



Instafamily

Six Week

Devotional

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Preface

Dear Bridge Family,

It is a well-established fact that everything can change in 40 days.

God's judgement came on the world in the days of Noah through 40 days and nights of rain. God's redemption came to the world through Jesus' ministry that started with 40 days of fasting in the wilderness. 40 days can change everything!

That's why the Bridge team has created this labor of love. In these pages, you will find a 40-day supply of simple devotional thoughts, discussions and suggested prayers. You'll also find a key thought for those of you who have children or teens at home. It is our prayer that 40 days of spending a few minutes together around God's Word, and meaningful conversation and prayer will change everything in your family forever!

In a day when the temptation to focus on our smart phones, and computer and TV screens is impacting us all, it is vital that we make intentional effort to focus on our family relationships.

Take advantage of these devotions and you may find that 40 days changes everything!

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Pastor Jim Wall". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Pastor" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Wall".

Pastor Jim Wall
Senior Pastor
The Bridge

Working Yourself Out of a Job

 *“Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old, he will not depart from it.” - Proverbs 22:6 ESV*

Would you accept a position with your employer if your task was to work yourself out of a job, so you were no longer needed? It's an important question because that's precisely the role of a parent in the life of their child. There is nothing like coming home after a hard day of work and having your toddler race to the door to greet you. Something happens when that little one enters adolescence. I'm referring to the process of your teen pulling away from you and becoming more independent. The worst part is feeling as if your child no longer needs you. During these years, teens seek their own identity apart from their parents. It's a natural process that prepares teens for adulthood within parameters parents must allow it to happen. Instead, most parents hit the panic button and desperately cling to that feeling of being needed. It's tough, but you must let go!

Parents, God has given you the responsibility of working yourself out of a job by raising kids who can stand on their own two feet. When your child becomes more independent, take heart. It doesn't mean they don't love you. It means they are developing as God designed them. They are spreading their wings into adulthood to live a happy, successful life on their own.



TALK ABOUT IT:

- What steps can we take to ensure our family has the tools to succeed in life?
- How can we measure success?



PRAY ABOUT IT:

God, thank You for the family You have given us. Help us as parents to “train our children” in Your ways and give them the wisdom of Your ways as they enter into this thing called life.

In order to teach our kids, they must understand how to be teachable.

Isaiah 64:8 says *"Yet You, LORD, are our Father. We are the clay, You are the potter; we are all the work of Your hand."*

Have your child shape a heart using clay or Play-doh. Discuss with them what it means to mold something. Explain that we shape the clay into a heart like the picture in our heads. Just like clay is soft and we can mold it, our hearts must be soft so God can mold them.

What does it mean for God to mold our hearts?

It means that we let Him help us learn to be more like Him.

What are some ways we can let God mold our hearts?

When we allow our parents to teach us about Him, and when we read our Bible and pray, He is molding our hearts.

Most parents/guardians will openly admit that they don't know everything, however, because they do have more experience at this whole life thing, there's a good chance that they know a little more about life than we do! Instead of dismissing their thoughts and ideas, what if you tried to learn from them? It makes sense, doesn't it? If you wanted to get better at basketball, you would find a coach who played for many years. What about golf? Wouldn't it be wise to learn from Tiger Woods, if you had the chance? Tiger has been playing golf for over 40 years now. So why not seek your parent's/guardian's advice when it comes to life? It might just save you in the long run.

Fight for Your Kids

 *"Don't be afraid of the enemy! Remember the Lord, who is great and glorious, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes!" - Nehemiah 4:14 NLT*

It was just like any other day in the Rosepace cul-de-sac. The boys were chasing each other around with water guns and the parents were cleaning up the yard. After working all day, the decision was made to move an old tarp that had been against the house for months. It had become an almost invisible part of the yard. Just as it was about to be moved, a thought appeared in the man's head. What if there is something living under there? With the deadly fear of serpents in his head, he asked his wife to move the tarp. Reluctantly, the wife moved the tarp and sure enough, there was a snake curled up in the dark, damp space. With mounting anxiety, the man grabbed a shovel and gave it to his wife. She killed the snake and removed it from the yard. As he stood there, he wondered how long this slithery being had been hiding just a few feet away from his boys while they played in the yard.

As it happened with this family, many parents today suffer from a similar lack of awareness. While this threat to was physical, there are unseen battles at work against our kids' hearts and minds. Kids are being pursued by everything from school bullies and drugs to pornography and sex. Unfortunately, many of these threats sneak in our homes quietly through the shows, movies, video games or other wavering influences that we allow. For a time, all seems well in the home. But is it really? Kids today need parents who fight for their hearts and minds and will be a source of strength and work to instill biblical values.



TALK ABOUT IT:

- How are we making sure our children are aware of the battle going on around them without instilling fear?
- How can we be more present in our children's lives?



PRAY ABOUT IT:

God, thank You for the awareness of the spiritual battle going on around us. Help us and equip us. Make us mindful of the enemy's snares.

day
2

bridgeKids

Use markers or colored pencils to draw and color a picture of Nehemiah 4:14.



DAY
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bridge
students

Nehemiah continues with verse 15 saying, *“When our enemies heard that we knew of their plans and that God had frustrated them, we all returned to our work on the wall.”*

During the rebuilding of the Jerusalem wall, Nehemiah had enemies who wanted to keep the rebuilding process from happening. Nehemiah discovered his enemies’ plans to destroy the progress they were making on the wall and he decided to prepare his people for the attack. Because Nehemiah took the threat seriously and prepared, the people and the wall were saved.

God’s Word makes it very clear that our enemy, Satan, wants to bring destruction to our families and our lives. How can we, like Nehemiah, prepare for the attacks of the enemy? Why is it important for families to stay united in prayer every day?

Who's the Boss?



"Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching, for they are a graceful garland for your head and pendants for your neck." - Proverbs 1:8-9 ESV

Raising a seventeen-year-old "man" in 2020 is never easy. While you want to be the sole authoritative influence in his life, you either feel bad for tightening the noose, or you feel like the worst parent ever for allowing in unwholesome influence. When you put your foot down, you feel it threatens the relationship you have, but you know it's the right thing to do. So, in the end, you give a little more each day until you realize you are about to lose him. Allowing him to spend time in certain environments may be fun and full of freedom, but there are also snares the enemy has set to trip him up.

As parents, God has given us a position of authority in our kids' lives. It's crucial that we don't waiver in that influence. Children don't need us to be their friends— someone telling them what they want to hear. They need a parent – an authority figure willing to speak truth into their lives. We should, of course, listen to our children and give their views careful consideration, but kids should not be allowed to run the home. That is our God-given responsibility.



TALK ABOUT IT:

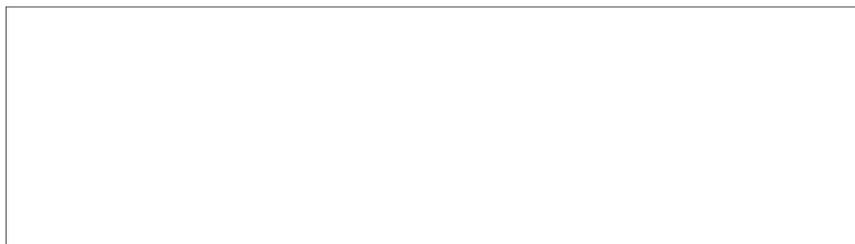
- How can we speak truth into the lives of our children?
- How do we keep the authoritative position, while allowing our child(ren) to express their views?



PRAY ABOUT IT:

God, You are the ultimate authority figure in our lives. Give us guidance and wisdom as we raise our children with confidence to share their views, but with respect to their role in our family.

Use markers, crayons or colored pencils to draw and color a picture of Proverbs 1:8-9 ESV.



Why do you think your father's instructions and your mother's teachings are important?

What have your parents taught you?

*"I will walk in freedom, for I have devoted myself to Your commandments."
- Psalm 119:45 NLT*

Have you ever broken a rule because you thought the rule was keeping you from MORE freedom, only to find yourself LOSING freedom because you broke the rule? Maybe you lost phone privileges, and your curfew got shorter? Not fun, right?

The funny thing about rules is that, even when it doesn't feel like it, they lead to freedom. That's exactly what the writer of this Psalm says. When we live within the rules, boundaries, and guardrails that are helpful to us, and helpful to the people around us, our lives are better—and we have more freedom.

Today, spend some time thinking about rules that you may have thought limited your freedom in the past. Think about how they might lead to more freedom down the road.

Navigating the Course

 *"If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and He will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking." - James 1:5 NLT*

Finally, the opportunity to scuba dive in the Bahamian waters! There were many occasions on the North Carolina coast, but the waters were murky and thick. Now, Samantha could see everything under the surface. Beautiful, tropical fish and sting rays in the distance marked her path. With every paddle, something grabbed her attention. To her left, something shiny slithered by and she followed it. It was moving at a pace much quicker than hers, and eventually, she lost sight of it. She continued to swim and was amazed at the bright life everywhere she looked. Surely the reef should be in sight soon, so she emerged to get her bearings. As she looked around, she realized she had been swimming in the complete opposite direction of the reef.

Sounds a lot like parenting, doesn't it? Even for believers, raising children almost never happens in a straight line, especially when it feels as though we're being bullied by a culture that is threatening to knock our family off course. It can certainly be a scary challenge. Strong parenting requires routine adjustments considering a child's development and maturity. We may need to adjust our approach as the child's environment changes and their social values grow. Through it all, God is our resource. He is right there, waiting for us to turn to Him and ask for guidance and wisdom.



TALK ABOUT IT:

- How do we limit the world's influences on our children while allowing them to have life experiences?
- How can we, as a family, navigate the ever-changing, challenging "waves" of life?



PRAY ABOUT IT:

God, thank You for being the ultimate Navigator of our lives. Give us grace as we dive into uncharted waters, and Your wisdom in the decisions that we make.

"I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my loving eye on you." - Psalm 32:8

To navigate, you need to first find your position and then plan your path. Walk through the following story with your kids: Imagine you are hiking and lose your way. What do you do? Your phone doesn't have a signal, so that's no help. You look in your backpack to see if you have any tools that will come in handy. You pull out a piece of paper that turns out to be a map.

The next thing you find is your compass. How can these items help? As you look at your map you notice a waterfall...just like the one in front of you. The map says your trail is to the east of that waterfall; how in the world do you figure out which way is east? Ah, the compass! You know that the needle always points north, so...you look down at your compass, line up the needle and...boom, all you need to do is walk to the right to find your trail. You are saved! Why? You were equipped with the tools you needed to navigate.

Just like we need the right tools to navigate in the wilderness, we need the right tools to navigate or day.

Ask: "What are some tools we can use to help us navigate?"

Brainstorm with your kids to think of tools they can use in their lives. (the Bible, prayer, asking parents hard questions, etc.)

Bonus: Look up and play the song "True North" by Rend Collective.

Ask: "What does the song mean when it says, 'You are my true north'?"
"How can we make Jesus our true north?"

When you were a little kid, your favorite voice was likely someone close to you—like a parent, an aunt, your grandfather, or maybe even a favorite babysitter or older sibling. Whoever it was, when they spoke, you listened, and you likely tried to obey. As we get older, we sometimes stop listening to those important voices in our lives, and instead, turn our attention to the voices and influences around us. True freedom comes when we obey the voice of the One who loves us above all else.

Today, lean into God's voice by praying and asking Him to help you hear His direction above the others around you.

What is Reality?

 *"But the Lord said to Samuel... "The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." - 1 Samuel 16:7 NIV*

Ok, we all know that the ride to church on Sunday mornings can go right or VERY wrong! This specific Sunday morning was the day after laundry day had been skipped to spend more quality time with the family. Now, there were no matching socks, crumpled button up shirts and a lot of attitudes. As we drove, we repeatedly yell "If you can't say anything nice...", well you know the rest. We arrive on two wheels, Bibles in hand and our best church smile on; promising to do things differently next week.

We go into church smiling, because while we may not have it all together, it's the best way to blend with the other families who obviously didn't have the same morning experience that we did! Other families walk in laughing and smiling, quoting scriptures and singing hymns. Wait, were they walking or floating? And were those actual halos glowing above them? My eyes were surely playing tricks on me!

How is it that most families never need to scream at their children while driving or remind them that the restroom facilities are on the inside of the building? While strolling through the foyer, we are approached by the loveliest couple in our congregation. Nervous and flustered, we tried to dodge them, but the meeting was inevitable. Knowing that they see the stress and frustration on our faces, we can only imagine the words about to be spoken.

"We just don't know how you do it," they say. "You come in each week, dressed your best, with the most well-behaved children."



TALK ABOUT IT:

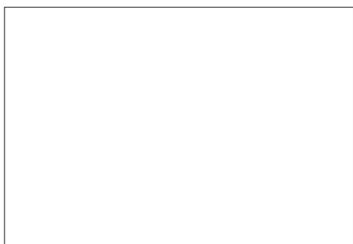
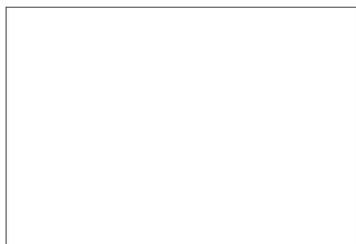
- Are there times where we are comparing our family with other families?
- What are some situations we feel are a "family fail?"
- How do we think it looked to God?



PRAY ABOUT IT:

God, thank You for allowing us moments of family bloopers. Help us to not compare our family with what we feel is going on in other families.

Draw a picture of a heart. Draw a picture of eyes.



Tell a family member the different between a heart and eyes. What function do they perform in the body? What would life be like without a heart or without eyes?

Read 1 Samuel 16:7. Why do you think God looks at the heart? What does this tell us about how we should look at people?

#nofilter is the hashtag people use when they post an unedited picture. #nofilter is also the way God sees YOU. God sees the unedited version of YOU. While we can cover up the way the world sees us, we can't cover up anything when it comes to God. He knows us to the depths of our hearts. While this may intimidate us, it really shows us just how much God loves us. God is willing to love us in our #nofilter state so that he can be the one that does the editing. God's purpose for your life is to edit your heart to look like his Son's heart.

One way we can start to look and act like Jesus is by looking pasts people's appearance to their hearts. Why do you think looking at others this way is Christ-like? What are some reasons judging people by their appearance isn't healthy? What's one area of your life that you need God to "edit" to help you look more like Jesus?

Your Family Name

 *For this reason, I fall on my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth receives its true name. - Ephesians 3:14-15 GNT*

Did you grow up in a family with the same last name, the family dinners, the mom, the dad, the sibling, and the dog? Or did you grow up in separate homes, with grandparents, adoptive parents, or another combination? Whatever your childhood looked like, most of us imagined a day when we'd start our own together-forever family.

Then life happened, and at some point, our dream seemed to fade. Maybe you found yourself as a single parent after a painful relationship. Maybe your first marriage included children from a previous relationship. Whatever happened, blending a family means needing God in a way we might have never imagined.

Have you felt the deep despair that you're not wanted by everyone in your household? Maybe a previous spouse, whose intentions and heart you no longer know or understand is now someone with which you need to co-parent. In times like these, we need God. We never expected to need Him like this, but He's not surprised, and He's ready with the grace, strength, and healing we never thought we would need. One of His most loving interventions in your life will be when He places people in your life who know you, love you, and love God even more.

The Apostle Paul writes in his letter to the church in Ephesus, the same God who can do abundantly more than you could ever ask or think is the One who named your family.

Our God named your blended family. We give names to what matters to us, and your blended family matters to God. Your family may not have been what you expected, but it's not a surprise to God, and He stands ready to do more than you could ever ask, think, or imagine.



TALK ABOUT IT:

- What are some challenges blended families may face?
- How does this change our need to lean on God for guidance?



PRAY ABOUT IT:

God, thank You for being ever-present in our lives. Thank You for knowing what we need before we ever ask.

day
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bridge**Kids**

Every family looks different. Have kids draw a picture of your family. Ask them if they could choose a name for your family what it would be? Ask why they chose that name? Talk about what your family is like.



DAY
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students

Is there someone in your life who you struggle to get along with? Today, do your best to show kindness to them. Try praying for them. Love that person with your words, actions, and thoughts.

You Are Loved

 *"Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God." - 1 John 4:7 NLT*

This verse from 1 John isn't just something said to make you feel good about yourself or a nice idea. This is a life-altering truth! When you truly believe and embrace the idea that God loves you, you can't help but share that with others. "Loved people love people."

It can be easy to show love to your friends, teachers, and teammates, but how about the people in your family? Sometimes, the hardest people to love, live in the same house as you. But, as followers of Jesus, we are to love all people. All people means all people - no exceptions. That includes your parents and your siblings. While you might not always feel like loving them, you don't have to. Love isn't a feeling. It's a choice. That means, you can choose to love when your sister bursts into your room uninvited. You can choose to love when your brother turns off the game while you're playing. You can choose to love your parents when they embarrass you. Choose love.



TALK ABOUT IT:

- How can we model Christ's love in our family?
- Why might it feel harder to love those in our family?



PRAY ABOUT IT:

God, thank You for the love You have for our family. Help us show Your love, love with no exceptions and love that is not just a feeling.

We use the word 'love' a lot, don't we? I mean, think about it. I would say that I LOVE a lot of things. I love hanging out with my friends. I love playing video games. I love going to see sports games and cheering for my team, but love is so much more than that. Love isn't just something you FEEL. Love is something you DO. Remember, love is choosing to treat others the way you want to be treated.

Jesus thought it was super important for us to learn to love each other. There was a time when He was talking with His disciples, just before He went to die on the cross for our sins. Jesus told His friends how they needed to stay joined to Him, like branches are joined to a vine. He gave them this command in John 15:12-13, "Love one another, just as I have loved you. No one has greater love than the one who gives their life for their friends." Think about that. Jesus told the disciples that they should love each other the same way that Jesus loved them.

What are some ways that Jesus showed love? As a family, make a list of things you can do for each other and for others in your life.

"Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God." - Romans 15:7 NIV

Worship can look many ways. So often, we think of praising God with songs or music, but we can give praise to God every single day by the way we live our lives.

This verse gives us a great place to start. Accept one another. That's it! Accept one another in the way that Christ accepted all of us. When we love, accept, and embrace other people—all people—we are giving praise to the God who created them. Is there someone in your life you've been struggling to accept or embrace? Someone you know who could use a friend? Try to get to know that person this week and remember, this is another way we can worship God.

The Swing

 *Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. - Matthew 11:28 NIV*

We live in a society of stressed-out people. Stress affects young kids, teenagers, college students, and adults; almost everyone seems touched by it. Then, to ease the stress, we make it worse. We work harder. We work faster. We do more. We refuse to rest, and then we wonder why we are so exhausted. It's a vicious cycle.

Do you want to know who isn't stressed? Anyone currently swinging on a front porch! I remember my grandad swinging on his front porch every afternoon. When asked why he did it, his reply was simply, "It's my resting place."

Try a little swinging on someone's front porch and see what happens. You will swing your cares away, my friend. Christ knew that life would be stressful. He didn't invite us to come to him and have all our problems solved. A quick fix or an end to the current struggle is not what our bodies need. He gives us what we often do not give ourselves: permission to rest.

We don't need to do one more load of laundry, go to one more ball practice, stay out later, or get up earlier. We need to rest in Christ and His wisdom. He offers rest and invites us to give our worries and burdens to Him. We have permission to turn on the radio and sing as loud as our heart desires. To laugh out loud. To simply breathe.

We have permission to take a break from whatever is weighing us down. You and I have permission to rest, and there's no better place to rest than a front porch swing.



TALK ABOUT IT:

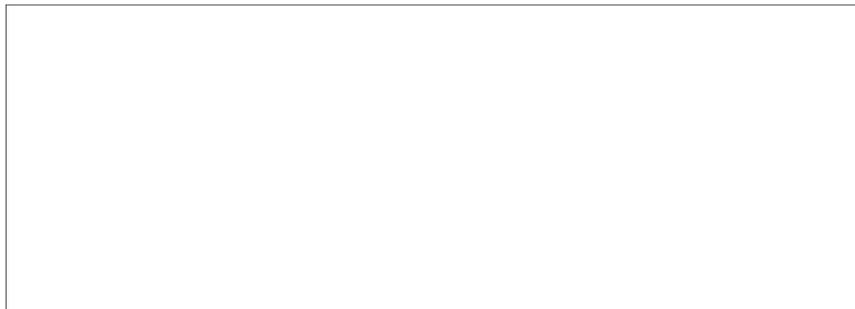
- What are some things in our life that we need to take a break from?
- As a family, how can we identify a "resting place" in life?



PRAY ABOUT IT:

God help us find a place where we can meet with You. Help us to find our resting place, a place where we can get away from the busyness of life and rest in You.

Draw a picture of your best friend. Make a list of what you like about them.



Your list may include that they are kind and caring. God gave us friends to be there when life is tough, but ultimately, no one is closer to you than God.

Next to your list of what you like about your friends, make a list of what you know about God. How is He a friend to you? Pray to God and ask Him to show you how He is the friend who is always with us and never fails us.

Take a few minutes today to rest with Jesus. Read your Bible, listen to music, go for a walk, or write in your journal. Simply spend time with Him without distraction and watch how it helps ease the stress in your life as you do.

Do What I Do

 *Keep a close watch on how you live and on your teaching. Stay true to what is right for the sake of your own salvation and the salvation of those who hear you. - 1 Timothy 4:16 NLT*

Some parents ask, “What’s the best way to teach life lessons to my child?” The answer is often for moms and dads to model proper behavior in everyday situations.

One spring day, my son and I were fishing for striped bass in the Roanoke River. After catching a few small ones, my son caught one that was 17 inches long, the biggest catch of the day, and in his words “the one.” At that time, the legal limit was 18 inches long. After measuring the fish, I told my son we had to throw him back. My son protested. We could put it in the cooler or hide it in the woods. No one was around. Who would know? I was understanding, but firm: the fish had to go back.

Does that seem extreme to you? My son has caught several striped bass since that day and often talks about that time we decided to throw “the one” back. Now, every time he faces a decision between right and wrong, he is reminded of that day. It all came about, not by endless lecturing from me, but by observing godly character in a real-life situation. It’s an important lesson for all parents. How we reflect God’s truth in our actions every day is often, more important than what we say about God’s truth.



TALK ABOUT IT:

- How does our behavior line up with the character of Christ?
- What proper behavior lessons can we teach our child(ren) today?



PRAY ABOUT IT:

God help us to lead by example. Fill us with Your Spirit and wisdom. Give us discernment to avoid temptations and snares of the enemy.

Read Luke 4:1-13

List all the things the devil did to tempt Jesus.

- What did the devil promise Jesus?
- What are some temptations you face?

Early in Jesus' ministry, as He was being baptized, God's voice called out from Heaven, "this is My son, with whom I am well pleased" and then Jesus was taken to the desert. You'd think that after God declared Jesus was His Son, Jesus would have rocketed to stardom, but instead, God's Spirit led Him to spend time alone . . . in the desert. As you read in Luke, it was here that Satan tempted Jesus. After many tries, Jesus didn't give in, so the devil gave up! He left Jesus and decided he'd wait until a better time. God sent His angels to take care of Jesus and give Him everything He needed.

When Jesus had to face those temptations, He made some pretty wise choices, wouldn't you say? Did you notice what was true about each one of the responses Jesus gave? Jesus quoted words from Scripture! He was able to stand up against the devil with words from God that are always true. When you have a tough choice to make, you can do the same thing Jesus did. You can gain knowledge about God by reading the Bible. Then, when you are faced with a difficult situation, you can use the knowledge you have and make a wise choice.

Paul tells his readers in 1 Corinthians 11:1, "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ." God uses people to lead people to Jesus. God has invited YOU to do just that, to be an example for others. Think about this past week. If someone would have followed you around, do you think that by the end of the week their relationship with Jesus would be stronger or weaker? Why? What things can you do this week to be a Christ-like example for others?

Pass It On

 *"We will not hide them from their children but tell the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and His might, and the wonders that He has done." - Psalm 78:4 ESV*

Have you ever talked to an elementary-aged child about their favorite sports team or political figure? I had a conversation the other day with an 8-year-old boy who was listing reasons why NC State had a way better team than Carolina. Where did this deep conviction come from? His parents of course! So... we have called Child Protective Services. (Ok, just joking, of course!)

As parents, it is our desire to pass along knowledge to our children. How to cook a meal, and how to change the oil in a car are all great examples of things we want our kids to learn. And yes, we may even direct their rooting interest in sports. But the greatest thing we could ever teach our children is about Jesus.

The Psalmist says we will tell the coming generation about the deeds of the Lord. In other words, we are going to share what God has done for us with our children and those around us.



TALK ABOUT IT:

- Give examples of things your parents passed on to you.
- What are ways that we can pass our faith to the next generation?



PRAY ABOUT IT:

Father, I pray that You would give us wisdom and courage to share with other people the cause for the hope that we have within us. That hope comes from Jesus.

Every family has traditions that are passed down from generation to generation. Maybe it's baking cookies on Christmas Eve, or taking a trip to the beach every summer. Discuss some of the traditions in your family. Just as we pass traditions down to the next generation, we can also pass our knowledge of faith.

Why is this your favorite tradition?

Read 2 Thessalonians 2:15.

"So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold fast to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter."

Talk as a family about what this verse means.

Brainstorm the ways your family is passing along their faith. Also come up with a few ways to share your faith with others.

In the information age we live today, it's easy to assume that you, "know it all." The reality is that we all have a lot to learn. While you can learn practical things like how to play a guitar or the best way to apply eye shadow from YouTube tutorials, there are just some things that you can't learn from the internet. You can't search online to find how God has shown up in your parent's or guardian's life, or the story about how they became followers of Jesus.

Today, ask your parent or guardian to share a tough moment in their life that God helped them through, a time that God's presence was evident. Or ask them to share with you about when they made the decision to follow Jesus.

Leaving a Legacy

 *"But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him, and His righteousness to children's children." - Psalm 103:17 NKJV*

Have you ever thought about how you want to be remembered? The fact that one day you won't be at the same school, in the same job, or live in the same town should affect how you live today. The truth is that one day you will leave this world. What do you want people to say or remember about you? This is your legacy.

The Psalmist is calling us to think in generational terms. My life is not all about me. There are those who will come after me....my children, and my children's children. In the case of Timothy from the New Testament, the apostle Paul says that his faith dwelt first in his grandmother, Lois. (2 Timothy 1:5)

I pray that each of you has a good long life in front of you, but there is something about living with the end in mind that influences how we live. Think of it this way. If you had to run a mile, would you run at a different pace than if you had to run 15 yards? Sure you would! A mile would look more like a jog and 15 yards would be a sprint.

TALK ABOUT IT:

- What do you want to be known for in your community and to those at church?
- Today's verse talks about fearing God. What does that mean? Is it different for the believer and the non-believer?

PRAY ABOUT IT:

God, I pray that each of us would live with our ultimate purpose in mind, that it would affect every action. Help us Lord, to leave a strong and lasting legacy.

day
11

bridgekids

"Being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." - Philippians 1:6

It can be hard for children to understand what it means to leave a legacy. To help them have a real-world example, consider planting a tree. Ask them to imagine how long it will take that tree to grow? Maybe 1 year? 10 years? 40 years? It takes many years for a tree to reach its full height and it can live for hundreds of years.

Explain that the tree they plant today has the potential to be around for their grandchildren to enjoy. The same is true with us! Our actions today will affect the future. What we learn about God today, we can teach others. Just like we plant a seed to grow a tree, each time we tell someone about God, it plants a seed for them. Their actions will leave a legacy.

DAY
11

bridge
students

Students, lead your family in a time of worship by breaking out the laptop or a cell phone and playing the worship song called, "The Blessing" by Elevation Worship. Afterward, ask your family, "How can I be a blessing to you today?" Make sure to follow through with it before the day is over.

Wisdom Through Discipline

 *"To discipline a child produces wisdom, but a mother is disgraced by an undisciplined child." - Proverbs 29:15 NLT*

Have your parents ever said, "This is going to hurt me more than it hurts you." As a child, that did not feel like the truth! But if you have children, you know it is absolutely the case. No parent wants to put their child in time-out, give them a spanking, take their favorite toy or put them on restriction. Why? Because we love our children.

Discipline is necessary. Undisciplined children become undisciplined adults who are guided by their desires and impulses. They become selfish and entitled. Our Heavenly Father teaches the value of discipline throughout Scripture. In fact, Hebrews 12 tells us that God disciplines those He loves, those that are His Children.

The verse tells us that this discipline in our lives produces wisdom. Good things flow from a foundation of discipline in our lives, but disgrace is the natural by-product if discipline is not present.

TALK ABOUT IT:

- Why do you think discipline is such a valuable and practical aspect in our lives?
- Where have you seen wisdom rise out of correction?
- Why is it unbiblical to avoid discipline?

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Heavenly Father, I pray that you would help me welcome discipline in my life, that I might grow personally and be a better person.

"Teach me to do your will, for You are my God; may Your good Spirit lead me on level ground." - Psalms 143:10

When King David wrote these words, he wasn't asking God to teach him some fun facts or information. He's asking God to teach him to be obedient, to do what God wanted, instead of going his own way.

When we disobey God and go our own way, we face some not so awesome consequences. No one likes to be disciplined. David knew that God's way was better. Just like David, when we discover how God wants us to live and we follow His way in obedience, we'll be on the smoothest path, for sure. The next time you're riding in the car and you hit a bump in the road, remember this verse. "Teach me to do your will, for You are my God; may Your good Spirit lead me on level ground." Psalms 143:10

Take some time to pray today and ask God to teach you to do His will knowing that He will lead you on a level path, even through the bumps of life.

Here is a headline that will never make it to the news: "A Parent and Their Student Disagree." It happens in every family. At some point, you will not see eye to eye with your parents and the temptation will be to blow up with anger or frustration. In those situations, instead of being frustrated, try to seek understanding. You might discover that the root of their discipline comes from a place of love and protection.

Boundaries with Technology

 *"Lord, You alone are my portion and my cup; You make my lot secure. The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance." - Psalm 16:5-6 NIV*

Technology has become a normal part of our everyday lives. Pew Research says that 96% of Americans have a cell phone. Just 20 years ago, that number was 24%. That is a lot of change and it happened quickly. Most of the cell phones being used now are smartphones, meaning they have internet capabilities.

Business Insider says that the average age children receive these smart phones is 10. So, at just 10 years of age, a child has the whole world just a few screen taps away. That is, well, scary. Such a powerful tool in such young hands. They need boundaries.

The truth is, we, as adults, need boundaries too. How often do we mindlessly stare at our screen for hours instead of being present with our family? In the verse above, we see that God has set boundaries for us, and that they fall in pleasant places. His desire is not to keep you from pleasant places, but instead, to keep you in them. To put it another way, He wants to keep you in intimacy with Him and to enjoy the blessing of your relationship with your family.

TALK ABOUT IT:

- Have you seen technology prevent a family member from being able to spend time with God or the family? Explain.
- What are some practical boundaries you can put on technology in your home? (TV, phones, tablets, etc.)

PRAY ABOUT IT:

God, thank You for the good gift of technology. Help me, Lord, to accept boundaries and adhere to them. I want to honor You with the way I use all my devices.

It's easy to get distracted and let other things get in the way when we're trying to get something done. Technology can be a big part of the distraction if we allow it. When we stay focused on our task, not looking to the right or the left, we have a better chance of limiting the distractions around us.

Discuss the meaning of distraction (something that takes your focus off the task in front of you).

Ask:

- What are some things that distract you or keep you from finishing your homework?
- What are some things that often distract you or get you off track?
- What are some things that keep you from doing what God wants you to do?

When you look ahead and keep going, not looking to the right or the left, it's much easier to finish what you start! As a family, discuss ways to limit distractions.

Time away from our phones can be one of our most challenging struggles, and it all has to do with F.O.M.O. (Fear Of Missing Out). But what if in our fear of missing out on something that's happening on our phones, we miss out on something that's happening right in front of us? Like time with our family? At a siblings first ballgame or recital; a grandparent sharing a story from their childhood, or a family member's birthday party. These are the moments we should be afraid of missing.

Today, make it a goal to disconnect from your phone for at least an hour to spend uninterrupted time with your family. The funny cat video your friend sent can wait and the text about that new Netflix series will still be there. Learn to live in the moments all around you that you can't get back!

Have Some Fun!

 *"A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones."*
- Proverbs 17:22 NIV

Every family needs a little fun. Whether it be an extended time of fun on a vacation, a long weekend, or maybe just an evening together as a family being silly...we want to celebrate good times together. Your Word says that a cheerful heart is good medicine. Just like medicine helps you feel better when you are sick, laughter and fun revive our spirit.

What's difficult is we all have routines. A routine of going to work, school, practice, or the gym. Those are good, worth-while things. We need a routine to have normalcy in our lives. But that can't be every moment. There is something about having fun together as a family that strengthens the home.



TALK ABOUT IT:

- Ask each person to share one thing you do that is fun as a family.
- What could you plan for later this week or an upcoming weekend to have fun together as a family?



PRAY ABOUT IT:

Heavenly Father, I pray that we would learn to work fun into our lives that are built on routines. God, we want to laugh and play together. We want to have fun as a family. Show us how.

It's okay to be silly sometimes! The term "Dad Jokes" comes to mind; actions and words that have no other purpose than to make others laugh! Take some time today to just be silly with your family. Here are a few jokes to get you started:

Q: Who was the shortest man in the Bible?

A: Nehemiah (knee-high-miah).

Q: Who was the smartest man in the Bible?

A: Abraham. He knew a Lot.

Q: What kind of lights did Noah have on the ark?

A: Floodlights

Q: Why couldn't Jonah trust the ocean?

A: He just knew there was something fishy about it.

Do a Google search for "What are the benefits of laughter?" and share a few benefits with your family. When you want to laugh, what or who do you turn to? If you need to change any of your choices, ask God to help you now.

Communication is Key

 *"I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong—that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith." - Romans 1:11-12 NIV*

In this verse, Paul is longing to communicate with the Romans. He knew that if they could communicate, everyone would benefit, including him. We live in a society where feelings often go unvalidated, and people would rather talk than listen. But researchers have found that strong families actually do the opposite. Strong families communicate!

They share common exchanges; they encourage one another to express their feelings and convictions. The only way this happens is if each member of the family feels safe. They know when they open up, other members of the family are going to listen and not share others. At the end of the day, we all want to be heard and understood. Family should be one place where that happens.



TALK ABOUT IT:

- Do you feel like your family really listens to you?
- Do you mutually encourage one another? Give examples.



PRAY ABOUT IT:

God, I pray that You would help me listen, really listen to the members of my family. I also pray that You would bring it to my mind to encourage them.

What does it mean to communicate? Have kids brainstorm the definition. How important is communication? Let's play a game to find out.

Find It Together Game

You will need a blindfold, selection of objects, and a designated place on the floor (suggestion: use tape or a hula hoop to mark the area). Use the blindfold to make sure the child cannot see as you move the objects on the floor. Spin them around a few times (like they are about to take a swing at a piñata). Using only words, guide your child to a pre-chosen object on the floor. They may ask questions to help them find the correct object.

Ask:

"How was communication important to finding the object?"

"Was it important for you to listen when I was giving directions? Why?"

"How did it help you when I listened to and answered your questions?"

"Can you think of how communication can be helpful every day?"

Communication involves more than just words; it includes your body language as well. If you want someone to know that you care and that you're listening, make sure your body language reflects that you're paying attention. When your attention is focused elsewhere, like your phone, your computer, or the tv, it will often communicate to the other person that you don't care. If it becomes a habit, it might even discourage the other person from talking to you. One of the most encouraging ways you can listen and communicate care to others is to look up from your device and fix your focus on the person.

Conflict Resolution



"Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity."

- Colossians 3:13-14 NIV

Families are a bunch of imperfect people who are in close relationship with each other, so conflict is inevitable. You could even go much broader than that. Anytime just two people are in relationship with each other...there will be conflict.

The difference in strong families and families that crumble, however, is that strong families deal with conflict well. Granted, it can be challenging, because you know you are right. Only kidding! We always think we are right. But through the mercy Christ has shown us, we can confidently and patiently love our family well, even through pain and hurt.



TALK ABOUT IT:

- Is there conflict in your family that you need to talk about?



PRAY ABOUT IT:

Jesus, we need Your help to love each other well. When we get mad with each other or conflict arises, please help us to show mercy and grace to each other and work toward resolving it.

What does it mean to communicate? As a family, brainstorm the definition. How important is communication? Here is a game to help find out. Take turns answering.

Find It Together:

You will need a blindfold, a selection of objects and a designated place on the floor (use tape or a hula hoop to mark the area).

Use the blindfold to make sure the child cannot see as you move the objects on the floor.

Spin them around a few times.

Using only words, guide your child to a pre-chosen object on the floor. They may ask questions to help them find the correct object.

Once you are done and everyone has gotten a chance, sit down and talk through the following questions:

- How was communication important to retrieving the object?
- Was it important for you to listen when I was giving directions? Why?
- How did it help you when I listened to and answered your questions?
- Can you think of how communication can be helpful every day?

"And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross." - Colossians 2:13-14 ESV

Notice that God not only forgave us of our sins against Him; He also set our sins aside and nailed them to the cross. He's no longer holding on to them to later bring them back up. Often when we give forgiveness, we hold on to the issue to bring back up later. That's not how God forgave us. Maybe it is time for you to forgive like our Heavenly Father and not only forgive someone, but also lay the issue to rest. Why do you think it's important to forgive this way?

Shared Experiences

 *“Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up.” - Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 NIV*

As families, we “do life together.” That means that everyone in the family experienced that trip to the beach last summer when Uncle Tony did the belly flop into the pool. You all experienced grandma’s delicious Thanksgiving dinners. You have those shared experiences, both good and bad. The times you never want to forget and the times you wish you never experienced.

Families that are truly strong have a shared spiritual life. They attend church together. They pray with one another and for one another. They do devotions like this one together. By virtue of the fact you are reading this, your family may be stronger than you realize. At the very least, you are taking some right steps.



TALK ABOUT IT:

- What are some of your favorite shared experiences?
- What are some ways you could have more shared spiritual experiences?



PRAY ABOUT IT:

Jesus, we know that the most important part of our life is our spiritual life, because it is the only part that lasts forever. I pray that we would be intentional about growing together in this way as a family.

day
17

bridgekids

Have the kids tell the story of their favorite family memory. What were you doing? Why did it stick with you?

Have them tell a story of a time your family had to deal with something hard. Why did this story stick with you? What do both stories have in common?

How was it more fun to have your family with you in the first story? How did it make the hard time you experienced easier to deal with in the second story?

We can always look back and remember lessons from these shared experiences. Brainstorm some new experiences for your family.

DAY
17

bridge
students

What can you do this week to help take ownership of creating more shared spiritual experiences in your family? (i.e. give a morning or night devotion, offer to pray before a meal, find an outreach opportunity for your family, etc.)

Our Heavenly Father

 *"For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by Him we cry, "Abba, Father." - Romans 8:14-15 NIV*

God gives you family, your parents and siblings, to show an example of what your relationship with Him is like and who He is to you. Everyone wants parents who love and care for them. Unfortunately, that is not always the case. But the good news is God loves you and cares about you more than you can even imagine!

Think about the verse above for a moment. God says we can know him intimately. We can call Him "Abba Father," which means "Daddy God." I heard a quote that put this in perspective. "No one dares rouse a king in the middle of the night, except for his child. For him, even just needing a cup of water is a good enough reason."



TALK ABOUT IT:

- If you had a good earthly father, what is your best memory with him?
- Did you know God wants this close of a relationship with you? How might this change how you approach Him?



PRAY ABOUT IT:

Abba Father, thank you for this special relationship I get to have with You as my Heavenly Father. Thank You that I can be close to You. Help me to never forget this.

Draw a picture of a dad. It can be your dad, your grandpa, someone else's dad, or a dad you have seen on TV.

Spend a minute thinking about what makes them a good dad? If you can, write the qualities or characteristics around the dad in your picture. Maybe they are kind, fair, funny, or something else.

No matter if you have a dad or not, you have a perfect Heavenly Father who is all those things you described and more. He is with you at every moment of your life. He cares for you and loves you. You can always talk to Him. You can ask Him for help or advice. He is always there for you, no matter what.

Take a few moments now talking to Him. Ask Him to show you how much He loves you.

As a kid, I wanted to be just like my dad. I would dress like him, try to talk like him, and try to do the very same things he was known for doing. That is the same enthusiasm that God wants from us. When we come to know God, we want to be like Him. And the more we want to be like Him, the more we desire to find ways to get close to and learn about His ways.

Today, list 5 things you know about God and His ways that you love and aspire to be like. Then, list 5 things you want to know more about when it comes to God. Make a point to try and find out more about those things as you get to know Him more this week.

The Family that Serves Together

 *"You know that the family of Stephanas were the first believers in Southern Greece. They have given themselves to the service of God's people. I ask you, brothers, to follow the leading of people like these and anyone else who works and serves with them." - 1 Corinthians 16:15-16 ICB*

There are many things that bind a family together in strong bonds of love; i.e. playing together, praying together, and building memories together are some of the best-known ones. Those are all great things to do, however, families should also be careful not to neglect the grace of serving others together.

Something powerful happens when family members come together on behalf of someone else. It might be coming together for the sake of aging member of your own family. It might be to help a neighbor in need. It might be simply to do a random act of kindness. Whatever form it takes, there is something powerful that happens when families brainstorm ways to make a difference in the world. It becomes even more powerful when they can look back and realize they made a valuable difference as a team in their world.

What if one day, someone wrote to areas Christians, much like the Apostle Paul is doing in 1 Corinthians but instead of the family of Stephanas, it is your family being written about?!



TALK ABOUT IT:

- Create a short list of things our family can do that would make a difference in someone else's world.
- Let's identify one thing from our list that is most interesting to us as a family.
- Plan that activity and set a date to get started.



PRAY ABOUT IT:

Lord, help us think beyond our own needs to the needs of others. Give us unity as a family to decide on at least one act of kindness that we can accomplish together.

day
19

bridgekids

Take a moment and think of all the people in your life: your family, your friends, your classmates, teachers at school, people you see at Walmart. Now make a list of 10 of these people. Pray a short one or two sentence prayer for each of them.

As a family, talk about why you think this is important? How is this a way to serve people?

DAY
19

bridge
students

Verse 16 instructs believers to *“follow the leading of people like these,”* referencing people who have given themselves to the service of God’s people.

Who is one person in your life that is dedicated to serving others? Why do you think God’s word tells us to follow the leading of people who are selfless and serve others? How does living a lifestyle of serving others draw others closer to Jesus?

Created on Purpose with an Amazing Purpose

 *"You made my whole being. You formed me in my mother's womb. I praise You because you made me in an amazing and wonderful way. All the days planned for me were written in your book before I was one day old."*
- Psalm 139:13, 16 LB

We all know that each of us is unique in so many ways. Unfortunately, we live in a world that seems to value some traits more than others. When King David wrote this Psalm, he understood that each of us was hand-made by God to form a unique and amazing person. But He goes further than that. He custom designs each of us and then custom designs a plan for our lives that takes full advantage of every trait He has given us.

When the temptation come to try to look like, sound like, think like the "popular" people around us, don't listen! The joy of being unique is you have everything you need to accomplish everything God made you to do and to become!

Anytime someone tries to put you down for a personal trait you were born with, just remember: You are Amazing, Personally Made by God! He custom-designed you to fulfill an amazing sense of purpose.

The responsibility that comes with those Truths is to celebrate your own uniqueness, develop the gifts, talents and abilities you have—whatever they are—fulfill God's purpose for your life. Keep in mind that every relationship you have will help to enhance those Truths or detract from them.



TALK ABOUT IT:

- Work together as a family to identify several of the gifts, talents and abilities that we recognize in one another.
- What are some specific ways we can encourage one another to use those gifts to help others?



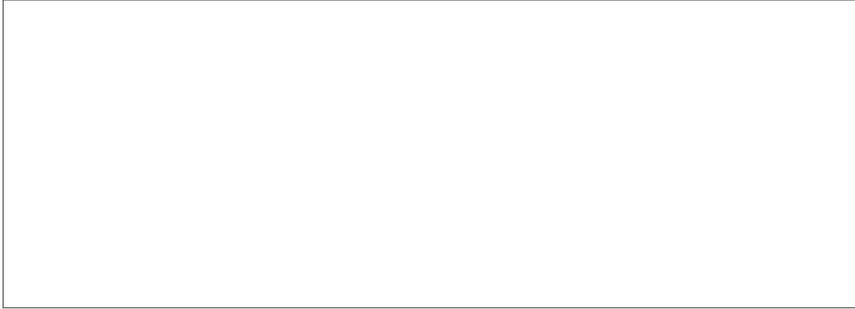
PRAY ABOUT IT:

Lord, please help our family to affirm one another's unique make-up. Help us to urge another one to the great things You have planned for us.

day
20

bridge**Kids**

Draw and color a picture of Psalm 139:13, 16 LB.



DAY
20

 bridge
students

It is so exciting to receive a new piece of tech. A new computer, a new tablet, a new phone, there's nothing like unboxing them for the first time and being the first one to take that thin piece of plastic wrap off the screen.

While you may have some idea how to operate the device straight out of the package, it's wise to consult the owner's manual first. The developer sends that manual with the item so that the owner knows how to take full advantage of their new piece of tech.

In the same way God, our creator, knows everything there is to know about us. If we want to take full advantage of our life and the skills and abilities that we have and have yet to discover, the wisest action we can take is to ask God to help us know how to use them. Starting today, ask God to help you discover and strengthen the gifts He's given you.

Love Wins the Day

 *"Love each other. You must love each other as I have loved you. All people will know that you are my followers if you love each other."*
- John 13:34-35 NIV

There are many things that bind a family together in strong bonds of love. Playing together, praying together, and building memories together are some of the best-known ways we can build these bonds. These are all great things to do, however, families should also be careful not to neglect the grace of serving others together.

In this simple quote from Jesus, we see that the entire unbelieving world can determine if we are true followers of Jesus based on how we love each other. The problem is that love is one of those words with a brand range of definitions. Some define love as a warm, fuzzy feeling. Others talk about love as a purely physical act. Still others say that love is uncontrollable; we just "fall in love," as if we stepped over a cliff and can't do anything about it.

For followers of Christ, the definition is clear. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. (John 15:13 NIV) Not only is the definition clear, we have the quintessential example of it. God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8 NKJV) Love is an action. Love is giving someone what they need, not what they deserve.

As followers of Christ, we are called to demonstrate genuine love for one another and for those outside the household of faith.



TALK ABOUT IT:

- What are some ways that we can show genuine love to others; within our family, our spiritual family, our community, our world?
- What is the most loving thing we can do for people we love, but who are struggling to accept Jesus' love for them?



PRAY ABOUT IT:

Lord, I confess that sometimes it is hard to show love to someone I do not feel deserves it. Help me to be more like You and love unconditionally. I pray that my genuine love for others will draw more people to Your love.

Read John 15:12

When Jesus said these words, He was speaking to His closest friends, the disciples. Jesus was about to face the cross, rise again, and then return to heaven. Before He left them, He wanted to remind them how they should treat each other. Jesus was saying, "When I'm gone, look after each other and don't fight. Remember how I've treated you with love and treat each other the same way." But this command wasn't just for Jesus' disciples. It's for us too. Jesus wants us to love one another just like He loves us.

Who are the "one anothers" in your life?

1. Write down the names of five people that you see almost every day.
2. Do you remember the last time you talked to that person?
3. Were you loving with your words or actions? What happened?
4. How could you show love to that person the next time you see him or her?

Ask God to help you show love to the people you've listed, remembering that you can love because Jesus loves you.

Jesus makes it very clear that as his follower, we "must love each other." Why do you think Jesus felt so strongly about his followers loving other people? Do you find this command, to love one another, challenging to live out in your own life? How about loving those who might not show that same love in return?

Jesus not only commanded us to love one another, he modeled it. Knowing that one of his own, Judas, would betray him, Jesus chose to love him and include him in the last supper.

Today, ask God to open your eyes and your heart to the people around you that need love. If there is someone in your life right now that is hard to love, ask God to soften your heart towards them. Finally, do something to extend love towards that person.

The Power of Life and Death

 *"From a wise mind comes careful and persuasive speech. Kind words are like honey—enjoyable and healthful." - Proverbs 16:23-24 TLB*

Wouldn't it be awesome if we could take some of the words we speak and put them back in our mouths!? Let's be honest, we've all said things in the heat of the moment that we regret. The reason we regret harsh or unfair words is that we know the tremendous impact they can have on the people who hear them. Solomon described our words as having the power of life and death. The Apostle James described them as little sparks that can start a forest fire. That's why one of the most important things we can do among those we love is to weigh our words carefully before we speak them because we can't put them back!

The temptation is to believe that our words just sort of evaporate into the air. We think of them as feathers, but the other hears them as boulders! The truth is that no relationship ever rises above the level of the words spoken between them. That's why the Apostle Paul wrote, "Don't let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen." (Ephesians 4:29 NIV)

The question is, how well do we keep that in mind in our day-to-day interactions within the family? Take a look at your family relationships and you will know the answer.



TALK ABOUT IT:

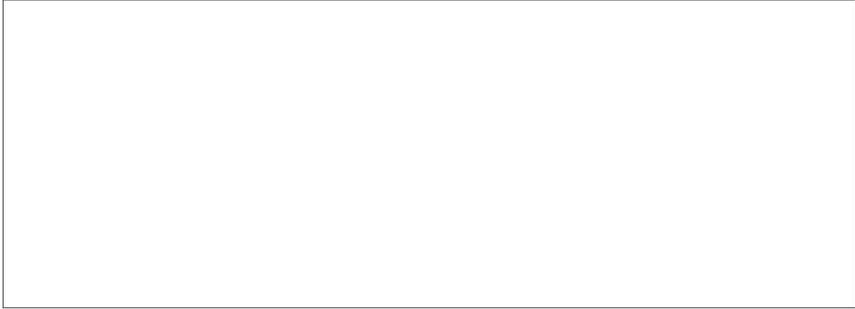
- How well would you say the words exchanged within our family are "helpful for building one another up?"
- Would you say we are better at building each other up with our words or do we more often vent our current feelings?
- Identify at least one thing each of us can do to get better at speaking life into our family.



PRAY ABOUT IT:

May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in Your sight, Lord my Rock and my Redeemer." (Psalms 19:14 NIV) Lord, please help me to speak life into the lives of everyone I encounter today.

Draw and color a picture of Proverbs 16:23-24.



*"A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger."
Proverbs 15:1 NIV*

"Telling lies about others is as harmful as hitting them with an ax, wounding them with a sword, or shooting them with a sharp arrow." - Proverbs 25:18 NLT

It took three years to build the Titanic. Once the iceberg struck, it took less than three hours to sink it. It takes less time and effort to destroy something than to build it. For that reason, when it comes to our words, we often take the destruction route instead of taking the time to reflect on the damage that our hurtful words could cause.

We often remember the negative things that people say to us and about us, maybe even more than the good things. Why? What do you think would happen if the next time you were tempted to destroy someone with your words, you chose to build them up? How do you think the person would respond?

Everyday Faith

 *“Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.” - Deuteronomy 11:18-19 NIV*

These words were originally written to the Nation of Israel as a reminder of how important it was—not just to obey God’s commands—but to pass them along to future generations. The message is loud and clear: Don’t just preach to your children, practice what you preach. Live what you believe. Make your faith central to everything you do. When you do, your children will see it, believe it and (hopefully) do the same with their children one day.

The challenge of the 21st century is that families don’t do a lot of the things listed in this passage. When we are sitting at home, we’re either watching TV or each family member is watching their own device. It is extremely rare to see families out for a walk together. When we get up in the morning, our time is spent rushing around trying to get out the door for work, school or the day’s activities. So how do we live out this vital challenge?

The key is to understand the principle behind the practice. Whether you have these activities in your home or not, it is critical that you set aside specific times to put down mobile devices, turn off the TV and talk. Make sure your relationship with Christ shows through in your conversations. The great debate in parent is whether quality time or quantity time is most important. I say, quality times (special moments that become memories) happen during well-defined quantity time.

By setting aside even a few minutes each day as a family for connection and communication, you not only ensure your family maintains a bond of love, you pass your faith on to one another in the process.



TALK ABOUT IT:

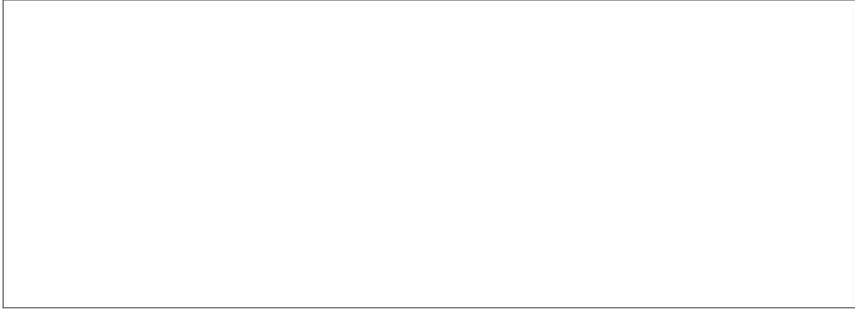
- What is the best time each day for us to sit down together for family dialogue and devotion?
- What other things can we do as a family to keep the love of Christ central in our home?



PRAY ABOUT IT:

Lord, help us to discipline ourselves to find ways to communicate daily our love for one another and for You!

Draw and color a picture of Deuteronomy 11:18-19.



God instructed the Israelites to saturate their everyday lives with His word. It seems like it was so easy for the Israelites to forget. If we're honest, it's easy for us to forget too. Here a few exercises that can help keep God's word front and center in your life.

- 1.) Commit to memorizing a verse.
- 2.) Writing a verse on an index card and taping somewhere you'll see it daily.
- 3.) Listening to scripture through the YouVersion App.
- 4.) Drawing what you've read.
- 5.) Praying a verse of scripture. Today, choose one to help remind you of God's word.

For God So Loved...

 *"For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him." - John 3:16-17 NIV*

It's easy to let the rejection of others influence how you see yourself. You might not feel like you have any friends at work or school, and it has you feeling unlovable. You might have friends who haven't treated you right lately or have played favorites with other friends that has you feeling left out. No doubt, the COVID-19 season of "sheltering in place" has led to feelings of loneliness and isolation for us all.

Whatever the source of those feelings, remember this important truth. God loves you and is pursuing you right now wherever you are. You matter to God. God gave His only Son as a gift for you. He didn't have to do this. He wanted to. He loves you that much!

Another important truth to remember is that you are vital to God's plan here on earth. You're called to do something important. Don't lose sight of this because someone didn't treat you right. You can't control how others treat you, but you can control how you see yourself. No matter what you face in life, you matter. You have value. You are important.

Challenge yourself today to see yourself as God sees you. Base your worth on what God says, not on how others treat you.

 **TALK ABOUT IT:**

- If any of us are feeling any of the emotions we just read about right now, can we identify some of the reasons we're feeling unlovable, alone or isolated?
- How can we as a family help one another when feelings like these arise? What can we do right now?

 **PRAY ABOUT IT:**

Lord, help us to base our view of ourselves in terms of what you say about us, not what we believe others are saying. Help us to rise above feelings by basing our life decisions on the truth that we are lovable, valuable and never alone.

God loves us so much that He sent His only Son to die just so we could be close to Him. As a reminder of God's love have the kids grab some masking tape and a piece of paper. Use the masking tape to create a cross in the center of the page. Have them color the page any way they choose. When finished, remove the tape in the center to reveal the cross. Then, write today's verse inside the cross, filling in the blanks as indicated below.

*"For God so loved (child's name) that He gave His one and only Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life."
- John 3:16 NIV*

Have you ever been made to feel like you're not valuable? If yes, when? Read John 3:16, what did God give up for you? What does that type of sacrificial giving on God's part communicate about your value? Now grab your Bible and read Ephesians 1:4-6. What does this text tell us? This text was true of the readers in the first century and is still true for you today!

Every day, you can encourage others and remind them that they are valuable. One of the simplest, yet out of the ordinary ways you can do this is by sending someone a physical letter in the mail. It doesn't have to be a long one, just thoughtful. This week, do just that, send a friend a card with a few encouraging words. I promise it will make their day and remind them they are valuable!

Wisdom is a Family Activity

 *“When a wise person sees danger ahead, he avoids it. But a foolish person keeps going and gets into trouble.” - Proverbs 22:3 ICB*

This proverb from Solomon, the wisest of the ancient kings, seems common sense and obvious at first glance. Of course, we should look ahead and make decisions that will avoid future pitfalls and improve our chances of avoiding danger. But the truth is, we’ve all seen times when we sensed something was off—call it intuition, a check-in-your-spirit, Holy Spirit discernment, whatever—but we kept going because we wanted it. We think, “Oh, I can work through that. It will be OK.” Until day we wake up and realize we’ve been headed down a dangerous path. Tragically, too often we stop to look around until damage is already done.

That’s why when my sons were in their teen years, I would sometimes say, “I’m praying son, that look down the road at the potential consequences of your choices before you make them.” They would roll their eyes and say, “Oh Dad.” It was only later—as adults—that they looked back and said, “Thanks Dad.” I sometimes couldn’t see the dangers that you saw.

One of the joys of being part of a family (biological, adoptive or spiritual family) is having people in our lives who can help us see what’s coming. Our natural instinct is to resent the intrusion with words like, “Why don’t you trust me?!” But, if we listen to one another, and change course as needed, we can avoid all kinds of trouble.



TALK ABOUT IT:

- Why do you think it is human to believe we can handle things on our own without the advice of others who care about us?
- What are some ways that we, as a family, can help each other in the decision-making process?



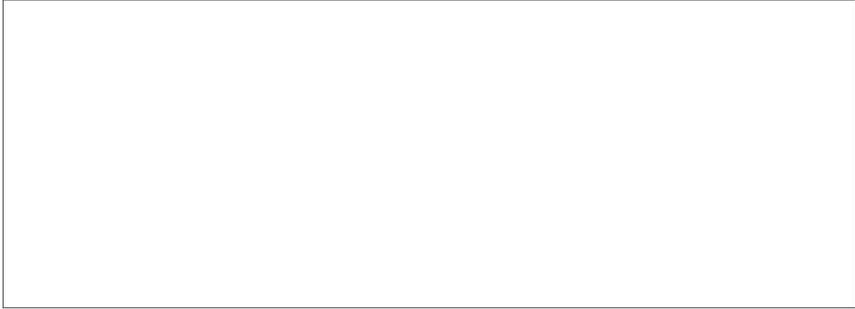
PRAY ABOUT IT:

Lord, help us to see the value of the support we can give one another as a family. Help us to care about each other enough and trust each other enough to listen to words of advice and accountability.

day
25

bridge**Kids**

Draw and color a picture of Proverbs 22:3.



DAY
25

 bridge
students

Have you ever been watching a movie and witnessed the main character make a decision you know will harm them? They walk into the woods after hearing a weird noise or they get into their car after a villain has tampered with it.

Some of us are guilty of yelling at those characters on our television even though we know the characters can't hear us. That's because we hate to watch someone make a bad decision.

I wonder how many bad decisions we would avoid if we simply invited others into our decision-making process. Read Proverbs 11:14; 15:22; 24:6. What is the benefit of seeking wise counsel?

Passing Blessing to the Next Generation

 "[Jesus] said to them, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.'
- Mark 10:14,16 NIV

This powerful story tells about a time when Jesus was teaching crowds of people. One day as he was answering questions and instructing adults, parents began to show up and ask Jesus to bless their children. At first, the disciples stopped them saying things like, "Jesus has been things to do than deal with your kids." Jesus rebuked them sternly and blessed the children one-by-one.

He made it clear that, not only are children a vital part of the Kingdom of God, it was important for adults to pass some of the blessing they had received on the next generation. Today, we often do "baby dedications" in church. Parents will bring their children to the church on a Sunday morning, one of the pastors will charge the parents and pray a blessing over the children. I love those Sunday morning services! If you have kids at home and you haven't done that yet, please contact the church and let's plan a service. BUT...

The most valuable blessing any child can receive is the blessing that comes from his/her parents. What could happen if you planned a "baby dedication" in your home? What if you—as parents—prayed that prayer of blessing over your child; whatever their age? What if you invited some trusted Christian adults to be there and add to the "blessing" by speaking affirming words of encouragement to them? What lasting impact do you think that could have on their lives?



TALK ABOUT IT:

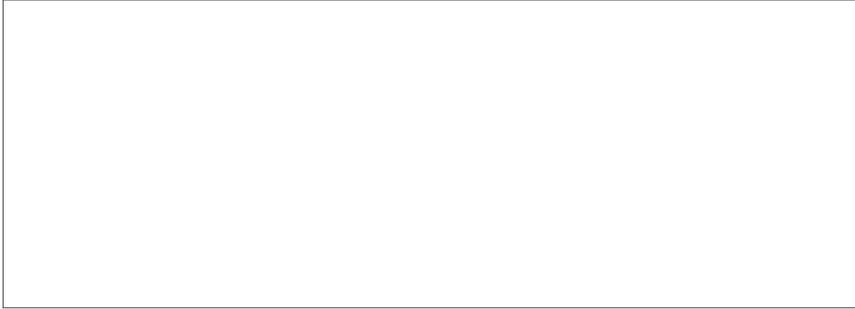
- Would we say that words of blessing or criticism are more common in our family? Why do we think that is true? What are some things we can do to speak blessing into one another's lives?
- Note to parents: What might it look like if you planned a "blessing ceremony" in your home?



PRAY ABOUT IT:

Lord, help us to speak blessing into our children's and/or grandchildren's lives. Empower us with words of blessing that will positively impact them for the rest of their lives. Most importantly, help us to speak words of life by introducing our children and grandchildren to You, Lord.

Draw a picture of Jesus blessing the children in Mark 10:16 NIV.



Over the years I've heard many well-intentioned adults say, "Teenagers are the church of tomorrow." While the saying is meant to be encouraging, I believe it to be inaccurate. Teenagers are NOT the church of tomorrow; teenagers are the church of TODAY.

One of the biggest lies the enemy would love for a teenager to believe is that they will only be effective when they are older. Like mid to late twenties older, when they're "settling down" and have a job and house and family. The truth is, God is ready and willing to work in and through you to build His Kingdom. The real question is are YOU willing? Are you willing to let God work through you to help transform the world around you? Are you willing to let God's Spirit lead you in your decision making?

If so, I have good news, God is waiting on you and the time is NOW. Today, if you're ready, let God know. Right where you are, pray this prayer,

"Father, here I am, I submit myself to You. I want to help build Your Kingdom. Lord, open my eyes to see opportunities to serve others around me for Your glory and help me to follow through. Amen."

The Family that Plays Together

 *"A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones."*
- Proverbs 17:22 NIV

This proverb from Solomon paints a vivid contrast doesn't it? I can see a face filled with laughter from the smile to the eyes vs. a face filled with anguish and downcast eyes. You may have heard the well-worn expression, "The Family that Prays Together, Stays Together." I believe that is true. (which is one of the reasons we are providing these family devotions for you!) I also sincerely believe The Family that Plays Together, Stays Together.

The reality for most is, one day our children will grow up and leave home to make their way in the world. Their decision whether to take the time to come home for visits will hinge largely on their memories of growing up in the home. If they are happy memories, they will look forward to times of homecoming. They will work hard to make those visits as frequent as possible. If they are painful memories, they may come, but those visits will likely be infrequent and as brief as possible.

By all means, pray together as family. Worship together too! But don't neglect building fun memories that will draw your kids back like a powerful magnet when the day comes for them to make their own way in the world.



TALK ABOUT IT:

- Identify 3-5 fun things we can do as a family.
- What is one fun thing we can plan to do before this week is past?



PRAY ABOUT IT:

Lord, help us to remember that a cheerful heart is a healthy heard. Help us to be intentional about building fun memories as we do life together as a family.

day
27

bridge**Kids**

Pick a night this week for a family game night. It could be as simple as building towers with Legos or as complicated as Monopoly! Here are a few suggestions: card games (war, old maid, Uno, etc), Choose Pictionary, Charades, Dominos, Would You Rather, or one of the many board games out there. Grab some snacks and enjoy a fun evening making memories with your kids!

DAY
27

 bridge
students

Share one of your favorite family memories. Why does that memory stick out? Together with your family, make a bucket list of five things you would like to do in the next five years.

Dinnertime is Family Time

 *"My prayer for all of them is that they will be of one heart and mind, just as You and I are, Father—that just as You are in me and I am in You, so they will be in us, and the world will believe You sent me." - John 17:21 TLB*

"Dinnertime is family time." That should be a phrase posted on the wall of your kitchen. Families seem to be struggling now more than ever to find amounts of quantity and quality time together. Family dinner time provides the opportunity for both! It provides an atmosphere to talk, share, laugh, and for some, even learn table manners! You don't have to invest large amounts of time to get the benefit. Research says the average family dinner last 35 minutes. That's not a lot of time to invest to get great benefits for your family.

That leaves the question, "Who has time to cook?" What's for dinner really isn't as important as who's eating. Some of the strongest families in the world today can't afford fancy meals at all! But they're all present around the table. Whether it's sandwiches or steak, a consistent gathering of the family gives opportunity to communicate. The by-product is they have a greater chance of growing strong and healthy, building a stronger family identity.



TALK ABOUT IT:

- What does dinnertime typically look like for our family?
- What changes could we make this week to move towards making our family stronger through dinnertime?



PRAY ABOUT IT:

God, help us value Your design of family unity. We want to put You first, and in doing so, have regular times together as a family. Bless our efforts and draw us closer together than ever before!

Pick one night this week to have a family dinner. Once everyone is seated and eating, go around the table and have everyone share one thing about their day. Then read 1 John 4:10, NIRV.

"Here is what love is. It is not that we loved God. It is that he loved us and sent his Son to give his life to pay for our sins." - 1 John 4:10, NIRV

Ask the following questions:

- What does this verse mean to you?
- Having dinner as a family gives us a chance to intentionally love each other with our time. What does this mean?

Kids:

Say the first thing that pops in your mind to finish this thought: I love _____.

- Why do you think that was the first thing you thought?

Parents:

- What makes you feel loved?

"How was your day?" is a question every parent/guardian wants to know when it comes to their student. "It was good." is the answer every student gives their parents. LOL! Students, your challenge for today is to go beyond, "It was good." Share with your family three things that happened during your day and then share one prayer request that you and your family can pray for together.

Healthy Families Shift

 *“For God is not a God of confusion but of peace.” - 1 Corinthians 14:33 ESV*

God is talking to the church in this verse about things being done in an orderly way when they gather together. God wants order in His family. He desires us to have order in ours as well.

In today’s busy world, it’s impossible to always have balance with our families. Sometimes schedules aren’t balanced at all. However, it IS possible to have harmony. Harmony assumes things will shift. There are days, weeks, and sometimes months where things shift at work, church, or in the family. It could be a temporary assignment at work that needs extra hours, or a service project at church that calls for an extra weekend or more. Maybe it’s a sick family member or a new venture in kids’ sports that means extra time given to something besides the norm. Things can’t always be in balance, but we can have harmony knowing things sometimes shift.

For harmony to exist, communicating these shifts is imperative. As each family member becomes aware of what is coming, it can be a great trust-building tool as everyone works together to navigate that season of life, helping where they can and being patient. If done with grace, creating family harmony like this can be one of the best bonding agents for families.



TALK ABOUT IT:

- What specific things are coming up this week, month or quarter we need to communicate to one another so that we all have a chance to shift and create harmony in our home?
- What tools could we put in place to make this a consistent culture in our home (shared calendar, family meetings, family text thread, etc.)?



PRAY ABOUT IT:

God, help us to communicate well. Forgive us for times we have failed to maintain family harmony in this way. Help us to have grace and put each other first during seasons where things shift. Help us to come out stronger and more unified.

day
29

bridge**Kids**

Grab a Bible, some markers, paper and scissors. Find 1 Corinthians 14:33 in your Bible and have kids copy the verse on the piece of paper. Cut out each word separately and scrabble the words. Explain how the jumbled words are very confusing. Guide kids in putting the verse back in the proper order to create peace out of the confusion. Talk about ways God can create peace out of confusion in your own family.

DAY
29

 bridge
students

One of the best ways to create peace among your family is to share the load. Parents carry a lot of weight when it comes to jobs, bills, responsibilities, and taking care of their parents while also taking care of you. How can you help lighten the load? Instead of waiting for your parents to tell you to clean your room, clean the dishes, etc. why not take the initiative and help where you see a need in your own home? Doing this will not only lighten the burden your parents carry AND help create harmony, but it will also give everyone in your family MORE time to spend together.

Speaking Hard Truths in Love

 *"We will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church." - Ephesians 4:15 NLT*

"It's true, so you need to hear it!" Sound familiar? Every family on earth has had hard truths to tell one another at some point. For whatever reason, we feel most comfortable speaking hard truths to members of our family with little regard to how they are going to take it or feel afterwards. Sometimes, we treat people we don't even know better!

Even though something may be true, who said truth without love was a virtue worth having? The Apostle Paul said both need to be present, truth and love, if we are going to be like Christ, building the family, which is the basic unit of His church.

Are you able to tell someone in your family a hard truth and they see it as something to value, not something you simply tried to shove down their throat? Did you say it in a way that you can remain influential in their life when the conversation is over?

There's nothing wrong with truth, but make sure it is infused with love. After all, Jesus is BOTH of those things, not one or the other.



TALK ABOUT IT:

- Have you ever told the truth without love? With love?
- What was the difference in the way you handled each situation?
- What are 3 things we can do to ensure truth is always infused with love?



PRAY ABOUT IT:

God, help us to remember that the way we talk to one another matters. Help us to keep our mouths closed until we can remember to love. Let every word we speak be useful for building the hearer up, not tearing them down.

day
30

bridge**Kids**

Sit down as a family and talk about what it means to tell the truth. Share a time that someone told you something you didn't like. Maybe mom or dad told you to stop acting a certain way or doing something. Why do you think they told you that? Read Ephesians 4:15. Why do you think it is important that we speak the truth in love to each other? Brainstorm ideas of ways that we can speak the truth in love.

DAY
30

 bridge
students

The Bible says that kindness and wisdom come from God. If we want to be people who speak kind words and make wise choices, we must stay connected to God, our Source! Instead of always just "trying harder" to say the right things, sometimes what we need to do is reconnect with God.

In other words, we need to be people who ask God for wisdom to say the right things, at the right times. Before you ever confront your family, always ask God for His wisdom. Pray that He will help you speak with truth and grace.

Connected to the Source

 *"Blessed is the one...whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither—whatever they do prospers." - Psalm 1:1-3 NIV*

When God blesses families, it is attractive. A new job with better pay or an unheard-of deal on a house gets others talking and wondering about their own lives. Sometimes it's not stuff. An overwhelming peace during the worst of circumstances causes the people who see you to be in awe. "Could that kind of peace be available to me?"

David describes these blessings as fruit on a tree. Just like a giant fruit tree covered in ripe fruit, people tend to look at the blessings in our lives, and possibly miss the most important part - the source to which we are connected. Are you quick to point the people looking at your family's blessings to your source - The God of every good and perfect gift? Or are you content with simply showing off your fruit? Just as the vibrant, healthy tree is connected to streams of water close by, watering the tree and giving it life, you are connected to God. And when you delight in Him and His Word, you will bear beautiful fruit at just the right time.

TALK ABOUT IT:

- What is the first response we give when people ask about our family's successes?
- What are three blessings in our lives right now for which we can give God thanks and credit?

PRAY ABOUT IT:

God, thank You for the blessings You have given our family. More than that, thank You for being our Source. Help us to always remain thankful, and point others to You who notice how we are blessed.

Grab your Bible. Journal and complete the following:

Read Psalm 1:1-3. Look up the meaning of the word “meditates.” What do you think it means to meditate on God’s Word? Why do you think God wants us to meditate on His Word?

In your journal, draw a picture of a fruit tree. What kind of fruit did you draw on it? Why do you think meditating on God’s Word helps us bear “fruit?”

Read Galatians 5:22-23. What is the connection between meditating on God’s Word and bearing the Fruit of the Spirit?

Did you know that when it comes to prayer, it is not always about asking? You can also pray to tell God thank you! Here are two example prayers from the book of Psalms.

“You are my God, and I will praise You; You are my God, and I will exalt You. Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; His love endures forever.”
- *Psalm 118:29*

“I will give thanks to You, LORD, with all my heart; I will tell of all Your wonderful deeds.” - *Psalm 9:1*

Today, think about each one of your family members and share with them a way that God has used each of them to bless your life. Then, lead your family in a prayer of gratitude by simply telling God you are thankful for your family.

Better Than Kings

 *"And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you?" - Matthew 6:28-30 NIV*

Jesus tells us not to worry about our needs being met. He says God gives careful attention to how he "dresses" the fields with flowers, which are here today and gone tomorrow. If He provides for the fields, how much more does he care about us, his master creation?

To show how much attention he gives to the fields, he says, "Not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these." God blessed Solomon with tremendous wealth and honor. I'm sure when he had all his "splendor" on, it was a sight to see. Yet, Jesus said it's not even close to how he dresses the fields. And to think he cares even more about us! Let that sink in - He thinks of us as better than Kings!



TALK ABOUT IT:

- How has God provided for each of us this week?
- How has He blessed us with more than enough?



PRAY ABOUT IT:

God, thank You for the way You have provided for us. You don't owe us anything, but You provide because You love us. Help us not to worry when we're in need, but trust You will come through as You have promised.

Make a list of all your worries. You may have worries about things at school, or situations with your friends, the health of your family members or pets. Whatever it is, share with your family what you are worried about and why.

Read Matthew 6:28-30 together again.

Discuss these questions?

What do you think God thinks of our worries?

Ask your parents, how do you feel about my worries?

The reality is, a parent does not want you to worry. They want you to trust, but when you are worried, they want to hear about it. They want you to come talk to them and tell them what it is you are feeling.

Spend a few moments as a family praying and telling God all that worries you.

Parents and guardians work hard to provide for their children in ways that often go unnoticed. Today, take 10 minutes and write your parents or guardians a Thank You note describing a few things for which you are thankful. After writing your note, pray for your parents/guardians, thanking God for using them to meet your needs.

Serving the Poor

 *"The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'" - Matthew 25:40 NIV*

Jesus came at a time when Israel was being held hostage in their own country. Years of disobedience left them scattered and governed by Rome. Many thought the promised Messiah would come as a mighty warrior, taking the country back by force. Jesus, although He was that same promised Messiah, came as a baby just like everyone else. He looked like every other Jew. He didn't take the country by force. But in this passage, He talks very plainly about the day He will. He could have really gotten the crowd riled: "I'm going to take it by force!" [Crowd goes wild.] "They won't know what hit them!" [Crowd goes wild again.] "We will be a world superpower!!" [Crowd goes absolutely crazy and carries Jesus out on their shoulders.]

But instead, He focuses on another aspect no one probably expected. He tells them, "When I return in all my glory with all the angels (vs 31), with all power and authority, I'm going to start by asking how you handled the poor, needy, and broken around you."

I don't think there's anything more powerful to describe God's priority to help those in need than this. At a time when He was talking about the longest standing need in the country being met, the restoration of Israel, He made sure they knew the priority of God's heart, those in need.



TALK ABOUT IT:

- Is God's heart for the needy around us a priority in our home?
- What are some practical ways can we consistently serve those who are less fortunate?



PRAY ABOUT IT:

God, help our hearts mirror what's important to You concerning the needy. Open our eyes to see people around us who need help, whether it be resources, time or just someone to listen. Help us to make giving to others a priority.

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.”

Philippians 2:3-4

Have you ever completed one of those “hidden picture” pages or tried to spot things in an “I Spy” book? Isn’t it helpful to look at the list on the side of the page that tells you what to look for? If it was not there, you might waste time looking for the wrong things.

The verse today gives us a clue of what we should look for. Read the verse aloud and ask “What should we be looking for?” “What should our priority be, others or ourselves?” “How do we put others first?”

Play a game of “I Spy.” For the next 24 hours, pay attention to the people around you. If you spot an opportunity to help or do good for someone else, do it. Ask God to help you put others first this week by spying ways you can help!

Serving others is not something that comes naturally. We must ask the Holy Spirit to help us look beyond our own needs, to see the needs of others. Today, ask God to open your eyes to those in need around your neighborhood, your school, and your community. During your prayer time, listen to “The Cause of Christ” by Kari Jobe.

You are an Influencer!



"Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ."

- 1 Corinthians 11:1 NIV

I spend a lot of time asking God, "What do you want to do in me?" Maybe you've asked the same question. It's a great question! But it's easy to only focus on what God may want to do in us and fail to see what He may want to do in others through us. How might God want us to influence our kids, friends, spouse, and family in order to fulfill His purpose in their lives?

I think about some of the most influential people God has used to reach countless people for His kingdom: Billy Graham, C.S. Lewis, Rick Warren, Mother Theresa, Charles Stanley, and so many others! But I wonder who influenced them? What if the people in their lives were so focused on the plans God had for them, they never invested in these future power houses for God's kingdom? They probably didn't appear to be much as kids. No one could have ever truly known just how much God would one day use these great men and women of God!

Just maybe, you have one of these mighty men or women in your home right now, under your feet playing with Legos, watching a show, or enjoying a bottle. Maybe the seemingly insignificant friend or family member is the one God is going to use one day to bring many souls to Heaven! Your greatest contribution to the kingdom of God may not be something you do, but someone you influence!



TALK ABOUT IT:

- Let's give some thought to the spiritual gifts of those closest to us.
- What are some unique personality traits we notice about one another?
- Using that knowledge, what could we do to help one another see God's purposes for our lives?



PRAY ABOUT IT:

God, I know You have a great plan for each of us. Help us to not only strive after You for ourselves, but to help one another fulfill the plan You have for each of us.

day
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bridge**Kids**

What does it mean to influence someone? It means to affect the character, development, or behavior of someone. Take a few minutes to discuss this with your family. Share a story of someone who influenced you. What made that person special? How did it change you? Have each child tell about someone who has influenced them. Brainstorm and list some ways each family member can influence others.

DAY
34

 bridge
students

You may not have the famous blue check by your name on Instagram, you may not have 3.5k followers or a legion of fans on TikTok, but **YOU**, my friend, have influence. Whether you've noticed it or not, you are influencing others. Someone is taking their cue from you. It could be a younger family member or a classmate. For that reason, it's very important that as a follower of Jesus we set a Christlike example, not just at church, but at home, at school, and everywhere we go.

The Great Commission Starts at Home

 *“Go, then, to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples: baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit...”*
- Matthew 28:19 GNT

What if someone’s life was going to end unless you brought a message to them? Would you abandon everything and go deliver the message? The reality is, that’s exactly what Jesus did for us. Romans 5:6 says at just the right time he abandoned heaven to bring Good News to earth to save our very lives.

This message of Jesus’ love and forgiveness is the most important message of all, and there are many all around us who need to hear it. Jesus wants the whole world to know it, and calls us to take it to them. He told His disciples to share the Good News with everyone. This is called the “Great Commission,” or the great command. We’re supposed to take that same message to others around us at home, work, school, the grocery store, or wherever we go. When we take on the Great Commission, we take on the mission of God. The importance of that starts at home.



TALK ABOUT IT:

- Have we taken on God’s Great Commission as a family? If not, what is stopping us?
- What are some practical ways we can share God’s message of love and forgiveness with others?



PRAY ABOUT IT:

God, help us not to hoard the Good News of Jesus to ourselves. Show us people in our everyday lives who need to hear it. Give us courage and help us obey Your command to share.

day
35

bridge**Kids**

Gather some paper and colored pencils or crayons.

Task: Ask your child to draw their favorite superhero.

Ask them what their superhero's mission is. What are they being called to do? Discuss with them the mission that we as believers have. The Great Commission! That mission is to tell everyone about Jesus. Brainstorm ways we can be superheroes by telling others about Jesus.

DAY
35

 bridge
students

Make a list of three people that you know need to hear the Good News. Starting today, pray for those three people and ask God to help YOU bring the message to them.

Trusting God When It Hurts

 *“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.”*
- Proverbs 3:5-6 MEV

Every family I’ve ever known (including my own) has been through seasons of life where it was difficult to trust God. Because we live in world with sin, trust in God requires faith, not sight. But God says if we’ll trust Him whole heartedly and not ourselves, He’ll make our paths straight. The Hebrew word means our paths will be right, pleasant and prosperous. We all want our families to experience those kinds of paths in life!

Sometimes our feelings fight our belief when we’re in the middle of painful circumstances. You may not always feel good about trusting God. In fact, it may demand the most courage your family can muster while you fight the biggest doubts. God doesn’t expect you to always feel good about it. He expects you to believe in Him.

Abraham believed God despite being in one of the worst circumstances his family had ever been through. The Bible says he was considered righteous by God (Romans 4:3). It didn’t say he felt good about it. It just said he believed. That’s what God expects of you. If you hurt, then hurt. If you’re overwhelmed, then be overwhelmed. If you don’t feel anything good, it’s okay, just BELIEVE! God accepts that, and it’s credited to you as being in right standing with Him. When you do, He promises to do His part making your paths right, pleasant and prosperous.



TALK ABOUT IT:

- Have there been circumstances, as a family or individually, where trusting ourselves felt better than trusting God? (It’s ok to have feelings!)
- What made trusting ourselves so appealing?
- How does it compare to God’s promise when we trust Him wholeheartedly?



PRAY ABOUT IT:

God, we’re sorry for letting doubt rule our minds at times. We commit to trust and believe in You with all our hearts! Help us to trust You even when it hurts. We know You’re with us!

day
36

bridge**Kids**

Draw and color a picture of Proverbs 3:5-6.



DAY
36

 bridge
students

This passage of scripture reminds us of the importance of trusting God and being aware of His presence in every aspect of our lives. Write today's verse down on an index card and place it somewhere that you'll see it every day, like a bathroom mirror or the refrigerator. Take it a step further and memorize it.

