

Families of the Bible

Devotional Readings

by

Steven L. Lange

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One

Made for Each Other

The Story of the First Family

Day One

Read Genesis 2:18,24.

Rosa looked stunning as she sat at the table. A single candle illuminated her face. She seemed to glow, as the moon glows when it reflects the light of the sun. She was the most beautiful woman that Juan had ever seen.

Juan was sitting across from her, holding her hand in the middle of the table. “Rosa,” he said, “you have made the past year more wonderful than any other year of my life. I feel as if we were made for each other. We share the same faith. We share so many of the same interests. Your strengths complement my weaknesses. You are one of God’s greatest blessings to me.”

“Well,” Rosa replied, “I feel the same way about you. Every day I thank God that he has brought you into my life. I don’t know what I’d do if God ever took you away from me.”

“I don’t want us to ever part.” Juan continued. “I agree with what God said about Adam; it’s not good for me to be alone. I’m tired of being alone. I need a helper to be with me and share my life with me. I want you to be my helper for the rest of my life.”

Juan reached into his coat pocket and pulled out a small black box. He opened the box, revealing a sparkling diamond ring. “Rosa, will you marry me?” he said.

Rosa was so excited she couldn’t speak. All she could do was put her hands over her mouth and nod. “I’ll take that as a yes,” said Juan.

“Yes!” Rosa exclaimed, as Juan slipped the ring on her finger.

Discussion

What are some of the most important elements for a God-pleasing beginning to a marriage?

What one solid piece of advice would you give a newlywed couple?

Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank you for the gift of marriage. Bless husbands and wives everywhere that they may always see their spouses as a tremendous blessing from you. Amen.

Day Two

Read Genesis 2:18-23.

God saw that it was not good for Adam to be alone. Adam, however, didn't know that yet. So God had Adam name all the animals. Naming all the animals helped Adam realize how much he needed the woman. It made God's special gift of a helper even more meaningful.

Discussion

Make a list of ways in which you think you complement each other well.

How could you demonstrate to others (especially your children, if you have children) that God has made the two of you complement each other?

Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank you for making husbands and wives complement each other. May we always work together and cherish each other as special gifts. Amen.

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Day Three

Read Genesis 2:18-25.

Discussion

God made Adam and Eve to be the first family. Who was the "head of the house" in this family? How can you tell?

Who is the head of the house in your house?

Does this mean that one spouse is more important in the marriage relationship than the other?

How do these roles in the marriage relationship carry over into the parenting relationship between a father and a mother?

Prayer

Heavenly Father, we praise you for the wonderful way in which you have ordered our family. May we always respect the roles of fathers and mothers, and may they always work together as you have designed them to do. Amen.

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Day Four

Read Genesis 3:8-13.

When Adam and Eve fell into sin, their relationships with God and each other changed drastically. Adam’s leadership was flawed by a self-serving attitude. And Eve wasn’t as willing to serve her husband with the same devotion she had before sin spoiled it all.

Discussion

How can you tell from the reading that Adam and Eve’s relationship with God no longer was perfect, as it had been?

How can you tell that Adam no longer loved or appreciated Eve as much as he had before?

How has sin made it difficult for you to be the loving leader or the loving helper that God wants you to be?

Why is it good to know that in Jesus all our sins are forgiven and we have strength to live as he wants us to live?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, forgive us for not always loving one another as you have loved us. Fill us with your love so that we may love one another more and more. Amen.

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Day Five

Read Ephesians 5:22-24.

In this section of Scripture, Paul encourages wives to “submit to your husbands as to the Lord.” Consider your relationship with Jesus. You submit to him willingly and with devotion.

Discussion

Is such submission a burden?

Does your submission to Jesus keep you from being a valuable person?

How does understanding how we submit to Jesus help us understand how a wife is to submit to her husband?

Prayer

(Spoken by the women and girls of the family) **Heavenly Father, thank you for making me a woman. Thank you for the important job you have given me as my husband's (or future husband's) helper. Help me always carry out this job with joy, even as I submit to you. Amen.**

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Day Six

Read Ephesians 5:25-33.

In this section, Paul encourages husbands to “love your wives, *just as Christ loved the church.*” Consider how Jesus loves you.

Discussion

What was Jesus willing to do for you because he loves you?

Does he ever do anything that is not in your best interest?

How does understanding how Jesus loves us help us understand how a husband is to love his wife?

Prayer

(Spoken by the men and boys of the family) **Heavenly Father, thank you for making me a man. Thank you for the love you showed me when you gave your life to save me. Help me always love my family in the same way that you love me. Amen.**

Two

Alone against the World

*Noah and His Family***Day One**

Read Matthew 6:31-34.

Juan sat at the kitchen table, staring at the array of bills that lay before him. With a deep sigh, he glanced at his checkbook and muttered, “How will we ever be able to pay all these?” Suddenly, a sound like a gunshot rang through the air. Instinctively, Juan ducked, terrified that a bullet might come sailing through his window, as had happened to his neighbors two days earlier.

Just then, Rosa walked into the kitchen. She noticed Juan’s defensive posture and said, “It’s okay, dear. Some kids are just setting off firecrackers in the alley.”

But for Juan, that wasn’t okay. Boiling with anger and frustration, he shouted, “I can’t take this anymore! I’m sick of all the violence. I’m tired of only scraping by. Why isn’t God taking better care of us? Maybe he’s forgotten about us!”

Rosa sat down and took Juan’s hand. “Juan, dear,” she said, “do you remember Noah and his family?”

“Of course I do,” Juan replied. “But what does that have to do with us right now?”

“Well,” Rosa continued, “during the entire year and ten days that they were in the ark, did God ever forget about them?”

“No,” Juan replied, “I guess he didn’t.”

“At times, it probably seemed as if God had forgotten about them,” Rosa went on. “But God never did. Throughout the flood, God provided Noah and his family with everything that they needed. They never had any reason to worry. They were never alone. God was always with them.”

“But don’t you wish we could move to a safer neighborhood?” Juan asked. “Don’t you wish we had an easier time making ends meet?”

“Sure, I do,” Rosa responded. “But that doesn’t mean we have any reason to worry. Just as God was always with Noah and his family, so he is always with us. He will protect us from danger and provide us with everything that we need. He will never forget about us.”

Discussion

Talk about the things that each member of the family is inclined to worry about.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, help us remember that you are always with us. Strengthen our trust in you so that we may never worry. Amen.

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Day Two

Read Genesis 6:9-13.

Discussion

Describe the world in which Noah and his family lived. What were the people like? How many of them believed in God? Would you have felt safe living in the world of Noah's time?

Because the people of Noah's time had become so unbelieving and violent, God announced that he would destroy the world with a universal flood and start over. Why was God justified in taking such drastic action? What might have happened if he hadn't sent the flood?

Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank you for loving us so much that you were willing to send the flood. As we live in a violent and unbelieving world, protect us, just as you protected Noah and his family. Amen.

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Day Three

Read Genesis 6:8,9 and Hebrews 11:7.

God was not displeased with everyone who lived at Noah's time. Noah and his family found favor in the eyes of the Lord. Evaluate this statement: Noah and his family found favor in the eyes of the Lord because they were the only people in the entire world strong enough to resist the unbelief and violence that surrounded them.

You and I have found favor in the eyes of the Lord too.

Discussion

How have we as sinners become right with God?

Prayer

Heavenly Father, we praise you for your gift of faith, through which you have declared us holy for Jesus' sake. Keep us always close to you so that we may always enjoy your love and favor. Amen.

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Day Four

Read Genesis 6:13-22.

Discussion

Put yourself in Noah's place. What difficulties will you face as you carry out the Lord's command?

What are some of the difficult things that God asks us to do?

How can we use these difficult tasks to tell other people about Jesus?

Prayer

Heavenly Father, we praise you for giving us the strength we need to live our lives for you. Help us take advantage of every opportunity that you give us to tell other people about Jesus and what he has done for us. Amen.

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Day Five

Read Genesis 7:24–8:5.

For 150 days (nearly half a year), Noah and his family could see only water. Perhaps they began to wonder whether the flood would ever end.

Discussion

How did God show Noah and his family that he hadn't forgotten about them and that the flood would indeed end?

Has there ever been a time when you felt as if God forgot about you?

How does God's love and care for Noah and his family assure you that God will never forget about you either?

Prayer

Lord, forgive us for the times when we doubt your love and care for us. Help us remember that you are always with us and trust that you will always care for us. Amen.

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Day Six

Read Genesis 9:8-17.

After Noah and his family came out of the ark, they may have wondered whether God would send another universal flood to destroy the earth.

Discussion

Why was the rainbow such a comforting gift for them from God?

Why is the rainbow still such a comforting gift for us from God?

Prayer

Heavenly Father, we thank you for your promise never to destroy the earth again with a universal flood. May your rainbow always remind us of your promise and help us appreciate just how well you take care of us. Amen.

Three

Blessed Is the Family That Puts God First*Abraham, Sarah, and Isaac***Day One**

Read Genesis 22:1-5.

It was devotion time, and Juan and Rosa were sitting on the couch together, reading Genesis chapter 22. Suddenly, Rosa grabbed her stomach and exclaimed, “Ouch! That one really hurt!”

“Is the baby kicking again?” Juan asked excitedly.

“See for yourself,” Rosa replied as she smoothed her shirt over her belly. Sure enough, Rosa and Juan’s unborn baby was kicking and flipping and doing all sorts of gymnastics.

Juan bent down and kissed Rosa’s belly. “I love you, baby,” he said.

“How much do you love the baby?” Rosa asked.

“A lot,” Juan replied. “We had to wait a long time before God gave us this baby. I can’t imagine what I’d do if anything ever happened to him.”

“Well,” Rosa continued, “what if God came to you, as he did to Abraham, and said, ‘Take your son, your only son, whom you love, and sacrifice him as a burnt offering’? Would you be able to do it?”

Juan thought for a while and then said, “I know that Abraham did it. But I don’t know that I’d be able to do what Abraham did. I guess I’m glad that God hasn’t asked me to do that.”

“But he has asked us to love him more than we love anyone or anything else,” Rosa continued. “And he demonstrated his love for us by willingly sacrificing his Son, Jesus, for us on the cross.”

“I know,” Juan responded. “That’s why I want to show God my gratitude by loving him in return. But instead of sacrificing our baby, which God has not asked us to do, why don’t we do something that God has asked us to do? Why don’t we offer ourselves as living sacrifices and dedicate our whole lives to God?”

“Good idea,” said Rosa as she watched her baby kick. “We’ll serve God with everything we are and everything we have. And in that way we’ll show that we love God most of all.”

Discussion

In what ways are each of the members of your family dedicated to serving God?

Prayer

Heavenly Father, you showed us your love by giving us your Son. Fill us with your love, that we may love you most of all. Amen.

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Day Two

Read Genesis 15:1-6.

When Abraham was 75 years old, God promised him that he would have a child. But Abraham waited for longer than a decade, and he and Sarah had not yet had a child. When God came to Abraham in these verses, God told him, “Do not be afraid, Abram.”

Discussion

What fears do you think Abraham had?

How did God’s message to Abraham in verses 4 and 5 calm Abraham’s fears and strengthen his trust in God’s promise?

Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank you for the promises that you have given us. Strengthen our faith, that we may always trust your promises, as Abraham did. Amen.

»»»»»»»»»» ♦ ««««««««««

Day Three

Read Genesis 18:9-13.

When Abraham was 99 and Sarah was 89, the Lord and two angels visited them with some wonderful news. Within a year they would have the son that God had promised them.

Discussion

How did Sarah react to this news?

How was her reaction different from the way Abraham reacted in our devotion yesterday?

Was Sarah right to react in the way that she did? Why or why not?

Prayer

Gracious God, forgive us for the many times we doubt your promises to us. Strengthen our trust in you so that we may never forget that nothing is too hard for you. Amen.

»»»»»»»»»» ✧ ««««««««««

Day Four

Read Genesis 21:1-7.

Discussion

Children always are blessings from the Lord. In what ways was this especially obvious in the birth of Isaac?

Prayer

Lord God, you always fulfill your promises. Accept our thanks and praise for the countless blessings you give us day after day in keeping with all your promises to us. Amen.

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Day Five

Read Genesis 22:1-19.

Abraham's great love for God is evident throughout this account.

Discussion

List evidences that Abraham loved God most of all.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, how could we ever thank you enough for the love you have shown to us in Jesus! Strengthen our faith in you so that we may love you most of all. Amen.

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Day Six

Read Genesis 24:1-9.

Parents often look for certain qualities in someone who may marry their child.

Discussion

Abraham insisted that Isaac's wife be from among his own relatives. Why was this so important to Abraham?

Is it still important for us, as we look for a spouse, to consider the faith of the person whom we want to marry? Explain your answer.

Prayer

Loving Lord, we praise you for bringing us to faith in you. Help us always fear and respect you above all things, even as we look for someone to marry. Amen.

Four

Salt That Lost Its Saltiness

*Lot and His Family***Day One**

Read Matthew 5:13-16.

“Hmm,” Rosa said as she took her first bite of supper. “My roast beef could use a little more salt.”

“Mine too,” Juan responded, holding little Carlos on his lap. But when Juan tried to sprinkle some salt on his meat, little Carlos accidentally knocked Juan’s arm. The cap came off the saltshaker, and a mountain of salt appeared on Juan’s plate. “Oh, Carlos!” Juan moaned. “Daddy just wanted to season his meat, not preserve it!”

“Preserve it?” Rosa asked.

“Yeah,” Juan replied. “People long ago used salt to preserve their food.”

“I remember now,” said Rosa. “It’s like when Jesus told us to be the salt of the earth. He wants us to act differently from the rest of the world so that we might preserve it and keep it from going completely bad.”

Rosa’s comment got Juan thinking. “Are we salty enough?” he asked.

“What do you mean?” Rosa replied.

“So many television shows show no respect for God’s gift of sex,” Juan explained, “and yet, I keep watching them. I even laugh at some of their disgusting jokes.”

“I know what you mean,” Rosa responded. “A gay couple brings their adopted child to the moms’ group that Carlos and I go to. I know that their homosexuality is wrong. But I never know quite how to tell them that lovingly.”

“So I guess we’re not as salty as we should be,” Juan said.

“Perhaps not,” Rosa replied. “Yet God can make us salty again. He daily assures us of our forgiveness in Jesus. He strengthens our faith through his Word and sacraments. As he continues to strengthen our faith, we will get saltier and saltier.”

“And then I won’t just sit there when the world throws its immorality at me,” said Juan.

“And I’ll know how to speak to the gay couple in the moms’ group,” Rosa added.

“But right now, I need some more roast beef,” Juan continued. “This piece is a little too salty for me.”

Discussion

Where are there opportunities for your family to flavor the world in which you live your daily lives?

Prayer

Heavenly Father, fill me with the light of your Word so that I may be salt to this dying world. Amen.

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Day Two

Read Genesis 13:5-13.

Discussion

What seems to have been most important to Lot as he chose a place to live?

What should have been most important?

Was Lot's decision to move near Sodom wise? Explain.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, forgive us for sometimes thinking that the things of this world are more important than our relationship with you. Help us always put you first in everything we do. Amen.

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Day Three

Read 2 Peter 2:7,8 along with Genesis 19:1-11.

Discussion

When the men of Sodom came and demanded that Lot hand the two angels over to them, how did Lot show that he was “a righteous man, who was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men”?

Prayer

Lord, we too live in a filthy world. We are distressed to see so many people living in ways that displease you. Make us bold to speak out against sin so that you, through us, may lead many to repentance. Amen.

»»»»»»»»»» ♦ ««««««««««

Day Four

Read Genesis 19:1-11.

Lot was “a righteous man, who was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men” (2 Peter 2:7). Yet we can see that his long exposure to the immorality of Sodom had blunted his faith.

Discussion

Find evidence from the verses you just read to show that Lot was influenced in some way by the immorality that surrounded him.

Prayer

Gracious God, we confess that the immorality of our world affects us too. Our faith is not as sharp as it should be, nor do we always speak out against sin as strongly as you want us to. Forgive us our failures and strengthen our faith so that we may be salt to the people of this world. Amen.

»»»»»»»»»» ♦ ««««««««««

Day Five

Read Genesis 19:12-26.

Discussion

How can you tell that Lot and his family were still more concerned about material things than they were about spiritual things—even as Sodom was about to be destroyed?

Prayer

Heavenly Father, forgive us for clinging to our material possessions instead of clinging to you. Help us always listen to your Word and obey you willingly out of gratitude for your love. Amen.

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Day Six

Read Ephesians 6:10-17.

Although we live in an immoral world, God has not left us defenseless.

Discussion

In Ephesians chapter 6, Paul describes the spiritual armor that God has given us to defend others and ourselves against the immorality that surrounds us. List the pieces of spiritual armor that God has given us, and discuss ways that we can be sure that we are always using them.

Prayer

Almighty God, thank you for protecting us with the armor of Jesus' forgiveness. Help us always wear this armor so that Satan and his allies may never succeed in defeating us. Amen.

Five

Rivalry and Reconciliation

*Jacob and His Family***Day One**

Read Ephesians 4:32.

“Just one more block, and my super tower will be complete,” Carlos said as he gingerly placed the yellow block on top of his masterpiece. Just then, his twin sisters, Carmen and Marisa, walked into his room. They were four years old, two years younger than Carlos, and usually were a lot of fun to play with. But now they spelled potential trouble for Carlos’ super tower. “Don’t touch my tower!” he warned them. “I’ve worked all morning on this, and I want to show it to Mom and Dad.”

“Okay,” Carmen and Marisa said as they sat down on the floor to watch. But as Marisa was sitting down, her left foot flew out and bumped the side of Carlos’ tower. In one huge chain reaction, the super tower toppled into a shapeless pile of blocks.

“No!” Carlos cried.

“I’m sorry, Carlos,” Marisa said immediately. “I didn’t mean to do it. Can I help you build your tower again?”

“No,” Carlos snapped. “Get away from me. I don’t want to see you ever again.”

At this, Marisa burst into tears and ran out of the room, bumping into Rosa on the way. “What’s going on here?” Rosa asked.

“Marisa accidentally knocked down Carlos’ super tower,” Carmen explained. “And now Carlos won’t forgive her.”

“Now, Carlos,” Rosa began, “let’s talk about this. How many times have you sinned against God?”

“A lot,” Carlos replied.

“And has God ever refused to forgive you?” Rosa continued.

“No, I guess he hasn’t,” Carlos said.

“God sent Jesus to die on the cross for us,” Rosa explained. “And because Jesus has paid for all our sins, God doesn’t hold any of them against us anymore. Now, God wants us to forgive others just as he has forgiven us.”

“You’re right, Mom,” Carlos responded. He then turned to Marisa and said, “You’re forgiven, Sis. Can you help me rebuild my tower now?”

“Sure, Carlos,” Marisa replied. “And this time, I’ll be more careful.”

Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank you for forgiving us all our sins for Jesus’ sake. Help us always forgive others just as you have forgiven us. Amen.

Day Two

Read Genesis 37:2-11.

Discussion

How did Jacob, Joseph, and Joseph's brothers each contribute to the hateful rivalry that existed between Joseph and his brothers?

Who do you think was most responsible for this rivalry? Why?

Prayer

Heavenly Father, forgive us for the times that bitterness has built up in our hearts. Let your love fill us so that bitterness may have no place among us. Amen.

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Day Three

Read Genesis 37:12-36.

Discussion

James tells us, "Each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death" (1:14,15). How do the actions of Joseph's brothers demonstrate the truth of James' statement?

How do their actions show a lack of love not just toward Joseph but also toward their father, Jacob?

Prayer

Gracious Lord, we must confess that too often we have let bitterness grow into hateful and hurtful actions toward others. Forgive us, Lord, and help us always to nip bitterness in the bud so that it has no chance to separate us from those whom we love. Amen.

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Day Four

Read Genesis 42:18-24.

Discussion

Joseph must have known that demanding his brothers to bring Benjamin to Egypt would cause his father great heartache. Why, then, did Joseph make this demand?

How can you tell that Joseph's test already was having the desired effect on his brothers?

Prayer

Loving Savior, you never want anyone to remain in sin and perish. Lead us always to confess our sins to you and to trust in you for forgiveness. Amen.

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Day Five

Read Genesis 44:18-34.

Judah here was pleading for Benjamin, in whose sack Joseph's silver cup had been found. Joseph told the brothers that they were free to return home; however, Benjamin must remain a slave in Egypt because he supposedly stole Joseph's cup. Joseph's purpose in giving his brothers this very difficult test was to see whether their hearts had changed since they sold him as a slave.

Discussion

Give evidence from Judah's speech that his and his brothers' hearts had definitely changed for the better.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, you cared nothing for yourself and sacrificed yourself for us. Make us as selfless and self-sacrificing as you are so that we may always serve the best interests of others. Amen.

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Day Six

Read Genesis 45:1-15.

Joseph was in a position to punish his brothers for their cruelty to him. Yet he didn't do that.

Discussion

Give evidence from this reading that Joseph had completely and unconditionally forgiven his brothers for everything that they had done to him.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, you have fully and unconditionally forgiven us all our sins for Jesus' sake. Lead us always to forgive one another just as in Christ you forgave us. Amen.

Six

Train a Child*The Families of Hannah and Eli***Day One**

Read Proverbs 13:24.

Juan opened the door as he returned home from work. The sound of screaming immediately filled his ears. “Not again,” he thought as he ran into the kitchen.

“What’s Carmen upset about this time?” he asked Rosa.

“I asked her to pick up her toys,” Rosa replied, “and she openly defied me. So I told her she had to stay in her room until everything was picked up. And then she started screaming. She’s been at it for half an hour.”

Juan helped Rosa out of her chair, and the two of them walked together into Carmen’s room. Carmen was still screaming. “You hate me! You hate me!” she yelled. “You never let me do what I want to do!”

Juan put his arms around Carmen and held her tightly. She wriggled violently, trying to break free. But the more she squirmed, the tighter Juan held her, until finally she began to calm down.

“We need you to understand something, Carmen,” Juan began. “Your mother and I love you very much.”

“Yes,” Rosa continued. “If your dad and I hated you, we’d let you do whatever you wanted. But we can’t do that. Most of all, we want you to know that Jesus is your Savior. And we want to train you so that you can live as Jesus wants you to.”

“What you did to your mom today was very disrespectful,” said Juan. “And your mother was right to discipline you for that.”

“But don’t think that I hate you when I must discipline you,” said Rosa. “I discipline you because I love you and want you to grow up loving Jesus.”

Carmen sat and thought. After a long pause, she said, “I’m sorry, Mom.”

“Jesus forgives you, and I forgive you,” said Rosa. “Now let’s clean up these toys as our way of thanking Jesus for his forgiveness.”

Discussion

How can a parent correct a child’s wrong behavior in a God-pleasing way?

Give an example of parental correction that would not be God pleasing.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, we thank you for giving us parents who discipline us for our good. Help us always love and honor them as they train us to know and follow you. Amen.

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Day Two

Read 1 Samuel 2:12-17,22-25.

Hophni and Phinehas, the sons of Eli, were priests and, therefore, should have treated God's offerings with great respect. However, they greedily took parts of the offerings that were not theirs. They even committed adultery with the women who served at the tabernacle. By doing this, they showed great disrespect for God and his offerings. Eli, their father, knew what they were doing and rebuked them.

Discussion

Was Eli's rebuke strong enough? Explain.

If Eli's rebuke was not strong enough, what else should he have done to discipline his sons?

Prayer

Heavenly Father, forgive us for the times we have not respected or obeyed our parents. Help us always love and honor them, knowing that they discipline us for our good. Amen.

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Day Three

Read 1 Samuel 2:27-36.

Discussion

In Proverbs 19:18, God tells us, "Discipline your son, for in that there is hope; do not be a willing party to his death." How does the account of Eli and his sons illustrate this truth?

What did Eli do—or not do—to contribute to his sons' deaths?

Prayer

Loving Lord, we thank you for the discipline you give us through our parents so that we may live godly lives. Grant that all may continue to go well with us so that we may enjoy the life you have given us on this earth. Amen.

»»»»»»»»»» ♦ ««««««««««

Day Four

Read 1 Samuel 1:21-28.

Discussion

Why would it have been understandable if Hannah had had misgivings about taking Samuel to live at the tabernacle?

Hannah, however, showed no misgivings about fulfilling her vow and taking Samuel to live and work at the tabernacle. What does that say about her confidence in the training that she was able to give Samuel during the few years she had him at home?

Prayer

Gracious God, thank you for giving us godly parents who have taught us about you and about Jesus, our Savior. May we continue to grow in the faith you have given us all the days of our lives. Amen.

»»»»»»»»»» ♦ ««««««««««

Day Five

Read 1 Samuel 1:21-28.

Discussion

If you were Hannah, what things would you have done to train Samuel to know the Lord?

What things did your parents do for you to train you to know the Lord?

Prayer

O Lord, our Redeemer, how blessed we are to know you as our Savior. May we always love your Word, sing your praise, and live our lives to your glory. Amen.

»»»»»»»»»» ✧ ««««««««««

Day Six

Read 1 Samuel 2:18-21,26.

Discussion

In what ways did Hannah continue to have a strong and positive influence on Samuel even after he went to live at the tabernacle?

In what ways does Samuel's life show that it is never too early to train a child to know the Lord?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, you invited even the youngest of children to come to you, because your kingdom belongs to them. May we always trust you with a childlike faith so that we may never lose the blessings you have given us. Amen.

Seven

Fallen, Yet Forgiven*David's Sin and Its Consequences for His Family***Day One**

Read 2 Samuel 12:7-14.

The car was eerily quiet as Juan drove Carlos home from the police station. Finally, Juan broke the silence. “What were you thinking going to a beer party, Carlos? You’re only 15!”

“It wasn’t supposed to be a beer party,” Carlos said. “But when I got there and saw everyone else drinking, well, I guess I just got caught up in things. I’m really sorry.”

“I know you’re sorry,” Juan continued. “And your mother and I have forgiven you. More important, God has forgiven you. But that doesn’t mean you won’t suffer any consequences for what you’ve done. You’re not going to any parties for a long time. And your mother and I still have to talk about how long it will be before you do anything other than go to school and come home.”

“But Dad,” Carlos protested, “that hardly seems fair! I’ve never done anything like this before. Aren’t you being a bit harsh?”

“Well,” Juan replied, “if God were punishing you, what do you think would be fair?”

“I’d rather not think about it,” Carlos said quietly.

“I’ll tell you,” Juan continued. “Eternal death in hell would be fair. That’s what you deserve. Yet you don’t have to worry about going to hell. Jesus got the punishment that you deserve. And in him you are completely forgiven. However, there may still be some consequences. Remember King David? God fully forgave him for his sins of adultery and murder. Yet, as a consequence of his sin, his and Bathsheba’s infant son died.

“You see, Carlos, you can praise God that for Jesus’ sake he’s not giving you what you deserve. Knowing that will help you deal with the remaining consequences of your sin, because you know that whenever God disciplines you, he always does it for your good.”

Discussion

What is the difference between discipline and punishment?

Why doesn’t God’s discipline always feel as though it is intended for our good?

Prayer

Heavenly Father, we praise you that for Jesus' sake you have not given us what we deserve. Strengthen our faith so that we may humbly accept your discipline, knowing that when you discipline us, you always do it for our good. Amen.

»»»»»»»»»» ✦ ««««««««««

Day Two

Read 2 Samuel 11:1-5.

Discussion

An old saying warns, “Idle hands are the devil’s workshop.” How was this true for David?

Can you think of a time when your idle hands became the devil’s workshop?

What are some things that you can do to make sure that your hands do not become the devil’s workshop?

Prayer

Gracious God, forgive us for the many times we have opened the door to the devil by remaining idle. Fill our hands with useful things to do so that we may always serve and honor you. Amen.

»»»»»»»»»» ✦ ««««««««««

Day Three

Read 2 Samuel 11:6-17,26,27.

Discussion

When you’re trying to cover up a sin, it’s very easy for one sin to lead to another. List all the commandments David broke in trying to cover up his adultery with Bathsheba.

AGREE OR DISAGREE: Since the law prescribed the death penalty for those who committed adultery, David had no choice but to try to cover up his sin.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, you know even the deepest thoughts of our hearts. Forgive us for the many times we have tried to hide our sins. Lead us always to confess our sins to you and to look to you alone for forgiveness. Amen.

»»»»»»»»»» ♦ ««««««««««

Day Four

Read Psalm 32:3,4.

These verses describe how David felt during the time (which may have been over a year) that he refused to repent of his sin.

Discussion

AGREE OR DISAGREE: It is possible for guilt to make a person physically sick.

Has guilt ever made you feel physically sick?

What is the only solution to guilt, a solution that David refused to accept for a long time?

Prayer

Loving Lord, we praise you for removing from us the burden of our guilt. Keep our hearts free from all guilt through the forgiveness that you give us in Jesus. Amen.

»»»»»»»»»» ♦ ««««««««««

Day Five

Read 2 Samuel 12:1-7a,13,14.

The Lord immediately forgave David his sin as soon as David confessed it. And that forgiveness removed some, but not all, of the consequences of David's sin.

Discussion

Which consequences of David's sin did God's forgiveness remove? Which consequences remained?

EVALUATE: The fact that God did not remove every consequence of David's sin shows that David was not completely forgiven.

Prayer

Almighty Lord, you are a just God. We praise you for punishing Jesus in our place for all our sins. Help us always trust that in Jesus we are fully forgiven, even when some of the consequences of our sins remain. Amen.

»»»»»»»»»» ♦ ««««««««««

Day Six

Read 2 Samuel 12:15-23.

Discussion

Explain David's behavior after his son died.

What lessons can we learn from David about how to deal with the consequences of our sins that remain in our lives?

Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank you for loving us enough to discipline us. Help us always see your discipline as evidence of your love and humbly accept it for our good. Amen.

Eight

Holding On While Letting Go

*Mary's Relationship with Her Son Jesus***Day One**

Read Genesis 2:24.

Juan's eyes filled with tears when he saw his two little girls. They were dressed in white wedding gowns, each a little different so that everyone could tell them apart. And they were waiting for Juan to escort them down the aisle of their church so that they could get married.

"Please, Dad," said Marisa, "don't cry. You're going to get us crying—and we don't want to mess up our makeup!"

"But I'm just so happy for both of you," Juan responded, "and a bit sad to see you go off on your own. You've always been my little girls. Now I have to let go of you so that you can start your own families."

"But, Dad, you're not letting go of us completely, are you?" asked Carmen.

"I suppose not," said Juan. "Your mother and I will always be there to help and encourage you—especially when it comes to helping you hold on to your relationship with Jesus."

"You and Mom have already gotten us off to such a great start," Marisa replied. "We can't thank you enough for all that you've done for us. I still remember all those evenings when you sat on the sofa with Carlos, Carmen, and me and read us Bible stories."

"And I remember how patient you and Mom were when I was having all those temper tantrums," Carmen added.

Marisa continued, "Carmen and I are starting our own families now. But we will never let go of you or Mom. You will always be an important part of our lives."

"Thank you," Juan said as he wiped his tears from his face. "So, are we ready?"

"Yes!" Carmen and Marisa said as they each grabbed one of their father's arms. Then they turned to their father and kissed him simultaneously on his cheeks.

It was one of the best kisses he had ever received.

Discussion

As children grow older, is it harder to hold on to them or is it harder to let them go? Explain.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank you for our parents and all that you have done for us through them. Help us always cherish our relationships with them, even as we hold on to our relationship with you. Amen.

»»»»»»»»»» ✦ ««««««««««

Day Two

Read Luke 2:41-52.

Discussion

Why do you think Mary felt justified in rebuking Jesus for his behavior?

We are told that Mary “treasured all these things in her heart” (Luke 2:51). How does this show Mary’s determination to hold on to her faith relationship with Jesus?

Prayer

Gracious Lord, we thank you for sending your Son to carry out your plan of salvation. Help us always hold on to him, just as Mary did, and show respect for our parents, just as Jesus did. Amen.

»»»»»»»»»» ✦ ««««««««««

Day Three

Read John 2:1-11.

Discussion

AGREE OR DISAGREE: Mary was completely out of line when she went to Jesus and implied that he should do something about the wedding couple’s shortage of wine.

Mary continued to trust that Jesus would do something about the lack of wine. What in this account shows that?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, forgive us for the times when we have tried to tell you exactly when and how you should help us. Teach us to come to you in humble faith and to trust your wisdom, just as you taught Mary to do. Amen.

»»»»»»»»»» ✧ ««««««««««

Day Four

Read John 19:25-27.

While Jesus was hanging on the cross, he saw his mother and his disciple John standing there. As the perfect Son, he showed his love for Mary by asking John to take care of her for him.

Discussion

How did Jesus' final provision for his mother's care help Mary let go of Jesus without fear?

Prayer

Loving Savior, we praise you for keeping all the commandments, including the Fourth Commandment, perfectly for us. Help us always cling to you in faith, just as Mary did when she saw you dying on the cross for her sins and the sins of all people. Amen.

»»»»»»»»»» ✧ ««««««««««

Day Five

Read Acts 1:12-14.

Discussion

Acts 1:14 is the last mention of Mary, the mother of Jesus, in the Bible. Why is this a fitting way to end Scripture's account of Jesus' relationship with Mary?

Mary continued to hold on to Jesus throughout her life. What are some things that you can do so that you also continue to hold on to Jesus throughout your life?

Prayer

Heavenly Father, we praise you for bringing us into a relationship with you through faith in Jesus. Fill us with your Holy Spirit so that we never let go of you. Amen.

»»»»»»»»»» ♦ ««««««««««

Day Six

Review the four Bible passages that you read in the previous devotions this week.

Discussion

What lessons can you learn from Jesus about how children are to treat their parents throughout their lives?

Prayer

Our Father in heaven, we thank you again for our parents. Help us always love, honor, and respect them throughout our lives, just as Jesus did perfectly for us. Amen.