

Taking Faith Home

February 5, 2012

Scripture Verse for this Week:

Isaiah 40:31 (NLT)

“Those who trust in the Lord will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint. “

- Say at mealtime, read at bedtime, and try to commit to memory

Mealtime Prayer:

Lord, you set people free, you heal the sick, and you feed the hungry. We give you thanks and praise. Amen.

Our Four Keys to Passing on the Faith

Caring Conversation:

- Mark 1:35 tells us that Jesus went off to a quiet place to pray. When do you pray? Where do you pray? What do you pray about?
- Share about a time when you felt or experienced God answering your prayers.

Devotional Practices:

Prayer is a faith practice. We learn how to pray by praying with others - by practicing with them. In the home, parents have a special responsibility to teach their children how to pray by praying with and for them. Learn and practice this “five finger prayer” as a household. Put your hands together, palm to palm, with your fingers pointing upwards. Each finger on the hand represents a topic for prayer.

Thumb: Your thumb is nearest to you. Pray for the people who are closest to you (e.g. family, friends).

Pointer Finger: Pray for those who point the way – those who lead, teach, guide or heal others (e.g. government leaders, teachers, medical professionals and pastors).

Tallest Finger: This finger reaches up towards God. Give thanks and praise for all the good gifts God has given you and the world.

Ring Finger: This is our weakest finger. Pray for all those who are sick, in trouble or in pain. Pray also for God to forgive you for your weaknesses.

Little Finger: This is the smallest finger of all, and reminds us of where we should place ourselves in relation to God and others. As Jesus says, “The least shall be the greatest among you.” So, last of all, pray about your own needs and worries.

Rituals and Traditions:

Christian people are praying people. There are many traditions we can introduce into our homes to remind us to pray and to help make prayer a routine part of our lives. Here are some ideas:

- Have a prayer whiteboard, where household members can jot down prayer requests during the week for others to see.
- Make up a photo display of people you wish to pray for regularly.
- Start a household prayer journal, in which to record prayer points and answers to prayer.
- Display well-known prayers on your walls (e.g. the Lord’s Prayer).

Service:

Caring for the sick is a special way of showing Jesus’ love. Plan to visit or contact a sick friend or relative this next week.

Taking Faith Home

February 12, 2012

Scripture Verse for this Week:

Psalm 6:3-4 (CEV)

"I am in deep distress. How long will it be? Turn and come to my rescue. Show your wonderful love and save me, LORD. "

- Say at mealtime, read at bedtime, and try to commit to memory

Mealtime Prayer:

Our hands we fold, our heads we bow. For food and drink, we thank God now. Amen.

Our Four Keys to Passing on the Faith

Caring Conversation:

- How does it feel to be left out? Share about a time when you felt that way.
- People with leprosy were not allowed to mix with others in Jesus' time. When Jesus healed the man with leprosy, how do you think the man's life might have changed? (Read Mark 1:40-45.)
- How has Jesus changed your life? How does he want us to treat others who feel left out?

Devotional Practices:

This week, make a point of praying for people who are sick. Prepare a list of people and mention them by name each day in your household prayers. You might want to ask your pastor for the names of people in your church who need prayers of healing. Prepare "get well" cards to send to them.

Rituals and Traditions:

Post a "Question of the Week" on a piece of paper or a whiteboard in a common area of your home, together with a pen or marker. Questions might include, "*What are your favorite foods?*"; "*What is a birthday gift you'd like to receive?*"; "*What is your favorite Bible story?*"; "*What annoys you?*" Invite household members to post their answers during the week. Use the answers as the basis for sharing and conversation. Change the question each week. Ask household members for their question suggestions. It is good to create rituals of family strengthening in our daily lives. It is not uncommon for one child or person to feel "left out" as compared to a sibling whom they view as "better" or more favored by their parents. In responding to the behaviors and achievements of their children, parents can unconsciously send the message that one child is preferred over and against another. It is important for us to be intentional in showing love to all of our children in ways that are not behavior-dependent. When a child misbehaves, take time to explain, "I don't like what you did, but I still like you." Compliment them for their own unique and special qualities. Give unconditional affection.

Service:

In Jesus' time, lepers suffered not only because of their sickness, but also because they were social outcasts. When Jesus healed the leper he gave him a whole new beginning in life. Talk about people you know who may feel left out at school, church, or in the community. Plan to invite such a person for a meal or to be part of a household activity. Pray for them as a household.

Taking Faith Home

February 19, 2012

Scripture Verse for this Week:

Mark 9:7 (CEV)

"From the cloud a voice said, "This is my Son, and I love him. Listen to what he says!"

- Say at mealtime, read at bedtime, and try to commit to memory

Mealtime Prayer:

For every cup and every plateful, to you, O God, we're very grateful. Amen.

Our Four Keys to Passing on the Faith

Caring Conversation:

- Share about a time when you were scared. What did you do?
- In Mark 9:2-9 we hear about an amazing experience that Peter, James and John had one day. How do you think you would have reacted?
- God spoke from the cloud and told Jesus' disciples to listen to Jesus. How does listening to Jesus help us when we are scared or fearful?

Devotional Practices:

If your congregation does not have a worship service, you can observe Ash Wednesday (February 22) in your home. Mark one another with ashes made by burning some paper and crushing it into fine ashes. Then, mix the ashes with a small amount of olive oil. Make the sign of the cross on one another's foreheads as you say these words:

Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return. Turn back to God and believe in Jesus, your Savior.

Rituals and Traditions:

This week, Lent begins! Begin your household preparations by observing Shrove Tuesday (February 21). The name "shrove" comes from the practice of being "shriven" – going to church, confessing your sins and being forgiven – before the start of Lent. Shrove Tuesday is also sometimes known as Pancake Tuesday or Fat Tuesday, because households used up their remaining eggs and fats before Lent by making pancakes on this day. Here are some ideas for Shrove Tuesday:

- Have a pancake breakfast or dinner. As you eat, talk about what Jesus gave up for our sake, and what you might wish to give up for Lent to help you prepare spiritually for Holy Week.
- Have a household party with special dessert foods, party hats and an "Alleluia" sign. Prepare a box, covered with purple paper and a foil cross on top. Eat your meal, sing a party song, and welcome in Lent with noisemakers. At the end of the meal, "bury" the noisemakers and the "Alleluia" sign in the box. Open the box again on Easter Sunday.

Service:

Make this week "secret service" week in your home. Put your household member's names in a hat and have each person draw out someone else's name. They are to do some form of "secret service" for that person during the week.

Taking Faith Home

February 26, 2012

Scripture Verse for this Week:

1 Peter 3:18a (CEV)

“Christ died once for our sins. An innocent person died for those who are guilty. Christ did this to bring you to God.”

- Say at mealtime, read at bedtime, and try to commit to memory

Mealtime Prayer:

For food in a world where many walk in hunger; for faith in a world where many walk in fear; for friends in a world where many walk alone; we give you thanks, O Lord. Amen.

Our Four Keys to Passing on the Faith

Caring Conversation:

- What is temptation? Share about a time when you felt tempted.
- Jesus spent 40 days in the desert, where he was tempted by Satan. What do you think it was like for Jesus to spend that time alone in the desert?
- How did Jesus fight Satan’s temptations? How does God help us when we are tempted?

In Martin Luther’s *Small Catechism*, Luther shares his thoughts on the sixth part of the Lord’s Prayer – Lead us not into Temptation: What does this mean? God surely tempts no one to sin, but we pray in this petition that God would guard and keep us, so that the devil, the world, and our flesh may not deceive us or lead us into false belief, despair, and other great and shameful sins; and though we are tempted by them, we pray that we may overcome and win the victory.

Devotional Practices:

Cut out 2x4 inch strips of purple-colored paper. Each evening during Lent, gather prayer suggestions from those in your household. Write or symbolize each petition on a paper strip. After you have prayed together, glue or staple the strips into a paper chain, which will grow throughout Lent. Drape it somewhere in your home as a reminder to pray. Watch and wait for God’s answers to your prayers.

Rituals and Traditions:

Make a “crown of thorns” wreath to serve as a home devotional feature. Make or purchase a grapevine wreath to use as the base. Insert six purple candles, one for each remaining week of Lent, and a white candle to represent Christ. Light one candle for this next week, two candles for the week after, and so on. Begin Holy Week (on Palm Sunday) with all of the candles lit, then extinguish one candle each night thereafter. Light the Christ candle as you celebrate Jesus’ resurrection on Easter Sunday.

Service:

As a household, decide not to buy a special treat item that you would normally buy each week, or to set aside the money you might have spent on eating out. At the end of March, use what you have saved to buy food items to donate to a community food shelf or food pantry.