

Family Devotional Packet

⁴ Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. ⁵ Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. ⁶ These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. ⁷ Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. ⁸ Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. ⁹ Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 (NIV)

An important part of the covenant relationship was that it be passed on from generation to generation, for its promises and provisions were for generations yet unborn (Deut 4:25, 40; 5:9–10, 29). To accomplish this there must be a regular routine of biblical instruction. A father must educate his son and son the grandson so that the commands and promises of the covenant might never be forgotten.

This “passing on” begins by impressing the word of God upon our own heart (v.6). When the Word of the Lord is impressed upon our own hearts we will naturally impress it on everything around us, i.e. our children (v.7). In the psychology of the Old Testament the heart is not the center of emotional life and response but the seat of the intellect or rational side of humankind. To “be upon the heart” is to be in one’s constant, conscious reflection.

The image of “impress them on your children” is that of the engraver of a monument who takes hammer and chisel in hand and with painstaking care etches a text into the face of a solid slab of granite. The sheer labor of such a task is daunting indeed, but once done the message is there to stay. Is this not what we all desire for the next generation—the Word of the Lord in their hearts and minds eternally!

In less figurative terms and yet with clear hyperbole, Moses said that the way this message is made permanent is by constant repetition. Thus whether while sitting at home or walking in the pathway, whether lying down to sleep or rising for the tasks of a new day, teacher and student must be preoccupied with covenant concerns and their faithful communication (v. 7). The pairing of these sets of contrasting places and postures forms a double merism (using opposing terms to express an all-encompassing concept). Sitting suggests inactivity; and walking, of course, activity. Together they encompass all of human effort. Likewise, to sleep at night and rise in the morning speaks of the totality of time. So important is covenant truth that it must be at the very center of one’s labor and life.

In what was apparently intended to be another figurative way of expressing the centrality of the covenant to everyday life, Moses instructed the people to tie the words of covenant to their hands and foreheads (v. 8). Moses expanded the sphere of covenant claim to the house and then to the village. In this manner the person and his entire family

and community become identified as the people of the Lord. Essentially, their lives were meant to be consumed with covenantal faithfulness.ⁱ

We strongly encourage that every family in the church have at least one night each week devoted to building strong bonds, faith in God, and treasured memories that will affect not only your children but generations to come. To help facilitate the process of “passing on” this packet contains 5 family devotionals!ⁱⁱ

10 THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND WHEN PLANNING FAMILY DEVOTIONALS:

1. Be regular, weekly, scheduled (i.e., 7-8pm, everyone knows what to expect). Not too long...20/30 minutes, plus game time.
2. Have lots of fun; laugh; be happy.
3. Involve everyone, youngest to oldest.
4. Plan ahead. Both mom and dad and kids give input.
5. Vary each week. No ruts!
6. Ask open-ended questions ("What do you think?" "How do you feel about that?" "Why do you feel that's important?" "What else?" "What's your opinion on that?" "Why do you feel that way?", etc.).
7. Sing, pray, share "good news", play games, cards, discussions on various topics, etc.
8. Use the Bible each devo. Everyone, even youngest, should have their own Bible.
9. Include other families in your family devotionals.
10. Turn off the TV, phone, computer and all electronic games. It's time to focus on the family.

LIGHT NIGHT

Singing: Be sure this is fun. Get help if it isn't.

Prayer: Have a sentence or two prayer, each person thanking God for your home.

Scripture: 1 Peter 2:9, 10.

Lesson: Read 1 Peter 2:9, 10.

1. Emphasize "chosen people" and talk about how special your children are. Use this time to talk about all the great qualities you see in each child. Talk about how happy you are that God "chose" you to be their parents.
2. Talk about the phrase "*called out of darkness into his wonderful light*"
 - a. Ask "how do you like being in the dark"? Tell them scary story about how you were afraid in the dark as a child. Make it exciting and humorous.
 - b. Explain that God says people that are not disciples of Jesus are in darkness. (Explain that it grieves God that people are not disciples. That he desires for everyone to be saved and that's the reason we need to spend our lives helping that happen).
 - i. Ask: "What is the worst thing about being in the dark?" (the answer that you're looking for is that "you can't see where you're going")
 - ii. "What happens when you can't see where you're Going?" (the answer: you can get hurt).
 - iii. Explain that living without God and his word is just like living in the dark all the time.
 - iv. Talk about how we need to talk to God all the time also.
3. Prepare ahead of time enough candles or flashlights for everyone in the family. If possible, have dad's candle bigger than the rest of the family's. Darken the room. Ask the kids how they like being in the dark. Then dad should light his candle. He then should light mom's and she should light the oldest child's, and so on. End up with talking about Mt. 5:14-16. Memorize together vs. 16

Close with a prayer and a fun snack and game!

WHAT MAKES A HOUSE A HOME?

Singing: How's it going here? Is it fun? Are you learning some new, fun songs?

Prayer: Have a sentence or two prayer, each thanking God for your home.

Scripture: Psalm 127:1a, "unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain." This is a good reason we have family nights....we're building our homes!

Lesson Goal: To help family members appreciate your Home and to encourage them to express this appreciation by doing at least one thing to make your home a happier place to live.

Note to Parents: We often don't take time as a family to think of the many beautiful ways in which God helps us make our house a home. Some day our children will reflect upon their home and re-live memories that we are in the process of building now. What will they think of? Will they have warm memories or remember that you seldom had the time for them? God, the master builder, wants to use us, his Carpenters, to build beautiful homes.

Start this family time by mom and dad describing the house or houses that they grew up in. Not just how it looked, but also the "feel". If it was a happy place, what made it so? If it wasn't a happy place to grow up, be gracious in saying why.

Have each child draw a house on a piece of paper. Have them write on the doors and windows what they feel makes a happy home. Discuss what they write.

Play the "finish the sentence game:"

"...My home makes me feel_____."

"...The thing I like best about my home is_____."

"...My best memory about our home is_____."

"...I wish our home could be more _____."

"...I am happiest when we_____."

"...make up your own..."

The "Grand Tour": Go into every room and have each person think of some way he/she can help make it a more happy room. Example: help keep the bathroom clean, make my bed, wash the dishes, etc.

For families with younger children, you may need to adapt these ideas a little but they can still be effective.

You may want to play house with the little ones. Let them dress up in your clothes. Let them be the father and mother and you be the children.

Close with a prayer and then some super-duper Refreshments. (Ever made a cake or cookies together, as a family? Try it.....great fun!!!!).

LOVE IN ACTION, PART 1

Song: Let the kids choose the songs they know and like to sing. (There are some great tapes available to teach you some spiritual and fun songs if this is not your forte).

Prayer: Have a sentence prayer, each thanking God for specific things about each of your family members. (Set up for specific things to be mentioned by talking before the prayer about loving things that have been done by different family members in the recent past). Question: "What do you think is the second most important thing you can do to please God"? Praise each child's response. "Let's see what the Bible says!"

Matthew 22:34-40; John 13:35 (discuss briefly...)

Memory Verse:
John 13:35, *"by this all men will know you are my disciples, if you love one another"*.

Close:

- Close with a family prayer, expressing to God: "We love one another because..."
- Have a FUN (for the kids) game, tell jokes, tell stories about when you were kids (mom and dad), and eat something delicious!!!!!!
- Have the kids work on next weeks game ideas, refreshment ideas, etc.

Plan now to have your next Family Night with another family. Call them and set it up!!!!!! The spiritual friendships that result will be a blessing to everyone for life - and beyond!!!! Suggested Activity for bit older Kids (one's who can read):

This week we want to emphasize how each individual in the home can practice what love is. Have the readers in the family read from I Corinthians 13, concentrating on the descriptive verses of what love is (patient, kind, etc.). Ask your kids to give examples of how they can show patience, kindness, gentleness, etc. Create a game for the week that encourages them to be very aware when they are being loving. Prepare ahead of time a "loving cup" for each child and parent. (You may want to use part of the family night to let each family member decorate his/her own cup). Use a large paper or plastic cup that can be drawn on or have items pasted to it. Place the cups in a highly visible location so that everyone will be reminded several times a day to be loving. Give a reward (stickers, sucker, bubble gum, pencil, etc.) every time you see or hear anyone practice a loving word, action or response. At the end of the week, have a special "Reward Ceremony" for all the loving kindnesses shown by all during the past week.

Love in Action, Part II

Song: Bible book stores have tapes and CDs with favorite children's songs.

Prayer: Have a sentence (or 2) prayer, each family member thanking God for your family, and for all the loving things that have been going on in your home.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 13

Discussion: 1 Corinthians 13 describes what love is all about. Have each family member, (kids, mom/dad), talk about what they learned about love last week, as they were all working on being more loving. Talk about God's definition of love here.

This week, we want to actively take love outside the home. Spend part of the family time helping each family member think how he or she is going to show love to the following people:

Tuesday: a neighbor

Wednesday: a friend of the family

Thursday: an "enemy"

Friday: an elderly person

Saturday: grandparents

Sunday: a Bible class teacher/helper

Make plans that can be carried out easily. Parents must be the catalyst in order for this to be a great experience for the kids. To truly give your children a great lesson in the rewards of loving, plan a trip on Monday night (or when ever your Family Night is) to a retirement/nursing home. Allow the children to visit with the residents. Preparation of what to say, to speak up, hold hands with the residents will help this be a wonderful experience and a great blessing for all.

As with all Family Devotionals, end with a prayer and super refreshments and a game or cards that involve the entire family, in a fun, interactive way.

LOVE GOD

Song: Let the kids choose the songs they like to sing

Prayer: Have a sentence prayer, each thanking God for something He's done for you.

Question: "What do you think God would say is the most important thing He wants us to do?" (praise each child's response). "Let's see what the Bible says is the most important."

Scripture: Mark 12:28-30. "Jesus said loving God is the most important thing we can do". "What are some of the reasons you love God?" (have a large felt pen and poster board or butcher paper to record all the answers....or, give red construction paper hearts to write out the reasons you each love God and then display).

Close: Close with a family prayer, expressing to God: "We love you because.."

Always enjoy refreshments at the end....with a family game, help with homework, etc.

TRADING PLACES

Singing: Have you gotten a tape yet??

Prayer: Have a family prayer, thanking God for each member

Scripture: Philippians 2:4

Lesson:

1. Start with a fun activity that all the children will enjoy. Be prepared ahead of time by pulling out some of dad's and mom's old clothes. Allow the boys to dress up in their dad's clothes and the girls to dress up in mom's clothes. (If you're a single parent, solicit fill ins to help you, or join another family who's doing this family devo). Not only do you want the children to wear their mom or dad's clothes, but you need to take on the identity of your children (wear their ball caps, put your hair in pigtails, etc.)
2. Play a game of "What If". Pretend that the children are now the parents and vice versa. Create different situations by asking "What If" questions. For example: "What if I was being mean to my sister and not sharing? What would you do? (It would be good for the adult to act out not sharing so that the children can see how it looks). Allow the children to say what they would do as a parent to correct the problem. Take the time to have properly thought out the questions that will be appropriate for your family according to the current needs. (Other topics might be whining, disobedience, arguing, disrespect, moodiness, etc.)
3. Learn the memory verse together, Philippians 2:4 and discuss it light of this devo.
4. Be sure to have your camera, video ready. A picture of this evening will your family's hearts 20 years from now.

Close with a prayer, a fun snack and a game.

ⁱMerrill, E. H. (2001, c1994). *Vol. 4: Deuteronomy* (electronic ed.). Logos Library System; The New American Commentary (166). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

ⁱⁱ The 6 devotionals were retrieved from: <http://www.seattleicoc.org/>