



Family Devotions



There's One God

Scripture: Genesis 1:1-2

Also, Isaiah 37:16, Isaiah 44:6, 1 Timothy 2:5

Memory Verse: Genesis 1:1

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

For My Family

To some people, the idea of God is strange. Maybe you've never really heard of God or thought about him much before. Or maybe it's different for you, and you feel like you've *always* known about God...since you were a little baby your mom or your dad has been talking about him. But whether it's confusing and new to you, or something you've been hearing all your life, everyone can learn more about God. And—this is even more important—everyone can get to know God more. That's really the important thing—God doesn't just want us to know *about* him, he wants us to *know* him. Kind of like you know a friend, or your parents.

For instance, imagine I brought you a little card with a picture of a man on it, and you said, “Who's that?” So I said, “Oh, it's my friend Darius. See, that's what he looks like, and, if you flip this over, it tells you all kinds of cool things about him—where he lives, his favorite food, how tall he is, *everything!*” And then you said, “Wow, you know him?” And I say, “Well I've never met him or talked with him, but I got all his cards, and I can tell you any fact about him.” I think you'd say, “Wait, you said he was your *friend*. You can't call someone your friend and say you know him if you've never met him. Knowing facts about someone doesn't mean you know them!” And you'd be right. And it's the same way with God. We shouldn't ever think that just learning facts *about* God means we know him. It's way deeper than that.

But then...think about it the other way. Can you really know someone if you don't know *anything* about them? If I say to you, “Oh, have you met my friend Darius?” And you say, “No, what's he like?” And I say, “Um...well...” and you start asking me questions, like, “Well where's he live? How tall is he? How old is he? What color hair does he have?” ...and I can't answer *any* of those questions...*Think* about it. Is Darius really my friend? Don't you have to know things *about* someone to actually *know* them? (I think you'll agree the answer is yes.)

So here's where we're going to start these family bible discussions. We're going to use these times to read the bible to think and learn about God, and then we're going to spend a few minutes praying *to* God about what we are learning. *Then*, the next part is to spend our days living out what we learn, while we depend on him.

...But let's not get ahead of ourselves. For today, let's start right here. There's a big, big, first idea we can start with. And here it is: *There's only one God*. There aren't two or three or a hundred Gods There's only one.

Now, different people think there are lots of Gods. In different places of the world, and at all different times in history, people have thought there were lots of different God's with lots of different names, and they all did lots of different things. But God's word, the Bible, is clear—there is only one God. It makes it simple for us—but that's not why we believe it. We believe it because the Bible says it and it's true. And we also believe it because when we believe the Bible and trust this One True God, we come to *know* him, just like we were talking about before.

Questions for Young Children:

How many Gods are there?

How do we know this? (The bible tells us, and we can get to know him.)

Questions for Teens and Pre-teens

What's the difference between *knowing about* someone and *knowing* them?

Name some people you know *about* but don't *know*.

Now name some people you *know*, but only know *a little about*.

Now name some people you know, but know *a lot* about.

How are your relationships with the people on each list different to you?

How many God's are there? What are two ways we can come to know that?
(The bible, and personal experience of getting to know him.)

How do you feel about starting to get know someone by reading a book?



Family Devotions



The Trinity

Scripture: Luke 5:20-21; John 5:17-29; John 10:27-38; John 14:16-20, 26; John 15:26; Galatians 4:4-6

Memory Verse: 2 Corinthians 13:14

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

For My Family

There is only one God (that was lesson 1). But this one God is not really like anyone else we've ever met. That's true in a lot of ways, but it's especially true in this one special way: God is a Trinity. What does that mean? Well, if you ask someone, they might say something like... "Wow, that's really hard to understand..." So then you might think that God's just far away and hard to understand. And you still wouldn't know what "Trinity" meant.

So what does it mean? Here's a way to think about it. When Jesus came, He did a lot of teaching. While He was teaching, He talked a lot about someone He called, "My Father." And everyone started to realize he was talking about God. But then they realized that Jesus was calling God "Father" in a special way—in a way no one had ever called God "Father" before. He meant that God was His Father in a way that God wasn't anyone else's Father. That made a lot of people confused. They realized that if God was Jesus' Father in a special way, that also meant that Jesus was God's Son in a special way—like no one else. Then people realized that when Jesus talked that way, He also talked in a way that made people see that Jesus thought He was on the same level with God. He said things about his Father that you could only say about God, and then He said those same things about Himself. In other words, when Jesus talked about Himself, He talked about Himself like He talked about God. And when He talked about God, he included Himself.

And then Jesus did one more interesting thing. When it was almost time for Him to die, He started to talk to his followers about someone else—He called Him "The Holy Spirit." And Jesus talked about the Holy Spirit the same way He talked about Himself and the Father. In other words, Jesus was teaching them that the Holy Spirit was also God—the Holy Spirit was included in God. And then, after Jesus had died and rose from the dead, God sent the Holy Spirit to Jesus' followers, kind of like how God had sent Jesus a few years before. And Jesus' followers understood... there was only one true God, but in God was all three of these persons Jesus had been speaking about...the Father, who sent Jesus (the Son), and the Holy Spirit. In other words, Jesus' followers realized that God was Three in One. All these years later, in English, we use the word "Trinity" to describe that.

It's pretty big and mysterious. And it can seem hard to understand. But that's ok. The important thing about God is not to try to figure everything out about Him, all at once. The important thing is to learn what he says about Himself, trust it, and trust that He'll give us more understanding as we grow and as we seek Him.

For now, you can just remember this: the one true God is three in one—Father Son, and Holy Spirit. And Jesus is truly God, and shows us who God really is.

Questions for Young Children:

Is God a Trinity?

What are the three names we think of when we think of God?

Questions for Preteens and Teenagers

How did people find out about the Trinity?

Why do you think God revealed this truth in this way?

What do these things tell us about who God is?

How does the fact that God is a Trinity help us understand what it means that “God is love”?



Family Devotions



God Made Everything

Scripture: Hebrews 11:3; Psalm 33:6; Genesis 1:1-15

Further Study: Deuteronomy 10:14, Psalm 24:1-2; Psalm 50:10-12, Psalm 139:13-16

Memory Verse: : Hebrews 11:3

By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.

For My Family

God made everything, out of nothing, by talking.

Last time we saw that there was only one God. Now let's talk about this world we live in. Where did our world come from? Did God wake up one day and find that there was a big lump of "stuff" next to him, like play dough, and decide to use it to make a world? No! Before God made the world there was nothing else beside God... no earth, no play dough, no *nothing*! So God didn't use *stuff* to make the earth and the sky and the stars and galaxies, he made it out of... well...*nothing*!

And did God use machines like bulldozers and backhoes to make the world? No! Did he use a computer? No! Did he even use a hammer and a screwdriver? No! *He just used his words*. When God spoke His powerful words, and said what should happen, *it happened*. God's words are so powerful that when he talks, things happen! So if he says, "light—shine!" then light starts shining.

So...our world comes from words! Isn't that funny? (And here's something interesting too—when you use words, you're showing that God is a talking God. But that's for later.)

Now here's one really important thing that means:

If God made everything, then he owns everything, and he's the boss of everything.

Who gets to be in charge of everything? The president? The army? The police? No! God does. Why? Because He made everything.

When *you* make something—out of clay, or out of Legos maybe—you get to say what happens with that thing. And when God made the world, he became its boss too. In the Bible God is called, "*Lord*." It means God is our king. He gets to tell us how to be and how to live.

Many people today think they should be their own boss and decide who they are and how they should live. They think God can't tell them how to live and who to be. That is called sin. Since God made people, God is the Lord of people. He's the King of everything.

The days of creation show us something else too: They show us that God is a worker. He likes to get things done. They show us He is powerful. The things He made show us how creative He is, and how much He loves the things He made. The earth He made is a good home which has the things the animals and people who live there need to live. It's good news, isn't it—this news that the world is made by a good, powerful God?

Questions for Young Children:

Who made everything? Who made the world? Who made you?

How did he make it? Did he use a hammer? Did he use a computer? Did he use a bulldozer? Then how?

Who's the boss of everything? Why?

Questions for Teens and Pre-teens

Why is God the Lord of everything? Does this seem to make sense to you?

Think about the kind of world God made for humans? What does that tell us about the kind of God he is?

When you think about the world God made (the trees and mountains and oceans and animals and sun and stars, etc...), what does it make you think about God?

What does the earth God made tell us about God?



Family Devotions



God Made Humans

Scripture: Made in His Image: Gen 1:26-27, Gen 9:6, James 3:8-10, Acts 17:26
Out of Dust, with His Spirit: Gen 2:7, Acts 17:24-25

Memory Verse: : Genesis 1:26

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

For My Family

Some things are so important that everyone needs to know them. One of those things is the truth that there is only one true God. Another one of these important things is the truth that God made everything. And another one of the biggest, most important things you can know is the answer to this question: What are you?

Well, the Bible tells us a few very important things here in these verses.

First, it tells us that we are made by God. We didn't make ourselves. We didn't come from nowhere. We were specially made, by some One. So we're not accidents! We're more like works of art. Every human being is special and valuable, because we're made by God.

Everyone is also valuable because we're made in the image of God. This is why it's wrong to hate or hurt or kill people, or even to talk bad about people. Because people are made in God's image, what we do and say to them shows how we think and feel about God. So a way to show how much we love God is to love people.

Being made "in God's image" means that we "show" what He's like. One part of that is that our bodies show who God is. [If you're in middle school or beyond—we're talking about the physical part of you]. God sees, so he made us with eyes. God hears, so he made us with ears. God thinks and feels, so he gave us thoughts and emotions. In other words, what you can see and touch about people shows things that are true about God, even though you can't see or touch him. [Older students, you could say that we are physically in a visible way what God is in an invisible way. In other words, God is invisible, but humans are here to make him visible for all creation.] So our eyes and ears and hearts and minds all show what God is like.

Another thing being made in God's image means is that we were made to rule. Kind of like how kings used to put statues of themselves around their kingdom, God put images of himself in his world to show people who the true King is. Of course, when God makes an "image," it's not a stone statue, or even a robot...it's a real live person! And His image actually rules along with Him, even "in His place," as a representative. So really, we're more like sons than statues.

Another way the Bible says that people rule with God is to say that God gives humans dominion. But the way God wants us to have dominion, or to rule, is not by being mean to animals and ruining plants. He wants us to rule by taking care of everything and helping it all grow. We glorify God by taking care of the things God made and gave to us. Think about this too—since God made humans, we're all related. No matter how big or small people are, what color our eyes, hair and skin are, where we're from, whether we're tall or short, we're all made in God's image. So you could say that we're all family!

*Parents, let's major on communicating wonder to our children. The vision of humanity in our culture is so small and weak (molecule machines meant for reproduction), or it's grandiose and big but patently false (unlimited gods who rule the universe). These two poles of belief are messing up whole generations. Here in Genesis 1 and 2 we have simple, powerful, profound statements about what humans are (what Man is)—made of stuff (what you can see and feel), but with God's breath in us to make us stuff that's alive. It's amazing! These are just great things to throw out there into their thought world.

Questions for Young Children:

Where did you come from? Did you just appear, or did someone make you?
Who made you?

When God made people who was in charge—the animals and trees and rocks, or people?

And who's in charge of everything, even the people?

If God made you, do you think He thinks you're special? Do you think He cares about you?

Questions for Teens and Pre-teens

How does knowing that you're made by God make you feel different than if you happened by accident?

What does it mean to be made in God's image?

What do your eyes show about God? Hands? Mouth? Ears? Feet? Brain? Emotions?

What does dominion mean? Is it more like "doing whatever you want" or like growing a garden?

Why is it wrong to hate or murder people? If this wasn't true, would it still be wrong to murder?



Family Devotions



Male and Female

Scripture: Gen 2:18-23, Gen 1:27, Matthew 19:4

Memory Verse: Genesis 1:27

So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

For My Family

[PARENTS: the point of this particular study is not to get into details about any of this, but just to make sure we speak to our kids about the huge, important truths we find in Scripture about these things. Of course, these are some of the most debated and emotional issues of our day. The best thing for our families in this area is just to make sure we're speaking about these things, using the Bible as our guide, to help our children simply "breathe the air" of the truth of Scripture and how it describes the world. So just concentrate on getting the big, basic truths out there: There are two kinds of humans. They are different. Everyone is one or the other. And this is a good part of God's good plan.]

This part of the Bible tells us one more very big, important thing about who and what we are as people made in God's image. It tells us how many kinds of human beings there are. There is not just one kind (although that's how it started off for Adam). There are not three or seven or sixty-five kinds. There are two kinds. And the names of these two kinds are "male" and "female." Usually we say "boys and girls" or "men and women," but the idea is the same.

Everyone who has ever been born is one or the other of these two kinds of human. You are one of the kinds. And even though there are many things the same about these two kinds of humans, God wanted there to be differences, too. God must have known that things would be better for us if there were two kinds of people, instead of just one.

Why? Maybe because he wanted people to cooperate. When he made two different kinds of humans, who have different strengths and weaknesses, he showed us that he wants us to work together to do his work ("ruling the world"). He wants us to cooperate, and live in families, and take care of each other. And so he made two different kinds of humans who would need each other to do the work God called us to do.

So... God made us different, and the differences between boys and girls are good. Both boys and girls are made in God's image. God loves them both equally. And God made the differences between the two. Which means that God loves the things that make girls, girls, and the things that make boys, boys. He loves difference, and he loves cooperation and working together.

This is a wonderful and amazing part of who God made us. So we shouldn't think it's weird or gross that boys and girls are different, we should just know this: God made it that way, and he did it because he knew it would be better than if there were just one kind of human. So that means he will use our differences to do good things in the earth!

[FURTHER THOUGHTS FOR PARENTS: In reading the passages where God creates this differentiation (Genesis 1:26-28, 2:7-8, 2:18), we see that the first, stated reason the Bible gives for it is that two kinds will be necessary to enable humans to fulfill their mandate to fill the earth and exercise dominion. God could have, conceivably, made humans to be able to reproduce asexually, but he knew this arrangement was better. His solution was that only a union of...two humans, who differ ...would be able to produce more humans.

In God's wisdom, he made a world where Man and Woman need each other in order to fill and cultivate the earth. Evidently God knew it would be a better thing for humanity if our mandate included this need than if it didn't. And so as we contemplate this part of God's design, we find that the distinction of man and woman produces a glue that holds us together, since what we need (and often even like) are precisely the things that are different between us. The differences between man and woman also cause humility—as we acknowledge that, unlike God, we cannot do things alone. So the distinction between our bodies produces a situation where we glorify God by recognizing and submitting to our dependence on each other.

And since this distinction is the crucial element in procreation, gender distinction also creates a real, biological (and also spiritual) connection between all members of the human race. Humans don't rise up wholly formed out of the ground. No, we all come from two other people, two other families, which creates a connectedness in the human race nothing else could. God didn't simply want us to be a crowd of individuals, He wanted us to be a family. Making sexual differentiation necessary for reproduction is His way of accomplishing that.

Beyond the physical, we see that distinction creates a drive for relationships. At our core we're relational beings, so maybe God designed gender distinction to create the context and the need for relationship. Here we may see glimpses of the fact that God is relational Himself, in the Trinity. We reflect God's glory to the fullest when we exist in relation to each other. It is God-like to be in relationship.

So—why is there gender? The why question always has two aspects. What is the origin of gender and sex distinctions? They are gifts of God, designed, made, and given by Him. What are these distinctions for?" They enable us to more fully fulfill our purpose than if we were undistinguished. God created us to be beings that find our highest life in the loving expression of relational community—of family—and gender distinction provides for that.]

Questions for Young Children:

How many kinds of humans are there?

What are the names of the kinds?

What kind are you?

Does God love boys? Does God love girls? Does God love boys or girls more?

Questions for Teens and Pre-teens

How many kinds of humans are there?

Why did God think it would be better for there to be two kinds of humans, instead of just one?

What did God give us to know whether we're one or the other?
(The answer is our bodies.)

What do you think about this?

Do you see how these differences can enable us to fulfill our purpose?



Family Devotions



Adam and Eve

Scripture: Genesis 3

Memory Verse: : Romans 15:12

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned

For My Family

God had made the Earth and everything in it. He had made the sun, moon and stars, the seas, the land, every kind of animal, even human beings, and He had called them all good. God had made no mistakes, everything was perfect, there was peace and harmony, and most importantly, Adam and Eve lived with God. They walked with Him in the Garden, they talked with Him, they spent time in His presence. That was until Adam and Eve made a choice, a choice to do something that God had told them not to do. They ate the fruit and in that moment everything changed. They had sinned, and that sin affected not only themselves, but the whole world. Because of their sin Adam and Eve could no longer be with God in the Garden. They were banished and could no longer be in His presence. It was one of the worst things that has ever happened in the history of the world.

Adam and Eve had messed up, but God still loved them. He promised that He would make a way for Adam and Eve's descendants to be reunited with Him. He promised that one day all of the sin, all of the sorrow, all of the mess, would be cleaned up and made right again. Specifically God promised that He would send someone who would fight against the serpent, would crush its head, but in turn would be bruised himself. He would be a savior to all mankind and He would make a way for man to be with God again.

You and I have been affected by Adam and Eve's choice. We don't live with God the way that we should. We, like Adam and Eve, choose to ignore God and do our own thing all the time. Because all of us have sinned, we too cannot be with God. In fact, the bible says that we are like sheep without a shepherd, we are lost and we need to be saved.

But we have some good news, the best news that you will ever hear. God kept His promise. He sent the Savior, the Savior crushed the serpent's head and won the victory for everyone, everywhere. His name is Jesus Christ, and because of what He did for us we can have our sin washed away as if it never happened. Not only that, but Jesus promised that one day, everyone who believes in Him would be reunited with God the Father. We can live with Him forever, not in a Garden, but in a City filled with light.

Adam and Eve messed up and sin cursed the whole Earth. Jesus came, just as His Father promised, and through Him everything will be made right again!

Questions for Young Children:

How did Adam and Eve disobey God?

What did God promise Adam and Eve?

Questions for Pre-teens

How did Adam and Eve know that they had sinned?

When God asked them what they did, did they confess or make excuses? Who did they blame?

How did God show that He still loved Adam and Eve?

Questions for Teens and Pre-teens

How did Adam and Eve's choice affect the whole world?

What were the consequences of Adam and Eve's choice? Have you ever had a situation where something went wrong and it affected other people?

How does sin affect our relationship with God? How does it affect our relationships with people?



Family Devotions



Noah

Scripture: Genesis 6:5-14; 7:1-10; 8:13-22; 9:12-16

Memory Verse: : Romans 6:23

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

For My Family

Ever since Adam and Eve had sinned in the Garden of Eden, things had been getting worse and worse for humanity. The sin that had infected Adam and Eve had spread to their sons, and as we saw in our last devotion, it led to their son Cain killing his brother Abel. Almost 2000 years later, things had gotten so bad that the Bible says that every thought of mankind’s heart was “only evil continually” (Genesis 6:5). This wasn’t just a few bad people doing wicked things sometimes. All people knew how to do was evil. In fact, it got so bad that in Genesis 6:6, God said that He was sorry that He had even created the world. Imagine how bad things must have been for God to regret making man, the one He created in His own image! In order to deal with man’s sin, there was only one solution: God was going to destroy the world with a flood.

Sometimes this can be a hard thing for us to hear. We might think, “How could a loving God flood the earth?” What’s important to remember is that sin is serious, it spreads, and it must be dealt with. Deep down, we all know that this is true. If someone robs a bank, there is something in each one of us that believes that he should go to jail. We know that there must be a punishment for crime. Well sin is a crime against God, and Romans 6:23 says that the only fair punishment for a crime against God is death. This refers not only to physical death, but permanent separation from God forever. Sin is like a virus, infecting everyone around it, and total destruction is the only cure.

Luckily for both Noah and us, God made a way of escape from judgment. For Noah, it was the ark. God provided him with a place of safety that would keep him from the coming destruction. Because Noah and his family believed and obeyed what God had said, they were not destroyed in the flood with the rest of the world. For us, God offered us a way to escape the punishment of separation from God by sending His Son, Jesus Christ. In fact, by coming to earth, living a perfect life, and dying on the cross, He took the punishment for sin that we deserved so that we don’t have to. Now, we can enjoy friendship (fellowship) with God forever if we will only trust in Jesus and ask Him to forgive us for our sins.

Questions for Young Children:

How did God punish the world for their sin?

How did Noah show that he trusted God and believed what He said?

Have you ever done something that deserved a punishment? Why is there a punishment when we do bad things?

Questions for Pre-teens

Why did God have to treat man's sin so severely?

How is what God did for Noah like what Jesus has done for us?

How do you think God feels about your sin?

Questions for Teens and Pre-teens

What is justice, and how does God show it in this story?

What is mercy, and how does God show it in this story?

What are some of the similarities between Noah's faith and ours?

Have you ever thought God has done something unfair? How does this story help us to see the fairness (justice) of God?



Family Devotions



Call of Abraham

Scripture: Genesis 12:1-9, 15:1-6, James 2:23.

Memory Verse: : Genesis 15:6

“[Abraham] believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.”

For My Family

Since we started reading on page one of the Bible, a lot has already happened in the story of the world. Here, in the life of this man named Abraham, we read about some more very important things. You might not know it yet, but Abraham was one of the most important people who ever lived! Why? Not because he was the best or the smartest or the richest. And it's not because he was a great king or president (he wasn't). No, Abraham is important because of what God used him to do.

See, think of the bad things that happened after God created Adam and Eve. First they sinned, and had to leave the garden. God said that people would die now. And even though people lived a long time, they did die. And then people got so evil that God sent the Flood to clean the evil out of the earth—and only one family was saved. After that, when there were more and more people on the earth again, people started to love evil all over again. And it seemed like everyone was forgetting about God again. At least, they were deciding they didn't want to know him or follow him.

So what was God going to do? Would He just destroy everything and start all over again? No, this time we see God do a new thing. In fact, it's such an amazing thing, that it turned out to be the very beginning of his big plan to fix everything. What God did was choose one man, and his wife, and invite that man to be His friend. God showed Himself to Abraham, and called him to do something. He said that Abraham needed to leave his city, and travel far away, and go see a new land—a land that God would one day give his great-great-grandchildren.

And you know what? Abraham listened! And Abraham obeyed! And when he did, he started on this long journey—the journey of knowing God. Now, when God called him, Abraham did not have any children. It was just him and Sarah his wife. But God promised that one day they would have a baby. Abraham heard that promise, and he believed God. And when he did, God called Abraham “righteous.” That means that God declared that Abraham was right with God.

With this believing, obeying man, God began his plan. First Abraham would know God. Then Abraham's family would live in this new land, a land that became known as the land of Israel. Then, many years later another man would come from Abraham's family, living in Israel. That man was Jesus. It was Jesus who God used to fix everything that is wrong with the world. But the story of Jesus begins all the way back here—with one man and one woman, hearing some promises from God, and believing them. Maybe it seemed like a small thing to Abraham and Sarah. But then, God loves to take things that seem small and do really big things with them.

When Abraham and Sarah believed God, they became part of God's story—the story of how God made the world, and then saved it all over again when it got ruined. Today, God is still calling people to hear him and believe him and obey him. And when anyone hears and believes and obeys God, they become part of God's story too—the story of Adam and Eve and Abraham and Jesus—the story of how God is making everything new and good again.

Questions for Young Children:

What did God tell Abraham to do?

Did Abraham believe God? Did Abraham obey God?

What did God say about the stars?

Questions for Teens and Pre-teens

What things might have made it hard for Abraham to obey God in Genesis 12?

What if, in Genesis 12, Abraham said, “Of course I believe in God, I’m just not going to leave my land and go to this other land?” What would that tell us about Abraham?

What kind of faith was God asking Abraham to have in Genesis 12? What about in Genesis 15?

Do you have any areas of your life that are kind of like either of these stories? Where is God asking you to trust him, or obey him?

How are trusting God and obeying God related? How can this help you know what it means when we talk about “believing in God”?



Family Devotions



God's Covenant with Abraham

Scripture: Genesis 17:1-8, Genesis 22:17-19

Memory Verse: : Genesis 22:18

[The Lord said to Abraham] in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.

For My Family

Last time we learned about how God called Abraham—he told Abraham to leave his land, and promised that he would give Abraham the new land, and promised that Abraham and Sarah would have children. Today we're going to learn something else about Abraham that's very important.

When God called Abraham, he made a “covenant” with him. (Go ahead and say it—covenant.) What's a covenant? A covenant is a group of promises someone makes. When God makes a covenant, He makes a bunch of promises and says: “I will do these things. You can count on it.” And that's what God did for Abraham. He promised Abraham would have children. He promised Abraham's children would have children—so many, it would be like trying to count the stars! And He promised that Abraham's children's children would have the land of Israel for their home. What amazing promises! And when God makes promises—He always, always keeps them. As you read the Bible, you see that Abraham's family wasn't always very good. They didn't always follow God. But God still kept His promises. (Sometimes we call that “grace.”)

And He promised something else too—He said that he would “bless” all the families of the earth through Abraham's family. This is a really important word, but you might miss it if you don't think hard. Remember what God did for Adam and Eve when he first created them? He “blessed” them! (That's in Genesis 1:28.) So everyone was blessed! But then, after Adam and Eve sinned, we hear a new word: God says a “curse” on the earth. (That's in Genesis 3:17.) “Curse” is the opposite of “bless.” And the curse on the earth meant that now, people would die, instead of living forever.

The Bible is the story about how God wasn't happy with this situation, and how He brought back the blessing back to men and women, even after we sinned. It's the story about how God loved us all so much that He decided He would do everything that had to happen for us to be blessed—and for us to live forever.

When Jesus came, we found out how God was going to keep the promise to bless all the people of the whole earth. Jesus was from Abraham's family. And because of who Jesus was, and what He did on the cross, and how He rose again, sin is being conquered, and people can have eternal life. That's definitely a blessing!

It's pretty amazing that a promise God made thousands of years ago is still affecting us today. But it's true. Jesus came to keep the promise God made to Abraham. And since we see that God kept his promises to Abraham, we can know that He'll always keep His promises to us.

Questions for Young Children:

What is a “covenant”?

What promises did God make to Abraham?

Questions for Teens and Pre-teens

What is a “covenant”?

What promises did God make to Abraham?

How is Jesus related to Abraham?

Are there any promises of God that are hard for you to believe?

How can seeing how God kept his promises in the Bible help you trust the promises for your life?



Family Devotions



The Birth of Isaac

Scripture: Genesis 18:1-15, Genesis 21:1-8 (and also Romans 4:16-25)

Memory Verse: : 1 John 2:25

And this is the promise that He has promised us-- eternal life.

For My Family

In these passages we learn about how God kept his promise to Abraham, not only by sending Jesus later on, but also in a way Abraham could see. God had told Abraham that he would have a child, and then Isaac was born. God loved Abraham. He wanted to give him the very thing Abraham most wanted.

In Genesis 18 we see how hard it was for Abraham and Sarah to believe that God would really do this. When God came to Abraham, Sarah was in the tent (they lived in a big tent) preparing food for the meal. She heard God make the promise, and she laughed! It sounded funny to her—after all, she and Abraham were both very old. They were way too old to have children; at least, way too old for people to have children in most normal circumstances. But this was different, because God was involved.

In fact, it seems like God wanted it this way. He waited till Abraham and Sarah were so old that anyone who heard the promise would think, “That’s impossible! No one that old can have children!” This happens all the time in the Bible. God likes to go somewhere where the situation seems impossible, and then He says, “But watch what I can do.” Sometimes He makes strong walls fall down. Sometimes when professional fishermen are afraid of drowning, He makes winds and waves just stop.

And sometimes He sends a baby. Like when the Israelites were stuck as slaves in Egypt—no army was strong enough to free them. So he sent a baby. And that baby, Moses, grew up to free the people. Or when he wanted to rescue the whole world from sin. What did he do? He sent a baby. That baby was born to poor parents when the Roman Empire ruled the world with an unbeatable army. But that baby, whose name was Jesus, grew up to conquer all evil, and even beat death itself.

What a great God! He’s so powerful that He can do what seems impossible to us. And why does He do it? So that we’ll trust Him. So that we won’t panic when things look difficult. And so that, no matter how bad things get, we’ll always think thoughts like, “Well, I don’t know what’s going to happen here, but I know that, no matter what, Jesus is going to come back, be the King, and fix everything. And then, I’ll be safe, with Him, in His kingdom.”

That’s why the Apostle Paul writes, in Romans 4, that Abraham “did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform.” When we trust in Jesus, He stirs up this same kind of strong faith in us.

Questions for Young Children:

What Did God promise to Abraham?

What did Sarah do when she heard the promise?

Why did she laugh?

Questions for Teens and Pre-teens

Are there things that God has promised that you know some people laugh at?

What was God's response to Sarah's laughing? What do you think about that response?

What do you think it was like for Abraham and Sarah to hold Isaac after he was born?

What promises of God are you waiting on?



Family Devotions



Jacob and Esau

Scripture: Genesis 25:21-34

Memory Verse: : John 6:35

Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

For My Family

Throughout the Bible, God shows us what is important to Him and what should be important to us. In this story we see two brothers make two very different choices. Esau chooses what seems right in his own eyes; Jacob chooses what is right to God.

We all know that we need food to live and the Bible talks about food all the time! There are instructions on how to make certain foods and descriptions of meals. God tells the Israelites that the Promised Land is flowing with “milk and honey.” Jesus frequently ate with his disciples. In fact, there is even a feast when we get to heaven! Food fills us for the moment, but, as much as we like food, God has even greater better things for us. After a long day in the fields, Esau was so hungry that he was willing to sell his birthright to his (slightly) younger brother, Jacob, for a bowl of beans. The birthright was a special privilege and duty for the oldest son; it meant that he would receive a greater inheritance and would be the spiritual leader of the whole family- a blessing from God. Esau was more interested in taking care of his physical hunger than the much better gift of a birthright! If Esau’s attention was on God and His best gifts, he may have realized that a bowl of beans is not worth giving up such a special present.

Think about all the things that we see around us that we might want: clothes, toys, games, even food. You might describe our desire for these things as a “hunger.” Now, they aren’t bad things, but they fade when compared to God’s greatest gifts: love, grace, freedom from sin, the hope and purpose He gives our lives! These gifts are eternal and have spiritual value that will last long after any clothes, toys, or meals. Jacob isn’t a perfect brother, but he can see what is more important. Unlike Esau, he doesn’t allow his hunger for temporary things to blind him from the gift of greater value.

Questions for Young Children:

What has more value: soup or a birthright?

What is one of God's greatest gifts to us?

Questions for Pre-teens

What are some material things that you have put before God's eternal gifts?

Why did you choose the lesser of the gifts?

How can you prepare yourself to make the right choices when you're "hungry" like Esau?

Questions for Teens and Pre-teens

Can you think of a way that you have traded spiritual blessings for momentary physical or material benefits?

Why did you make that choice?

How can Jesus' words in John 6:35: "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst," connect to this story?



Family Devotions



Jacob Wrestles with God

Scripture: Genesis 32:22-32

Memory Verse: Genesis 32:28

“And He said, ‘Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel: for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed.’”

For My Family

Jacob had spent his entire life only caring about what he wanted. He stole the blessing from his brother. He lied to his father. He mistreated his wives. He was sneaky in dealing with his brother in law. He was not honest when he saw his brother again. After all of this God waited until Jacob was alone to deal with him. God approached Jacob once he had sent everyone else away. God’s goal was not to embarrass Jacob. His goal was to get Jacob to submit, change, and rely on Him. God loved Jacob so much that He didn’t want Jacob to continue being selfish and dishonest. God took Jacob, even with all of his faults, and made him into God’s chosen son. God used Jacob to show us that God does not choose us because of how great we are (Jacob was far from a good man) but because of how good God is. God loves us and will forgive us no matter what we have done.

Jacob (now named Israel) would not be able to move well on his own, but would need to lean on a walking stick for the rest of his life. Every time he would take a step and feel that pain in his hip, he would be reminded of how God had cared enough to visit him and choose him even though he was not a good man. He would also know how much he needed rely on God to walk through life just like he needed to rely on his stick to walk through the fields.

Have you ever gotten in trouble or corrected in front of other people? Was it embarrassing? God does not want to embarrass us... but instead He prefers to teach us quietly when no one else is looking. That is one of the reasons God gave us His Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will tell us when we are doing something wrong. He tells us quietly in our hearts so only we can know just like God waited until Jacob was all alone before He wrestled with him.

Questions for Young Children:

Why did God choose to cripple Jacob?

How does God talk to us now?

Questions for Pre-teens and Teenagers

How does God talk to us now?

Are you willing to listen to God if He speaks to you?



Family Devotions



Joseph and His Brothers (part 1)

Scripture: Genesis 37

Memory Verse: : Genesis 45:5

But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life.

For My Family

Are you a child in a large family? Are you an only child? Do you have lots of brothers and sisters; maybe cousins and nieces and nephews, aunts and uncles? Or is it just you and your parents? Joseph was a member of a large family; he had eleven brothers! With lots of brothers can come lots of love, fun, games, and adventures. But sadly, at times come heartbreak, anger, and even hatred. Have you ever experienced a time where you were so angry at one of your family members you just wanted to be rid of them, at least for a little while? There's an old saying that goes "we always hurt the ones we love". This was true in Joseph's family – his brothers sold him into slavery because of things he had said about them. They were hurt by what he said (only because they didn't understand the dreams God had given Joseph), so they hurt Joseph. But through all the hardships Joseph experienced, he never lost his faith in God, and he never stopped behaving the way God wanted him to behave.

Maybe you've been hurt by something a family member has said or done to you, and you've hurt them back by trying to "get even". Maybe you've hurt a family member by something you've said and they hurt you back by trying to "get even". Has this ever ended nicely for either one of you? I doubt it. You've probably both just ended up being hurt, angry and maybe even in trouble from your parents. Although in the end Joseph and his brothers were reunited and forgave each other, it was years of separation and sadness for the whole family; especially their father. Jesus tells us to love each other the same way he loves us. We can avoid a lot of sadness, heartache and hurt feelings if we love and forgive each other the way Jesus loves and forgives us!

*Write the names of every family member on a piece of paper, fold them up, and put them in a bowl. Have everyone secretly draw a name, making sure that they end up with someone else in the family. Challenge each other to do something nice for that member of the family every day this week. You might do one of their chores for them, write them an encouraging note or let them choose the game that you are going to play.

Questions for Young Children:

Why were Joseph's brothers mad at him?

Does God love any one of His children more than another?

How does God want us to treat our family members?

Questions for Pre-teens

Why did God let Joseph's brothers sell him in to slavery?

How have you hurt a family member or been hurt by a family member and how could you have handled the problem better?

Questions for Teens and Pre-teens

What is an area in your life in which you are harboring anger for a family member? What should you do about it?

At 17 years of age, Joseph was receiving dreams from the Lord; is there an area in your life where God is trying to speak to you but you are refusing to listen?

Joseph's hardships came as a result of people being angry about God's working in his life. Are your hardships a result of people being angry about God's working in your life, or a result of your own pride and selfishness?



Family Devotions



Joseph and His Brothers (part 2)

Scripture: Genesis 42-45

Memory Verse: : Genesis 50:20

As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.

For My Family

Have you ever heard the saying, “what goes around, comes around”? We often say it to friends when warning them about doing something they might later regret. It means, be careful what you do or how you treat someone now, because you may get treated the same way or have something similar happen to you later on. Someone should have given this warning to Joseph’s brothers before they sold him into slavery. Years later, after he had been a slave and a prisoner, he was made the second-in-command of all Egypt. Then when a famine came upon all the land, Joseph’s brothers had to go begging for food from Joseph. This would have been the perfect opportunity for Joseph to get revenge on his brothers by refusing to give them food, throwing them in prison, or even having them killed; all things he could have done as the second most powerful person in Egypt.

Have you ever been in a position where you could get revenge on a brother or sister, or someone else in your life? Joseph chose to take care of his brothers rather than seeking revenge because God helped him to understand His (God’s) bigger plan (Gen. 50:20). God used Joseph to not only save his brothers, but to be the “savior” of the Hebrew nation. Because of Joseph’s actions, what was a family of 70 people grew in to a mighty nation of millions of people. It’s important you remember this when you have the chance to get revenge, or “get even” with someone else. Rather than getting revenge, think about what your actions may lead to. You’re probably not going to help start a brand new nation, but you could be a witness that leads someone to the Lord! If you seek revenge, someone may look at your actions and say, “If that’s how a Christian acts, I don’t want to be one”, or they may see the love and forgiveness you give to someone after they’ve wronged you and say, “If that’s how a Christian acts, then I want to be one”.

Remember what the scriptures teach us in 1 Peter 3:9, “Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.”

Questions for Young Children:

How did Joseph show his love and forgiveness to his brothers?

How can you show your forgiveness to your brother(s), sister(s), or friend(s)?

Questions for Pre-teens

How did Joseph become the second most powerful person in Egypt?

Why did God allow Joseph to be a slave and go to prison before making him the pharaoh's right hand man?

How did Joseph's actions lead to starting a great nation?

Questions for Teens and Pre-teens

How was Joseph a "type of Christ"?

Revenge may seem like it will bring us satisfaction. What are the "bigger picture" things we need to think about when considering revenge?



Family Devotions



Moses

Scripture: Exodus 1:8-2:10; Hebrews 11:23

Memory Verse: : Psalm 112:1

Praise the Lord! How blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who greatly delights in His commandments.

For My Family

Fear is something that we all experience. People fear of all sorts of things: heights, spiders, death, and the dark just to name a few. When we are faced with fear, we are also faced with a decision of how to deal with it. Sometimes fear is appropriate and even helpful. A healthy fear of heights can be good if it keeps you from getting too close to the edge of a cliff. However, fear can also be destructive if it is misplaced. Some people have such a strong fear of heights that they aren't able to ride an elevator or climb stairs. That type of fear enslaves instead of protects.

Throughout this passage, we see people respond in various ways to their fears. Shiprah and Puah, the Egyptian midwives, had to deal with a fear of disobeying the Pharaoh's orders which could have led to their deaths. Their fear of the Lord, however, was greater than their fear of man. Jochabed, Moses' mother (Ex. 6:20), had to deal with the fear of losing her baby by placing him in a basket in the river. She conquered this fear by entrusting her baby to God. Miriam, Moses' sister, had to deal with the fear of getting caught as she approached the Pharaoh's daughter (the same Pharaoh who had ordered Israelite boys murdered) and attempted to reunite her baby brother and her mother. Miriam put her faith in God and pushed through this fear, knowing that God was mightier than any person - even the most powerful person on earth at the time.

When we go through things that cause us fear, we, like Miriam, can have confidence that God is on our side and is greater than any circumstances in this world. We become slaves to our fears when we let the fears of this life dictate our actions. Whether we think about it or not, we often let the fear of man dictate how we think, talk, or act. We may participate in an un-Christ-like discussion or laugh at an unkind joke because we fear what people would think of us if we don't. The fear of not fitting in often dictates our actions, speech, dress, and decisions in unhealthy ways. We may even align with unbiblical beliefs or go along with certain trends because we fear that we will be seen as uneducated or foolish if we don't.

Pharaoh chose to kill thousands of innocent babies because of his fear of man. He feared that the Israelites were becoming so great in number that they could defeat him and his army. The fear of man can cause us to do some irrational and terrible things. Rather than fear man, we should fear the Lord for He is mighty and greatly to be praised. The fear of the Lord will lead us to peace, truth, and clarity. For Christians, fearing the Lord doesn't mean that we need to be scared of Him, but that we revere Him in such a way that it affects how we live our lives. If I revere the Lord, I am going to respect Him, obey Him, submit to His discipline, and worship Him in awe. The fear of the Lord brings about good things. This passage offers us a beautiful example of that truth. Fearing the Lord, Moses' Mother entrusted her baby to God, and as a result, Moses was returned to her.

Questions for Young Children:

Why did Pharaoh want to kill all the baby Israelite boys?

What are some things that you are scared of, and how can you give these fears to God?

Why should we fear/have reverence for God? (Parents may want to explain what reverence means)

Questions for Pre-teens

What does it mean to fear the Lord?

What are some ways in which you have a “fear of man” or seek the approval of others?

What are some things in your life that you fear right now? Have you handed them over to the Lord?

Questions for Teens

Read Proverbs 1:7. How does the fear of the Lord give us wisdom?

Are there any matters in your life for which you are seeking God’s wisdom?

Where in your life is the “fear of man” greater than the fear of the Lord? Can we pray together for these areas?

Is there anything in your life you are afraid to hand over to the Lord, because you want to hold on to it instead?



Family Devotions



Moses called by God

Scripture: Exodus 3-4:17; 2 Corinthians 12:9-10

Memory Verse: : Exodus 3:14

God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM”; and He said, “Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”

For My Family

Throughout Scripture we see God call ordinary people to do extraordinary things. The common trait amongst the heroes of Scripture is not their intellect, special skill, or strength – rather it is that they are all flawed. God came to Moses in a spectacular way, speaking to him directly through a burning bush. There was no mistaking God’s calling on Moses’ life. God told Moses exactly who He was (I AM) and what He wanted Moses to do (rescue the Israelites from Egypt). However, even though God was very clear about His plan for Moses, Moses kept making excuses for why God had the wrong guy for the job. Moses failed to realize initially that his skillset, or lack thereof, did not matter to God. What did matter was that God had called him and He would be with him. The I AM would provide Moses with all he needed to accomplish the task – if Moses would trust in Him.

In the same way that God called people throughout Scripture like Moses, Ruth, David, and Mary for specific jobs, God continues to call His children today. God may be calling you to talk to a friend about Him. He may be calling you to volunteer your time to a specific ministry. He may be calling you to be an example of obedience to your siblings. He may be calling you to forgive someone in your life or show kindness to someone. God calls us in different ways – we don’t all have God speaking to us through a burning bush. When we sense God speaking to us – through His Word, by an impression on our hearts, through another person, etc. – we should examine God’s Word to be sure it aligns with God’s truth, spend time in prayer talking to God about it, seek the counsel of other believers, and step forward in faith. We don’t need to evaluate whether we are good enough or skilled enough to be used by God – we aren’t. However, the I AM who calls us is also the One who will give us what we need to accomplish His work. When you feel like you aren’t brave enough – I AM. When you feel like you aren’t well spoken enough – I AM. When you feel you aren’t good enough – I AM. God often calls us to do things outside of our comfort zone, because He wants us to trust in Him and not ourselves.

2 Corinthians 12:9-10 says “He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.” 2 Corinthians 12:9-10

Questions for Young Children:

What is the name God tells Moses to use for Him?

Why was Moses scared to do what God asked Him to do?

What is one thing you think God may want you to do (at school, at home, etc.)?

Questions for Pre-teens

Why do you think God uses the name I AM with Moses?

Have you ever felt that God has called you to do anything specific? How did you respond?

Are you willing to be used by God and to answer His calling in your life? What may be standing in the way of you being willing to be used by Him?

Questions for Teens

Why would God choose us to carry out his purposes rather than doing it supernaturally?

How does it make you feel when you read 2 Corinthians 12:9-10?

How can you decipher the difference between God's calling and your personal desires?

Are there any reasons you feel like God may not be able to use you? What do you think God would say to you concerning these flaws/weaknesses?



Family Devotions



The Ten Plagues

Scripture: Exodus 7:14-24 and 11:1-10

Memory Verse:

"This is what the Lord says: By this you will know that I am the Lord "

For My Family

Pharaoh quickly summoned Moses and Aaron and said, "I have sinned against the Lord your God and against you." (Exodus 10:16). In this verse Pharaoh demonstrates the urgency to stop the devastation to his land and admits his sin. "Now forgive my sin once more and pray to the Lord your God to take this deadly plague away from me." (Exodus 10:17) Pharaoh's problem was that everytime the Lord relented and brought an end to one of the plagues, he would harden his heart and would not let the Hebrews go free. God proved to Pharaoh ten times that He was the true God. He sent locusts and gnats, He brought darkness and sickness, He turned the water to blood and sent fiery hail from the sky. He proved He has power over life and death itself, and still Pharaoh would not give in.

Pharaoh thought that he was all powerful, he was the king and no one could tell him what to do. He would not allow God to have any authority in his life, and he would do things the way that he wanted to.

Ignoring God and doing things our own way is called sin. Adam ignored God and ate the fruit in the Garden of Eden, Jonah ignored God and sailed as far away from Nineveh as he could. You and I are really good at doing things our own way and not listening to what God wants us to do. We like to pretend that we are in control of our own lives and can do what ever we want.

God has proven to you and I that He is the true God, but in a different way. He didn't send plagues of lice, flies or frogs, He sent His Son, Jesus Christ to die on a cross for our sins. He sent us the Holy spirit to lead us in all truth and counsel us. He gave us His Word to read and know who He is.

We have been sent all of these incredible things to know who God is, will we be like Pharaoh and keep doing the things we have always done? Or will we say to Him that He is God and we are not and start to live life the way that He has asked us to?

Questions for Young Children:

What did God send to Pharaoh?

How many plagues did He send?

What has God sent to you and I?

Questions for Teens and Pre-teens

Why would Pharaoh not surrender and give in to God?

The bible says that Pharaoh “hardened his heart,” what do you think that means?

How has God proven to you and I that He is real?



Family Devotions



The Red Sea

Scripture: Exodus 14: 19-31; the parting of the Red Sea

Memory Verse: : Isaiah 55:8

“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,” says the Lord.”

For My Family

Moses and all of God’s people have just escaped Pharaoh, the King of Egypt. It looks like their lives are going fast and straight toward better days and times. No more slavery, no more captivity – just serving the good God who rescued them.

Then they realize that Pharaoh is chasing them with plans to have his slaves back. Pharaoh knows the desert and that Moses and God’s people are now squeezed between wide, deep water in front, and Egypt’s army’s behind, them. Pharaoh thinks Moses and the people are “bewildered by the land, and that the wilderness has closed them in”¹ so they should be easy to recapture. Even God’s people think they are trapped and ask Moses “have you taken us to die in the wilderness ²? So almost everybody has got the same idea --- God’s people are trapped and Pharaoh is the sure winner. Bet all your money on it. But what almost everyone does not expect happens – God rescues His people by a miracle. The deep water is split into two parts and the people cross on dry land. When Pharaoh and his men try the same amazing road the water closes in and destroys Egypt’s army. How about that -- the thing that both sides thought was a trap was a design of God to benefit His people, not to harm them.

Our lives will have times when the things going on will appear like one thing, but may actually be a very different thing. There will always be the perfect purpose of God in all our situations, but we will only be able to take comfort in all these easy, and hard, things when we seek God in prayer and His Word, the Bible. Remember, the trap that was not a trap for God’s people was shown in advance to Moses³. Moses had God’s peace and did not fear the “trap”.

Seek Him when you feel trapped. Just as importantly, seek Him even when you feel certain. Seek Him and “the Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace”⁴.

Exodus 14:3
Exodus 14:11
Exodus 14:13
Exodus 14:14

Questions for Young Children:

Count the amazing things God really did in this true Bible story. I found three things – how many do you find?

Does God still know how to do amazing things for people? Could He even do them for your family? What might an amazing thing be you would like God to do?

Questions for Pre-teens

Why would Pharaoh keep chasing after he had suffered all the plagues and the loss of the first born children of Egypt? (By the way, this is called a self-destructive action).

With that said, what are some foolish or dangerous things that students you know may be tempted by? Also, how do adults and students sometimes persuade themselves that these foolish things are worth risking their lives and happiness over?

Questions for Teens

What spiritual and physical muscles were God's people to be building while first wandering in the desert <Exodus 13:17>? Is some situation pinching you now that is meant to build you up? What ways can a woman or man hold on while going through a tough building up process?



Family Devotions



The Ten Commandments

Scripture: Exodus 20:1-17

Memory Verse: : 1John 5:3

“For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.”

For My Family

Everybody knows that God has rules, right? Some people love to complain that He has too many rules, or rules that are just too tough or unfair. And when it comes to God and His rules, one famous and tough to live by set of rules is the ten that He gave Moses.

During the time Moses was on the mountain getting these ten rules, it was frightening to be nearby. The entire mountain where God was meeting Moses was full of darkness, earthquakes, thunder, and lightning (Exodus 19:16-20), and no one was to come near it unless invited by God Himself (Exodus 19:12-13). When you stop to think about it, some people even feel these same feelings about God's ten rules – being frightened since they wrongly think that they must come from an angry, rule-making, no-excuses kind of God. Some people have even been so frightened of these rules and God that they have made a business out of creating more rules to wildly expand and explain those original ten rules just so no one ever makes a mistake with this angry God they fear.

The truth is, however, that living as a Christian with the God who is the giver of these rules reveals something quite different from that wrong set of ideas about Him. The God who loves us enough to give His Son's life to rescue us from sin is not into writing rules to boss us around or shutdown our enjoyment of life. God's rules are given to protect us, not to make scared puppets or robots out of us. God guides us with rules because He wants our lives to have the best things, and not the hurtful things that will naturally occur after breaking God's good rules. Like John says, “... His commandments are not burdensome...” (1 John 5:3). When I can trust that God loves me and knows what is best, then I can start to see that His commandments give me much more liberty than they do restrictions.

Questions for Young Children:

“Burdensome” is like you are carrying something that is so heavy that it is hard to walk and it quickly also makes you too tired to keep walking.

Sometimes even good rules can seem bossy and no fun. But what happens if I don’t listen to my parents about brushing my teeth? Is it more fun to visit the dentist? Or what happens if I decide not to stop my bike at stop signs? Or if I always want to play with candles when they are lit? What are two other rules you can think of that really help you, even though you may not like them very much?

Questions for Pre-teens

The ten rules, or commandments, used to be frequently written in places outside of US courthouses. Now many people complain that this is unlawful in our modern country and that these plaques should all be taken down. Why do people who do not love God not like His ten rules being where they can see them?

Some people say that some sins are worse than other sins. But we know for a fact that all sin is wrong. Why do you think people sometimes want some sins to be worse than others? What do they think they are gaining with this man-made system?

Questions for Teens

Hollywood does not always report Scripture accurately, and sometimes our memories fail us. Consider (contrary to the old Bible movie “The Ten Commandments”) whether God first gave Moses the law orally or on stone tablets (Exodus 20:1 and Exodus 24:12 and 31:18). Notice at which stage the people said they had fully bought into God’s commandments (Exodus 24:3).

We all know that there is more to having a rule than simply hearing it. Aaron heard God’s 10 rules when first delivered, yet what is he up to a few chapters later (Exodus 32)? What are the multiple causes that may have made Aaron a hearer, but not a doer, of the first few commandments given to Moses?



Family Devotions



Golden Calf

Scripture: Exodus 32

Also Psalm 135:15-18 and Romans 1:23

Memory Verse: Deuteronomy 6:5

“You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.”

For My Family

The nation of Israel had been rescued from the Egyptian army as God freed them from slavery (Exodus 14:1-12), parted the red sea for them to pass (14:13-31), led them safely into the desert while providing them food and drink (16:1-31), and gave them ten commandments to help them become a great nation (20:1-17). He gave them good things and was a good God to them. But after awhile they thought God forgot about them and they wanted to worship a pretend god that they could see, so they created a statue of a calf made from gold and called it a god (Exodus 32). That golden calf statue is called an idol because they began to worship that instead of God. How do you think that made God feel?

Sometimes we can be like that with God. We are happy when God does good things in our life and gives good gifts to us. But because we can't see him, we can forget about Him. Then when we think something “better” comes along, we choose that thing instead of God. Whatever that thing is – friends, money, sports, entertainment, accomplishments – even when they are good things, they can become bad things when they take the place of God. Anything that takes the place of God is called an idol.

Is there something in your life right now that is more important to you than God? What do you spend most of your time thinking about? Just like a golden calf statue could not give the nation of Israel the safety and protection that God did, nothing in our life can give us the joy, the peace, and the unconditional love that only Jesus can.

Questions for Young Children:

What did the people of Israel decide to worship instead of God?

How did they make a golden calf statue?

Was that golden calf statue (idol) able to love the people like God did?

Questions for Pre-teens

What is an idol?

What are the good things in your life than can become idols?

How do they become idols (Romans 1:23)?

Questions for Teens

Where does our culture say we get our value, significance, and security?

How do those things fit into what Psalm 135:15-18 is saying?

Why are we inclined to give worth to things we see and feel instead of worship to God?

“Idols are anything that we seek to give us what only God can give”



Family Devotions



The Tabernacle

Scripture: Exodus 25:1-9; John 1:14; Revelation 21:3

Memory Verse: : Revelation 21:3

“And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.’”

For My Family

Have you ever slept over a friend’s house? There is something about sleeping in your friend’s room, about living with them for a night, that makes you feel like you and your friend are family. Living with someone, whether with your family or with your friend for a night, draws you closer to that person. This is why God commands the children of Israel to build Him a tabernacle in the midst of their camp. He wanted to live among the people and have a relationship with them, as He says in Exodus 25:8, “And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them.” That sanctuary, the tabernacle, would be the place God would dwell among His people.

Throughout the Bible, we see God’s desire to dwell with His people. In the Garden of Eden before Adam and Eve sinned, God walked with them. After the tabernacle, God’s presence dwelt in Israel’s temple. John 1:14 tells us that eventually, God dwelt among humanity in the man Jesus Christ. Yet every time, sin separated humanity from that presence. Adam and Eve’s sin meant exile from Eden. The tabernacle and temple were both destroyed because of Israel’s sin. Humanity crucified Christ. Sin ruins our fellowship with God, yet despite all of that, God still seeks to draw near to us.

Before man can be in God’s presence, sin must be dealt with. The tabernacle may have been a place of fellowship, but it was also a place of sacrifice. Before anyone could come into God’s presence in the tabernacle, they had to offer sacrifices. However, the good news for us is that our sin has already been taken care of. As believers, we can come into God’s presence without sacrifices because Jesus offered the ultimate Sacrifice, Himself, on the cross.

In Revelation 21:3, the Apostle John sees a day coming in the future where God will dwell among His people in Heaven forever. There will be no more sin to separate us from Him. He will live among us for all eternity, and we will be His people, and He will be our God. What a wonderful day that will be!

Questions for Young Children:

What are all the different ways God has lived among His people in the Bible?

What keeps God from being able to dwell among His people?

How does it feel to know that God wants to live among us?

Questions for Pre-teens

What do we learn about God from the fact that He keeps finding new ways to dwell among His people even though they sin?

Why do we no longer need the tabernacle to come into God's presence?

How does Revelation 21:3 affect your view of what Heaven is like?

Questions for Teens

Why does sin disrupt God's ability to live with His people?

What does the tabernacle teach us about the character of God?

How does God dwell among His people today?



Family Devotions



Gideon

Scripture: Judges 7:2-21

Memory Verse: Proverbs 3:4-5

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding;
In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.

For My Family

This Bible story starts with a problem: enemies of God's people want to fight with them. The funny thing is that God tells Gideon, leader of Israel's armies, that he has too many guys to fight the Midianites. Wouldn't you think you'd win if you had more help?

Gideon follows God's instructions, and first sends home anyone who is afraid. Lots of guys leave, but God says there are still too many for him to let Israel win the battle. Wouldn't you now be afraid if you were Gideon and saw how many men you had left?

Gideon follows God's instructions again and has all the remaining warriors take a drink. Most of the warriors got down on all fours, and slurp up water from the stream. Only a small amount of them brought the water to their mouth. God told Gideon that these 300 would be the ones to go and fight for Israel, and that they would win.

Gideon must have been so afraid. He snuck into the Midianites' camp and overheard the enemies talk. They were talking about a loaf of bread rolling and crashing into a tent. Gideon was encouraged. He wasn't afraid anymore. He knew that the Lord would help them win the battle.

Right away, he went to his soldiers. He told them the battle plan: walk up, smash your pot when you hear a trumpet, and then shout "the sword of the Lord and of Gideon." The 300 soldiers do what they are told. After the trumpeting, smashing, and shouting, the Midianites' camp goes into chaos. They all run away. No bow and arrows are ever used. No spears. God hands the victory to His people.

Gideon's 300 men won without using any weapons because God handed them a victory. Sometimes God has to make odds seem impossible to prove He is in control and that He is faithful. Do I have to "slim down" to allow God to work in my life? What needs to be let go? Be faithful to let God get the credit for what he produces in your life.

Questions for Young Children:

What did God tell Gideon to do to make the army smaller?

How did God's people win the battle?

Questions for Preteens

Why did God want a small army instead of the big one that was there at first?

Gideon was obedient each time God slimmed down the army. God tells all children to honor and obey their parents. Why do you think this is important?

What do you think obedience will produce in your life?

Questions for Teenagers

Fear can produce different results in people.

Talk about how each person's fear was different (verse 3, verse 10, verse 14).



Family Devotions



Jesus Returns to the Disciples

Scripture: 1 Samuel 9:15 – 10:1, 10:17 – 24

Memory Verse: 1 Samuel 16:7b

“For the Lord does not see as man sees: for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”

For My Family

God had been king of Israel up until now and Samuel was their judge, but the people wanted a human king like the other nations. They rejected God. They didn't want Him to be their king anymore and God chose to give them a human king. He chose Saul to be the first king of Israel. Saul was tall, handsome, and strong - everything you would expect in a king. Except that isn't how God looks at people. He looks at people's character. Saul started out well but he quickly became impatient, unkind, cruel, selfish, and, worst of all, he turned away from God. This didn't come as a surprise to God. He hadn't chosen Saul because of any of the things we mentioned before. He chose Saul because He wanted to teach Israel not to choose people based on the way they look. They wanted a king that looked like a king, one that they could see and admire, but he was not what they needed. One day Saul would be replaced by a man that cared about the same things God cared about.

The first thing that we should learn from this passage is not to try and be like everyone else around us. The Israelites decided that they wanted to be like all of the other nations and have a King. God, however, wanted the Israelites to be different. He wanted them to stand out because of their love and devotion to Him. Are you tempted to fit in with the crowd? Do you face peer pressure at school? God doesn't want you to look and act like everyone else, He wants you to be you! More than that though, He wants you to show the world who He is by being different than everyone else. What ways can you show Jesus to the people around you by being different than others?

Secondly, we should not be worried about what we, or others, look like. It is fine to take care of ourselves by bathing or showering, brushing our teeth or our hair, etc., but that should not be what we spend a lot of time thinking about. Instead, God cares about our character. Are we patient? Are we kind? Are we loving? Are we willing to put other people first? Do we love God more than anything else? If the answer to any of those questions is no, then we should work on those things. However, we don't have to work on them by ourselves. God said He would give us His Holy Spirit to live inside of us and the Holy Spirit's character would become our character. The Bible says the Holy Spirit's character is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal 5:22). We can be more like Him if we ask Him to live in us and are willing to do what He asks us too.

Questions for Young Children:

Why did the people want a King?

Why did the people think that Saul would be a good King?

Questions for Preteens

Are the kids at your school more concerned about the way that other people look, or about their character?

In what ways have you 'judged a book by its cover' and been wrong?

Questions for Teenagers

Is there a pressure in school or amongst your friends to fit in or to look a certain way?

What can you do to avoid peer pressure?



Family Devotions



Saul Rejected

Scripture: 1 Samuel 13:4-14; 15:1; 17-26; 35a

Memory Verse: 1 Samuel 15:23b

“Because thou has rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king.”

For My Family

We need to read this warning from the Lord. It is never acceptable to reject or compromise the Word of God. There's nothing on earth that allows even a tiny sin against what God commands - no pressure, army, fear, suffering, loneliness, or doubt. We live in a world that likes superficial spirituality and is pressure-filled and fast-paced. The world today, as in Saul's time, encourages us to use our senses, to rely on what we see, touch, and feel to understand what is good and bad. Not the Word of God.

Saul judged with his eyes he was facing an army of “people as the sand” alone. His army was hiding in caves and Samuel was late to make the offerings. Priests were to offer sacrifices. Kings were to rule over the people. But yielding to the pressure, Saul called for the sacrifices (burnt offerings and peace offerings) and offered them. Immediately Saul was rejected as the forever king (1 Sam 13:13-14) and he never saw Samuel again. Sadly, we can make the same mistake as Saul and think that God delights in sacrifice rather than obedience. We can put on a mask of phony, false religion that looks good to a casual observer, but that never pleases God, is not submitted to the Lord or the Word of God, and can continue like Saul's reign for another 20 years depriving us of a living relationship with God.

Saul rejected the written Word of God, the Word of God explained by Samuel at his anointing, and the “voice of the words of the Lord” spoken by Samuel. We may read His Word on a specific issue and have it confirmed by a friend or family member, only to sin later on that same issue. Remember, “the Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart.” A person that does not make excuses for sin, refuses to blame others for their failings (as Saul did in 1 Sam 15:21), and obeys God and His Word.

Questions for Young Children:

What did Saul do wrong?

How can you hear the Word of the Lord? (By reading the bible)

Questions for Pre-teens

Does Saul's repentance in chapter 13 seem genuine?

If Saul's repentance had been truly genuine, do you think God would have forgiven him?

Read 1 Sam 15:22. Are there sacrifices that we can make that are acceptable to God?

Questions for Teenagers

What does it mean that the Scripture is God-breathed? Without error? Unchanging?

When do you notice you are most vulnerable to temptation?

Are there any parts of God's Word that you find difficult to trust or believe?



Family Devotions



David Anointed

Scripture: 1 Samuel 16:1-13

Also Psalm 139:4,14

Memory Verse: 1 Samuel 16:7b

“For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”

For My Family

Sometimes the scriptures need to remind us that while we are made in God’s image, we are very different than God. The people of Israel wanted a King who *looked* good on the outside, but God wanted a King who was good on the inside. Even God’s prophet Samuel thought that David’s older brother Eliab would be chosen as the next King because of the way that he looked. David was the youngest, the shortest, the least impressive looking brother on the outside, but God knew what David was like in his heart. What David lacked in age or height, he made up in how much he loved God.

There is a famous saying, “You can’t judge a book by its cover.” We make this mistake all the time. We judge movies on the trailer, we choose food by how good the packaging looks. Worst of all we judge people based on the way they look. If someone wears glasses or has braces in their teeth we might think that means something about them. We might choose to be friends (or not) with someone solely based on the way that they look. More than that we might feel pressure to change the way that we look so that other people will think certain things about us.

God is far less concerned by the way we look than He is about the state of our hearts. He judges us by the way we show love towards our neighbor and by the way that we love Him. God has made us fearfully and wonderfully, and it doesn’t matter if we have red hair or blond hair, blue eyes or green, if we are tall or short. What matters to God is how we look on the inside. Do we have compassion, patience and humility? Do we say with our lips that we love God but really our hearts are far from Him? He knows our every thought, because He looks not on the outward appearance but on the heart.

Questions for Young Children:

Why did Samuel think that Eliab would be chosen as King and not David?

When God looked at David what did He see?

What does God want to see in our hearts?

Questions for Pre-teens

How can the way things or people look change the way that we think about them?

What are some ways that you have “judged a book by its cover?”

When God looks at your heart, what does He see?

Questions for Teenagers

Do you feel pressure at school (or anywhere else) to fit in by looking a certain way?

How does it make you feel when you read Psalm 139:14?

Is there anything in your heart that you need to set before the Lord?

Is there anyone that you have judged based on their appearance? Do you need to seek forgiveness from that person?



Family Devotions



David and Goliath

Scripture: 1 Samuel 17

Memory Verse: Isaiah 41:10

"So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."

For My Family

Fear and anxiety are very common in today's society. Even in David's day the men were crippled by fear. They were warriors ready for battle until they saw Goliath and fear gripped their hearts. All of them men would scream and shout to energize themselves for battle, only to see all of their courage and strength slip away at the sight of Goliath. Standing between nine and 10 feet tall Goliath was a very frightening figure, but in the proper perspective he was just a man. David could look at Goliath and see that he was a mere man defying the living God. He could remember the faithfulness of God in His life and realize that Goliath was no different than a lion or a bear, and He could move forward because of God's past faithfulness.

There is a Christian saying "Don't tell God you have a big problem, tell your problem that you have a big God". The difference between David and the men of Saul's army is that he could see Goliath in proper perspective. Many of Saul's men had seen God do mighty works. Jonathan, the son of Saul, had stepped out and defeated the Philistines in 1 Samuel 14. Yet, even he was unwilling to step out against Goliath because his perspective was clouded by fear of the giant.

Often times in life fear and anxiety are very overwhelming; however, we can choose to focus on the severity of the situation like the men in the army did, or we can continue to focus on God. The only reason that David was able to defeat Goliath was because God was with him. Just as David could trust the past faithfulness of God for a present circumstance, so can we. We can see the faithfulness of God through scriptures or in our own lives and know that God is Faithful in our current situation.

Questions for Young Children:

Who is the giant?

Why does David fight the giant?

Questions for Pre-teens

How does David fight Goliath?

What makes him confident he can win?

When you are fearful who do you trust in?

Questions for Teens

Are there "giants" in your life that make you doubt God?

How can you learn to trust in God like David?

What are some ways you can encourage the fearful around you?



Family Devotions



David the King

Scripture: 2 Samuel 2:1-7 & 2 Samuel 5:1-5

Memory Verse: Psalm 21:1

“The king shall have joy in Your strength, O Lord; And in Your salvation how greatly shall he rejoice! “

For My Family

Many years have passed since Samuel visited Jesse and his sons to anoint the next king of Israel. David, the youngest son, went from shepherd to hero, to outlaw, to king of Judah, and finally king of all Israel. Every milestone in David's life was placed there by God, because all of the difficulties and struggles formed David into the king that God knew he could be. No king after David would be as great a ruler as David was. He allowed God to shape him in the most common, and boring days in the shepherds field, the greatest days on the battle field, and the most fearful days as a fugitive.

So often we receive the promises of God and expect immediate action from Him, but sometimes, like in the life of David, we see that God works in his time and not ours. Years and years passed before David's anointing became a reality in his life. He spent many years as the future king of Israel, before anyone else ever got to see it happen. One lesson we can learn from David is that time passing does not negate any promise of God. The bible is full of promises that we as Christians are meant to trust in and believe, whether it is for healing physically, the return of a prodigal, financial provision, or any other promise found in the word of God.

David would tell us that the promises of God are worth waiting for. Sometimes it seems that God is allowing the exact opposite of the promise that we are reading and believing, when in reality God is simply working out that promise in his perfect plan. David realized as a fugitive that the best way to receive the kingship was to allow God to give it to him; the best way to receive the promises of God in your life is to trust God to work them out in His timing.

Questions for Young Children:

Who becomes king?

What is he king of?

How old was David when he became king?

Questions for Pre-teens

Why did David decide to return to Judah?

Why did Israel decide to anoint David king?

How can David's patience apply to your life?

Questions for Teens

How long did David have to wait to become king of all Israel?

What areas of your life should you be waiting for God's leading?

How can you discern God's plans?



Family Devotions



I will build you a house

Scripture: 2 Samuel 7; Luke 1:31-33

Memory Verse: 2 Samuel 7:13 “He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever”

For My Family

We don't know where and when this idea first came to David: to build God a permanent house. Was it hiding in the caves or when playing music for Saul? From the battle field after watching Goliath fall? Or did it come to David from a place of rest in the Lord like we find him at the beginning of the chapter (v. 1)? We aren't given the origin of this idea coming to David, but we are given the sense that it was the first time anyone ever wanted to build God a permanent house to replace the Tabernacle. So that makes it a big idea and desire. And once you have a desire, big or small, that you want to do for God, hearing “no” can be devastating, especially, if like David did with Nathan, you have had enough boldness to tell someone else about it.

An earthly “no” stand in stark contrast to the “no” that David got from the almighty, infinite mind of God. Hearing a no can make a person feel embarrassed or ashamed of an idea altogether. God was so gracious to David that we see none of that. With the heart David had for God, hearing that His Spirit wouldn't depart from him was probably enough. But when he heard that his family would build the house and his throne would continue forever, David was left marveling “Who am I Lord?” (v. 18). Today, we recognize that passage was a promise from God to David that his forever king, King Jesus, would rule from his throne and over his people forever. Luke 1 tells us the Lord God gave Jesus the throne of His father, and we wait now for the complete fulfillment of God's promise to David in 2 Samuel 7:13, when Jesus will return to reign on the earth in the Millennium, and then for all eternity.

Questions for Young Children:

What did David want to do for God?

What did God do for David instead?

Questions for Pre-teens

Did Nathan say the wrong thing to David? How did Nathan respond?

Have you ever desired to do something for the Lord that didn't happen yet or at all?

Questions for Teenagers

Have you ever reacted badly to a disappointment? Do you think it kept you from a blessing?

In what way would God establish the House of David forever?



Family Devotions



The Kingdom Divided

Scripture: 1 Kings 11:1-13

Memory Verse: Hosea 8:9a

“They sow the wind, and reap the whirlwind.”

For My Family

King Solomon was the wisest man who ever lived. God gifted him with wisdom, power, extreme riches and great peace in the land of Israel. But Solomon began to think more about his own needs than those of anybody else. He became so proud about himself and his riches, that he even started drinking out of cups that were made of pure gold!

Solomon started making close friends with people who were against God. Because he hung out with them, Solomon soon started acting like them. He even started walking away from God and disobeying God's commands.

God saw this right away and became angry. He told Solomon that he would be punished for his disobedience. Soon thereafter, God raised up enemies against Solomon and the peace of Israel was threatened. Then after Solomon died, all of the kingdom went to his son, Rehoboam. But God had said through the prophets that most of the kingdom would be taken away from Solomon's son and would be given to a servant man named Jeroboam. However, God decided to give one tribe to Rehoboam for the sake of God's servant, David, and for the sake of Jerusalem, the place God had chosen.

After the kingdom was split, Jeroboam did everything he could to make sure that his people would never reunite with Rehoboam's people. Instead of trying to bring the people of Israel together, Jeroboam built temples in the northern part of the land so that his people would not have to return every year to worship at the temple in Jerusalem. Solomon had disobeyed God in many ways, but his main sin was that his heart had turned away from the LORD. Solomon's actions eventually led the entire kingdom into sin and rebellion against God, and resulted in a great split among God's people.

Questions for Young Children:

Who was the wisest man who ever lived?
What good things did God give to Solomon?
What was the “big sin” that Solomon did?
How did God punish Solomon?

Questions for Pre-teens

What kind of things can keep you from “walking with God”?
What is the best way to choose good friends? And, what is the best way to keep good friends?
How serious is God about sin?

Questions for Teens

Did God over-react to Solomon’s sins?

The “Divided Kingdom” is in some ways just like a “Divided Family.” What must people think when they see quarrelling and bickering in our families or even in our churches?

God left a part of the kingdom in the hands of Solomon’s son, Rehoboam, “for David’s sake and the sake of Jerusalem.” What does this say about God’s faithfulness?

The scripture you have read today talks about sin and its’ devastating consequences. Discuss the memory verse in light of this truth. Remember two principles: 1) sowing comes before reaping, and 2) wind (something of little substance) can reap a whirlwind (something that leads to great destruction). can give”



Family Devotions



The Temple

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 3:1-14

Memory Verse: 1 Corinthians 3:16

“Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?”

For My Family

King Solomon built the Temple in Jerusalem thousands of years ago. His father, King David, provided the materials. It was a magnificent building where God's people would gather to pray, to worship God, and to seek God's protection and wisdom. It was sort of like the church buildings we have today, but much fancier, with gold and expensive furnishings.

But the Temple was also a place for God to be near His people. The Bible tells us that whenever God's people gather together in His Name, He will be there with them. The Temple was also called, “the house of God.” Yes, God has a house!

The Temple took 7 years to build and lasted about 700 years before it was destroyed by God's enemies, the Babylonians. God's people had become sinful and rebellious, so God used His enemies to destroy the Temple. A second Temple was built much later in Jerusalem, but it was not as great as the first. This was the Temple that Jesus knew as a child, and the place where He taught and performed many miracles. But the second Temple was also destroyed. Today, there is no Temple at all in Jerusalem, so you may ask, “Where does God meet His people now?”

The Bible says that people who trust in Jesus for salvation and for eternal life are called, “the Temple of God” (read the Memory Verse). So God has decided to live within the hearts of all believers so that He can be with each of us all the time. This is wonderful, because we don't need to be in a building to be near God. He is with us all the time.

Jesus came from Heaven to earth to be born as a child on Christmas morning, to teach us all about the love that God has for us, and to show us the way of salvation. Jesus died on the cross for our sins, rose from the dead and has returned to be with the Father in heaven. But Jesus has sent the Holy Spirit to live within the hearts of all believers. We are the “Temple of God.” Again, God is with us, now and forever.

Questions for Young Children:

What is another name for God's House?

Why does God call each of us, "His Temple"?

The Temple was great, but the one who lives in the Temple is greater. Who lives in your heart?

Questions for Pre-teens

How should you live your life, knowing that God lives within your heart?

The Bible says that the Temple was great and amazing, but the Bible also says that Jesus is much greater (Matt 12:6; 23:21). In what ways is Jesus greater than the Temple?

Questions for Teenagers

Can you tell by looking at someone whether they are a Christian with God living inside?

How does the Holy Spirit living in you enable you to live a life committed to Christ?

Since God is living in your heart, what kinds of things does He prompt you to do for Him?



Family Devotions



The Exile

Scripture: Jeremiah 29:10-14

Memory Verse: : Jeremiah 29:11 ,

For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope

For My Family

The Israelites had been taken captive. Their enemies had completely taken them over and carried them to Babylon and destroyed their land and their cities. This wasn't something that happened without warning. God had repeatedly warned the Israelites over and over to turn away from their evil ways and follow Him. Instead of listening to God, they continued in their wicked ways and God let them have the consequences of their sin. Now their enemies had taken them into captivity and they were to remain there for 70 years.

As these verses begin, the people of Israel were scared that God has abandoned them. God spoke through the prophet Jeremiah to remind his people that He had not forgotten them. He hadn't left them to die in captivity. He had a plan for them to gather His people back together in Israel when the captivity was over.

Have you ever done something you knew was wrong and then received the consequences for that action? Sometimes the consequences can come in the way of punishment, strain on a relationship, or some other hard situation. During these times, it can feel like God is far away, but He is not. Sin causes a separation between you and God, but that doesn't mean God doesn't love you. God wants you to walk with Him and follow Him. He desires to have fellowship with you, so He sent His Son, Jesus, to die on the cross to restore your relationship. He doesn't walk away from you just because you messed up. He reaches back to you to try to restore your relationship with Him.

When you feel far away from God, remember, the consequences may be hard, but they are temporary. God's love is eternal and He desires to restore that relationship with you just like He desired to restore His children, Israel. They had to reap the consequences of their actions, but they could still have fellowship with God during this time. Even in hard times, you can still have the Joy of the Lord.

Questions for Young Children:

Why were the Israelites living in a far away land?

Had God forgotten about the Israelites?

What was God's plan for them?

Questions for Teens and Pre-teens

How did God keep His promise to the Israelites?

What were the consequences of the Israelites sin?

What does this passage teach us about God's judgment?

What does this passage teach us about God's love and mercy?



Family Devotions



Daniel

Scripture: Daniel 1:1-9 & 1:17-21

Memory Verse: Romans 12:2

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

For My Family

In Daniel 6 we see how some of the king's men were jealous of Daniel and laid out a plan to have Daniel thrown into the den of lions to be killed. This wasn't just a case of Daniel being in the wrong place at the wrong time. These wicked men had never liked Daniel and it all started when he first arrived in Babylon.

Daniel and his three friends (Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego) were selected out of the group of Jewish captives and given a good position within the kingdom. They were good-looking, smart young men and the king of Babylon wanted them working for him. Now these four were probably just teenagers at the time. They were in a foreign land with new and strange customs. Many of their family and friends were living in terrible conditions as captives. It would have been very easy (probably even understandable) for them to decide to blend in. Eat like Babylonians, talk like Babylonians, and even act like Babylonians. After all, they had been given a good opportunity within the kingdom. But Daniel knew that his God, the one true and living God, wasn't interested in having these boys conformed into the image of Babylon. God wanted them to be faithful to the things they knew were right and in doing so be conformed into His image.

There are plenty of times in our lives where it is much more comfortable to fit in than it is to stand out. But in a situation where fitting in means going against what the Bible has told us is right, we need to choose either to follow the world or follow God. This decision is not always an easy one. Maybe your friends want you to do something you know is wrong. Or maybe you think you need to act a certain way to fit in at school. If the things you are considering are not honoring to God, then God wants you to stand out in faithfulness to Him. He does not want you to look like the world. He wants the world to look at you and see Him. Daniel did not know what the outcome of his faithfulness to God would be. He didn't know if the king of Babylon would have him killed for disobedience. But Daniel did know that God loved him and being faithful to the Lord would bring him more joy than the temporary pleasure of fitting in. As Daniel was faithful, God blessed him. He gained significant position within the kingdom of Babylon all because of his faithfulness to God. But his faithfulness to God is also the reason he was thrown to the lions. But all of those things, both good and bad, were conforming Daniel into who God wanted him to be. Next time you are presented with an opportunity to fit in by doing something wrong or to stand out in faithfulness to God, remember Daniel. Do we care more about the comfort of fitting in or about honoring God with our words and actions even when they make us stand out?

Questions for Young Children:

What happened to Daniel when he was faithful to God?

Questions for Preteens

Have you ever felt pressure to fit in?

What are some ways we can be faithful to God even when it means not fitting in?

How can we be more conformed into the image of God?

Questions for Teenagers

Sometimes it seems easier to just “go with the flow” instead of taking a stand in faithfulness to the Lord. Have you ever felt like there was a time where the Lord was asking you to stand for Him when it wasn’t easy?

Do you feel right now, in your life, that you look more like the world or more like God?

Is there any part of your life right now that has been “conformed into the image of the world” that you need to lay before the Lord?



Family Devotions



Jesus is Born (#2?)

Scripture: John 1:1-3, 1:14; Luke 2:1-20

Memory Verse: John 1:14

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

For My Family

Today we're reading something that might be called the greatest thing ever. It's definitely top three or so. Because when Jesus was born, God was keeping his promises—promises he made hundreds of years before. Promises like the one He made to Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:17, and to Abraham in Genesis 22:18, and to David in 2 Samuel 7:16, and to Israel in Isaiah 9:6. For all these long years God had been saying that He was sending someone who would crush the serpent, and bring back blessing to all nations, and rule over the whole world, and now, we finally find out who this person is going to be, and how He comes.

So this was beginning the final steps of God's great plan—His plan to get rid of sin and evil and save people and fix the world. And the whole plan began with...a baby. This baby was born to poor parents. Most people didn't know how important He was when He was born. But he was the one God had promised, and in fact, He was even more than that. It turned out that in some mysterious way, He was actually God Himself. And He was the Word of God. This is such a big, surprising truth, that Christians have used some big words to talk about all this. One of the big words is incarnation. (Go ahead and say it...in-car-NA-tion.) "Incarnation" just means that God is so big-hearted, so wise, and so powerful, that when the time was right, He decided he would fix things Himself—the Father sent the Son, and the Son became a little boy who was born just like everyone else (even though He had always existed), and Jesus lived with people in a very normal, ordinary way.

No one had ever imagined anything like this before. God loved humans so much that He didn't want sin to destroy all of us. He decided he would take care of the problem Himself.

That's who God is. He is the God who wants to live among us. He is the God who wants us to live forever. He is the God who sent, and the God who came. So Jesus is God...who loved us and died on the cross for our sin.

And that's what Christmas is all about. It's about the best news in the world, and how everyone can be forgiven of their sin and be friends with God and live forever. Jesus was born. Jesus is the King. And the baby King grew up to become the Savior.

Questions for Young Children:

Who was the baby that was born in the story?

Why is Jesus special?

Questions for Preteens and Teenagers

Why is this plan of God's so surprising?

Do you remember some other times God began a plan to fix things with a baby?

What things about Jesus make him just like every other person?

What things about Jesus make him different than every other person?

What do you think about calling Jesus, "the King"?



Family Devotions



Jesus is Born

Scripture: John 1:1, John 1:14, Luke 2:1-20

Memory Verse: John 1:14

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

For My Family

Many people have heard about Jesus. And maybe everyone has heard about Christmas. A lot of people even know that Christmas is all about when Jesus was born. But why do we celebrate Jesus being born? Everyone who ever lived had a day when they were born. What makes Jesus' day so special? Well, Jesus birthday is different from every other person's birthday because...the day Jesus was born was not the beginning of him. What the Gospel of John tells us is that the baby Jesus was someone very special—He was God Himself. In fact, He was God the Son. (Remember, as we learned before—the only true God lives as one God who is three persons in one—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit... kind of mysterious, but true! And it was God the Son, or as John calls him, “The Word,” who came as Jesus.)

So He had always been alive, and always been God for all of eternity. But then, one day, He came as a baby and was born like every other person. Think about it! God became a baby...and then, a man!

And when he was born, was his dad a king? Was he born in a big castle with gold and velvet pillows all around him? No...He was born to a regular family, kind of poor, on a long trip, at a time when his parents didn't even have a good room. No hospital, just a place where animals lived—a stable. That's how God came to us. Only a few people even really knew about it. But that was God's plan to fix the world. This baby.

It shows us how powerful God is. He doesn't need armies or fans or money—He just sends a baby. He just comes as someone small and weak. And that's stronger than all those other things put together.

It shows us how loving God is. He knew we needed Him to fix things for us. He knew we couldn't get to him by ourselves—we had too much sin. So, since we couldn't get to him, He came to us. He came and lived with us.

And he did it so that we could live with him, forever.

Questions for Young Children:

Was Jesus born like you?

But was Jesus alive before he was born? How?

Questions for Preteens and Teenagers

Why was Jesus' birth not like any other person's birth?

What does the birth of Jesus show us about God?

Why didn't God need to come as someone famous?

How do these things make you feel about God?



Family Devotions



Jesus Returns to the Disciples

Scripture: Matthew 4:1-11; Also Luke 4:1-13

Memory Verse: Matthew 4:1

"Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil."

For My Family

The Bible includes many stories of how Jesus lived. These stories serve as an example for us to follow. In Matthew 4:1-11, Satan tempted Jesus with three very important temptations, all of which we can directly learn from. An important backdrop is that Jesus fasted for forty days and forty nights prior, so He was obviously very hungry and weak when the temptations started. The first temptation was when Satan told Jesus to turn the stones into bread to prove he was the Son of God. Jesus replied by saying, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." Jesus would not allow earthly things (like His hunger) persuade Him to do something that the Word of God told Him not to do. The second temptation happened when Satan took Jesus to the pinnacle of the Temple. Now we know that the Temple was over 150 feet tall. Satan told Jesus to throw himself off the pinnacle of the Temple to prove that He was the Son of God and claimed that the angels would catch him safely as proof. Jesus answered and said, "It is written again, Thou shall not tempt the Lord thy God." For the third temptation, Satan took Jesus to a high mountain to view all the nations of the world, revealing all their glory and power. Satan promised Jesus that he would give Jesus all those things He saw if He would simply fall down and worship Satan. Jesus replied, "Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, 'Thou shall worship the Lord thy God, and him only shall thou serve.'" Satan was trying to convince Jesus that His sacrifice and death were unnecessary. Jesus, however, would not listen to the lies of the enemy.

Whenever Jesus was questioned He would always turn to the scriptures. God has given us His word, and His word is true. People can question or challenge or tempt you in million different ways, but if what they ask us to do goes against the truth of God's Word we must not give in to it.

How do we combat such temptation? The answer is just how Jesus did, with the Word of God. When we are faced with temptation, we need to lean on God's Word and do what it says. We should be comforted that we have a Savior, Jesus Christ, who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin (Hebrews 4:15), so not only can He relate to us and comfort us, but has given such wise and loving direction, and when we are faced with temptation we have God's Word to strengthen us and guide us through.

Questions for Young Children:

How many temptations did Jesus go through?

Where was Jesus lead when he went through the temptation?

Questions for Preteens

What did Jesus mean when He said, “Man does not live by bread alone?”

Can you remember a time when you were tempted with one of the temptations, and if so, how did you handle it?

Questions for Teenagers

Do you feel like you know the Scriptures well enough to overcome different temptations? How could you improve your Bible knowledge?

When considering each temptation, can you find the scriptural passages in the Bible that Jesus used to respond to Satan?

What kind of temptations are you or your friends confronted with at school? How about online?



Family Devotions



Jesus Heals

Scripture: Mark 2:1-12

Memory Verse: Galatians 6:2

Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

For My Family

This picture of Jesus has to do with a paralyzed man: a man who couldn't do anything for himself. His arms and legs didn't work. He couldn't scratch an itch. He needed someone to feed him, to help him with the bathroom, and to wash him. He couldn't go outside without help.

Although he had a big problem, he did have friends - four buddies. They probably all knew how hard it was for him. They all learned no smart person, or doctor, or gadget would fix their friend. These guys had an idea: bring their friend to Jesus. Sometimes, there is nothing someone can do to help, except bring their friend to Jesus.

Meanwhile, Jesus came to their town, and was teaching in a packed house. There was nowhere to move or walk inside. These four guys carried their friend to the house, but couldn't get in through the door or through the window. Instead, they took apart the roof of the house to make a hole big enough to push their friend through. It was a big job: noisy and messy. Imagine what everyone in the house was thinking as dust, dirt, and pieces of the roof fell down on top of them!

Finally, the man's bed swung down in front of Jesus. Jesus probably looked up at the four guys' faces through the busted roof and smiled. He knew how much work it took to get their friend there. It was clear to Jesus that these four buddies were sure Jesus could help their friend.

Jesus' first words to the man were that his sins were forgiven. Some people became upset because Jesus said He was forgiving sin. The guys on the roof wanted Jesus to fix his body. Next, Jesus told the man to get up and walk to prove that he can do both: forgive and heal.

Finally, the man's arms and legs were made strong. He got up for the first time in ages and walked! He even did something for himself: he took up his mat! This miracle made everyone praise God in the end.

Several people paid a cost for this man to come to Jesus. The homeowner had an open roof to deal with. The friends both carried their friend the whole way, and then labored on top of the sunny roof to get their friends in. They might have even listened to this guy complain about the ruckus they were stirring.

Am I willing to pay a cost to bring someone to Jesus (Time? Reputation? Convenience? Money?)
Am I willing to have eyes that look out for one that can't help himself/herself?
What practical steps can I take to bring someone hurting to the Lord?

Questions for Young Children:

What was wrong with man in this story?

How did his friends try to help?

What did Jesus do?

Questions for Preteens

Do you ever look around to check for others who are left out?

How can you be helpful if you see him or her?

How did the four friends show their faith in Jesus? How can you?

Questions for Teenagers

Jesus not only healed this man's body but he fixed a problem within.

Why did Jesus address forgiveness first?

Are there people in our lives that need to be brought to Jesus? How can we help to do that?



Family Devotions



Jesus casts our Demons

Scripture: Mark 5:1-20

Memory Verse: 2 Corinthians 5:17

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”

For My Family

The description of the man Mark gives us in Mark 5:2-5 is one of the scariest pictures you can imagine. This man was in all kinds of pain, lived isolated among the tombs, and did not even have control over his own body. When people saw him, they probably didn't think, “I hope he gets healed.” They wanted to get away as quickly as possible! He is probably the last person you would expect to ever follow Jesus. However, Jesus did not see him as a problem, but as a person made in the image of God that needed to be restored.

Jesus took this demon-possessed man and completely restored him to the point that the man at the end of the story is nearly unrecognizable from his description at the beginning. In fact, he had changed to the point that his neighbors were afraid to see him “clothed and in his right mind” (Mark 5:15). But the story goes on to show us that it was not just his outside that was changed. He was a new person on the inside too. When Jesus was about to leave town, the man asked and begged if he could follow Him. Then, at Jesus' request, he told everyone in that town and the surrounding area about the great things that Jesus had done for him. This man had gone from demon-possessed to passionate disciple.

Some think that Jesus came only to save “good people.” They believe that Jesus couldn't possibly forgive someone who has lived a life of sin, or that He could never change a sinner's heart. Today's story shows us that this is not true. Jesus is able to save the most wicked sinner as much as the holiest saint. There is no life that He cannot transform. And when He does save, He does not just make us “saved bad people.” We become a totally new creation! He gives us the power to turn away from our sin and follow Him and obey His commandments. The Bible tells us that Jesus gives us His Holy Spirit so that we can live for God in righteousness. That doesn't mean we will live perfectly, but for the Christian, our lives are spent becoming more and more like Jesus in our words, thoughts, and actions. Our old life before we knew Jesus is dead and gone, and we can now walk in the new life that only Jesus can give.

Questions for Young Children:

What was the demon-possessed man like before he met Jesus? What was he like after?

Did Jesus just change the man on the outside, or did He change the man's heart?

Is there anyone out there who is too sinful for Jesus to save?

Questions for Preteens

What is the difference between how other people looked at the demon-possessed man and how Jesus looked at him?

Are there any other people in the Bible who turned to God unexpectedly?

How has God transformed your life?

Questions for Teenagers

How should we look at unbelievers based on this story?

Why do you think that only the demon-possessed man, not the rest of the town, believed and trusted in Jesus?

Are there any people you know that you would never expect to be saved?



Family Devotions



The Last Supper

Scripture: Luke 22:14-20

Memory Verse: Luke 22:19

And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me."

For My Family

*Before starting this study, consider purchasing some grape juice and bread in order to take communion with your family to close.

The last thing that Jesus did with His disciples before He was betrayed was to sit down and eat a meal. We call this meal the last supper, because the very next night Jesus would be arrested and eventually crucified. Jesus knew that all of these things would happen, so He gave His disciples some special instructions. He told them to remember who He was by breaking bread and drinking wine. He told the disciples that the bread should be broken to help us remember how Jesus body was broken and bruised, He told us to pour out the wine because this would help us to remember that His blood was poured out for the sins of the world. Eating bread and drinking wine (or grape juice) to remember Jesus is called "communion."

When we take communion nothing mysterious or magical happens. The bread is just bread and the juice is just juice, the amazing part is what happens in our minds. Thinking about Jesus, and His sacrifice, makes us thankful for everything that He has done for us, it reminds us of His promises to us (including that He will come back again some day), and strengthens our love for Him. The word communion means to spend time together, so when we take the bread and the cup we are spending time with Jesus.

This is the very best part of all, Jesus asked us to spend time with Him. Jesus *wants* to be with you, He wants to spend time with you. That's right, Jesus, the one who holds all things together by the power of His word, wants to spend time with YOU!

Take communion together as a family. Pass out the bread and spend some time thinking about what Jesus did for us, how He offered up His life for us. Then pass out the grape juice and spend some time thinking about Jesus death and resurrection. Pray together and spend some time in communion with Jesus.

Questions for Young Children:

In communion why do we eat bread?

Why do we drink juice?

Questions for Preteens

Why is it important to think about Jesus broken body?

What are some other ways that we can “spend time with Jesus.”

Questions for Teenagers

How much time have you spent with Jesus this week? Have you been reading His Word? What have you been reading about?

How does taking communion make you feel? Is it strange to think about someone giving up their life for others?

When you think the bread and cup, what do you think about?



Family Devotions



The Crucifixion

Scripture: John 19:5-30 , Romans 6:23

Memory Verse: John 19:29

So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.

For My Family

Read John 19:5-30 and open by asking the following question: "Why did Jesus have to die?"
Give your children an opportunity to respond

The death of Jesus is the greatest tragedy in the history of the world. It is, without question, the worst thing that has ever happened. God, who took on flesh and walked among us, who healed the sick and gave sight to the blind, died. The one who came to bring life and hope to all men was killed alongside criminals. It was the worst thing, but in so many ways, it was also the best thing.

The Bible calls Jesus, "the Lamb who was slain before the foundation of the Earth." (Rev 13:8) Remember Adam and Eve in the garden? Before God had made them, or the tree whose fruit they ate, Jesus knew He would die for them. Jesus knew before sin entered the world, before man even existed, that one die He would sacrifice His life for them. Romans 6:23 tells us that "The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus." When we break God's law a payment needs to be paid. We don't pay for sin with money, or by doing good things to make up for it. There is only payment that can forgive sin, and that is death.

When Jesus died on the cross for you and I, He paid the price that we were supposed to pay. He had lived a perfect life, He had never sinned. So when He laid down His life, He paid the price for you and I. Jesus looked up to Heaven and said, "It is finished." He said this because now, no one else would have to die and be separated from God. Because of what He has done we can be forgiven and reunited with God, we will not have to spend in eternity in Hell, but can be with Jesus and all other believers in Heaven forever. Jesus death was a gift, the greatest gift that anyone will ever give you.

But you know what the best part is? Jesus didn't stay dead...but we will talk about that next time!

Questions for Young Children:

Why did Jesus die for us?

Why was Jesus death a good thing?

Questions for Preteens

Why did Jesus say, "It is finished?"

Is it fair that Jesus, who never did anything wrong, would be die for people who have sinned against God?

In what way is Jesus death a gift to us?

Questions for Teenagers

When you think about Jesus dying a criminals death, how does it make you feel?

Because Jesus died, we have the opportunity to be forgiven for our sins. What do we have to do to be saved?

Is there anything that is preventing you from giving your life to the Lord?



Family Devotions



The Crucifixion

Scripture: Matthew 28:1-8, 1 Corinthians 15:12-49 (for older kids)

Memory Verse: Matthew 28:5-6a

But the angel answered and said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen

For My Family

Thinking about death can be a scary thing. You might know someone in your family who died. Maybe you went to a funeral where you celebrated that person's life. The truth is that death IS a scary thing, or at least, it used to be.

Jesus had never sinned, so death had no hold over Him. Three days after Jesus had died and was placed in a tomb, He rose back up again, the stone that was placed over the doorway to the tomb was rolled away. After Jesus had risen from the grave He went and ate with His disciples, spoke to them, let them touch His body and hear His voice. Jesus was truly alive!

Why is Jesus' resurrection so important? Because when Jesus rose from dead, He conquered death once and for all. In the same way that one man, Adam, brought sin into the world, and death through sin, so one man, Jesus, saved us from sin and death. Jesus promised that everyone who called upon His name would be saved from sin, and on the last day would be raised to life, to live with Jesus in a New Earth and a city called the New Jerusalem.

This is what Jesus told everyone that He came to do right from the beginning. Jesus didn't come to earth just to teach people things about God, nor did He come to Earth just to heal sick people. Jesus came to Earth, so that all people, in all places could be set free from the curse of sin and death.

Jesus Himself said it. John 3:16 says, “For God so loved the world that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.”

You and I don't have to be afraid of death. For those who have trusted in Jesus as their Lord and Savior death has no victory. When we take our last breath in this world we will immediately open our eyes in the presence of the Lord. We don't have to be afraid of death, because Jesus fought it and won!

Questions for Young Children:

What happened three days after Jesus died?

Is death a scary thing?

Questions for Preteens

Why is it so important that Jesus rose from the grave?

How is Jesus like the opposite of Adam?

What happens to a believer when they die?

Questions for Teenagers

What happens to people who haven't accepted Jesus gift when they die?

What proofs did Jesus give that really did rise from dead? Why are these important?



Family Devotions



Jesus Returns to the Disciples

Scripture: John 20:19 – 31

Memory Verse: John 20:29

Jesus said to him “Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

For My Family

Jesus came back! It was so exciting for His disciples to see Him again. He was alive and He was seen from time to time, but not the way you might have thought. Jesus didn't go back to His old life. His disciples didn't follow Him around as they did before because they didn't know where He was. In fact, as you read, Thomas didn't believe that Jesus had come back even though his friends told him. He wanted proof. Normally wanting proof isn't a bad thing but this time it was. Jesus told all of His disciples, including Thomas, that He would return, so when Thomas didn't believe that Jesus was back he showed that he did not trust what

Jesus promised. He wanted it to be true, but he wasn't sure it was. Jesus didn't kick Thomas out. He didn't tell Thomas that he couldn't follow Him anymore. Instead, Jesus appeared to Thomas but told him that it was better to be a person that believed without seeing.

There are a lot of things in the bible that are difficult to believe. Did God really make the world in 6 days? Was there really a flood that covered the whole Earth? Did God really come to the Earth as a baby in the person of Jesus Christ? There were very good reasons for Thomas to believe that Jesus had truly come alive again: He had been told that Jesus had been seen by people that he trusted, the stone was rolled away from the tomb entrance and the tomb was empty, Angels had appeared to the women and told them that Jesus was risen, etc. But even though Thomas couldn't come to believe that it was true, Jesus was incredibly gracious and appeared to him to help him know for sure. Thomas teaches us that it is okay to question and to think about these incredible things, but he also teaches us that it is important to have faith. Jesus here teaches us that we can put our faith in the very good evidence we have for the things written about in the bible, but if we are still struggling to believe some of the more amazing events of scripture, we can ask Him to help us have faith and know that those things are true.

God has made a lot of other promises in the Bible, such as that Jesus will come again and take His followers to Heaven, that we will live with God forever, and many more. We don't see any of these promises, we don't have any proof, but we believe them because God said they would come true and Jesus said that believing without proof is better.

Questions for Young Children:

What other promises did God make in the Bible?

What is your favorite promise God made?

Questions for Preteens

Even though we can't see God, what evidence do we have that He exists?

What was Thomas' response to seeing Jesus?

Questions for Teenagers

Jesus said that those who believe without seeing will be blessed. What other things do we need to put our faith in, even though we don't have concrete evidence?

How do you think the disciples felt before and after Jesus appeared to them risen and alive?



Family Devotions



Ascended into Heaven

Scripture: Acts 1:1-11, Luke 24:50-53 (John 16:7)

Memory Verse: John 1:11

"This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

For My Family

When Jesus died, a lot of people thought He had been defeated. But then He did something that showed everyone how amazing He really was—He rose from the dead! No one expected this. And no one could have guessed how it would happen. He wasn't a ghost. He wasn't just someone who got better from being sick. It was Jesus—you could see Him and touch Him. He cooked breakfast for the disciples. He ate in front of them. He walked around and talked with them. But He was different too. He could appear in rooms where the door had been locked. They could hear Him when they couldn't see Him. It was Him, but He was...better. The Bible calls this new way Jesus was alive...resurrection.

And when Jesus was here with His followers, after His resurrection, He also did one important thing—He taught them. He had been teaching the whole time they followed Him. It was one of the things He did the most. And after He was raised from the dead, He kept teaching. He taught them about the kingdom of God. He taught them about the Holy Spirit, and told them to wait until the Spirit came upon them. He told them that they'd be going everywhere and telling people about Him.

And then, finally, when Jesus knew that He had done everything He needed to do with His body here on earth, something amazing happened. When they were talking to Him, He began to rise into the sky. He went up until he disappeared into a cloud and they couldn't see Him anymore. Christians call this His ascension. (Can you say that?) Jesus "ascended," we say. It means He went up.

So why did Jesus do this? Well, He had already told them that it was good for them if He went away. (It made them sad when He said that.) Because once His body wasn't on earth anymore, He would send the Holy Spirit—and then everyone who believed could have God in them, all the time, instead of having to go find Jesus in His body to talk to God. So Jesus needed to go to the Father so that the Spirit would come.

And here's another reason Jesus ascended into heaven. It was a final way to show how victorious He was. When Jesus went up into the sky, Christians understood that He had gone all the way up to God's throne room—they said that He went up and "sat down" at the right hand of God, on His throne of power. That means that Jesus was not just alive, but that He was really the King. Death didn't kill Him—He killed death! And He won in such a big way, that now He is the King for all time. He showed this by rising up into the sky.

The angel told the disciples one more thing we need to know about all this. It is true that Jesus went into the sky. It is true that He's with His Father now. But one day soon, Jesus will come back. And just like the angel said, He'll come back, like He left—only this time He'll be coming down—down from the sky, with everyone watching.

So everyone who is a Christian is someone who is waiting for Jesus to come back—but we're not only waiting. We're spending our waiting time telling everyone about Jesus and His amazing victory over sin and death. Or, as Jesus told them on that day, we're witnesses. Ask your parents what a witness is!

Questions for Young Children:

Where did Jesus go?

Will Jesus ever come back?

What do people who love Jesus do now?

Questions for Preteens and Teenagers

What does “ascension” mean?

Why do you think the disciples needed to see Jesus ascend?

Why do you think the angel said what he said to them?

How does what the angel said to them apply to us today?

What do you tell people about when you tell them about Jesus?



Family Devotions



The Trinity

Scripture: John 14:1-3; 1 Corinthians 15:50-53; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-17; Rev 20:1-10

Memory Verse: John 14:3

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also”

For My Family

There are two returns that we as believers should be ready for any day without fear: Jesus’ return for us individually in death or Jesus’s return for His bride (the Church) in the Rapture. As we talked about in the last study, Jesus has conquered death, and if we have trusted our lives to Him we know for sure that we will spend eternity with Him in Heaven.

Jesus promised that He would come back and would undo all of the broken, wrong and sinful things that people have done, however before that wonderful day when Jesus comes back there are lots of things that He has asked us to do for Him here on Earth. He told us that in order to do those things, He would send someone who would be with us, who would remind us of all the true things that He taught us, and would comfort and strengthen us. The person that Jesus sent to us is called the Holy Spirit and He lives with us and helps us in so many ways.

Jesus also told us that while we are waiting for Him to return that there would be many difficult things that we would have to go through. He promised us that we have sad days and troubles. One of most wonderful things about Jesus promising to return is that it helps us to have the right perspective about Earth. When we are having difficult days, or experiencing sad things, we can remind ourselves that one day Jesus is going to come back and make all things right.

Knowing that Jesus is going to return helps us to do the things that He asked us to do, and helps us to endure the difficult things that happen here on Earth. The promised return of Jesus is an incredible and wonderful thing. Best of all, Jesus ALWAYS keeps His promises!

Questions for Young Children:

Where did Jesus go after He left earth?

What is Jesus doing before we get to be with Him again?

Who did Jesus send to be with us while He is gone?

Questions for Preteens

How should Jesus' return draw you to God and His word?

Are you afraid of your death or for anyone in your family?

Who do you need to share the Gospel with?

Questions for Teenagers

What are some things that Jesus is asking you to do?

Are there any difficult things going on in your life right now that you want to talk about?