1 tsp. vanilla extract

INSTRUCTIONS

- Put all ingredients in a blender and blend until smooth
- ENJOY!

Psalm 16:11: You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore. (ESV)

A full-page background image with a blue tint. It depicts a large, energetic splash of water, likely from a pool or beach, with many white droplets and foam visible against a bright, clear sky. The water splash originates from the bottom right and expands upwards and to the left, filling most of the frame.

I'll be cheering for your game time and all the moments in which you intentionally build relationship with your son. I'd love it if you shared stories and photos of your time with him! Snap a photo and share using #boymombook. I'll be resharing your stories on my social media as well!

Now grab your calendar and make a plan. I'm SO excited for you!