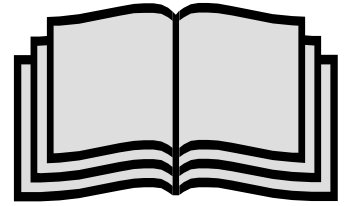


# FAMILY DEVOTIONS



WHERE DO I START?

## BIBLE VERSES & DEVOTIONS AND THE FAMILY



### **Isaiah 55:11**

*"...so is my word that goes from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it."*

### **Proverbs 22:6**

*"Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it."*

### **Proverbs 31:26**

*"She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue."*

### **Deuteronomy 11:18-20**

*"Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates..."*

### **Psalms 78:4, 6-7**

*"We will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power, and the wonders he has done...so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands."*

### **II Peter 3:18**

*"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord ..."*

### **James 4:8a**

*"Come near to God and He will come near to you."*



# DEVOTIONS

## WHY DO WE NEED FAMILY DEVOTIONS?

- ◆ To create or enhance family unity and strengthen relationships
- ◆ To provide a good example for our children
- ◆ To help us stay close to the Lord as a family and allow a time to express our joys, our thankfulness, our fears, or our struggles
- ◆ To allow time to hear what the Lord has to say to our family
- ◆ To draw strength from God
- ◆ To take time to celebrate His blessings to us

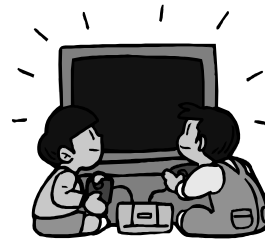
## SO...WHAT'S STANDING IN THE WAY?

Television

Busyness of Life

Sports & Meetings

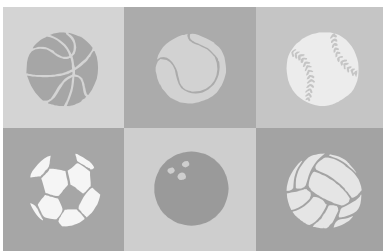
Lack of Discipline



Lack of Materials

Fear of Starting Something New

Etc.



## HOW DO I GET STARTED?

1. Set a *simple* goal of having family devotions 1 time a week and build up after a month or so.
  - Try to make it a *consistent* time so that it will become a habit—mealtime (either breakfast or supper when the entire family is at home) or a few minutes before bedtime work well for many, but there may be a better time that works for you.
2. Try to incorporate *everyone*.
  - Reading
  - Praying
  - Asking or Answering Questions (Little Visits)
  - Looking for Something in a Picture (Big Thoughts)
  - Drawing or Making Something
3. Try *different* resources to see what works well for your family.
  - Keep it on their level
  - Use variety
4. Be *creative and flexible!*
5. Keep it *short!*
  - 5 min. is long enough for children 2nd grade & younger
  - Toddlers may only last 2 – 3 min.



## INCORPORATE DEVOTIONS IN DIFFERENT WAYS THROUGHOUT EACH DAY

- ◆ **Going to Church** — bring a bag with Bible story books, coloring sheets, or crayons
- ◆ **TV Time**—use Christian videos from bookstores or libraries (VeggieTales, Adventures in Odyssey)-watch them together & talk about it.
- ◆ **In the Car**—Use Bible stories on tape, Bible songs, etc.
- ◆ Take advantage of **“teachable moments”**—if you’re taking a walk, bring up how wonderful God’s world is & how He made each animal unique; if you see an accident, remember to pray for the people involved at mealtime or bedtime, etc.



## PRAYER



Here are some ideas for prayer time:

1. Have each person in the family pray for one thing.
2. Hold hands while you pray.
3. Pray for specific things on certain days:
  - Sundays—thankfulness to God for His blessings
  - Mondays—our family and relatives
  - Tuesdays—our friends and neighbors
  - Wednesdays—our church and missionaries
  - Thursdays—our nation and its leaders
  - Fridays—those in foreign lands
  - Saturdays—our schools, teachers
4. Pray for the person on your left or right.
5. Each family member takes a turn praying.
6. Each family member thinks of a praise item, or a person who is hurting, or ...
7. Do Post-It Note Prayers—Have everyone think of something specific to pray for & write it on a sticky note. Attach it to a piece of paper. Remove the sticky notes when the prayer is answered.
8. Prayer Pots—This is an ongoing project. Take a small flower pot & decorate it. As a family, think of people who might need your prayers (ie uncles, aunts, friends, etc.) and write their names on popsicle sticks. Put the sticks in the pot. Each time you have devotions or pray, pull out a popsicle and pray specifically for the person on the stick. You can add sticks as needed or remove sticks as prayers are answered.
9. Have a time of singing.
10. Learn a short verse or passage as a family and recite it occasionally as a prayer.
11. Prayer Journal—Make a simple cover and staple a few blank sheets of paper behind it. Pick a night during the week to write down things to pray for and then pray for this list during the rest of the week. Highlight ones that are answered. Or, you can leave a journal out on the table and simply let the kids add things throughout the week.

# SEE HOW THEY LEARN...

## 2-Year-Olds...

- ... demand person time
- ... observe & listen to everything, but use few words.
- ... like to scribble with crayons or markers.
- ... recognize Jesus' picture.
- ... like to turn pages in picture books.
- ... learn & sing simple songs.
- ... memorize 1 or 2 line rhyming sentences.
- ... love actions with words & music.
- ... fold their hands to pray.
- ... can focus on one thing for about 2 minutes or less.

## 3-Year-Olds...

- ... love to hear & say their own name.
- ... fold their hands & repeat simple prayers.
- ... enjoy acting out stories as a group.
- ... like to look at books with Jesus & Bible characters pictured.
- ... love to sit on a lap and be read to.
- ... memorize words to favorite simple books.
- ... learn & sing simple songs.
- ... demand to show adults what they've done.
- ... are starting to learn the difference between right & wrong.
- ... can focus on one thing for about 3 minutes.

## 4-Year-Olds...

- ... view prayer as "talking to God" & can make up short prayers.
- ... recognize the Bible as "God's Book".
- ... distinguish make-believe from reality & associate Bible stories with reality.
- ... exhibit a simple, deep faith in Jesus.
- ... can retell Bible stories with some accuracy.
- ... see the wrongs in others but not in themselves.
- ... love to make things with their hands.
- ... like to tell others what they learned.
- ... can focus on one thing for 4-5 minutes.
- ...

## 5-Year-Olds...

- ... visualize Jesus as a person.
- ... recognize the Bible as a special book that tells about Jesus.
- ... enjoy church activities, often playing "church" by singing & praying with friends.
- ... feel secure in God's love & care.
- ... think in literal, factual & concrete terms.
- ... say "I'm sorry" but do not understand true repentance.
- ... need & enjoy repetition of songs & Bible verses.
- ... are developing a sense of humor.
- ... can focus on one thing for about 5-8 minutes.

### **1st & 2nd Graders...**

- ... have a vague understanding of God because they do not yet think in abstract terms.
- ... can understand that God is our heavenly Father; God gives us everything.
- ... show complete trust in their heavenly Father.
- ... can understand that Jesus is God's Son; that Jesus died on the cross for all.
- ... find unconditional love hard to accept.
- ... consider actions as wrong only if caught or punished.
- ... apply the letter of the law rather than the spirit of the law.
- ... are curious about death, dying, & heaven.
- ... can focus on one thing for about 5-10 minutes.

### **3rd & 4th Graders...**

- ... internalize their concept of God.
- ... share their faith readily.
- ... can study the Bible chronologically.
- ... enjoy learning about heroes in the Bible.
- ... can begin to see the role of the church in world missions.
- ... see God at work in the everyday world.
- ... can confront someone who has hurt them rather than "tattling".
- ... pray readily for others.
- ... are developing the ability to carry on deep discussions about God & their Christian faith.
- ... build moral standards based on what they hear & see adults do.
- ... can focus on one thing for about 8-12 minutes.

### **5th & 6th Graders...**

- ... are capable of deep religious feelings.
- ... look for heroes & models for their lives.
- ... are really curious about religious or spiritual matters.
- ... have developed a conscience.
- ... see God as more rational & less vindictive than earlier.
- ... see goodness & badness in everyone; tend to "keep score".
- ... accept the Bible as true because it gives authority.
- ... expect immediate answers to prayer.
- ... pray in a less egocentric & materialistic way than younger children.
- ... can focus on one thing for about 12-15 minutes.

### **7th & 8th Graders...**

- ... are able to understand concepts of increased complexity.
- ... contemplate the mysteries of the Christian faith.
- ... are easily drawn to the beliefs of their friends.
- ... need a strong relationship with good adult mentors.
- ... marvel at the awesome nature of creation.
- ... are able to see the hand of God at work in history & in the world around them.
- ... can more fully understand the redemptive work of Jesus.
- ... enjoy hands-on Christian service projects in the community.
- ... can focus on one thing for about 15 minutes.

### **High-Schoolers...**

- ... are capable of deep discussion & significant personal application of the truths of Scripture.
- ... can be uninhibited about sharing their faith & revealing how it impacts their lives.
- ... are on a journey to independence.
- ... experience strong peer relationships.
- ... are building personal values.
- ... are individuals and have unique personalities.
- ... want to be a part of the group.
- ... need to be affirmed & valued as the people they are.
- ... desire to be a part of their church's ministry.
- ...

### **Adult Learners...**

- ... are self-directed.
- ... Prefer a learning environment in which they are respected for their ability to act independently.
- ... Try to apply what is learned to their personal experiences.
- ... Enjoy the fellowship of other Christians.
- ... Seek immediate help for the issues that are facing them personally, at work or in family.
- ... Have deep convictions & value the opportunity to delve into them.
- ... Are problem-oriented, usually taking a class because it can help them solve a problem.
- ... Are easily threatened; they'll take a risk but will drop out if embarrassed.

~ RESOURCES ~ RESOURCES ~ RESOURCES ~

1. *The Bible in Pictures for Little Eyes* by Ken Taylor (ages 3-7)
2. *The King's Alphabet* by Mary Hollingsworth (ages 2-7)
3. *The King's Numbers* by Mary Hollingsworth (ages 2-7)
4. *God is Great* by Lucas (includes Bible reference, ages 2-8)
5. *What Would Jesus Do?* Revised by Helen Haidle (ages 4-8)
6. *First Steps* by Paul Loth, Jr. (ages 5-9)
7. *The Bible Tells Me So* by Paul Loth, Jr. (ages 5-9)
8. *Big Thoughts for Little People* by Ken Taylor (ABCs, ages 2-5)
9. *Wise Words for Little People* by Ken Taylor (Proverbs, ages 2-5)
10. *International Children's Bible*
11. *Paw Paw Chuck's Big Ideas in the Bible* by Chuck Swindoll (ages 3-8)
12. *My Very First Golden Bible* by Kennedy (ages 3-7)
13. *Devotions for Families That Can't Sit Still* by Carolyn Williford (younger)
14. *High Chair Devotions—God Made My World* by Woody/John (ages 1-3)
15. *High Chair Devotions—God Cares For Me* by Woody/John (ages 1-3)
16. *One Year Book of Devotions for Kids* by Tyndale Publishing House (Keys for Kids, ages 5-14)
17. *103 Questions Children Ask About Right From Wrong* by Veerman/Galvin, etc. (ages 4 & up)
18. *Teach Me About Jesus* by Sattgast and Elkins (ages 2-7)
19. *Toddler Devotions* by Gilbert Beers (ages 1-4)
20. *Your Family Time with God* by John Maxwell (various)
21. *Little Visits with God* by Jahsmann and Simon (ages 2-8)
22. *Today I Feel Like a Warm Fuzzy* by William Coleman (ages 2-6)
23. *If Animals Could Talk* by William Coleman (ages 6-12)
24. *Kid's Choices* (ages 6-12) or *Teen Choices* (ages 12-18) by Chariot Victor Publishing
25. *Bible Quizmasters* (various ages) by Rainfall Educational Toys (includes parent guide)
26. *Young Explorers in the Land Where Jesus Lived* by Marcia Hammond (ages 8-12)
27. *Growing Up Together* by Jan Kempe (ages 3 & up)
28. *Let's Make a Memory* (by Gloria Gaither & Shirley Dobson (general, pp180-186)

29. *Snip and Tell Bible Stories* by Karen Henley (various)
30. *Clip and Tell Some More Bible Stories* by Lois Keffer (various)
31. *What Would Jesus Do? For Kidz* by Mary Hollingsworth (ages 3-8)
32. *Discovering the Wonders of God's World* series by Joanne E. DeJonge (ages 5 & up)
33. *Family Walk Devotional Bible*
34. *Growing Little Women* by Donna J. Miller (girls 9 to 12 & Mom)
35. *A Place for Me in God's Family* by Rich Gritter
36. *On Your Mark* by William Coleman (sports-minded families)
37. *108 Questions Children Ask About Friends and School* by Veerman, Galvin, & Osborne (school-aged children)
38. *My Best Bible Word Book Ever* by Stephen Barclift (ages 2-5)
39. *How Long is God's Nose?* By John Timmer (ages 5-9)
40. *Popcorn Clouds and Bubblegum Trees* by Susan Damon (ages 3-8)
41. *Wanna Trade?* By Carol Reinsma (ages 4-8)
42. *A Pile of Stones* by Jessie Schut (ages 8-12)
43. *With a Cherry on Top* by Carol Reinsma (ages 4-8)
44. *The Shortest Disciple* by Steven Jensen (ages 8-12)
45. *Have You Looked at Your Tongue Lately?* By Ruth Donker (ages 8-12)
46. *Winners, Losers, and Wannabes* by David Willingham (teens)
47. *Down to the Wire-Faith Under Fire* by David Willingham (teens)
48. *Please Don't Feed the Lions* by Michael Vander Klipp (ages 8-12)
49. *No Kidding, God* by James Schaap (various ages)
50. *One Large Order of Faith to Go* by David Willingham (teens)
51. *100% Chance of Frogs* by James Schaap (teens)
52. *Don't Pray with Mud on Your Shoes* by James Schaap (teens)
53. Special Holiday Devotionals
54. Monthly & Bimonthly Devotional Booklets:
  - *TODAY* - available through [www.btgh.org](http://www.btgh.org)
  - *Family Walk*—monthly from Walk Thru the Bible Ministries (ages 6-12). Call 1-800-877-5539
  - *Keys for Kids*—available from Children's Bible Hour (send request to Children's Bible Hour, Box 1, Grand Rapids, MI 49501 or go to [www.cbh.gospelcom.net](http://www.cbh.gospelcom.net) and can search for specific topic
  - [www.faithaliveresources.com](http://www.faithaliveresources.com)—look under Children & then under Devotions or type in a title

## 13 FAITH-NURTURING FAMILY ACTIVITIES

**WORSHIP PREPARATION**—Prepare for formal “at church” worship before you leave home. Wake up earlier than your kids so you’re not rushed. Try putting on the soft sounds of Christian music for your kids to wake up to.

**PRAYER**—Show your kids that they can pray in any situation—when they see someone whose car was broken down on the roadside or when seeing an ambulance to pray for those involved. Another good time to pray with and for your kids is before they leave for school. Say a simple prayer for them to stand up for what’s right today.

**BIBLE READING/STUDY**—Read or tell Bible stories before bedtime or read a short, meaningful verse at breakfast. Find ways to keep kids interested in reading the Bible so it can lead to a good habit as they grow. Remember to keep Bible passages short for “short people”!

**MEALS TOGETHER**—It’s become more difficult in today’s busy lifestyle to find time to eat together. Try to set aside a time to come together as a family to pray together & to talk about each other’s day. Have your kids take turns saying a mealtime prayer. Encourage conversation by asking specific questions to each child.

**FAMILY FUN**—TV, video & computers, shopping, & telephones can all take away from opportunities to have quality time with your family. Try playing board games that the whole family can enjoy or take out a puzzle or coloring books to do together.

**CELEBRATIONS**—Make birthdays in your home an all-day event for your special family member. Let them pick their favorite dinner and birthday cake. At Thanksgiving, Christmas, & Easter keep the focus on God and others. Tell stories to make the holidays meaningful. Making & keeping annual traditions are a great way to bond families together.

**VACATIONS**—Nothing works better than vacations for building wonderful family memories. Many kids enjoy the long drives because it gives them an opportunity to have their parents’ undivided attention. It can be a time for great conversation, playing road games, and making fun road stops.

**SERVICE PROJECTS**—Involve each family member in giving of their time by helping a neighbor with lawn work, bringing a meal to a sick church member, sponsoring a child from another country, or cleaning up your community. It’s something the whole family can do together, and at the same time, shows your

kids what it means to give of themselves. They may be surprised how good it makes them feel to help someone else!

**SACRIFICIAL GIVING**—Use allowance as a great tool to show your kids how to divide their money into giving, saving, & spending. Use three jars, or build a bank with three separate slots. Help your children set the amounts and label the jars “God’s”, “Saving” & “Spending”. Encourage younger kids to give their “God” money to church each week. Older kids may like to save up & give a larger gift to church or a special cause of their choosing.

**FAMILY MISSION STATEMENT**— Decide as a family to form a mission statement where all family members take part in choosing what values, visions & purposes are important to them. Writing these choices down and each member making the commitment to live the mission statement will unite your family with God as the center.

**REST**— Families today are so busy with sports, meetings, and other commitments. God knows that we need to rest and refresh ourselves spiritually. We need to set aside Sunday for worship and rest, as well as to regroup as a family.

**FAMILY CONFERENCE**—Set aside a certain night as family night. Allow each member of the family to take a turn in choosing an activity . If the outing costs money, parents need to decide if it’s in the budget. Also, throughout the year plan family conferences where chores & responsibilities are discussed, address any ongoing problems/solutions, get kids’ input on what they’d like to see change for the better in the family.

**CONFLICT RESOLVERS**—Because we are all individuals living together under the same roof, conflicts are a normal part of every home. When someone is treating another family member unkindly, have them say or write a few things he/she likes about the other person. This becomes a helpful reminder to look at the positives of each family member. With conflict comes the need to forgive and to be forgiven. Forgiveness is a good lesson of how we can be Christ-like when a family member treats us unkindly.



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