



Weekly Family Devotions

Dear Parents,

No two families are exactly alike, but the consistent message of the Bible is that God's plan and purpose for every family is still the same. He wants parents, grandparents, and other people of God to pass faith along to the next generation (Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Psalm 78:1-8). One of the best ways we can carry out this important calling from God within our homes is to have intentional faith conversations with our children throughout the course of the day. With that in mind, it is our earnest prayer that this particular devotional guide will be a practical resource you can use to help point your kids to the Lord.

Within these pages you'll find six devotional readings that we encourage you to go through together with your children. Each devotion corresponds to one of the six primary topics that are covered in the 40-Day *Only by Prayer* church and small-group study. You'll also find suggestions inside this guide for shared activities and discussions that were created to help you and your kids connect with each other and to engage in meaningful and productive faith conversations.

You might want to begin and close each devotional time with a short prayer. If in your conversations your child poses a question for which you don't have an answer, don't be afraid to say "I don't know" or "Let's look in the Bible" or "Let's ask another friend at church about that."

Here are some additional ideas you may want to consider:

- Strive to make the devotions as fun and inviting for your kids as possible. You can do them outdoors, while eating popcorn together, while sitting in a booth at a restaurant, in different rooms of the house, in the morning, at nighttime before bed – anytime that works for your family and promotes interaction!
- Keep it simple. If you have younger children, you should definitely consider paraphrasing or condensing the readings and discussion questions to make the concepts easier to understand and to reinforce the main idea behind each topic.
- Keep it short. These Scripture readings are designed to foster conversation, but remember that kids (and some adults as well!) have short attention spans.
- Be intentional. Families are busier now than ever, so the more intentional you are about having devotions together, the more likely they will actually take place.

May God use these devotions to center your family's focus upon God's redeeming love as expressed through the cross, inspire you to turn to God in prayer with greater boldness and faith, and enable you to make family memories together.

Week 1

Reliant

“After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, ‘Why couldn’t we drive it out?’ He replied, ‘This kind can come out only by prayer.’”
Mark 9:28-29

Do you remember a time when you were little and wanted to prove that you could do something all by yourself, without anyone helping you? Showing others that you’re growing up sure is a special feeling!

The Bible tells us, though, that God loves it when we ask Him for help. He wants us to always depend upon Him. That’s one of the main reasons why God created prayer. Prayer is a reminder that we need God. In fact, we *all* need God’s help to be the people that God made us to be. And like today’s Scripture passage tells us, there are certain things that can only happen by prayer.

Do you ever need help obeying your mom or dad? Do you need help loving someone who hurts your feelings? Do you need help trusting God when you’re sick or when you’re scared? Do you need help when you have a tough choice to make? Absolutely! And the best person to look to for help is God. Remember that you can always rely on Him to be there for you.

Do

Look at the following statements about prayer together, and then ask each person to share which three statements they agree with most:

- It’s good to pray every day.
- Talking to God is like talking to a friend.
- I never know what to pray about.
- The best place to pray is at church.
- Praying is boring.
- People use too many big words when they pray.
- I always pray whenever I’m scared or worried.
- Sometimes I forget to pray.
- I only talk to God about big things, not little things.
- I know I can talk to God about everything.

Create a basic “prayer board” together that you can use as a family during this 40-day study. Use it to write down prayer needs as they arise. Then remember to pray regularly together about the things on the board. And be sure to check off prayer requests that God has answered!

Week 2

Repentant

*“Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.”*

Psalm 51:10

Which do you enjoy more in the game of hide-and-seek: hiding or seeking? It seems that, if given a choice, most people find it more fun to be the one who is hiding, especially if they can find such a great place to hide that the person looking for them never finds them!

Do you know who the first people to ever play hide-and-seek were? Believe it or not, it was actually Adam and Eve. The Bible teaches us that they were so ashamed when they chose to sin against God that they actually tried hiding from Him in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:8). And then they tried to cover up their sin by making excuses to God (Genesis 3:12-13). As a result, their relationship with God was broken.

The truth is that we all do the same thing that Adam and Eve did. We all disobey God in various ways (Romans 3:23), and we often try to hide our sins from God. We like to pretend that they don't exist or that our sins are not that big of a deal. But they *are* a big deal, because our sins – even the little ones – separate us from God, and there is no amount of good things we can do that can change that fact (Romans 6:23).

The best news of all, though, is that Jesus died for our sins on the cross, so God makes it possible for us to be forgiven whenever we disobey Him. You don't need to hide from Him. You simply need to confess your sins to God, and He promises to forgive you and give you a clean heart (1 John 1:9).

Do

- Pick an object and have family members take turns hiding the object in a room somewhere. Then have the rest of the family try to find the object. Talk afterwards about how Adam & Eve tried hiding from God.
- Take a tube of toothpaste and squeeze some out on a plate or napkin. Then try to put the toothpaste back into the tube. Were you able to do it? Why or why not, and how is this exercise an analogy for the consequences of sin?

Week 3

Desperate

*“As the deer pants for streams of water,
so my soul pants for you, my God.”*

Psalm 42:1

When do you think about water the most? Maybe it’s after you’ve played outside on a hot day. Or maybe it’s after you have something salty to eat. We may not think about water all of the time, but when you’re really thirsty, water is probably just about *all* you can think about. And the thirstier you are, the more you’ll think about it – and be grateful for it!

The writer of Psalm 42 in the Bible knew what it was like to be thirsty. He said he felt as thirsty as a deer that desperately needed a drink of water from a stream. But the psalmist wasn’t merely thirsty for water. It says that he was thirsty for God (v. 2).

What does it mean to be thirsty for God? It means more than just being physically thirsty. It is a way of telling God that you need Him. It means to crave God’s power and presence more than anything else in this whole world. And that’s exactly how God wants it to be. He created you to depend upon Him, just like a thirsty person who aches and longs for a glass of cool water.

All of us are thirsty for something or someone that we hope will satisfy us and make us happy. And because we are sinners, we often look to the wrong things to do that for us. But here’s what you need to remember: Only God will ever be able to fully quench your thirst and give you true, long-lasting joy.

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Do

- Eat some salty crackers together, but don’t drink any water right away. After eating, see how long it takes before you start feeling thirsty. Talk about what the experience of being thirsty feels like.
- Try to memorize today’s Bible verse (Psalm 42:1) together as a family. To aid in memorizing, try writing down each word from the verse on separate sheets of paper. Then mix up the pieces of paper and take turns putting the words together in order.

Week 4

Fervent

*“Then you will call on me [God] and come and pray to me,
and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find
me when you seek me with all your heart.”*

Jeremiah 29:12-13

Doing something that is good and beneficial with your whole heart is better than doing it with half a heart or with no heart at all. Whether it’s playing a sport, practicing an instrument, doing your chores, completing an assignment, or doing something kind for somebody else, when you do something with all your heart, it shows that you’re really giving it your best effort. It shows that you really care about and are serious about your commitment to whatever you’re doing or to the one for whom you’re doing it.

Now think about this in relation to God. What would it look like if we were to only worship God half-heartedly? Or what if we were to do that with prayer? It would mean that we weren’t giving God our very best. Or that we’re distracted by other things that we think are more important.

God always deserves our full hearts and our full attention. It’s important that we don’t just go through the motions of prayer. That means that we should not only pray with our mouths, but also with our minds and our hearts. As you pray, it’s important that you remember that you have the very special privilege of talking and listening to the God who created you and everything else in the universe.

Today’s Scripture passage reminds us that, when we come to God with all of our hearts, He promises to hear our prayers and to allow us to know Him more. And the more we know God, the more we will want to continue giving Him our very best!

Do

- With adult supervision, put a pot of water on the stove and bring it to a boil. Then take the pot off of the burner. Talk together about what you observe. Explain that God wants us to have hearts that are “on fire” for Him (as opposed to cold or lukewarm hearts).
- Brainstorm ideas for different activities or situations in which the difference between giving your whole heart and giving half a heart could make a big difference. You might even consider role-playing or acting out some of these scenarios.
- As we covered in the adult workbook on the topic of Fervency, one of the ways in which people sometimes show their devotion to God is by fasting. Talk about different things from which a person can fast. Consider taking a “screen-time” fast (from TV, media, video games) together as a family for a portion of a day or even for an entire day. Talk afterwards about your experience.

Week 5

Persistent

“Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.”

Luke 18:1

How long did it take you to learn how to walk? To ride a bike? To write your name? All of these activities take time and lots of practice and patience. The key to learning to get better at doing something is persistence. Persistence means being determined and not giving up, even if it seems difficult or frustrating.

As today’s verse shows us, God wants us to be persistent in prayer. Jesus told a parable to help teach His followers this very lesson. Jesus described a woman who was being mistreated every day by someone else. When the woman went to a judge to get help, the judge didn’t answer her request – at least at first. But the woman persisted. She refused to take “no” for an answer. And because of her persistence, the judge eventually granted her request.

When God doesn’t answer our prayers right away or in the way that we want, it’s tempting to want to give up. But we need to remember that if God doesn’t immediately answer our prayers, there must be a good reason why. Sometimes God doesn’t answer our prayers because we ask for the wrong types of things, or for things that might be harmful to us or to others, or for things that don’t please God. And sometimes God doesn’t answer right away because He wants to teach us to be patient, to wait, and to learn to trust Him more.

Being persistent in prayer doesn’t mean that you’ll always get what you pray for, but it does mean that you believe God must have a good reason for not answering yet or something even better in store for you. So don’t give up trusting Him.

Do

- Fill two clear bottles with water. Put 5-10 drops of blue food coloring into one of the bottles. Say, “This blue water is like the judge in Jesus’ parable.” Then put 5-10 drops of yellow food coloring into the other water bottle and say, “This yellow water represents the woman in the parable.” Then using a funnel, slowly pour a little yellow water into the blue water. You likely won’t see much color change occur at first. But then pour a little bit more of the yellow water into the blue water. Keep slowly adding yellow water until the water in the second bottle turns green. Ask, “How long did it take for the color change to take effect? How is this like the persistence of the woman in Jesus’ parable?”

Week 6

Expectant

*“In the morning, Lord, you hear my voice; in the morning
I lay my requests before you and wait expectantly.”
Psalm 5:3*

When you sit on a chair, what do you expect will happen? What about when you jump off of a diving board? Or when you put a seed into good soil and give it plenty of water and light?

In each of these situations, we expect certain things will happen based upon what we know to be true about chairs and gravity and how seeds grow. In some cases, the things we expect to happen will take place pretty quickly. In other cases, it may take a bit longer. In either case, though, we expect *something* to happen.

What does the Bible teach us about what you can expect to happen when you pray? There are at least four things you can be confident of:

- You can be confident that God hears you when you pray for things that please Him (1 John 5:14-15).
- You can be confident that God cares about you more than you could ever imagine (John 3:16; 1 Peter 5:7).
- You can be confident that there is nothing that God cannot do (Matthew 19:26).
- You can be confident that God always keeps His promises (Luke 1:37).

What does this mean for you? It means that you can pray every day and all throughout the day with confidence and hope and expectation. He will give you exactly what you need, exactly when you need it.

Do

- Come up with a list of predictions for things you think will happen in the future (e.g., What will the exact temperature be tomorrow? What grade will you get on your next test? Who will win the next Super Bowl? What will you be doing in 10, 20, or 30 years? What kind of cars, houses, and clothes will people own?). Discuss how the reliability of our predictions is different from whenever God makes a promise.

