



Grace Chapel
CHURCH OF CHRIST

Daily Devotionals for Families

A Companion to the *Peace, Be Still* Message Series



The ABCs of Family Devotionals

Frequency

Experts on forming healthy habits recommend setting a minimum goal that is achievable during even the worst weeks and a stretch goal to encourage growth of the healthy habit. If your family has not been doing family devotionals, your minimum and your stretch goal will be to have one family devotional every week for at least two months to firmly establish the habit. On weeks when you have more time, go ahead and do devotionals on as many days as you like. Just don't get frustrated and give up, if the next week you only manage one devotional. For families already having family devotionals, your minimum will still be one a week (for those weeks when everyone has the stomach virus), and your stretch goal will be having a family devotional one more day a week than you are currently. Already having daily family devotionals? That's awesome! Give your fellow parents encouragement and tips you found that helped.

Scheduling

In order to be more consistent, it is important to attempt to have any devotional at the same time every day/week and to tie it to another activity your family never misses. When our daughter was little, we were all early risers, so our devotionals were around the breakfast table each morning. Try tying a family devotional to a meal, an established habit (like brushing teeth) or as a part of the morning or bedtime routine.

Tip

Place your Bible and other family devotional materials where you will see them during the activity to which you have anchored your devotional (like the kitchen table) so you will have a visual reminder to have your devotional.

Participation

Ideally, every family member will participate. Realistically, we understand that this is not always possible. If there is not a day or time when everyone can participate in a particular devotional, choose a time when the most family members can attend. For babies and toddlers, it is good for them to participate in some way, even if they are unable to fully understand. Consider reading to them the story in a baby Bible or retelling it in a



Introduction

few simple sentences. The activities are also designed so children can participate to the best of their ability. For example, if the activity asks children to draw something, help your baby or toddler “scribble” their own drawing.

Bible Translation

We suggest using an NIrV or International Children’s Version (ICV) when reading from scripture. Both are written on a third grade reading level, making it more understandable for even young children. For those with older children or teens—especially those who are familiar with the Bible—you may want to consider also reading the passage in the New American Standard version, considered by many to be the most accurate word for word translation available. (It does have an eleventh grade reading level, so it may not be the best option for struggling readers.) Or just use your favorite translation. Thankfully, with Bible apps, you don’t need to purchase a new Bible, and can even compare multiple versions of the same passage with a few clicks.

Study Materials

Authors of family devotionals have preferences and priorities that differ from person to person. As long as any theology taught within the devotional is biblical, the devotionals that best engage and encourage growth in your children are often ideal to use. These daily family devotionals from Grace Chapel are designed to encourage regular family devotionals, improve Bible knowledge and comprehension, reinforce/teach Christian life skills, encourage scripture memory and provide Christian parenting support for your journey. They are designed to be as flexible as possible so you can adapt them to the needs of your family.

Format

A basic familiar format is helpful—especially when you want to find things quickly. Here is the basic format of the Daily Family Devotionals with an explanation of why we believe that particular section is important.

1. **Topic:** This is the overall topic for the week’s devotionals based on the sermon topic on the Sunday of that week. If your children heard the sermon on Sunday, ask them to tell you something new they learned or didn’t understand in the sermon in the car on the way to lunch. You may also want to ask them one thing they want to focus on doing or changing this week based on the sermon topic. This is a great way to teach them how to learn from a sermon.

If your children were not in the auditorium for the sermon, give them a summary of it. Share any points you thought might be interesting or helpful to them. By sharing the sermon with them, you are subtly teaching them that a sermon is a useful tool for spiritual education.



2. **Memory Verse:** Wouldn't it be great if when your children are faced with a choice in life, their first thought is a scripture? Working with them on scripture memory can provide those "tapes" or long-term memories in their brain. While it is actually easier to move longer passages of scripture into long-term memory, regular repetition of a Bible verse over long periods of time will also move that verse into long-term memory.

Read the Bible verse for the week aloud every day—even if you are not having a devotional that day. Talk about not only what it means, but also how they can apply it to their lives. Encourage them to memorize it and memorize it yourself. In future weeks, randomly review a verse previously memorized to begin the shift of the verse into their long-term memories.

Tip

Don't be overly critical if your children miss a word or two when attempting to quote a verse from memory—especially with little ones or children with memory issues. Do make sure, however, that the meaning of the verse isn't altered by the forgotten word.

3. **Background for Parents:** This section will give you some parenting tips for the principles and commands learned in the devotional. We will share how your children will benefit spiritually, emotionally and at times academically and physically from mastering the godly principles, commands or Christian life skills in the devotional. At times, we will also share tips for helping children who are struggling in that area, free printable parenting sheets that you can keep handy for future reference, or other parenting resources we believe may be helpful.

Weekly Devotional/Day One

This is the basic devotional for the week. Every family should attempt to at least cover the material in this devotional each week. Here's what you will find in this devotional:

- **Scripture Reading:** These few verses cover a Bible story that illustrates the theme of the week or a closely connected theme that is more age appropriate.
- **Guiding Question:** This is a question for everyone to consider as you read the scripture passage together.
- **Questions:** There will be a variety of questions from which to choose. The difficulty will range from asking them to remember the facts of the story to deeper spiritual questions connected to the topic. If you have very young children, you may only ask one or two questions. For teens who know the story well, you can skip to the more difficult questions. Some families may choose to discuss them all. Do try to ask at least the first two basic questions to make sure your children understand what you are reading from the Bible.



Introduction

- **Activity Idea:** While activities are technically optional, we believe these hands-on, experiential and engaging activities will enhance memory, comprehension and application of what is being taught. While the activities are designed to use items you already have at home, each home is different. Feel free to substitute another activity that uses what you have available.
- **Prayer:** We believe it's important to teach children how to pray independently. As a result, we will not provide a suggested prayer, but encourage you to have one or more of your children end each study with a prayer of their own creation.

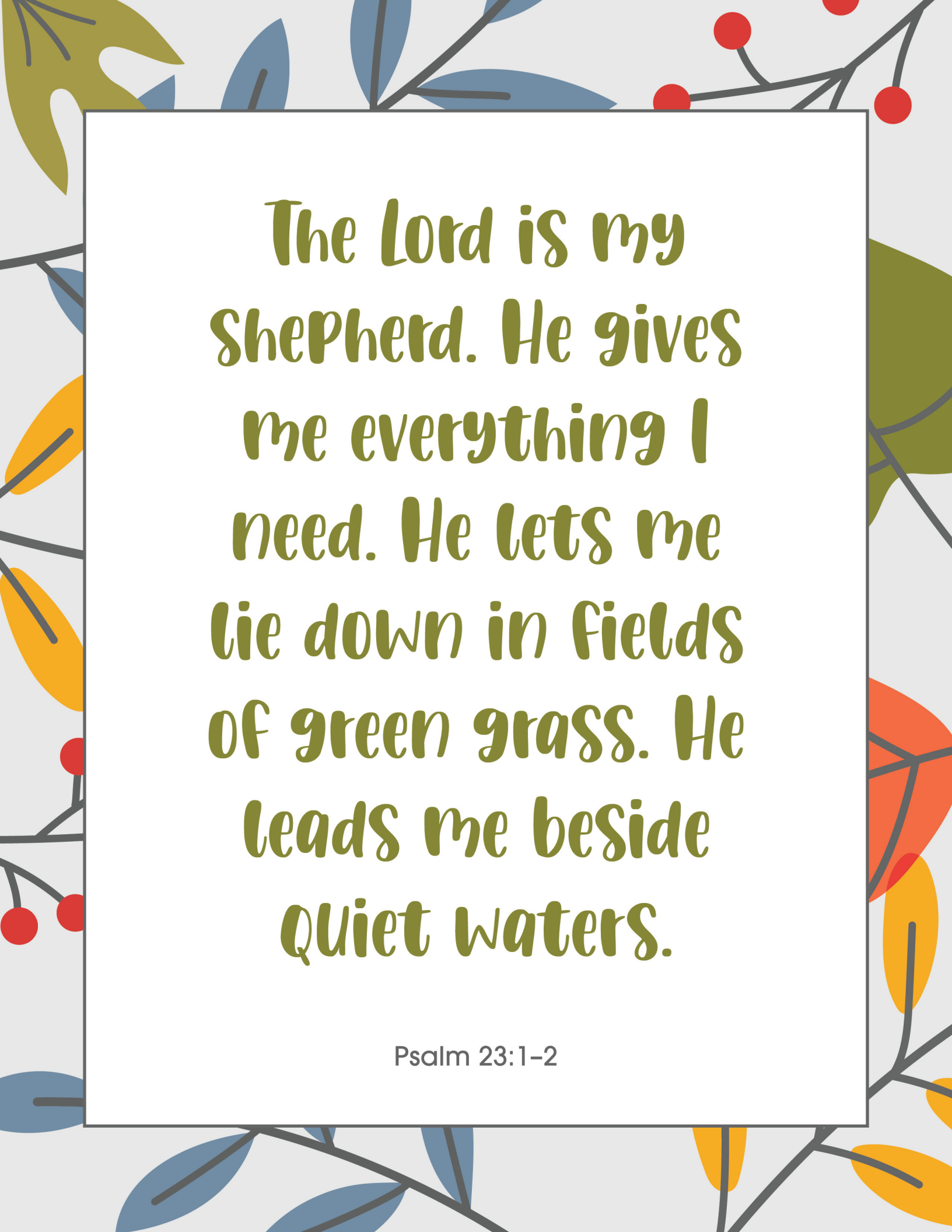
Days 2–6

These daily devotionals are shorter than the primary devotional for the week, although the format will look familiar. The scripture reading may be much shorter and is designed to reinforce or enhance your children's understanding of the theme for the week. Some of these shorter devotionals will have suggested activities, but these are purely optional for those families who would like to explore the theme more with their children.

Suggested Adaptations/Notes

This section may not be available every week. It is merely a space for us to give you additional information we believe will be helpful.





The Lord is my
Shepherd. He gives
me everything I
need. He lets me
lie down in fields
of green grass. He
leads me beside
quiet waters.

Psalm 23:1-2

Identifying and Expressing Emotions in Godly Ways

Devotional Tips

- Have a minimum goal of one family devotional a week.
- Your stretch goal should be one more family devotional than you are currently averaging each week.
- Try to schedule your family devotional for the same time every day/week.
- Link your family devotional to an already established habit like a meal, bedtime routine, teeth brushing, etc. Place the materials for your devotional where you will see them when doing that activity as an additional reminder.

Sermon Connection

Sabbath rest; Jesus is the Good Shepherd

Memory Verse

“The Lord is my shepherd. He gives me everything I need. He lets me lie down in fields of green grass. He leads me beside quiet waters.” (Psalm 23:1–2, NIV)



Background for Parents

God designed your children to need rest. While sleep is a large part of that needed rest, your children also need times of quiet reflection. This allows them to process everything that they are learning and experiencing. These times of rest also give them the time to identify and express their emotions—an important key to mental and spiritual health.

Unfortunately, many children do not have an adequate emotional vocabulary. The lack of words from which to choose to express themselves can leave them feeling unheard or misunderstood, causing additional frustration. For younger children, this frustration can be expressed with biting, hitting, tantrums and other inappropriate behaviors. Older children and teens may express their frustration in a wide variety of ways. Helping your children add to their emotional vocabulary can lessen frustration and improve behavior when strong emotions are felt by your children.

It is also important to make time each day to help your children process the events of the day and express the emotions those events may have caused. This daily conversation can help children process and express emotions on a regular basis, rather than allowing them to build until an emotional explosion (or implosion) of some sort occurs.

This week's devotionals are designed to examine the purpose of emotions and how God can help them when they are feeling strong emotions, while also giving your children tools to identify and express their emotions.

Check out additional activities at the end of each week's guide.



Weekly Devotional / Day One

Scripture Reading

John 21:3–18

Guiding Question

How can I use times of rest to think about the emotions I have been feeling and how to express them in ways that will make God happy?

Questions

1. What are the emotions Peter and the others might have felt at different points in the story? (For young children, you may want to pause the reading at each point when an emotion might have been felt and ask them to identify it then.)
2. What are some other words you can use to express those same emotions?
3. What words could be used if the emotions Peter felt had not been as strong or had been stronger?

Advanced Questions

1. Read Ephesians 4:26–27. Why do you think God did not say we should never be angry, but only that we should not sin when we are angry, and that we shouldn't stay angry for very long?
2. What are some ways people may sin when they feel strong emotions?
3. What strong emotions are more likely to encourage you to make poor choices in what you say or do?



Activity Idea

Give each person in your family a piece of paper and pencils, crayons, markers or any art materials you may have available. Have everyone draw as many faces expressing emotions as they can on their sheet of paper and write the name of the emotion under each face. These don't have to be particularly artistic—a “smiley” face with different facial expressions works just as well. This [link](https://www.printablee.com/post_printable-feelings-chart_383913) has several examples. If you do not have enough time for the activity, you can print one to use with your children: https://www.printablee.com/post_printable-feelings-chart_383913

Younger children may have difficulty thinking of more than a handful of emotions to draw. Suggest other emotion words to add to their chart. Here is a [link](#) to some great emotion vocabulary words for your children to learn and use. You may also have to describe what the word means if it is new to your child. When everyone is finished, share your charts with each other. Encourage your children to add any emotions they didn't originally have to their chart.

Make it a new family habit to have a time in the evening when everyone shares the top one or two emotions that best describe how they felt most of the day. For those doing this at bedtime, you may want to start your bedtime routine earlier, in case the emotion shared results in a painful story also needing to be expressed.

Prayer

Encourage one of your children to lead a prayer thanking God for giving us emotions, and asking Him to help your family to express those emotions in ways that would make Him happy.



Day Two

Scripture Reading

Proverbs 4:23

Guiding Question

What does God want us to do with our emotions?

Questions

1. What does this verse mean by the word “heart”—the physical heart beating in our chest, or our souls where emotions are felt, along with our minds where we make decisions about what to say and do? *The idea of “heart” as used in the Bible is an abstract concept. Young children will not be able to fully understand the idea, but it is good for them to learn about it.*
2. What does it mean to “guard our hearts?”
3. Why does this verse say that everything we do comes from our hearts?
4. How can we identify and express our emotions in a way that would show we understand and are trying to obey this verse?

Prayer

Encourage one of your children to pray that God helps everyone in your family to guard their hearts.



Day Three

Scripture Reading

Psalm 94:18–19

Guiding Question

Why is it important to ask God to help us when we are feeling negative emotions?

Questions

1. What are the two ways the author of these verses says that God helped him when he was having a difficult time and he was feeling anxious?
2. What are some ways God might support us during a difficult time?
3. What are some ways God can calm us when we feel anxious?
4. Why is it important to read the Bible and pray when we are having a difficult time?

Prayer

Encourage one of your children to pray thanking God for helping your family when you are struggling.



Day Four

Scripture Reading

Isaiah 26:3–4

Guiding Question

How can our hearts be at peace when we are feeling negative emotions?

Questions

1. What does it mean to be at peace or have perfect peace?
2. How can trusting in God help us feel at peace in hard times?
3. What are some things we can do to keep our minds “steadfast” (unwavering) in our trust in God?

Prayer

Encourage one of your children to pray and ask God to help your family stay steadfast in your trust in Him.



Day Five

Scripture Reading

Psalm 29:11

Guiding Question

How does God help us when our emotions make us tired and restless?

Questions

1. What does David mean when he writes that God can give us strength? *Emotional and spiritual strength are abstract concepts. Young children will not thoroughly understand these ideas, but it is good for them to learn about them.*
2. What does David mean when he writes that God blesses His people with peace?
3. Can you think of a time in David's life when he might have needed strength and peace?
4. When are some times when you need more strength and peace?
5. What are some things you can do that might help you get the same strength and peace from God that David found?

Prayer

Encourage one of your children to pray and thank God for giving your family strength and peace when they need it.



Day Six

Scripture Reading

Psalm 23

Guiding Question

Why do many people find this Psalm to be comforting when they are upset?

Questions

1. How does this Psalm describe God? *This is a rather abstract lesson, but it is important for your children to begin discussing these concepts, even if they cannot fully understand them.*
2. To what does it seem to compare David?
3. How does this Psalm describe the shepherd caring for his sheep?
4. What does this Psalm teach us about how God wants to care for us?
5. Why do you think many Christians memorize this Psalm and repeat it to themselves when they are upset or scared?
6. How could memorizing this Psalm help you when you are upset or scared?

Prayer

Encourage one of your children to pray and thank God for caring for us when we are upset or scared.



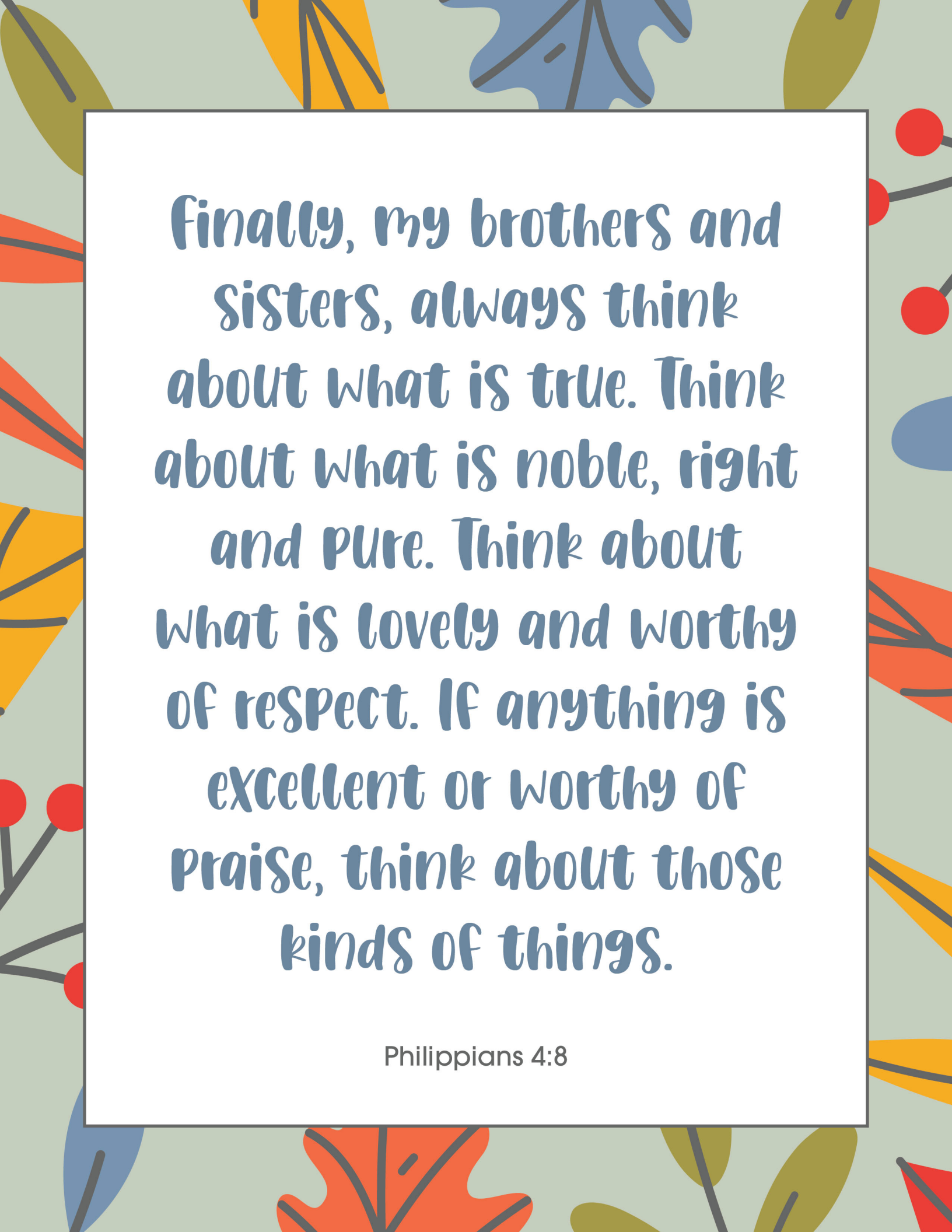
Activity Ideas for the Week

Emotional Intensity Thermometer: This activity is great for children still struggling with adding to their emotion vocabulary. Have them draw a thermometer and number it from one to ten “degrees.” Explain that the one means they are feeling just a little bit of an emotion, and the ten means they are feeling a lot of it. When your child expresses an emotion using a basic word like “happy,” “sad” or “mad,” ask them to give it a degree number on the thermometer. This can help bridge the gap while they are learning more emotion vocabulary words.

Emotion Vocabulary Flash Cards: Use index cards or paper about the same size. On each card, write a word describing an emotion that is new to your child. Have your child draw illustrations to help him or her remember what the word means. As a follow-up activity, encourage your child to group similar emotional words together and refer to them when needed.

Emotion Charades: Play a game of charades using emotions or situations that might cause certain emotions.





Finally, my brothers and sisters, always think about what is true. Think about what is noble, right and pure. Think about what is lovely and worthy of respect. If anything is excellent or worthy of praise, think about those kinds of things.

Philippians 4:8

Reading and Reflecting on Scripture in Order to Place It on Our Hearts and Minds

Devotional Tips

- Try to have a minimum goal of one family devotional a week.
- Your stretch goal should be one more family devotional than you are currently averaging each week.
- Try to schedule your family devotional for the same time every day/week.
- Link your family devotional to an already established habit like a meal, bedtime routine, teeth brushing, etc. Place the materials for your devotional where you will see them when doing that activity as an additional reminder.

Sermon Connection

Meditation; truth

Memory Verse

“Finally, my brothers and sisters, always think about what is true. Think about what is lovely and worthy of respect. If anything is excellent or worthy of praise, think about those things.” (Philippians 4:8, NIV)



Background for Parents

The first mention of meditation in the Bible is found in Genesis 24:63 when Isaac goes into the fields to meditate. The Bible mentions meditate or meditation 23 times, mostly in the book of Psalms. In the New Testament, what many would call meditation is often referred to as focusing one's mind or thinking on certain things.

Even in secular research a connection has been found between meditation and calming. As Christians, we have an opportunity to meditate on God's words, giving us additional benefits not gained from meditating with mindless syllables, an empty mind or on a specific object.

Meditation is a practice that is most likely unknown to your children. With our fast paced lives, the idea of sitting quietly for any amount of time and meditating can seem like torture. Yet meditating on scripture can help calm your children, remind them of important godly principles and begin to place important scriptures in their long-term memories. Once a scripture is in the long-term memories of your children, it is available to them whenever they need it to make good choices.

Meditating on scripture, Bible stories, God's miracles and/or blessings can also help children better control any intrusive (negative) thoughts. Whenever they realize they are thinking negatively, they can practice saying "stop" to themselves and switching their thinking to God. They will need to practice this skill set. In the beginning, they may only be able to stay focused on the godly thoughts for a few seconds. Encourage them to merely say stop and shift their thinking again, as often as necessary. Over time they will be able to shift their focus more easily and for longer periods of time.

Do not try to force your children—especially active ones—to sit and meditate for long periods of time if they have never done it before. You want them to find value in the process. Start by reading a verse from Proverbs or the verse of the day from your Bible app. Ask them to think about what the verse means, what God wants them to do with that information and changes they want to make in their lives because of the verse. Depending upon the ages and temperaments of your children, you may need to start with a mere 30 seconds for them to think about the verse and your questions, before allowing them to give you the answers.

Gradually, increase the time they can spend quietly reflecting/meditating on a verse. After each practice session, discuss how they are feeling in the time of quiet reflection. Discuss ways to stay focused on the scripture. Talk about the advantages of regular meditation on scripture. A great family habit is to start each day with a verse to think about throughout the day and then talk about it later in the day. For very active children, consider walking while meditating quietly to help their focus.



Weekly Devotional / Day One

Scripture Reading

Matthew 5:13–16

Guiding Question

How can meditating on (or thinking about) scripture every day help me?

Questions

1. What is a parable? (A simple story that is told to help people better understand a spiritual principle.)
Parables are by nature abstract. Young children may have difficulties understanding the connection between the items in a parable and its meaning. It is still good for them to hear parables and their meanings.
2. What are the two items mentioned in these parables?
3. What do the parables say about salt and light?

Advanced Questions

1. What is the meaning of each parable?
2. How can Christians be like salt?
3. How can Christians be like light?
4. How could meditating on these verses regularly make an impact on your choices each day?
5. What other changes might happen if someone meditated on these verses every day for a period of time?



Activity Idea

There are creative and fun ways to encourage your children to meditate on scripture. One of these is scripture art. Have your children choose a Bible verse they believe would help them if they meditated on it more often. Give them art materials and encourage them to create scripture art of that verse that they can place in their room or another place where they will see it often. The scripture should be written out in such a way that it is easy to read and can be read from a distance. Young children may need you to write the scripture on their paper for them.

Need ideas? Here is the [link](#) to a Pinterest board with dozens of fun ideas you can use. Many provide templates and require only paper and colored pencils, crayons or markers. Children also love drawing a fruit bowl with each fruit of the Spirit written on a piece of fruit on a square of white cotton fabric (with permanent or fabric markers) and tracing this [drawing](#) of the Armor of God on another square of white cotton fabric. Then sew the two squares together, leaving a hole for them to place the stuffing inside the pillow. If they are old enough, you can teach them to hand stitch the opening closed. They will be so proud of the pillow they made that it will become a prized possession. We have heard so many stories over the years of children memorizing those lists without anyone helping them, merely from looking at the pillows they made. (Of course, you can use other scriptures and art as well.)

Prayer

Encourage one of your children to pray, asking God to help your family be faithful about meditating on scripture.



Day Two

Scripture Reading

Psalm 119:9–16

Guiding Question

How does our attitude about scripture (reading, meditating, memorizing) impact how much I learn and enjoy learning from the Bible?

Questions

1. What advice does the author of the Psalm give young people in verse 9? (This Psalm's writer isn't named, although many assume it was David.)
2. What does the author say about his own attitude about scripture and how he interacts with it?
3. Why does the author meditate on God's statutes/laws/commands/rules?

Advanced Questions

1. How might memorizing scripture make meditating on it easier?
2. How do you think meditating on these verses for a period of time could help you? *Show your children the paragraph "titles" in Psalm 119. Point out that in Hebrew, each line starts with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet in order, making it easier to memorize.* What memory tricks do you use to help you memorize a long passage like this or a list of items?
3. Did you know that in the time of Jesus, children (primarily boys) went to school at the local synagogue? By the age of ten they would have memorized the first five books of the Old Testament! Look in a Bible and see how much they memorized! Why do you think they valued memorizing scripture so much? How could memorizing even a few verses help you make better choices?

Prayer

Encourage one of your children to say a prayer asking God to help your family read, meditate on and memorize more scripture.



Day Three

Scripture Reading

Psalm 63

Guiding Question

How can it help to think about God when we are in bed?

Questions

1. How does David feel about spending time with God?
2. According to the description of the Psalm, where was David when he wrote this?
3. When David was in the desert writing this Psalm, he was running away from his son, Absalom (2 Samuel 15–19). Do you think David felt happy or sad about having to run from his son? Would you say this Psalm is mostly happy or mostly sad? Why?

Advanced Questions

1. How could David write such a positive Psalm when his life was not going well?
2. Why do you think David specifically mentioned thinking about God when he is in bed at night?
3. How can thinking about God when you are in bed help you?
4. What are some things that involve God which would be good to think about at night?
5. How could memorizing scripture make it easier to think about God in bed?
6. What types of Bible verses might help you the most if you thought about them in bed each night?
7. What specific verse(s) can you think about tonight in bed? How might it help you?

Prayer

Encourage one of your children to pray, asking God to help your family remember God at night and think about Him while they are in bed.



Day Four

Scripture Reading

Psalm 143

Guiding Question

How can thinking about God's miracles, Bible stories and blessings help us?

Questions

1. What kind of mood was David in when he wrote this Psalm?
2. Can you think of some stories from the life of David that might have made him feel this way? (We don't know for sure which incident inspired this Psalm.)
3. Why do you think David says that when he is tired emotionally/spiritually, he thinks about everything God has done in the past?

Advanced Questions

1. How can thinking about everything God has done in the past help us when we are upset?
2. What are some specific miracles, stories or blessings you can remind yourself of that would help you when you are struggling?
3. What are some ways you can remind yourself that when you are lying in bed thinking about things that are upsetting, you need to begin thinking about God instead?

Prayer

Encourage one of your children to pray, asking God to help your family think about Him when you are in bed.



Day Five

Scripture Reading

Isaiah 26:3–4

Guiding Question

How can trusting in God help us feel at peace in tough times?

Questions

1. Why do these verses tell us we can trust God?
2. Steadfast means focused or unwavering. What does it say God will give people whose minds are steadfast and trust in Him?

Advanced Questions

3. How can staying focused on God and trusting in Him give us peace?
4. How hard is it to trust in God when He doesn't seem to either want you to have what you want in a particular situation or is making you wait?
5. How do you know you can trust God even when God denies your prayer request or makes you wait?
6. What can you do to remind yourself to stay faithful when times are tough so that you can be at peace?

Prayer

Encourage one of your children to lead a prayer asking God to help your family stay steadfast and faithful to God even in difficult times.



Day Six

Scripture Reading

Psalm 119:11

Guiding Question

How can memorizing scripture help you avoid sinning?

Questions

1. How can having Bible verses in your heart/mind help you avoid sinning?
2. What are some good verses to memorize that could help you make better choices?

Advanced Questions

1. Memorizing scripture is kind of like exercise or math problems. Doing those things may seem boring at times, but being disciplined enough to do it can make a huge positive difference in your life. What are some things you can do to motivate yourself to spend time memorizing scripture?
2. What are some Bible verses you want to try to memorize before the end of the year? What is your plan for creating time to memorize them?

Prayer

Encourage one of your children to pray, asking God to help your family keep His words in your hearts.




Activity Ideas for the Week

- Listen to worship songs that have Bible verses as lyrics. Which songs does your family already know by heart? What is a new song you could learn that would also help you memorize a new scripture? It doesn't really matter how well you sing. Crank up the volume on a new scripture song and learn the lyrics!
- Have your children write some verses they want to learn or that will help them with something (like being kind or trusting God) on index cards. Tape them to the bathroom mirror or some other place where they will see them several times a day. Encourage them to read the verses every time they see the cards.
- If your children are trying to memorize scriptures, try writing each word on a different index card and mix them up. Can they put the words in the correct order? Or create a matching game using multiple scriptures, half on one card and half on a second card. Mix the cards up and turn them word side down like a regular matching game. The winner is the one who correctly matches the most scriptures.
- This week's devotional underscores the necessity of your children developing independent Bible study habits. This [link](#), featuring a Bible bookmark, shares tips for helping children develop independent Bible study habits. This resource is also available in Spanish [here](#) as a full-page resource.

Special Note: One of the keys for moving scripture from the short-term to long-term memories of your children is spaced, regular practice. Revisit memorized verses and passages of scripture regularly to make this transition more likely. You may also be interested to know that it is actually easier to move larger passages of scripture into long-term memory than a short memory verse (unless the memory verse is regularly reviewed).





Blessed are
those who obey
his covenant
laws. They
trust in him
with all their
hearts.

Psalm 119:2

God Wants Us to Get Help from Him and Others When We Struggle (and How to Find Fun Ways to Deal With Our Emotions)

Devotional Tips

- Try to have a minimum goal of one family devotional a week.
- Your stretch goal should be one more family devotional than you are currently averaging each week.
- Try to schedule your family devotional for the same time every day/week.
- Link your family devotional to an already established habit like a meal, bedtime routine, teeth brushing, etc. Place the materials for your devotional where you will see them when doing that activity as an additional reminder.
- This week, encourage one other family you know to do the family devotionals attached to this sermon series.

Sermon Connection

Confession

Memory Verse

“Blessed are those who obey his covenant laws. They trust in him with all their hearts.” (Psalm 119:2, NIV)



Background for Parents

God wants to help you and your children with your emotions, especially during difficult times. He has provided things in the world around us that can help your children express and work through their emotions. It is easier for your children to get that help if they “confess,” or tell you, about their emotions. In extreme cases, your children may need additional assistance from medical professionals, but most of the time your children just need to be aware of and use several healthy outlets for their emotions. Often, they may need encouragement from you to use them.

This week’s devotional will include several activity options in the weekly/day one option, instead of at the end of the devotional. This is because we want every family to know several strategies they can use when their children are struggling emotionally. Whether you teach and practice them as part of the devotionals this week or at a later time, it is important your children know and remember these strategies. Having these tools available can make it less likely they will turn to unhealthy or ungodly ways to cope with negative emotions.



Weekly Devotional / Day One

Scripture Reading

Matthew 18:12–16

Guiding Question

How much does God want to help us when we are struggling?

Questions

1. How many sheep did the man have and how many got lost?
2. What did the man do when he realized one of his sheep was lost?
3. Why do you think the man went looking for the lost sheep?

Advanced Questions

1. Why does the last verse compare God to the shepherd and us to the sheep?
2. What do you think it means when the verse says God is not willing for one person to perish?
3. What does this parable teach about God’s love for us, even (or especially) when we are struggling?
4. In what ways do you think God “looks” for us when we are struggling?
5. Can you think of a Bible story where God seems to go out of His way to help someone who is struggling?
6. Can you think of a time in your life when you felt like God helped you when you were struggling?



Week Three

Activity Ideas

You will probably not have enough time to do all of these during this devotional. These are important tools for your children to learn to use when they are struggling. Try to find time to teach them all to your children at some point.

Art: Art is a great way for your children to express their emotions. Don't try to interpret their art or read anything into it. Ask them to tell you about it, but don't worry if they have little or nothing to say about it. You can ask them to illustrate the story or draw a self portrait. Half of the portrait should be how they see themselves and the other half how they think other people see them. After they are done, have them write words around the portrait to describe how they think God sees them. Another interesting one is to have them draw "God," either what they think He looks like, or in a way that is descriptive of His qualities.

Walking: A recent study found that a long walk every day can help lift depression in the majority of people. Take a long walk or hike together. *You may find your kids start talking to you about things that are bothering them as you walk. We will address breathing and other types of exercise during the coming weeks.*

Puppetry: Children view puppets as a type of mask. They will often allow their puppets to express emotions and concerns they are afraid to voice. Grab some paper lunch bags and markers. (They also love using colored paper, googly eyes, pom poms, yarn and other art supplies, but those aren't essential.) Ask them to create a puppet that is anything they want it to be, but expresses an emotion. If they want, and you have time, let them create a puppet show about emotions.

Music: Music can elevate moods and raise energy levels. For some young people, listening to sad music when they are sad helps, and for others it makes them sadder. Angry music can fuel anger. Sample some songs to see how they make each of you feel and start creating individual or family playlists to help manage emotions.

Note: Although the book *Helping (Ministering to) Children of War* was written for children who have experienced war or community violence, it has lots of activity ideas for exploring emotions. The e-book is free and can be found at this [link](#).

Prayer

Encourage one of your children to pray, thanking God for loving us enough to help us when we are struggling.



Day Two

Scripture Reading

John 3:16–17

Guiding Question

Why did God send Jesus to die on the Cross?

Questions

1. Why did God send Jesus to Earth?
2. What did Jesus do so that Christians could spend eternity with God?
3. How does that show God's love for us?

Advanced Questions

1. John 3:16 is one of God's promises that can reassure us when we are struggling. What are some other promises God made to us in the Bible that can help us when we are struggling? *This is a great time to teach your children how to find scriptures using keywords in internet searches or in the concordance in their Bibles.*
2. How can remembering or reading God's promises to His people in the Bible help us when we are struggling?

Prayer

Encourage one of your children to pray, thanking God for sending Jesus to Earth to die for our sins.



Day Three

Scripture Reading

Hebrews 13:5–6, 8

Guiding Question

What are some promises of God we can memorize so we can remember them when we are struggling?

Questions

1. What are the two quotes in the reading?
2. What do they mean in your own words? *When a child is able to restate a verse in his or her own words, it shows an actual understanding of the verse as opposed to just repeating what is said.*
3. What is the other important statement about Jesus in verse 8?
4. What does it mean in your own words?

Advanced Questions

1. How can knowing the information in these verses help us when we are struggling?
2. Read the quotes from which the verses in the scripture reading were quoted, Deuteronomy 31:6 and Psalm 118:6–7. Why do you think Paul quoted these Old Testament verses here?
3. How can remembering the Lord is my helper keep you from being afraid?
4. **Bonus Question!** Why do you think Paul mentioned the love of money and to be content with what you have in connection with the first quote in this passage?

Prayer

Encourage one of your children to pray, thanking God for never leaving or forsaking us.



Day Four

Scripture Reading

James 1:2–5

Guiding Question

How can God’s wisdom help us when we are struggling and how can we get it?

Questions

1. What do these verses say can happen when we are struggling?
2. What does James write that we should do if we want wisdom from God?
3. What does James write that will happen if we ask God for wisdom?

Advanced Questions

1. How can trials test our faith?
2. How does that testing of our faith help us have perseverance?
3. How does the process help us become mature Christians?
4. What are some ways God can give us wisdom when we ask Him for it?
5. Can you name a situation in your life where it would help you to have some of God’s wisdom in dealing with it?

Prayer

Encourage one of your children to pray, asking God to give your family His wisdom.



Day Five

Scripture Reading

Psalm 121

Guiding Question

What are some of the promises God has given us that can help us when we are upset?

Questions

1. Where does this Psalm tell us that our help comes from?
2. What are the ways the rest of the Psalm tell us God helps us?
3. Which verse(s) would make you feel better when you are upset? Why?

Advanced Questions

1. Can you think of examples in the Bible when God helped a person or a group of people in these ways?
2. Can you think of times in your life when you have seen God help you or someone else in these ways?
Sharing faith stories of how you have seen God working in the world today can help your child see God at work in their lives more easily and strengthen their faith.

Prayer

Encourage one of your children to pray, thanking God for something specifically mentioned in the scripture reading for today.



Day Six

Scripture Reading

1 Corinthians 10:1–13

Guiding Question

What kind of help can God give us when we are tempted to sin? *There is a connection in scripture between certain emotions and a temptation to sin (like anger). This devotional's discussion of temptation will be examined further in the devotional dealing with anger.*

Questions

1. What Old Testament stories does Paul refer to in the scripture reading?
2. What does he write that these stories tell us about the Israelites?
3. What are we supposed to learn from them?
4. How does God help us when we are tempted to sin?

Advanced Questions

1. What does it mean that God will not let us be tempted beyond what we can bear?
2. What does it mean he will provide a way out for us?
3. Can you think of a time when you were tempted to disobey God, but He provided you with a way out?
4. How does it help to remember God provides a way out for us when we are tempted?
5. How can we remember to look for these “escape routes” and take them?
6. **Bonus Question!** Verse 13 is possibly the most misquoted scripture in the Bible. How do people misquote it? How is that very different from the actual scripture?

Prayer

Encourage one of your children to pray, thanking God for always giving us a way out when we are tempted to disobey Him.

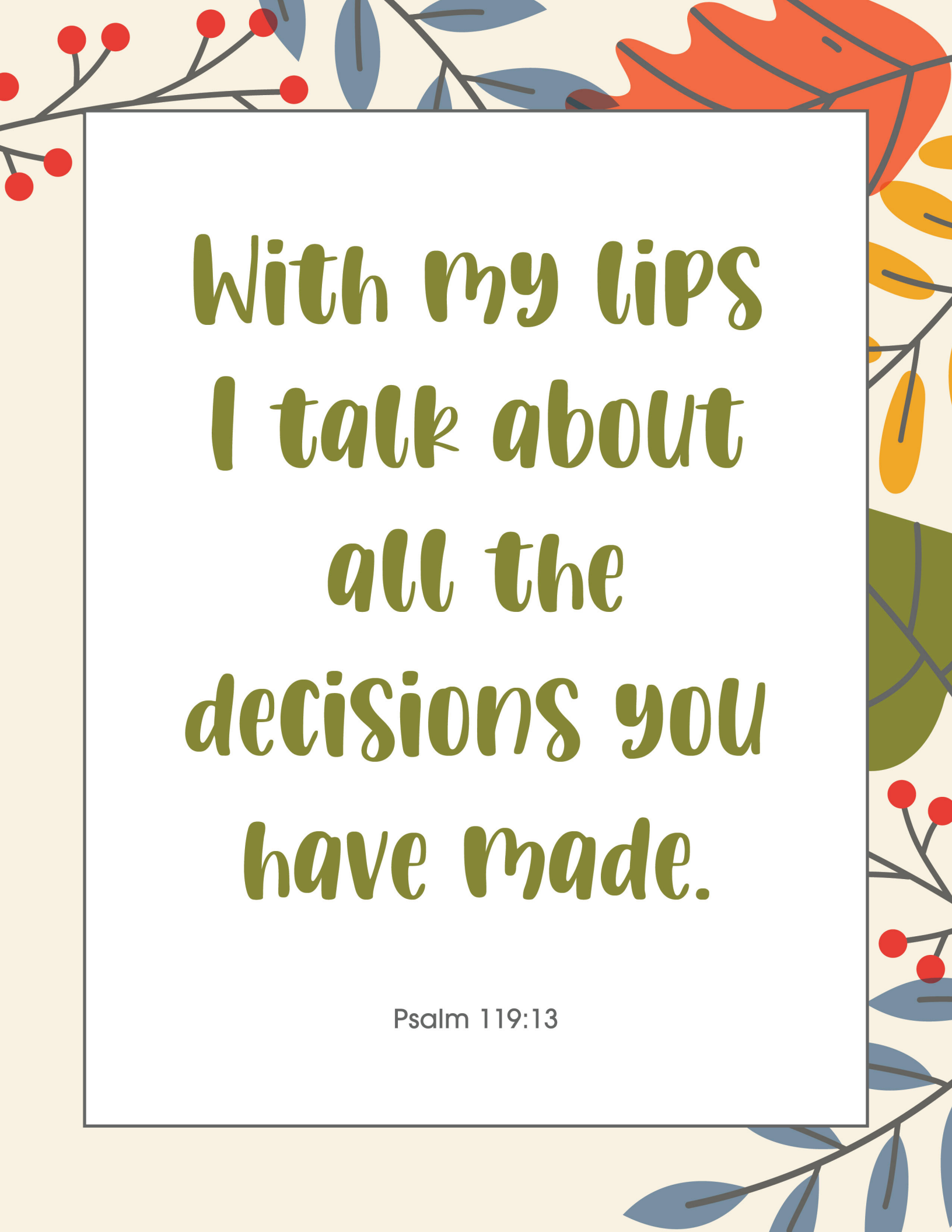


Week Three

Activity Ideas for the Week

See Day One devotional



A decorative border surrounds the central text box. It features stylized autumn leaves in shades of orange, red, and yellow, along with blue and green leaves. Small red berries are scattered throughout the design.

With my lips
I talk about
all the
decisions you
have made.

Psalm 119:13

Serving Others and Teaching Them About Jesus Can Give Us Purpose and Hope, and Lift Our Spirits

Devotional Tips

- Try to have a minimum goal of one family devotional a week.
- Your stretch goal should be one more family devotional than you are currently averaging each week.
- Try to schedule your family devotional for the same time every day/week.
- Link your family devotional to an already established habit like a meal, bedtime routine, teeth brushing, etc. Place the materials for your devotional where you will see them when doing that activity as an additional reminder.
- To make the scripture reading easier to understand, try reading it from the NIrV or ICB version of the Bible.
- Try finding a way to encourage another family to do the family devotionals.

Sermon Connection

Evangelism

Memory Verse

“With my lips I talk about all the decisions you have made.” (Psalm 119:13, NIrV)



Background for Parents

Did you know that a healthy relationship with a nurturing parent is the foundation of resilience in children? Many young people in the world are disconnected emotionally from their parents, leaving them at risk for hopelessness. Several studies found that children who had experienced war recovered more completely from their trauma if they were religious. Why? Because only Christianity could give them a deep hope based on something outside of their current circumstances and provide them with true meaning and purpose for their lives.

While your children will, Lord willing, avoid exposure to war, they too can benefit from a strong spiritual foundation. What better way to put what they are learning from scripture into practice than serving others and sharing the message of Jesus? This, in turn, can reach other young people searching for hope, meaning and purpose in their lives.

Raising children who understand their meaning and purpose as Christians, who serve others and share their faith, is easier if your family regularly serves others as a family. Don't have any ideas of how you can serve others and share your faith? Don't worry! This week's devotionals include lots of resources to help.



Weekly Devotional / Day One

Scripture Reading

Luke 10:1–12

Guiding Question

What can we learn about what God wants us to do from the instructions Jesus gave the seventy-two?

Questions

1. Where did Jesus send the seventy-two?
2. What were they supposed to do when they arrived in a new town?
3. What do you think were the two most important things they were supposed to do (verse 9)?

Advanced Questions

1. Why do you think Jesus connected healing people and telling them “The Kingdom of God has come near to you”?
2. What do you think “The Kingdom of God has come near to you” means?
3. Of what other passage in scripture does this remind you (Matthew 28:19–20)? *You may want to read the verses to your children and talk about what they mean, although this scripture passage is the reading later this week. Point out that this is our mission, too.*



Activity Ideas

It's time for a family service project! Don't worry; this can be as simple or as complex as your family would like. You don't necessarily have to complete the project today, but it is a great idea to begin planning it. Give your children as much ownership of the project as possible, including choosing whom you will serve and what you will do. The more they play an active role, the more they will benefit from the experience and be able to replicate it later independently.

Choose one of the project ideas below, choose one from the dozens of ideas under the service tab at this [link](#) (click on the service tab on the left to see the complete list of service project ideas), or develop your own idea. As you are planning the project, discuss how you can also point the person you are serving to Jesus in some way.

- Make cards for someone who is struggling or lonely.
- Offer to rake leaves for a neighbor or older person.
- Make cookies or muffins and deliver them to someone.
- Collect cans of food, winter coats or other items needed by one of Grace Chapel's community partners.
- Help your children go through clothes and toys to find items they can donate to one of the community partners, or someone you know who could use them.
- Go visit or call someone living in a nursing home or assisted living facility.
- Collect all of the spare change in your house and give your children extra jobs around the house to earn money. Donate the money to a ministry or nonprofit. (Your children will benefit more if they help deliver the donation.)
- Plant a fall/winter container garden. Deliver the food grown to community food banks or people you know who would benefit from fresh produce.

Prayer

Encourage one of your children to pray, asking God to help your family remember to serve others and teach them about Jesus as often as possible.



Day Two

Scripture Reading

Ephesians 2:10

Guiding Question

What is our responsibility to do good works?

Questions

1. What does the verse mean by “we are God’s handiwork?”
2. What are good works?
3. Can you give some examples of good works?
4. What good works can you do?
5. How can you find good works to do?

Advanced Questions

1. What do you think it means that the good works are “prepared for us in advance”?
2. How can we know if a good work is meant for us to do, or if should we just do every good work we can?
This question begins an ongoing conversation with children who are very empathetic and see hundreds of ways they can do good works each day, even to the detriment of their health or schoolwork.
3. What if we don’t notice any good works that need to be done? (This question is designed to start a discussion with children who tend to overlook things that need to be done, whether it’s around your home or good works in general.)

Prayer

Encourage one of your children to pray, asking God to help each of you see the good works He has planned for you, and to help you do them the way He wants them done.



Day Three

Scripture Reading

1 Peter 4:8–11

Guiding Question

What does God want us to do with our gifts?

Questions

1. What are five things Peter tells us we should do in this scripture reading?
2. What are some ways you can do each of those things?
3. Why does Peter say we should do these things?

Advanced Questions

1. What are your gifts from God? *If your children have not discovered at least one of the gifts God has given them to serve Him, help them complete this simple [gift discovery worksheet](#) and discuss what gift(s) each of you may have.*
2. What are some of the ways you can use your gift(s) to serve God right now?
3. What can you do to develop your gift(s) so that you are prepared when God gives you an opportunity to serve Him using that gift?

Prayer

Encourage one of your children to pray, asking God to help each of you discover, develop and use your gifts to serve Him.



Day Four

Scripture Reading

John 13:1–17; Matthew 23:11–12

Guiding Question

Why is it so important to Jesus that we think of ourselves as servants?

Questions

1. Why did Jesus wash the apostles' feet?
2. Who usually washed the feet of people during the time of Jesus? *Young children may need some background information including that people wore sandals, walked a lot on dusty roads because there were no cars, good manners meant washing your feet when entering someone's home, servants usually did that job, etc.*
3. Why was Peter so upset that Jesus was washing his feet?
4. What was the explanation that Jesus gave him?

Advanced Questions

1. Why is it so important to Jesus that we think of ourselves as servants?
2. How hard is it to be humble?
3. Describe a humble person.
4. Do you believe you are humble? Why? If not, in what areas do you need to improve? *Be prepared for siblings to want to "help" each other answer this question. Try to manage the discussion so it doesn't turn into a sibling fight!*
5. What are some ways we can be humble servants each day?

Prayer

Encourage one of your children to pray, asking God to help each of you remember to be humble servants.



Day Five

Scripture Reading

Matthew 28:16–20

Guiding Question

What final instructions did God give the apostles before he ascended to Heaven, and what can we learn from them that he wants us to do?

Questions

1. What did Jesus tell the apostles to do?
2. What does it mean to “make disciples of all nations”?
3. What is baptism?
4. Why is it important for us to teach others to obey God/Jesus?

Advanced Questions

1. Why do you think these verses are called the Great Commission?
2. How important is it for every Christian to obey these verses?
3. What would happen if Christians stopped making disciples of all nations, baptizing people and teaching them to obey God/Jesus?
4. How can you begin doing these things now?

Prayer

Encourage one of your children to pray, asking God to help each of you remember how important it is to obey the Great Commission.



Day Six

Scripture Reading

Acts 20:33–35

Guiding Question

What does it mean that it is “more blessed to give than to receive”?

Questions

1. What evidence did Paul give that he wasn't doing what he was doing to get rich?
2. What does it mean to be greedy? Generous?
3. What does it mean that it is “more blessed to give than receive”?
4. How can you, at your age, give to help others?

Advanced Questions

1. What are some things you can do to have a more generous heart?
2. In what ways do you struggle to be generous?
3. Why might it be important that Paul mentioned he worked to supply his “needs” and not his “wants”?
4. We often think being generous only applies to money. In what other ways might God want us to be generous that would help others?

Prayer

Encourage one of your children to pray, asking God to help each of you be generous in helping others.



Week Four

Activity Ideas for the Week

Serving in Secret: Can your family serve someone without them finding out who served them?

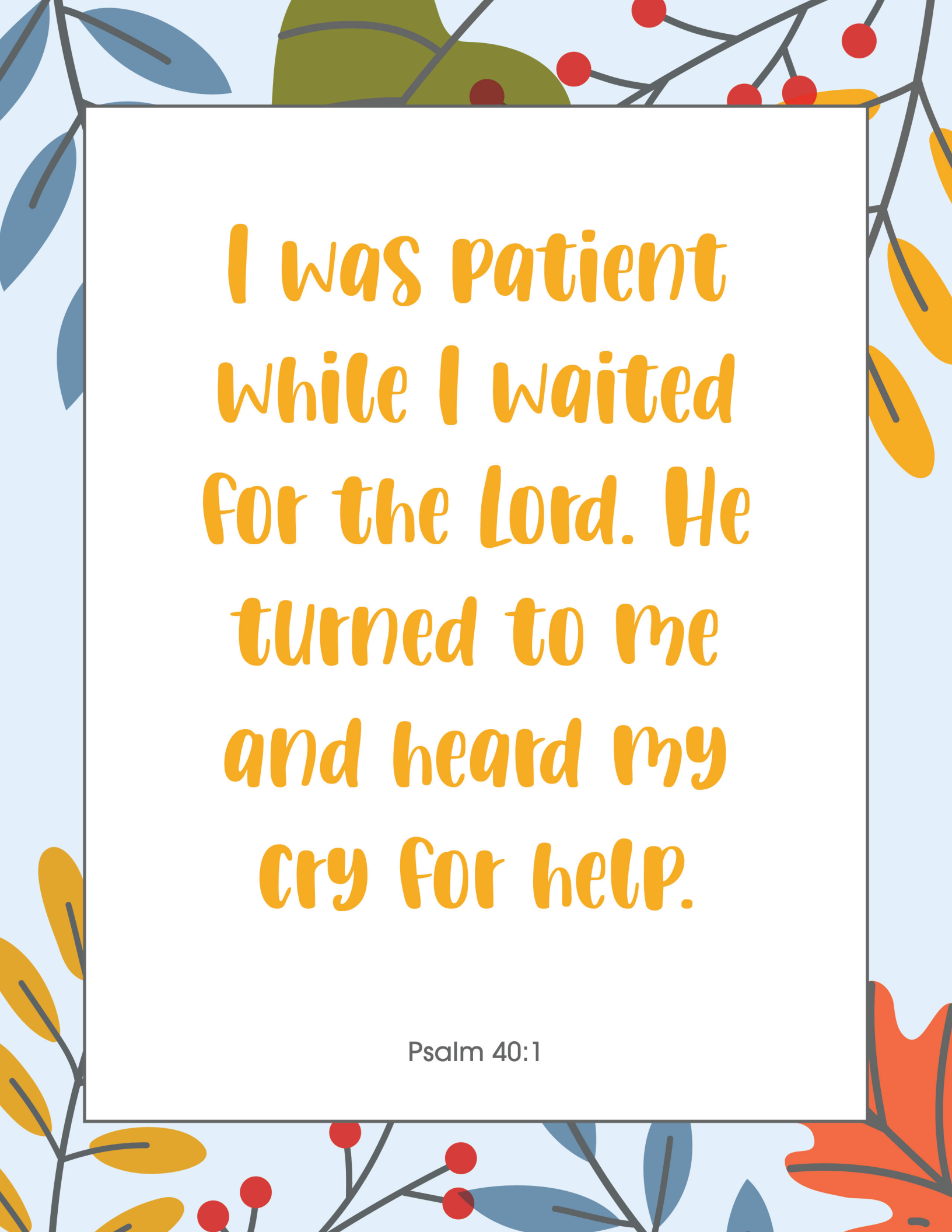
Serving Daily: Encourage each member of your family to serve someone in some way each day. At dinner or bedtime each night, ask everyone to share how they served others that day.

Telling the Story of Jesus: A part of sharing our faith with others is storytelling. Help your children develop the ability to tell these stories well. *This will take multiple conversations and practice sessions over time.*

- The perfect Creation
- How sin ruined things
- The basic story of Jesus—why he came to Earth, how he spent his time, his death, resurrection and ascension
- The beginning of the church in Acts 2
- Why someone needs to become a Christian
- How someone can become a Christian

Special Resource: Want to study baptism with your children, but not sure where to begin? This free e-book, *A Student's Guide to Baptism with Leader's Guide*, has everything you need to get started. It is designed to take more time with children who aren't quite ready, or can be gone through quickly with a child who is probably ready. The activities can also be used after baptism to help new Christians continue to grow.





I was patient
while I waited
for the Lord. He
turned to me
and heard my
cry for help.

Psalm 40:1

Using Rest, Solitude and Simple Things to Manage Stress and Anxiety

Devotional Tips

- Try to have a minimum goal of one family devotional a week.
- Your stretch goal should be one more family devotional than you are currently averaging each week.
- Try to schedule your family devotional for the same time every day/week.
- Link your family devotional to an already established habit like a meal, bedtime routine, teeth brushing, etc. Place the materials for your devotional where you will see them when doing that activity as an additional reminder.
- To make the scripture reading easier to understand, try reading it from the NIrV or ICB version of the Bible.
- Try finding a way to encourage another family to do the daily devotionals.

Sermon Connection

Simplicity/solitude

Memory Verse

“I was patient while I waited for the LORD. He turned to me and heard my cry for help.” (Psalm 40:1, NIrV)



Background for Parents

Children and teens today often have little, if any, time in quiet solitude. This is unfortunate, because quiet solitude gives them time to reflect on the things they are learning, how to apply them to their lives and the changes they may need to make. As a result, their emotional and spiritual growth can be slowed or stifled.

Trying to encourage your children to begin taking time for quiet reflection is difficult when they have never done it before. Everything around them has programmed them to expect constant, rapid stimuli. Making the situation even worse, the various apps on their phones and other devices are legitimately programmed to create a mental addiction that is as strong as that of cigarettes or alcohol. Asking them to put down the phone for even a few minutes of quiet can result in anxiety, frustration and even explosive anger. Yet, that is what needs to be done to help your children be emotionally resilient and to develop a strong faith foundation.

In this week's devotionals, we will discuss the need for quiet, solitude and rest. We will also give you tools to teach your children to help them manage anxiety—whether it's caused by separation from their devices, a particular incident or life in general. If your children struggle with anxiety that does not seem to improve after using these strategies for a time and the anxiety symptoms are disrupting their lives significantly, please talk with a medical professional to see if something else needs to be done to help your child.



Weekly Devotional / Day One

Scripture Reading

Mark 6:30–34, 45–46 *The story of the feeding of the 5,000 happens between the time they started on their journey to get rest and actually resting. If you have the time, you may want to also read verses 35–44.*

Guiding Question

Why did Jesus think it was so important for the apostles to rest?

Questions

1. Why did Jesus want the apostles to rest?
2. Where did he want them to go to rest?
3. Why do you think he stopped to teach more people before they rested?
4. What did Jesus do as part of his rest?

Advanced Questions

1. If Jesus rested, and wanted the disciples to rest, do you think he wants us to rest, too?
2. Notice that the apostles had worked really hard before Jesus suggested rest. What might we infer from this passage for our own lives?
3. This passage only tells us a couple of things the apostles and Jesus did during their times of rest. What were they?
4. Read Exodus 35:1–3. What did Moses say the Lord had commanded about work and rest?
5. Although Christians aren't commanded to rest on a specific day, following the example of Jesus means we will rest regularly. Rest to Jesus and the apostles did not involve devices or leisure in the way we think about playing video games or watching Netflix or TicTok. Their rest included reflecting on scripture and praying. What are some other things you can do when resting that will really make you feel rested?



Activity Idea

Encourage your children to pick a time in the coming week as their time of rest. While a full day is optimum, it may be unrealistic for children who are constantly scheduled. Instead, help them find a half day or several hours to rest. Take a few minutes now to plan not only when you will rest, but some of the things you can do while resting. While many children may need sleep during that time (doctors suggest 8–12 hours nightly of sleep from birth to adulthood; many parents find more sleep also equates to better attitudes and behaviors in their children), reading the Bible or other books that help them grow, praying, taking walks, working on artistic or creative activities (the restrictions for no physical activity don't apply to Christians and many find some level of productive activity is restorative) are also great ways to rest. Anything done on a device is not restful, even though most believe it is. Studies have found, for example, playing a sport is more restful than watching a sport on a device or playing a video game of a sport. Times of rest may be easier if your entire family is resting at the same time.

Tip

For some families, an extended rest time during the time naps are generally taken by small children works best. Encourage each family member to find a comfortable place, turn off all devices and engage in a quiet activity. Those who are sleep deprived may fall asleep, even if they deny they are tired.

Prayer

Encourage one of your children to pray, asking God to help each of you remember to rest on a regular basis.



Day Two

Scripture Reading

Philippians 4:6–7

Guiding Question

How does God want us to handle anxiety?

Questions

1. What does this passage say we should do when we feel anxious?
2. What does the “peace of God” mean?

Advanced Questions

1. How can prayer help give us peace when we are anxious?
2. Does that mean God will always say “yes” to the things we prayed to Him?
3. How can we have peace knowing that sometimes God may say “no” or “wait” when we pray to Him about something that is making us anxious?
4. Can you think of a time when you or someone else was anxious, but praying to God gave you (or them) peace about the situation? *Sharing stories of how God works in the world today will help your children see God at work in the world as well.*

Prayer

Encourage one of your children to pray about the things currently making members of your family anxious, asking God to grant you peace in each situation.



Day Three

Scripture Reading

Matthew 6:28–34

Guiding Question

What are some truths of which we can remind ourselves we are feeling anxious, in order to calm ourselves?

Questions

1. What example does Jesus give about why we shouldn't worry about clothes?
2. What are some other things people worry about that Jesus mentions?
3. What does Jesus say we should focus on instead of worrying about things?
4. What does verse 34 mean in your own words?

Advanced Questions

1. Why do you think Jesus talks about the things we need and not the things we want? (Notice also that this passage doesn't promise us designer clothes or gourmet food, but clothes and food that allow us to be clothed and fed!)
2. Why do you think Jesus doesn't want us worrying about the future?
3. Can you think of a time when you spent a lot of time worrying about something bad that might have happened in the future, but didn't? Was that the best use of your time and energy? What would have been a better use of your time and energy according to this passage?
4. Obeying this passage means trusting God. How hard is that for you to do? What are some ways, you can increase your trust in God?

Prayer

Encourage one of your children to pray, asking God to help your family not to be anxious about the future, but to trust in Him.



Day Four

Scripture Reading

1 Peter 3:13–18

Guiding Question

Does trusting in God mean bad things will never happen to us?

Questions

1. What does Peter say will generally happen when we are trying to do good?
2. Does he say that no one will ever want to hurt us if we do good?
3. Why does he say not to be afraid even if they threaten us? What should we focus on instead?
4. What does he say will happen to those who say untrue things about the good we are doing?
5. Regardless of what happens, does God think it is better for us to suffer somehow at the hands of people who want to hurt us, or for us to take revenge on them?
6. Why does he give what Jesus did as an example?

Advanced Questions

1. Can you think of an example in the Bible when someone was doing what was right and people tried to hurt him or her in some way?
2. Can you think of an example in real life?
3. How hard is it to avoid being frightened when someone has threatened you in some way?
4. How hard is it to avoid hurting them in return?
5. What are some things you can do to focus on doing the good things mentioned in this passage whenever you think someone may want to hurt you, or is hurting you for doing what is right?

Prayer

Encourage one of your children to pray, asking Him to help your family to not be frightened when someone threatens to hurt you for doing what is right.



Day five

Scripture Reading

Psalm 27

Guiding Question

What does this Psalm of David teach us about fear?

Questions

1. What are some of the reasons this Psalm gives for why we do not need to be afraid?
2. What are some times David might have been afraid in his lifetime? *Younger children may only remember the story of David and Goliath. If they have not heard it yet, you can find the story in 1 Samuel 17.*

Advanced Questions

1. From this Psalm and the stories of David's life, what do you think are some of the things David tried to remind himself of whenever he felt afraid?
2. Which verses in this Psalm could you remember that would help you the most when you feel afraid?

Prayer

Encourage one of your children to pray, asking God to help each of you remember Psalm 27 and the story of David and Goliath when you are afraid.



Day Six

Scripture Reading

Isaiah 41:10–14

Guiding Question

Although God is speaking to the Israelites in these verses, what does it tell us about who God is and what He wants for Christians today?

Questions

1. Why does God say we should not be afraid?
2. What does God promise He will do?
3. What does it mean that God is with us?
4. How can remembering some of God's promises in the Bible help us be less afraid?

Advanced Questions

1. We studied earlier this week that bad things can still happen to good people on Earth. Why? *It is important for your children to begin understanding the ideas of living in a fallen world, and the free choice God gave everyone as the source of the bad things that happen in this world. God created the world to be perfect, but sin "broke" that plan.*
2. What verses in this passage can help you be less afraid?
3. What are some ways you can remember God's promises when you are afraid?

Prayer

Encourage one of your children to pray, asking God to help your family remember His promises and His presence when you are afraid.



Activity Ideas to Help Children Manage Anxiety

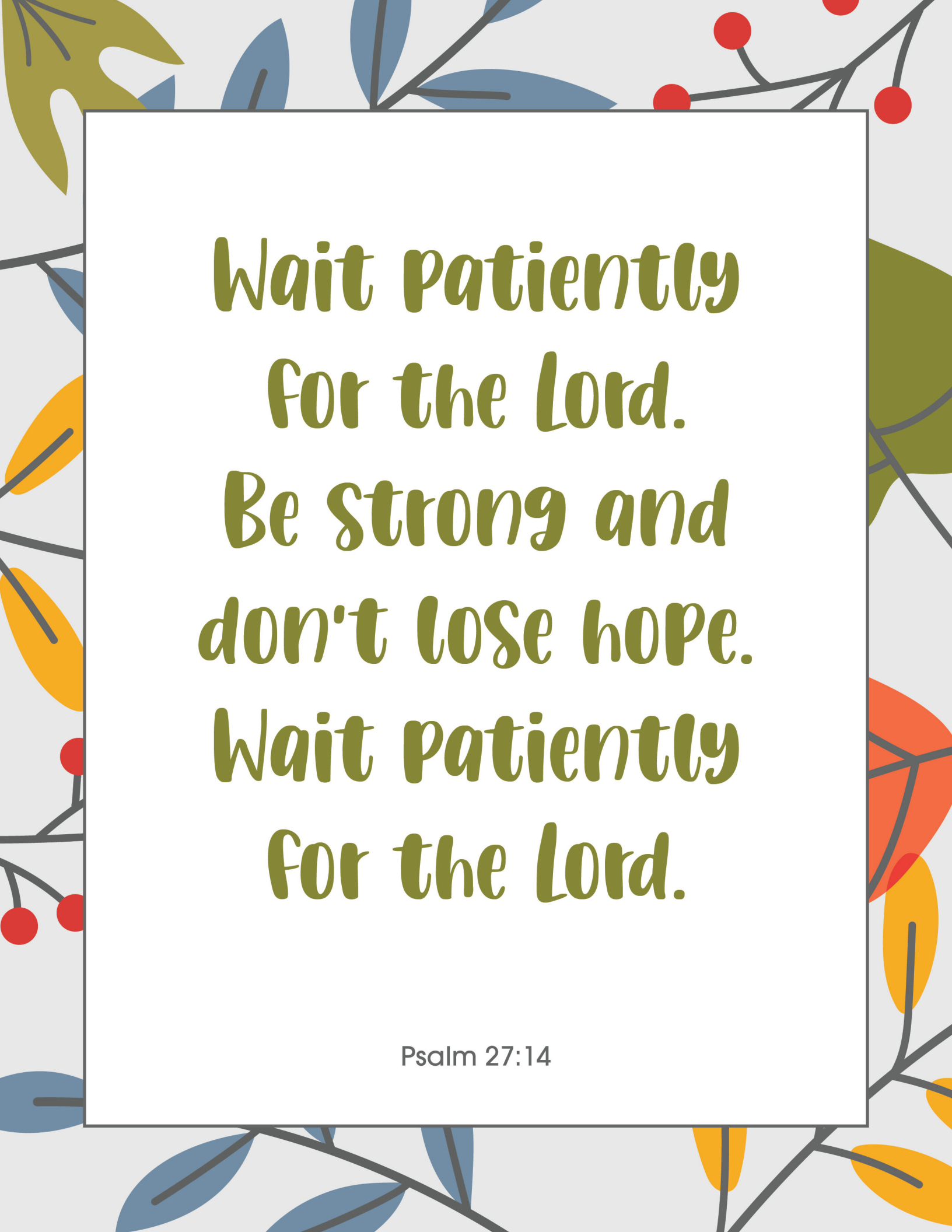
Breathing Techniques: When your children are anxious or frightened, their heart rates increase and their breathing becomes more rapid and shallow. This, in turn, signals the brain that there must be danger (like a bear), so it gives your children what they need to fight or flee from the danger. When there is no actual physical danger, that excess energy has nowhere to go, so it speeds up the heart rate and quickens breathing. What this vicious cycle can quickly become is a panic attack, although most children don't know what that is. The fastest way to calm them and break the anxiety cycle is to slow and deepen their breathing, which will slow their heart rate and calm them. For older children and teens, practice breathing in for a slow count of three and back out for a slow count of three. For extreme anxiety, have them try holding the breath for a count of three before breathing it out. For little ones, have them lie flat on the floor. Place a favorite stuffed animal on the part of their body that rises and falls when breathing. Encourage them to make the stuffed animal go up as high as possible and then as low as possible. This encourages deep, slow breaths.

Calming Math: Sounds ridiculous, but another way to calm anxiety is doing math. It doesn't have to be difficult. Counting backwards from 100 by threes, multiplication tables or even math homework can help. There's brain science behind it, but anything that distracts their thinking and pulls it up into the higher brain where things like math are done, will help. (Just keep them focused if they drop back into anxious thinking.)

The Perfect Day: Thoughts that make your children anxious tend to be intrusive, and can become obsessive. The trick is to teach them to stop those thoughts as soon as they start, and switch to thinking about something else. This is easier if they have pre-chosen their favorite day or place to think about whenever they are anxious. Give them paper and markers or crayons and tell them to draw their favorite place or the perfect day. After they have finished, explain to them the process of replacing negative thoughts. As soon as they realize they are having a negative thought, they should mentally tell themselves, "Stop!" Then they should begin thinking about this pre-chosen happy place or day. At first, they may only last a few seconds before the negative thoughts return. Instruct them to say "Stop!" again, and return to thinking about their happy place. Do this as many times as needed until their minds have moved onto something that doesn't make them anxious. Initially, they will need your verbal coaching to help them through the process; after practice, they should be more able to control their intrusive negative thoughts.

Exercise the Anxiety Away: Anxiety is actually best managed with two different types of exercise. Vigorous exercise helps burn off the excess energy created by anxiety. Calming exercises, like stretching, help calm the body and mind. Help your children find both vigorous and calming exercises they enjoy, and encourage them to exercise in those ways when they are feeling anxious.





Wait patiently
for the Lord.
Be strong and
don't lose hope.
Wait patiently
for the Lord.

Psalm 27:14

Defining Supportive Community and Handling Issues That Can Arise When in Community

Devotional Tips

- Try to have a minimum goal of one family devotional a week.
- Your stretch goal should be one more family devotional than you are currently averaging each week.
- Try to schedule your family devotional for the same time every day/week.
- Link your family devotional to an already established habit like a meal, bedtime routine, teeth brushing, etc. Place the materials for your devotional where you will see them when doing that activity as an additional reminder.
- To make the scripture reading easier to understand, try reading it from the NIrV or ICB version of the Bible.
- Try finding a way to encourage another family to do the daily devotionals.

Sermon Connection

Community

Memory Verse

“Wait for the LORD. Be strong and don’t lose hope. Wait for the LORD.” (Psalm 27:14, NIrV)



Background for Parents

One of the reasons children and teens are struggling is their lack of quality interactions with other people. This was made worse by COVID-19, when many young people had limited contact with others for a long period of time. If the foundation of resiliency is a strong relationship with a nurturing parent, relationships with other nurturing adults and supportive peers can build on that foundation for added resilience.

Unfortunately, when people are in community with others, things can happen that cause anger and conflict. While anger is not a sin, the things we say and do when angry can become sinful. It is very unhealthy spiritually and emotionally for your children to hold onto any anger they have. Anger and conflict can encourage children and teens to retreat into their perfect virtual worlds. This pulling away from “real” relationships is not in their best interest emotionally or spiritually. This week’s devotional will explore both why God wants us in community with others, and how to handle anger and conflict in godly ways. (Added bonus: If you help your children practice these skill sets, it can cut down on sibling battles as well!)



Weekly Devotional / Day One

Scripture Reading

Luke 24:36-53 (If you have more time, start the reading at verse 13)

Guiding Question

Why does God want us to spend time with people IRL (in real life)?

Questions

1. When Jesus rose from the dead, what is one of the first things he did?
2. Why do you think Jesus spent a lot of time with people during his lifetime and after his resurrection?
3. When Jesus ascended back into Heaven, did his followers go their separate ways or stay together?
4. What were the people doing together while they were waiting for the gift of the Holy Spirit that Jesus had promised them?

Advanced Questions

1. Did being with people ever cause Jesus any problems?
2. Why do you think he continued spending time with the Apostles and other people even when it wasn't easy?
3. Why does God want Christians to spend time together every week?
4. What are some problems that can happen when people spend a lot of time together?
5. Obviously, God knows that when people spend a lot of time together, they can say and do things that make each other angry, and they can disagree and have conflicts. Why do you think God still feels it is important for Christians to be part of a community of Christians (church) and spend time with them each week?



Activity Idea

Give your children paper and something to write or draw with. Ask them to draw or list the people in their support network—the people they can go to who are safe and will try to help them if they have a problem. Ask them to share their finished list/artwork. Discuss other people you believe they can add to their lists, including siblings.

Ask them if they have ever gotten angry with anyone on the list or had a disagreement with them. If they claim they haven't, remind them of the last time they were angry with you or a sibling or friend. Why are those people still on their list? (For older children and teens, you can expand the conversation to include a discussion of the temptation to retreat into a perfect virtual world rather than deal with issues in real relationships. Make sure to point out that although relationships in the real world take work, the benefits of those relationships go far beyond anything we can get from the virtual world.)

Explain that learning how to control our own anger and manage conflict well can make interacting with other people a better experience. Sometime this week, share some of the anger management strategies found [here](#) and help your children practice them. (While you are reading the list, sign up for the newsletter and receive two Christian parenting blog posts in your email each week!)

This week (and going forward), teach and help your children practice this godly conflict resolution model. It is a child-friendly version of the conflict resolution model from the number one conflict resolution program for adults in the United States. It will take time to walk your children through the model every time they have a conflict. Over time, however, they will be able to use it with less coaching. The worst parenting advice consistently given by parenting experts is to “let children work through conflicts on their own.” That is why we have a lot of adults resolving conflict like five-year-olds! Actively teaching and helping your children practice a godly model of resolving conflicts will help improve their relationships now and in the future.

Prayer

Encourage one of your children to pray, asking God to help your family remember that having relationships with other people is important, and that they are worth working to improve.



Day Two

Scripture Reading

Ephesians 4:25–32

Guiding Question

How are we to treat others? How does God want us to handle our anger?

Questions

1. Name all the things Paul listed as ways we should treat other people.
2. How does Paul say we should handle our anger? (Emotions are given to us by God. Feeling an emotion is not sinful; it is how we choose to act on that emotion that can become sinful.)
3. What does it mean to “not let the sun go down on your anger”?
4. What do you usually do when you are angry? What are some good things you can do when you feel angry? *This is a good time to review the anger management strategies from yesterday.*

Advanced Questions

1. What are all the words in this passage that deal with anger and the attitudes and behaviors that often happen when people are angry?
2. Why do you think Paul spent so much time writing about anger in this passage?
3. What problems can be caused by our words and actions when people get angry?
4. What do you struggle with the most when you feel angry?
5. What are some good ways to remember (and do) the things Paul writes about in the passage as the best way to handle our anger?

Prayer

Encourage one of your children to pray, asking God to help your family not sin when you are angry, and to not “let the sun go down” on your anger.



Day Three

Scripture Reading

James 1:19–27

Guiding Question

What advice does James give Christians?

Questions

1. What does it mean to “be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry”?
2. Why does James write that doing those things is important?
3. What does the verse mean when it says, “does not produce the righteousness God desires”?
4. What are some other things James writes God wants us to do (or not do)?
5. Which of these things are easy for you? Which ones are hard?
6. What does James suggest we do instead of being angry, saying and doing things that hurt others?

Advanced Questions

1. Why do you think James puts so much emphasis on controlling what we say?
2. Why does it seem so difficult to keep our mouths from saying things we shouldn’t?
3. Why do you think James mentions how important it is to listen?
4. What are some strategies you can use to listen more, speak less and be slower to get angry with others?

Prayer

Encourage one of your children to pray, asking God to help each of you to listen more, speak less (and in more godly ways) and be slower to get angry.



Day Four

Scripture Reading

Proverbs 14:29; Judges 15:3–5

Guiding Question

Why is it wiser to be patient than quick-tempered?

Questions

1. Why did Samson set the foxes' tails on fire?
2. What were some of the negative consequences of Samson being quick-tempered and not thinking through what he was about to do?
3. What does the Proverb say about people who are patient?
4. What does it mean to have “great understanding”?
5. What does it mean to be quick-tempered?
6. What does Proverbs 14 say about people who are quick-tempered?

Advanced Questions

1. On a scale where “1” is extremely patient and “10” is extremely quick-tempered, where do you think you are most of the time?
2. Are there certain circumstances that tend to make you less patient or more quick-tempered?
3. Why do you think those things/situations upset you more than others?
4. What are some practical things you can do to be more patient?

Prayer

Encourage one of your children to pray, asking God to help each of you be more patient and less quick-tempered.



Day Five

Scripture Reading

Proverbs 15:1–5 *Verse 5 actually has little to do with the topic at hand, but why not give you a little extra scriptural support today?!*

Guiding Question

What are some important things to remember when we are speaking to others?

Questions

1. What is a gentle answer and why does it make people less angry? What is a harsh word and how can it make people angry?
2. Why do the tongues of wise people speak knowledge and the tongues of foolish people speak folly/foolishness?
3. Can you give an example of each? *Adults may have to give some examples first.*
4. Why do you think the author reminds us that God is always watching us?

Advanced Questions

1. What does “the soothing tongue is a tree of life” mean? What does “a perverse tongue crushes the spirit” mean?
2. Can you give some examples of something a soothing tongue might say? What types of things might a perverse tongue say?
3. Of all of the things mentioned about our speech in this passage, which is easiest for you? Why? Which is most difficult? Why?
4. What are some practical things you can do to improve the way you speak to others?

Prayer

Encourage one of your children to pray, asking God to help each of you be more godly in your speech.



Day Six

Scripture Reading

Romans 12:9–21

Guiding Question

How does God want us to treat our enemies?

Questions

1. What does it mean to honor one another above yourselves?
2. Give an example of what that would look like in your life. *(Some siblings may use this question to point out how their siblings should obey this verse. Gently remind them the question is about their behavior.)*
3. What does this passage say about sharing? What does it say about hospitality? What is hospitality?
4. What do the remaining verses say about how we are to treat everyone? Those who harm us or are our enemies?
5. What are some ways you can be kind to those people?

Advanced Questions

1. How difficult is it to do the things listed in this passage?
2. Which thing on the list is hardest for you to do? Why?
3. What are some practical things you can do to improve in that area?
4. Why do you think that although the passage is about treating other people well, the writer mentions that by being kind to our enemy we will “heap burning coals on his head”?
5. What does the author quickly write after that sentence? Do you think there is a connection between that and the verse before it? What is that connection?

Prayer

Encourage one of your children to pray, asking God to help each of you to love your enemies and be kind to them.



Activity Ideas for the Week


Anger Scenarios Game: Write down a few common scenarios in your home where anger and conflict arise. Have your kids take turns drawing a scenario and acting it out with the new techniques they are learning. The adults may want to offer to be the person playing the other role in order to better guide them through the process.

Be Kind to Your Enemy Day: Most kids have (at the very least) another child at school who makes their life more difficult. Brainstorm some ways they can be extra kind to that person the next day at school or work for adults and working teens. That night everyone can share what they tried and what happened. *“Hurting people hurt people” is a saying for a reason. Chances are the people you target for extra kindness will not respond in kind. This is a great opportunity to reinforce doing what is right, regardless. Encourage them to continue the campaign of kindness. They may be surprised to find an eventual softening in their enemy, or the person may leave them alone when not getting the reaction they want. Be very careful if your child has a legitimate bully, especially one prone to violent behaviors. Their reaction may put your child in additional danger.*

Family Mix-Up Day: Often, we can only see our hurtful behaviors when we see them through the eyes of others. Write each family member’s name on a slip of paper. Each person draws the name of the person they will be for the day. *This usually works best on a weekend day or holiday. If your schedules are super busy, play the game for a few hours—perhaps in the evening when everyone is home. Each person has to do the chores around the house (when safe and appropriate) normally assigned to that person. Have fun with it, but be careful not to mock or belittle each other in the process. Afterwards, discuss what you each learned from walking in the shoes of another person in your family.*

Extra Resources: This [resource](#) has more tips for handling sibling issues, and [this one](#) has tips for teaching your children how to apologize well. This [resource](#) can help you work with your children on being better listeners.





Don't worry about
anything. No
matter what
happens,
tell God about
everything. Ask
and pray, and give
thanks to Him.

Philippians 4:6

Encouraging an Independent and Corporate Prayer Life and Asking for God's Help in Tough Times

Devotional Tips

- Try to have a minimum goal of one family devotional a week.
- Your stretch goal should be one more family devotional than you are currently averaging each week.
- Try to schedule your family devotional for the same time every day/week.
- Link your family devotional to an already established habit like a meal, bedtime routine, teeth brushing, etc. Place the materials for your devotional where you will see them when doing that activity as an additional reminder.
- To make the scripture reading easier to understand, try reading it from the NIrV or ICB version of the Bible.
- Try finding a way to encourage another family to do the daily devotionals.

Sermon Connection

Prayer

Memory Verse

“Don’t worry about anything. No matter what happens, tell God about everything. Ask and pray, and give thanks to Him.” (Philippians 4:6, NIrV)



Background for Parents

A huge factor in spiritual and emotional resilience for your children (and anyone) is a healthy prayer life. Prayer reminds your children God is with them and they are not alone. It reminds them of the hope they have in Jesus and an eternal life spent in Heaven. Prayer gives them God, to whom they can express their emotions and ask for guidance and wisdom—even when there is no one else around, or they feel like they can't talk to anyone human about how they are feeling. All of these things also provide key components of mental health.

You've probably done a great job of praying with your children at meals and bedtime. There is a “next level” of praying for which they will need your help—learning how to have a healthy prayer life that is independent, consistent and constant. This week we will focus on the purposes of prayer and learning how to pray independently. Next week, we will focus on the ideas of praying constantly and consistently.

You may have noticed that several times throughout these family devotionals we have revisited some verses more than once (as we will over the next two weeks). This is needed to help move important verses and their concepts into the long-term memories of your children. Known as “spaced repetition,” regularly revisiting key scriptures in varying ways will help begin to move those verses into their long-term memories, where they can easily access them in the moment when needed. Try thinking of each repetition of scripture as making a deeper rut or pathway in the brains of your children. The deeper those ruts are, the more easily they are accessed and traveled when needed. (Apologies to the scientists out there for this oversimplification!) Remember: songs, art and other fun ways of interacting with scripture can also give your children deeper scripture pathways in their brains.



Weekly Devotional / Day One

Scripture Reading

Matthew 6:5–13

Guiding Question

What are some things I can pray to God when I am by myself?

Questions

1. What are some of the things Jesus prayed about?
2. Do we have to pray the exact words Jesus prayed in this prayer? Why or why not?
3. What are some things you can pray about that are like the things Jesus prayed about?

Advanced Questions

1. Why do you think Jesus gave the instructions about prayer that he did?
2. Do we need to literally go into a closet every time we pray?
3. What is another way of praying that gives us the privacy that praying in a closet would, but that we can do at any time and place? (Silent prayer)
4. Why do you think Jesus gave them an example of a prayer instead of just a list of some things about which they could pray?
5. Does God expect us to pray a prayer formatted just like this prayer of Jesus every single time we pray? Why or why not?



Activity Ideas

The activities this week are focused more on helping your children understand the types of things about which they can pray. Depending upon the age of your children and their spiritual maturity, their needs for an activity will differ. Younger children may need help thinking of things for which to pray without your verbal reminders. Older children may need/want to be more organized/intentional about their prayers, or may benefit from seeing how God is answering those prayers. Because of these varying needs, we are giving you a number of ideas you can use for this week here, instead of at the end of this week's study. You can choose one activity and revisit it during the week, or use more than one activity on different days.

Color Prayers: Give your children small pieces of cardstock paper, index cards or anything that is relatively sturdy. Have them color each piece a different color. Encourage them to make use of all of the colors available to them in their crayons or markers. For writers, help them list things on the back all of the things they can pray about that are that color. If using index cards, they can color one corner and then write on the rest of the card. Non-writers may need a full sheet of paper for each color, with a corner colored solid and the rest of the space used for drawings of things they can pray about that are that color. Help them practice praying using their color sheets without any help from you (unless absolutely necessary).

Prayer “Jar”: Find a container that’s safe for your children to use when praying. You can make one larger container for the entire family, but it works better if you can also have a smaller container for each person. Have them decorate the container. Give them lots of little slips of paper on which they can write or draw ideas for things to pray. Help them practice pulling various slips from their containers and pray based on the slips they pulled.

Prayer Person of the Day: Find photos of various people that are close to your family, or have your children draw pictures of the various people. They can be relatives, friends, neighbors, teachers, etc. Each day, pull one photo from the pile. During the day, each person’s personal prayers and corporate family prayers should try and include that person. If you want to make it even more meaningful, make the person the focus of prayer for the week. When someone is pulled at the beginning of the week, contact them, explain what your family is doing and ask if they have any specific prayer requests they would like you to pray about that week.

Prayer Journals: You don’t need fancy journals. Buy spiral notebooks or composition books that you can cover with plain paper, decorate the cover or use the first page or inside front cover to decorate. Give each child his or her own notebook if you can afford it. Adults can make a corporate journal for the family. Have them decorate their journals. Take requests to write in the family prayer journal and encourage them to write whatever they want to pray about in their personal journals. For the next few months, add to the family prayer journal regularly and encourage them to add new requests to their personal journals. Periodically, revisit old requests and discuss how God worked in those situations. Don’t forget to remind your children that sometimes God says “no” or “wait,” sometimes for reasons we



don't understand, but we must trust that God knows what is best. If you continue doing this activity for months and even years, you will probably have multiple examples where much later you can see why answers from God that you questioned really were the wisest response to your prayers.

Prayer

Encourage one of your children to pray, covering suggestions of various family members.



Day Two

Scripture Reading

Romans 8:26–28

Guiding Question

What can we do when there is something to pray about that is so confusing or upsetting, we don't know exactly what to pray?

Questions

1. Who is the “Spirit”?
2. God is one, but also three parts, a little bit like an apple; the skin, the core and the fruit/meat are all parts of one apple, and could each be called “apple,” but they also have separate functions. God is one God, but what are the three “parts” of God? *This concept is often too abstract even for adults to fully understand, but your children need to know this information, even if they won't understand it.*
3. What do you think it means that the Holy Spirit “intercedes for us through wordless groans” when we don't know what we ought to pray for?

Advanced Questions

1. What are some situations you can think of when it might be difficult to know what to pray, and you might want the Holy Spirit to help you pray?
2. Does verse 28 mean that nothing bad will ever happen to Christians?
3. What does it mean that because we live in a fallen world and God gave us free choice, bad things can and will happen, even to Christians? Knowing that, what do you think verse 28 means?

Prayer

Encourage one of your children to pray, asking God to help you to each pray, even when you aren't quite sure what to pray about a certain situation, and to help you remember the promises in today's verses.



Day Three

Scripture Reading

James 5:13–16

Guiding Question

When are some of the times we should pray?

Questions

1. List the times these verses say we should pray.
2. When are some other times (circumstances) in our lives when we should pray?
3. What should we do when we sin/disobey God?

Advanced Questions

1. This passage says we should pray when we are troubled and sing praises when we are happy. Can we sing to God when we are troubled and pray when we are happy? Why do you think James specifically recommended praying for when we are troubled and singing when we are happy?
2. If someone is not healed when the elders anoint them with oil and pray, does that mean the sick person or the elders did something wrong? That God did not keep His promise or did not love the person? That James was wrong? *This is a good point to review the principle that God does not always answer “yes,” even to prayers like this. These verses describe a promise that God will “raise them up” is not an absolute guarantee that God will heal the person by making them well. “Raise them up” could mean that God takes them to Heaven or has other plans. The Apostle Paul prayed to have his “thorn in the flesh” removed, and to our knowledge, it never was. That was not a reflection on Paul’s faith, but that God had a different plan.*
3. Why do you think this passage talks about confessing our sins to each other and praying for each other?

Prayer

Encourage one of your children to pray, asking God to help each of you to remember to pray to God about everything that is happening in our lives and the lives of others.



Day Four

Scripture Reading

Matthew 6:7; Ecclesiastes 5:1–3; John 9:31; Luke 18:10–14

Guiding Question

What are some things God does not want in our prayers to Him?

Questions

1. Why do you think Jesus said not to “babble with many words” when we pray? *This is a good time to reinforce that prayers—even public prayers—do not have to use a lot of fancy words or phrases or have many words at all. It is more important to God that our prayers are sincere and from our hearts, not a performance.*
2. Why do you think Solomon advised that we be careful about what we say to God? *This passage is believed to be about the idea people often have that we can somehow bribe God to do what we want, or about telling God what to do, rather than trusting Him to do what is best and in His will.*
3. Why does God listen to the prayers of those who believe in Him and not necessarily those who reject Him? *There are examples in the Bible where one could argue that unbelievers had prayers answered. In most situations, they had faith in God, and perhaps God knew their heart would/could change in the future. The generalization from the scripture reading should perhaps be that we know God hears those who are trying to follow Him, and we cannot expect Him to answer our prayers if we totally reject Him.*
4. What were the differences between the prayers of the Pharisee and the tax collector? Why did Jesus say that God preferred the prayer of the tax collector? *This is a good time to emphasize the need for humble prayers.*



Advanced Questions

1. Of the four types of “problem” prayers we discussed today, with which one do you struggle the most to believe is true or to keep in mind when you pray? Why?
2. What are some practical things you can do to remember that your prayers don’t need to be long and fancy, that you don’t try to control God when you pray, that you are a faithful believer who is trying to obey God, and that your prayers are prayed with a humble spirit?

Prayer

Encourage one of your children to pray, asking God to help you pray prayers that are pleasing to Him.



Day Five

Scripture Reading

Matthew 5:43–48

Guiding Question

Why does God want us to pray for our enemies?

Questions

1. Why do you think Jesus said to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us?
2. Why does Jesus say it is easy to love those who love us?
3. God/Jesus often ask Christians to do more than people in the world who don't worship God. How does loving our enemies and praying for them make us stand out in the world? What is the purpose of Christians standing out in the world? (Philippians 2:15) *This is perhaps a more advanced question, but younger children can begin thinking about these principles.*

Advanced Questions

1. What kinds of prayers can we pray for those who hate and persecute us that would be acceptable to God?
2. Why does Jesus say it “rains on the just and the unjust”? *This is a good point to reinforce that life doesn't always seem fair, because it isn't...but God is aware of that. It reflects not an acceptance of the evil or sinful choices of those who reject Him, but rather His love for all and His willingness to give everyone the opportunity to change and obey Him.*
3. In this passage, Jesus implies that he understands loving and praying for our enemies won't be easy, but that it is very important. What are some practical things you can do to make it easier to pray for your enemies?

Prayer

Encourage one of your children to pray, asking God to help each of you remember to love your enemies and pray for them.



Day Six

Scripture Reading

1 John 1:5–10

Guiding Question

Why is it important to confess our sins and ask God for forgiveness? *Although very young children have not yet reached the age of accountability for their sins, they are still capable of disobeying God. It is important to begin using the proper vocabulary of repentance and talking about the concepts so they are mentally and spiritually ready when they do reach the age of accountability.*

Questions

1. What is a sin?
2. What does it mean to confess our sins?
3. How is confessing and repenting like an apology?

Advanced Questions

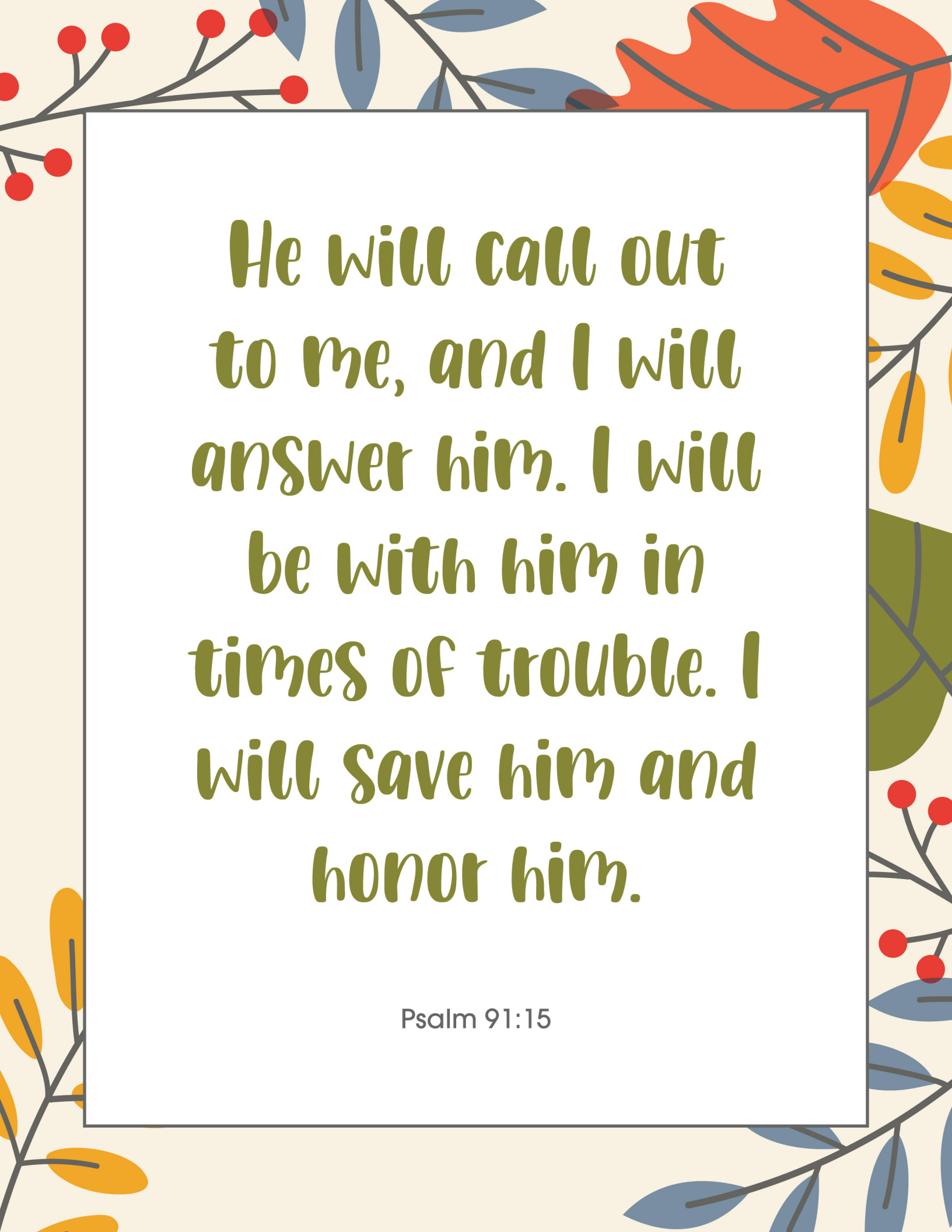
1. Why is it hard to confess our sins to other people?
2. Why doesn't it make sense to try and hide our sins from God?
3. What is repentance?

Additional Resources

- This [printable parenting sheet](#) on teaching your children to apologize well is great to tie to this lesson. The common elements of the types of apologies forced on children really teach them to make very weak non-apology apologies, undermining their relationships with others and with God, and making true repentance more difficult. Teaching and insisting upon this more complete model of a true apology may take more time and effort on your part in the beginning, but you are lessening the chances you will have to deal with bigger, more time-consuming problems in the future because your children never learned how to apologize well.
- This quick tips printable parenting sheet has more prayer teaching tips and is available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).





A decorative border surrounds the central text box, featuring stylized autumn leaves in shades of orange, red, and blue, along with small red berries on thin branches.

He will call out
to me, and I will
answer him. I will
be with him in
times of trouble. I
will save him and
honor him.

Psalm 91:15

God Wants Us to Pray to Him Without Ceasing, Anytime and Anywhere

Devotional Tips

- Try to have a minimum goal of one family devotional a week.
- Your stretch goal should be one more family devotional than you are currently averaging each week.
- Try to schedule your family devotional for the same time every day/week.
- Link your family devotional to an already established habit like a meal, bedtime routine, teeth brushing, etc. Place the materials for your devotional where you will see them when doing that activity as an additional reminder.
- To make the scripture reading easier to understand, try reading it from the NIrV or ICB version of the Bible.
- Try finding a way to encourage another family to do the daily devotionals.

Sermon Connection

Fasting (*Because so many young people today have eating issues, we will leave any potential discussion of fasting up to individual families.*)

Memory Verse

“He will call out to me, and I will answer him. I will be with him in times of trouble. I will save him and honor him.” (Psalm 91:15, NIrV)



Background for Parents

Doesn't it always seem that we are sometimes at our most emotionally and spiritually vulnerable in the middle of the night? Your children may not want to wake you up if they are awake struggling with negative emotions in the middle of the night. It is important that they not only understand that they can pray to God about anything, but also anytime and anywhere. Truly understanding and believing this truth to their core means your children will never be alone, even if they are struggling and no one is with them, or they are in a situation when they don't have the time or the ability to ask anyone for help other than God.

This week we will help you teach them lots of ways to get in the habit of praying without ceasing, and lots of different types of prayers they can use in almost any situation. This is a great opportunity to really give your children a strong foundation of prayer, as well as reinvigorating your own prayer life.



Weekly Devotional / Day One

Scripture Reading

Luke 11:5–13

Guiding Question

Will God only hear our prayers if we pray them at certain times or in certain places?

Questions

1. Why does the person go to his/her friend at midnight and ask to borrow some bread?
2. Why does the friend not really want to give the person bread?
3. Why does the friend end up giving the person bread?
4. Sometimes Jesus told stories like this that had a deeper meaning than the actual details of the story itself. In this story, who might represent us? Who might represent God? What do you think might be the deeper meaning of the story? *Even if your children are too young to answer these questions, it is important that they hear them answered and begin to think about parables as having more than one meaning.*

Advanced Questions

1. Have you ever prayed to God in the middle of the night?
2. Do you feel like you might be bothering God if you pray during the middle of the night? Why or why not?
3. Do you think praying to God in the middle of the night impacts how He responds to our prayers? Why or why not? Can you think of an example of a story or verse in the Bible that makes you think the way you do about the subject? *Whenever your children share a spiritual opinion, asking them what else they see in the Bible that backs up their theory is a great habit to get into. They may still be incorrect in their supposition, but it sets up an understanding that theories that aren't able to be backed with scripture cannot be assumed to be spiritually valid. For example: If your children come to you saying that lies of omission are okay for some reason, the story of Ananias and Sapphira and Psalm 34:13–14 (and others) don't back the assumption, and it therefore cannot be accepted as truth.*



Week Eight

Activity Ideas

This week your children may be at very different stages in their prayer lives. Chances are great that all of us could benefit from more reminders to pray without ceasing, no matter the time of day or night. Below are several activity options from which you can choose based on the needs of your children and the supplies you have available.

Prayer Rocks: Find some large rocks in your yard, around the neighborhood or at the craft store (Five Below often has rock decorating kits you can adapt for your purposes). Give your children paint or permanent markers and let them decorate them and write the word “Pray” in large letters on the rock. Instruct them to place the rock (once dry!) on their pillow to remind them to pray before they go to sleep. Once they pray, they should place it somewhere where they will see it the first thing upon waking in the morning. As soon as they see it, they should pray and place the rock back on the pillow. Repeat daily!

Prayer Sticky Notes: Have your kids decorate lots of sticky notes (or paper and Scotch/painters tape) with the word “pray” and hide them in places all over the house where family members will find them at odd times of the day. (For example, the refrigerator!) Let them hide their sticky notes all over the house. Instruct everyone that whenever they find a note with “pray” on it, they have to stop whatever they are doing and say a prayer. They can then leave the note where it is or move it somewhere new for someone else to find.

Prayer Walks and Drives: There are lots of different ways to do these, but the easiest with children is to have them call out something they see that you can pray for as you go. For example, if you see a school, pray for the students and teachers, or if a fire engine drives by, pray for the people they are on their way to help. One sentence per prayer, and keep going until the next idea for a prayer comes to someone. This is a great way to encourage praying every time anything happens that needs prayer.

Prayer

Encourage one of your children to pray, asking God to help you remember that He wants to hear your prayers any time of day or night.



Day Two

Scripture Reading

1 Thessalonians 5:16–18

Guiding Question

What does it look like in our lives if we rejoice always, pray continually and give thanks in all circumstances?

Questions

1. What does it mean to rejoice always? When is it hard to rejoice?
2. How can you rejoice when it is hard?
3. Does the verse mean we are to pray every minute of every day?
4. What does pray continually mean?
5. What does it mean to give thanks in all circumstances?
6. Is there always something we can be thankful for - even in tough times? What?

Advanced Questions

1. How hard is it for you on most days to rejoice, pray continually and thank God no matter what happens?
2. What practical things can you do to make it more likely that you do these three things every single day, no matter what? *Some children have a more optimistic nature, and these instructions will be easier for them. Interestingly, optimism also makes people more resilient. That doesn't mean children with a more pessimistic or "realistic" bent can't be resilient. They may never be a full optimist, but you can encourage them to spend more time and effort looking for the good in every situation. Even moving a little in the direction of optimism can improve their resilience.*

Prayer

Encourage one of your children to pray, asking God to help each of you rejoice, pray and be thankful every day.



Day Three

Scripture Reading

Matthew 6:5–8 (*This passage of scripture is so important, we are revisiting it multiple times. Consider trying to memorize it and the Lord's Prayer as a family. Interestingly, memorizing these longer passages of scripture makes it more likely they will move to long-term memory. Why? Because it takes multiple repetitions to memorize them!*)

Guiding Question

Does it matter to God where we pray?

Questions

1. Is it wrong to pray at church or when you are standing on a street corner? *This passage is a little tricky for young children because it is abstract, but they need to hear the answers.*
2. What is a hypocrite?
3. What was the real problem with the prayers of the hypocrites in those places?
4. Where does Jesus suggest is a better place to pray?
5. Does he mean that is the only place we can pray?
6. Name some of the places we can pray.
7. What is the weirdest place you have ever prayed in?

Advanced Questions

1. Are there some places where you find it easier to pray? Where are they? Why do you think it is easier for you to pray there?
2. Are there some places where you find it is difficult to pray? Where are they? Why is it more difficult for you to pray there?
3. What are some practical things you can do to make it easier for you to pray anywhere?

Prayer

Encourage one of your children to pray, asking God to help each of you remember that you can pray to Him no matter where you are.



Day Four

Scripture Reading

Ephesians 6:10–20

Guiding Question

What is the Armor of God, and what does Paul remind us about praying right after the list of the pieces of armor?

Questions

1. What are the pieces of the armor of God?
2. What does each stand for? *This is an abstract concept for young children, but it is important for them to hear about the Armor of God.*
3. What are some of the things for about about which Paul wants the Ephesians to pray?
4. Which are things about which we should also pray?
5. For whom can we pray that is trying to do some of the things Paul was doing when he was alive?
6. Is it okay to ask other people to pray for us?

Advanced Questions

1. What are some practical ways we can put on the armor of God?
2. What are the “all kinds of prayers and requests” that Paul may have been thinking about when he wrote this passage?
3. Why do you think Paul specifically mentioned praying for all Christians?
4. What are some things you would like our family to pray about for you?
5. What are some specific prayers we can pray for specific Christians or Christians in general?

Prayer

Encourage one of your children to pray, asking God to help each of you to remember to put in the Armor of God and to pray about everything, as well as other Christians.



Day Five

Scripture Reading

Luke 6:12–13

Guiding Question

Why is it important to take time and pray before making important choices?

Questions

1. Where did Jesus go to pray?
2. What time of day was it?
3. For about how long did he pray?
4. From the next verse, what can we assume was at least one of the things about which Jesus was praying?
5. Why do you think he prayed about which Apostles to choose?

Advanced Questions

1. How important is it to pray before making a decision about something major? Minor? Why?
2. What is a decision you have to make soon/in the future? How can praying help you make a better choice?
This can be a great time to talk about the difference between asking God to bless what we have already decided we want to do and asking God to help us make the wisest decision that will also please Him.

Prayer

Encourage one of your children to pray, asking God to help each of you to remember to pray before making choices.



Day Six

Scripture Reading

Mark 1:35–38

Guiding Question

What is the example Jesus often set for prayer when he was on Earth?

Questions

1. When was Jesus praying? *This is a great example of starting your day with prayer.*
2. Where did Jesus go to pray? *This is a good time to review earlier devotionals about quiet, solitude and rest.*
3. What happened when the disciples found Jesus?
4. Why do you think Jesus thought it was important for him to pray before starting the day of traveling and preaching?

Advanced Questions

1. What are some advantages to starting your day with prayer?
2. Is it something that is easy or difficult for you to remember to do? Why?
3. If you struggle, what are some practical things you can do to make it easier for you to pray first thing in the morning?

Prayer

Encourage one of your children to pray, asking God to help each of you to remember to start each day with prayer.



Week Eight

Activity Ideas for the Week

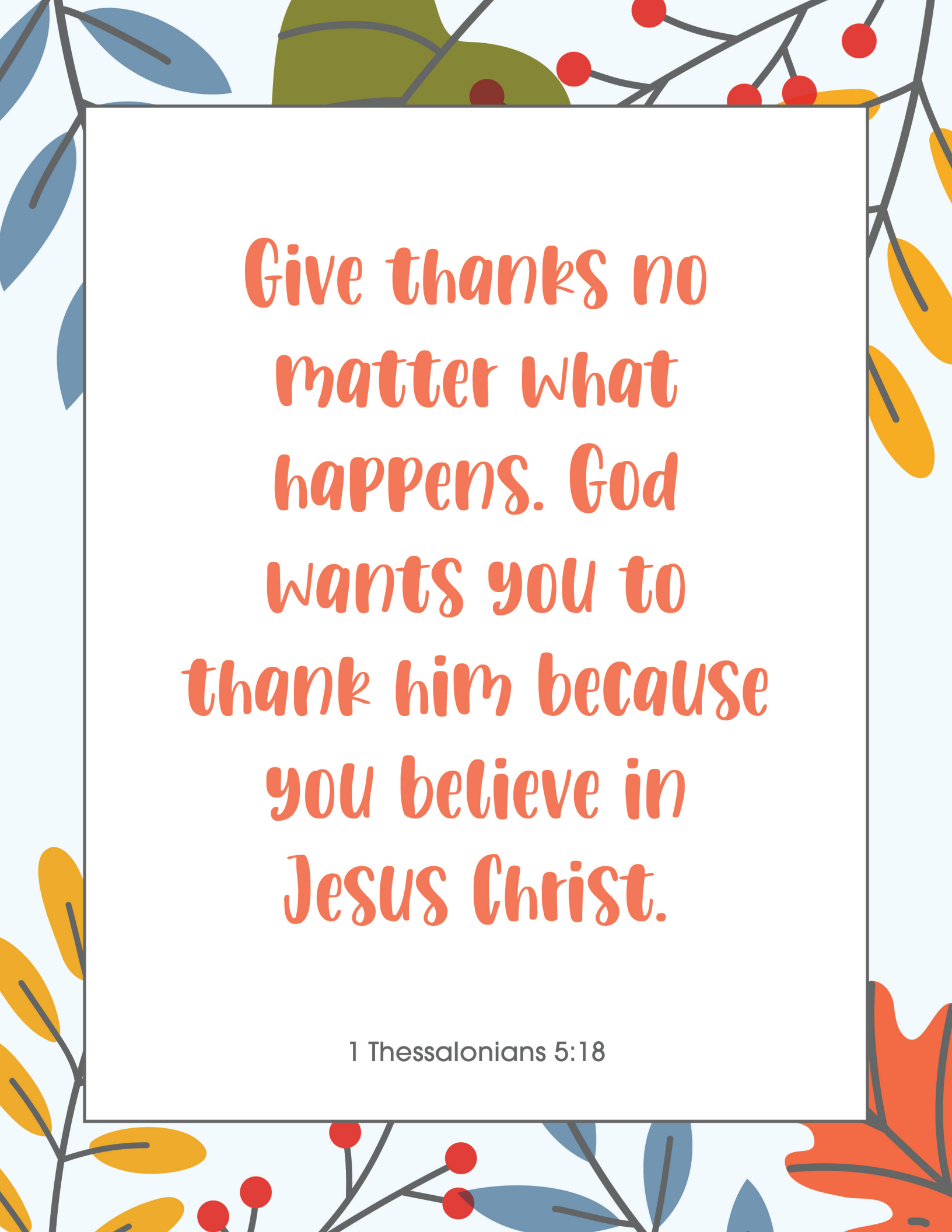
Breath Prayers: It is important to teach your children how to pray in the moment something is happening, even if it is noisy and confusing around them. Teach them about breath prayers. These are very informal but crucial prayers. Literally only a phrase that can be prayed silently while still participating in the activity or conversation. These prayers are particularly great when in the midst of a difficult conversation with someone. You may need to help your children think of times when breath prayers could be helpful and some options of breath prayers that might be helpful in each situation. You can even write different scenarios on slips of paper and have them act them out for practice.

Prayer Lists: Often missionaries, churches, ministries and others give a list of prayer requests they would like people to pray for them. Help your children find some of these lists and make a point of praying for one or more groups and their requests for a period of time. You can then get new requests from the same group as prayers are answered or new needs arise, or adopt a new group for whom to pray for the next time period.

Are You Praying About It?: Provide art supplies for each of your children to make some reminder that they should pray before trying to make decisions. Encourage them to ask each other to pray when they are making decisions as well.

Additional Resource: The [book](#) *Window on the World: an Operation World Prayer Resource*, is really interesting because it explores various countries around the world, introducing children to not only details about them, but the needs of Christians in that country. It's not a cheap book, but with a little effort, you can do something similar. Spin the globe or close your eyes and point to a random country on the map. Work together to research the country and learn what you can about life for Christians there. If you have the time, you can also enjoy recipes, art, language and folk music from each country online. Want to really go the extra mile? Find a missionary in that country and do a service project to help them and/or let them know your family is praying for them.





Give thanks no
matter what
happens. God
wants you to
thank him because
you believe in
Jesus Christ.

1 Thessalonians 5:18

Gratitude

Devotional Tips

- Try to have a minimum goal of one family devotional a week.
- Your stretch goal should be one more family devotional than you are currently averaging each week.
- Try to schedule your family devotional for the same time every day/week.
- Link your family devotional to an already established habit like a meal, bedtime routine, teeth brushing, etc. Place the materials for your devotional where you will see them when doing that activity as an additional reminder.
- To make the scripture reading easier to understand, try reading it from the NIrV or ICB version of the Bible.
- Try finding a way to encourage another family to do the daily devotionals.

Sermon Connection

Conclusion

Memory Verse

“Give thanks no matter what happens. God wants you to thank him because you believe in Jesus Christ.”
(1 Thessalonians 5:18, NIrV)



Background for Parents

Did you know that gratitude will help make your children more resilient (and less entitled)? Secular research out of UCLA found that “practicing” gratitude for 15 minutes a day improved mental health and, in some people, shifted their overall perspective on life. Other researchers found that gratitude in children also led to better physical wellbeing, boosted self-esteem, enhanced sleep quality, enhanced optimism (a component of resilience), and led to greater satisfaction with relationships. Imagine what would happen if your children could adopt the attitude in this week’s memory verse—give thanks in all circumstances?!

You have probably done a great job encouraging your children to say, “thank you” when someone gives them a gift or a complement. Do your children, however, have a constant and consistent attitude of gratitude? Do they do everything without complaining (Philippians 2:14–15)? Do they actively look for opportunities to thank those who others often take for granted? Do they begin their prayers with thanksgiving before they begin asking God for the things they want? Are they truly grateful for everything you have done for them?

Gratitude is contagious, as is the lack of gratitude. We could probably all use practice at being more grateful in all circumstances. This week’s devotionals and activities are designed to encourage your family to be grateful, even after Thanksgiving!



Weekly Devotional / Day One

Scripture Reading

Matthew 14:13–21

Guiding Question

When did Jesus thank God for the food in the story of the feeding of the five thousand, and when should we thank God for His blessings?

Questions

1. What was the problem in this story?
2. How many people were there? *Scholars estimate that the actual number of people needing to be fed may have been much higher, as counts at this point in history often only included the men in attendance.*
3. How much food did they have?
4. When did Jesus thank God for the food?
5. Why do you think he thanked God for the food before the miracle instead of after it?

Advanced Questions

1. How often do you think you thank God before He has said “yes” to your prayer request? *It is important for your children to understand that we should always thank God after He has blessed us. The point of this lesson is that we should also thank God for His answer to our prayers, even before we know if that answer will be “yes,” “no,” or “wait.”*
2. What does the memory verse mean that we are to be “grateful in all circumstances”?
3. Why is that important to God?
4. Under what circumstances is it hard for you to be grateful?
5. What practical things can you do to have a more grateful attitude, even during tough times?



Activity Ideas

Thanksgiving may be over, but these are great activity ideas for encouraging gratitude any time of the year. With Christmas on the horizon, encouraging gratitude can also lessen some of the selfishness that can come with holidays that involve gifts.

Gratitude Journal: It is important to be intentional about noticing things for which to be grateful. There are several different ways that you can do this. Have each of your children decorate a spiral notebook or composition book as their personal gratitude journal. You may also want to keep one as a family. At the end of each day, take a few moments and have everyone name one to three things for which they are grateful. (I recently found a gratitude journal for children to use with questions to guide their thinking at Five Below.)

Gratitude Jar: This is more of a long-term activity. Decorate a gratitude container and place it on your kitchen table or somewhere where everyone will see it daily. Place slips of paper and pens beside the container. Encourage your children to write down something they are grateful for at any point in time and place the slip in the container. (Non-writers can draw pictures instead of writing.) You may want to encourage them to create a slip any time they are excited about something (“That would be a great thing to put in the gratitude jar, wouldn’t it?!”). Be sure that you place slips in the jar as well. Don’t be afraid to put some unusual slips in the box about gratitude for things that seem negative, but in which you saw something to be grateful. Periodically take all of the slips out of the jar and read them to the entire family. End the time thanking God for His blessings.

Facts in Five Gratitude Game: Draw grids that are 5x5 on a sheet of paper for each person. Pull out those Scrabble tiles, or make little slips of paper with a letter of the alphabet on each. Going down the left side of the grid, write categories of things for which you can be grateful. For example: objects, people, places, food, books. Along the top of the grid, write the five letters pulled from the pile. Set a timer for three to five minutes (depending on the age and abilities of your children). At the word “go,” everyone is to fill in as many boxes on the grid as possible. For example, in the space where “object” and the letter “B” intersect, someone may write the word “bike,” while someone else might use the word “Bible.” The winner is the person with the most spaces filled in. (Many kids absolutely love this game, so you may want to be prepared with extra grids and lots of categories.)

Prayer

Encourage one of your children to pray, thanking God for various specific blessings and His blessings in general.



Day Two

Scripture Reading

Psalm 100

Guiding Question

Why should we be grateful to God?

Questions

1. What are some of the things listed in this Psalm that are about God?
2. What are some instructions the writer gives to God's people about their attitudes and behavior towards God?
3. What are some things about God for which you are grateful?

Advanced Questions

4. What are some of the reasons the psalmist may have written this Psalm?
5. Did you know that psalms were used in the time of Jesus as both songs and prayers? Do you know the worship song that is based on this Psalm? *You can find a clip of it online to play for your children [here](#).*
6. Why would Psalm 100 also make a good prayer?
7. Are you able to easily have the attitude in this Psalm? Why or why not?

Prayer

Encourage one of your children to pray, asking God to help each of you be the person described in Psalm 100 every day.



Day Three

Scripture Reading

1 Timothy 4:3–5

Guiding Question

What can we learn from these verses about the things God created and how we are to receive them?

Questions

1. Why did Paul say that everything God created is good?
2. How should we receive the things created by God?
3. How hard is it to thank God when you are served a food you don't particularly like? *This passage is obviously a discussion of clean and unclean foods, but the principle can be applied to any discussion of food and/or gratitude in general.*

Advanced Questions

1. Why do we sometimes forget that God created things like our food?
2. How does forgetting that make it more difficult to be grateful?
3. What is the difference between just thanking God for the food in a prayer before eating and actually being grateful in your heart?
4. What are some practical things you can do to remind yourself that all good things come from God and to be grateful for them?

Prayer

Encourage one of your children to pray, asking God to help each of you to be more grateful to God for the things He created—even the foods you don't particularly like.



Day Four

Scripture Reading

Psalm 30

Guiding Question

What does it mean to sing praises and not be silent?

Questions

1. What are some of the things for which David is grateful to God?
2. Why do you think David tells God's faithful people to sing praises to God and praise His name, even though they may not have had the same experiences as David?
3. Have you ever sung a praise/church song outside of worship service or Bible classes?
4. Why might it be a good idea to sing praise songs to God at home, too?

Advanced Questions

1. Read verses 11 and 12 again. Can you think of a time in David's life when he mourned? *Deaths of his baby with Bathsheba and the death of Absalom are two examples of which your children may be aware. If not, you can share the stories in a few sentences.*
2. How do you think God turned his mourning into dancing, removed his sackcloth and clothed David with joy? *Explain that in ancient times, people who were in mourning literally put on clothes made of sackcloth—similar to our burlap, but usually made from goat or camel hair—and covered themselves with ashes.*
3. Can you think of a time when you were sad, but God helped you to remember to be grateful and you began to feel better?

Prayer

Encourage one of your children to pray, asking God to help each of you to remember this Psalm when you are going through a tough time



Day Five

Scripture Reading

Psalm 118

Guiding Question

What does it mean to thank God because He is good, and His love endures forever?

Questions

1. Why does the writer say we are to give thanks to God in the first verse?
2. What does it mean when people say God is good?
3. What does it mean when people say God's love endures forever?
4. What are some other things in this Psalm for which the psalmist, and we, should thank God?

Advanced Questions

1. How could this chapter help you remember to be grateful when you are going through a difficult time?
2. Which verse or verses do you think could help you the most?
3. Have you ever thought about thanking God because He is good, and His love endures forever, and not just because He gave you something you asked Him for in prayer? Why or why not?
4. What are some practical things you can do to help yourself remember to thank God for being good and having enduring love for us?

Prayer

Encourage one of your children to pray, thanking God for His goodness and His enduring love.



Day Six

Scripture Reading

Psalm 106 (*This Psalm is a bit longer than the normal reading. Feel free to stop reading after verse five if you don't have enough time, but some of the questions will assume the entire chapter has been read.*)

Guiding Question

How can proclaiming the mighty acts of God help us to be more grateful?

Questions

1. Why do you think Psalm 118 (from yesterday) and this Psalm start with some of the same words?
2. Why does it ask a question instead of making a statement about the mighty acts of God?
3. Why does the Psalmist question if it is possible to fully praise God?
4. What are some of the mighty acts of God you can name?

Advanced Questions

1. What are some of the stories the Psalmist reminds readers of in this Psalm?
2. What is the pattern you see in the Israelites' attitudes and behaviors?
3. How easy is it for us to forget everything God has done in the past?
4. Why does it seem to make it easier to sin when we forget the mighty works God has done?
5. Why do we tend to only praise God right after He has done something amazing, but then forget about it over time?
6. What are some practical things you can do to remember all of the mighty acts God has done?

Prayer

Encourage one of your children to pray, naming some specific mighty acts of God and thanking Him for those things and His enduring love and action in the lives of His people even today.



Activity Ideas for the Week

- This [website](#) has a lot of great gratitude printables for activities, including a gratitude scavenger hunt. *Please note that any of these links do not serve as an endorsement of the sites as an entirety or their creators, merely an acknowledgement that these are a few great ideas you can use. The sites and their creators may indeed be fine, but we did not take the time to deeply research them.*
- This [website](#) has some printable gratitude conversation starters. These often work well at meals with unfamiliar or quiet relatives to get the conversation going or just for your own family dinner.
- This [website](#) has a cute gratitude game using pick-up sticks.

Additional Resource: This printable parenting resource on raising grateful children has more good tips. It is available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).



