

Use this devotion guide each night with your family. Follow the five FAITH5 steps: **Share, Read, Talk, Pray, and Bless.**

DEVOTION ONE

Signs of the Son

1 SHARE

Your Highs & Lows for the day with one another.

2 READ

Scripture Verse and Highlight it in your Bible:

But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

— Mark 13:24–25

3 TALK

Give each of your family members paper and crayons or markers. Have everyone draw a storm with lightning, clouds, etc. Share your pictures and hang them up.

Billy was very afraid of storms. If he was playing with his friends and the clouds started to gray or the wind picked up, he would jump on his bike and head for safety. Billy's mom would remind him each time he ran in the door: "Pay attention to the signs of the storm so you don't get wet or hurt." By looking for the signs of the storm, Billy could appreciate the power of the storm and feel thankful for the warmth of shelter from its force.

The Bible says when Jesus enters the world there are signs everywhere signaling His arrival. People who pay attention to God's work in the world have no trouble seeing it. Some of the signs are violent like the wind. Some are scary like the thunder, but none is mistakable for anything but the coming of God's Son. In other words, when Jesus is on His way, the world reacts. Are you paying attention?

Questions:

1. What do you hear God's voice saying to you in the Bible verse? In the quote?
2. Tell about a time you were caught in a storm. How did it feel?
3. What signs would you see to let you know Jesus is coming?

4 PRAY

Use a *Praise / Thank / Ask* prayer:

Praise:

Praise God for sending so many signals announcing Jesus' arrival.

Thank:

Thank Jesus for making such a grand entrance into your life. Thank Him for today's "highs."

Ask:

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you see the signs. Bring your family's "lows" to God. Close in Jesus' name.

5 BLESS

Bless one another with the sign of the cross and say:

"May your eyes be open to the signs of Christ's coming."

"The future you shall know when it has come; before then, forget it."

— Aeschylus

DEVOTION TWO

Son in the Clouds

1 SHARE

Your Highs & Lows for the day with one another.

2 READ

Scripture Verse and Highlight it in your Bible:

Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in clouds' with great power and glory. Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

— Mark 13:26–27

3 TALK

Go outside and look at the clouds in the sky. Tell each other what shapes you see in them.

Have you ever rested on your back in the grass looking up at the clouds? Have you ever wondered what's in them? There are many different kinds of clouds. Some clouds look like pillows or marshmallows. Some are gray and look like smoke. Still some are low and thick. Clouds circle the earth all the time. The same cloud blocking out the heat of the sun at noon could bring a cold rain later in the afternoon. Clouds are shifting constantly, changing shape and size, quickly forming out of nothing and evaporating just as quickly.

The Bible says at the end of time, when Jesus comes again, He'll come "in clouds" with great power and glory. But clouds are unpredictable. Sometimes they're dangerous. Does Jesus show up just in the nick of time to save you? Does Jesus show up when you don't want Him to? Does Jesus show up in a fashion that will most surprise you? Is that the way Jesus is going to come? Yes. It always is that way. One thing is for sure: Jesus will show up, and the future belongs to Him.

Questions:

1. What do you hear God's voice saying to you in the Bible verse? In the quote?
2. Have you ever looked down on the clouds from an airplane? What was that like?
3. Why do you think the Bible says Jesus is as unpredictable as the clouds?

4 PRAY

Use a *Praise / Thank / Ask* prayer:

Praise:

Praise God for never failing to give you Jesus, no matter how unpredictably.

Thank:

Thank Jesus for always showing up in His unpredictable clouds. Thank Him for today's "highs."

Ask:

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you stay alert and to keep your eye on the clouds swirling in your life. Bring your family “lows” to God. Close in Jesus’ name.

5 BLESS

Bless one another with the sign of the cross and say:

“May your eyes be open to the signs of Christ’s coming.”

“We steal if we touch tomorrow. It is God’s.”

— Henry Ward Beecher

DEVOTION THREE

Fig Tree Prophecy

1 SHARE

Your Highs & Lows for the day with one another.

2 READ

Scripture Verse and Highlight it in your Bible:

From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates.

— Mark 13:28–29

3 TALK

Talk about the changing of the seasons and signs of spring. Take out crayons and paper and draw things that show spring is just around the corner.

Spring arrives before you see it, even before you feel it. People who live in climates where spring is new life from winter's snow often claim to be able to sense spring's arrival in a moment. It's a snap. They say it is similar to the snap from autumn to winter, but in reverse. Buds may appear on the trees or birds may return to their roost before the snow is off the ground. Nature knows what it takes humans weeks to figure out. Spring has arrived, pushing winter back and bringing new life with warmth, winds and green.

Jesus says His arrival on earth will be very much the same. The signs of His coming are known in subtle and sometimes not-so-subtle ways. Not by sight, but by faith. Faith is born in your heart before He comes, before you have proof that Jesus is Lord. Maybe even before the cold snow of life has melted. The same way you might know spring is here, you know Jesus is here. It's unmistakable. It's unstoppable. And to those who have ears to hear and eyes to see, it is the power and glory of the message fulfilled: Jesus Christ is here!

Questions:

1. What do you hear God's voice saying to you in the Bible verse? In the quote?
2. Talk about the way spring arrives in your town. Is it subtle or obvious? What are the signs?
3. Why do you think Jesus compares His arrival to the arrival of spring?

4 PRAY

Use a *Praise / Thank / Ask* prayer:

Praise:

Praise God for offering you the resurrection of spring in Jesus Christ every day.

Thank:

Thank Jesus for teaching you to look for the signs of His arrival in your life. Thank Him for today's "highs."

Ask:

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you observantly watch for the signs that Jesus has come into your world. Bring your family “lows” to God. Close in Jesus’ name.

5 BLESS

Bless one another with the sign of the cross and say:

“May your eyes be open to the signs of Christ’s coming.”

“Don’t ever prophesy: for if you prophesy wrong, nobody will forget it; and if you prophesy right, nobody will remember it.”

— Josh Billings

DEVOTION FOUR

The Father Knows Best

1 SHARE

Your Highs & Lows for the day with one another.

2 READ

Scripture Verse and Highlight it in your Bible:

But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

— Mark 13:32

3 TALK

Sit down and talk about the safety rules for your house. Explain how these rules keep people from getting hurt. Make a list of the rules and hang it on the refrigerator.

For young people, it is sometimes difficult to understand the decisions parents make in the best interest of their children's safety. You may have heard yourself ask, "Why can't I slide down the stairway railing?" or "Why can't I walk all the way to school by myself?" It is hard to understand the emotion and experience parents bring to their decision-making. When it comes to the best interest of children, only a parent knows.

The Bible says Jesus' arrival on earth is so unpredictable even Jesus doesn't know when it will happen. Only God the Father alone knows. This may frighten some people because it leaves them out of control of their future. But the Bible says clearly that being unsure and out of control is the way God wants people to be, because when they're like that they're more dependent on God. And that is the beginning of faith.

Questions:

1. What do you hear God's voice saying to you in the Bible verse? In the quote?
2. Why do people try to predict the future? Does it work?
3. Why do you suppose God likes people to be dependent on God?

4 PRAY

Use a *Praise / Thank / Ask* prayer:

Praise:

Praise God for always being in control of the future, even of Jesus' arrival on earth.

Thank:

Thank Jesus for arriving in your life. Thank Him for today's "highs."

Ask:

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you stay dependent on God and aware of Jesus' coming. Bring your family "lows" to God. Close in Jesus' name.

5 BLESS

Bless one another with the sign of the cross and say:

“May your eyes be open to the signs of Christ’s coming.”

“We may not know what the future holds, but we know who holds the future.”

— Corrie ten Boom

DEVOTION FIVE

Keep Awake

1 SHARE

Your Highs & Lows for the day with one another.

2 READ

Scripture Verse and Highlight it in your Bible:

"Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come..."

— Mark 13:33–37

3 TALK

Get a clock with a second hand, put it where everyone can see it. Have every family member choose a number on the clock. Have one family member go out a door on a pretend journey. When they come back in, check to see which number the clock's second hand is on. Whoever chose that number is the winner.

Do you like to stay up late? Have you ever stayed up all night? The verse says to "keep awake." Does that mean you can never go to sleep...ever? Now that doesn't sound quite so good. When you are so tired you can't keep your eyes open, isn't it great to crawl under warm covers, snuggling up to a favorite stuffed animal? No one can stay awake forever. So what does it mean? It means God wants you to be aware of Him.

When Jesus was born He was a BIG surprise to people. The people had been waiting for a warrior and a king even though God had told them through prophets and signs that it wasn't going to be that way. So instead of a warrior they got a baby, and Jesus, instead of conquering enemies, died on a cross. It was a surprise because people weren't listening—they weren't staying aware! God wants you to pay attention, listen and live the way He tells you to. God still likes to surprise you, but if you "keep awake" you'll see many wonderful things!

Questions:

1. What do you hear God saying to you in the Bible verse? The quote?
2. What are the signs your body gives you when it's tired?
3. Where do you see God? How can you and your family stay awake and aware of God?

4 PRAY

Use a *Praise / Thank / Ask* prayer:

Praise:

Praise God that you can rest yourself in His care and keeping.

Thank:

Thank God for Jesus who is always awake and watching on our behalf.

Ask:

Ask the Holy Spirit to keep your family alert and ready for the unexpected. Bring your lows to the Lord.

Mark each other with the sign of the cross and pray together.

5 BLESS

Bless one another with the sign of the cross and say:

“May your eyes be open to the signs of Christ’s coming.”

“Some time, some ordinary day will come filled to the brim with ordinary tasks, perhaps so full that we have little thought or care of Him, and there will be no hint from the silent skies, no sign, no clash of cymbals, roll of drums; and yet that ordinary day will be the very day in which our Lord will come.”

— Horatius Bonar

DEVOTION SIX

The Beginning of the Uncommon Life

1 SHARE

Your Highs & Lows for the day with one another.

2 READ

Scripture Verse and Highlight it in your Bible:

"The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, 'See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you who will prepare your way; the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.'"

— Mark 1:1–3

3 TALK

Ask each person in your family to share something new that they have seen or know about. Let it be a secret that they whisper to an adult who will write a short note about each person's news. The adult will then tell each person's news and ask everyone to guess who shared it.

What is some good news that you heard today? Good news can be about anything—family, friends and events! When you hear good news you feel happy and excited. In fact you even feel good about the person who brought you the news. John the Baptist is a messenger bringing news. John is not only the messenger of news, but John is also a sign! The prophet Isaiah said John would come to prepare the way for Jesus.

John was a very uncommon man. "Living off the land" takes on a whole new meaning when it means wearing camel hair (not a good fashion move) and eating locusts and honey (the honey isn't bad, but bugs...). His life was filled with a love and bravery that helped him be faithful to his job of preparing the way for the most uncommon man to ever live, John's cousin, Jesus!

With a clear strong voice John called people out to be baptized. He challenged them to confess their sins, repent and prepare themselves—after all the Messiah was coming! Now that is good news! Who will you tell?

Questions:

1. What do you hear God's voice saying to you in the Bible verse? The quote?
2. Who do you know that lives an uncommon life? Is that a good thing or not?
3. Talk about how John and Jesus were uncommon and what it means for us today.

4 PRAY

Use a *Praise / Thank / Ask* prayer:

Praise:

Praise God for people who are brave enough to live an uncommon life.

Thank:

Thank Jesus for His willingness to give His life so that we might have eternal life.

Ask:

Ask the Holy Spirit to give you strength to live an uncommon life like John and Jesus did. Bring your highs and lows to God and close with the sign of the cross.

5 BLESS

Bless one another with the sign of the cross and say:

"May your eyes be open to the signs of Christ's coming."

"No longer lend your strength to that which you wish to be free from. Fill your lives with love and bravery, and you will lead a life uncommon."

— Jewel — "Life Uncommon"

DEVOTION SEVEN

Sudden Choices

1 SHARE

Your Highs & Lows for the day with one another.

2 READ

Scripture Verse and Highlight it in your Bible:

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

— Mark 1:4

3 TALK

Gather the whole family together for a game of hide and seek. Let the youngest choose who gets to be it.

Do you ever play games where you have to pick sides? Sometimes you get picked to be on the “good” team, sometimes not. Do you ever get to do the picking? Sometimes it’s hard to be in that position. What if your best friend is horrible at the game you are going to be playing—do you pick her? Decisions like that are part of life every day. Maybe while you’re pedaling your bike home from school, you bump into a group of bullies picking on a younger child. What do you do? Maybe a friend comes to you telling you he is going to do something dangerous. You know you should tell an adult but he swore you to secrecy. What do you do?

John the Baptist had a choice for the people. He put them in a hard position. He tells them about a baptism of repentance. He challenges people to admit their sin and turn away from their sins. Suddenly, people have a decision to make. They need to decide whether they want to stand with God or continue to live sinful lives. Just like you, these people knew what the right decision was. But just as it’s hard to stand up to a bully or break a friend’s trust for their own good, so people found it difficult to do as John asked.

In a way, John is still asking. He is calling you and asking if you are ready to be sorry for your sins. What do you do?

Questions:

1. What do you hear God’s voice saying to you in the Bible verse? In the quote?
2. Tell about a time when you had to make a tough choice. How did you feel?
3. What sins are bothering you? What can you and your family do?

4 PRAY

Use a *Praise / Thank / Ask* prayer:

Praise:

Praise God for helping you with hard choices.

Thank:

Thank Jesus for forgiveness. Thank Him for today's "highs."

Ask:

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you make good choices in your life. Ask for strength to forgive. Bring your family "lows" to God. Close in Jesus' name.

5 BLESS

Bless one another with the sign of the cross and say:

"May your eyes be open to the signs of Christ's coming."

"There is no better measure of a person than what he does when he is absolutely free to choose."

— Wilma Askinas

DEVOTION EIGHT

The Valley of Love and Delight

1 SHARE

Your Highs & Lows for the day with one another.

2 READ

Scripture Verse and Highlight it in your Bible:

And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

— Mark 1:5

3 TALK

Practice saying, “I’m sorry.” Have each person in your family think of something that they have done that hurt someone else in the family. Give each person a chance to tell what they have done, say “I’m sorry” and get a hug from that person. Lead this activity by your example.

How many times have you had to say, “I’m sorry” to someone? Did you mean it? Maybe you got into an argument at school, maybe you had a fight with a sister or brother—a teacher or parent says to you very sternly, “You go and say you are sorry.” You oblige, but frankly you think you were right, and after all saying “sorry” is much better than being punished!

John the Baptist’s job was to prepare people for the coming of Jesus. The preparation included baptism and confession of sins. John also called for repentance. Repentance is about really being sorry for a sin that was committed. It doesn’t mean saying you were sorry just to have it over with. Repentance is about understanding what you did was wrong, asking forgiveness and working hard to not repeat the sin. This was hard for the people of John’s time and it’s hard for people today. It’s not easy to admit you are wrong. It’s a very good thing that John came to help us know what to do—it’s a much better thing that Jesus came and did it for us!

Questions:

1. What do you hear God’s voice saying in the Bible verse? The quote?
2. Tell about a time you had to say you were sorry but you really didn’t mean it. Tell about a time someone said “sorry” to you and didn’t mean it. How does that feel?
3. As a family, make a plan where confession and forgiveness can be a part of your life.

4 PRAY

Use a *Praise / Thank / Ask* prayer:

Praise:

Praise God for John the Baptist.

Thank:

Thank Jesus for the gift of forgiveness.

Ask:

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you to sincerely confess and repent. Close by confessing where you wronged someone today and asking Jesus for forgiveness.

5 BLESS

Bless one another with the sign of the cross and say:

"May your eyes be open to the signs of Christ's coming."

"The hills collect the rain for a hundred fruitful valleys."

— Mrs. Charles E. Cowman, "Streams in the Desert"

DEVOTION NINE

Camel Hair — The Armor of God?

1 SHARE

Your Highs & Lows for the day with one another.

2 READ

Scripture Verse and Highlight it in your Bible:

Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, 'the one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of His sandals.'

— Mark 1:6–7

3 TALK

Tell your children that you will help them to make a funny outfit. Put on clothes or pieces of material inside-out, upside down, backwards or tied in a bunch for an interesting effect. Perhaps they would like to help make a funny outfit for you too.

Why do you wear the clothes you do? Maybe you like the style, you have no other choice, or you don't care what you wear. Who knows? Do you notice what other kids wear? Are some kids treated better or worse because of what they wear? Clothes seem to be important. It is uncertain what John's reason for camel hair was, but chances are it was a very unusual fashion choice. John was different. To attract attention you often have to be different from others.

John was a signpost pointing to Jesus. He said he was unworthy to even stoop down and touch the ties of Jesus' sandals. But it didn't stop him from being the best possible signpost God could have asked for! Even though he dressed different and ate odd food, his task was what was important! He was preparing the way for Jesus! Next time you are tempted to think about the way someone else is dressed, you might want to think instead of the one who doesn't care how anyone is dressed—the one who loves us just the way we are! And who knows, that person may be on special assignment from God!

Questions:

1. What do you hear God's voice saying to you in the Bible verses above? In the quote?
2. Talk about the clothes you wear and why you wear them. Tell about someone who is made fun of for the way they dress. How do you suppose that person feels?
3. What are ways that you and your family could be "signposts" for Jesus?

4 PRAY

Use a *Praise / Thank / Ask* prayer:

Praise:

Praise God for the clothes you wear.

Thank:

Thank Jesus for loving you just the way you are.

Ask:

Ask the Holy Spirit for courage to be a signpost to God. Close with a blessing.

5 BLESS

Bless one another with the sign of the cross and say:

"May your eyes be open to the signs of Christ's coming."

"Why fit in when you were born to stand out?"

— Dr. Seuss

DEVOTION TEN

Water and the Holy Spirit

1 SHARE

Your Highs & Lows for the day with one another.

2 READ

Scripture Verse and Highlight it in your Bible:

"I have baptized you with water; but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

— Mark 1:8

3 TALK

Get a doll and a dish with water. Let your child be a part of a pretend baptism. Use the words of the Bible verse as you baptize the doll. Let the child choose a part: parent, sponsor, pastor or guest observer.

When you think baptism, you think water. Water is a part of it, but think about all the other things that are part of baptism—the pastor, godparents, parents, music, prayer and promises. Do you remember being baptized? Probably not since you were most likely baptized as a very small baby. Do you know what baptism is? Baptism is kind of God's way of welcoming you into the family and telling the world about His love for you.

Water is used in baptism. It is used to show that our sins are washed away by Jesus. John the Baptist was doing just that...baptizing! He was telling people to repent of their sin and be baptized. Remember though, John was sent to prepare the way, so John was also telling the people that there was more to come. There was a more important baptism coming—one that would last for all time! John said, "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." Jesus was the "He." Jesus died on the cross and took all sin with Him. Later He sent His Spirit to be a helper to all His people. The Holy Spirit reminds you Jesus is with you always. The Holy Spirit is a forever baptism saying you are always welcome and your sins are forgiven before you even ask. Imagine that!

Questions:

1. What do you hear God's voice saying in the Bible verse? In the quote?
2. Talk about a baptism you saw. What do you remember the most?
3. If your sins are already forgiven before you ask, why is it important to ask anyway?

4 PRAY

Use a *Praise / Thank / Ask* prayer:

Praise:

Praise God for always forgiving you.

Thank:

Thank Jesus for loving you even when you sin.

Ask:

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you live the way Jesus would want. Confess your sins and ask God to help you with the lows you talked about earlier. Close by making the sign of the cross on family members' foreheads with water as a baptismal remembrance.

5 BLESS

Bless one another with the sign of the cross and say:

"May your eyes be open to the signs of Christ's coming."

"God's mercy is open to the person who is so ashamed that he can tell his shame to no one except God."

— William Barclay

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