

These family lent devotionals are designed with the intent of families joining together for a short time several times before Easter to connect and intentionally turn their attention to Jesus.

It is designed knowing that families are busy, whether with busy schedules or with the busy movement of little bodies. Most of the time when we are going through these devotionals, my kids are playing with fidgets, slime, drawing, or even standing on their heads.

Sometimes some great insights come out of the mouth of babes. Sometimes some great discussion evolves. Sometimes questions are triggered in their growing minds. Sometimes they get nothing out of it. Sometimes one is sent to his/her room because of disruptive behavior. Sometimes we have had to quit in the middle because it is going nowhere.

But over the almost decade of doing some variation of these practices. My kids look forward to them. They are disappointed when schedules prevent us from doing it. In reality, I look forward to them too. Which is the way I believe it should be. If this practice becomes about teaching the kids about Jesus, then I have missed the point. The point isn't that my kids learn the core of Christian theology. It is written with the intent of having our entire family turn our attention toward Jesus. It should be a time of worship, not just learning. I believe that kids who watch their parents interact with Jesus will be drawn to doing so themselves. It should be a time where my kids feel that they are treasured by Jesus enough to interact with him themselves alongside mom and dad. On the good nights, it seems this is why my kids look forward to doing these devotionals. On the hard nights...well let's just say we wouldn't have the good nights if we stopped on the hard nights. I wholeheartedly believe that these kinds of experiences are what is going to start my kids on a lifelong journey of walking with Jesus.

With that said, here are the practicals:

Follow the outline for each devotional. It is pretty straight forward.

Keep it simple.

Modify the content to fit your family and the ages of your kids. (My kids are 9, 7,4) But give your kid's (and the Holy Spirit) credit. They get more than we think.

There are devotions for ten days to be used throughout lent when it works for you. Some weeks you might use one, some weeks you might use four. There are also four devotionals designed to follow holy week- Maundy Thursday through Easter Sunday. The content here follows what these days are dedicated to.

When my kids were younger, we used a Children's Bible to read some stories and The Holy Bible to read some passages. I do believe it is important to give kids the experience of hearing Scripture read. Even if they don't understand it all, they grow in their understanding and it begins to sound more familiar, less foreign, as they hear it over time. I let my kids find the passages in the Bible even if it takes longer because they are then a part of the worship experience in a tangible way.

I encourage you as parents to answer the questions about your life experiences too (in age appropriate ways that don't make your kids feel responsible for you or anxious). This makes you more human to your kids. It allows God to use your story in your kids' lives, and it allows them to see your faith and how God is active in your life.

Let your kids inspire and teach you.

Allow the conversation to go where it may. You never know what the Holy Spirit may be up to.

We sing the classics acapella. Jesus Loves Me; I've Got the JOY, JOY, JOY down in my heart; Amazing Grace; Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus; Rejoice in the Lord Always; Halleluiah...

I pray that this experience with your family would lead you closer to each other and closer to Jesus!

Blessings, Katie

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HOPE:

Verse: John 16:5-7

Main point: The disciples were scared and confused with what was going on in the world at that time. They needed to know that things would be ok. They needed hope. Before Jesus was crucified, he promised that he would send a friend to be with them and help them after he left. That friend is his Spirit and he has given that friend to us as well. In Acts 2:1-4 (read) we see that they had reason to hope because Jesus kept his promise. He did send them the Holy Spirit to help them, to be with them.

Questions: Do you ever feel hopeless, like things will never get better? How does this feel in your body? Tell me about a time when you received hope in a hard situation? Do you think Jesus was part of the hope? How?

Pray/Sing

Activity: Plant seeds in paper cups (you don't see the flowers and you wonder how they could ever grow from a little seed, but you have hope that they will)

GRACE:

Verse: Ephesians 2:4-5

Main point: God loves us very, very much. So much so that even though we make choices that aren't loving toward him, choices that make our life harder, less safe, and less full of goodness, He was willing to provide a way for us to live a life that is so full of goodness and love we can hardly imagine! He made a way for us to have this life by allowing himself to be crucified so that we could be connected to God. Being connected to God is what gives us this full life. He did not have to do that. A life full of goodness and love is not something we have earned or worked for, but he gave it to us anyway.

Questions: What does knowing that God love you this much make you want to do? Has a person ever given you something that you did not earn? Have you ever given someone else something they have not earned? This is grace, next time it happens let it remind you of the enormous grace God offered you because he loves you.

Pray/Sing

Activity: Dye Eggs (The eggs were made beautiful, not because they deserved it, but because you wanted to make them that way, this is grace.)

COURAGE:

Verse: Luke 22:41-44

Main point: Leading up to the time when Jesus was to be arrested and crucified, he was scared. He was so scared that his sweat was filled with drops of blood. He knew he would need to have a lot of courage to do what His Father was asking him to do. So, he spent time praying. When he prayed God sent angels to strengthen him and give him courage. Jesus' Father didn't take the hard thing away he just gave him what he needed to be courageous.

Questions: Have you ever been scared? How does being scared feel in your body? Did you know that you don't need courage if you are never scared? How does it make you feel to know that Jesus was scared too and had to choose to be brave? What could you do next time you want to be brave?

Pray/Sing

Activity: Take a walk remembering the courage it took Jesus to walk to Golgotha, the place he was crucified.

FAITH:

Verse: Hebrews 12:1-2 (read this in the Message version if you can!)

Main point: The chapter before these verses we just read are filled with many stories from the Old Testament of people who believed that God would help them when they were facing hard or scary things. (Read one with as a family if you have time and the attention of your kids.) They had no idea how their story would turn out but they obeyed God because they believed God was good and loved them. And God kept his promises to each and every one of them. Even Jesus lived life not knowing exactly how things were going to turn out. He had to live by faith that God the Father had it all under control. He had faith enough to allow himself to be crucified, believing it was part of God's plan. The verses we just read encourage us to do the same thing, believe and obey God the Father, and to follow the example that Jesus gave us of how to do this. Now all the people listed in chapter 11 and Jesus himself are with God the Father, cheering us on!!

Questions: What is a situation that you are facing (example if needed: friends at school, a hard test, corona virus, lots of fighting with siblings) that you aren't quite sure how God is going to bring goodness and love into it? What do you think obeying God would look like in this situation? Keep your eyes hope for ways God pulls through!!

Pray/Sing

Activity: Play hide and seek, in the dark makes it even more fun (Faith means that we don't always know where God is in hard times or what will happen next, but just like in hide and seek when we keep seeking --having faith-- we will find God.)

LIFE:

Verse: John 10:7-15

Main point: Jesus wants us to have a life filled with good things (such as love, joy, and peace). He wants that so much for us that he was willing to die so that we could be near to him so that he could take care of us like a shepherd takes care of his sheep. He will never leave us alone. He will always take care of us, but we have to choose to live with him for us to receive the benefits of this care.

Questions: When was a time that you experienced real true abundant life? What did it feel like in your body? What does a shepherd do for his sheep to make sure they live a good life? How does Jesus do those same things for us? How do we choose to live with our shepherd Jesus?

Pray/Sing

Activity: Put together an arrangement of flowers as a reminder of beautiful abundant life -or- go for a walk and notice all the signs of spring and the coming of new life after the death of winter.

LOVE:

Verse: 1 John 4:19

Main point: Experiencing the love and forgiveness of Jesus, especially when considering he died for us, is what gives us the ability and desire to love others.

Questions: Share a story of a time that you knew someone loved you. How did that feel in your body? Is it always easy to do the things that shows others love? Do you think it was easy for Jesus to die on the cross? But he did it anyway because he really truly loves you!!

Pray/Sing

Activity: Find a way to bless somebody as a family—we get to be the hands and feet of Jesus now, sharing his love with others
(be creative during this time of isolation)

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SUFFERING:

Verse: 2 Corinthians 4:7-9 and 16-17

Main point: There are lots of verses about suffering in the Bible. As Christians we will face times of hardship and struggle, just as Jesus did. He knows what is like to suffer pain in the body, pain in the heart, and pain in our mind. But he endured it by leaning into His Father and obeying Him. It is interesting when you read all the verses of suffering it says that if you endure in a way that is honoring to God you will be rewarded in the end, but we have to practice faith to get there.

Questions: In what ways did Jesus face suffering in this world? In what ways have you faced suffering in this world? What was Jesus' reward for following God even in suffering? What will our reward be for following God even in suffering?

Pray/Sing

Activity: Make a purple and black bracelet out of pipe cleaners and beads-or any other items you may have around. (Black is symbolic of death and Purple is symbolic for suffering.)

THANKFULNESS:

Verse: Psalm 136

Main point: God deserves our praise and gratitude. He is always loving! The verses we read were written to remind God's people of all the good things that he had done for them. He was good and loving even when times were hard and they faced evil situations. God was with them and pulled them through. When we remember what God has done in the past and have a heart of gratitude it is easier to have faith in hard times.

Questions: How does your body feel when you are thankful? What is the opposite of thankfulness? How does your body feel then? How do you think it makes God feel when we tell him we are thankful for the things he has done. Look over Psalm 136 again. What were some ways that God showed his love and goodness to his people during hard times?

Pray/Sing

Activity: Write your own give thanks to the Lord Psalm. It can look any way you want—each write or draw a picture of something God has done for you as individual or write a Psalm like the one you just read as a family, or the options are endless. The idea is to remember what God has done for your family. Parents share stories not only of ways God has been faithful to you, but also of ways God has been faithful in the generations of your family before you.

JOY:

Verse: John 15:9-11

Main point: Jesus wants us to live with joy! We are filled with joy by living with Jesus—which means knowing he is with you always and living in a way that honors him, brings him glory.

Questions: What does joy feel like in your body? What can we do to live in a way that praises God (obey him, talk to him, love others)?

Pray/Sing

Activity: Have a dance party as a family

Maundy Thursday:

Verse: John 13:1-17

Main point: Jesus throughout the gospels showed his love by serving others. The story we just read takes place the night before Jesus was crucified at a special meal he shared with the disciples called Passover. In this story, when it would have been very easy to think about what would be happening to him the next day, he served his friends by washing their feet. Today this might seem strange, but then they had to walk everywhere in the heat on dusty roads. Imagine how dirty, stinky, and sore their feet must have been. The biggest way Jesus served others during his time on earth was by dying on the cross as a payment for our sins.

Questions: What does it mean to serve somebody? Would you rather be served or serve? Why is it so hard to serve others? What are some ways that you can serve others?

Pray/Sing

Activity: Eat dinner picnic style and wash each other's feet afterwards

Good Friday:

Verse: Mark 15:33-41

Main point: Jesus allowed himself to be crucified on a cross. When he died the curtain in the temple tore, showing the world that they could now be connected to God even though they were sinners.

Questions: What does your body feel when you think about this story? What does your body feel when you think about why Jesus did what he did?

Pray/Sing

Activity: Make a tomb in the living room to leave up until Easter Sunday

Holy Saturday:

Verse: Mark 15:42-27

Main point: After Jesus died he was placed in a tomb with a large, heavy stone in front of it. The Bible tells us that Jesus had told his disciples that he would die but three days later be resurrected, but they didn't understand this. We know the end of the story. We know that Easter is tomorrow. But they didn't.

Questions: Imagine the hopelessness of not knowing that Jesus would be coming back to life. What do you think they were thinking? How do you think they were feeling? How would their thoughts and feelings be different if they knew about Easter Sunday? Thinking about this, do you want others to know the truth about Good Friday and Easter?

Pray/Sing

Activity: Make a "He is Risen sign" with messages and pictures of gratitude from everyone in the family

Easter Sunday:

Verse: Mark 16:1-8

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Main point: Jesus was crucified, dead, and buried and then rose from the dead on the third day just as he had promised.

Questions: What do you think those who saw the empty tomb were thinking and feeling? Why is it important that Jesus not only died but also was resurrected?

Pray/Sing

Activity: Take down the tomb and hang the He Is Risen sign in its place