

A photograph of a family walking away from the camera on a paved path. A man in a grey polo shirt and sunglasses is on the left, holding the hand of a woman in a grey t-shirt and a white lace dress on the right. A young child in a red and white striped shirt is sitting in a stroller between them. The path is surrounded by lush green foliage, and the scene is bathed in warm, golden light, suggesting late afternoon or early morning.

# 70 BIBLE STUDIES FROM ANGER TO ZEAL

A Family Devotional

A close-up photograph of the rear wheels of two bicycles on a brick-paved path. The bricks are arranged in a herringbone pattern. The lighting is warm and soft, creating a sense of depth and texture.

## BRUCE ZACHARY

**70 Bible Studies from Anger to Zeal:**

**A Family Devotional**

By Bruce Zachary

I am the vine, you are the branches.  
He who abides in Me,  
And I in him, bears much fruit.  
John 15:5

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## introduction

As parents, the greatest challenge we face is to help our children know God and His ways, so that our children and their children can follow after Him. The responsibility to teach our children about God cannot be delegated to the church or Christian schools. This responsibility, privilege, and blessing, rests with parents. The purpose of this book is to assist parents in teaching their children, daily, how to love God with all of their heart, soul, mind, and strength [Deuteronomy 6:4-9, Matthew 22:37].

Our children face tremendous pressures in our culture that will make it difficult for them to know God and keep the faith. Parents labor to make ends meet, to provide a good education, a nice place to live, and decent clothes for their kids. In our fast-paced world, it is difficult to find time to teach our kids about God. Yet, we know that this is the true priority. The problem is compounded because we feel unable to teach our kids about God, since the challenge seems so complex. But, we really can teach our kids about God on a daily basis.

## how to use this book

Children can learn from the Bible at an early age [2Timothy 3:15]. This book is designed for families with children from first grade through middle school. There are 70 topical studies arranged in alphabetical order. Every day, spend time in one of the lessons with your family. For example, spend 15-20 minutes before school and work at breakfast time, or spend time at the dinner table going through a lesson. It is helpful to review each lesson before moving to the next. You can talk about the lesson in the morning, and then review at night, or explore the same topic two mornings in a row. You will probably go through the studies in alphabetical order, but, consider the table of contents as a topical index to address any particular issues that your family is dealing with that day.

When Jesus was in the Temple as a boy, He was in the middle of a group of teachers listening to them and asking them questions [Luke 2:46]. Encourage your family to ask questions as well as listening and answering questions. The family devotion time is intended to draw us closer to God, and to help us bond with one another. Questions in the introduction to each topic and the application [Bringing it home] sections are frequently oriented toward the kids. For example, the question may ask about school rather than work. Nevertheless, parents should respond to the questions as well. You can either share about your childhood experiences, or adapt a question to your current life situation. As the family shares their experiences they will draw closer to one another, and to God.

Begin the devotion time by asking a family member to **pray**. The **introduction** questions should be answered by each family member, and help to draw our attention to the topic. The **WDJD** section helps us to consider what did Jesus do. The **FYI** provides a bit of related information for your interest. As you go through the study, look up the

**scripture references** and have different family members read the verse[s] aloud. The **bringing it home** section helps us to apply what we have learned. **Write** your family's answers in a separate journal or in the margins of the book. Writing your answers helps make our thoughts and ideas tangible, and provide a way to review and see how you have grown in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ [2Peter 3:18]. Finally, have a family member **pray** at the end of the devotion. **Remember** to: read it, learn it, and do it. Let your family see that God is real in your life.



## anger

### **Introduction:**

Have you ever been angry at someone? What makes you angry [what really bugs you]?

### **WDJD?**

Do you think that Jesus was ever angry? How do you think that Jesus dealt with His anger? Jesus warns us our anger can be very displeasing to God. We need to be careful when we feel angry [Matthew 5:21-22].

### **Subject:** anger

**FYI:** Alexander the Great was one of the few men in history who truly seemed to be great. He was full of energy and was super bright. Unfortunately, on some occasions, he failed to control his anger and it brought painful consequences. One time, a dear friend and general in Alexander's army was drunk, and began to ridicule Alexander in front of his men. Blinded by anger, Alexander threw a spear and killed his childhood friend. Alexander was so upset he wanted to take his own life. Alexander never overcame the guilt he felt for murdering his friend. All that pain because of uncontrolled anger.

### **Object:** don't sin when we're angry

### **Bible Text: Genesis 27:41**

*So Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father blessed him, and Esau said in his heart, "The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then I will kill my brother Jacob."*

**The problem:** our anger tends to separate us from family and friends, and tends to cause us to hurt others.

**The solution:** learn a proper way to deal with your anger.

Esau hated his twin brother Jacob because Jacob deceived their father, Isaac, and stole Esau's blessing. Esau was so upset that he wanted to kill his brother. Each of us has been angry or very upset with someone. We have probably all wanted to hurt someone who hurt us. All of us have acted out in a wrong way when we've been angry.

Anger can be a powerful emotion that causes us to hurt others. Cain was so angry that he killed his brother Abel [Genesis 4]. Cain was jealous that God approved of Abel's offering but did not approve of Cain's. Even though we might not really kill someone we're angry at, our anger can cause a lot of problems in our relationships.

Anger is often more harmful than the injury that caused it. The story is told of the time when Leonardo da Vinci was working on his painting "The Last Supper" and became angry with a certain man. When he returned to paint, he attempted to work on the face of Jesus. But, he found he was unable to paint Jesus' face in his angry condition.



Finally, he went and found the man and they were reconciled. Then, Leonardo was able to return and paint the face of Jesus.

How should we deal with our anger? Here are some right choices to make next time your angry:

1. Be slow to anger [Proverbs 14:17]: take a minute or two to cool off before you respond. Speak when you're angry, and you'll make the best speech you'll ever regret.
2. Give a gentle answer [Proverbs 15:1]: don't try to hurt someone back. Be gentle even if you're mad. Whoever said, "Sticks and stones can break my bones, but words will never hurt me" didn't have brothers and sisters. Remember, hurtful words can really hurt. Be gentle with what you say, and how you say it.
3. Don't sin [Ephesians 4:26]: even when you're angry, you need to act in a way that pleases God.

**Bringing it home:**

- 1. Think about a recent time when you were angry. How could you have dealt with it differently?**
- 2. Think about a relationship where you are frequently angry. Pray and ask God to help you respond appropriately when you are angry at that person.**

## believe God

### **Introduction:**

Imagine that your parents tell you, "Next Saturday you have to be up and dressed at 5:00 a.m. and ready to go 'cause you're going to a special place." What would you think? How would you feel? What questions would you ask? What if the only response you got was, "Trust me." How would you feel?

### **WDJD?**

Jesus always trusts God, His Father, especially in difficult times. For example, believing was especially hard just before the cross. What did Jesus do at those times?

**Subject:** believe God

**FYI:** There are only two things that babies are afraid of: loud noises and falling. All of our other fears are learned.

**Object:** trust and obey God

### **Bible Text: Hebrews 11:8**

*By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.*

God called Abraham to leave his home and go to a place that God would give him. Abraham didn't know where he was going, but he trusted God and obeyed. When we go somewhere we often want to know where we're going, when we will get there, and how we will get there. When God directs us, He usually only gives us the directions one step at a time. That way we have to trust Him. The blessing is discovering God, not just His plan for us. Our biggest problem is not trusting Him. But, God wants us to take a step of faith.

How do you think that Abraham felt as he took his first steps of faith? Do you think he was scared, excited, or maybe both? How do you think God felt when Abraham trusted Him? When we believe God it pleases Him [Hebrews 11:8]. The Bible tells us that Abraham was God's friend [2Chronicles 20:7]. Even though Abraham had times when he didn't completely trust God, he was still God's friend and pleased God.

In May 1995, Randy Reid, a 34-year-old construction worker was working on a water tower 110 feet above the ground. Reid fell from the tower over 10 stories high and landed facedown on a pile of dirt, just barely missing bricks and construction debris. Amazingly, Reid was alive, and an ambulance was called. When the paramedics arrived, he was complaining of a sore back. As they carried him to the ambulance, Reid had one request: "Don't drop me." After being spared a 110-foot fall, we don't need to worry about being dropped from a three-foot height. God loves you and will protect you. You

can trust Him, and believe. By the way, doctors later said Reid's only injury was a bruised lung.

**Bringing it home:**

- 1. Here's an exercise to take a step of faith: fall back into someone's arms. Is the idea scary, exciting or both? What about the person who is catching you makes you want to trust him? Would it be different if you prayed first? How did it feel when you did it?**
- 2. What do you know about God that makes you want to trust Him?**

## blessings

### Introduction:

Have you ever heard someone say, “Count your blessings.”? What do you think it means? Have you ever tried to count your blessings?

### WDJD?

In the Sermon on the Mount [Matthew 5:2-10], Jesus described some of our spiritual blessings. Jesus wants to remind us that our spiritual blessings are even greater than our physical blessings.

**Subject:** blessings

**FYI:** Burt Baskin and Irv Robbins began making ice cream in 1945. The idea of 31 flavors was to offer one for every day of the month. They have created over 1,000 different ice cream flavors with loads of different ingredients and fanciful names. Each store typically offers more than 31 flavors each day, yet many people have only tried a few.

**Object:** be grateful

### Bible Text: Psalm 115:15

*May you be blessed by the Lord, who made heaven and earth.*

**The problem:** sometimes we forget all that God has given us, or we fail to discover all that God has for us.

**The solution:** count your blessings.

What are blessings? A blessing means to receive God’s favor or gift. All blessings come from God. When we think about our blessings we are happy.

The Bible tells us that God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places through Christ [Ephesians 1:3]. For example, God has given us the Holy Spirit, the Bible, and love. The Bible also tells us that God has blessed us with physical blessings. For example, God has given us a place to live, food to eat, and clothes to wear. Augustine said, “God is more anxious to bestow his blessings on us than we are to receive them.”

Imagine going to an ice cream shop with many, many flavors. Each time you go, you order the vanilla ice cream. You figure you like vanilla so why change or try something different. There’s nothing wrong with vanilla, but you may be missing out on a whole world of flavors that you might really like. We need to learn about the blessings that God has for us. The more we experience His blessings and focus on our blessings, the happier we will be.

**Bringing it home:**

- 1. Make a list of your blessings. Next to each item on the list make a note regarding whether you think it's a spiritual blessing, a physical blessing, or perhaps both. How long a list do you think you can make this week? Do you think you could count more than 10? How about more than 25? How about more than 50?**

## boasting

### **Introduction:**

Each of us has special talents or abilities that make us special. What are you good at? Think of a time when you received attention or praise as you used your talent. What happened? How did it feel?

### **WDJD?**

Whenever people praised Jesus for the things He did or said He gave all the glory to God. He did not boast about His special abilities, instead He was humble. Jesus said, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven [Matthew 5:16]."

**Subject:** boasting

**FYI:** King Herod received praise from the people and they said he was a god. Immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God. And he was eaten by worms and died [Acts 12].

**Object:** give glory to God

### **Bible Text: Genesis 37:5**

*Now Joseph had a dream and he told it to his brothers; and they hated him even more.*

Joseph was loved very much by his father Jacob. Jacob even gave Joseph a special coat and didn't make him work as hard as his brothers. It seemed that Jacob loved Joseph more than all of his older brothers. The brothers were jealous and hated Joseph.

Then Joseph had dreams that he would be so great that even his father, mother, and older brothers would bow down to him. The Bible tells us that his brothers, "hated him even more for his dreams *and for his words*." It wasn't only because of the dreams, but also his words.

Joseph probably boasted to his brothers about how great he would one day be. Read Genesis 37 verses 6-7. Pretend you are Joseph and try to tell your brothers about your dream and sound boastful. Then try to say it again without sounding boastful. Can you tell the difference? Remember, if we really love God, and other people, we will not boast [1Corinthians 13:4]. Boasting tends to separate us from others. Receiving praise can feel good, but if we boast it can push others away. Instead, give the credit where credit is due ... give it to God.

In 1994, Thurman Thomas sat, with his face in his hands on the Buffalo Bills bench following his team's fourth straight Super Bowl loss. His three fumbles had helped to seal their awful fate. Suddenly, standing before him was the Dallas Cowboys' star running back, Emmitt Smith. Smith had just been named the 28th Super Bowl's MVP,

and was carrying his small goddaughter. Smith looked down at her and said, "I want you to meet the greatest running back in the NFL, Mr. Thurman Thomas." Rather than boast, Smith was humble, and was able to lift up Thomas. Smith's greatness on the field was matched by his greatness off the field. Real love for God and others lifts them up, rather than seeking to lift ourselves up.

**Bringing it home:**

- 1. Have you ever experienced one of your friends, a family member, or someone you know who was boasting? How did you feel about the person at that time? Remember, people probably feel the same way about us when we boast.**
- 2. Don't forget: whatever talents or abilities we have were given to us by God [1Corinthians 4:7]. Therefore, we should not boast, but give glory to God. Next time someone praises you for something you've done, give glory to God.**



## boldness

### **Introduction:**

Have you ever wanted to tell someone at school or in your neighborhood about Jesus? Or invite them to church? Have you ever been afraid to tell others? Have there been times when you've told someone about Jesus? What happened? How did it feel?

### **WDJD?**

Jesus told people about God and did the right thing even when He knew it would create conflict. He wanted to please God more than He was worried about what other people thought.

**Subject:** boldness

**FYI:** At Legoland-California there is an exhibit called Miniland that displays seven U.S. cities built with 20 million Lego bricks in 1:20 scale. You'll see the Golden Gate Bridge and the Brooklyn Bridge built in miniature, but exact scale. You wonder, "How long would it take to build these bridges one Lego at a time?"

**Object:** be bold

### **Bible Text: Acts 4:13**

*Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.*

It is so cool when you hear athletes being interviewed telling people about Jesus and how much God loves them. God wants us to tell people about Him [Matthew 28:19-20], but sometimes we're afraid. That's why we need boldness. What is boldness? Boldness is God-given courage to stand for what you believe in, or bravery to tell people the good news about Jesus. Why is it good to be bold? When we tell people about Jesus it makes God happy and it helps to build a bridge so that people can come to know Jesus.

Peter and John told people about Jesus with boldness. They weren't afraid of the religious leaders or what others might have thought. Even though they hadn't been trained at religious school, they had a message to share because they knew about Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Because they were close to Jesus they were not afraid [Acts 4:13].

The other believers also wanted to be bold. So they prayed and asked God to help them to speak His word with boldness. God answered their prayers and gave them the power to speak boldly. Then they were not afraid to tell people about Jesus [Acts 4:29-31].

**Bringing it home:**

- 1. We, too, can be bold, just like the disciples. We need to: learn about Jesus and be close to Him; then pray and ask Him to help us be bold.**
- 2. Consider ways that you can let people know that you love Jesus. Here are some ideas: Wear a WWJD bracelet, cross necklace, t-shirt or hat that tells people about your faith; or a bracelet or necklace that tells the gospel message with colored beads. Also, invite friends and neighbors to church, Vacation Bible School [VBS], or an outreach event.**

## confession of sin

### Introduction:

Have you ever had a time when you did something wrong, but it was hard to admit you were wrong? Have you ever blamed someone else for something you did wrong?

### WDJD?

Jesus never sinned; He is perfect. He has no sin to confess. But He knows how important it is for us to admit when we're wrong, and to ask God and others for forgiveness. When Jesus taught us to pray, He explained the need to admit our wrongs and ask for forgiveness: "Forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us."  
[Matthew 6:12]

**Subject:** confession of sin

**FYI:** The longest one-syllable word you can make is eight letters [e.g. *schwartz*]. The most difficult words to say are seven letters, "I'm sorry."

**Object:** admit when we're wrong and ask forgiveness

### Bible Text: 1John1:9

*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

In the comic strip Calvin and Hobbes, Calvin says to his tiger friend, Hobbes, "I feel bad that I called Susie names and hurt her feelings. I'm sorry I did it." "Maybe you should apologize to her," suggests Hobbes. Calvin thinks about it and replies, "I keep hoping there's a less obvious solution." Sometimes, we're like Calvin, we don't like the obvious solution.

Sometimes we refuse to admit when we are wrong; and sometimes we say we're sorry, but we don't really mean it. We need to learn to admit we are wrong and sincerely ask for forgiveness. In the Garden of Eden, everything was perfect, there was no sin. God told Adam not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But, Adam did not obey God: he ate from the tree, and that was wrong. Sin is doing something that God has told us not to do, or failing to do something that we are supposed to do.

When God asked Adam whether he had eaten from the tree, Adam should have admitted that he was wrong and asked God to forgive him. Instead, Adam blamed the woman that God had given Him. Adam was trying to shift the blame to Eve, and also trying to shift the blame to God. Adam knew what he did was wrong, but he did not want to admit he was wrong and ask to be forgiven. Adam was probably afraid of the consequences. Just like Adam, we tend to blame others rather than admitting our wrongs.

God tells us that we need to admit when we do something wrong, and ask Him to forgive us. Confessing our sin is more than just admitting we are wrong. It also means that we want God to help us not to do that wrong again. When we confess, God will completely forgive us.

**Bringing it home:**

- 1. Parents and kids are both wrong at times. Next time you do something wrong, don't be afraid to admit it and ask forgiveness.**
- 2. When you tell someone, "I'm sorry," it's important that you really mean it. Ask God to help you not to do that wrong again.**
- 3. When you don't think that you did something wrong, try to explain to the others involved. Everyone involved needs to listen with open ears, an open mind, and an open heart. Remember to pray and ask for God's help.**

## confidence

### **Introduction:**

Have you ever had someone tell you to have confidence in yourself? Maybe it was a teacher before a test, a coach before a game, or a well-meaning friend or parent who wanted to encourage you to believe in yourself. But, better than trusting in our strength or ability, we should have confidence in God.

### **WDJD?**

Jesus told his disciples, "With God all things are possible." He wants us to have confidence in God rather than have confidence in ourselves [Matthew 19:23-26].

**Subject:** confidence

**FYI:** When David prepared to fight Goliath he gathered five stones for his sling shot. David only needed one stone to kill Goliath, but the giant had four brothers. After killing the giant, David cut off his head with Goliath's sword and paraded it through Jerusalem for everyone to see [1Samuel 17:51-54].

**Object:** have confidence in Christ

### **Bible Text: Philippians 4:13**

*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.*

Knowing your own strength is a fine thing. Recognizing your own weakness is even better. What is really bad, what hurts and finally defeats us, is mistaking a weakness for a strength.

Remember David and Goliath? The giant was about nine feet nine inches tall and wore at least 175 pounds of armor. His spearhead alone weighed over 15 pounds. Goliath probably weighed more than 700 pounds. For 40 days, the giant challenged the armies of Israel to send a man to fight against him. But, no one came because they were afraid of the giant. The problem wasn't the giant, or need for self-confidence, but their failure to trust God.

David was just a young man, but he volunteered to confront the giant. David had learned that God was bigger than the challenges he faced. When David protected his flock against a lion or a bear, God had been faithful. David had no fear because he had complete confidence that God would give him victory.

As Goliath came to attack, David slung the first stone. God guided the stone to strike the giant in his forehead, and the giant went down for the count. David knew that the battle wasn't between him and the giant, but between Goliath and God. David had come to understand that he could do all things through God's strength. We should put our confidence in God rather than self, because self-confidence results in pride and false confidence.

**Bringing it home:**

- 1. No matter how big, good, strong or smart we are, there are problems in life that are giants and seem too big for us. We need to remember that God is bigger than our giants. When there is a giant problem, you can trust God will help by either: removing the obstacle, helping you around the obstacle, or being with you as you go through the obstacle. You can have confidence in God.**
- 2. What are some challenges in your life today that seem like giants? Pray and ask God to give you confidence that He will help you.**

## contagious faith

### Introduction:

What is a fad? When someone starts doing something and other people follow, it is a fad. Consider what people are wearing, games people are playing, the music they are listening to, the movies and TV people are watching, or even what people are eating or drinking. What are some of the latest fads at your school, or in your world?

### WDJD?

When Jesus taught the Sermon on the Mount, He told people to have the right attitude and do the right thing even when others around you don't. The people knew Jesus was telling the truth and large crowds began to follow Him.

**Subject:** contagious faith

**FYI:** Lance Armstrong is the world's most famous cyclist. He has won the Tour de France bicycle race seven times and is a cancer survivor. His yellow "live strong" wristbands began a fad, and now it seems that everyone is wearing a colored rubber wristband with some message. The yellow wristbands became contagious and everyone caught on.

**Object:** influence others to stand for God

### Bible Text: Daniel 1:8

*But Daniel made up his mind not to defile himself by eating the food and wine given to them by the king.*

Daniel and his three friends were teenagers when they were taken as prisoners from Jerusalem to Babylon. In Babylon, the people did not worship the God of the Bible, but different gods. The Hebrews had been instructed by God about how to live a life that pleases God. They dressed differently than the Babylonians; they were not to eat certain foods, get drunk on wine, and they were not to worship other gods, only the Lord.

The Babylonians wanted Daniel and his three friends to be just like them. They changed their names, their clothing, their diet and sought to make Daniel and his friends worship the gods of Babylon. But, Daniel decided that he was going to live a life that was pleasing to God, even if people in Babylon thought he was different. What about Daniel's three friends? Would they seek to live to please God or would they yield to the peer pressure to live like the world around them in Babylon?

Daniel's decision influenced his friends and they also made a stand for God. Daniel's faith was contagious. Not only did it influence Daniel's friends, but it also impressed the King of Babylon about Daniel's God. Contagious faith influences others. We need our faith in Christ to be contagious so others can catch it.



Former General and President Eisenhower demonstrated the art of leadership with a simple piece of string. He'd put it on a table and say: "Pull it and it will follow wherever you wish. Push it and it will go nowhere at all. It's just that way when it comes to leading people. They need to follow a person who is leading by example."

**Bringing it home:**

- 1. Think of an example in your life where other people do something because you do it? For example, maybe some of your friends listen to a certain band, play the same games, or wear the same kind of clothes because you started doing it. You probably have more influence than you realize ... you are contagious.**
- 2. Sometimes we influence people by what we don't do as much as by what we do. For example, when you tell your friends that you won't watch a certain movie, visit a certain website, wear certain clothes, or use bad language, you are influencing them and you are being contagious.**
- 3. How can you influence your friends for God?**

## contentment

### Introduction:

Have you ever had a time in your life where you wanted a toy, clothes, or some “thing” that you thought would make you happy for a long time? Maybe you thought that one more thing would really satisfy. What happened?

### WDJD?

Jesus didn’t have fancy clothes, or a big house, but He was satisfied [Matthew 8:20]. He knew that true satisfaction comes from a relationship with God.

**Subject:** contentment

**FYI:** William Randolph Hearst was one of the world’s richest men. He lived in a castle full of many beautiful works of art. One time, there was a beautiful painting that he wanted to buy. He sent people all around the world to try to find the painting. After searching for a long time, they discovered that he already owned the painting.

**Object:** be satisfied

### Bible Text: Philippians 4:11

*I have learned in whatever state I am to be content.*

One day, a very rich businessman was disturbed to find a fisherman sitting lazily beside his boat. “Why aren’t you out there fishing?” he asked.

“Because I’ve caught enough fish for today,” said the fisherman. “Why don’t you catch more fish than you need?” the rich man asked. “What would I do with them?” “You could earn more money,” came the impatient reply, “and buy a better boat so you could go deeper and catch more fish.”

“You could purchase nylon nets, catch even more fish, and make more money. Soon you’d have a fleet of boats and be rich like me.” The fisherman asked, “Then what would I do?” “You could sit down and enjoy life,” said the rich man. “What do you think I’m doing now?” the fisherman replied.

The apostle Paul had learned to be content. He had times in his life when he had lots of things. He had a nice place to live, nice clothes, and lots of good food. There were also times in his life when he had very little. Paul learned that the secret to contentment is to be close to Jesus. Being close to Jesus brings contentment because He satisfies our needs. Paul learned to be content with whatever God gave Him.

Things can only satisfy for a little bit. Unfortunately, if we are not content with what we have, we won’t be satisfied with twice as much. Also, we can never be satisfied by comparing what we have with someone else. There will always be someone with less, and also someone with more. Things break, fashions change, and there will always be a new thing. Remember things aren’t the “main thing.”

Where can we find true contentment? First, be content with what you have because Jesus is with you and He won't leave you [Hebrews 13:5]. Second, stay close to Jesus by reading your Bible, praying, going to church, and being with other Christians. David wrote the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm and began, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." When we let God care for us and lead us we are content and satisfied. If you are wanting right now, maybe you are not allowing the Lord to be your shepherd.

**Bringing it home:**

- 1. There is nothing wrong with things. But, we have to be careful that we don't look to things to make us happy.**
- 2. Next time you think some thing is likely to make you happy, stop and consider how long you think you will be truly happy because of it.**
- 3. What was the last thing you really wanted that you got? Before you got it, how did you think it would make you feel? How did it really make you feel? What did you learn about contentment?**

## courage

### **Introduction:**

Do you like scary rides at amusement parks? Some people like scary rides and others don't. What are your three favorite rides at any amusement park? Why do you like those rides? Have you ever been scared on a ride, or too afraid to get on a ride?

### **WDJD?**

Do you think Jesus ever needed to be courageous [brave]? Why do you think Jesus was able to be brave?

**Subject:** courage

**FYI:** The Kinga Ka roller coaster at Six Flags Great Adventure in New Jersey is the world's tallest, fastest roller coaster. The ride goes from 0-128 mph in just under four seconds and is 465 feet high, as high as a 45-story building.

**Object:** be brave

### **Bible Text: Joshua 1:9**

*Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.*

**The problem:** sometimes God calls us to do something and we're afraid we will fail, be hurt, or hurt others ... so we don't do it.

**The solution:** know that God is with us.

Joshua had been Moses' assistant. When Moses died, Joshua was called to lead all of the Hebrew people across the Jordan River and into the Promised Land to fight their enemies. Moses was a great leader, and a man who heard from God. Joshua would certainly "have to fill some big sandals." How do you think Joshua felt?

God encouraged Joshua to be brave. Three times God tells Joshua, "Be strong and of good courage." One time the people encouraged Joshua, "Be strong and of good courage." God confirmed that he had called Joshua. Most important, God told Joshua, "The Lord your God is with you wherever you go." The best reason not to be afraid, or discouraged, is because God is with us.

Joshua was encouraged and did in fact lead God's people across the Jordan River, into the Promised Land, and into victorious battle. But what if Joshua refused to be brave? God would have raised-up another to lead His people, and Joshua would have missed out. He would have missed out on: learning to trust God, being used by God, getting to depend on God for courage, and getting to see God work. When God calls us to do something that is frightening to us, we need to know that God is with us and be strengthened by that.

Years ago, African-American children and white children went to separate schools in the South. The courts ordered the public schools to allow black children to attend the all-white schools. Whites threatened any blacks who tried to come to the schools. So, the black children stayed home ... except Ruby Bridges. Her parents sent her to school all by herself. She was only six years old.

Every morning she walked alone to school, through a heckling crowd, and to an empty school. White parents threatened the little girl, and refused to let their children attend if a black child was at the school. But, every morning Ruby came to school, escorted by U.S. marshals. Then she spent the day alone with her teachers inside the big silent school building. When Ruby's mother was asked about Ruby's courage, she said, "There's a lot of people who talk about doing good, and a lot of people who argue about what's good, and what's not good, but there are other folks who just put their lives on the line for what's right." Courage is doing what's right even when you're afraid. And courage flows from knowing God is with us.

**Bringing it home:**

- 1. Think of a situation that is frightening to you but you think that God is calling you to try. There are many experiences that can be scary. For example: performing in a play at school or church, competing in sports, tests at school, giving an oral report, standing up to a bully, or telling the truth in a difficult situation. What situation did you think of?**
- 2. Pray for courage to do God's will. Know He's with you; be strong and of good courage. What do you think you should do?**

## devotions

**Introduction:** Is it ever hard to wake up early or stay up late to spend time with God? What are some of the things that distract you from spending time with God?

**WDJD?**

Read Mark 1:29-35. Jesus was very busy. There were many people constantly coming to Him for help; many were sick and needy people. Jesus woke up early in the morning, a long time before the sun came up, and spent time with God. Jesus knew how important it was to spend time with God before He began His busy day.

**Subject:** devotions

**FYI:** H.H. Haley wrote a handbook to help people understand the Bible. His book has sold millions of copies and has been translated into many languages. He read the whole Bible from Genesis to Revelation over 100 times during his life. Each time he read the Bible he enjoyed it more. How many times do you think you will read the Bible in your life?

**Object:** start your day with God

**Bible Text: Deuteronomy 6:7**

*You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.*

Parents are called to instruct their children daily about God and His ways. Parents need to make an effort to have devotions with their children. It takes diligence, because there are so many distractions that could keep us from spending time with God. Talking about God with our children in the morning helps us prepare for our day because we are spending time with God as well as our family.

God's people seek to regularly spend time with Him. Jacob rose early in the morning to be with God [Genesis 28:18], so did Samuel's parents [1Samuel 1:17-19], and King David, too [Psalm 5:3]. Even Jesus woke up very early, before the sun came up, to spend time with God.

Why do you think people like Jacob, David, Samuel's parents and even Jesus had morning devotions? There are many reasons why, but perhaps the best reason is because they loved God and wanted to learn how to live a life that was pleasing to Him. God tells parents to teach their kids about Him. They are to be an example to their children by talking about Him throughout the day. Morning devotions help us to learn about God and draw close to Him.

**Bringing it home:**

1. **How do you think God feels when we spend time with Him at the start of our day?**
2. **What do you think is the biggest obstacle to your morning devotion time?**
3. **Draw a picture of your family devotion time.**

## diligence

### **Introduction:**

Are there times when you don't feel like working, doing your chores, or finishing your homework?

### **WDJD?**

Imagine Jesus at Joseph's carpentry shop. How do you imagine Him working?

**Subject:** diligence [showing effort]

**FYI:** An ant can walk while carrying an object in its mouth weighing five times its body weight and can even drag an object 25 times heavier.

**Object:** do what you're supposed to do when you're supposed to do it

### **Bible Text: Proverbs 6:6-8**

*Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise, which, having no captain, overseer or ruler, provides her supplies in the summer, and gathers her food in the harvest.*

**The problem:** we can tend to be lazy.

**The solution:** learn to be diligent.

The highest reward for your diligent work is not what you get from it, but what you become by doing it. Have you ever watched ants? What are some of the things that you have observed? God wants us to look at the ants and learn from them, especially if we're lazy and don't like to work (a sluggard).

What do we learn from the ant? God points out two important truths. First, the ant doesn't need someone to constantly tell him what to do. On the other hand, sometimes we need to be repeatedly reminded to do our homework or do our chores. The ant gets the job done when the job is supposed to be done.

Second, the ant provides for the future. By gathering supplies in the summer and food in the harvest, the ant is prepared for the winter. The habits that we develop today, and our attitudes about work, will impact our future. If we learn to be lazy, and avoid work, we are likely to struggle in the future. But, if we learn to be diligent, our future will be full.

### **Bringing it home:**

1. **What are some of the areas in your life where you need to learn from the ant?**
2. **Remember people aren't ants; it's important to remember to play as well as work. It may be helpful to get your work done before you play. Consider areas in your life where you need to apply this lesson.**



## direction

### **Introduction:**

Have you ever gone for a long hike? Do you like hikes? Why? A long hike at a National Park like Yosemite can be full of beautiful scenery. The trails are marked to direct you on which way to go. Sometimes they use rocks or tree branches to mark which way you should turn. The directions keep you from getting lost and getting hurt. They also get you from where you are to where you should go.

### **WDJD?**

Jesus spent three years with His disciples teaching them daily about how to live a life that pleases God. He led all of them in the same direction, but He also recognized that they were all different. Peter would have a different ministry than John, and Thomas was different than Matthew.

### **Subject:** direction

**FYI:** The John Muir Trail is named for the man who helped to establish Yosemite as a National Park. John Muir was a Christian who loved the wilderness of Yosemite. The trail travels over 200 miles through Yosemite (across beautiful streams, waterfalls, meadows, lakes and mountain scenery) to Mt. Whitney at an elevation of 14,500 feet.

### **Object:** train our children

### **Bible Text: Proverbs 22:6**

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

Parents are to train their children in the way they should go. They are to teach their children what they should do and what they should not do. The most important training is to give our kids direction about God. Parents are the engineer on the train. All the other cars on the train follow the locomotive. Therefore, the engineer must know where he is going as he drives the locomotive down the tracks.

Sometimes, kids think it would be better if there were no parents to tell them what to do, and what not to do. Maybe you've thought it would be better if your parents never told you to clean your room, do your chores, brush your teeth, go to bed, or go to church. But, without direction, you would get lost. On the other hand, as children get older, they get more choices and more responsibility. Nevertheless, in some of life's most important decisions, parents need to direct their kids. For example, parents should direct their children in regard to their faith, worship, reading the Bible, and whether to go to church. When parents direct their kids, God has promised that they will not depart from the right path when they are older.

In the Hebrew version, this verse can also be translated, "train up a child *in the way that he is going* ..." Parents must recognize the different cloth that God has cut each

child from. A father may want his child to play sports, but the child may have no desire for sports. Parents need to understand that each child is different and encourage the gifts that God has given to each child.

**Bringing it home:**

- 1. The next time you direct your children and they are reluctant to follow your guidance, try to explain to them where you are trying to help them go. Help them to see some of the benefits of the desired destination and some of the dangers of getting off course.**
- 2. Tell your parents what you like to do, and what you don't like to do. Share as a family your interests so that everyone knows the way that each person is going.**
- 3. The next time you go for a hike, or a road trip [long drive] take a look at a map or make sure to find some trail markings. See if you can follow the directions and stay on course.**

# discipline

## Introduction:

Have you ever been punished or grounded for doing something wrong? What happened? Have you ever felt that if someone really loved you they wouldn't punish you?

## WDJD?

When the disciples had a bad attitude or behaved inappropriately, Jesus would correct them and guide them in the right way. Remember, the root of discipline is *disciple*.

## Subject: discipline

**FYI:** Setting limits is difficult but no one ever said parenting was an easy task. Parents must set limits for their children. No one else can discipline with the same love, affection, and concern as a parent. When kids know where the limits are, they feel safe.

## Object: correct our children in love

## Bible Text: Hebrews 12:6

*For the Lord disciplines those He loves, and He punishes those He accepts as His children.*

A boy's toy boat went out of reach on a pond one day and started floating away. A man on the side of the pond started throwing rocks near the boat, and the boy became upset at what might happen to his boat. But, then he realized the rocks were going past the boat and made ripples that pushed the boat back to shore and into the boy's hands. Many times when we stray away from God, it appears that He is throwing rocks at us. But, He is really using the ripples to bring us back home.

How should we respond when our kids do something wrong? Ideally, we learn to discipline our children as God disciplines us. When we correct our children it proves we really care and love them. No one is excited about the idea of receiving discipline, but our kids are actually comforted when we establish boundaries for them. Here are some guidelines the Bible gives us about how to discipline our children:

1. **promptly:** the discipline should be as soon as possible and ideally, on the same day. This way the connection is made between the wrong attitude or behavior and the punishment [Proverbs 13:24].
2. **without anger:** parents should not discipline their children when the parents are very angry. We need to be careful not to provoke our children to wrath. It's best to wait 'til you're not angry before you discipline your child [Ephesians 6:4].
3. **in love:** parents should discipline their children in a loving manner. Parents need to remind their child that they love them when they are correcting them [Hebrews 12:5-7]. It is very helpful as a parent to consider, "How would I want God to discipline me?"

4. **purpose:** the purpose of discipline is to produce respect. Correction yields respect for God and for parents. We do not discipline our kids to make them feel bad. Respect for God and parents helps our kids to have the right attitude and behavior in general, regarding any particular issue.

**Bringing it home:**

1. **Next time there is a need for discipline, review this devotion as a family. As you consider what correction is needed, make sure the punishment is appropriate for the offense. Ask your child what they think would be the right discipline. Consider their suggestion and explain why you agree with them or why you are choosing a different plan.**

# evil

## **Introduction:**

Remember the Star Wars movies? Who are some of the bad guys, or the evil characters? Who are some of the good characters? What about Anikin? He started good, but then became evil as he became Darth Vader. Consider the droids like R2D2, C3PO, or a battle droid. They are programmed to do either good or evil. What goes into them determines what they will be. What goes into us also influences whether we are good. But, unlike the droids, we have a choice to do good or evil.

## **WDJD?**

Jesus' life and teaching help us to understand the difference between good and evil. When we use the word *good* we mean the things that are pleasing to God. When we talk about *evil*, we mean the things that are upsetting to God. Jesus gave his life so that we could overcome evil and do what is good.

## **Subject:** evil

**FYI:** Star Wars talked about *the force*, a spiritual power that had a good or light side, and an evil or dark side. The force does not love, and does not care for people. Remember, the force was just make-believe for a movie. But, the Bible teaches us the truth about God: He loves us, cares for us, and He gives us power to do good.

## **Object:** overcome evil with good

## **Bible Text: Romans 16:19**

*Be wise in what is good, and stay innocent concerning evil.*

The Bible warns us about the dangers of evil. We need to be careful, because the influence of evil can spoil good habits. How can we do what is good, and avoid what is evil? First, we need to be wise in what is good. As we learn the Bible, we learn about God, and we learn what is good [pleasing to God].

Second, we need to be simple in what is evil. In other words, we should avoid: doing what is evil, being interested in what is evil, and people who try to get us to do what is wrong. We keep ourselves pure by being careful about what we see, hear, and do. The Bible teaches us to avoid companions who encourage us to do evil [1Timothy 5:22]. We need to be careful in deciding who to hang out with. Even if we know what is right and what is wrong, if we keep hanging out with people who are doing what is wrong, we are likely to start doing what is wrong [1Corinthians 15:33].

Finally, we overcome evil with good [Romans 12:21]. It is not enough to avoid evil, but we need to learn what is good, and do the right things. Then we will overcome evil.

**Bringing it home:**

- 1. Think about the video games you play, the TV shows and movies you watch, the internet sites you visit, the magazines you read, and some of the stories and jokes you listen to or tell. If there are any that you know are not pleasing to God, ask God to help you to stop.**
- 2. Think about the people you hang out with. Are there some people who try to get you to do things that you know are not pleasing to God? It would be wise to spend less time with them, and more time with friends who help you to do what is good.**

## excellence

### Introduction:

What is an area in your life where you really try hard and do your best? Maybe it's a class at school, sports, a game, or your hobby. Are there other areas in your life where you don't really try to do your best? Maybe it's your chores, or a class at school that you don't like, or even Bible study.

### WDJD?

Imagine Joseph's carpentry shop where Jesus and Joseph worked. They made doors, tables, chairs and other items. Imagine the quality of the items. Do you think Jesus tried to make excellent, average, or poor-quality items? Jesus probably made things that were excellent.

**Subject:** excellence

**FYI:** Olympic runners train for years to compete in the 100-meter dash, and the race lasts less than ten seconds. They labor to improve their time by hundredths of seconds. All Olympic athletes are excellent at what they do, whether they win a gold medal or not.

**Object:** give God your best

### Bible Text: Philippians 1:10

*Approve the things that are excellent.*

Paul encourages the church to approve of the things that are excellent. We are to know the difference between good and bad, doing our best, doing enough to get by, or not caring at all. Excellence is not perfection, but we need a standard or a goal. For example, if you generally get a C- on a math test, a B on the test can be excellent.

For example, a true musician always does his best for every audience, be it of knowledgeable music lovers or unschooled listeners. Enrico Caruso, a great singer, was once asked to sing at a concert to benefit a charity. They told Mr. Caruso, "As this is a charity affair we would not expect much from you ... you can merely sing a song requiring little effort or skill." Caruso replied, "Gentlemen, Caruso never does less than his best."

Excellence requires discipline. You need to work toward the goal. For example, you may need to study more instead of playing as long as you usually play, or wake up earlier than normal. King Solomon wrote, "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might" [Ecclesiastes 9:10]. Instead of saying "*whatever*" because you don't care, decide that in *whatever* you do, you'll give your best.

Excellence requires us to learn from others, like the disciples learned from Jesus. Excellence requires us to let others teach us so we can become better at what God has



called us to do. Finally, excellence requires motivation. We should desire to give our best for Jesus. We don't want to try to impress people, but we want to show Jesus we love Him by doing our best at what He calls us to do.

**Bringing it home:**

- 1. Think of an area in your life where you don't really try as hard as you should. Maybe it's your chores, a class in school, your relationship with God, or something else. How can you give God your best, or do better in that area?**
- 2. Think of an area in your life where you want to give God your best. Set a goal for how you want to grow in that area in the next three months. Write down the goal and the date in this book.**

## forgiveness

### **Introduction:**

Has anyone ever made you mad? Has anyone ever asked you to forgive them, but you didn't want to? Have you ever asked someone to forgive you and they refused to? How did you feel when they didn't forgive you? How many times do you think you should forgive someone who does something wrong to you?

### **WDJD?**

Peter asked Jesus how often he had to forgive someone. Peter thought seven times would be plenty, especially since the rabbis taught that you only had to forgive three times. Peter expected Jesus to praise him for his desire to forgive up to seven times. Instead, Jesus said that we should forgive not seven times, but 70 times seven. Jesus did not mean to count to 490. He meant to use a number so large that we wouldn't count, but would keep on forgiving instead.

### **Subject:** forgiveness

**FYI:** When Louis XII became king of France, he caused a list to be made of his enemies and marked against each of their names a large black cross. When this became known, the enemies of the king fled. But the king, hearing of their fears, caused them to be recalled with the assurance of pardon and said he had put a cross beside each name to remind them of the cross of Christ. He intended to follow the example of Jesus who prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

### **Object:** forgive others

### **Bible Text: Ephesians 4:32**

*And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.*

C.S. Lewis, the author of The Chronicles of Narnia, observed, "Everyone says forgiveness is a lovely idea until they have something to forgive." Why is it hard to forgive people? Sometimes we are still angry or upset, and sometimes we want to hurt them back. Sometimes we forget that we also have done wrong and hurt others, and we also need to be forgiven by others. Our hearts can become insensitive or hard, but, we need to be kind and tender-hearted toward God and others.

In the parable of the prodigal son [Luke 15:11-32] the younger son comes to his father and asks to be forgiven. The father demonstrates the love of God and forgives his son but the older brother refuses to. The older brother thinks that he has never done anything bad like his little brother. When we forget how much we have done wrong and been forgiven by God, and others, it is hard to be forgiving.

One day, I forgot a brand-new baseball glove at the park. To make matters worse, it was a gift from my brother. I had to ask my brother to forgive me for losing the glove, and he did. I discovered that the next time that one of my sons lost something it was much easier for me to forgive and not be upset. My heart was soft to God and to them. When we remember how we have been forgiven by God and others we have the right attitude about forgiving people who hurt us.

**Bringing it home:**

- 1. When was the last time that you forgave someone? What happened? How did it feel to forgive?**
- 2. When was the last time you asked someone to forgive you? What happened? How did it feel?**

## friends

### Introduction:

Why do you like your best friend? What do you think are important qualities for a friend? Do you think you are a good friend?

### WDJD?

Jesus said the disciples were His friends. They were so close they were like brothers.

**Subject:** friends

**FYI:** After the Civil War, a group of die-hard former Southern rebels met with President Lincoln. The President's gentle, friendly manner, created a new respect from his old enemies. A northern politician criticized Mr. Lincoln for befriending the enemy, and suggested that instead of befriending them he should have had them shot as traitors. Lincoln replied, "Am I not destroying my enemies by making them my friends?"

**Object:** be good friends

### Bible Text: John 15:12-15

*This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.*

**The problem:** it is difficult to choose good friends, and sometimes we get involved with friends who aren't very good for us.

**The solution:** we need good friends, and we need to be good friends.

Jesus gathered the disciples together and told them they were his friends. They were like brothers to Him. What were some of the qualities of their relationship that teach us about friendship? First, there was **love**. Good friends really care about you. They are willing to put the needs of you and others before their own. They are willing to make a sacrifice. David and King Saul's son, Jonathan, were best friends [1Samuel 18]. Jonathan was a prince, and would likely be the next king. But, Jonathan knew that God had called David to be the next king. Jonathan was a real friend and made a great sacrifice to help David become the next king.

Second, good friends **respect** the feelings and wishes of others. Jesus' friends respected what He told them. If you ask a friend not to do something, and they keep doing it, they may not be a good friend. Respect is demonstrated by loyalty. Good friends stick with each other through the good times and the bad times.

Third, good friends **communicate** with each other. Jesus told the disciples important things about His life and about God. Good friends learn to share their

feelings, fears, hopes, disappointments, and excitement. Good friends should be honest with each other, counsel us to do the right things, and should encourage us, rather than discourage us.

Good friends bring comfort. We don't have to be careful about what we say, or how we say it, we can just pour out our hearts, and know they will listen and not judge us harshly. What a wonderful, safe and comfy feeling it is to know that we have a good friend ... especially Jesus.

**Bringing it home:**

- 1. It is more important to consider the quality of our friends than the quantity. It is better to have a few truly good friends than many who aren't. Spend time with people and see what they are like before you decide that they are a real friend. Remember, if you want to have good friends, you need to be a good friend.**
- 2. Consider what kind of friend you are. What do you think makes you a good friend? What is one thing you can ask God to help you with to be a better friend?**

## giving

### **Introduction:**

Do you think it is more fun to give presents to others or to get presents? Why?

### **WDJD?**

Jesus gave everything, even His life, and He gets back only a very little from us. But, He is happy giving to us, and teaches that true joy is in giving not getting.

**Subject:** giving vs. getting

**FYI:** A woman made an appointment to meet with President Abraham Lincoln. The president asked what he could do for her. The woman told him she wasn't asking for anything. But, she had baked the President's favorite cookies for him. President Lincoln was so touched that he began to cry. He told her she was the first person who had come to him seeking to give rather than to get something.

**Object:** learn that giving brings true happiness

### **Bible Text: Acts 20:35**

*Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, and He said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."*

When we think about Christmas, or our birthday, it is usually exciting to think about the presents we are going to get. There is nothing wrong with taking joy in gifts. The problem is, most of us believe, the more we get, the happier we will be. But, Jesus taught us that true happiness is in giving rather than getting.

When we give to others, we will be truly blessed. First, we know that we are following God's example. God the Father gave us Jesus, the most precious gift available [John 3:16]. Jesus gave us Himself, His love and His life. Second, when we give to others we get to share in the happiness that we bring to their lives. Third, when we make our time, our talents, or our treasure available to God, He can use it to do great things.

For example, remember when Jesus fed 5,000 people [John 6:5-14]. A young boy gave five small loaves of bread and two small fish. It didn't seem like much, but, once he gave his gift to Jesus, the Lord was able to feed more than 5,000 people! Certainly, everyone who was fed that day was blessed by receiving, but the boy who gave was the happiest. He was happy because he saw the joy that others received from what he gave.

Several years ago, there was a Christian school for very poor children in India. Each year, the children received Christmas presents from children in England. The girls got a doll and the boys a toy. One year, a missionary suggested that the children could share some of their old toys with some other kids who had less. The kids agreed, but, the next week when he returned, he was surprised that the kids wanted to give away

their brand-new toys. The kids explained: since God gave His best to them, they wanted to give their best.

**Bringing it home:**

- 1. What is a way you can give to someone else today or this week? You can give of your time, your talents, or your treasure. For example, you could help care for a neighbor's pet; give part of your allowance to your church or another charity; give a toy to a friend; donate some of your things to a garage sale; or buy school supplies or toys for kids in need.**

## gossip

**Introduction:**

Each of us has had someone whisper and say, "Did you hear about ...?" Then they tell you something about one of their friends that makes that friend look bad. Sometimes, we have been the ones who spread news from person to person.

**WDJD?**

People spread rumors about Jesus that were not true. They tried to make Jesus look bad. But, Jesus never told gossip about others.

**Subject:** gossip

**FYI:** Some newspapers and magazines are "gossip columns" which tell the social and personal lives of celebrities or elite members of society. Readers were asked, "Do you believe what you read in these stories?" They said, "No, but we like to read it anyway." Can you guess why people read them?

**Object:** stop gossip**Bible Text: Proverbs 16:28**

*Gossip separates the best of friends.*

Some time ago, a professor at a university conducted a series of experiments to see how quickly rumors spread. He called six students into his office and, in strict confidence, told each that two very famous people were planning to attend a dance on campus. Within a week, the completely false story had spread to almost every student on campus. Soon town officials and news people were calling for details. The professor was amazed at how fast rumors and gossip travel.

What is gossip? Gossip is spreading news from person to person, especially rumors or private information. Gossips are people who say things behind another person's back for the purpose of making the other person look bad. Unfortunately, gossips generally speak against their companions. Gossip is a problem because it is mean, hurtful, and separates the best of friends. One difference between news and gossip is whether you raise your voice or lower it. Gossips tend to whisper, or speak privately.

The Bible warns us about being friends with gossips [Proverbs 20:19]. Essentially, if they are telling you other people's private information, and telling you stories about other people that make them look bad, they are probably saying things about you behind your back, too. Be careful!

The Bible also tells us that we are not to be gossips [Leviticus 19:16, 1Peter 4:15, 2Thessalonians 3:11-12]. Oftentimes, people speak gossip to try to make themselves



feel good by putting others down. If we are busy doing good we won't find it necessary to gossip about others.

**Bringing it home:**

- 1. The next time someone begins to tell you, "Did you hear about ...," tell them that you don't want to hear gossip.**
- 2. The next time you find yourself about to say something behind someone's back that is personal or makes them look bad, remember that it's gossip and stop.**

## gratitude

### **Introduction:**

I love the Thanksgiving Holiday. I love the time with family, and I love watching football and playing football. Most of all, I love all the food ... especially the turkey. I love the big drumsticks, and I love the white meat. I love to make sandwiches with turkey breast slices, mayo, and cheese on soft fresh bread. I even love making sandwiches the next day from the leftovers. But, after a few days of turkey leftovers, I tend to become less grateful. Have you ever had the experience of losing your attitude of gratitude?

### **WDJD?**

Jesus gave thanks to God even in the most difficult times of His life. Shortly before the cross, Jesus met with His disciples, and He shared the Lord's Supper (communion). As Jesus took the bread and the cup, He gave thanks to God [Luke 22:17, 19].

**Subject:** gratitude

**FYI:** The first Thanksgiving Feast was celebrated in October 1621. The first pilgrims left Plymouth Harbor in England on a ship called the Mayflower, seeking freedom in America to worship. They celebrated the first Thanksgiving to give thanks to God for their first harvest. The menu for the three-day feast included: turkeys, geese, ducks, deer, lobsters, clams, oysters, fish, corn, cucumbers, carrots, cabbage, turnips, radishes, onions, beets, and fruit. What a meal!

**Object:** be grateful

**Bible Text: Psalm 136:1**

*Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.*

**The problem:** imagine that a lifeguard saves you from drowning at the beach. You are so grateful you promise that every day for a year you are going to make the lifeguard lunch, and bring it to him at the beach. After a few weeks you start to miss a few days. After a little more than a month you rarely make the lifeguard lunch. You've lost the attitude of gratitude.

**The solution:** learn to keep an attitude of gratitude.

A little boy was asked by his father to say grace at the table. While the rest of the family waited, the little guy eyed every dish of food his mother had prepared. After the examination, he bowed his head and honestly prayed, "Lord I don't like the looks of it, but I thank you for it, and I'll eat it anyway. Amen."

One time, Jesus came to a village and healed ten men who were lepers [Luke 17:10-11]. These men had a life-threatening disease. They were not allowed to get close to other people, since they were contagious. Because of their disease, they lived a

miserable life. But, Jesus healed all ten of them. Imagine how excited and grateful they would be.

Unfortunately, only one man returned to give thanks and praise God. Jesus was disappointed in that the other nine failed to return, and apparently were not grateful. God wants us to be grateful to Him because of who He is, and His great love for us. Even more than what God does, or our circumstances, we should be grateful to God because of who He is.

Anyone who has a relationship with Jesus has so much to be grateful for. It is important for us to remember to give thanks to God regardless of the circumstances. Bible commentator, Matthew Henry, after being robbed, wrote in his diary the following: "Let me be thankful. First, because I was never robbed before. Second, because although they took my wallet, they did not take my life. Third, because although they took my all, it was not much. Fourth, because it was I who was robbed, not I who robbed." Matthew Henry had learned to keep an attitude of gratitude.

**Bringing it home:**

- 1. Maybe you've lost the attitude of gratitude. Here's a way to help you find it: make a list of what you are grateful for. Thank God for the things that you are grateful for.**
- 2. It is good to pray before we eat and give thanks to God for His provision. When we are hungry, it is easy to be grateful for our food. Sometimes, it's harder to remember to give thanks when we are full. Try praying after you you've eaten, too. Tell God "thanks" whether you're hungry or full.**

## habits

### **Introduction:**

What is a habit? A habit is something that you do all the time. It's your routine or custom. Sometimes our habits are so much a part of our lives that we don't even realize we are doing them. Do you have any habits? What are your good habits? What are your bad habits?

### **WDJD?**

Jesus had the habit of going to the synagogue on the Sabbath day to be with God's people [Luke 4:16], and the habit of praying [Luke 22:39].

**Subject:** habits

**FYI:** If you do a behavior for more than 30 days it will likely become a habit. If you stop the behavior for more than 30 days you will probably break the habit.

**Object:** have good habits and stop bad habits

### **Bible Text: Daniel 6:10**

*Daniel ... prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days.*

Bad habits are like comfortable beds: easy to get into, but hard to get out of. Habits have a tendency to take our life in directions we would never have chosen. Good habits can guide us through difficult times and situations where we aren't sure what to do and don't realize the dangers ahead. Bad habits are often seemingly fine at first, but they can lead us into dangerous waters. They are like a smooth river on which a young boy is floating, seemingly harmless, which then becomes swifter, exciting, scary, and finally goes crashing over a waterfall ... causing great damage to him and those around him.

Daniel formed the habit of being a man of prayer when he was a young man. He would pray in the morning, in the afternoon and in the evening. Daniel continued to pray, even when it was difficult. A life of prayer had become a very good habit that continued in Daniel's life even as an older man.

Daniel had made a decision as a young man to be a man of prayer. Our decisions determine our actions, and our actions become habits, and our habits will create a lifestyle. We need to make decisions in our lives to develop good habits and break bad habits.

God has given us His Holy Spirit to give us strength to have good habits and to break bad habits. Before you try to break a bad habit, or start a good habit, pray and ask God to help you. Remember, it's not about your strength, but God's strength. Daniel was able to have good habits because he tapped into God's strength, and that same strength is available to you.

**Bringing it home:**

- 1. Make a list of some good habits that you would like to have in your life. Pick one or two new habits that you want to practice this month.**
- 2. Make a list of some bad habits that you have. Decide on one or two habits that you want to break this month. All of the family members should share their lists with each other and help each other.**

## help

### **Introduction:**

Every year, our church sends teams of missionaries to Mexico to help care for people's needs. At the end of summer, we deliver hundreds of boxes of school supplies, and, in December, hundreds of boxes of Christmas gifts. Many people in the church prepare the boxes to help others. Then the teams deliver the boxes, help the people in Mexico with construction projects, and outreach to the kids. Each year the teams come back and share the blessings they received by helping others.

### **WDJD?**

Jesus looked on the multitudes and was moved with compassion. He began to teach them many things about God, and he cared for their physical needs [Mark 6:34].

**Subject:** helping others

**FYI:** Aesop told a fable of a mouse and a lion. The lion caught the mouse, and the mouse begged for mercy. The mouse tried to persuade the lion that if he let him go, the mouse could one day help him. The big lion just laughed at the idea of the little mouse helping him. But, he let the mouse go. One day, the lion was caught in a hunter's net. The mouse heard the lion roar, came to help, chewed through the ropes, and freed the lion. The moral of the story is: sometimes a very little friend can be a very big help!

**Object:** help those in need

### **Bible Text: Acts 11:29**

*Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea.*

**The problem:** until Jesus comes, there will always be needs in the world.

**The solution:** learn to help others.

In the days of the early church, the area around Jerusalem experienced a famine. The people didn't have enough food to eat, and needed help. The Christians from other areas decided to help, and helped as they were able.

Sometimes, when there are so many needs in the world, we might wonder, "What can I do to help?" We can't help every need, but the key is to figure out what each of us is called to do to help. For example, not everyone is able to go to Mexico, but many are able to fill boxes with school supplies or Christmas gifts.

True heroism is not really dramatic. It is simply the urge to help others regardless of the sacrifice. What are some of the benefits of helping others? Here's a short list of some ideas:

1. Helping others makes Jesus happy;
2. When we help others, we can show them Jesus;

3. It shows we are following Jesus;
4. The people you help will probably help you and others;
5. It will make others happy;
6. It will truly make a difference to you and others.

**Bringing it home:**

1. **When was the last time you helped someone else? What happened, and how did it feel?**
2. **What is a way that you can help others? For example, you can take the trash out, help care for a pet, carry groceries, or help a younger child. As you think of a way to help, decide how you will help others this week.**

## honor

### **Introduction:**

Think of some of the cartoons or other shows you watch on TV. How do the kids act toward their parents? Do they show respect for their parents? Do the programs even show parents and kids together?

### **WDJD?**

Jesus showed respect to Joseph and Mary all the days of His life. Sometimes we feel we're better than our parents or smarter than they are. Jesus is God, and He was surely better, but He honored His earthly parents, as well as God His heavenly Father.

**Subject:** honor our parents

**FYI:** There are over 600 commandments in the Old Testament, but only ten were written by God's own hand. How many of the Ten Commandments do you know? Make a list and then check your answers by reviewing Exodus 20:1-17.

**Object:** respect your parents

### **Bible Text: Exodus 20:12**

*Honor your father and your mother. Then you will live a long, full life, in the land the Lord your God will give you.*

**The problem:** lack of respect.

**The solution:** honor God by honoring your parents.

God commands us to honor or respect our parents. The Ten Commandments were the only ones written with the very finger of God ... so they must be important. The fifth commandment tells us to honor our parents. It is the first commandment with a promise. God promises to bless your life if you respect your parents. If we respect God, we will honor our parents.

Honor and respect are attitudes. We can show respect by our actions, such as obeying. Our attitude of respect can also be seen by the expressions on our face, and heard by the tone of our voice. Sometimes, kids will talk to their parents, or behave at home, in a way they would not act at school. It is good to respect your teachers, but it is better to honor your parents.

Parents can help their children to learn to honor them by being an example to them. When parents respect their children, it teaches the kids to respect their parents [Ephesians 6:1-4]. Parents have a tendency to tell their kids when they feel that they are not being respected or honored. But, parents often fail to praise their kids when they are being respectful. By encouraging and praising their kids for being respectful, parents help develop kids who honor God and them.



**Bringing it home:**

- 1. Parents, try to encourage and acknowledge your kids' behavior and attitude when it shows respect.**
- 2. Also, parents when you correct your kids for being disrespectful, first, ask the child if they know what they did that you think was disrespectful. If they don't understand, try to explain. Also, listen to your children as they respond. Showing respect encourages respect.**

## hope

### **Introduction:**

Have you ever had a really bad day? Describe what happened. We have all felt hopeless and wanted to give up.

### **WDJD?**

Do you think Jesus ever had a bad day? What do you think He did?

**Subject:** hope

**FYI:** An experiment was done with some lab rats to see what effect hope can make. The first group was rescued just before something bad happened, but the second group wasn't. When they were tested a second time, the first group tried twice as long without giving up compared to the first group.

**Object:** hope in God

### **Bible Text: Lamentations 3:22-2**

*Through the LORD's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. "The LORD is my portion," says my soul. "Therefore I hope in Him!"*

Have you ever tasted hot fresh biscuits when they came out of the oven? They are so yummy! Just consider what goes into them. The flour itself doesn't taste good, neither does the baking powder, nor the shortening, nor the other ingredients. However, when you mix them all together and put them in the oven, they come out tasting just right.

Sometimes we have a really bad day and feel hopeless. All of us have been embarrassed, felt stupid, or have done something bad. But, because of God's love for us, He won't let us be destroyed. Things that happen in our lives are all part of the process of making yummy biscuits.

Each day we have a fresh start. We can trust God to care for us today because He is faithful. God knows the struggles that we go through and He cares. Even when life seems hard, God is going to care for us. Even in difficult times God will show mercy to his people because He loves us and He is faithful. Don't give up! Don't forget, the biscuits are coming.

God wants to give us hope. The Scriptures are to give us hope; Jesus is our hope; the Father is the God of hope; and we are to abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit [Romans 15:4, 12, 13]. Whenever we lose hope, we can remember God's love and have hope. The next time you feel sad or hopeless, remember God's love never ends. Tomorrow is a new day with a fresh start.

**Bringing it home:**

- 1. What is the biggest struggle that you will face this week? Don't lose hope! Remember God's love for you, and His faithfulness. Pray and ask God to give you the hope that you need to get through today.**
- 2. Make some hot biscuits and look at the ingredients. Taste and see how wonderful it all works out in the end.**

## imitate

### **Introduction:**

Imagine children following their parents for a walk along the beach. As the parents step in the wet sand they leave their footprints. The kids try to put their feet in their parents' footprints. They are literally following in their footsteps. But, kids also follow in their parents' footsteps in the sense that they are following their example. If kids are following in their parents' footprints, parents need to be careful where they are leading their kids.

### **WDJD?**

Jesus is the good shepherd and His sheep (Christians) hear his voice and follow Him [John 10:3-5, 27]. His followers are to imitate Him.

**Subject:** imitating Jesus

**FYI:** One of the most effective stop-smoking commercials showed a father and son sitting together under a tree. The father lights a cigarette and puts the pack down. Then the son picks up the pack and looks at it, as the narrator says, "Like father, like son." The message reminded parents that children imitate our examples, both good and bad.

**Object:** imitate godly examples and be good examples

### **Bible Text: 1 Corinthians 11:1**

*Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.*

As a boy, Dr. John Mitchell was familiar with the mountains and mine pits around his house. One night his Boy Scout troop was on a midnight hike. Since Mitchell knew the mountains and where the dangerous pits were, he took several private hikes away from the troop. The scoutmaster corrected him, saying: "Although you know where the mine pits are and how to avoid them, when you go to them you make a path that others may follow to their death."

Jesus called the disciples to follow Him. As they learned from Jesus and watched Him, they began to imitate Jesus. They were thinking like Jesus and acting like Him. They were doing the things Jesus did. The apostle Paul was one of Jesus' followers. He told other believers to imitate Him just like he imitated Jesus. Paul understood the importance of His example in helping people to follow Jesus.

When we imitate someone, it means that we copy them. Most of us are looking for examples to imitate. Many of us look to athletes or performers, such as musicians and actors, to be role models. We may take cues from them on how to dress, or how to act. We need to be careful about who we choose to imitate. Also, are our friends good examples or bad examples?

Parents and kids need to imitate godly examples, but, ideally, parents will be that godly example for their kids. When we imitate Jesus, it is not so much dressing or

looking like Him, but imitating His character: love, joy, peace, kindness, gentleness, patience, goodness, faithfulness, and self-control. When parents say to their kids, “Do as I say, not as I do,” kids are not likely to be impressed. Kids are not looking for perfection, but desire and need consistency. Parents need to reflect Jesus for their kids.

**Bringing it home:**

- 1. Ask your kids to tell you in what ways you remind them of Jesus.**
- 2. Ask your kids in what way you could be more like Jesus.**
- 3. Tell your kids what you see in them that reminds you of Jesus.**
- 4. Ask your kids in what way they could be more like Jesus.**

# jealousy

## **Introduction:**

Have you ever felt jealous of someone else? Maybe you visited a friend and you liked their house, clothes, toys, electronics, or something else that was theirs. Perhaps you felt that it was unfair that they had it and you didn't.

## **WDJD?**

Jesus visited the homes of wealthy people and saw the many nice things they had. Jesus did not have a nice home, nice clothes or nice things. But, Jesus was not jealous, and had no desire for other people's stuff.

**Subject:** jealousy

**FYI:** If we are busy helping the people below us, we won't have time to be jealous of the people above us [Henrietta Mears].

**Object:** trust God

## **Bible Text: Song of Solomon 8:6**

*Jealousy is as cruel as the grave; its flames are flames of fire.*

**The problem:** not being grateful for what God has given you.

**The solution:** trust God to give you all you need and more.

A wrestler was so jealous of Theogenes, the prince of wrestlers, that he even wrestled with his statue. One night he picked up the statue to throw it, and it fell on him and crushed him to death. Jealousy can be a very dangerous emotion!

We have all been jealous of someone else. Maybe we were jealous of the attention that they received, or the praise that they were given. Maybe we wanted something that they had, or were jealous because of something that they could do that we couldn't do. The problems with jealousy are: they tend to divide us rather than bring us together, and we can become angry at God and others because of our jealousy.

Saul was jealous of the attention and praise that David received after David killed Goliath. Saul became so angry he tried to kill David [1Samuel 18:7-11]. Also, in the story of the prodigal son [Luke 15:11-32], the older brother was jealous and angry because his father threw a big party for the younger brother. The older brother felt jealous because he had been a "good son" all his life, and his father never threw a party for him. Yet, his father threw a huge party for his little brother who had been rebellious. The older brother was so upset he would not even go to the party. Do you see how jealousy tends to divide us?

But, the father assured the older brother that all of his needs would be cared for and he will give his oldest son all that he had. This is the heart of God the Father. He wants us to know that even when He has given much to someone else, He has not

forgotten us. He will care for us because He loves us. When we trust God to care for us, we don't need to be jealous of how he has cared for someone else.

**Bringing it home:**

- 1. When was the last time that you felt jealous? It's natural to feel jealous, but, think about the situation: Remember that God loves you, and He knows what's best for you. You can trust God. Don't let the feelings of jealousy separate you from God or others.**

# joy

## **Introduction:**

Would you describe yourself as a happy person? What makes you happy? What makes you unhappy? On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the happiest, describe your level of happiness. Ask your family what they think your level is. Then go around the room and do the same for each person.

## **WDJD?**

Jesus told His disciples that He wanted them to have His joy. The disciples certainly wanted to have joy like Jesus. Even though there were times when Jesus was very sad, He usually had great joy even when life was difficult.

## **Subject:** joy

**FYI:** During the last 50 years more than 250 million people have gone to Disneyland. Disneyland calls itself, “The happiest place on earth.” Many go to the “Magic Kingdom” seeking happiness and escape from the pressures of their lives.

## **Object:** learn to have joy

## **Bible Text: John15:11**

*These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy be full.*

C.S. Lewis once observed, “Joy bursts in our lives when we go about doing the good at hand and not trying to manipulate things and times to achieve joy.” Joy is generally not found by beginning a quest to find it. Joy is generally discovered as we steadily follow the Master’s path of duty. Then we find ourselves in the place where joy is sure to meet us.

Why was Jesus full of joy? First, Jesus obeyed God. There is joy in knowing that you are doing the right thing even when things are not going the way you want them to. Second, He trusted God’s promises. Even when life is difficult, we can be sure that God will care for us.

Third, He put the needs of others before His own desires. Jesus had joy, because He brought happiness into other people’s lives. He was busy helping others rather than focusing on His own circumstances.

We, too, can have a life filled with joy. What we need to do is remember that **JOY** stands for:

Jesus

Others

You



We need to put Jesus first and try to live to please Him. We can trust that He'll care for us even when things aren't going our way. We can rejoice in the Lord always [Philippians 4:4]. If I order a Happy Meal and the toy is broken, or it is a toy that I already have, I don't need to be unhappy. I can trust that Jesus has a good plan for me and wants me to have joy, even when I don't like what's happening.

We need to put others next. If I'm trying to help other people, I won't be focused on myself, and I can have joy. When we try to bless other people and make them happy, we discover that we have joy. If I get a Happy Meal and discover a toy inside that I already have, I can try to give the toy to someone else to make them happy. Then I can have joy. Finally, put yourself last. Don't expect to get everything you want. Happiness depends on what's happening, but you can have joy no matter what's happening.

**Bringing it home:**

- 1. The next time you feel unhappy, see whether you trust Jesus, and how you can put the needs of others before your own.**
- 2. An ancient Chinese proverb teaches us, "If you want to be happy for an hour, take a nap. If you want to be happy for a day, go fishing. If you want to be happy for a month, get married. If you want to be happy for a year, inherit a fortune. If you want to be happy for a lifetime, help others."**

## kindness

### **Introduction:**

What do you think of when you think of the word *kindness*? Sometimes we think of volunteers who help others. Maybe we think of doing something for someone and not expecting any reward. Kindness is similar to compassion, mercy, and sympathy. The opposite of kindness is often described as being mean or cruel.

### **WDJD?**

Jesus showed kindness to people basically by everything He did. He taught people about God, healed the sick, provided food for the hungry, showed compassion for the sad, and loved people in need.

**Subject:** kindness

**FYI:** The Greek word from which we translate *kindness* is *philanthropia*. It literally means, “love for humanity.” From the Greek word, we get our English word “philanthropy,” meaning charity. An internet search of the word charity revealed over 11 million hits. People are interested in kindness.

**Object:** be kind

### **Bible Text: 2 Peter 1:7**

*Godliness leads to kindness.*

One of the most difficult things to give away is kindness, for it is usually returned. Jesus taught us that whenever we give food or water to someone, help someone in need, provide clothing, or visit someone in prison, it is just like doing it to Jesus Himself [Matthew 25:31-46]. When we show kindness to people it is the same as showing kindness to Jesus.

Godliness leads to kindness. As we grow in our relationship with God, we learn to be kind to other people. King David showed kindness to the grandson of King Saul [2 Samuel 9:1-7]. Even though the grandson of King Saul was a potential challenger to the throne, David decided to be kind to him rather than harming him. David restored property to the grandson and brought him to the palace. He fed him at his table. The grandson was an enemy because he was a threat to the king’s throne, but David showed kindness. David was able to show kindness, even to an enemy, because he had grown close to God.

We often think of the opposite of kindness as being mean or cruel. But, one of the opposites of kindness is not caring. When we don’t care about others, and we fail to show kindness, we miss out on the opportunity to be blessed, to bless others, and to bless Jesus.

If we don't show kindness to others, we need to continue to draw close to God, and then we will be kind to others. Remember, God's love is kind [1Corinthians 13:4]. If there are any kind words to be spoken, let us speak them now, while friends and loved ones can appreciate them. If there are any loving deeds to be done, let us do them today, while we can.

**Bringing it home:**

- 1. When was the last time that you showed kindness to someone? How did it feel?**
- 2. Think of someone at school, work, or elsewhere, that you can show kindness to today or this week. What will you do to show kindness?**

## learning

### **Introduction:**

What is, or was, your favorite subject at school, and why? What is something you learned recently? Some of us like school more than others. However, all of us need to learn, not only at school, but everywhere we can.

### **WDJD?**

When Jesus was 12 years old, He was at the temple in Jerusalem with the rabbis. He was listening to them and asking them questions. The teachers marveled at His understanding and answers; and Jesus increased in wisdom [Luke 2:41-52].

**Subject:** learning

**FYI:** Some people learn best by reading, others by seeing, still others by writing, others by hearing, and others by doing. All of us learn in a variety of ways, but generally some ways are better than others for each of us.

**Object:** learn about God

### **Bible Text: Proverbs 9:9**

*Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; teach a just man, and he will increase in learning.*

**The problem:** not wanting to learn.

**The solution:** learn to love learning.

Learning is acquired through experience and instruction. The apostle Paul *learned* to be content no matter what his circumstances were [Philippians 4:11]. He learned through experience that God was with him, and God would care for him no matter how difficult life seemed. Consider the experiences of your own life and see what you've learned about God. Also, as you go through life, keep your eyes open to learn more about God.

The Bible is the best source of instruction to learn about God. The Bible was written so that we could learn about God and receive His comfort and hope [Romans 15:4]. If you want to learn about God, read the Bible. Also, share with friends, family, and others the things you are learning. Don't be afraid to ask questions; that's what Jesus did. We can all learn from others.

If you are wise, you will continue to learn throughout your life as you receive insight and instruction. People say, "You can't teach an old dog, new tricks." But, people can keep learning all of their lives, especially, if you learn to love learning. Parents can help their kids to love learning by trying to find out how their kids learn best. Talk with your kids about their classes, and ways that they learn best. For example, if your kids

like to draw pictures of what they are learning, encourage them to draw pictures during your devotion time while your family learns about God.

Finally, we sometimes learn very valuable lessons from our mistakes. Don't be afraid to make mistakes, and when you do, learn from them. The story is told of a young man who was promoted to fill the position of a senior officer with a brilliant record who had just retired from the company. The young man asked the senior officer the secret of his success. The old man answered, "Two words: right decisions." The young man then asked, "But how do you make right decisions?" Again the older man answered, but with only one word, "Experience." The young man then asked his last question, "And how do you get this experience?" "Two words" answered the older man, "wrong decisions."

**Bringing it home:**

- 1. What is your favorite Bible story or what are your favorite Bible verses? What did they teach you about God?**
- 2. Have your child read to you from the Bible as you're cleaning up after supper, or read to your child as he cleans up.**

# lies

## Introduction:

Each of us has told a lie. If you say, "I've never lied," you're probably lying. We might try to excuse our lies. People might describe a lie as: an exaggeration, a half-truth, a misrepresentation, or a white lie. But, the Bible teaches us that a lie is a lie, and it's wrong.

## WDJD?

Jesus represents all that is true. Jesus said, "I am the way, **the truth**, and the life. No one comes to the Father, except through Me." [John 14:6].

**Subject:** lies

**FYI:** Do you know who told the first lie? The very first lie was in the Garden of Eden, and the devil was the originator of lies [Genesis 3:1-5; John 8:44].

**Object:** tell the truth

## Bible Text: Ephesians 4:25

*Therefore, putting away lying, let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor, for we are members of one another.*

What's the problem with lying? God says lies are wrong. Not only does it grieve God, but lies are damaging. They destroy relationships. People don't want their friends to lie to them. Also, lies tend to lead to more lies. People often feel they have to tell more lies to try to keep from getting caught. Lies are like a sticky spider web that catches us, traps us, and hurts us, as well as others, and God. "A little lie is like a little pregnancy -- it doesn't take long before everyone knows" (C.S. Lewis).

Why do people lie? People lie to get away with something, get away from something, or get out of something. Sometimes we lie to avoid conflict, sometimes to try to make ourselves look better, and some of us lie because it has become a habit.

How can we stop lying? First, decide with God's help that you are going to put away lying. Recognize that, as a child of God, you need to stop. Second, pray and ask God to help you stop lying; and to protect you from the lies of others [Psalm 120:2]. Third, remember that if we are honest, we will be set free from the problems of lies.

## Bringing it home:

1. **Talk about a time when someone lied to you, or when you told a lie. What happened, and how did it feel?**

# love

## Introduction:

Most of us say we love a lot of things. For example, I love God, my wife, my sons, and my dog. I also love baseball, hiking in Yosemite, hot dogs, chocolate chip ice cream, coffee, and reading the Bible. But, as you probably imagine, I mean something different when I say, "I love chocolate chip ice cream," and I say, "I love my wife." So, what does it mean to truly love?

## WDJD?

Jesus loves His followers to the end. Even though He knew He would be betrayed by Judas, and that the disciples would deny Him, Jesus was committed to them. His love was unconditional. He loved them to the end [John 13:1].

## Subject: love

**FYI:** The Greek language of Jesus' day used four different words to describe love. *Agape* is the type of love that God shows us. *Storge* is the love parents show their children. *Phileo* is the love between brothers, and *eros* refers to physical love that God reserves for married people.

## Object: love others

## Bible Text: 1Thessalonians 4:9

*But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another.*

In his letter to the Thessalonians, Paul didn't need to spend a lot of time teaching them about loving their brothers (phileo), because God has taught us to show His love (agape) to one another. God teaches us with the Bible, by the work of the Holy Spirit in us, and by His example.

Jesus is the example of love. He cares about people and spends time with them to let them know He cares about His friends. Although Jesus had so many things to do, He showed that He loved people by spending time with them. He shows love by being kind, caring, and forgiving. Jesus forgives, because His love is unconditional.

Perhaps the greatest definition of God's love is contained in

## **1Corinthians 13:4-8:**

***Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.***

If you re-read the definition of love, and insert Jesus' name, it still makes perfect sense:

“Jesus suffers long and is kind; Jesus does not envy; Jesus does not parade Himself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek His own, Jesus is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; Jesus bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Jesus never fails.”

Real love is a picture of the life of Jesus. As we learn about Jesus, we learn about God’s love. Once we discover what real love is, we can begin to love others. In a boiler room, it is impossible to look into the boiler to see how much water it contains, but next to the boiler is a tiny glass tube that shows how much water is inside the boiler. When the tube is half full, the boiler is half full; if the tube is empty, so is the boiler. How do you know you love God? Your love for others is like the glass tube ... it reveals the fullness of your love.

**Bringing it home:**

- 1. Draw a picture to describe love.**



## maturity

### **Introduction:**

Have you ever wanted to be big? As a parent, do you remember when you were a kid, and what you wanted to do when you became a big person? As a kid, what do you want to do when you're big?

### **WDJD?**

Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and people [Luke 2:52]. In other words, Jesus continued to grow and mature. Wisdom speaks of mental growth. Stature speaks of physical growth. Favor with God means spiritual growth, and favor with people social maturity and influence.

**Subject:** maturity

**FYI:** The movie "Big" is about a young boy who gets his wish to become "big." One day he wakes up and he's no longer a kid, but he's big. He discovers all sorts of new privileges, and things he can do, while still having the heart to have fun, because on the inside he is still a kid. But, he also discovers that being big comes with more responsibility. Finally, he decides that he doesn't want to become big too fast. Remember, you don't need to grow up too fast, but you do want to mature.

**Object:** grow in God

### **Bible Text: 1Corinthians 13:11**

*When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.*

Why do kids want to grow up? There are a lot of reasons, but, two of the most common are: you get to do more stuff; and you get to make your own decisions. Growing up means more privileges and rights, but it also means more responsibilities and expectations.

To mature means you're growing up. Everyone has a different schedule for how fast they grow up, but each of us wants to grow. You grow physically, as your body matures. You can measure that you are growing: bigger shoes, bigger clothes, you weigh more, and you're taller. You grow mentally as you learn to read, and read to learn; also as you graduate from grade to grade. You grow socially as you become more comfortable in different situations with different people.

Most importantly, we need to mature spiritually. We are to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus [2Peter 3:18]. As you read your Bible, talk about God, and go to church, you will learn about God. And, as you apply what you learn, you mature.

How do you know if you're maturing spiritually? If you plant a young orange tree, water it, and provide good soil, it will produce oranges as it matures. As Christians

mature, they produce fruit, too: in the form of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. If you see fruit, you are maturing.

**Bringing it home:**

- 1. Find a closet door jam and mark how tall everyone in the family is. Put a mark, the person's name or initials, and the date. Return to the closet door in six months and then in a year to check on each child's growth.**
- 2. Describe a way that you've grown spiritually in the last six months. Describe a Bible study that you learned, and a lesson that you applied to your life.**

## money

### **Introduction:**

What would you do if you had all the money you wanted? How would you spend it?

### **WDJD?**

One day, a poor woman came to the temple to worship. She only had two pennies, but she gave it to God as an offering. Jesus noticed her gift, and mentioned to the disciples that she gave even more than the rich, because, she gave all that she had. When we share with others, Jesus sees, and wants to reward us.

### **Subject:** money

**FYI:** The first coins were made approximately 700 B.C. The first printed money appeared in China, around 800 A.D. Before the development of coins and printed money, people would trade goods and services by exchanging a certain weighed amount of grain or precious metals. How would you like to do all your chores in exchange for five pounds of wheat?

### **Object:** share with others

### **Bible Text: 1Timothy 6:10**

*For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness.*

To many people money is like a shoe: if the amount is too small, it pinches and irritates, but if it is too large, it causes them to stumble and fall. One day a certain old, selfish, rich man visited a rabbi, who took the rich man by the hand and led him to a window. "Look out there," he said. The rich man looked into the street, "What do you see?" asked the rabbi.

"I see men, women, and children," answered the rich man. Again the rabbi took the man by the hand and this time led him to a mirror. "Now what do you see?" "Now I see myself," the rich man replied.

Then the rabbi said, "Behold, in the window there is glass, and in the mirror there is glass. But the glass of the mirror is covered with a little silver, and no sooner is the silver added that you cease to see others, but you see only yourself."

Money is not the root of all evil, but the love of money is a problem. Some people have even left their relationship with God, because they loved money more than God. Money can be used for good, but can also make us selfish and greedy.

The Bible teaches us to: earn money, save money, share it, and spend it wisely. The most common way for kids to **earn money** is by doing household chores in exchange for an agreed upon amount of money [allowance]. Decide, with your parents, what chores you will be responsible for, and how much allowance you will receive.

Make a checklist or chart of the chores. For example, take out the trash, make the bed, clean the room, help with laundry, and help with pets. Decide how often you have to do the chore. For example, every day, or two times a week. You can also consider special projects to earn extra money.

Once you've earned the money, you should **share** some. Perhaps 10% is a good amount to donate to charity, or to your local church. For example, if you earn \$10.00, donate \$1.00. Also, it would be wise to **save** some of your money. Again, perhaps 10% would be a good amount to save. Each week set aside some to share and some to save.

That leaves you 80% to **spend**. But, before you spend your money, you want to try to spend the money wisely. Use your money for things you think you need or will bring longer lasting pleasure. Try to avoid buying something simply because you have some money to spend. Instead, wait for things you really want.

**Bringing it home:**

1. **Pray and talk together, as a family, about a plan for the kids to earn, share, save, and spend their money.**
2. **Provide a savings bank for each child, and a way for them to donate money to share.**

## nature

### **Introduction:**

What's your favorite place to go to experience nature? What do you like about it?

### **WDJD?**

The Bible tells us Jesus created all things that are in heaven and that are on earth, and all things were created through Him and for Him [Colossians 1:16]. God created nature for us to enjoy, and for His purposes. Jesus pointed to the birds of the air and the flowers of the field to show us how much God loves us [Matthew 6].

### **Subject:** nature

**FYI:** The Milky Way is the galaxy which is the home of our solar system, together with at least 200 billion other stars.

**Object:** when you see the beauty of nature, you should think of God.

### **Bible Text: Psalm 19:1**

*The heavens tell of the glory of God. The skies display His marvelous craftsmanship.*

From the time the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky and all that God has made. God's power and His nature are seen in the beauty of His creation [Romans 1:20]. Nature doesn't tell us all that we need to know about God, but it does reveal God.

The Empire State Building is small compared with the great Half-Dome of Yosemite or the cathedral spires of Zion National Park. The Panama Canal is a scratch on the surface compared with the Grand Canyon of the Colorado. No artist can reproduce the beauty of the silvery halo of mists that sometimes crown the head of Mt. Whitney in the morning light. All these wonders proclaim the glory of God.

Have you ever been away from the city, looked at the night sky, and seen a countless number of stars? Sometimes, it seems there are so many stars in the sky. It's as if someone splattered white paint against a black background. When you consider how many stars there are, just in our galaxy alone, it helps us to understand how big God is. Similarly, when you go to the beach and consider the size of the ocean, you are impressed with how big it is. When you see how big the sky and the oceans are, you begin to see how big God is. When you see how big God is, you know that no problem you have is too big for Him.

When you see mighty, snow-capped mountains, you can think of His majesty. When you see giant trees, you can be reminded of His strength. When you see a beautiful rainbow, you can remember God's promise to Noah, and know that God keeps His promises. And, when you see an impressive waterfall cascading over a cliff, you see

the beauty of a life yielded to God. When you see the beauty of nature, you should think of God.

**Bringing it home:**

- 1. Draw a picture of the beauty of nature.**

## needs

### **Introduction:**

Have you ever gone into a store and thought, “I need that.” Maybe it was a new toy, game, clothes, electronics or something else you felt that you just had to have. Sometimes we confuse what we want with what we need.

### **WDJD?**

Jesus comforts us by reminding us that our Father knows the things we have need of before we even ask Him [Matthew 6:8, 32]. God will take care of our needs, because He loves us. Since God cares for the flowers and the birds (and He loves us more), we can trust Him to care for us, too.

**Subject:** needs

**FYI:** People have various needs. We have physical needs such as thirst, hunger and oxygen/air. There are safety needs like shelter and security. We have emotional and social needs such as love, compassion, acceptance, friendship, attention, language, and growth.

**Object:** trust God to provide

### **Bible Text: Philippians 4:20**

*And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*

Sometimes we confuse needs and “greeds.” There is a difference between what we want and what we need. It’s okay to want things. But, if you always want something more, you may be greedy. God didn’t promise to satisfy your “greeds”, but He promises to take care of all our needs. We want to be careful about our desires because the devil, like a fisherman, baits his hook according to the appetite of the fish. Instead, we can trust God to provide for our needs.

The only survivor of a shipwreck washed up on a small uninhabited island. He cried out to God to save him. Every day he scanned the horizon for help, but none seemed to be coming. Exhausted, he eventually managed to build a simple hut, and put his few possessions in it. Then one day, after hunting for food, he arrived to find his little hut in flames, the smoke going up to the sky. The worst had happened, and he was so sad that he cried.

Early the next day, a ship drew near the island and rescued him. “How did you know I was here?” he asked the crew. “We saw your smoke signal,” they replied.

God may not give you everything you want, and you may not get it when you want it, but God will provide all of your needs.

**Bringing it home:**

1. **Make a list of ten things you want or need. Next to each item on the list, write whether it's a want or a need. Have each family member share their list and their thoughts about whether something is a want or a need.**



## obedience

### **Introduction:**

A husband and wife were discussing the possibility of taking a trip to the Holy Land. The husband said, "Won't it be great to take the family to Jerusalem and stand at the temple mount and read the Ten Commandments?" The wife responded, "It would be better if we stayed home and kept them."

### **WDJD?**

Jesus always obeyed His Father. Jesus was obedient, even when it was very difficult, especially the cross [Philippians 2:8]. He wants to help us be obedient, too.

### **Subject:** obedience

**FYI:** A little boy was riding his tricycle furiously around the block, over and over again. Finally, a policeman stopped and asked him why he was going around and around. The boy said that he was running away from home. Then the policeman asked why he kept going around the block. The boy responded, "Because my mom said that I'm not allowed to cross the street."

The moral of the story is clear: obedience will keep you close to those you love.

### **Object:** respect your parents

### **Bible Text: Ephesians 6:1**

*Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.*

Children are told to obey and honor their parents. Obedience means to listen to, submit to, or follow. Obedience deals with behavior, while honor focuses on attitude. Children are to obey parents as long as they are living in their parents' home, but even when they leave the home, they need to honor their parents. Obedience and honor are ways to show respect for God and our parents.

Why is it difficult to obey? Sometimes we are trying to be independent, or self-reliant. Sometimes we don't want to do what we're being asked to do. Other times, we are being rebellious. But, generally, we are disobedient because of a lack of respect and love. When parents show respect and love to their kids, it makes it easier for kids to obey, because kids respond to love and respect with love and respect.

Children are to respect their parents because it pleases God and is right. God promises to reward us for obeying. He will give us a full, satisfying life filled with blessings. There are many reasons to obey God and your parents. Some obey out of fear feeling that they have to, *or else*. Some obey because of rewards. They only obey because they want something out of it. But, the best reason to obey is because of love for God and your parents. What are your reasons for obeying?

Finally, partial or selected obedience is not obedience at all; it is merely convenience. Remember, when God puts in a period, do not change it to a question mark.

**Bringing it home:**

- 1. God assures us of rewards for obedience. Parents should also reward their children for obedience. One way you can reward your kids for obedience is by praising them. Count how many times you praise your kids during the next two days. If your kids are being obedient, praise them frequently.**
- 2. Another way to reward obedience is to provide a bonus. Children often receive an allowance for doing their chores, but, a bonus rewards them for being generally obedient. For example, a movie night, pizza with their favorite toppings, or a special dessert may be ways to provide positive reinforcement for good behavior.**

## overcoming

### **Introduction:**

Each of us faces challenges: things that we are afraid of, things that are hard, and temptations to disobey God. What are some of the difficult challenges in your life that seem hard to overcome?

### **WDJD?**

Jesus assures us that we can overcome difficulties because of Him. Therefore, we don't need to worry.

### **Subject:** overcoming

**FYI:** Mt. Everest is the world's highest mountain at 29,035 feet high. Sir Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay were the first to climb to the top on May 29, 1953. The best year for climbers was 1993 when 129 made it to the top, but eight died trying.

### **Object:** be an overcomer

### **Bible Text: John 16:33**

*Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.*

Years ago, George Frederick Handel was alone in his room, very sad. A few days earlier, his orchestra and his music had been rejected by the audience and critics. He was sure he was a failure. Then a friend came and asked him to write music for a performance called *Messiah*. Handel felt unworthy, but the love of Christ touched Him, and he fell to his knees praying for God's help. Then he started to work, and for the next three weeks he focused on Jesus, and completed the *Messiah*.

When the *Messiah* was first sung, and "The Hallelujah Chorus" echoed through the concert hall, the audience rose to its feet and presented thunderous applause. Only weeks before, Handel was convinced he was a failure, but God helped him to overcome.

Life is full of difficulties and challenges: schoolwork, sports, peer pressure, speaking in front of people, and dealing with mean people. It can be difficult to love God when people at your school or your work don't seem to care about God, but God wants us to overcome.

What does it mean to overcome? To overcome means to prevail, to conquer, or defeat. What do we need to overcome? First, we overcome the world. The world represents life apart from God. If you trust in Jesus, learn of Him, and follow Him, you will overcome [1John 5:5]. Second, how do we overcome evil? We overcome evil by doing good, not by doing more evil [Romans 12:21].

Third, how do you overcome fear? When we learn that God is on our side, we don't have to worry about anyone or anything being against us. With God for us, we are

more than overcomers, and we overcome fear [Romans 8:31-37]. Fourth, we overcome temptation. Jesus overcame temptation by knowing the Word of God and doing it when He faced temptation [Matthew 4:1-11]. We, too, can learn the Bible and apply it when we are tempted to sin.

**Bringing it home:**

- 1. What's the biggest challenge you are facing today? Is it the world, evil, fear, or temptation? What did you learn to help you overcome?**
- 2. Draw a picture of you overcoming Mt. Everest.**

## parents

### Introduction:

What parents in the Bible had the hardest job and why? What do you think is the most important part of a parent's responsibility to their kids? God has established the family as the basic structure to teach children about Him. God wants parents to teach kids about His love, how to worship Him, and how to live a life that pleases Him.

### WDJD?

Kids are very important to Jesus. Parents brought little children to Jesus so that He could bless the children, but the disciples stopped them. The disciples thought that Jesus was too busy and important to stop and care for children. But, Jesus corrected the disciples. He told them that children are important to God, He wants to bless them, and He wants the children to come to Him. He also wants us to remove obstacles to the children coming to Him.

**Subject:** parents

**FYI:** Who is the oldest parent in the Bible to have their first child? Answer: Noah was 500 years old when he had his first of three sons [Genesis 5:32].

**Object:** help your kids love God

### Bible Text: Matthew 19:14

*Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.*

A little boy who was told by his Sunday school teacher that God made people good, replied, "Yes I know; but mothers help a lot." A good parent is worth a hundred good teachers. When Napoleon, alarmed at the bad conditions of his country, was asked, "What does France need most?" he answered, "Mothers."

A parent's most important responsibility is to love her children. How does God want parents to show love to their children? There are many ways to show love, but God wants parents to do the following:

- 1. Protect:** Moses' parents protected him by hiding him from Pharaoh [Hebrews 11:23]. Parents need to provide a safe and secure environment for their children. Kids should not be afraid of their parents, but should feel protected, safe, and secure.
- 2. Train:** parents are to train their children in the way they should go, so that, as they grow older, they won't depart from the faith [Proverbs 22:6]. Parents need to train their kids about reading the Bible, praying, and going to church.
- 3. Educate:** parents are to teach their kids about God, and about the Bible [Deuteronomy 6:4-9]. Spend time talking about the things of God daily with your kids.

**4. Correct:** parents are to correct their children when they do wrong [Hebrews 12:5-6]. By correcting kids and establishing boundaries, you let your kids know that you really love them.

**5. Provide:** parents are to provide for their children's material needs [2Corinthians 12:14]. Parents may not be able to give their kids everything they want, and it wouldn't be good if they did, but parents should provide for their kids. This often means that parents will need to make sacrifices for their kids.

**Bringing it home:**

- 1. Tell your parents if you think they're doing a good job of helping you love God.**
- 2. Tell your parents how you think they could do a better job of helping you love God.**

## patience

### **Introduction:**

We live in a world where everybody wants something now. We want our computers to be faster; we cook microwave meals in seconds, we eat at fast-food restaurants; and we don't like standing in lines. Many of us are not used to waiting. We get impatient and frustrated when we don't get what we want when we want it. Can you think of a time when you were patient? What was it like? Can you remember a time when you were impatient? What was that like?

### **WDJD?**

Jesus never seemed to be rushed. I imagine going through a drive-through at a fast-food restaurant with Jesus driving the car. He asks everybody in the car, "What do you want?" While everybody is staring at the menu, trying to decide, there's a line of cars behind us. But Jesus stays cool and doesn't even rush us. He gets the orders from us, confirms the drinks, orders Himself a fish sandwich, and patiently waits for the order to be prepared. Jesus is patient [Galatians 5:22].

**Subject:** patience

**FYI:** God told Noah to build an ark. Noah believed God, obeyed Him, and built the ark. Noah kept building the ark for 120 years. Noah patiently waited for God's perfect timing.

**Object:** learn to wait

**Bible Text:** 1Corinthians 13:4

*Love is patient ...*

When I was a young boy, my older brother and I decided to make a cake for our mom. We took the cake mix and the ingredients, then we began to make a huge mess in the kitchen. Finally, we got the cake mix into the pan and put it into the oven. I kept looking at the cake through the glass door, but I couldn't really see what was going on. So, I kept opening the door every 5 to 10 minutes to see how the cake was doing. Unfortunately, the cake never really cooked all the way through because I kept opening the door. The moral of the story is: if we don't learn to be patient, we'll miss out on some good things.

Remember, Noah built the ark for 120 years while waiting for the rains that God promised. Moses waited 40 years as a shepherd waiting for God to call him to deliver the Israelites, and then he had to wait 40 years to get to the edge of the Promised Land. Joseph and David had to wait about 15 years before they became leaders, but, as they were learning to be patient, He was preparing them [just like cooking a cake].

We also need to learn to be patient. While we're waiting we can trust that God will take good care of us. If God gave us everything we wanted, when we wanted, it wouldn't be good for us. It would be like a cake that never got properly prepared. He knows what's best for us ... what we need, and when we need it. So, the next time you don't want to wait, trust God, don't get upset and be patient.

**Bringing it home:**

- 1. Bake a cake this week as a family project, and then eat it as a family project, too!**



## peace

### Introduction:

All of us have been afraid at one time or another. We've all had bad dreams or been worried about something. Wouldn't it be awesome not to be afraid? Can you remember a bad dream that you've had?

### WWJD?

Jesus wants us to have peace and not be afraid. He told His disciples, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." [John14:27] Jesus' peace is different than the world's peace. He wants us to have peace even when things are scary.

**Subject:** peace

**FYI:** During childhood, almost all children experience occasional nightmares. Some children have nightmares more often than others. Nightmares often come in phases, with children having nightmares every night for a week or weeks, and then none at all for weeks or months.

**Object:** fear not

### Bible Texts: Psalm 4:8

*I will both lie down in peace, and sleep; for You alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety.*

### Philippians 4:6-8

*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.*

How can we have peace even in difficult, scary times? In Philippians 4:6-8 we learn three important keys:

1. **Pray [v.6]:** instead of worrying, we should pray and let God know our concerns and our needs. We can be thankful knowing that God hears and cares.
2. **Trust [v.7]:** we can trust that Jesus will protect us, and that God will give us His peace. No matter what is going on, God is big enough to handle it.
3. **Focus [v.8]:** instead of thinking about things that scare us or make us worry, we are to think about good things. You can only focus on one thing at a time. For example, if you think about the words to "Jesus Loves Me," you can't think about the words to "It's a Small World" at the same time. If you are focusing on what is

good, pure, lovely, nice, and comforting, you won't be thinking about things that make you worried.

A hurricane is a storm with winds that exceed 74 mph. Rain, thunder, and lightning usually accompany the winds. Hurricanes can be very frightening and damaging storms as the winds swirl and pound hour after hour. But a very interesting fact about a hurricane is its "eye," a place of perfect calm in the very center. Though the winds blow and rage all around it, there is no wind in the eye.

So it is with us in the storms of life. With the Lord as our center, there is calm and peace, even in the darkest of life's storms.

**Bringing it home:**

- 1. The next time that you're worried, remember: pray, trust, focus, and God will give you His peace.**
- 2. Here are some things parents can do to calm their children when they have nightmares:**
  - **Try to prevent them. Parents should monitor their children's viewing of shows that are scary and/or violent, especially ones viewed close to bed time.**
  - **Go to your children. Parents should get to their children as quickly as they can. Children need their parents' comfort and support.**
  - **Stay with your children. Even at the risk of losing some sleep, it is important that parents stay with their children until they have settled back down.**
  - **Pray with your children. Assure them that God is with them, and will protect them.**

## peer pressure

### Introduction:

Young Joe McVicker of Cincinnati is "the man" behind Play-Doh. McVicker came across this non-toxic substance which was used for cleaning wallpaper. Now at about this time, his sister-in-law, a nursery school teacher, had been complaining about the modeling clay she had been using. It wouldn't model. So McVicker sent her some of the wallpaper cleaning stuff. What a hit! Soon the Cincinnati Board of Education was using it in all their elementary schools.

They began manufacturing Play-Doh in 1956. Initially the "doh" was only available in off-white, 1½-pound cans. The "three-pak" would be born shortly after, in 1957, with red, blue and yellow, and the famous "four-pak," including white, the following year.

Soon Play-Doh would be available in a variety of rainbow colors, and kids could squeeze it into various shapes, like cylinders, squares, and rectangles through the "Play Doh-Pumper."

### WDJD?

Jesus resisted the traditions and rituals that characterized the Jewish religious leaders of His day. Instead, He had a relationship with God. Jesus also resisted the Greek and Roman influence of His culture which was contrary to God.

**Subject:** peer pressure

**FYI:** The Santa Monica Pier was built in 1909, and is a National Historic Landmark. The pier is the finish line of Route 66, and allows visitors to walk over the Pacific Ocean. The pier has entertained guests for nearly 100 years, with arcade games, rides, the famous merry-go-round of hand-carved and painted wooden animals, and the Wurlitzer organ. Do you know the difference between a carousel and a merry-go-round? A carousel has only horses, but a merry-go-round has other animals.

**Object:** don't be conformed to the world

### Bible Text: 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.*

Every day our kids experience pressure to conform to certain values. Sometimes those values are good, and sometimes they're not. Your friends should encourage and help you to do the right thing. But, sometimes people you know will encourage you to do things that you know you shouldn't do. For example, lying, using bad words, watching things you're not supposed to on the internet, TV, or movies. Just because other people do something doesn't make it right.

The world tries to squeeze us into its mold, like the Play-Doh pumper squeezes Play-Doh into shapes. Peer pressure can try to squeeze us into a shape that we know is not pleasing to God. That's a lot of pressure. How can we resist that kind of pressure?

We need to renew our minds by learning about God. By reading the Bible, going to church, and learning about God with family, we learn how to live a life that pleases God. Then we can stand strong against the peer pressure. The Santa Monica Pier stands strong year after year. Every day, the waves of the ocean crash against the pier, but the pier stands above the Pacific Ocean. That's the kind of peer pressure we want, "pier pressure" to stay strong even when waves are crashing against us trying to knock us down.

**Bringing it home:**

- 1. The next time somebody tells you to do something you're not supposed to do, say, "No" and suggest something else to do.**
- 2. Decide to stand strong like a pier, rather than being squeezed by peer pressure.**
- 3. Role-play a situation with your child such as handling peer pressure to cheat.**

## play

### **Introduction:**

One of the great joys of being a kid is having time to play. Kids get summer vacation, Easter and Christmas break, and time to play. Parents need time to play, too. What are some of your favorite things to do when you're playing?

### **WDJD?**

If you could play any game with Jesus, what would you like to play with Him? What do you think it would be like?

### **Subject:** play

**FYI:** Did you know that people in Jesus' day played games? The ancient Greek Olympics were rather different from the modern Games. There were fewer events, and only free men who spoke Greek could compete, instead of slaves or athletes from any country. Also, the games were always held at Olympia (in Greece) instead of moving around to different sites every time. Some of the events included: boxing, discus toss (very heavy Frisbee), javelin throw (spear), jumping, running, and wrestling.

The Romans also had athletic competitions, and played board games such as chess, checkers, and dice, too.

### **Object:** have fun and be safe

### **Bible Text: Zechariah 8:5**

*The streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in its streets.*

I remember when I was a kid, we would play ball in the street in front of our apartment. All the kids on our street would play baseball until the sun went down. Our parents would occasionally come out to watch, and to make sure that we were okay.

It's a blessing to see kids playing in neighborhood streets, parks, and schoolyards. When God describes a restored Jerusalem under His care, He describes the streets of the city as full of kids playing. When streets and neighborhoods are safe, parents can delight to see their kids playing ball, skating, riding bikes, and having fun. Playing brings satisfaction and enjoyment to kids and teaches life lessons. They learn sportsmanship, communication and social skills, as well as team values, and how to resolve disputes.

Kids need to play, and parents need to make sure that their kids are safe, as they play. Parents should frequently watch their kids to see what they're doing. Make sure that your kids are safe as they are playing and having fun. For example, find out what games your kids are playing on the internet and make sure they're appropriate.

### **Bringing it home:**

- 1. Ask your kids what their favorite games are, and learn about the games. Watch them play, and maybe even try playing. Learn about your kids.**
- 2. Parents, tell your kids what games you used to play when you were their age. Teach your kids how to play, and maybe even try playing.**

## power

### Introduction:

If you could be any superhero, which one would you want to be? What super powers would you choose if you could choose any three?

### WDJD?

Jesus has all power and authority in heaven and on earth. He gives power to us, so we can do His will on earth [Matthew 28:18-20].

### Subject: power

**FYI:** Superman was one of the first characters with superhuman powers. He has tremendous strength and is virtually indestructible. He can defy gravity and fly. His sharp senses enable him to hear sounds too faint to be detected by the normal human ear. His "telescopic vision" enables him to focus his sight on distant objects far beyond the range of normal human sight. His "microscopic vision" allows him to observe an object in microscopic detail. Superman's so called "X-ray vision" enables him to see clearly through solid objects. His power to generate heat within objects manifests itself as a red glow, and is therefore known as "heat vision."

### Object: use God's power

### Bible Text: Acts 1:8

*But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*

Imagine a model train set. You begin to put all the track pieces together to make an awesome layout. You've got a tunnel, a bridge, a train station, and lots of cool train cars. You put all the pieces where you want them to go, and switch on the controls, but nothing happens. You check all the track connections, and they're good, but nothing is working right. Finally, you open the battery pack and discover that the batteries are in upside down. Everything was ready to go, but there was no power.

Christians need the power of God, too. Jesus promised that we would receive power from the Holy Spirit, but what is the power for? God may not call you to leap over tall buildings in a single jump, be faster than a speeding bullet, or be stronger than a train. But the power He gives you will strengthen you to show people Jesus by the way you live your life. You will have the power to do the right thing rather than the wrong.

The Greek word *dunamis* is translated *power*. That's where we get our English word dynamite. God will give you *dynamite* power to pray, tell people about Him, read your Bible, memorize Scripture, and live a life that's pleasing to Him. As we receive that power, we experience spiritual growth. Jesus promised the early church that their

influence would grow beyond their city, county, and state, and would impact the world. As we receive God's power, we, too, will grow, and our influence for Christ will expand beyond our family, house, school, work, neighborhood or church. That's a real superhero!

**Bringing it home:**

- 1. Memorize Acts 1:8 [ask God to give you the power to memorize this verse].**
- 2. Draw a superhero.**



## praise

### **Introduction:**

What are some of your favorite worship or praise songs?

### **WDJD?**

Jesus sang hymns with His disciples [Matthew 26:30]. Our English word *hymns* comes from the Greek word *hummes* meaning praise of God.

**Subject:** praise

**FYI:** Our English word *hallelujah* comes originally from the Hebrew word *hal'al* which means, to boast with words of singing.

**Object:** sing songs of praise to God

### **Bible Text: Psalm 150:6**

*Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord!*

Praise is a natural and necessary response to fully enjoy life. For example, when watching a football game on television it is a natural response to praise a great play. You enjoy the game more when you get to cheer after a great touchdown catch. When you have the freedom to express yourself in praise and excitement, you enjoy life more.

Music is one of the great ways that we can praise God. We worship God with all of our life, but worship often travels best through music. Read Psalm 150. As you read, you'll see each verse ends with an exclamation point. We should be excited to praise God!

Psalm 150 answers four key questions on the subject of praise: Where [v.1], Why [v.2], How [v.3-5] and Who [v.6]? Where: we praise God everywhere. Why: God is to be praised for His mighty acts [i.e. what He does], and His excellent greatness [i.e. who He is]. How: God is to be praised with every kind of instrument, especially the voice. I believe God's favorite instrument is the human voice. God is not afraid of or offended by loud music. All of God's creation is called to praise the Lord.

Finally, the last question: who? The answer is everything. The Hebrew word *nesemah* refers to all living creatures that are given life by the creator, but especially people. The angels in heaven, the song of the birds of the air, the roar of a lion, and the praise of His people are all reasonable responses to God. The choir of all the voices of the earth is to join in praise to God.

### **Bringing it home:**

1. **Talk about your favorite worship or praise song[s].**
2. **Sing one or more of the songs together as a family.**

## prayer

### **Introduction:**

Almost everyone prays at one time or another. Why do you think we should pray?

### **WDJD?**

As the disciples saw Jesus pray, they saw intimate communication with God. Who wouldn't want to speak with God as Jesus did? So the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray, and He did.

### **Subject:** prayer

**FYI:** In Judaism and Christianity, prayer is rooted in a Biblical understanding of God as a personal being who hears and responds to His people. The earliest prayers in the Bible are intimate dialogues: Adam speaking with God in the Garden of Eden; Abraham surprised by God's promise that he would be the father of a great nation despite his advanced age; Moses called by God from the burning bush to lead God's people out of bondage in Egypt and responding with obedience. In the New Testament, Jesus teaches us to pray ... not only did He observe the traditional custom of praying at the Temple, but His prayer is intimate communication with God.

### **Object:** learn to talk with God

### **Bible Text: Matthew 6:9-13**

*In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.*

**The problem:** we often approach prayer as a means to get something good or avoid something bad.

**The solution:** discover that prayer is a way to have a close relationship with God.

Chaplain Richard Halverson of the United States Senate told the story of a time when the subject of prayer in schools came up just before a Senator was to give a speech to several hundred men at a church's annual men's dinner. In response to the Senator's question about how many of the church men believed in prayer in the public schools, nearly every man raised his hand in the affirmative.

Then the Senator asked, "How many of you pray daily with your own children in your own home?" This time only a few hands were raised.

People want to pray, but sometimes we don't know how, or where to begin. Here are some ideas that may help. Think of the word **ACTS** .

**Adoration:** tell God that you love and adore Him. Tell Him some of the reasons why you think He's wonderful. For example, that God is loving, holy, and all powerful.

**Confession:** if you've done something wrong, tell God you're sorry, and ask God for forgiveness. Ask Him to help you not to do it again.

**Thanksgiving:** tell God some of the things you're grateful for. For example, thank Him for your food, your family, friends, a place to sleep, and your clothes.

**Supplications:** is a fancy word for desires or needs. Tell God the things that you're concerned about, and the things that are important to you. Whatever you want to ask Him to help you with, you are welcome to talk to Him about it.

### **Bringing it home:**

**Here are some tips or practical pointers for prayer:**

- 1. Schedule a time for prayer: maybe before you eat, go to school, or before bedtime.**
- 2. Set aside a place for prayer: have a place where you like to pray.**
- 3. Pray out loud: Luke 11:2 "When you pray, say ..." God doesn't need to hear us speak, but we pray out loud for our benefit. Learn to pray out loud.**
- 4. Prayers can be simple: God's not concerned about big words, but you can talk to Him as though He is a loving parent (which He is!).**
- 5. Pray for family, friends, and the needs of others.**
- 6. Tell God that you love Him, and tell Him what you're grateful for.**
- 7. Just do it!**

**Homework:** make a list of 10 things that you believe are important (to you, and to God) for you to pray about today.

## priorities

### **Introduction:**

Make a list of three to five things that you would like to do today if you could do whatever you wanted. Share your list with your family.

### **WDJD?**

Jesus has perfect timing. He always does the right thing at the right time. When it's time to pray, he prays; when it's time to work, He works; and when it's time to rest, He rests. Jesus teaches us to make God the priority in our lives, and then everything else will fall into place.

**Subject:** priorities

**FYI:** Tom Landry coached the Dallas Cowboys for their first 29 years, and led America's Team to five Super Bowls. He was famous for pacing the sidelines, for three decades, wearing a stone face, business suit and felt hat. His 270 victories are more than any NFL coach except Don Shula and George Halas. When asked why he had been so successful, he responded, "In 1958, I did something everyone who has been successful must do; I determined my priorities for my life - God, family, and then football."

**Object:** put God first

### **Bible Text: Matthew 6:33**

*But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.*

Our priorities are the things that we think are the most important, or the things we want to do. Every day we have choices and challenges for what we will do. There are some things that we have to do: getting dressed, going to school, doing our chores, doing our homework, and eating. Sometimes we have to do things that we don't want to do, and sometimes we get to choose what we want to do. We often make our choices based on what is important to us.

Sometimes we forget to consider what's important to God. Jesus understands that people are concerned about what they are going to eat, or what they are going to wear. He knows you want to play, and He knows there's only 24 hours in a day. So, He reminds us to remember to make God the most important thing, then everything else will be added to us.

In the movie "Toy Story," the little boy's favorite toy is a cowboy doll named "Woody." They play all the time and are best friends. One year, Andy gets a new toy, a spaceman action figure named "Buzz." Andy wants to play with Buzz all the time, and seems to have forgotten about Woody. Woody is jealous, but most of all he's sad, because he misses Andy. That's how God feels when we forget about Him, because

we've made other things the priority. There's nothing wrong with doing good things, but we need to remember to do the best thing, and that's spend time with God.

**Bringing it home:**

- 1. Make a *new* list of three to five things to do today that you think are the priorities. Share your list with your family, and ask God to help you to make wise choices for your priorities.**

## purity

### **Introduction:**

Imagine a dry erase board perfectly clean and white. What would you write or draw on it? What do you think your family would write or draw?

### **WDJD?**

Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." [Matthew 5:8] Jesus encourages us to be pure so that we can get close to God.

### **Subject:** purity

**FYI:** If you use a permanent marker on a dry erase board, the eraser won't remove the writing completely. Most cleaners won't remove permanent marker either; they will only smudge the writing. But, if you write over the permanent marker with a dry erase marker, and then use an eraser, the board will be clean.

### **Object:** be pure

### **Bible Text: Psalm 119:9**

*How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your word.*

What does it mean to be pure? To be pure means to be spiritually clean. We are pure if we seek to avoid doing wrong, and when we do wrong, we ask God to forgive us. Being pure is like a clean dry-erase board.

As you imagine the dry-erase board, you imagine the things that you want to write and draw on it. The things that you put on the board probably reflect who you are. The words and pictures reveal how you feel, and what you're thinking about.

As you begin to fill up the board, take a look at what you've written and drawn. Maybe there are some things on the board that you want to erase. As you look, consider whether God would be pleased.

God's forgiveness through Jesus is like the dry-erase board. Your life begins and you are pure like a clean dry-erase board. You start to fill up the board with your thoughts, ideas, and experiences. They paint a picture of your life. But, as you look at the picture, you discover some things that need to be erased. You try to erase them, but it's like permanent marker on the dry-erase board ... it doesn't seem to come clean. Then you ask Jesus into your heart and ask God to forgive you, because of what Jesus has done for you. And, it's just like writing over the permanent marker with a dry-erase marker and then erasing ... it comes clean!

If you want to do the right thing: if you ask God to forgive you, and help you to do the right thing, you will be pure. And, you will draw close to God.

### **Bringing it home:**

1. Take a piece of blank paper and pretend it's a dry-erase board. Draw pictures and use words to describe your thoughts, ideas and feelings. Don't worry about making a "pretty" picture, but try to describe what's really going on in your heart.
2. The next day, look at your "dry-erase board." If there is something that is not pure, ask God to help you, and forgive you. Write the name "Jesus" in red marker or crayon over that part of your dry erase board. Then you will be pure.

## quick to listen

### **Introduction:**

Have you ever thought about the fact that God gave you two ears, and only one mouth? Why do you think He did that?

### **WDJD?**

Do you think that Jesus was a good listener? Do you think that Jesus interrupted people?

**Subject:** listening

**FYI:** What mammal has the best hearing? Elephants have the biggest ears and can hear low frequencies, so low humans can't hear them. However, elephants probably don't have the best hearing. The mammals with the best hearing are bats, whales and dolphins. They use *echolocation* to find their way and find their prey.

**Object:** listen before you speak

### **Bible Text: James 1:19**

*Be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry.*

Do you think there is a difference between hearing and listening? You are right, there is! Hearing is simply the act of perceiving sound by the ear. If you are not hearing-impaired, hearing simply happens. Listening, however, is something you consciously choose to do. Listening requires concentration so that your brain understands meaning from words and sentences. Listening leads to learning. Most people tend to be "hard of listening" rather than "hard of hearing."

What keeps people from listening? Sometimes we're distracted, so we don't pay attention. Other times we think that we know what someone is going to say so we don't really listen. Or, we don't really care about what other people think, and just want to focus on what we care about. Sometimes we're angry, so we don't pay attention. Also, we can be thinking about what we want to say, rather than what someone is saying to us, so we don't really listen.

The Bible tells us that we should be quick to listen, or ready to hear. How can we get ready to pay attention?

1. Be slow to speak: take time to think before you speak.
2. Don't interrupt.
3. Be prepared to repeat what someone has said to you. If you're ready to repeat what you heard, you will likely listen.
4. Learn to ask questions: if you don't understand what someone is saying, ask them to help you understand.



5. Don't grab the conversation: "Here's what happened to me ..."
6. Watch the person's face as you listen to them speak: "listen with your eyes."
7. Don't argue.

**Bringing it home:**

1. **Play a round of "cell phone." The leader whispers to the person seated to their right something to be repeated. Go around the family/group until the last person repeats the words out loud. See how well you communicate. Are you talking so that people can understand? Are you listening to what people say? It's hard, so keep practicing.**

## remember

### Introduction:

Robert Boyd Munger wrote an inspiring book, *My Heart Christ's Home*, describing the Christian life. He paints a picture of Jesus entering our lives like a newly-arrived guest going from room to room in our homes. The library represents our minds. There, Jesus finds all sorts of worthless reading material and entertainment, which He proceeds to throw out and replace with His Word. In the dining room, which speaks of the bodily appetites, He finds many sinful desires listed on a worldly menu. In the place of such things as prestige, materialism, and lust, He puts humility, meekness, love, and all other virtues for which believers are to hunger and thirst. The quietest room in the house is the living room, where Jesus has invited the Christian to come every day to spend time with Him. After awhile, the Christian allows time with Christ to be crowded out until simple fellowship with Him is virtually absent from his life.

Munger describes the experience as follows: "Under the pressure of many responsibilities, little by little, this time began to be shortened. Why, I'm not sure. Somehow I assumed I was just too busy to give special, regular time to be with Christ. This was not a deliberate decision, you understand; it just seemed to happen that way."

"Eventually, not only was the period of time shortened, but I began to miss days now and then, such as during mid-terms or finals. Matters of urgency demanding my attention were continually crowding out the quiet times of conversation with Jesus. Often I would miss it two days in a row or more.

"One day I recall rushing down the steps in a hurry to be on my way to an important appointment. As I passed the living room, the door was wide open. Glancing in I saw a fire in the fireplace and Jesus sitting there. Suddenly, in dismay, it came to me, 'He is my guest. I invited him into my heart! He has come as my Savior and friend to live with me. Yet here I am neglecting him.' I stopped, turned and hesitantly went in. With downcast glance I said, 'Master, I'm sorry. Have you been here every morning?' 'Yes' he said. 'I told you I would be here to meet with you.'

"I was even more ashamed! He had been faithful in spite of my faithlessness. I asked him to forgive me and he did, as he always does when we acknowledge our failures and want to do the right thing.

"He said, 'The trouble is that you have been thinking of the quiet time, of Bible study and prayer, as a means of your own spiritual growth. This is true but you have forgotten that this hour means something to me also. Remember, I love you. At a great cost I have redeemed you. I value your fellowship. Just to have you look into my face warms my heart. Don't neglect this hour if only for my sake. Whether or not you want to be with me, remember I want to be with you. I really love you!'"

### WDJD?

Jesus gathered the disciples before going to the cross, and they ate the Passover meal together. As Jesus broke the bread and gave it to the disciples, He told them, "Do this in

remembrance of Me.” Every time the disciples would eat, they had a tangible reminder of Jesus’ sacrifice for them.

**Subject:** remember God

**FYI:** The mind can’t recall everything: events are imperfectly remembered. Many events are not remembered at all. Some events are remembered initially but later gradually forgotten. A trigger (e.g., a photograph of a friend) might bring back a recently forgotten memory. However, most events eventually become permanently lost and can never be retrieved. It is impossible for the brain to store complete details of every event. It simply does not have the storage capacity to hold that amount of data.

**Object:** don’t forget God

**Bible Text: Ecclesiastes 12:1**

*Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth ...*

God reminds us to remember Him, because it can be easy to forget. Have you ever had the experience of forgetting about a relative or a friend? Maybe you were close friends when you were in a class together in school, or when you were younger. But, now you don’t see each other or spend time together. It’s not that you totally forgot them, but you’re no longer close.

God knows that our lives and circumstances change. We grow older, we meet new people, friends leave, and priorities and interests change. We remember the things that we believe are important or necessary. God reminds us to remember Him early in our lives, and to keep remembering Him.

How do you remember your friends or relatives? A great way to remember people is to spend time with them. Another way is to have a tangible reminder. For example, a ring or bracelet from a special person in your life, or pictures of loved ones, can help you remember people. God has given us many ways to help us remember Him. For example, we can spend time with Him as we read our Bibles and pray, we can wear a cross necklace, and we can partake of communion as ways to remember Him.

**Bringing it home:**

1. **Have the family make a list of at least ten ways to help your family remember God.**

## respect

### Introduction:

Do you know how to spell *respect*? What does it mean to you? Tell everyone in your family what you think respect means so that they can find out what it means to you.

### WWJD?

Jesus showed respect to all people. He treated all people the same whether they were rich or poor, male or female, young or old, Jew or Gentile. He treated people with dignity.

**Subject:** respect

**FYI:** In many parts of Asia, children are taught to hand objects to their elders using two hands as a sign of respect. Business people hand a business card using both hands as a sign of respect, and would not slide a card across the table.

**Object:** respect elders, your siblings and others

### Bible Text: 1Peter 5:5

*Likewise you younger people, show respect to your elders. Yes, all of you show respect to one another.*

Respect deals with attitude, and relates to honoring others, and avoids violating their rights. It also deals with relating to others, and having concern for others. Respect for others flows from respect for God.

Why do you think God instructs us to respect our elders? Older people often have a lot of wisdom that they have gathered through the years. We can learn from older people. But, sometimes we assume that they can't teach us anything. So we fail to learn from them, relate to them, care about them, and we violate their right to dignity. Remember, God cares about people, all kinds of people, and wants us to respect them, too.

How can we show respect for others? There are many ways to show respect. When people are speaking to you, look at the person who is talking, and pay attention to them. Remember to use words like, "please," "thank you," and "excuse me." Generally, don't refer to adults only by their first name. For example, rather than saying, "Hi, Bob" to their neighbor, young people would show respect by saying, "Hi, Mr. Dawson" or, "Hi, Mr. Bob." Value the opinion of adults, and speak kindly about them. What other ways can you think of to show respect?

### Bringing it home:

1. **Act out a scene showing respect between people; and then a scene that shows disrespect to others.**

## rest

### **Introduction:**

As you get older, it seems you have more responsibilities. There are more chores, there is more homework, and then you start to have to work outside of the home. How many hours a week do you have to work if you add school time, homework, and chores? It's important for us to rest in order to recharge from all of our work.

### **WDJD?**

When the disciples reported to Jesus all the work that they had done, He urged them to come apart by themselves to a quiet place and rest for a while [Mark 6:31]. If we don't come apart and rest, we'll just come apart.

### **Subject:** rest

**FYI:** According to Greek legend, a man noticed the great storyteller and philosopher, Aesop, playing childish games with little boys. He laughed and jeered at Aesop, asking why he wasted his time. Aesop responded by picking up a bow, loosening its string, and placing it on the ground. Then he said, "Now answer the riddle, if you can. Tell us what the unstrung bow implies."

The man looked at it for several moments but had no idea what point Aesop was trying to make. Aesop explained, "If you keep a bow always bent, it will break eventually; but if you let it go slack, it will be more fit for use when you want it."

### **Object:** rest in the Lord

### **Bible Text: Genesis 2:2**

*And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done.*

God made the heavens and the earth in six days. On the seventh day, God rested and did not work. God did not need to rest because He was tired [God never becomes tired]. God rested to provide an example for us. We are the ones who need to be recharged physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

God made a day of rest [Sabbath] for us. We need to find time to rest from work. Resting from work can provide a physical recharge. Playtime can provide rest from emotional stress. We also need rest from play. Neither rest from work, nor rest from play, can recharge us spiritually. We need to take time from our busy lives to spend time with God. Then we will have spiritual rest [Matthew 11:28-30].

God doesn't want us to try to work to get to heaven; Jesus has done all the work for us. Instead, we simply trust Him. But, we find spiritual rest by learning about God's love for us. Some people like to use Saturday as a day of rest, others Sunday, and others

during the week. More important than which day of the week, is the need to find time to rest in God.

**Bringing it home:**

- 1. Make a family plan to commit to go to a Bible-teaching church and/or Bible study where the family can learn the word of God. Make your commitment to go a priority. Spend time after church or the study talking about the things that your family learned about God.**

## restore

### **Introduction:**

Sometimes things in our lives are a mess, and need to be restored. Maybe you need to clean your room, or a homework assignment needs to be done, or there is a pile of dirty laundry to wash, or a sink full of dirty dishes needs to be cleaned. Sometimes the mess seems so big we're discouraged, and don't even start the job of restoration.

### **WDJD?**

Jesus came to the world to restore people and their relationship with God. Some people are in the restoration business, because they repair cars or homes that have been damaged. God has the ultimate restoration business. If Jesus had a business card, it might say, "Father and Son Restoration: damaged lives repaired."

**Subject:** restoration

**FYI:** The White House has a unique and fascinating history. It survived a fire at the hands of the British in 1814 (during the war of 1812) and another fire in the West Wing, in 1929, while Herbert Hoover was President. Throughout much of Harry S. Truman's presidency, the interior of the house, with the exception of the third floor, was completely gutted and renovated while the Trumans lived at Blair House, right across Pennsylvania Avenue. Nonetheless, the exterior stone walls are the ones first put in place when the White House was constructed two centuries ago.

**Object:** be restored

### **Bible Text: Nehemiah 6:15**

*So the wall was finished ... in 52 days.*

To restore means to bring back into existence or use; to re-establish, or bring back to an original condition. Nehemiah led the people in rebuilding the wall around Jerusalem. The city had been destroyed by the Babylonians over a hundred years earlier. There was so much mess that no one knew where to begin. Everyone thought it would take forever to finish, and it would be too hard, so they gave up trying to restore the city.

But, Nehemiah helped the people see that the wall, the city, and their lives could be restored. The people did in fact rebuild the wall, and they did it in less than two months! Here are three steps Nehemiah followed to help restore the city: first, he inspected the city to figure out what needed to be done. Second, he reminded the people that God would help them. Third, he helped them help each other. Rather than fight with one another, they worked together. When the people followed these three steps, restoration was done faster than anyone expected. The wall was built. It was built right, and the people and the city were restored.

The next time you have a restoration project, follow the same steps as Nehemiah. First, inspect the project and figure out what needs to be done. Second, pray and ask God to help you. Remember, God is in the restoration business, and He will help you. Third, ask for help and help others. Try to work together rather than fighting about who has to do what. When you follow these steps, you'll probably be pleasantly surprised at how fast the job gets done.

**Bringing it home:**

- 1. See how well you can work together to restore something. For example, see how fast you can clean your room by working with someone. Make sure you do it right, not just fast.**
- 2. Have everyone pitch in for a half-hour "blitz" of cleaning. It helps us to experience restoration and learn responsibility and teamwork.**



## rewards

### **Introduction:**

Have you ever seen a sign offering a reward for a lost pet? If you found the lost pet would you return it? Why?

### **WDJD?**

Jesus assures you that God wants to reward you. Whenever you really try to live a life that is pleasing to God, you can be sure that God will reward you. Even if you give a thirsty person just a cup of cold water to show them God's love, Jesus promised that you will be rewarded [Matthew 10:42].

### **Subject:** rewards

**FYI:** Henry Morrison served 40 years in Africa as a missionary. As he came home by boat, President Theodore Roosevelt was also there on his way back to New York. President Roosevelt received a great welcome as he arrived, but there was no such welcome for Henry Morrison. He was sad, because he felt after 40 years of service there should be a reward when he came home. Then God spoke to Mr. Morrison and said, "Henry, you're not home yet."

### **Object:** seek God's reward

### **Bible Text: 1Corinthians 3:8**

*Each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor.*

We like to do activities that are satisfying or pleasurable, like eating, resting, laughing, playing games, winning, creating, seeing and hearing beautiful things, being held lovingly, and so on. To do these things we don't need to be paid, applauded, cheered, thanked, respected, or anything, commonly we do them for the good feelings we automatically and naturally get from the activity.

Sometimes we don't feel like doing certain things. To try to encourage us to do the right things, we reward good behavior and apply negative consequences (punishment) for wrong behavior. For example, people are generally paid to work. You study to get good grades, to avoid failing, and for your future. You do your chores and receive an allowance; you come home on time and avoid being grounded.

God also rewards people to encourage them to do the right thing. God knows that, sometimes, when we do the right thing, it feels great, and we don't even care about a reward. Other times, it's harder to do the right thing, so God assures us that we will be rewarded. For example, if you found a lost dog, and brought the dog to its family, you'd feel good because you did the right thing. You did the right thing because it was the right thing to do, not for a reward. When people give you a reward it's an extra

blessing. But, even when people don't give you a reward, know that God will reward you.

**Bringing it home:**

- 1. Create a family reward certificate book. Each family member gets to suggest rewards, and the family gets to approve the suggestions. Each family member will get two of their suggestions approved. Make coupons for each reward. For example, "This coupon entitles you to: pick the family dessert, choose a movie to watch, or a day without chores," etc. The family will award the coupons to a deserving family member.**

## scripture

### Introduction:

How often do you think someone should read their Bible? Why?

### WDJD?

How often do you think Jesus read the Scriptures?

**Subject:** scripture [Bible]

**FYI:** How many chapters do you think there are in the Bible? There are 1,189 chapters [929 in the Old Testament and 260 in the New]. How many verses do you think there are in the Bible? There are 31,103 [23,145 in the Old and 7,958 in the New Testament]. Which is the longest chapter in the Bible? Psalm 119 has 176 verses, and is the longest chapter in the Scriptures.

**Object:** read your Bible daily

### Bible Text: Psalm 119:11

*Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You.*

God wants us to read the Bible so we can learn about Him, His love for us, and how to live a life that is pleasing to Him. What does the Scripture say about how and why we should read the Bible? Here are some guidelines from the Bible about the Scriptures:

1. **Read God's Word to learn the difference between right and wrong, and to help you do what's right:** "Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You" [Psalm 119:11]. The Bible helps keep us from sin.
2. **The Bible directs us about our daily choices:** "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" [Psalm 119:105]. Each of us experiences challenges, and needs God's guidance for the decisions we must make.
3. **Learn to memorize verses:** "Your word I have hidden in my heart ..." [Psalm 119:11]. Memorizing verses helps us to remember God, and live a life that pleases Him.
4. **Write the Word of God in addition to reading it:** "And when he has been crowned and sits upon his throne as king, then he must copy these laws from the book kept by the Levite-priests" [Deuteronomy 17:18]. Kings were instructed to write the Word, as well as read it, because it helps us to remember. Take notes when you go to church or Bible study, and write what you are learning about the Word.
5. **Read your Bible daily:** "That copy of the laws shall be his constant companion. He must read from it every day of his life so that he will learn to respect the Lord his God by obeying all of his commands" [Deuteronomy 17:19]. Read your Bible every day. Let the Word of God be your constant friend, so the God of the Word becomes your best friend.

**Bringing it home:**

***How to memorize Scripture:***

Start by choosing short verses to learn. This will build your child's confidence. Remember to have fun while learning the verse. Keep the time brief to hold your child's attention. This should be enjoyable. If your child gets frustrated, try again later.

Show your child where the verse is found in the Bible. Mark their Bible with a special color to identify verses they have memorized. Say the book, chapter, and verse before and after the Scripture. Recite the verse several times a day in your child's presence so it becomes familiar to them. Clarify any words that they don't understand.

Make flash cards with Scripture on one side, and the book, chapter, and verse on the other. Take the cards with you when you go out so that you can review the verse at different times of the day (for example, in the car while you are at a light, etc.). You can put a sticker on the card when the child has successfully memorized the verse. He will be encouraged by the accumulated cards. Put your flash cards in a special envelope or container and review the verses that they have learned so that they do not forget them.

***Four Fun Ways to Help Them Memorize:***

1. Teach them one phrase or word from the verse at a time. Say a word (or phrase) then point to your child to supply the next word (or hand them an item when it is their turn to speak).
2. Bounce or roll a ball back and forth as each word of the verse is said. Start by saying the verse with your child as you pass the ball. As she learns the verse, each of you says a word of the verse as you pass the ball.
3. Put the verse to music or rhythm. Your child will enjoy singing and clapping her hands.
4. Use flash cards. Put each word on an index card, and then scramble the words. Have your child put them in the right order.

## self-control

### **Introduction:**

Imagine how you might react to problems like a conflict with your siblings (brothers and sisters), being pushed, having a family member touching your stuff, or name-calling. What do you think you might do?

### **WDJD?**

In return for His love, Jesus' enemies mistreated Him. But, Jesus did not retaliate. He even prayed for those who crucified Him: "Father forgive them, for they do not know what they do."

**Subject:** self-control

**FYI:** Martin Luther King, Jr. was a great leader of the civil rights movement. When others urged violent protest, he pursued a non-violent course. In 1963, he led demonstrations in Birmingham, Alabama, where local police used dogs and fire hoses against black demonstrators.

On August 28, 1963, more than 250,000 protesters gathered in Washington, D.C., and from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, King delivered his famous "I Have a Dream" speech. Despite all the provoking to strike back, King remained committed to non-violent protest, and overcame those that were opposed to him.

**Object:** let God control you

### **Bible Text: Galatians 5:23**

*But the fruit of the Spirit is ... self-control.*

Some people think that self-control is the ability to break a chocolate bar into 4 pieces with your bare hands, and then eat just one of the pieces. But, self-control is restraint practiced over one's own emotions, impulses, or desires. It is the ability to make positive choices, and to think before acting. Without self-control, people say and do things which often lead to trouble. Children need to be taught to pause and think of the consequences that may result from their various behaviors.

Self-control is really God-control. The Holy Spirit helps us to respond to situations in a way that pleases God, rather than reacting to situations based on our flesh [i.e. our emotions, impulses or desires]. Before you react, pray to God, and ask for wisdom on how to respond.

It is essential for parents to model self-control. By controlling your own words and actions, you are demonstrating to your child a healthy way to react to stress. When you blow it [and we all will], admit it, and ask for forgiveness. Finally, as Thomas a' Kempis observed, "Don't be angry that you cannot make others as you wish them to be,

since you cannot make yourself as you wish to be.”

**Bringing it home:**

- 1. Have the family role-play proper responses to problem situations. For example, try to demonstrate self-control in the following situations: a conflict with your siblings, being pushed, having a family member touching your stuff, or name-calling.**

## selfless

### Introduction:

Imagine your family is talking about what to do. Perhaps you're talking about where to go, or what to eat. Are you more likely to tell them what you want to do, or ask them what they want to do?

### WDJD?

Jesus is our example of selflessness. Paul urges us to have the same selfless attitude as Christ. The ultimate expression of selflessness is Jesus leaving heaven to come to the earth as a man, and giving His life for us [Philippians 2:5-8].

**Subject:** selfless

**FYI:** If you were to look at a picture of your class at school, who is the first person that you would likely look for? It seems that we spend 90% of our waking hours thinking about ourselves, and the other 10% of the time wondering what others think about us. Most of our thoughts are self-focused.

A New York telephone company analyzed 500 telephone conversations and discovered that the most frequently used word was "I." It was used more than 4,000 times in those 500 short conversations. By nature, we are all this way. We put "I" at the center. What I do is determined by what "I" want.

**Object:** learn to be less selfish

### Bible Text: Philippians 2:3-4

*Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.*

A little boy and his younger sister were riding a rocking horse together. The boy said, "If one of us would just get off this horse, there would be more room for me." The little boy hadn't learned to be selfless. What do you think he would have said if he was selfless instead of selfish?

Billy Graham once remarked, "The smallest package I ever saw was a man wrapped up wholly in himself." It has been noted that one-half of our problems come from wanting our own way. The other half come from getting it! Too many people conduct their lives like a modern gas station: self-service only. One of the greatest dangers facing our lives is the problem of selfishness. Selfishness is characterized by being self-centered, self-seeking, greedy, mean, and miserly. Selflessness, on the other hand, is characterized by love, charity, giving and caring.

The root of selfish is *self*. To be selfless, we need to think of self less. It is not about thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less often. Paul urges us to

control selfishness and pride through the power of God's love within us. Paul is not saying that we should have an inferiority complex, or belittle our abilities. Rather, we should put the needs of others before our own. Paul repeats the word "others" to emphasize our need to think of others rather than thinking of our own desires. Real love does not seek its own, but seeks the well-being of others [1Corinthians 13:4-5].

Martin Luther once said, "If someone were to knock on the door of my heart and ask who lived here, I would say, 'Martin Luther used to live here, but he moved out, and Jesus Christ has moved in.'" Real selflessness occurs when God moves into our hearts.

**Bringing it home:**

- 1. The next time your family is talking about what to do, where to go, or what to eat, ask them what they want, rather than trying to get your way.**



## serving

### **Introduction:**

A student at a Bible school in the Philippines became disturbed over the condition of the men's restrooms, since they always seemed to be dirty. When nothing was done, he complained to the school principal. A little while later, the student noticed that the bathroom was being cleaned. To his amazement, the man with the mop and pail was the principal himself! Later, the student commented, "I thought he would call a janitor, but he cleaned the toilets himself. It was a major lesson to me on being a servant, and of course, it raised a question in my own mind as to why I hadn't taken care of the problem!"

### **WDJD?**

Jesus came to serve others rather than seeking to be served [Mk10:44-5]. Certainly, we would expect God to expect to be served, but instead He serves us. Jesus gives us the perfect example of serving others rather than seeking to be served.

**Subject:** serving

**FYI:** Here's a cute poem with a lesson about serving others:

"There's a clever young guy named Somebody Else, there's nothing this guy can't do. He is busy from morning 'til way late at night, just substituting for you. You're asked to do this or you're asked to do that and what is your ready reply? Get Somebody Else to do that job; he'll do much better than I.

So much to do in this weary old world, so much and workers so few, and Somebody Else, all weary and worn, is still substituting for you. The next time you're asked to do something worthwhile, just give this ready reply: if somebody else can give time and support, my goodness, so can I!"

**Object:** serve others

### **Bible Text: John 13:14-15**

*If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.*

Jesus gave us an example of serving others when He washed the disciples' feet in the Upper Room. In that culture, washing the feet of dinner guests was common hospitality, in the same sense that we would offer our guests something to drink. However, none of the disciples offered to wash the others' feet. No one wanted to volunteer to do a servant's job ... besides, washing feet is stinky and gross! Nevertheless, Jesus volunteered, and did a servant's job. Do you think that Jesus complained about doing a servant's job?

This is the only time in the Bible that Jesus tells us He is giving us “an example.” He then instructs us to follow His example. D.L. Moody once said, “The measure of a man is not how many servants he has, but how many men he serves.” One of the great tests of whether we have the attitude of a servant is how we act when we are treated like one.

A servant does not complain about the work he has to do. His goal is to live to please his master. We please God when we follow the example of Jesus and serve others. We actually serve God when we serve others. One of the ways that we show God, and others, that we love them is by serving. Instead of waiting to be asked to help, look for opportunities to offer to help. When asked to help, don’t complain about what you’re doing, but seek to serve God by serving others.

Ignatius Loyola prayed, “Teach us, Lord to serve you as you deserve, to give and not to count the cost, to fight and not to heed the wounds, to toil and not to seek for rest, to labor and not to ask for any reward save that of knowing that we will do your will.”

**Bringing it home:**

- 1. Why do you think Jesus did a servant’s job?**
- 2. How can you apply this lesson to your life?**
- 3. What do you do to serve others?**

## sharing

### Introduction:

Have you ever had someone ask for you to share your french fries, your candy, or a toy? Have you ever not wanted to share? Why do you think it's hard to share?

### WDJD?

Jesus told us that there would always be needs: "The poor you have with you always ..." [John 12:8]. Jesus gives us an example of sharing. He shares everything He has with us. He gives us resources, such as time, talent [the things that we can do], and treasure [money] so that we can share with others who have less than us. And, remember, Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

**Subject:** sharing

**FYI:** What is Communism? It is a form of government where people are forced by the country to give what they have to the country, and then the government distributes to the people equally. As an idea, it seems good, but the problem is that people who don't want to share are forced to share. The Bible describes "Commonism." In Commonism, people share their resources for the "common" good, because of the love of God, and each other.

**Object:** learn to share

### Bible Text: Acts 2:44-45

*Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.*

The early church was moved by God's Spirit and Word to share what they had with those who had less. God did not command them to give up their possessions, but people wanted to share with those in need. This is a model for *Commonism*. People were sharing because of love, not a law or a rule. In the early church, needs were cared for, because people shared: "Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid *them* at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need" [Acts 4:34-35].

Remember, "Sharing is caring." We share, because we care about God and others. When we share, it proves that God's love is alive in our hearts: "But whoever has this world's goods and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?" [1John 3:17]

Everything we have is a gift from God. Therefore, when we share with others, we are simply giving back to God. No one is likely to share everything with everyone all of the time, but each of us can learn to share more than we do today.

In 1996, David Suna and John Tu sold 80% of their company, Kingston Technology Corporation, for \$1.5 billion dollars. The two men decided to share their money with their employees. The average bonus payment that their workers received was just over \$75,000. Susa summarized their decision: "To share our success with everybody is the most joy we can have." Sharing will bless God, others, and you.

**Bringing it home:**

- 1. During the last 24 hours how many times were you asked to share? What were you asked to share, and how did you respond?**
- 2. How did it feel when you shared?**

# temptation

## Introduction:

A father had to go on a trip for a few days and told his teenage son not to use the car while he was gone. When Dad returned, his son told him, “While you were gone, I came real close to breaking my promise to not use the car while you were away. You left the keys, and I carried them for three days, fighting temptation.” The father smiled, “Son, there’s nothing like temptation to show you what you’ll do – if you’re given the chance!”

## WDJD?

Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted [Matthew 4:1]. Why would the Spirit lead Jesus to be tempted? Perhaps it is to show that Jesus was tempted just like we are. But, it also shows that He is God by the fact that He resisted temptation and did the right thing every time. Also, He shows us how to respond to temptation. Each time that Jesus was tempted, He uses the Word of God to resist the temptation.

**Subject:** temptation

**FYI:** Temptations and tests reveal our love for God. Temptations are desires to do what you are not supposed to do. Anything that draws you away from God can be a temptation. The same Greek word, *peirasmos*, is translated either “test” or “tempt” depending on the context. Temptations are from the devil, and they try to draw us away from God. Testing is from God, and it is to grow us and draw us close to God.

**Object:** resist temptation

## Bible Text: James 4:7

*Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.*

What do you think it means to be tempted? What are some things that tempt people? Can you think of an example of being tempted?

A little girl was asked how to deal with temptation, and she said, “When Satan comes knocking at the door of my heart, I send Jesus to answer the door. When Satan sees Jesus, he says, ‘Oops, I must have the wrong house.’”

How can we overcome temptation? God wants to help us win when we are tempted, so He gives us a plan:

## The plan to overcome temptation

1. **Submit to God [James 4:7].** Make a decision to live your life to please God.

2. **Know the Word [Psalm 119:11].** By knowing God's Word we hide it in our hearts and use it so that we don't sin. Jesus used the Word to resist the temptations in the wilderness.
3. **Resist [James 4:7].** When you feel tempted to do something that you know is wrong, fight against the desire.
4. **Look for an escape [1 Corinthians 10:13].** God will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but will provide a way of escape. When you're tempted, look for a way to escape the temptation.
5. **Be careful who you hang out with [Psalm 1:1].** People who encourage you to do things that you know are wrong can be dangerous. Learn to be wise about choosing your friends.

**Bringing it home:**

1. **The trouble with trouble is that it usually starts out as a whole lot of fun. Temptation attracts us, because it seems fun. Remember, temptation is dangerous because it can come between us and God.**
2. **Review the plan to overcome temptation and write out the plan on a card. Keep the card in a visible place [e.g., taped to a mirror, or in your Bible], and review the plan often.**

# time

## **Introduction:**

Do you ever feel that you don't have enough time? Sometimes it feels like there's not enough time for school, homework, chores, and play. What would you want to do if you had more time?

## **WDJD?**

On the night before Jesus was crucified, He prayed to His Father, "I have glorified you on earth. I have finished the work which you have given me to do" [John 17:4]. Jesus was declaring that everything that He was supposed to do, He did. But, when you look at the life of Jesus, you see that there were times when He left a city and didn't heal everyone who wanted to be made well. So how could Jesus say, "I have finished the work"? Jesus understood what He was supposed to do, and He did it. He used His time wisely to do all that He was supposed to do.

## **Subject:** time

**FYI:** There are 1,440 minutes in a day. If you had \$1,440.00, how would you choose to spend it?

## **Object:** use time wisely

## **Bible Text: Ephesians 5:15-16**

*See then that you walk carefully, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.*

## **The problem:** wasting time

## **The solution:** use time wisely

The Greeks used two different words to describe time. *Chronos* described a specific quantity or span of time such as a second, minute or hour. *Kairos* was used to describe a period of time, such as a season, and was used to refer to opportunities. The Greeks described *kairos* as a chubby, little angel with wings on his feet, and a "pony tail" that was on the front of his head. As *kairos* flew by, you had to grab the pony tail. If you missed, there was nothing else to grab. That's how time is, once it's passed, you can't get it back.

God wants us to make the most of the time and opportunities that He gives us. God says that there is a time for everything [Ecclesiastes 3:1-8]. There is a time to go to school, a time for play, a time for chores, and a time for rest. Since only God knows how much time any of us has, we want to use time wisely.

We redeem the time by recognizing it is a precious resource to be used wisely. We need to spend time carefully, because there is much evil in the world. A friend of mine is a farmer and he once told me a secret about farming: "The best thing for crops

is the farmer's shadow." When the farmer is close to his farm, and watching after the crops, the farm does well. A family is like a farm: when families spend time together, each member grows. Making time for God and family is wise.

**Bringing it home:**

- 1. Spend at least one meal a day at the table with your family. Talk with each other without the distraction of TV, DVD, stereo, video or other media.**
- 2. Play the "question game." One person picks a category, such as: movies, dessert, school, or the Bible. Then, the same person selects a question about that category. For example, if the category is dessert, then a question could be, "What's your favorite dessert?" Each person answers the same question. Then the second person asks a question about the same category. For example, "What's your least favorite dessert?" Or, "What's your favorite flavor of ice cream?" Each person asks a question about the first category, and everyone answers each question. When everyone has asked a question about the category, you can move on to another category. The "question game" is a great way to get to know one another. Getting to know your family is a great use of time.**



## trust

### **Introduction:**

Which of your friends do you trust the most and why? Why don't you trust others as much?

### **WDJD?**

Trust is based on truth. Jesus always spoke the truth, and His life is a picture of truth. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." His life is our model for truth, and because Jesus is all true, we can trust Him.

### **Subject:** trust

**FYI:** Our culture has developed a language of lies. We call lies misrepresentations, exaggerations, omissions, half-truths, and a host of other terms. We "color-code" lies as either white or black. But, the Bible calls the truth, truth, and lies, lies. In a world that "normalizes" lying, it is not surprising that we have a hard time trusting people.

**Object:** be a person who is trustworthy

### **Bible Text: Proverbs 31:11**

*The heart of her husband safely trusts her ...*

A woman of good character is trustworthy, so her husband trusts her. One of the traits of a true Christian is that they are trustworthy. As we grow in Christ, we become more trustworthy, and we also trust others more. One of the best ways to become trustworthy is to learn about Jesus, and follow Him.

Trust is often developed over time. It can take time to learn that someone can be trusted. Unfortunately, trust can be damaged pretty quickly. For example, when we are lied to, it makes it hard for us to trust people in the future. To establish trust in our relationships, we need to realize that lying is wrong, and stop lying. When we are not trustworthy, we need to admit that we are wrong, ask to be forgiven, and pray for God's strength to change.

Finally, the more you trust God, the more confidence you can have in trusting others. We learn that God will protect us from those who might harm us. For example, you might not want to tell someone "a secret" because you're worried that they will tell others. You can trust God to protect you, even when you learn that someone you trusted was not really trustworthy.

### **Bringing it home:**

1. Are you a trustworthy person, and why?
2. How can you become more trustworthy?

## understanding

### **Introduction:**

Some of us are like Christopher Columbus when it comes to our understanding: he didn't know where he was going. He didn't know where he was when he got there. He didn't know where he had been when he returned. Sometimes we feel that we can't understand God. We want to understand God, but we're not sure how we can. Have you ever had problems trying to understand God?

### **WDJD?**

Jesus came so that we would understand God. A small boy was drawing a picture when an adult asked, "What are you drawing?" The boy replied, "A picture of God." The adult said, "No one knows what God looks like." To which the boy confidently responded, "They will when I get through." Jesus came so we could get the real picture on what God is all about, and understand Him. As we learn about Jesus we better understand God.

**Subject:** understanding the Bible

**FYI:** Where do we get our custom of pastors teaching from a pulpit or podium? Ezra taught from a platform of wood elevated above the people so that they could hear him teach. It is from this model that we get the modern idea of a pulpit or podium. As Ezra stood above the people he opened the scrolls containing the Scriptures. The focus was to be the Word of God, not Ezra, Nehemiah, or any other man.

**Object:** understand God

### **Bible Text: Ezra 7:10**

*For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel.*

Ezra studied the word, lived it, and taught it. Martin Lloyd-Jones, a pastor and teacher with a big ministry in London during World War II, noted the primary task of the Church is the preaching of the Word of God. The effect of simply teaching the simple truth of the Bible is profound. Individual lives, families, and communities are transformed by an intimate relationship with God. This transformation is brought about by an understanding of who God is as we understand His Word.

The people wanted to understand God, so they requested Ezra, a scribe and teacher, to teach them the Word of God [Nehemiah 8:1-8]. When we understand His Word, we can know God. The assembly included men, women, and children old enough to understand. Children are able to understand the Bible, and it makes them wise to the things of God [2 Timothy 3:15].

As people read the Bible, they will learn about God. But, they will also have questions about things that they don't understand. Ezra, and the other teachers tried to

explain what they were reading, so the Bible would make sense, and the people could apply the Word to their lives. If you don't understand something, ask questions from someone you think will help you understand. Perhaps your parents, or a teacher at church, can help you find answers. Don't feel bad about asking questions ... none of us has all the answers. Asking questions is a great way to learn, and helps us understand.

**Bringing it home:**

- 1. How often do you read the Bible?**
- 2. How often would you like to read the Bible this year?**
- 3. When you read something you don't understand, remember to ask questions.**

## unity

### Introduction:

How often do you feel that you get along with other family members? For example, would you estimate 25%, 50%, 75%, or 90% of the time? Maybe it depends on who the person is. What are you likely to fight about? How does it feel when you get along with others? How does it feel when you're fighting?

### WDJD?

Shortly before going to the cross, Jesus prayed for His most important concerns. He prayed for us to be united [John 17:20-21]. He wants us to love one another and not fight with one another. Jesus' ideal for His church is unity. He wants us to be in agreement and harmony with one another. Jesus' church is full of many different kinds of people. We are united by our faith in Christ, by our love for Him and one another, and by the hope that we have in Him. When we are united, it demonstrates the love of God to those who don't know Him yet.

**Subject:** unity

**FYI:** Many weddings include the lighting of a unity candle. The side candles represent the family or individual. These flames represent you and your ties to your family. The middle, or unity candle, represents your marriage and your new family. As the two flames merge into one and can no longer be separated, so are the bride and groom joined as one in marriage. The side candles may be blown out to represent the start of life as a couple, or remain burning to signify the continued ties to your family.

**Object:** be united

### Bible Text: Psalm 133:1

*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!*

How do you think your parents feel when the family gets along? How about when you are fighting? How do you think God feels? When we are living in harmony, we should appreciate how wonderful it is. Enjoy it, experience it, and learn from it.

How can we experience more unity?

1. **Look for ways to make peace:** [Romans 14:19 - *pursue the things which make for peace*]. When you're upset, look for ways to bring peace. For example, go to the person and tell them that you're sorry; ask forgiveness, and listen as they explain why they're upset.
2. **Try to build each other up:** [Romans 14:19 - *seek the things that build-up one another*]. When we put others down, or say discouraging things, it causes conflict. But, when we encourage others and build them up, it creates unity.

3. **Remember, you are family:** [Ephesians 4:3-6]. Family members are all one unit. You wouldn't want to hurt yourself, so you want to be careful not to hurt others who you should be one with.
4. **Try to reunite:** When you lose the unity, try to reunite as soon as possible (asap). If possible, try to reunite on the same day [Ephesians 4:26 - *don't let the sun go down on your wrath*].

**Bringing it home:**

1. **How long do you think that you can be united with your family in peace? Set a goal and see how you do.**
2. **How long do you think it would take to reunite? Set a goal and see how you do.**

## virtue

### Introduction:

Maybe you've heard someone say, "Patience is a virtue." Virtue is more than just patience. But, what is virtue? Virtue means moral excellence ... and that's a good thing. Some of the words that we think of when we consider virtue are: integrity, purity, goodness, honor, power, quality, strength, and righteousness.

### WDJD?

Jesus is the model and example of virtue. Whatever Jesus displays, by His life and teachings, reflects virtue and helps us to understand virtue.

**Subject:** virtue

**FYI:** The Apostle Paul defined the three most important virtues as love (which is the essential nature of God), hope, and faith. Early Church leaders called them the three theological virtues because these virtues are not natural to man apart from God.

**Object:** have a virtuous reality

### Bible Text: Philippians 4:8

*Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any **virtue** and if there is anything praiseworthy — meditate on these things.*

Various descriptions of virtue, and lists of virtues, have been proposed over the ages. For example, The Seven Heavenly Virtues: faith, hope, love, strength, fairness, self-control, and wisdom. In addition, these virtues were often associated with good works: feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, give shelter to strangers, clothe the naked, visit the sick, minister to prisoners, and bury the dead.

Paul urges us to focus on whatever has virtue, and to think about those things. If we focus on virtue, we will not be as tempted to do wrong. It's like eating lots of healthy food, there'll be no room in your tummy for junk food.

Virtue is doing the right thing with the right attitude. The apostle Peter described it as a growing process [2Peter 1:5-7], "Add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge ..." The more we grow, the more virtue people see in our lives. Then, we have a virtuous reality. Finally, here's a list of some virtues: patience, purity, faithfulness, trust, wisdom, respect, obedience, honesty, compassion, and kindness.

### Bringing it home:

1. **Make your own list of virtues. How many do you think you can list?**

**2. What virtue(s) would you like more of?**

## worry

### Introduction:

What are you worried about? Make a list of the three biggest “worries” in your life. Share your list with your family.

### WDJD?

Jesus taught us not to worry [Matthew 6:25-34]. People worry about what others think, what they’re going to wear, what they will eat, and about their life. But, Jesus reminded us that we can trust God to care for us. God already knows what we need before we ask. He feeds the birds, He makes the flowers beautiful, and He loves us more than them. So, we don’t have to worry about tomorrow, because God will care for us.

### Subject: worry

**FYI:** Wasting time on most of our fears is unnecessary. Statistics show that people spend their time worrying about:

1. Things that will never happen.....40%
2. Things that are in the past.....30%
3. Needless concerns about one's health.....12%
4. Petty and miscellaneous cares.....10%
5. Real and legitimate concerns.....8%

When fear and worry knock on your door, let faith answer and they'll find that there was no one there!

**Object:** don’t worry, trust God

### Bible Text: Matthew 6:34

*So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today’s trouble is enough for today.*

Worry is like a rocking chair: it will give you something to do, but it won’t get you anywhere. A child does not generally worry all day long about whether his house will be there when he gets home from school or whether his parents will have a meal for him that evening. Children do not worry about such things because they trust their parents. In the same way, all Christians should trust their heavenly Father to care for us.

When we are worried, what should we do?

1. First, make a list of the things that you are worried about.
2. Second, ask yourself if there is something that you can do about it.
3. If there’s nothing that you can do about it, pray and ask God to help you trust Him, and help you not to worry.



4. If there's something that you can do, make a list of the things that seem to make sense for you to do. For example, if you're worried about a test, write down what you need to study. Pray and ask God to help you do what you can.
5. Try to stay focused on today. Many of our worries are concerns about the future, so try to stay focused on what's going on now.
6. Finally, remember that God has promised to provide for your needs, to protect you, and to give you His peace. God loves you, and He always keeps His promises. Be encouraged!

**Bringing it home:**

1. **Review your list of your three biggest worries. Follow steps 1-6 above, and see how you feel.**
2. **Next time you worry, come back and review.**

## worship

### **Introduction:**

What is worship, and why should we worship? Worship is a life that is changed by drawing closer to God. Worship is demonstrated in song, prayer, and lifestyle. Worship is the stirring, by God's Spirit, of our spirit. The evidence of true worship is a life characterized by devotion to God.

### **WDJD?**

Jesus teaches us that God is seeking people who will worship Him in spirit and truth. God is looking for people like you to worship Him. Imagine if your pet dog ran away. You would keep searching with all your strength to find your dog, because you love her. In the same way, God is searching after you.

**Subject:** worship

**FYI:** Anthropologists [people who study the cultural development of humans] have learned that there has never been a culture of people who did not worship. All people have a desire to worship.

**Object:** be worshipers of God

### **Bible Text: John 4:23**

*But the time is coming and is already here when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth.*

The English word *worship* is derived from the Old English word *worthship*, a word reflecting the worthiness of one receiving honor and devotion. Basically, worship is about God, and for God. Worship is what God desires, and what He is worthy of. Our motive is to please God and glorify Him. The Greek term *proskuneo*, that we translate worship, can be defined as a kiss toward one as a token of respect or honor. Our worship is a special kiss toward God. God desires that relationship, He requires that relationship, and He is seeking that relationship.

We go through life with a thirst that only God can satisfy. The relationship between this thirst, and the satisfaction of worshiping God, is seen in the account of Jesus' interaction with a Samaritan woman at a well as recorded in John 4. Jesus teaches us that our desire to be satisfied, and God's desire to be glorified, are both met when we worship God.

Jesus explains that real worship is in spirit and truth. First, worship is spiritual. It is not only emotional or something that you simply think about. For example, you can go to a ball game and cheer loudly for your team. But, simply cheering loudly may just be your emotions. On the other hand, when you want to worship God, He will help you by His Spirit. Second, worship is in truth. The best way to worship in truth is to learn about

God by reading your Bible. As you get to know God, and how He wants to be worshiped, you can worship in truth.

**Bringing it home:**

- 1. Look at objects in your house and see how they relate to Jesus. For example, a candle can remind you that Jesus is the light of the world. Focusing on Jesus is a way for you to worship God.**

## youth

### **Introduction:**

Do you think that young people can be a godly example to their friends, family, and neighbors? Do you think that others see something different in you because of your love for God? Are you different in what you say, how you live, your love for others, or your faith?

### **WDJD?**

Jesus wants young people to come to Him, and to bless them. It's important for us to realize that children are important to Jesus; and what's important to Jesus should be important to us [Matthew 19:13-15].

**Subject:** youth

**FYI:** The Bar Mitzvah and Bat Mitzvah are a "rite of passage," a crossover from childhood to adulthood; a milestone in a Jewish life.

Judaism deems a boy a "bar mitzvah" when he turns 13 and a girl becomes "bat mitzvah" when she turns 12. At that point the child is no longer a child in the eyes of Jewish law and becomes responsible for his or her own deeds, spiritually, ethically, and morally.

**Object:** be a godly example

### **Bible Text: 1Timothy 4:12**

*Don't let anyone think less of you because you are young. Be an example to all believers in what you say, in the way you live, in your love, your faith, and your purity.*

At the time of Paul's letter, Timothy was younger than many of the other church leaders. But, Paul urged Timothy to be an example to all believers. Paul points out five areas where young people can be good examples:

1. **In what you say** refers to our words. Our speech should be pleasing to God's ears. We should avoid saying things that we wouldn't say if we knew Jesus was there.
2. **In the way you live** relates to your conduct. Kids should be allowed to be kids. They should have the liberty to do "kid things." But, they should remember that they're God's kids. The way we live should be pleasing to God. If we are pleasing to God, we'll be a great example to others.
3. **In love** means people should see the love we have for God and one another, especially those who might be hard to love. It shows that God's Spirit is working in our lives when we love our enemies, and love those who may seem hard to love. This kind of love shows people that we have a relationship with Jesus.

4. **In faith** refers to trusting God. When people see that you trust God, and that you believe God's ways are best, you are a great example.
5. **In purity** refers to staying innocent. Be careful not to lose your innocence. Keep yourself from things that are not pure. Be careful what you watch on TV, movies, music videos, internet, and what you listen to on your radio, mp3, iPod, etc.

**Bringing it home:**

1. **What sort of example do you think you are to your friends, family, and neighbors? Give yourself a grade on a scale of 1 to 100, with 100 being the best. Do this for friends, then family, and then neighbors.**

## zeal

### Introduction:

What do you get excited about? Everyone is excited about something ... a master passion (games, work, school, relationships, fitness, recreation, sports, a hobby, cooking, eating, new clothes, cars, pets ...). It's not wrong to be excited; actually it's good. But, it's important to be excited about God. If you think about some of your friends, and people you know, you probably know what they're excited about. They also probably know what you're excited about. If we are excited about Jesus, how do we express that excitement so that others see our zeal for God?

### WDJD?

One day, Jesus came to the Temple, and he was so upset that He turned the tables over [John 2]. Why was Jesus so upset? The religious leaders were taking advantage of people who had come to worship God. Jesus is passionate about the things of God, and He wants us to be totally committed to doing what is right. Jesus gives us a wake-up call to do the right thing.

**Subject:** zeal for God

**FYI:** What is the best college sports town? A Sports Illustrated article in 2003 decided that it was Madison, Wisconsin. The football stadium holds 76,634 fans and always sells out. Over half of the crowd stays after football games to engage in the "Fifth Quarter," a mass sing-and-dance-along, as the band plays everything from polkas to fight songs. On college football game days, it seems like the whole town is wearing the school's red and white colors.

**Object:** be on fire for God

### Bible Text: Titus 2:14

*Jesus gave Himself for us, to free us from sin, to cleanse us, to make us His very own people, **zealous** for good works.*

Jesus is passionate about us, and requires us to be passionate about Him. Zeal is intense enthusiasm for a person, cause or object.

How can we have zeal for God? Jesus shows us four steps [John 2:15-25]:

**1. Clean house: remove what inhibits worship [15-17].** Jesus removed the things that were obstacles to worship. If there's something in your life that keeps you from being zealous for God, clean house! Not only do we need to remove the things that offend, but we need to replace them with things that help us to be excited about God. For example, reading our Bibles, spending time with Christian friends, listening to Christian music, etc.

**2. Remember Jesus' death and resurrection [18-21].** Because Jesus gave His life for us, and since the resurrection proves that He is the way to God, we should be zealous for Him. The temple in Jerusalem was the center of spiritual life. Jesus came to show us that the way to God was through Him, not buildings made by men.

**3. Believe the Word: know it and live it [22].** The disciples were strengthened in their faith as they remembered what Jesus and the prophets predicted about His resurrection. When you are studying the Word of God, and you don't understand something, you can still treasure the truth, and later God will make it clear.

**4. Commit to God: Jesus knows our hearts [23-25].** Jesus wants followers who are truly committed. Jesus is not seeking a big crowd, but He is seeking a real commitment. Since Jesus knows our hearts, isn't it nice when He looks at your heart and sees zeal for Him?

**Bringing it home:**

- 1. What do people see us excited about?**
- 2. How do we show people that we are zealous for God?**

## the best topic

### **Introduction:**

Why is this topic the best study? It is the best topic, because you and your family will prepare it together. In the introduction, orient your family to your subject. For example, if the subject is faith, you can ask, “What do you think of when you hear the word faith?” Ask open-ended questions rather than questions that seek a yes or no answer. Also, ask questions that ask your family for their opinions or thoughts. For example, “What do you think?” invites a response, because everyone has thoughts or opinions. On the other hand, the question, “What does faith mean?” implies a right or wrong answer, and is not as likely to start your family talking.

### **WDJD?**

Here, you help your family to see Jesus’ example. For example, if you are talking about faith, you can teach about Jesus’ faith in trusting His Father in the Garden of Gethsemane. Search your Bible for examples from the life and teachings of Jesus. He is the best example for our family to see.

**Subject:** make sure that you remind your family what you are learning about. A clear reminder can help minimize any confusion.

**FYI:** Search your Bible, or the internet, or other sources, for a “nugget” of information related to the subject that will make the learning more fun and interesting. You know your family, better than anyone else, find things that will be interesting to them.

**Object:** as you learn about a subject, remember the purpose or objective. For example, if you are learning about faith, an object might be: trust God. Try to describe the object of the study in no more than 3-5 words. This will make it easier for your family to remember.

**Bible Text:** Find a verse that clearly addresses the subject that you want to discuss. For example, **Romans 10:17, “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”** Make sure that your family finds the verse in their Bibles, reads the verse, and ideally writes the verse to help them remember.

Write a few paragraphs to learn more about the topic, and to help your family understand. For example, reading Romans 10:17 teaches us that learning God’s word builds-up our faith. The more we learn about God through His Word, the more we want to trust Him.

Consider related ideas and cross-references. For example, in considering faith, we can find several related Bible verses:

1. Comes from the Scriptures: John 20:30-31
2. A gift from God: Ephesians 2:8



3. Builds us up: 1 Timothy 1:4
4. Christians live by faith: Romans 1:17
5. Pray to increase: Luke 17:5

A concordance, topical Bible index, study Bible, and Bible dictionary are good tools that will help you find related ideas. The simple truth is that preparing and sharing these simple truths about God is easier than you think. Be encouraged. Leading your family through the lessons in this book, has well prepared you to start preparing your own studies for your family, and to continue with your family devotion time. That is why this is the best study!

**Bringing it home:**

1. **Give some practical application to help your family see how to put the lessons that they have learned into their lives.**
2. **Remember that these studies are intended to encourage discussion, bring families together, and transform families through daily devotions.**
3. **Remember to: read it, learn it, and do it. Let your family see that God is real in your life.**