

Use this devotion guide each night — as a family with elementary and pre-teen children. Follow the five FAITH5 steps: **Share, Read, Talk, Pray, and Bless.**

PS — Adopt a “grandparent” type, a young adult, and a family with young children into your world every week at church. Add them to your thoughts and prayers every night. You will be richer for it!

DEVOTION ONE

Into the Wilderness

1 SHARE

Your highs & lows for the day with one another.

2 READ

Scripture Verse and Highlight it in your Bible:

“And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness.”

— Mark 1:12

3 TALK

Have you ever wanted to run away from home? Have you ever wished to escape into the wilderness and leave all your troubles behind? The problem with running away is this: the problems you meet in the wilderness are usually worse than those you had at home.

Jesus escaped into the wilderness once, but he wasn't running away from anything. He was running toward his future and he needed a time of silence and preparation to get ready for his important work. Right after his baptism, he went out into the desert. In that sacred, lonely place, he took the time to think, pray, and face temptation. After that, he was ready for the world.

How can you know what God wants you to do if you live your life surrounded by electronic noise? How can you find who you are if you live as a stranger to the silence? Maybe it is time for you to slow down, turn it all off, and step into the wilderness. God may have a message for you.

Learn to know the silence and you may begin to know yourself.

Questions:

1. Where is your favorite quiet place? How often do you get there?
2. What can you do to schedule some silence into the noise of your world?
3. What is God's voice saying to you in the Bible reading? In the quotation?

4 PRAY

Use a *Praise / Thank / Ask* prayer:

Praise:

Praise God for the sound of silence.

Thank:

Thank Jesus for the discovery that comes with silence. Bring him your family highs. Thank him for times to get away and refresh your mind.

Ask:

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you plan more silence into your life. Bring your family lows to God. Mark each other with the sign of the cross and close in Jesus' name.

5 BLESS

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

"May you follow the path of Jesus."

"You have to leave the city of your comfort and go into the wilderness of your intuition. What you'll discover will be wonderful—you'll discover yourself."

— Alan Alda

DEVOTION TWO

Forty Days

1 SHARE

Your highs & lows for the day with one another.

2 READ

Scripture Verse and Highlight it in your Bible:

"He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him."

— Mark 1:13

3 TALK

What is your favorite wild place? Is it a rocky desert with cactus, scorpions and burning sands? A rugged mountain with gnarled pine trees clinging to rocky hillsides and howling winds? Is it a woods where deer and bear roam? Can you imagine being out in that wilderness for 40 days with no food, water, or shelter?

After Jesus' baptism, he went immediately out into the wilderness for 40 days. There he faced many dangers. Hunger, thirst, and wild animals were bad enough, but Jesus faced even more. The devil came and tempted him to give up his mission. When he told Satan "No!" God sent angels to take care of him.

Where do you turn when you are tired and sad? Where do you run when temptations come your way or the wild "beasts" of the world are nipping at your heels?

When you face a wild time, remember this: You have a friend who has faced it all before and won. His name is Jesus. He's ready and waiting to guide you through the wilderness. In his name and in his power, you don't have to face all this alone.

Questions:

1. Who would you want with you if you were to be in the wilderness 40 days?
2. Who are some of your angels? Who are people God sends to help you when you are sad, lonely, or frightened?
3. What is God's voice saying to you in the Bible reading? In the quotation?

4 PRAY

Use a *Praise / Thank / Ask* prayer:

Praise:

Praise God for promising to go with you through the wilderness of life.

Thank:

Thank Jesus for the "angels" you mentioned in #2 above. Bring your family highs to him.

Ask:

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you be an “angel” (messenger) of God for someone in the wilderness tomorrow. Bring your family lows to God and close in Jesus’ name.

5 BLESS

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

“May you follow the path of Jesus.”

“Alone, all alone. Nobody, but nobody can make it out here alone.”

— Maya Angelou

DEVOTION THREE

God's Spell

1 SHARE

Your highs & lows for the day with one another.

2 READ

Scripture Verse and Highlight it in your Bible:

"Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God..."

— Mark 1:14

3 TALK

Question: Where does the word gospel come from? Answer: Gospel comes from the Old English word "gōdspel," which simply means "good news" (gōd means good, spel means news or story). Over time, people started playfully calling it "God's spell"—and in a way, the nickname fits: God's good news really can feel like magic in your life!

God's spell? Yes. What does a "spell" have to do with Jesus?

The Christian Gospel is not a set of magic words or incantations. God's special magic that sets the world free is none other than Jesus himself. Jesus didn't come simply to deliver a message about freedom from sin, death, and the power of the devil. Jesus came to deliver that freedom. He didn't come to talk about a message from God. His life, death, and resurrection were the message.

The gospel is not the story of Jesus. The gospel is Jesus.

Questions:

1. If you could wave a magic wand and change one thing about your life, what would it be?
2. How is God's good news better than all the magic the world has to offer?
3. What is God's voice saying to you in the Bible reading? In the quotation?

4 PRAY

Use a *Praise / Thank / Ask* prayer:

Praise:

Praise God for the magic that sets the world free.

Thank:

Thank Jesus for being God's magic in flesh. Bring your family highs to him.

Ask:

Ask the Holy Spirit to bring Christ from your head to your heart. Ask for power in sharing Jesus with your friends. Bring your family lows to God in prayer.

5 BLESS

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

“May you follow the path of Jesus.”

“The medium is the message.”

— Marshall McLuhan

DEVOTION FOUR

The Kingdom Is Near

1 SHARE

Your highs & lows for the day with one another.

2 READ

Scripture Verse and Highlight it in your Bible:

"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near..."

— Mark 1:15

3 TALK

When God sent Jesus to save the world, many people didn't see or understand who he was. They were looking for one type of king. Jesus was a different type. Here's a poem that illustrates what they were missing:

They were looking for the kingdom of God to appear. What they got was a mystical carpenter.

They were looking for the anointed Messiah. What they got was a crown of thorns.

They were looking for a powerful king. What they got was a suffering servant.

They were looking for a mighty liberator to crush the Romans. What they got was a teacher who told them to put away their swords.

They were looking for the glory of Jerusalem to be restored. What they got was an empty tomb.

They were looking for the kingdom of God to appear. It did, but they didn't see it because they were looking with eyes. And he brought it only to hearts.

Questions:

1. When you hear the phrase "the kingdom of God," what images come to mind?
2. Why didn't everyone see and accept Jesus as God's Son? Why don't they see and accept him today?
3. What is God's voice saying to you in the Bible reading? In the quotation?

4 PRAY

Use a *Praise / Thank / Ask* prayer:

Praise:

Praise God for having a wonderful plan to save the world.

Thank:

Thank Jesus for helping you see things God's way. Bring your family highs to him.

Ask:

Ask the Holy Spirit to help order your priorities. Bring your lows to God. Mark each other with the sign of the cross and close in Jesus' name.

5 BLESS

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

"May you follow the path of Jesus."

"We need never shout across the spaces to an absent God. God is nearer than our own soul, closer than our most secret thoughts."

— A. W. Tozer

DEVOTION FIVE

Repent and Believe

1 SHARE

Your highs & lows for the day with one another.

2 READ

Scripture Verse and Highlight it in your Bible:

“...repent, and believe in the good news.”

— Mark 1:15b

3 TALK

“I’m so sorry,” said Warren as he handed the stolen CDs back to the store clerk and reached for his wallet. “It was stupid of me to even try to take them. Here, I’ll pay.” He wasn’t really sorry that he had stolen them. He was mostly sorry that he had been caught.

“I’m sorry,” said Ginny as she swept up the pieces of her mom’s antique vase into the dustpan. “I shouldn’t have been throwing the football in the living room.” She wasn’t really sorry that it was broken. She was mostly sorry that she hadn’t glued it back together and replaced it on the shelf before her mother came home.

“I’m sorry,” said the car thief standing before the judge. “I’ll never do it again.” He wasn’t really sorry for stealing the car. He was mostly sorry that he had stopped for gas instead of continuing on out of town.

True repentance has very little to do with the words “I’m sorry” and a whole lot more to do with the actions that follow the words.

Words and actions: they must go together. That’s what integrity is all about.

Questions:

1. How can you tell when someone is sorry for something he or she did?
2. Tell about a time when you were truly sorry for hurting someone or breaking something. How did your words and actions show your sorrow?
3. What is God’s voice saying to you in the Bible reading? In the quotation?

4 PRAY

Use a *Praise / Thank / Ask* prayer:

Praise:

Praise God for offering forgiveness in Christ.

Thank:

Thank Jesus for dying to give you life. Bring your family highs to him.

Ask:

Ask the Holy Spirit to forgive you for a specific sin you committed today. Bring your family lows to God in prayer. Bless each other with the sign of the cross and close in Jesus' name.

5 BLESS

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

"May you follow the path of Jesus."

"True repentance has a double aspect. It looks upon things past with a weeping eye, and upon the future with a watchful eye."

— Unknown

DEVOTION SIX

Hearing the Hard Truth

1 SHARE

Your highs & lows for the day with one another.

2 READ

Scripture Verse and Highlight it in your Bible:

"Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He said all these things openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him."

— Mark 8:31-32

3 TALK

Do you always listen when your parents talk to you? Can you hear their words without listening to what they are saying? Peter had a hearing problem. He only heard what he wanted to hear. The disciples were on a "high." Peter had just proclaimed what they all had been thinking. Jesus was the Messiah—God's holy, chosen Savior. If this were true, he would soon start a revolution, throw the occupying Romans out of the country, and take the throne of David with God's blessing and protection. This was his time, his moment! They, his friends, would certainly be elevated to key roles in the new government. After all, they were his friends.

At this very moment, with visions of power in their minds, Jesus crushed their delusions by talking about suffering and death. You can hardly blame Peter for not wanting to hear such words coming from the lips of his new king. If Jesus' words came true, everything the disciples had hoped for, worked for, and left their families for would soon end in suffering, shame, and death. You can hardly blame him for telling Jesus off. Wouldn't you? God's Word and will are sometimes very hard to hear. What do you do when your will and God's will aren't the same?

Questions:

1. Talk about a time when someone didn't want to hear what you had to say.
2. Talk about a time when you didn't want to hear a hard truth. What happened?
3. What is God's voice saying to you in the Bible reading? In the quotation?

4 PRAY

Use a *Praise / Thank / Ask* prayer:

Praise:

Praise God for the marvelous, difficult, amazing plan that brought Jesus to die.

Thank:

Thank Jesus for going to the cross to free you. Bring your family highs to him.

Ask:

Ask the Spirit for ears to hear the truth. Bring your family lows to God.

5 BLESS

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

"May you follow the path of Jesus."

"I don't want to know the truth. I've already made up my mind!"

— Unknown

DEVOTION SEVEN

Get Behind Me, Satan!

1 SHARE

Your highs & lows for the day with one another.

2 READ

Scripture Verse and Highlight it in your Bible:

"But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, 'Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.'"

— Mark 8:33

3 TALK

Peter must have been confused. One minute Jesus was praising him, the next minute he was calling him Satan! They had been walking through an ancient city filled with beautiful buildings, temples, and statues to imaginary gods when Jesus asked, "Who do people say I am?" (Mark 8:27). Bold, bumbling Peter blurted out what they all had been thinking and hoping: "You are the Messiah!" The Messiah was the Hebrew word for God's chosen king. If Jesus were the Messiah, the disciples would all soon be part of God's mighty act in restoring the occupied nation of Israel to greatness. Jesus would become the king and they would help him rule.

It was no surprise that Peter objected when Jesus started talking about being handed over to the chief priests and crucified. It wasn't on Peter's agenda. The fisherman wanted life, power, and riches, not death and shame. Peter wanted his religion to make him some money, not make him some trouble. Now it was Jesus' turn to set the agenda straight. Anything or anyone who tried to get in the way of God's plans was Satan—a word meaning "adversary" or "the one opposed to God." Anyone attempting to turn God's plan into a personal power trip or financial gain was against God.

Peter had earthly power on his mind. Jesus had eternal life and salvation for the world on his. Peter wanted something small and now. Jesus wanted nothing less than forever for his friends.

Questions:

1. Talk about the last time someone scolded you. What were the circumstances?
2. What would you have said to Jesus if he started talking about dying for the world?
3. What is God's voice saying to you in the Bible reading? In the quotation?

4 PRAY

Use a *Praise / Thank / Ask* prayer:

Praise:

Praise God for sending a surprise in Jesus.

Thank:

Thank Jesus for being more than an earthly king. Bring your family highs to him.

Ask:

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you see Christ's entrances to the heart, through the heart. Bring your family lows to God in prayer. Mark each other with the sign of the cross and close in Jesus' name.

5 BLESS

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

"May you follow the path of Jesus."

"Aim at heaven and you get earth thrown in. Aim at earth and you get neither."

— C. S. Lewis

DEVOTION EIGHT

Gaining and Losing the World

1 SHARE

Your highs & lows for the day with one another.

2 READ

Scripture Verse and Highlight it in your Bible:

"He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it.'"

— Mark 8:34-35

3 TALK

Would anyone join the Marines if their slogan was "Join the Marines. Face humiliating and torturous training, and let people shoot at you"? Probably not.

Why would anyone join the Christian faith when Jesus uses words like "deny yourself, take up a cross and follow me"? The cross isn't a pretty piece of jewelry. It represents death and pain. Why would anyone follow Jesus to the cross and death?

The reason people are willing to follow King Jesus to death is because only King Jesus can take them through death. Why would anyone accept such a demanding call to discipleship? Because the grave is not the end. If you believe in forever, death is not the end. Death is a door. Jesus holds the key.

No. Jesus is the key.

Questions:

1. Tell about the toughest job you've ever had to do. What made it so tough? Are you glad you did it?
2. A caterpillar has to completely stop being a caterpillar in order to become a butterfly. How is that like what Jesus is asking his followers to do in this verse?
3. What is God's voice saying to you in the Bible reading? In the quotation?

4 PRAY

Use a *Praise / Thank / Ask* prayer:

Praise:

Praise God for the promise of eternity.

Thank:

Thank Jesus for facing the cross for you. Bring your family highs to him.

Ask:

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you be strong as you face the trials of life. Bring your lows to God. Trace a cross on each forehead and bless each other in Jesus' name.

5 BLESS

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

"May you follow the path of Jesus."

"When our Lord Jesus bids us to come and follow Him, He bids us to come and die."

— Dietrich Bonhoeffer

DEVOTION NINE

Forfeiting Life

1 SHARE

Your highs & lows for the day with one another.

2 READ

Scripture Verse and Highlight it in your Bible:

"For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life?"

— Mark 8:36-37

3 TALK

The Lusitania was sinking. A German torpedo had struck the luxury liner, and the unthinkable was happening fast: in less than twenty minutes, she would be gone. People ran frantically from deck to deck to grab their valuables and find a lifeboat. Crew members shouted over the chaos: "Women and children to the lifeboats!"

In the panic, two women ran into their cabins to rescue what they could of their valuables. One fumbled to open her cabin safe. She pulled out box after box of jewelry, filled her pockets with diamonds, and wound heavy golden chains about her neck. The other woman started doing the same, then paused. A bowl of fruit sat atop her bureau. She dropped the jewels to the floor and filled her pockets with oranges before dashing out. That night one woman entered the near-freezing waters and sunk to the bottom under the weight of her precious jewels. The other swam to a distant boat with food that would keep her alive.

Are you storing up the right stuff?

Questions:

1. If your house caught on fire, and you only had time to grab three things as you ran out, what would you take? Why?
2. If someone was to look at your home, lifestyle, and calendar, would that person say your family was storing up the right stuff? If not, what changes can you begin to make in your home? Your lifestyle? Your schedule?
3. What is God's voice saying to you in the Bible reading? In the quotation?

4 PRAY

Use a *Praise / Thank / Ask* prayer:

Praise:

Praise God for the gift of eternal life.

Thank:

Thank Jesus for helping you keep your priorities straight. Bring your family highs to him.

Ask:

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you organize your home, your lifestyle, and your schedule to reflect godly priorities. Bring your lows to God in prayer and close in Jesus' name. Bless each other with the sign of the cross.

5 BLESS

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

"May you follow the path of Jesus."

"You can't have it all. Where would you put it?"

— Anonymous

DEVOTION TEN

Shame and Acknowledgment

1 SHARE

Your highs & lows for the day with one another.

2 READ

Scripture Verse and Highlight it in your Bible:

"Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

— Mark 8:38

3 TALK

"Drop me off a block from school," said the girl.

"I can take you to the door," objected her father.

"No, that's all right. Just drop me here."

The father pulled over to the curb. "It's cold. I can take you closer."

"Just let me out!" The girl didn't want her friends to see the old car her father was driving. He had lost his job, and they had to downsize. She was ashamed of their car. She didn't want her friends to see her father either. Besides, he might do something like kiss her or hug her in front of them. Talk about embarrassing!

"I love you," said the father as she stepped from the car.

"I know," said the girl. "Just don't say stuff like that in front of my friends."

The father blew his daughter a kiss as she rolled her eyes. Then the man who had cared for her since she was a baby—who had provided her with clothing to keep her warm, food to help her grow, braces for her crooked teeth, and a decent place to live—drove silently away. Hurt.

Questions:

1. Tell about a time when you felt embarrassed by someone who loves you. What happened? Did that person mean it to happen?
2. How is the story above like your relationship with God? How is it different?
3. What is God's voice saying to you in the Bible reading? In the quotation?

4 PRAY

Use a *Praise / Thank / Ask* prayer:

Praise:

Praise God for giving, even when you don't deserve it.

Thank:

Thank Jesus for continuing to love you, even when you don't acknowledge him before others. Bring your family highs to him.

Ask:

Ask the Holy Spirit to give you the courage to witness to the love of Christ among your family and friends. Bring your family lows to God.

5 BLESS

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

"May you follow the path of Jesus."

"The Gospel is not presented to mankind as an argument about religious principles. Nor is it offered as a philosophy of life. Christianity is a witness to certain facts—to events that have happened, to hopes that have been fulfilled, to realities that have been experienced, to a Person who has lived and died and been raised from the dead to reign for ever."

— Massey H. Shepherd, Jr.