

DAILY DEVOTIONAL - MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity. ~ 1 Timothy 4:12

Introduction

Do you ever get frustrated because it seems like you're not old enough to do anything important? Maybe you'd really like to serve God in a meaningful way, but you have to be all grown up to be a pastor or a missionary or something like that. Well, you don't have to wait for years before God can begin using you to build his kingdom. Jesus made it very clear that children are a vital part of God's family. In fact, he told everyone else that they needed to become like children if they wanted to be part of that family! So don't feel bad because you're "just a kid." We're going to take a look at what you can do right now to make a huge impact in the world.

Today's devotion is based on 1 Timothy 4:12, which says, "Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity."

Devotion

Kelly stood on a giant chessboard at the Renaissance fair. She'd been chosen to be a pawn in a human chess match! As part of a show, two noblemen were playing the game. "Bishop takes rook!" said the nobleman controlling the black "pieces." The black bishop moved three squares diagonally to replace the white rook. Kelly feared her side was losing. But the other nobleman said, "Pawn to knight's eight."

He meant her! She moved ahead one square. Then she understood. When a lowly pawn reaches the end of the board, it can become a powerful queen. A crown was placed on her head, and now she had the black king trapped.

"Checkmate!" an official declared.

Never imagine you don't matter because you're little. A pawn can win a chess game! Likewise, God can use a young kid like you to make a big difference in the world. God is making great changes in your heart. The way you talk and act as a result sets a powerful example for others. You can inspire people (even adults) to live a more godly life.

People in Bible Times

Young Timothy made a big difference in the world. Traveling with the apostle Paul, Timothy helped spread the gospel. And his behavior set a good example for others. (See Philippians 2:22.)

Questions:

1. If you were old enough, what kinds of things would you like to do to serve God?
2. Can you think of other young people in the Bible, besides Timothy, whom God used in a powerful way? Some examples are: David, who killed Goliath, which encouraged the whole Israelite army to attack the Philistines; Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who refused to bow down to King Nebuchadnezzar's golden statue, inspiring the king to give glory to God; the boy in the crowd of five thousand people, who offered his food to Jesus so that everyone could be fed.
3. Have you heard of any kids living today who have done great things to serve God and help others?
4. How can obeying your parents, learning the Bible, and growing spiritually at this stage of your life be a way of serving God? One answer: It trains you and prepares you so you'll be able to do important work for God later. Remember, even Jesus went through a period of training and spiritual growth (see Luke 2:41–52) before he began his ministry!
5. In what other important ways, besides setting a good example for others, can you serve God, even at your young age? Some answers are: praying for people; teaching others your age what you know about Jesus, God, and the Bible; giving some of your own money to the church or to Christian organizations; writing letters of encouragement to missionaries.

DAILY DEVOTIONAL - PULLING TOGETHER

**We rebuilt the wall till all of it reached half its height, for the people worked with all their heart.
—Nehemiah 4:6**

Introduction

Wouldn't it be great to have your own personal robot that would follow you around your house and do everything for you? That way, when you came inside, took off your coat, and dropped it on the floor, your robot would hang it up. When you finished watching TV, your robot would turn it off as you left the room. And when you asked someone to pass the mashed potatoes at dinnertime, your robot would even remember to say, "Please" and "Thanks" for you! Some kids act that way at home, never picking up after themselves, always having to be reminded to use their manners, and so on. But that's not the way a family is supposed to work. God wants all the members of your family to help each other and treat each other with consideration and respect so that everything goes well and everyone is happy. And that's true whether we're talking about your family at home or God's family at church. Remember, you're an important member of both!

Today's devotion is based on Nehemiah 4:6, in which Nehemiah, the governor of Judah who oversaw the rebuilding of the wall around Jerusalem, wrote, "We rebuilt the wall till all of it reached half its height, for the people worked with all their heart." The devotion is called "Pulling Together."

Devotion

When C.J. and her brother Todd got home from school, their parents were busy cooking. "What are you making?" C.J. asked. Her dad put down a spoon. "Well, I have a special activity planned. Your mom and I are ready to open our own flower shop. Now, the whole family will need to pitch in to make this new business a success. So we're having a taffy-pull party, to remind us all to keep pulling together." He showed them how to stretch the warm taffy again and again to make it light and chewy. "Grab a handful, everyone!" Soon they were all laughing and pulling, helping each other stretch the gooey candy. In Nehemiah's day, the wall around Jerusalem was broken. The Israelites needed to rebuild it. So families pulled together to get the job done. That's what God wants to happen today in your family—and His. Do your part to make your family a success. Work at it with all your heart. And pull together with the members of God's family to help build his kingdom on earth.

People in bible times

Families in Jerusalem worked as teams to fix the city wall. Each family repaired the part of the wall near their home. By pulling together, the people rebuilt the wall in fifty-two days. (See Nehemiah 2:11–6:16.)

Questions

1. Do you treat your mom and dad like your own personal robots, expecting them to pick up after you all the time or do things for you that you should be doing for yourself? What are some specific ways you do this?

2. Do you ever treat the members of your family as if they were robots who didn't have any feelings, by forgetting to be polite and sometimes even acting rudely and selfishly? What are some specific ways you do this?

3. Do you ever feel as if your parents treat you like a robot—for instance, making you do more work around the house than your younger brothers and sisters? What should you do if you feel this way?

Two answers are: (1) talk to your parents respectfully about this (they may change some of your chores, or they may explain why you need to do them); (2) pray and ask God to help you have a good attitude about doing your part to help out at home.

4. What do you think is the reason why God wants the members of your family and his to “pull together” and live in harmony?

Two answers are: (1) God is pleased when the people he loves get along well together; (2) God wants the people he loves to experience the blessings that come from living together peacefully.

5. Are you willing to change your behavior and attitude at home and begin doing your part to make your family a success? If so, what is one specific thing you will start doing today to make that happen?

DAILY DEVOTIONAL - ENCOURAGING OTHERS

Encourage one another and build each other up. 1 Thessalonians 5:11

Introduction

When the king of Assyria threatened to invade Jerusalem, King Hezekiah encouraged his people. He told them, "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or discouraged because of the king of Assyria and the vast army with him, for there is a greater power with us than with him" (2 Chronicles 32:7). He reminded the people that God was with them and would fight for them. King Hezekiah's words had a strong effect. The people gained confidence and were no longer afraid. And sure enough, God wiped out the invading army, and the king of Assyria went back to his own land. The people of Jerusalem didn't have to fight at all!

Encouraging words can be very powerful. When people are worried, words of encouragement can help them find courage. When people are having a hard time, words of encouragement can inspire them to keep going.

Today's devotion is a reminder for us to encourage others with our words. It's based on 1 Thessalonians 5:11, which says, "Encourage one another and build each other up." The devotion is called "On the Ropes."

Devotion

Sam struggled to climb the big cargo net. It led up to the high platform at the beginning of the ropes course at summer camp. "Almost there!" said Mack, his counselor. Sam knew that the other boys from his cabin were watching him. They'd all become friends during the week, doing lots of fun stuff together.

"Go, dude!" Scott shouted.

Resting a moment, Sam shouted back, "This is harder than it looks!" With a burst of effort, he pulled himself onto the platform. The group cheered, and he did a victory dance.

"Okay, Sam," Mack said, laughing. "Let's see you tackle the high wire."

"Aye, aye, Captain," Sam said, turning around. Short ropes dangled above a cable that stretched to the next platform. Grabbing the first rope, he stepped onto the cable. It swayed and he lost his balance, pitching forward. He hung there awkwardly, holding the rope, his feet still on the cable.

"Don't give up!" Jimmy yelled.

Regaining his balance, Sam slowly worked his way across. The group cheered again. This time Sam only grinned, too tired to dance.

When people around you are struggling, God can use you to encourage them. Your words of support will lift their spirit and give them confidence. Can you think of someone you know who needs encouragement?

Words to treasure

Encourage one another daily, as long as it is called "Today". —Hebrews 3:13

Questions

1. Can you remember a time when you were encouraged by something someone said? How did you feel before they spoke to you? How did you feel afterward?
2. How can you tell when someone around you needs encouragement? What are some signs that they may be struggling or afraid?
3. What are some words or phrases you could use to encourage somebody? Spend some time brainstorming to come up with a list.
4. What do you think is the reason why words of encouragement are so powerful? For a clue, either have children look up Proverbs 18:21, which says, "The tongue has the power of life and death," or read this verse to them. Remind them that God created everything just by speaking, and we are made in his image. Words are powerful!
5. Is it possible to encourage people without using words? What are some ways you could do this? Spend some time brainstorming to come up with a list. Consider spending some time playing a game or doing an exercise to help children memorize the "Words to Treasure" Scripture verse.

DAILY DEVOTIONAL - THE PASSWORD

**[Jesus said,] “By this everyone will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another.”
—John 13:35**

Introduction

Sometimes it's important to be able to tell who's who. In sports, players can tell who's on their team by the color of their jersey. In a war, soldiers can tell who's on their side by the style of their uniform. Officials in airports look at people's passports so they can tell which country they're from. You might even wear a band on your wrist or a tag on your swimsuit so the lifeguards can tell you belong at the community pool. Well, Jesus wants everyone in the world to know who His followers are, so He gave them a way to make sure people could tell. But it's not something His followers have to wear or a little card they have to show. It's something they have to do. If you don't know what it is yet, better pay attention. You want to be recognized as one of Jesus' followers, and people are going to be checking your ID!

Today's devotion is based on John 13:35, in which Jesus said, “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” The devotion is called “The Password.”

Devotion

Sitting up in the tree house in his backyard, Jack heard a knock. “What's the password?” he asked.

Willie's voice answered. “Terabithia.”

Jack got up and lifted the door latch. “Hey, Willie,” he said.

His friend entered, carrying a large bag of potato chips. “Hey. What's going on?”

Sitting down again, Jack said, “Nothing yet. You see Trevor?”

Willie plopped into a chair. “No, but he knows I've got these, so he'll be here.” As he ripped open the bag, another knock sounded.

Jack called out, “What's the password?”

They heard silence, then Trevor's voice. “I forgot. Wait a minute ... Oh yeah. Terabinthia.”

Willie groaned, saying, “It's not Terabinthia! You gotta say it right.”

The door started rattling. “Come on, guys! Why do we need a password, anyway? You know it's me!”

Jesus gave his disciples a kind of password. It's a sign that proves they're his followers. But it isn't something they say; it's something they do. Everyone can tell who Jesus' true disciples are by the way they love each other. Do you know the password? If you do, show it!

Did you know?

The Gileadites used a password to tell friend from foe after a battle. The password was "Sibboleth." If a man said the word right, the Gileadites knew he was one of them. (See Judges 12:4–6.)

Questions

1. If you weren't carrying your Bible, wearing a necklace with a cross on it, or stepping out of a car with a fish symbol on it, would people be able to tell that you're a Christian? How?
2. How can you usually tell if a person is a follower of Jesus or not?
3. Which of the following three things has the most power to convince people that you really are a follower of Jesus—what's on your T-shirt, what you say, or what you do? Why is it the most powerful?
4. What do you think was the reason why Jesus chose love one another as his password? Why didn't he choose obey the Ten Commandments instead? For a clue, either have the children look up Galatians 5:14, Romans 13:9–10, and Matthew 22:34–40 or read these passages to them.
5. If all Christians showed love to one another the way Jesus told them to, how would someone who was wondering whether he or she wanted to become a Christian be affected? Do you think this was one of the things Jesus had in mind when he chose his password?

DAILY DEVOTIONAL - FOLLOW THE LEADER

[Jesus said,] “Come, follow me.” —Mark 1:17

Introduction

If you want to be good at a sport, you have to learn the strategies that will help you win the game. In every sport, there are secrets you need to know that will give you an advantage and help you achieve victory. According to the apostle Paul, being a Christian is a lot like competing in a sport. He compared being a Christian to running in a race—and he encouraged people to do their best to win the race so they will get the prize! What he meant was that we should live our lives well as Christians so that we will get all the rewards God wants to give us. In this race, as in any sport, there are things you can do to increase your chances of winning. The most important strategy is the one we’re going to focus on today.

Our devotion this time is based on Mark 1:17, in which Jesus told Simon and Andrew, “Come, follow me.” The devotion is called “Follow the Leader.”

Devotion

At the NASCAR race, Corbin watched the cars roar past. They were traveling in a tight pack as they headed into the curve. “Why do they follow each other so close?” Corbin asked.

“That’s called drafting,” said his dad. “The lead cars have to cut through the air as they go around the track. By staying right behind the lead cars, the other cars have it easier. A lot of the air goes around them. Their drivers are trying to save fuel, so they won’t have to make many pit stops.”

As the cars thundered past again, Corbin said, “Wow, Dad. You should drive like that! We’d save money on gas.”

His dad laughed. “If I did, I’d get a ticket. The police have another word for that kind of driving. They call it tailgating.”

A NASCAR driver follows the car ahead of him closely to save fuel. In Jesus’ time, a disciple followed his teacher closely to learn from him. The disciple would follow his teacher everywhere. He’d listen to his teacher’s words, watch his actions, and try to be like him. Are you following Jesus that closely?

Life in bible times

An old Jewish proverb said, “Follow the rabbi, drink in his words, and be covered with the dust of his feet.” Faithful disciples followed their rabbi, or teacher, very closely. They walked in the cloud of dust he kicked up!

Questions

1. When Jesus was here on earth, his disciples literally followed him as He walked around. How can we follow Jesus today?

Answer: we can follow what He says and does as we read about Him in the Bible; we can follow His commands, such as “Do to others what you would have them do to you” (Matthew 7:12); we can follow Jesus’ voice as we live our lives, listening carefully for Him to speak to us through His Spirit.

2. If you’ve been following Jesus for a while, how can you begin to follow Him more closely?

Some answers: spend more time reading your Bible every day; spend more time praying; make more of an effort to follow Jesus’ commands; be more involved at church; serve people and minister to them, because that’s what Jesus would do (in fact, that’s what He is doing today, through Christians like you!).

3. Do you think that by following Jesus more closely, people can become more like Him? Why or why not?

For a clue, either have children look up Luke 6:40, which says, “The student is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher,” or read this verse to them.

4. Do you have a little brother or sister who follows you around, trying to be like you? What kind of example do you think you should set for them, and how can you do it?

Answer: You should set a good example for them by doing your best to follow Jesus and be like Him. That way, you’ll be helping them follow Jesus too!

5. Are you aware that many other people, such as your classmates, teammates, and neighborhood friends, are closely watching your behavior and carefully listening to your words? Often Jesus’ followers become leaders themselves. They influence others to say and do the right things, and they lead them toward Jesus. Do you think this is the way Jesus meant for it to be?

DAILY DEVOTIONAL - THANKSGIVING

Blessed is the one who is kind to the needy. —Proverbs 14:21

Introduction

God wants His children to be thankful during Thanksgiving and all year long. And we have a lot to be thankful for! Every day, God blesses us in many ways. It wouldn't be hard, at any moment of any day of the year, to think of many things for which we can be grateful. God loves to bless us, and He loves it when we feel gratitude in our hearts and say, "Thank you, Lord!"

There's something else that God wants from us too. He wants us to express our gratefulness in a way that goes beyond just saying thanks. In Matthew 10:8, Jesus said, "Freely you have received, freely give." God wants us to respond to His generosity toward us by being generous to others! The great thing about this is that when we are generous to others, we receive one more blessing from God. It's a unique blessing that we can only get by giving.

Today's devotion is based on Proverbs 14:21, which says, "Blessed is the one who is kind to the needy." The devotion is called "A Special Kind of Blessing."

Devotion

A cold wind was blowing as Natasha and her parents entered the soup kitchen. It was a place that offered free meals to poor people in the city.

Natasha's dad found the woman in charge of volunteers. "Welcome!" she said. "Hang up your coats and step behind the counter, and I'll show you how you can help."

Soon Natasha was spooning out mashed potatoes to people who came in for food. When they thanked her, she smiled. "You're welcome. Happy Thanksgiving, and God bless you!" Serving them made her feel warm inside.

Later she took a break to eat. She sat with a girl named Clara, who'd come through the line with her mom. Clara gratefully said grace, and they all dug into the food, talking and laughing. To Natasha, turkey never tasted so good.

There are many types of blessings you can be thankful for on Thanksgiving Day—and all year round. But there's one special blessing you only get by being kind to the poor. It's the joy and satisfaction God puts in your heart as you help people He loves. That's what Jesus meant when He said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). Think of ways to reach out to needy people throughout the year. God will be pleased, and He'll bless you for your kindness.

Words to treasure

Whoever is kind to the needy honors God. —Proverbs 14:31

Questions

1. What are some ways that you can reach out to needy people all through the year? Spend some time brainstorming to come up with a list.
2. Have you ever experienced the joy and satisfaction that God puts in a person's heart when he or she helps people in need? What is it like? Try to explain it so that other kids who have never experienced it will understand. Maybe you can inspire them to reach out to needy people and experience that special blessing for themselves!
3. What is the difference between the joy of giving and the joy of receiving? Why is one better than the other? Do you agree with Jesus that it's better to give than to receive? If not, why not? Is it possible that your motivation for giving, or the amount of sacrifice you have to make in order to give, could affect the amount of joy you receive from giving?
4. Which is easier to do: give some money to a charity or go to a charitable organization and volunteer to serve the needy? Which do you think would bring you a greater blessing? Why?
5. How does helping people in need make us more like Jesus? Do you think that becoming more like Jesus is part of the special blessing that God gives to those who are kind to the needy? Why or why not? Consider spending some time playing a game or doing an exercise to help children memorize the "Words to Treasure" Scripture verse.

DAILY DEVOTIONAL - LOYAL AND TRUE

**Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man.
—Proverbs 3:3–4**

Introduction

A loyal friend is someone who will stick with you—and stick up for you — through thick and thin. David had such a friend. His name was Jonathan. Jonathan's father, King Saul, was jealous of David and kept trying to kill him. If Jonathan had helped his father do that, Jonathan might have become king himself one day. But Jonathan knew that God had chosen David to be king. Also, Jonathan loved David and was loyal to him. So he helped David escape from King Saul.

Are you a loyal person like Jonathan? God wants you to be. His desire is for you to be faithful to him and faithful to others as well. In fact, God wants you to be such a loyal person that you develop a reputation for it!

Today's devotion is based on Proverbs 3:3–4, which says, "Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man." The devotion is called "Loyal and True."

Devotion

Adrian wandered onto the vacant land next to his house. His family's St. Bernard, Moose, followed him. They used to play in the field that was once there. But now the land was being prepared for new houses, and the ground was all torn up. Adrian was sad about that. But he also wanted to look at the earthmovers parked there for the night.

"Check out this backhoe, Moose!" Adrian said. It was getting dark, and he wished he had a flashlight. "I'd sure like to drive—" Suddenly Adrian fell into a large hole. His ankle was twisted and his side hurt, so he couldn't climb out or yell. Moose stayed with him, barking for help. Finally Adrian's parents came to his rescue. "Good boy, Moose," Adrian said when they pulled him out. "You're a loyal dog!"

St. Bernards are known for their loyalty. God wants you to be known for yours. The Bible says you should strap faithfulness around your neck—kind of like the little wooden barrels St. Bernards wear in cartoons. That means you should practice faithfulness until it's part of who you are. Then you'll have a quality that God values and rewards.

Words to treasure

A faithful person will be richly blessed. —Proverbs 28:20

Questions

1. Why is it important for friends to be loyal to one another? Some answers: being loyal to one another builds trust between friends; it proves you care for each other; it shows that you value your relationship; it's what God wants you to do.
2. In Revelation 19:11, the apostle John wrote, "I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True." Who is the rider John was talking about? To whom is this person loyal? How does this verse give you another important reason to be faithful? Answers: The rider on the white horse is Jesus, and he is loyal to his heavenly Father. And the Bible says we are to be like Jesus!
3. By being loyal to David, Jonathan probably gave up any hope he had of becoming king of Israel. What did it cost Jesus to be loyal to his heavenly Father? Answer: it cost him his life, because Jesus was loyal and obedient when he knew God wanted him to die on the cross to save the world from its sin.
4. What do Jonathan's and Jesus' examples teach you about loyalty? Answer: It often costs something to be loyal, but it's important to be faithful anyway.
5. Jonathan was faithful to David, who was a godly man, but not to his own father, who was sinful. Jesus was faithful to his heavenly Father, but not to Satan, who tempted him in the desert to turn from God and worship him. What do these two examples teach you about loyalty? Answer: it's important to be wise when choosing to whom you should be faithful!
6. What are some practical ways you can "bind [love and faithfulness] around your neck" and "write them on the tablet of your heart"? Some answers: memorize Scripture verses, such as today's "Words to Treasure," that remind you to be faithful and loving; wear a chain around your neck with a cross or other symbol on it to remind yourself to be loyal; keep a journal in which you write about your desire and efforts to be faithful and loving, and keep track of how you're doing; etc. Consider spending some time playing a game or doing an exercise to help children memorize the "Words to Treasure" Scripture verse.

DAILY DEVOTIONAL - A SHOWER IN THE SKY

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands. —Psalm 19:1

Introduction

It's easy to forget how great God is. You get wrapped up in lots of different activities, like going to school, participating in sports, playing video games, and hanging out with your friends, and God seems to fade into the background. You know He's still there, but He seems like a friendly old grandpa who just sits in his rocking chair in the corner and watches everything. So you neglect to worship Him. Not only that, but sometimes when things go wrong and you need some help, it's hard to turn to God and trust Him, since He seems powerless to do anything. So you neglect to pray to Him. There are several things you can do to solve this problem, to keep remembering that God is very great indeed. The one we're going to talk about now is something you can do almost anytime, anywhere.

Today's devotion is based on Psalm 19:1, which says, "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands." The devotion is called "A Shower in the Sky."

Devotion

Lying on a blanket with her friends, Carlie checked her watch. "It's eleven p.m., so our meteor shower party can officially begin. Remember, whoever sees a shooting star first wins a prize!" It was mid-August, and the sky was clear.

"I could spend all night out here," Peyton said. Carlie reached for some chips.

"My dad wouldn't let us. But he said we could stay out till one o'clock. Most of the meteors will come around midnight, so we'll see lots of them." She pointed up. "See Perseus? That's the constellation I drew on your invitations. All the meteors will come from that direction. That's why they're called the Perseids."

Brooke asked, "How do you know all this stuff?" Carlie smiled. "My dad loves astronomy, and he teaches me a lot. Did you know—"

Suddenly Peyton shouted, "Look!" just as Brooke hollered, "There's one!" A white light streaked across the sky, and they all said, "Ooooooh!"

Need a reminder of how wise, powerful, and wonderful God is? Go outside anytime, day or night, and look up. Beautiful clouds. Awesome thunderstorms. Spectacular sunsets. Majestic stars. Through all these, the sky reminds everyone of God's glory

Words to treasure

Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one, and calls forth them each by name. —Isaiah 40:26

Questions

1. What is the most amazing thing you've seen as you've looked up into the sky? Where were you when you saw the most beautiful sunrise or sunset you've ever seen? Have you ever witnessed a shooting star, a lunar eclipse, the northern lights, or some other awesome thing in the sky? How did these things remind you of God's glory?
2. Why is it important to always remember how great God is? Some answers are: so we'll remember to worship him; so we'll remember to pray to him; so we'll turn to him for help when we need it and trust him; so our faith in him will remain strong; so we won't be tempted to disobey him by sinning; etc.
3. Do you think God intended for the sky to proclaim his glory day after day, night after night? Or is it just a coincidence that there are always so many wonderful things to see in the sky?
4. Do you think the sky is the only part of God's creation that proclaims his glory? Does the earth itself, and all that is in it, also point to how great God is? For a clue, either have children look up Psalm 98:7–9, which says, "Let the sea resound, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it. Let the rivers clap their hands, let the mountains sing together for joy; let them sing before the Lord," and Isaiah 6:3, which says, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory," or read these passages to them. Remind the children about butterflies emerging from their cocoons and flowers opening as the sun shines on them, and ask if they can think of other examples of how God's creation proclaims his glory.
5. What are some other things you can do to remind yourself how great God is? Some answers: read the Bible daily; go to church each week; listen to Christian music; memorize inspiring Scripture verses; stay in touch with God through prayer; talk to your friends about God and share with each other what you're all learning about him and what he is doing in your lives; etc.

Consider spending some time playing a game or doing an exercise to help children memorize the "Words to Treasure" Scripture verse above.

DAILY DEVOTIONAL - WANDERING THROUGH A MAZE

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with My loving eye on you —Psalm 32:8

Introduction

When you face a difficult choice, do you ever feel a little lost? Does it seem as if there are two or more directions that you could go, and you're just not sure which is the right one? Life is confusing sometimes, and it certainly would be nice if there were signs to point the way, or a voice to tell you what to do. But hold on! There are signs to point the way, and there is a voice that can tell you what to do. The Bible is full of wise advice about how to live your life—you just need to read it. And the Holy Spirit is always present to give you wise direction—you just need to ask Him for it and listen for Him to speak. There's no need to wander through life relying on your own sense of direction. God will guide you along.

Today's devotion is based on Psalm 32:8, which says, "I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with My loving eye on you." The devotion is called "Wandering through a Maze."

Devotion

Libby laughed as she and Alayna ran through the cornfield. Then the path they were on suddenly ended. "Another dead end!" Alayna said. The friends were trying to get through the maze Alayna's father had built in the cornfield next to his apple orchard. Backtracking, the girls returned to the last crossroads. "Which way, Dad?" Alayna cried.

From overhead Libby heard a chuckle. "Go right, sweetie." She looked up. Alayna's father was standing in a watchtower that gave him a view of the entire maze.

"He was here the whole time?" Libby asked.

Alayna nodded. "Yep. He put up that tower so he can guide people who need help."

Life is like a maze. You can't see very far ahead, and you constantly have to decide which way to go. But you're not in this maze alone! God is with you. He can see the way and guide you. Each time you reach a corner, He'll tell you which way to turn, until you finally make it through.

Life in Bible Times

The Israelites didn't really wander in the desert on their way to the Promised Land. God led them the whole time. But He took them along a winding, twisting path, like a maze.

Questions

1. Can you remember a time when you didn't know what to do, but God showed you the right way to go? How did He do that? How did you feel at first when you were confused? How did you feel after He gave you the guidance you needed?

2. When we pray to God for guidance, He doesn't usually hand us a map that lays out our entire journey. Instead He just shows us the next step to take. Why, do you think, is this so? For a clue to one possible answer, have children think about the way we learn to walk or read. God is teaching us to trust Him throughout our entire lives, and we learn one step at a time!

3. When you travel with a GPS device in your car, it tells you what to do before you even get to the intersection. Why doesn't God give us guidance like that, without our having to ask for it? One answer: God wants us to keep coming to Him and asking Him for guidance; He wants us to rely on Him, not just take His help for granted. Our relationship with Him is very important to Him, and He wants us to value Him even more than we value the help He can give us.

4. What should you do if you really want to go in one direction and it seems like the best direction to go, but you sense that God is telling you to go another way? Answer: Talk to your mom or dad or another trusted, godly adult to make sure that you're hearing God correctly. Then obey what God is telling you to do! He knows better than you, or anybody, what is right and what is best for you.

5. What should you do if you ask God for guidance, and He doesn't seem to be answering you? Answer: You should keep on waiting until God provides the guidance you need. It would be much better to lose some time than to take a wrong turn in life! And your willingness to wait on God shows Him that you trust Him.

DAILY DEVOTIONAL - WRITTEN IN STONE

When the Lord finished speaking to Moses on Mount Sinai, He gave him the two tablets of the covenant law, the tablets of stone inscribed by the finger of God. —Exodus 31:18

Introduction

Have you ever looked at a page of sheet music? There are a lot of black lines and dots and symbols all over the place. It's pretty cool looking and impressive, but it's not at all what the composer had in mind when he wrote the song. The composer wasn't after lines and dots and symbols—he was after sounds! He wanted to put music in people's ears and minds and hearts. He wanted them humming and singing along and even dancing to his song.

Well, this is similar to God's desire. When He gave people the Ten Commandments and, later, the entire Bible, He wasn't after a couple of heavy stone tablets and a bunch of big, thick books. He wanted to put His laws in people's minds and hearts. He wanted them to live by His laws.

Today's devotion is based on Exodus 31:18, which says, "When the Lord finished speaking to Moses on Mount Sinai, He gave him the two tablets of the covenant law, the tablets of stone inscribed by the finger of God." The devotion is called "Written in Stone."

Devotion

"The cement truck's here!" Nate said. He and his parents watched the big truck back up to where their new driveway was going to be.

Nate's dad held up his hand. "That's good!" The driver got out and set up the chute. He pulled a lever, and the gray, slushy mixture started pouring out. Using long-handled tools, he and Nate's dad moved the cement around. When the first section of the driveway was filled, they used other tools to smooth out the cement. Then the driver moved the truck, and they began working on the next section.

Soon the job was done. Nate stuck his palms in the wet cement, then wrote his name and the date with his finger. Everyone applauded. The driver said, "That's going to be there a long, long time!"

God used His own finger to write the Ten Commandments on stone tablets. But what He really wanted to do was inscribe His laws on people's hearts! Are God's laws written on your heart, so they're part of you forever? Memorizing Bible verses is a great way to help God put His laws right where He wants them to be.

Words to treasure

"I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts,"
[declares the Lord]. —Jeremiah 31:33

Questions

1. Why, do you think, is God more interested in writing His laws on people's hearts than He is in writing them on stone tablets or in books?

2. If God really wants His laws written on people's hearts, why doesn't He just create people that way? In other words, why aren't people born with God's laws already written on their hearts?

Answer: God gave people the freedom to decide whether they wanted to receive His laws on their hearts. He didn't want a bunch of robots that were programmed to love and obey Him. He wanted real people who would choose to love and obey Him!

3. How can you tell if God's laws are written on a person's heart? By whether or not he or she has them memorized?

Answer: You can tell by their words, actions, and attitude. That's the only real proof. Memorizing God's laws is a great first step for a person to take toward achieving what God wants, but even if a person has all of God's laws memorized, that doesn't mean those laws are in his or her heart; at that point, they may only be in the person's mind.

4. Is it possible to have God's laws written on your heart if you dislike them and/or think they're stupid? For a clue, either have children look up Psalm 119:97–104 or read this passage to them. The answer is no. You have to agree with God's laws, see the wisdom in them, and learn to love them in order for them to truly be written on your heart. This is what God really wants!

5. If God's laws aren't written on your heart, what will be? Will it be good for you or bad for you?

Answers: Some other "rules for living" will be written on your heart instead, such as the Devil's rules or the world's rules (those are rules that people make up all by themselves). It will be bad for you, because those other rules lead to evil and misery. God's rules are the only ones that lead to an abundant life here on earth and everlasting life in heaven.

Consider spending some time playing a game or doing an exercise to help children memorize the "Words to Treasure" Scripture verse above.

DAILY DEVOTIONAL - COOL WATER ON A HOT DAY

[The Lord] opened the rock, and water gushed out; it flowed like a river in the desert. —Psalm 105:41

Introduction

When Moses was leading the Israelites through the desert after God freed them from Egypt, there were no convenience stores where they could stop to buy bottled water or juice packs or energy drinks. And there were a lot of hot, thirsty people. Exodus 12:37 says, "There were about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides women and children." That means there were probably two million people in all! Where would they get enough water for everybody? After three days of traveling through the desert and finding no water at all, the people got desperate and started complaining angrily to Moses. So he cried out to God for help. Now, Moses may have been hoping that God would show them the way to a Dollar General, but God did something much more wonderful than that.

Today's devotion is about how God is able to provide for our needs. It's based on Psalm 105:41, which says, "[The Lord] opened the rock, and water gushed out; it flowed like a river in the desert." The devotion is called "Cool Water on a Hot Day."

Devotion

Rod and his friends sat on the steps outside his family's brownstone apartment, trying to keep cool. The heat wave in the city made it hard to do much else. Rod had his shirt off. Pete was drinking lemonade. Nora was fanning herself with a magazine. A door slammed, and Rod looked up. "Look, here comes Michael. Hey, Mike!" All the kids scrambled down to the sidewalk.

Michael was a young fireman who lived across the street. He was carrying a large wrench, and Rod guessed what he was up to. "Hi, guys," Michael said. "You looked hot out here. So I thought I'd help you cool off." He crouched next to the fire hydrant on the curb. Turning the wrench, he said, "Stand back, everyone!" Water sprayed into the street, and the kids cheered. As Michael watched, grinning, they frolicked in the geyser.

God is a faithful, powerful provider. When the Israelites needed water in the desert, He made it gush out of a rock! Does your family have a need? Gather together and pray. Remind each other how God provided for His people in the past. Remember God's promises to take care of His people always. And have faith that He'll provide for your family now.

Words to treasure

God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus. —Philippians 4:19

Questions

1. Again and again as the Israelites traveled through the desert, they kept complaining to Moses that there was nothing to eat or drink. Do you think they were trusting God to provide for their needs? What should they have done instead of getting angry and complaining?

Answer: they should have prayed humbly and trusted God to provide them with food and water.

2. How do you usually react when you need something and it doesn't look like you're going to get it? Do you get angry and complain, or do you pray humbly and trust God to provide what you need?

3. How can you tell the difference between something you want and something you need? Can you expect God to provide everything you want? How about everything you need? For a clue, either have children look up Isaiah 58:11, which says, "The Lord will guide you always; He will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land," or read this verse to them. Today's "Words to Treasure" verse is also a good clue!

4. Sometimes God meets people's needs in unexpected ways, like He did when the Israelites needed water in the desert. Can you remember a time when God met your needs in an unexpected way? What should our attitude be after we pray for something we need and as we wait for God to provide it for us?

Answer: we should trust God to give us what we need, but maybe not in a way we expect Him to.

5. Once, when the Israelites were traveling through the desert, they complained about the bread God was providing for them every day. They wanted some meat! God was angry with them because of that. What does this tell you about our attitude toward the way God chooses to meet our needs? For a clue, either have children look up 1 Timothy 6:8, which says, "If we have food and clothing, we will be content with that," or read this verse to them. The answer is that we should be content and grateful to God for what he gives us.

Consider spending some time playing a game or doing an exercise to help children memorize the "Words to Treasure" Scripture verse above.

DAILY DEVOTIONAL - HEAVEN

[Jesus told His disciples,] “[In] My Father’s house are many rooms.... I am going there to prepare a place for you.” —John 14:2

Introduction

Imagine sitting on a cloud all day, every day, forever, just strumming a harp. Nothing else to do. Nowhere else to go. Sound like fun? Amazingly, that’s the mental image many people have of heaven. Who knows where they got it from, but it’s not in the Bible. The Bible paints a very different picture of heaven. It describes a great city with streets of gold and gates of pearl, surrounded by a wall decorated with precious stones. A crystal-clear river flows through the middle of the city, lined with beautiful trees. The city will shine with God’s glory all the time, and its gates will always be open. Sounds great, doesn’t it? And that’s just the city! There will also be mountains in heaven and all kinds of animals, all of them friendly and safe. And no one in heaven will ever be sad or get sick or die. Doesn’t heaven sound a lot more interesting now?

We’re going to talk about one more thing that makes heaven exciting. Today’s devotion is based on John 14:2, in which Jesus told His disciples, “[In] My Father’s house are many rooms.... I am going there to prepare a place for you.” The devotion is called “The Mansion.”

Devotion

Dillan and Leanne followed their parents through the beautiful mansion. They were at the Biltmore House in Asheville, North Carolina. Although it was finished in 1895, it was still the largest home in America. “Can you believe the size of this house?” said Dillan’s dad as they admired the huge library. “Two hundred and fifty rooms. Sixty-five fireplaces. A banquet hall, a billiard room, and a music room. It even has elevators and an indoor swimming pool!”

“Don’t forget the bowling alley,” Dillan said, grinning.

Shaking her head, his mom said, “I can’t get over how big the bedrooms are.”

Leanne gazed at all the polished woodwork in the library, and at the thousands of books it contained. “I like the garden best, with all the stone walls and statues.”

Leaving the library, the family continued their tour. They reached the observatory, atop the main tower. From there they could see woods, meadows, a river, and mountains.

Dillan said, “I’d love to live in a place like this!”

Have you ever really thought about what heaven will be like? The Bible doesn’t reveal everything about it. But you won’t be living on a cloud, that’s for sure. God’s home will be an exciting, wonderful place. And he has a room in it just for you!

Words to treasure

I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. —Psalm 23:6

Questions

1. What are you most looking forward to about heaven? Are you eager to meet Jesus face-to-face? Who else are you looking forward to seeing there?
2. Are you excited about meeting angels? What do you think that will be like? Do you think angels will be serious all the time, or will they like to run and play?
3. In many ways, heaven will seem very normal to us. After all, the Bible says it has streets and trees and animals. In many other ways, however, it will probably seem very unfamiliar. Why is it good that we can expect both familiar and unfamiliar things? One answer: familiar things are comforting, while unfamiliar things are new and exciting!
4. Jesus said he was going ahead of us to heaven to prepare a place for us. What would you like your room in heaven to be like? Do you think Jesus knows enough about you to make your place just right for you?
5. Can you imagine all the stories that will be told in heaven? Surely there will be great tales of wonderful ways in which people served God during their earthly life. What do you want your story to be like? How does that change the kinds of choices you'll make as you live your life here and now?

Consider spending some time playing a game or doing an exercise to help children memorize the “Words to Treasure” Scripture verse above.

DAILY DEVOTIONAL - REDECORATING

Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. —1 Peter 4:8

Introduction

Recently, the people of New York City wanted to do something that would lower the amount of crime in their town. One of the things they decided to do was to fix up parts of the city that were run-down, ugly, and not being taken care of very well. So they started repairing broken windows in buildings and cleaning up the subways. And guess what? The crime rate went down! It turns out that when people see a broken window, they're more likely to pick up a rock and break another one. When they live in an area where things are a mess and it looks as if nobody cares about anything, they're more likely to commit crimes such as vandalism and theft. On the other hand, when things look nice and well cared for, people are more likely to behave well. Why is that?

Well, it probably has something to do with today's devotion. It's based on 1 Peter 4:8, which says, "Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins." The devotion is called "Redecorating."

Devotion

"What are all those people doing?" Erika asked. She and her dad were out for a walk. They were approaching an old building covered with graffiti.

"I don't know," he replied. "Let's go see." They went up to the crowd near the building. Several people were painting over the graffiti.

A woman walked over. "Hello, I'm Celeste."

Erika's dad shook her hand. "Hi, Celeste. I'm Robert, and this is Erika. What's going on?"

Celeste smiled. "I wanted to make our neighborhood more beautiful, so I got permission to paint a mural on this building. When I began painting, people offered to help." She showed them her design for the mural. It was a field of wildflowers near a river and mountains.

"That's pretty," Erika said. "Can I help too?"

Nodding, Celeste replied, "Sure! You can work on the bottom." She handed Erika a smock and a brush, then showed her where to paint. Erika worked beside her neighbors all afternoon, covering ugly words and drawings with bright, colorful flowers.

You can make life more beautiful by covering people's wrongs with love. Sometimes people make the world ugly by saying or doing hateful things. You'll only make it uglier by responding the same way. But you'll brighten things up if you show love and forgiveness instead.

Words to treasure

Love covers over all wrongs. —Proverbs 10:12

Questions

1. When somebody makes a nasty comment to you or treats you rudely, what is the first thing you feel like doing? If you did that, would it make things better or worse?

2. What do you think is the reason why people tend to respond with (or at least want to respond with) ugly words or actions when someone says or does something ugly to them?

A few answers are: (1) all people have had a tendency to sin ever since Adam and Eve committed the first sin in the Garden of Eden; (2) people are made in God's image, and because he is just, they have a deep sense of justice—so when someone sins against them, they want to settle the score, even though it's God's job to do that; (3) they get angry, and even though it's not a sin to be angry, it's always tempting to commit a sin when you're mad.

3. Why does it help to “cover over” others' sinful words and deeds with love? One answer is: when God's people show grace, forgiveness, and love to those who sin, it's easier for the sinners to believe that God will treat them the same way—in other words, it points them toward God and shows them what he's like!

5. Have you ever tried using love and forgiveness to “cover over” a wrong someone did to you? What happened?

6. Even if a person who sins against you keeps treating you badly after you've responded with love and forgiveness, do you think it's a good idea to keep “covering over” people's bad words and actions with love? Why? One answer is: it's always a good idea to do what God tells you to do in the Bible, because it's right and it pleases him!

Consider spending some time playing a game or doing an exercise to help children memorize the “Words to Treasure” Scripture verse above.

DAILY DEVOTIONAL - CHASING THE WIND

Whoever loves money never has enough. —Ecclesiastes 5:10

Introduction

Have you ever been outside when someone was blowing bubbles on a windy day? You probably had a great time chasing bubbles all over the place! But when you were all done, what was the result of all your effort? You were tired from all that running, and there was nothing at all in your hands. Well, maybe you ended up with a little sticky soap on your fingers! But it's kind of meaningless when you think about it.

In the book of Ecclesiastes, King Solomon wrote about how senseless it is to love money so much that you spend all your time and energy chasing it. In the end, you won't have anything truly valuable to show for it, and you will have wasted your whole life. Wouldn't it be so much better to spend your time pursuing the things that God has planned for you?

Today's devotion is based on Ecclesiastes 5:10, which says, "Whoever loves money never has enough." The devotion is called "Chasing the Wind."

Devotion

Danny and his mother walked into the sporting goods store to buy him some soccer cleats and shin guards. "What's that?" Danny asked. Near the front window was a glass booth with paper money swirling inside!

An employee said, "It's our 'Instant Rebate' program. If you spend over fifty dollars, you can go in the money booth for one minute. You get to grab as many dollar bills as you can."

Danny looked at his mom. "Can I do it?"

His mom laughed. "Sure, if we spend enough."

When they checked out, the employee let Danny inside the booth. Grabbing here and there, he tried to snatch the bills out of the air. When the buzzer sounded, he stepped out. "I got eleven!"

It would be fun to get into a money booth and try to grab as much cash as you could. But don't love money so much that you spend your life chasing it! King Solomon called this meaningless, like chasing the wind. He said that people who live this way are never satisfied. Solomon knew the real purpose of life. It's to "fear God and keep His commandments" (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

People in Bible times

God told King Solomon to ask Him for whatever he wanted. Solomon could've asked for money, but instead he asked for wisdom. God was pleased, so He gave Solomon great wisdom and great riches.

Questions

1. Did you ever get a chance to go into a money booth and try to grab dollar bills out of the air, or have you ever played some other game where you could win money? How much money did you get?

2. A key phrase in today's Scripture verse is "money enough." How do you know when you have enough money? One answer: Explain that everybody has to have money to pay for things they need, such as food, clothing, and shelter. Plus, people like to have money to pay for things they want, such as toys, video games, etc. So the point where you have enough money is somewhere in the "want" category, after you have money for the things you really need.

3. People who love money are never content with what they have. They always think they'll be happier when they have more money so they can buy more things. Why is it important to learn to be content with what you have?

4. Is it possible to be content with what you have and still look forward to getting something else you want?

Answer: Yes, you can be happy with what you have even as you work and save up your money to get something else you want. But remember, you don't want to spend your whole life always trying to get more money and things. It's much better to put your time and energy into doing what God put you on earth to do! If you do that, you'll be far happier and feel more fulfilled.

5. According to the Bible, there are two kinds of treasures that we can chase after. What are they? Why is one kind better than the other? Also, how does the kind of treasure we choose to pursue affect our hearts? For a clue, either have children look up Matthew 6:19–21, which says, "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also," or read this passage to them.