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EQUIPPING PARENTS OF ADOLESCENTS AT GRACE
BAPTIST CHURCH, SOMERSET, KENTUCKY,
TO LEAD FAMILY DEVOTIONS

A Project
Presented to
the Faculty of
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
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May 2013

APPROVAL SHEET

EQUIPPING PARENTS OF ADOLESCENTS AT GRACE
BAPTIST CHURCH, SOMERSET, KENTUCKY,
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Date _____

To Stephanie,
my devoted wife and helpmate;
and to Sydnee, Braedon, Averi, and Kendyl,
God's richest blessings.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	viii
LIST OF TABLES	ix
PREFACE	xii
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
Purpose	1
Goals	1
Ministry Context	2
Rationale	7
Definitions	8
Limitation and Delimitation	10
Research Methodology	10
Conclusion	12
2. BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS	13
Introduction	13
Foundations for Family Devotions	14
Deuteronomy 6:7	14
Ephesians 6:4	19
Psalm 78:1-8	26
Examples for Family Devotions	30
Exodus 12:1-28	30
Joshua 4:1-24	33

Chapter	Page
Conclusion	36
3. THEORETICAL SUPPORT FOR THE PRACTICE OF FAMILY DEVOTIONS	38
Introduction	38
Ingredients for a Departure from Family Devotions	39
Resources for Family Devotions from 1950 to 1990	40
Resources to Equip Parents and Pastors	41
Books to Use for Leading Family Devotions	47
Magazines Containing Family Devotions.	50
Resources for Family Devotions from 1990 to 2005.	52
Resources to Equip Parents and Pastors	54
Resources to Use for Leading Family Devotions	55
Resources for Family Devotions from 2005 to Present	58
Resources to Equip Parents and Pastors	58
Resources to Use for Leading Family Devotions	61
Conclusion	62
4. PROVIDING A FAMILY DEVOTION RESOURCE FOR PARENTS OF ADOLESCENTS	64
Introduction	64
Phase 1	65
Overview of the Family Devotions	66
Phase 2	70
Overview of the Weekly Parent Articles	74
Phase 3	79
Conclusion	82
5. EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT	83
Introduction	83

	Page
Evaluation of the Project Purpose and Goals	83
Key Findings of the Project	89
Busyness is the Greatest Challenge	90
Parents Need and Want Help Applying Scripture	91
Balance is Vital in Devotional Resources	93
Many Parents are Teaching—Just Not Systematically	94
There is a Correlation between the use of Family Devotions and As-You-Go Discipleship	95
Strengths of the Project	96
Weaknesses of the Project	97
Theological Reflections	99
Personal Reflections	102
Implications for the Future	103
Conclusion	105

Appendix

1. LETTER SENT TO PARENTS PROMOTING THE INITIAL PARENT LUNCHEON	107
2. PARENT PERCEPTIONS AND PRACTICES SURVEY PACKET	109
3. FAMILY DEVOTION GUIDE	112
4. PASTORAL PERSPECTIVES OF PARENTAL ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES OF LEADING FAMILY DEVOTIONS	159
5. WEEKLY ARTICLES SENT TO PARENTS	162
6. PARENT SURVEY SCORING KEYS	172
7. RESULTS OF PROJECT T-TEST	174
8. LETTER SENT TO PARENTS FOR THE CONCLUDING LUNCHEON	177
9. SAMPLE <i>FAITHTALK</i> GUIDE	178

Appendix	Page
10. POST-PROJECT PARENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	180
11. SELECTED DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY RESULTS	181
12. PARENT SURVEY RESULTS BY FREQUENCY	182
13. PARENT SURVEY RESULTS BY PERCENTAGE	203
BIBLIOGRAPHY	220

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

LXX	Septuagint
NLT	New Living Translation
HCSB	Holman Christian Standard Bible

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Parent perspectives results comparison chart	85
2. Parent practices results comparison chart	86
A1. Pastoral perspectives survey results	161
A2. Scoring key for parent survey	172
A3. T-Test results for combined parent surveys	174
A4. T-Test results for parent perspectives surveys	175
A5. T-Test results for parent practices surveys	176
A6. Demographic survey results	181
A7. Pre-project parent perspectives by frequency: All respondents	183
A8. Post-project parent perspectives by frequency: All respondents	184
A9. Pre-project parent practices by frequency: All respondents	185
A10. Post-project parent practices by frequency: All respondents	186
A11. Pre-project parent perspectives by frequency: Have attended Grace Baptist three years or less	187
A12. Post-project parent perspectives by frequency: Have attended Grace Baptist three years or less	188
A13. Pre-project parent practices by frequency: Have attended Grace Baptist three years or less	189
A14. Post-project parent practices by frequency: Have attended Grace Baptist three years or less	190
A15. Pre-project parent perspectives by frequency: Have attended Grace Baptist four years or more	191
A16. Post-project parent perspectives by frequency: Have attended Grace Baptist four years or more	192

A17. Pre-project parent practices by frequency: Have attended Grace Baptist four years or more	193
A18. Post-project parent practices by frequency: Have attended Grace Baptist four years or more	194
A19. Pre-project parent perspectives by frequency: Parents with teens and young children at home	195
A20. Post-project parent perspectives by frequency: Parents with teens and young children at home	196
A21. Pre-project parent practices by frequency: Parents with teens and young children at home	197
A22. Post-project parent practices by frequency: Parents with teens and young children at home	198
A23. Pre-project parent perspectives by frequency: Single Parents	199
A24. Post-project parent perspectives by frequency: Single Parents	200
A25. Pre-project parent practices by frequency: Single Parents	201
A26. Post-project parent practices by frequency: Single Parents	202
A27. Pre-project parent perspectives by percentage: All respondents	204
A28. Post-project parent perspectives by percentage: All respondents	205
A29. Pre-project parent practices by percentage: All respondents	206
A30. Post-project parent practices by percentage: All respondents	207
A31. Pre-project parent perspectives by percentage: Have attended Grace Baptist three years or less	208
A32. Post-project parent perspectives by percentage: Have attended Grace Baptist three years or less	209
A33. Pre-project parent practices by percentage: Have attended Grace Baptist three years or less	210
A34. Post-project parent practices by percentage: Have attended Grace Baptist three years or less	211
A35. Pre-project parent perspectives by percentage: Have attended Grace Baptist four years or more	212
A36. Post-project parent perspectives by percentage: Have attended Grace Baptist four years or more	213
A37. Pre-project parent practices by percentage: Have attended Grace Baptist four years or more	214

A38. Post-project parent practices by percentage: Have attended Grace Baptist four years or more	215
A39. Pre-project parent perspectives by percentage: Parents with teens and young children at home	216
A40. Post-project parent perspectives by percentage: Parents with teens and young children at home	217
A41. Pre-project parent practices by percentage: Parents with teens and young children at home	218
A42. Post-project parent practices by percentage: Parents with teens and young children at home	219

PREFACE

This endeavor of higher education has proven to be more valuable and beneficial to me than I could have ever imagined. Words cannot describe the level of gratitude I have for my wife, Stephanie, for her support, encouragement, and prayers. She is a tremendous blessing in my life, and I hope that all that I have learned has been applied at home before it was taken to others.

I owe a great deal of thanks to Dr. Michael Wilder for encouraging me to go back to school. I was quite apprehensive about returning to the realm of education, but he challenged me to pursue this doctorate. Dr. Timothy Paul Jones has made an enduring impact on my life and ministry through this process. I am indebted to him for his willingness to ask me the tough questions, provide helpful feedback through the process, and encourage me to pursue the idea for this project.

I would also like to express my deepest thanks to my pastor, Bill Haynes. I could not have accomplished this degree without his support and encouragement. However, my greatest area of appreciation to Bill is that he truly seeks to shepherd me and lead me to a closer walk with my Lord, Jesus Christ.

Two people in particular assisted me greatly through this project—Lynn Shearer and Scott Gilbert. Lynn has been my English expert and has spent countless hours helping me to put forth the highest quality writing possible. She has demonstrated a true heart of ministry to a Christian brother. Likewise, Scott Gilbert has been more than a co-laborer in the Gospel during the project. He has also taken the time to proofread my writings, offering suggestions and asking questions that have led me to think further about the subject at hand.

I will be forever indebted to my church family at Grace Baptist. Every day my

family experiences the reality of Jesus' promise in Mark 10:29-30, for we are truly loved as family at Grace Baptist. I am thankful for every person at Grace who has offered encouragement, provided feedback, and partnered with us in ministry as we continue to further the Gospel in Somerset and around the world.

Finally, I continue to be amazed at God's grace in my life and ministry. He has been much better to me than I could ever deserve or imagine. I pray that he alone will receive glory through this project and my life.

Todd Webster Meadows

Somerset, Kentucky
May 2013

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to evaluate the present practices of parents with adolescents at Grace Baptist Church, Somerset, Kentucky, in leading family devotions, and to equip parents with the knowledge and skills to lead family devotions.

Goals

The first goal for this project was to evaluate the present practices of the parents of adolescents at Grace Baptist in leading family devotions. A survey was developed and distributed to parents to measure the frequency of their family devotions, what they do during times of family devotions, and their perceived challenges that prevent them from having family devotions. In addition, a survey was given to the pastoral staff of Grace Baptist regarding what they perceive to be the challenges facing the parents at Grace Baptist as they seek to lead family devotions. These two tools revealed some of the challenges recognized by parents and challenges that they may be unaware of but are observed by their pastors.

The second goal of this project was to train parents to lead a family devotion. After many years of teaching parents their role in spiritually leading their children, it was an underlying assumption and observation that the parents know *why* it is important for them to lead their children spiritually at home. And, since parents at Grace tend to struggle with how to do this in everyday life, this project sought to equip them with the knowledge, skills, and habits to lead family devotions. Parents were trained during a seminar, which was followed up by a series of articles in the weekly parent-equipping

newsletter. This goal was measured by re-administering the initial parent survey at the end of the allotted time in order to observe the effectiveness of the provided devotional resource.

The third goal was to equip parents with a theologically sound and usable resource for leading their teenage children in family devotions. This devotional guide was a thirteen-week study of the life of Christ from the Gospels that focused on the importance of Jesus' incarnation in God's redemptive story. The end hope was that by using this devotional guide, parents would build the habit and confidence needed to continue leading family devotions at home. This goal was measured by conducting personal interviews with selected parents at the end of the time allotted for the project.

Ministry Context

Grace Baptist Church is located in Somerset, Kentucky. Somerset is the largest city in Pulaski County, which is in south central Kentucky. It is approximately thirty miles west of Interstate 75 and seventy-five miles south of Lexington, Kentucky, on Lake Cumberland.¹

The population of Pulaski County at the time of the 2010 United States census was 63,063, with 11,196 of those persons living within the city limits of Somerset. From 2000 to 2010, Pulaski County experienced a 12.2 percent growth in population, expanding from 56,217 people in 2000. However, the city of Somerset saw its population decrease 1.4 percent during this same period of time, from 11,352 people in 2000. This decrease indicates that the majority of newcomers to the community move into the outlying areas within Pulaski County. The southern portion of the county has experienced

¹All county statistics are taken from United States Census Bureau, <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/21/21199.html> (accessed August 8, 2012). All city statistics are taken from United States Census Bureau, <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/21/2171688.html> (accessed August 8, 2012).

the most growth; however, several neighborhoods have been built in northern Pulaski County to encourage growth in that area.

The ethnicity of the Somerset-Pulaski community is overwhelmingly white, as 92.3 percent of those living within the Somerset city limits and 96.1 percent of those living in the county are white. Hispanics form the next largest group in both the county and city, and blacks are the only other measurable group. Even with this disparity in ethnic diversity, little racial tension exists within the community.

The median income level for the community is much lower than that of the state of Kentucky, with the median household income in Pulaski County being \$32,771 and in Somerset being \$26,843, compared to the state median income of \$41,576. At first glance, this would be surprising to many living in the community because of a very large medical industry in Somerset. Lake Cumberland Regional Hospital is located in Somerset and serves as a regional hospital for the surrounding counties. In addition, there are numerous medical offices and a thriving medical park. Because Somerset is a regional hub for medical care, many doctors and medical professionals work in the area. However, even with the number of white-collar medical personnel in the area, the number of people living under the poverty level lowers the median income level. Within the city limits of Somerset, 21.9 percent of the residents live below the poverty level; 21.1 percent of the residents in Pulaski County are below the poverty level. Both of these numbers are above the state average of 17.7 percent.

Three public school systems serve the area, Pulaski County Schools, Science Hill Independent Schools, and Somerset Independent Schools. The Pulaski County School system is made up of two high schools and three middle schools. The Somerset Independent School system is comprised of one high school and middle school. The Science Hill School system has a middle school, but its students attend either the city or county school system for high school. In addition, three private Christian schools serve the area, Jordan Christian Academy, Somerset Christian School, and Saline Christian

Academy. In addition, an active homeschool co-op is in the area of which many adolescents are a part. While only 75.6 percent of the adults in Somerset and 76.1 percent of those in the county have obtained a high school degree, the community focuses strongly on academics and a general expectation of most families that adolescents will attend college upon graduation.

In order to understand the context of ministry within Grace Baptist Church, it is important to know its brief history. Grace Baptist was established in the fall of 2006 out of a desire to worship God and a love for the truth of God's Word. Some would be quick to assume that Grace was just the result of another church split, but Grace did not arise out of upset feelings, differing philosophies, or a fight over carpet colors. Instead, Grace was born when God called a group of believers to found a church that was committed to his glory above all else.

The founding members of Grace Baptist Church were all members of First Baptist Church of Somerset. First Baptist was founded in 1799 and has been an influential Southern Baptist church in the state of Kentucky since the formation of the Kentucky Baptist Convention. However, over the course of time many factions arose within the church, and liberal theological beliefs were held by a segment of its members. In 2004 Bill Haynes was called to be the senior pastor, joining the staff that included Ricky Teal, Scott Gilbert, and me; we had all served at the church since 2002. From his first day, Pastor Haynes met much opposition from a faction within the church due to his stance on the truth of God's Word, the inerrancy of Scripture, and his commitment to preach the entire counsel of Scripture. The opposition would only escalate over the next two years, despite multiple attempts by the pastoral staff and deacons to foster reconciliation, forgiveness, unity, and a spirit of love within the body.

The efforts of the staff, deacons, and other church leadership to resolve the conflict failed. However, God had other plans, and, in his timing, he raised up a body of believers to form Grace Baptist. Thus, on October 22, 2006, over 255 people gathered in

an unfinished medical office building to worship and seek God's direction. On November 19, 2006, Grace Baptist Church officially covenanted as a church with 280 founding members. The entire pastoral staff from First Baptist was among the founding members of Grace Baptist, and these four men faithfully continue to pastor the people of Grace Baptist. At present, there are 397 covenant members of the Grace Baptist family.

Since the beginning of Grace, God has been faithful to provide for this body of believers. In the first six months as a church, God provided a temporary building that would house a sanctuary, offices, and small group rooms for the children, along with a neighboring office suite to house the student ministry. Grace Baptist met in these temporary facilities for five and a half years. On September 9, 2009, God led the church to purchase a tract of land. Grace had previously looked at the land but could not afford the offer of ten acres at \$1.4 million. However, as the members of Grace sought God in prayer, the owner returned to offer Grace the entire tract of eighteen acres for only \$800,000. God provided this land for his people, and in less than a year he provided the funds necessary to pay it off. On December 5, 2010, Grace Baptist broke ground for the construction of a permanent home on the northern side of Somerset, and on April 6, 2012, the family of Grace gathered to celebrate Good Friday in the permanent home that God had provided.

At present Grace Baptist is comprised of a mix of young and old, which allows for a healthy intergenerational ministry. The ethnic demographic is less diverse than that of the surrounding community, with 97.6 percent of the members of Grace being white. However, families from all school systems within the community and from every walk of life form Grace Baptist Church. It is no rarity to observe a doctor and a farmer sitting together in fellowship after a worship service. The hallmarks of Grace continue to be a commitment to God's Word, a desire to worship, a warm and loving fellowship, and a passionate zeal to further the Gospel, and God has honored these commitments by growing the family of Grace Baptist by 41.8 percent since November of 2006.

Grace Baptist has a strong commitment to equip parents to spiritually lead their children. Since coming to Somerset in 2002, I have worked to lead parents to embrace and carry out their God-ordained role of spiritual leadership at home. In 2002 First Baptist was steeped in traditional, programmatic youth ministry. An immediate emphasis on the role of parents was made through the use of parent training luncheons and newsletters. In 2003 Scott Gilbert became the children's minister at First Baptist and also began seeking to equip parents in their role. The children and youth ministries began working together to unify the ministry to families, and since its the birth, Grace Baptist has functioned as what Timothy Paul Jones and Randy Stinson have called a family-equipping model of ministry.²

Parents at Grace are consistently provided with resources, training, and various other opportunities to be equipped to lead their families. First, parents receive a newsletter called *The Parent Line* every Monday, which is intended to encourage, equip, and inform parents with adolescents. Second, a scope and sequence teaching plan began to be implemented in 2005 and became fully functioning in 2009 for parents to know what their children would be taught from birth up through high school graduation. Third, ministry calendars are kept simple to allow parents more time with their families, and family retreats, marriage retreats, and parent-training seminars are commonplace in an effort to equip families. Fourth, families are provided with opportunities to take part in missions together. Each week families do missions in two area housing projects. In addition, opportunities are provided to go on mission trips as a family within the United States and internationally to Peru. Fifth, in January of 2011, weekly devotions based upon the sermon began being provided. Finally, in April of 2012, a rites of passage framework was implemented at Grace in order to guide parents as they rear their children toward biblical manhood and womanhood.

²Timothy Paul Jones and Randy Stinson, "Family Ministry Models," in *A Theology for Family Ministries*, ed. Michael Anthony and Michelle Anthony (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2011), 175.

Rationale

The family was the first institution ordained by God and ever since has been the primary context for passing on the truths of God from generation to generation. Deuteronomy 6:6-9, Psalm 78:1-8, and Ephesians 6:4 set the precedent in Scripture that parents are to teach their children diligently the ways and works of God. Therefore, the teaching of Scripture is clear: parents are the primary spiritual leaders of their children, and, as such, parents should be teaching God's Word to their children. However, twenty-first century parents struggle to fulfill this call for a myriad of reasons, and many parents do not even have a desire to lead their children spiritually.

The pastoral staff of Grace Baptist has worked hard to cultivate an attitude of parental leadership and responsibility over the past ten years, and the parents are ready to do what they can to lead their children. These parents of adolescents understand their role of spiritual leadership, but most of the parents would agree with Michelle D. Anthony when she writes, "Although many parents agree that the spiritual mantle has been given to them by God, they often do not feel prepared or equipped to pass on their faith to their children."³ If parents are going to spiritually lead and teach their adolescents at home, then it is the responsibility of the pastoral staff to equip them with the resources they need to do the job (Eph 4:11-12).

Therefore, the pastors of Grace have diligently sought to equip parents, as was explained above in the ministry context. However, this project was deemed necessary for two reasons. First, it was believed that very few families with adolescents were utilizing the weekly devotion that was being provided from the sermon. Second, a resource that was unavailable was that of a biblically sound family devotional for parents of adolescents. A key component of the rites of passage framework is a resource book that

³Michelle D. Anthony, "Equipping Parents to Be the Spiritual Leaders at Home," in *A Theology for Family Ministries*, ed. Michael Anthony and Michelle Anthony (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2011), 185.

has been provided to guide parents in leading their children through the rites of passage. Throughout this book, the pastoral staff recommended biblical resources parents could use to lead and instruct their children. While parents of younger children had a plethora of theologically sound family devotion resources to choose from, parents of adolescents had none from which to choose.⁴

Parents at Grace were in need of a biblically sound resource to teach their adolescents about God. This resource would help them learn how to lead a family devotion in such a way that they establish a habit and are able to continue leading their teenaged children in family devotions even after they finish the devotional resource. Hence, the ultimate benefit of this project was to provide a devotional guide that would not foster dependency upon the resource, but, instead, would train and equip parents to continue the practice of leading family devotions into the future. It was the presupposition of this project that parents were ready for this resource; it simply needed to be written and placed in their hands.

Definitions

Three key terms in this project can be ambiguous if left undefined. Thus, they are understood as follows:

Adolescent. For the purpose of this project, the term “adolescent” is used to describe young people between the ages of 13 and 18, or between the seventh and twelfth grades. David Keehn states, “Age 13 appears to begin the transitional years from childhood to adulthood,” and the age of 18 is the most common age at which children leave the care of their parents.⁵ This age range also coincides with the ages of the

⁴Theologically sound devotions for parents of younger children include Marty Machowski, *Long Story Short* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2010); Marian Schoolland, *Leading Little Ones to God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962); John Leuzarder, *The Gospel for Children* (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd Press, 2012); and Bruce Ware, *Big Truths for Young Hearts* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2009).

⁵David Keehn, “Youth Ministry from a Family Perspective,” in *A Theology for Family Ministries*, ed. Michael Anthony and Michelle Anthony (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2011), 226.

children of parents in the target group for the project since the student ministry at Grace Baptist ministers to young people in the seventh to twelfth grades.

Family devotion. “Family devotion” in this project is defined as an intentional time during which a family gathers together to pray and study Scripture. Calling this time a “faith talk,” Timothy Paul Jones states that it is a time “for the household to gather for prayer and to study a biblical truth together.”⁶ As Steve Wright has observed, “The specifics of family [devotions] are not spelled out in the Bible.”⁷ However, for the purpose of this project, the times of family devotion focused upon prayer and biblical instruction.

Spiritual leader. The designation of parents as the primary “spiritual leader” in this project refers to the role a parent possesses in being the primary person responsible for raising his or her children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. In explaining the role of spiritual leadership that parents have, Stuart Scott and Martha Peace write, “Parents have two primary biblical responsibilities toward their children, to bring them up: (1) in the discipline of the Lord, and (2) in the instruction of the Lord.”⁸ In a past conversation, a parent from the student ministry at Grace Baptist shared feelings of despair and insufficiency to be the spiritual leader for his child because he did not have a theological education. However, having a theological education does not make one a spiritual leader. Therefore, it was critical that those involved in this project understood that the designation of parents as the primary “spiritual leader” referred to the responsibility parents have in carrying out the instructions of Deuteronomy 6:7 and Ephesians 6:4.

⁶Timothy Paul Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide: How Your Church Can Equip Parents to Make Disciples* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan, 2011), 154.

⁷Steve Wright, *Apparent Privilege* (Wake Forest, NC: InQuest Ministries, 2008), 121.

⁸Martha Peace and Stuart W. Scott, *The Faithful Parent: A Biblical Guide to Raising a Family* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2010), 9.

Limitations and Delimitations

The first limitation of this project was its length because the family devotion resource was thirteen weeks long as predetermined by Timothy Paul Jones. One additional week was added to the project for the post-project evaluation and personal interviews with parents. Therefore, the total length of the project was fourteen weeks. The second limitation was the subject matter of the devotional guide, which was also determined by Timothy Paul Jones. The family devotion resource provided in this project was confined to the life of Christ in the Gospels prior to the Triumphal Entry.

Three delimitations guided this project. First, the focal group delimited it because the project was focused on parents with adolescent children living in their home at that time. Second, this target group of parents was from Grace Baptist Church, Somerset, Kentucky. Therefore, due to these first two delimitations, the target group for the project was made up of sixty-one parents. Finally, this project focused on equipping parents to lead their adolescent children by providing them with training and a resource for leading family devotions.

Research Methodology

A Family Perceptions and Practices survey developed by Timothy Paul Jones in his book *Family Ministry Field Guide* was used to evaluate the family discipleship perceptions and practices of parents at Grace Baptist. This survey was given to the parents twice during the project, at the beginning and again after parents had concluded the allotted time for the devotional series. During week 1 of the project, a parent seminar was held at which parents completed the survey, received the devotional guide, and were taught how to lead a family devotion. Any parents who were not present at this seminar received via email or personal delivery the information they missed; were encouraged to watch a video of the luncheon that was posted on the Internet; and were personally contacted to clarify any questions. During this first week of the project, the pastoral staff of Grace Baptist completed a similar survey that measured parental perceptions and

practices as observed by the pastors of the church. This survey served to provide additional knowledge of challenges parents were facing of which they may have been unaware.

Parents were instructed at the seminar to establish a plan for family devotions at their home in order to set a consistent time and place for the family to gather. Additionally, they were encouraged to meet together as a family for the purpose of discussing what they would be doing and their expectations for this time together. Parents were instructed to begin the weekly family devotional guide during week 1 of the project. Coinciding with starting the family devotional guide, parents received additional equipping and instruction via *The Parent Line*, a weekly parent newsletter that is emailed to parents of adolescents at Grace Baptist.

The family devotional guide was thirteen weeks in length, providing parents with one devotion per week to lead at home. The focus of the devotional guide was the gospel message from the life of Christ in the Gospels prior to the triumphal entry. Each devotional was practical and easy to use, regardless of the knowledge or resources of the parent, and was comprised of six sections: Be Together, Hear Together, Learn Together, Talk Together, Pray Together, and Serve Together. These sections guided families through a time of fellowship, learning, discussion, and prayer in view of sending them out to be on mission for the glory of God.

At the conclusion of the thirteen weeks allotted for using the devotional guide, parents were invited to a concluding luncheon at the church. At the luncheon, parents received the same Family Perceptions and Practices survey they completed at the beginning of the project. In addition, there was an open time of discussion regarding the experiences families had as they went through the project. This was an open time in which parents were asked to make suggestions, share struggles, explain aspects that were helpful, and ask questions. Over the course of the following week, I compared the two surveys from each parent in light of the additional parental feedback from the dinner. As

progress or regress was observed in the survey results among individual families, I set up times for personal interviews with parents during week 14. During these interviews, parents were asked to share how many of the devotionals they led, why they quit (if they did), and their general opinion of the devotional guide.

The Family Perceptions and Practices survey was scored by numerically weighing the answers from 1 to 6. The best possible answer value was 6, while 1 was the worst possible answer value making 96 the optimal total score. Once the survey was completed, the total score was assessed using a T-Test of dependent samples to determine whether or not the project made a significant difference in the perceptions and practices of the parents involved in it. The survey was also broken into two subscales, Family Perceptions and Family Practices, which each had the optimal score of 48. A significant difference that was either negative or positive as determined by the T-Test when the pre- and post-project surveys were compared warranted a personal interview with a parent during week 14.

Conclusion

The purpose, goals, and research plans introduced above are intended to provide a clear plan of action for meeting a ministry need within the context of Grace Baptist Church, Somerset, Kentucky. In the following pages, a biblical foundation will be laid to provide the basis for why parents should develop the habit of leading family devotions. Resources that have been available to parents and pastors since 1950 will then be surveyed to provide a framework for equipping parents with a family devotion resource. Following these two chapters of research, the project implementation will be explained and then evaluated based upon its measurable results.

CHAPTER 2
BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

This project contends that the practice of family devotions is one way in which parents can effectively exert spiritual leadership at home. However, no consensus opinion among modern Christians regarding the frequency of family devotions, the manner in which they are carried out, their content, or, regrettably, even whether or not parents should teach the Word of God at home exists. While there is indeed room for differing opinions concerning *when* families should gather to study God’s Word, *how* they should do so, and *what* they should study, two foundational principles can be gleaned from Scripture in regard to the practice of family devotions. First, Scripture gives parents the responsibility to teach their children about God, which is a truth that will be expounded upon in the following pages. Second, this God-ordained responsibility is not confined to parents with young children. Instead, Scripture instructs parents to practice times of intentional teaching with their children regardless of their age. Deuteronomy 4:9; 6:4-9, 20-25; 11:18-21; and 32:46 provide the foundational call for parents to teach their children about who God is and what he has done. The Hebrew word בן (*ben*) used in these passages refers to sons, children, or descendants and holds no age designation or limitation.¹ Likewise, in the New Testament the word τέκνον (*teknon*), meaning “children,” used in Ephesians 6:4 and Colossians 3:21 makes no distinction regarding

¹R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 1:113-14; John MacArthur, *Ephesians, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 1986), 311.

age, but refers to “children who are growing up and are still subject to their parents.”² Therefore, parents should seek to teach their children the Word of God as long as their children are under their authority. The following passages provide a biblical foundation for the parental practice of intentionally teaching adolescent children about God through the use of family devotions.

Foundations for Family Devotions

Deuteronomy 6:7

As a result of a renewed emphasis on family ministry in the church, recent history has seen this text explicated quite often as the foundation for the parental responsibility to spiritually lead children.³ The purpose of exegeting Deuteronomy 6:7 here is not to show the role of spiritual leadership parents have but, instead, to provide the foundational biblical understanding for this project. Specifically, parents have the responsibility to spiritually lead their children in an *intentional* manner, and, as will be shown, the consequences of doing so or not must never be underestimated.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 establishes the precedent that parents are the primary spiritual leaders of their children, and the context of this passage reveals its importance to its author, Moses. Deuteronomy contains the final words of Moses and is a book that is concerned with the living out of God’s Law. In his address, Moses not only reminds the

²Peter T. O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 44 (Nashville: Word, 1982), 224.

³For further study of the role of parents as the primary spiritual leaders of their children, see Randy Stinson and Timothy Paul Jones, *Trained in the Fear of God: Family Ministry in Theological, Historical, and Practical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2011); Timothy Paul Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide: How the Church Can Equip Parents to Make Disciples* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Pub. House, 2011); Timothy Paul Jones, *Perspectives on Family Ministry: Three Views* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2009); Michael Anthony and Michelle Anthony, *A Theology for Family Ministry* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2011); Voddie Baucham, *Family Driven Faith: Doing What It Takes to Raise Sons and Daughters Who Walk with God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007); Voddie Baucham, *Family Shepherds: Calling and Equipping Men to Lead Their Homes* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011); Tad Thompson, *Intentional Parenting: Family Discipleship by Design* (Adelphi, MD: Cruciform Press, 2011).

people of the Law that was graciously given to them by God, he also purposefully tells them of the blessings and curses that await their respective obedience or disobedience to the Law.⁴ He understood the importance of passing on the truths of God, so he instructed the people to practice purposeful spiritual leadership in their homes. The stakes are high for parents, and they must be diligent to instruct their children in the Lord.

Therefore, Deuteronomy 6:4-9 has historically been a very important passage to the Jew. “Hear, O Israel!” in 6:4 is the beginning of what has been traditionally called the Shema, so named after the Hebrew verb שָׁמַע (*shama*) meaning “to hear.” The imperative form of the verb is used here, calling the people not only to hear, but also to obey what is heard. Eugene Merrill writes, “To hear God without putting into effect the command is to not hear him at all.”⁵ Additionally, as Gerhard Von Rad points out, “Hear, O Israel” “was the traditional summons with which in the old days the assembly for worship of the tribes, the *qāhāl*, was opened.”⁶ The call of the Shema was to obedience and worship. Thus, the expectation for God’s people is to carry out the command to love God completely and to do so as an act of worship. This command to worship God should not be overlooked, for a failure to worship God is the root of the above-mentioned curses Moses warns of throughout Deuteronomy. Parents must strategically teach their children to embrace their God and to live their lives as what Paul would describe in Romans 12:1 as “living sacrifices.”

⁴The idea of blessings and curses is prominent in the book of Deuteronomy. In 6:1-2, Moses provides a threefold purpose for the Law—that it would lead the people to act accordingly, fear God, and have prolonged life. In 6:3, two blessings of obedience are given: namely, that life would go well for them and they would increase in number. Additionally, Moses warned the people of the curses that would come as a result of disobeying the Law in 4:25-27; 7:10; 8:19-20; 28:15-68; and 30:17-18. Likewise, he told the people of the rich blessings that are found in obeying the Law in 5:33; 6:1-3; 7:9; 7:12-16; 11:8-25; 15:4-6; 28:1-14; 30:1-10; and 30:15-16.

⁵Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, The New American Commentary, vol. 4 (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 1994), 162.

⁶Gerhard Von Rad, *Deuteronomy: A Commentary*, The Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966), 63.

This command to worship means, as Peter Craigie contends, that the Shema is both theological and practical.⁷ Theologically, the statement “the Lord our God, the Lord is one!” sets Yahweh above all other gods.⁸ There is no other god like him, so he alone is to be worshipped by his covenant people. Parents must not only *know* this truth, but should also be intentional in teaching their children how this truth applies to their lives. Therefore, Deuteronomy 6:4-7 reveals three practical implications that flow out of the knowledge that Yahweh is the only true God.

First, the knowledge that there is only one true God should result in loving God “with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might (Deut 6:5).” The truth of God’s sovereignty displayed mightily to his people should rightly result in a heartfelt love for him. C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch observe, “[T]he motive for this is to be found in the words ‘thy God,’ in the fact that Jehovah was Israel’s God, and had manifested Himself to it as one God.”⁹ From this point on in Deuteronomy, God’s expectation for His people to love Him wholeheartedly becomes a prominent theme.¹⁰ The emphasis on man’s love for God reveals how he expects man to respond to his

⁷Peter, Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 169.

⁸The Hebrew text translated here as “the Lord our God, the Lord is one” has four possible translations: “the Lord our God, the Lord is one” (NIV, ESV, NKJV, HCSB); “The Lord our God is one Lord” (KJV, RSV); “The Lord is our God, the Lord alone” (NLT); or “The Lord is our God, the Lord is one” (NASB). Scholars are divided on the best translation of this phrase. Eugene Merrill supports either the first or last translation; J. G. McConville holds to the first translation; Peter Craigie, Moshe Weinfeld, and Gerhard Von Rad support the second translation (although Von Rad also finds the third translation to be acceptable); and C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch also support the third translation. Depending upon which translation is supported, two theological truths are present. First, the Lord is one, a perfect unity. He is not a host of gods, but is the unified God of Israel’s monotheistic faith. Second, Yahweh reigns supreme over all other gods. There is none like him. Although he has avoided taking a definite stance on the translation, J. A. Thompson offers the best conclusion: “Whatever translation is chosen, the essential meaning is clear. Yahweh was to be the sole object of Israel’s worship, allegiance and affection.” J. A. Thompson, *Deuteronomy*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentary (London: InterVarsity Press, 1974) 121.

⁹C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *The Pentateuch: Three Volumes in One*, Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 3:323.

¹⁰See Deut 7:9; 10:12; 11:1, 13, 22; 13:3; 19:9; 30:6, 16, 20.

covenant love. This covenant relationship bound by love should be the goal parents have for their children—to love the Lord with all their heart, soul, and might.

Next, in 6:6, Moses states that the commands of God should be planted within the hearts of His people. Significantly, before he instructs the people to teach their children, Moses calls them to set his words within their own hearts. As parents prepare to lead their children spiritually, they must be ever mindful of the truth that they cannot lead children to love the Lord if they themselves do not have their hearts set upon him.

Finally, in Deuteronomy 6:7-9, Moses teaches that the works and commands of God should be intentionally passed on to future generations. As Craigie notes, “Having understood the commandments for themselves, the people were then responsible for their children.”¹¹ The foundation for parents as the primary spiritual leaders of their children is here established, and it is laid by calling parents to intentionally teach their children in the LORD. Standing before the people of God, Moses instructs parents to pass the commandments of God on to their children “not simply by enforcing them as a law code but by making them the fabric of life and conversation.”¹² The hearts of parents are to be so consumed by a love for God that they purposefully teach those whom they love most, their own children, to, in turn, love God above all else.¹³ This final implication is *the* foundational understanding for this project—parents are to intentionally pass on the truths of God and their love for him to the coming generations. They must not leave the continuance of their faith up to chance, or merely hope their children learn about God.

¹¹Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 170.

¹²J. G. McConville, *Deuteronomy*, Apollos Old Testament Commentary, vol. 5 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 142.

¹³Moses likewise gives this instruction for parents to teach their children in Deut 4:9; 11:18-20; and 32:46, consistently showing that parents are expected to lead their children in the commands of the Lord and to love the Lord.

Instead, they must weave the works and truths of God into the fabric of their lives in such a way that it leads their children to worship the LORD.

Moses instructs parents in Deuteronomy 6:7 to teach their children about God in two ways—“diligently” and “when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.” While both of these methods for discipling children in the home are beneficial, necessary, and even intentional, the “diligent” discipleship of children is of utmost importance for this project because diligence implies a methodical, focused, determined effort to accomplish a set task or objective. Diligence requires intentionality, and intentionality requires diligence—they are mutually dependent.

The Hebrew word used to express the diligent teaching of children is *וְשִׁנְנָתָם* (*shanan*), which means “to sharpen or whet” when used in the Qal form. For example, in Deuteronomy 32:41, Isaiah 5:28, Psalm 45:6, and Proverbs 25:18, *וְשִׁנְנָתָם* is used in reference to the sharpening of swords and arrows. However, in Deuteronomy 6:7 it is used in the Piel expressing intensive action.¹⁴ Thus, parents should not merely sharpen their children’s knowledge of the Lord, they should diligently teach them that He alone is God and worthy of their love.

Translators have conveyed the meaning of the Piel form of *וְשִׁנְנָתָם*, used only here in the Old Testament, in various ways that each reveal the intentional aspect of the parental responsibility to teach their children. The Jewish scholar Moshe Weinfeld translates the verb form to be “inculcate.”¹⁵ Formally equivalent, or literal, English translations such as the NASB, ESV, and KJV translate it as teaching children “diligently,” while dynamic equivalent translations such as the NIV and NLT express the

¹⁴Harris, Archer, and Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 2:943.

¹⁵Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1-11: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible, vol. 5 (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 332.

meaning of the verb by translating the phrase as “impress them on your children” and “repeat them again and again,” respectively. Merrill writes,

[The parent] must impress the words of covenant faith into the thinking of his children by inscribing them there with indelible sharpness and precision. . . . The image is that of the engraver of a monument who takes hammer and chisel in hand and with painstaking care etches a text into the face of a solid slab of granite. The sheer labor of such a task is daunting indeed, but once done the message is there to stay.¹⁶

Thus, the Piel form of *שׁוּנְנָה* refers to the diligent sharpening or instruction of children. Parents have the responsibility to instruct their children intentionally in the Lord, and there is no greater or more practical truth than that of the Shema—“The Lord our God, the Lord is one.” This truth should be diligently inscribed upon the hearts of children by their parents, who are to bring the knowledge of the Lord to the front of the minds of their children.

Ephesians 6:4

As part of the New Testament household codes, Ephesians 6:4 affirms the intentional nature of parental leadership at home and provides further clarity as to what it looks like.¹⁷ In 5:22-33, Paul addresses the marriage relationship before moving on to the relationship between parent and child in 6:1-4. Prior to exegeting Ephesians 6:4, it is important to note two truths. First, Ephesians 6:1-4 reveals that both children *and* parents have responsibilities in the Christian home. Children are called to obey their parents in 6:1-3. However, they are not to be left unguided, nor are they to be farmed out to “professionals” for spiritual formation. Instead, parents also have a duty at home: the spiritual nurture of their children. Second, the ecclesiological structures that arise with the birth of the church do not negate the paternal role of leading children in the Lord. A

¹⁶Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 167.

¹⁷Eph 5:22-6:9 are considered the household codes in Ephesians and speak to how the godly family should function.

temptation for parents, and, specifically, fathers, to abdicate their role of spiritual leadership often arises with the hiring of pastors with specific age-based responsibilities. However, Ephesians 6:4 contains one of the clearest, most referenced instructions in the New Testament concerning the duty of fathers¹⁸ in the home, calling them not to provoke their children to anger, but, instead, to “bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” Ephesians 6:4 destroys the idea that fathers should farm out the discipleship of their children. Instead, they are to “bring them up” in Christ, regardless of the presence *or* absence of pastors hired to work with teens and their families.

Three terms in Ephesians 6:4 are pertinent to the idea of paternal intentionality in teaching their children: ἐκτρέφω (*ektrepho*), παιδεία (*paideia*), and νοουθεσία (*nouthesia*). Each of these terms deals with the positive admonition of Paul to “bring [children] up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” The first term, ἐκτρέφω, is a compound word formed from two other Greek words—ἐκ and τρέφω. The prefix ἐκ is a preposition that means “from, away from, out of.” The suffix τρέφω is a verb meaning “to nourish, support, bring up, or nurture.” Therefore, a very literal reading of the verb would be “to bring up from” or “to nourish out of.” The phrase ἐκτρέτε αὐτὰ is translated by the NASB as “bring them up” and, as Frank Thielman argues, most likely refers to teaching them the law of God.¹⁹

The usage of ἐκτρέφω elsewhere brings clarity to its present meaning. This term is used often in the LXX in reference to rearing children,²⁰ but it is used elsewhere

¹⁸While the application of Eph 6:4 certainly does not exclude mothers, it was originally written to fathers. This distinction is apparent from the Greek, where γονεὺς (“parents”) is used in Eph 6:1, and Paul then uses πατὴρ (“father”) in 6:4. The emphasis on fathers is likely due to the importance placed upon the father as the primary educator of children in both Jewish and Roman contexts. For further study on the role of the father in the education of his children, see Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 42 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1990), 398-402.

¹⁹Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 401.

²⁰1 Kgs 11:20; 12:8-10; 2 Kgs 10:6; 2 Chr 10:10; Isa 23:4; Hos 9:12; and Zech 10:9 all use ἐκτρέφω in the LXX.

in the New Testament only in Ephesians 5:29. There, Paul is describing the way in which a man is to love his wife as he does himself—he is to “nourish” her. Paul sets two precedents for why a man is to nourish his wife. First, no man hates his own flesh, and his wife is flesh of his flesh. Second, Christ builds up, nourishes, and supports the church. Therefore, just as a man nourishes his own flesh, the husband is to build up his wife, support her, and nourish her by the Word.

Paul establishes a similar contrast for fathers. Rather than stir their children up to anger, they are to build up, nourish, and support their children. In Ephesians 5:29 ἐκτρέφω is used in contrast to hating oneself, and here it stands similarly as an antonym for the provocation of a child to anger. William Hendrickson contends that since this positive appeal stands in contrast to the negative appeal to avoid provoking children to anger, “full justice should be done to its prefix; hence, love must replace anger. The children should be reared tenderly.”²¹ In Roman culture, fathers were endowed with the utmost power and authority, both of which could easily be used to provoke anger within children.²² Therefore, Paul instructs fathers to bring their children up in the Lord, which stands in contrast to the ways many fathers lorded their position over their children. In addition, they are to bring their children up tenderly, as Calvin teaches regarding ἐκτρέφω: “[This word] unquestionably conveys the idea of gentleness and forbearance Let [parents’] conduct towards their children be at once mild and considerate, so as to guide them in the fear of the Lord.”²³ Intentionality is thus expressed by Paul’s use of ἐκτρέφω because fathers are to make a purposeful effort to rear their children in the Lord

²¹William Hendriksen, *Exposition of Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1996), 262.

²²See Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 42 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1990), 398-402, for further study on the power and influence of fathers in the Roman world.

²³John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians*, trans. William Pringle, *Calvin’s Commentaries*, vol. 21 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996), 329.

rather than provoking them to anger. Exasperating a child is easy and comes as first nature within the sinful hearts of parents. However, intentionality is needed for a man to tenderly and purposefully rear his children in a way that leads them out of the ways of the world and toward the grace of God.

Paul then uses two words to describe how the godly father is to bring up his children in the Lord: παιδεια and νοουθεσια, or, as the NASB translates them, “discipline” and “instruction.” Before exploring the meaning of these two terms, it is important to understand the word κυριου, or “in the Lord,” because it is a qualification that demands intentionality. There are two options as to what type of genitive κυριου is. First, it could be a subjective genitive, meaning that the discipline and instruction comes “from the Lord.” In this sense, the Lord is giving discipline and instruction to the children through the father. Second, it could be an attributive genitive expressing quality, meaning that the discipline and instruction are done within the sphere of Christ’s commands. In other words, it is Christian discipline and instruction in nature and quality.

Scholars are divided as to the type of genitive this is, and the discussion is more extensive than space will here allow.²⁴ However, it should be noted that either way it is interpreted requires fathers be intentional in the rearing of their children, because life in a sin-stricken world will not *accidentally* provide discipline and instruction that is Christian in nature *or* that is from the Lord. Fathers must seek to intentionally establish Christ as both the source *and* sphere of their child-rearing. Christ being the source of parental instruction will help children to know that the ultimate authority in their life is far above their parents—it is God himself. Thus, their disobedience is not a mere break in

²⁴Scholars who interpret κυριου as subjective include F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 398; Georg Bertram, “παιδεια,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 5:624; and Theilman, *Ephesians*, 402. Those who understand it as attributive include Peter O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 446-47; Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 408; and Hendrickson, *Exposition of Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon*, 262-63.

their relationship with a parent, but, more importantly, it is sin against the holy God. Likewise, when Christ is the sphere, or context, of parental instruction children will better understand what it means to walk in Christ as Paul had already instructed in Ephesians 4:1-5:21.

In order to understand Παιδεια and νοθεσια, one must note that the two terms are very similar. Some scholars, such as Klyne Snodgrass, interpret the two terms as expressing one concept.²⁵ However, these two words should not be viewed as synonyms, and the distinction has significant implications for the intentional instruction of children. Peter O'Brien points out, "Although often used together, the words probably have slightly different nuances."²⁶

Two aspects of the nuance should be understood, with the first being the nature of the instruction the terms refer to. Νοθεσια is primarily verbal in nature. Conversely, while παιδεια undoubtedly contains a verbal element, it is not constrained to being verbal. Scholars note this distinction and often draw a line between the two terms based upon their verbal nature. Hendrickson distinguishes παιδεια from νοθεσια by arguing that παιδεια is "*what is done to the child,*" while νοθεσια is "*what is said to the child.*"²⁷ However, this distinction must be limited because παιδεια cannot be confined only to physical action done to the child. Andrew Lincoln offers a more helpful distinction of the terms by pointing out that παιδεια speaks of education in a more general sense while νοθεσια is more specific verbal correction.²⁸ Lincoln's distinction most accurately

²⁵Klyne Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 322.

²⁶Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 446.

²⁷Hendriksen, *Exposition of Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon*, 262.

²⁸Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 42.

delineates the verbal nuance between the two terms because he maintains their connectedness while still expressing each term's unique nature.

Additionally, usage of παιδεια outside of Ephesians 6:4 is varied. Παιδεια is used in reference to both training and discipline in the LXX, as Lincoln has pointed out.²⁹ Therefore, its usage in the LXX brings little clarity to the best way of understanding it in the present context. Παιδεια is used elsewhere in the New Testament in 2 Timothy 3:16 and in Hebrews 12:5, 7-8, and 11. Its use in 2 Timothy 3:16 refers to the general education provided by the word of God and is thus translated as “training” or “instruction.” Other forms of παιδεια are used in the same manner in Acts 7:22, referencing the instruction Moses received in the learning of the Egyptians; Acts 22:3, referencing Paul's instruction under Gamaliel; and Titus 2:12, referring to the grace of God that teaches his people to deny ungodliness. Παιδεια as used in Hebrews 12 refers to the discipline or chastisement of the Lord toward His people. Additional usage of the word group as disciplinary in nature is found in Luke 23:16 and 22, when Pilate speaks punitive words toward Jesus; and Revelation 3:19, Jesus' words of discipline to the church at Laodicea.

Consequently, translators have differed in how they understand the meaning of παιδεια here in Ephesians 6:4. Both the ESV and the NASB translate it as “discipline.” While discipline is a possible component of παιδεια, it is not its primary function or characteristic. Georg Bertram describes the word in this way:

[It] denotes the upbringing and handling of the child which is growing up to maturity and which thus needs direction, teaching, instruction and a certain measure of compulsion in the form of discipline or even chastisement. Παιδεια is both the way of

²⁹Lincoln states, “Although in their broader Greek usage they referred to education in general and to its goal of culture, in the LXX, παιδεια and its cognates acquired the sense of discipline and chastisement. . . . At the same time, in the LXX wisdom literature παιδεια is often linked with σοφια, ‘wisdom’. . . . For both Philo and Josephus, the παιδεια word group continues to have the sense of education, which can involve discipline, and is one of the concepts which forms a bridge between the law and Greek culture” (Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 407).

education and cultivation which has to be traversed and also the goal which is to be attained.³⁰

Therefore, παιδεια should be understood here as “training” or “instruction” because bringing children up in the Lord requires more than corrective discipline and admonition; it requires training and instruction. It is best used here in reference to what A. T. Robertson describes as “the general education and culture of the child.”³¹ Therefore, translations that interpret the word as “nurture,” such as the KJV, or “training,” such as the NIV and HCSB, have better conveyed the meaning of the word in English. It is the education of children toward a specific goal and for a specific purpose.

The second aspect of this nuance is the timing of the two forms of instruction. Παιδεια, being general instruction, occurs continuously as parents weave the truths and worship of God into the very fabric of their family. However, νοουθεσια is more occasional, as it typically “implies that there is some difficulty or problem in the attitude or behavior of those receiving the admonition.”³² J. Behm writes in reference to Ephesians 6:4, “[Νουθεσια] denotes the word of admonition which is designed to correct while not provoking or embittering.”³³ Since this term tends to be more occasional in its usage, it does not have direct implications to the present discussion for the intentional teaching of children through family devotions.

However, two peripheral points regarding νοουθεσια deserve mention. First, the practice of family devotions establishes a context for νοουθεσια κυριου to occur. As parents spend time teaching the Word at home, they will have opportunities to speak

³⁰Georg Bertram, “παιδεια,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 5:596.

³¹A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1931), 4:548.

³²Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 408.

³³J. Behm, “νοουθετεω, νοουθεσια,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 4:1021.

admonishment in the Lord as sin rears its head in the lives of their children. Wise parents will intentionally put themselves in the position to admonish sinful behaviors and attitudes they see in their child. Second, it should be noted that this word is used elsewhere in the New Testament in reference to the role of the pastor.³⁴ While this does not definitively establish fathers as pastors of their home, it does allude to their role as being one that is pastoral within the home. As such, the father has the responsibility to intentionally shepherd his own family and correct them in the Lord as necessary for their own good.

The nuance, therefore, that exists between παιδεια and νοουθεσια may be subtle, but it is justifiable and important because it teaches parents that instruction is not just correction as occasion requires. Instead, parents are to intentionally rear their children in the instruction of the Lord. There is a goal for Christian parents, and that goal, as stated in Deuteronomy 6:5-7, is for their children to love God wholeheartedly and pass on their faith to their own children. Ephesians 6:4 reveals that this goal is achieved in the modern church the same way it was in Moses' day—through the diligent, intentional, continuous instruction of children in the Lord.

Psalm 78:1-8

Psalm 78:1-8 serves to focus parents upon the previously stated goal. While the majority of the psalter is a collection of praises and prayers to God, Psalm 78 is didactic, meaning that the purpose of the psalm is to teach or provide instruction.³⁵ The teaching in mind here is for future generations to place their trust in God. John Goldingay teaches

³⁴Col 1:28, 1 Cor 4:14, and 1 Thess 5:12 all refer to νοουθεσια in the realm of pastoral duty. Additionally, Behm points out that with exception of one reference, the post-apostolic fathers used the νοουθεσια word group in reference to the pastoral role rather than the paternal role. See Behm, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 4:1022.

³⁵For a summary of scholars who take various stances on the nature of this psalm, see Marvin Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 20 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 284.

that 78:1-8 “stands out from the whole as a statement of the psalm’s purpose. . . . to get people to listen and submit to God.”³⁶ While the first eight verses reveal the purpose of the psalm, its remainder reveals that a simple knowledge of God’s works is meaningless if his people do not heed his commands and submit their lives to him. In Psalm 78:9-10, the Ephraimites become the case study, for they saw the hand of God work in mighty ways, yet “did not keep the covenant of God, and refused to walk in His law.” The people’s faithfulness wavered even in the midst of seeing God’s wondrous works because the mere possession of intellectual knowledge does not guarantee faithfulness. What they needed was to know and own the purpose of this psalm—a complete, submissive trust in the Lord.

Psalm 78:1-8 provides focus for the parental instruction of children in three ways. First, the content that Psalm 78 instructs parents to teach shows that they should be purposeful in what they teach their children. Psalm 78 uses Israel’s history for the purpose of teaching the coming generations about God. Telling children of the works of God is important because it reminds children of tangible moments in the lives of their family in which God moved so that they can better understand his character. Willem VanGemeran has stated, “The history of redemption is revelatory. The Lord’s mighty acts reveal his love, mercy, and patience with his people.”³⁷ Parents must never underestimate the value of telling their children what God has done in the past—in their own lives or in the life of their family.

However, here the psalmist³⁸ uses instances from Israel’s past for more than relaying truths about God—he uses them as examples for teaching important life lessons

³⁶John Goldingay, *Psalms 42-89*, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 480.

³⁷Willem VanGemeran, *Psalms*, in vol. 5 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 505.

³⁸The traditional stance is that the author of this psalm is Asaph. However, in recent years some scholars have questioned the identity of the psalmist. For further study on the authorship of Ps 78,

to children. Regarding Psalm 78, Phillip McMillion writes, “The purpose of the psalmist was not to teach the basic facts of these events, nor to argue for their reliability. . . . The purpose was to review these well known events, and then to use them to draw a lesson for the present audience.”³⁹ The lesson to be learned is that parents tell their children of the works of God lest they risk the possibility of the coming generation becoming stubborn and rebellious. As Derek Kidner has observed, “It is meant to search the conscience: it is history that must not repeat itself.”⁴⁰ The content is not a mere history lesson but is, rather, a lesson taught with one eye on the future by drawing application from the past for the present lives of children.

Second, the method for teaching these life lessons demands intentionality. Parents are instructed in Psalm 78:4-6 to “tell” their children so that they will in turn “teach” their own children. As the Hebrew verb form expresses, parents are to be intentional in the verbal instruction of their children. סָפַר (*saphar*), translated as “tell,” literally means to “count” or “recount.” It is a denominative verb, which means it is derived from a noun, specifically from סֹפֵר (*sopher*), or “scribe.”⁴¹ It should be noted, then, that the life of a scribe is one consumed by the intentional relaying or recounting of information, and it is “scribe” from which this verb derives its meaning. In addition, the present form is iterative, stressing repetition. Parents are to repetitively “instruct their children of the need of the primacy of God in life and of his mighty wonders so that their

see C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Psalms*, Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 361-62; Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, 284-86; Anthony F. Campbell, “Psalm 78: A Contribution to the Theology of Tenth Century Israel,” *Catholic Bible Quarterly* 41 (1979): 51-79; and Phillip McMillion, “Psalm 78: Teaching the Next Generation,” *Restoration Quarterly* 43, (2001): 224-25.

³⁹Phillip E. McMillion, “Psalm 78: Teaching the Next Generation,” *Restoration Quarterly* 43 (2001): 225–26.

⁴⁰Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73-150*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentary (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1975), 280.

⁴¹Harris, Archer, and Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 2:632.

children may, in turn, transmit this information to their offspring.”⁴² They are to “tell” their children continually and intentionally of the lessons learned by their ancestors in view of their posterity.

Finally, the goal of the teaching expresses intentionality. The psalmist instructs parents to tell their children “the praises of the LORD, and His strength, and His wondrous works that He has done” in hopes that the coming generation “should put their confidence in God” (Ps 78:4; 78:7 NASB). Goals such as this promote intentionality because seldom is a goal reached without purposeful work to achieve the desired outcome. Calvin writes that this objective should cause parents to “be the more powerfully stirred up to instruct their children.”⁴³ Parents should purposefully teach their children in a way that warns them of the sins of their ancestors in view of the children growing up to live faithful lives for the Lord.

Additionally, parents are to teach their children to pass on their faith to their own offspring, as seen in Psalm 78:5-6. Therefore, the goal reaches far beyond one’s own nuclear family. It seeks to see one’s posterity place their trust in Christ so that they will, in turn, lead their own children to do the same. The goal is not reached when a parent’s child comes to faith but, instead, when a child places his trust in the Lord only to grow into an adult who possesses the same goal. Psalm 78 focuses parents on a generational faith.

The content, method, and goal of parental instruction revealed in Psalm 78 support the use of family devotions because they equip parents to fulfill the psalmist’s exhortation. Specifically, family devotions provide parents with a resource to verbally teach the Scripture in hopes that their children will place their confidence in God. Thus,

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalm*,: vol. 2, *Calvin’s Commentaries*, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 233.

the parent whose heart hopes “that the generation to come might know” is greatly encouraged by this Psalm to be intentional in their child-rearing.

Examples for Family Devotions

Exodus 12:1-28

As parents come to understand their calling to be intentional in leading their children spiritually, God provides passages in his Word that are exemplary of how to use his acting in redemptive history to purposefully teach children about him. The institution of the Passover meal and the Feast of Unleavened Bread in Exodus 12:1-28 are two examples. This passage lies within the context of God's deliverance of His people from Egypt.⁴⁴ God has brought nine plagues upon the Egyptians up to this point, and Moses has threatened Pharaoh with a tenth, and unfathomable, plague—the death of every firstborn Egyptian child. However, before this plague occurs, God provides instruction to the people for the observance of the Passover meal and the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

The context of the two celebrations in Exodus 12:1-28 is very important to the discussion at hand. Exodus 12:3 reveals that the Passover is to be celebrated as a *family*. As Childs has noted, "[Fathers' households] can have a wide connotation of 'clan' (6:14),

⁴⁴The placement of this text within the exodus narrative has led some scholars holding to redaction criticism to believe that this portion of Scripture was added at a later date than the events surrounding it. Redaction criticism became popular when, in 1878, Julius Wellhausen put forth his theory that the Pentateuch was composed from four sources, which he identified as J (Yahwist), D (Deuteronomist), E (Elohism), and P (Priestly). This theory became very popular but contains multiple problems, as listed in Bruce Corley, Steve Lemke, and Grant Lovejoy, *Biblical Hermeneutics: A Comprehensive Introduction to Interpreting Scripture* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1996), 102-04. For an overview of the documentary hypothesis and the debate surrounding it, see Gordon Wenham, "Pentateuchal Studies Today," *Themelios* 22, no. 1 (1996): 3-13. Regarding Exod 12, Childs argues that J is the source for 12:2-23 and 27a, while John Durham believes that P is the source for 12:1-20. See Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus: A Critical Theological Commentary*, The Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974), 184; John I. Durham, *Exodus*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 3 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), 152-53. In contrast, Douglas Stuart holds fast to Mosaic authorship of Exodus. See Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, The New American Commentary, vol. 2 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 28. Regardless of one's stance on the source of this text, Childs offers valuable wisdom that the source must not negate the meaning and value of the final text at hand. He writes, "The emphasis on the prior history of the biblical text by means of source and form criticism has often resulted in unwillingness and even inability to read the text in its present form. . . . [The] fact that the final redaction offers one of the first interpretations of the material justifies its close study." Childs, *The Book of Exodus*, 195-96.

but also a narrower meaning 'family.' In v. 3 the addition of the word [household] makes clear this latter, restricted meaning."⁴⁵ Likewise, Keil and Delitzsch point out that the lamb is to be taken "according to the natural distribution of the people into families, so that only the members of one family or family circle should unite, and not an indiscriminate company."⁴⁶ The observance of the Passover, and thus the Feast of Unleavened Bread since it lies within the same context, is to be taken by individual family units. It is an opportunity for families to worship together and to rejoice in the mighty acts of God. Modern Christianity has often taken acts of worship such as this out of the home, making them a community celebration for the body of Christ. Here, however, the celebration is to be partaken of by the clan of Israel in family units. John Pridmore writes, "[In] Judaism one observes that in certain respects worship without children is impossible. This principle is rooted in the priority of the family in Judaism and in the fact that the great festivals of Judaism—supremely Passover—are family festivals."⁴⁷

Within this context of the family, parents should intentionally utilize the forward focus of the Passover Meal. Exodus 12:14 says, "Now this day will be a memorial to you, and you shall celebrate it as a feast to the LORD; throughout your generations you are to celebrate it as a permanent ordinance" (NASB). "Throughout your generations" indicates the longevity of this memorial and is repeated in Exodus 12:17 in relation to the Feast of Unleavened Bread. These are not onetime meals observed merely for the consecration of the people—they are much more. The meal will serve as a testimony of the acts of God for future generations. As Peter Enns contends,

⁴⁵Childs, *The Book of Exodus*, 182.

⁴⁶C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *The Pentateuch: Three Volumes in One*, Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 1:10.

⁴⁷John Pridmore, "Children's Worship," *Modern Churchman* 26, no. 2 (1984): 36.

The purpose of these celebrations is clearly for the benefit of those generations who did not participate in the Exodus itself, a trajectory already hinted at in 10:2 (referring to the children and grandchildren of the Exodus generation—a point repeated throughout chapters 12-13). Yahweh's acts on behalf of his people are never meant to be anything less than acts that transcend time and space. There is more to the Exodus than simply delivering slaves from Egypt. God's field of vision is far and broad. . . . This celebration is to be a lasting, eternal ordinance. Passover is not just an event, and it is not just for one night. The Israelites from now on are to remember this night, impress it on their collective consciousness, and pass it on to their children.⁴⁸

Exodus 12:26-27 also provides a valuable principle for how parents should go about purposefully teaching children at home. Namely, they should seek to establish traditions, habits, teachings, and methods that will cause their children to ask about God. Stuart has provided keen insight here, teaching that this aspect of the celebrations is paradigmatic:

In other words, no Israelite parent could ever rightly say, "None of my children asked me about the point of the Passover ceremony, so I didn't tell them about what it means." Instead, the instruction to teach the upcoming generations the Passover tradition and law by responding to a child's question is simply a wording of one instance of how the teaching might occur; but occur it must. And the entire matter certainly was perceived as a command— not just the keeping of the Passover ceremony but the immediate instruction of children—as indicated by the observation in v. 27 that "the people bowed down and worshiped" as well as by the summation in v. 28 that "the Israelites did just what the LORD commanded Moses and Aaron."⁴⁹

Parents should demonstrate intentionality by leading their families in ways that invoke questions from their children about God. No parent can use the excuse that their child did not ask about God, for the burden to be taught does not lie on the shoulders of children. Instead, parents carry the responsibility to teach their children about the LORD, and they should carry out this responsibility in an intentional manner.

Additionally, the nature of how God instructs parents to utilize the Passover meal to teach their children expresses intentionality. Christopher Wright argues that memorial celebrations such as the Passover meal were intended to have a "catechetical

⁴⁸Peter Enns, *Exodus*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 247-49.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 289-90.

function,” pointing out that “no catechism was ever devised to meet childish curiosity, but rather to ‘prime’ the child with questions as a ‘springboard’ for the teaching of specific religious history and belief.”⁵⁰ Likewise, Joseph Tabory, in his research on the Passover eve ceremony, writes that the later Haggada, or the telling of the Exodus story, “was conducted in the form of questions and answers relating to the significance of the special Passover foods.”⁵¹ These questions most certainly prompted children to learn the truths of God's work among his people in intentional ways. The precedent set in Exodus was understood by the Jews to be carried out in a purposeful manner to relay the works of the LORD to the coming generations.

The importance of parents intentionally passing on the works of God to their children must not be underestimated. Stuart teaches, “Why such an emphasis on commemoration? Because what is not carefully remembered by a community is very naturally and easily forgotten—and virtually completely forgotten as soon as the oldest members of that community who experienced the original event die.”⁵² Intentional teaching by parents within the home will not only educate their own children of the LORD, it will also preserve the truths of the Christian faith for generations to come. Parents must realize that the moments spent in family devotions will have an impact on the future that is immeasurable in the present.

Joshua 4:1-24

Just as God instructed his people to use celebrations to intentionally teach their children about his mighty works, he also led them to establish memorials of remembrance to aid in the focused instruction of their children. One such instance is found in Joshua 4

⁵⁰Christopher Wright, *God's People in God's Land: Family, Land, and Property in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 83.

⁵¹Joseph Tabory, “The Passover Eve Ceremony: An Historical Outline,” *Immanuel* 12 (1981): 38-39.

⁵²Stuart, *Exodus*, 282.

as the people crossed the Jordan River into the Promised Land. Significantly, the crossing of the Jordan is framed by instructions from God to erect a memorial for the purpose of parents instructing their children in the works of God. For this reason Marten Woudstra argues that the main theme of this passage is the erection of the memorial stones.⁵³ Likewise, Keil and Delitzsch note that in Joshua 4:2-8, the command to build the memorial is given by God to Joshua, by Joshua to the men, and then faithfully carried out in order to show that the memorial is the main point of the passage.⁵⁴ The event itself was undoubtedly important, but the telling of the event to the coming generations was of primary importance.

God tells the people in Joshua 4:7 that the stones they erect “shall become a memorial to the sons of Israel forever” (NASB). Their purpose is to invoke remembrance of what he did in leading the people across the Jordan. זִכָּרוֹן (*Zikkaron*), used in Joshua 4:7 and commonly translated as “memorial” in English, is a derivative of the verb זָכַר (*zakar*), meaning “to think (about), meditate (upon), pay attention (to); remember, recollect.”⁵⁵ Zikkaron “is an object or act which brings something else to mind or which represents something else.”⁵⁶ This same word was used in Exodus 12:14 regarding the Passover, which would become a “memorial.” The stones Joshua was instructed to gather served to deliberately invoke conversations between parents and their children about this great miracle of God. He tells Joshua in 4:6 that this memorial will be a sign “when your children ask,” not *if* they ask. The memorial would be built in such a way that it *will* spur conversation. As children saw the memorial at Gilgal, they would be prompted to ask of

⁵³Marten H. Woudstra, *The Book of Joshua*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 90.

⁵⁴C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Joshua, Judges, Ruth, I & II Samuel*, Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 47.

⁵⁵Harris, Archer, and Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 1:241.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 242.

its significance, and this would bring to mind the work of God in a way that would spur on their faith.

The importance in building a memorial is rooted in the need for the people to remember God.⁵⁷ As they had demonstrated shortly after crossing the Red Sea, God's people were prone to forgetting what he had done in the past. This memorial would serve as an intentional reminder of who their God was so that their hearts would hold fast unto him. As Woudstra points out, "The notion of remembering in Hebrew is more than a calling to mind. It involves a remembering with concern; it also implies loving reflection and, where called for, a corresponding degree of action."⁵⁸ This constant reminder of God's work in parting the waters of the Jordan would serve to guard the hearts of the people as they encountered a multiplicity of gods in the land they would conquer. John Calvin remarks, "Joshua not only erected a mound, but called the attention of the people to its use in enabling fathers to keep the memory of the divine goodness alive among their children."⁵⁹ Contemporary parents would also be wise to purposefully erect memorials for their family that will serve as reminders of God's acting in their lives.

As with the Passover, the form of teaching in view here is catechetical.⁶⁰ In this regard, Robert Boling and G. Ernest Wright note the similarity of Joshua 4:21-24

⁵⁷God consistently calls his people to remember his works in Scripture. See Deut 8; 1 Chr 16:12; Neh 4:14; and Ps 105:1-5. In addition, Neh 9:17 reveals that a failure to remember the mighty deeds of God led the people to arrogantly sin against him in the desert. However, of all these passages that teach God's people to remember him, perhaps the most important and relevant to contemporary believers is the institution of the Lord's Supper, which Jesus instructed His followers to do "in remembrance of" him. See Lk 22:19. It is the intentional, persistent remembrance of Christ's work on the cross that keeps the hearts of the saints in tune with the atoning blood of their Lord.

⁵⁸Woudstra, *The Book of Joshua*, 92.

⁵⁹John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Book of Joshua*, trans. Henry Beveridge, *Calvin's Commentaries*, vol.4 (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005), 74.

⁶⁰See pp.32-33 regarding catechetical teaching in Exod 12:26-27.

with Deuteronomy 6:20-25.⁶¹ The importance of this is twofold. First, catechetic teaching is *intentional* teaching. This memorial did not seek to spur on irrelevant, mundane conversations between parents and children. Instead, the purpose of this memorial was to relate a very specific account of God’s work among his people. Second, this memorial was an aid for the intentional teaching of children. While the memorial most certainly had a distinct significance,⁶² it, in and of itself, did not teach children about God. Calvin comments, “Although the stones themselves cannot speak, yet the monument furnished parents with materials for speaking, and for making the kindness of God known to their children.”⁶³ The memorial simply served to start the conversation. Modern Christian parents need to establish memorials that will spur on conversations about God. Likewise, parents should also have modern resources at their disposal that will encourage them to intentionally train their children in the Lord and serve as a resource to start their conversations about God with their children.

Conclusion

God has ordained parents as the primary spiritual leaders of their children, and they are to lead their children in an intentional manner. This precedent is established in Deuteronomy 6:7, affirmed in Ephesians 6:4, focused in Psalm 78:1-8, and exemplified in Exodus 12 and Joshua 4. The form and frequency in which this intentional spiritual leadership takes place may vary from family to family. However, its presence within

⁶¹Robert G. Boling and G. Ernest Wright, *Joshua*, The Anchor Bible, vol. 6 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1982), 186.

⁶²David Howard notes that the designation of the stones as a memorial indicates “they were not to be an altar for sacrifice, but a pile of stones for ‘remembrance.’” See David Howard, *Joshua*, The New American Commentary, vol. 5 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1998), 134. Calvin writes, “From his introducing the children asking, What mean these stones? we infer that they were arranged so as to attract the notice of spectators. For had they been heaped together at random without any order, it would never have come into the mind of posterity to inquire concerning their meaning.” See Calvin, *Commentaries on the Book of Joshua*, 74.

⁶³Calvin, *Commentaries on the Book of Joshua*, 67.

Christian families should be non-negotiable because the neglect of this God-given responsibility in child rearing will always end poorly. As Charles Hodge writes,

[Children] are to be instructed, disciplined, and admonished, so that they be brought to knowledge, self-control, and obedience. This whole process of education is to be religious, and not only religious, but Christian. It is *the nurture and admonition of the Lord*, which is the appointed and the only effectual means of attaining the end of education. Where this means is neglected or any other substituted in its place, the result must be disastrous failure.⁶⁴

God has called Christian parents to lead their children toward the godliness, and they are to do so in a purposeful manner.

⁶⁴Charles Hodge, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980), 360.

CHAPTER 3
THEORETICAL SUPPORT FOR THE PRACTICE OF
FAMILY DEVOTIONS

Introduction

In response to the biblical foundation in chapter two, it would seem as though having family devotions would be a basic and primary way for parents to carry out the intentional teaching of Scripture at home. However, not only are most parents today not leading family devotions at home, but many of them have abdicated the spiritual leadership of their children to the church. It should be noted, though, that this lack of spiritual nurture and intentional instruction in the home has not been the historical precedent set by the church.¹ Instead, church leaders throughout history have taught of the importance of family devotions. Therefore, in view of the biblical foundation and the historical precedent set in the church for leading family devotions, one must carefully look at the reasons for the current landscape of the church in which a slim minority of parents are leading family devotions.²

Understanding that the practice of leading family devotions cannot always be equated with whether or not parents are leading their homes spiritually, the position held

¹The writings of early church fathers, the Puritans, and early American pastors and theologians has been well documented in works such as Donald S. Whitney, *Family Worship: In the Bible, in History & in Your Home* (Shepherdsville, KY: The Center for Biblical Spirituality, 2005); Timothy Paul Jones and Randy Stinson, *Trained in the Fear of God: Family Ministry in Theological, Historical, and Practical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2011); Holly Catterton Allen, ed., *Nurturing Children's Spirituality: Christian Perspectives and Best Practices* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2008), 5-126; and Terry Johnson, *The Family Worship Book: A Resource Book for Family Devotions*, (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 1998), 97-117.

²In a recent study, Timothy Paul Jones found that over 50 percent of parents say that their family never or rarely has family devotions; over one-third had not engaged in family worship in the past two months; and 20 percent of parents reported that they "never read, studied, or discussed God's Word with their children." Timothy Paul Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide: How Your Church Can Equip Parents to Make Disciples* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing, 2011), 27-29.

here is that family devotions are an essential way of intentionally and systematically providing spiritual instruction at home. However, the problem is that most modern parents have not seen family devotions led at home, and parents typically lead their homes the same way their parents did. So, if today's parents were not led in the intentional study of Scripture at home, there is a high probability that they will not lead family devotions in their own home. This problem should be addressed in two ways: First, parents must be taught of their role at home and the importance of having family devotions. Second, parents need to have access to resources that will help them learn to lead family devotions. Therefore, this chapter has two purposes: First, it will survey and analyze resources that were available after 1950 that exhorted pastors and parents toward the practice of having family devotions. Second, it will survey and analyze the resources that have been available since 1950 for parents to use in leading devotions at home.

Ingredients for a Departure from Family Devotions

The practice of intentionally teaching children at home waned during the drastic changes of the late eighteenth and nineteenth century. The dawn of the Industrial Revolution, young people's societies, and the temperance movement all drew young people into age-segregated groups, and the response of the church was to establish its own young people's groups to reach teens.³ As these groups gained momentum, the spiritual health of the family waned. In 1915, Henry Frederick Cope observed, "Family worship has declined until, at least in the United States, the percentage of families practicing daily worship in the home is so small as to be negligible."⁴

³Groups such as Christian Endeavor, the Epworth League, the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), and Young Life arose as the Church sought to minister to teens.

⁴Henry Frederick Cope, *Religious Education in the Family* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1915), 68. The rise of modern youth ministry made the practice of family devotions negligible for two reasons. First, Mark Senter III notes, "As the Christian worldview lost its authoritative place, parents felt like they were losing control," and the result was a push for local churches to do what parents began to feel inadequate to do—teach their children about God. Mark H. Senter III, *When God Shows Up: A History of Protestant Youth Ministry in America* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 76-77. Regrettably, the church's

The church had become the primary institution responsible for discipling children, and the flames of family discipleship began to grow dim. So dim, in fact, that when asked what resources were available for parents to use in leading family devotions when they first began working with teens, two veteran youth ministers, Dr. Johnny Derouen and Dr. Richard Ross, stated that they knew of no such resources.⁵ This setting provides the backdrop for the parents at Grace Baptist because they grew up in a time that saw the rise of the professional youth minister and the decline of churches, pastors, and resources that equipped parents to teach the Bible at home.

Resources for Family Devotions from 1950 to 1990

As the age-segregated model of ministry developed in the second half of the twentieth century, resources for equipping parents to teach Scripture at home became more and more scarce. However, they were in existence. While resources were indeed slim, they were available for parents who desired to teach the Bible at home and pastors who wanted to so equip parents for the task.

reaction to societal problems was to segregate adolescents from their parents and other adults in the church. The second problem with the rise of youth ministry in America was that it pulled teens away from the spiritual leadership of their parents. Mark DeVries pinpoints “the isolation of teenagers from the adult world and particularly from their parents” as the defining characteristic of the youth ministry model of the past century. Mark DeVries, *Family-Based Youth Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2004), 21. Unfortunately, pulling teens away from parents harms their spiritual development. Studies continue to show that teens need *and* want the spiritual leadership of parents. As Christian Smith has pointed out, “[T]he evidence clearly shows that the single most important social influence on the religious and spiritual lives of adolescents is their parents.” Christian Smith, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 271.

⁵Dr. Johnny Derouen, Associate Professor of Student Ministry and Chair of the Human Growth and Development Division at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and Dr. Richard Ross, Professor of Student Ministry and J.M. Price Chair of Religious Education at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, were contacted prior to writing this chapter in order to find resources that were available in the latter part of the Twentieth Century. However, neither of these experts in their field knew of any resources. As this chapter will go on to show, the resources were indeed available but they were not marketed in a way that put them into the hands of men like Dr. Ross and Dr. Derouen for the equipping of those to whom they were ministering. This is not a poor reflection of Dr. Derouen or Dr. Ross, but is, instead, a reflection of how poorly resources for parents were marketed as the popularity of the modern youth minister rose.

Resources to Equip Parents and Pastors

During the 1950's, various authors continued to call on parents to fulfill their role as spiritual leader at home. In 1953, Anna and Edward Gebhard authored *Guideposts to Creative Family Worship*, a book that both equipped parents and provided them with resources for leading family devotions.⁶ In the book they offer five guideposts to help parents lead meaningful family devotions:

(1) Choose a time when all or most of the family are together and unhurried; (2) Select a guidance material that has meaning for all or most of the family group; (3) Keep with regularity the worship period; (4) Let each member of the family share in leading as well as in participating in the worship period; and (5) Don't expect the family worship periods to satisfy all the spiritual needs of the family.⁷

In the remainder of the book, general guidance is given for family worship regarding the importance of Scripture, using hymns, praying at meals, and talking around the dinner table. The resources section of the book lists various readings, hymns, and Bible passages that can be used for specific occasions and purposes, but no devotions are provided.

Tenis Van Kooten penned an extremely helpful resource for parents and pastors in 1969, *Building the Family Altar*.⁸ Van Kooten uses "family altar" interchangeably with "family worship" and begins his book with a call to bring back family altars. Grieving for the state of homes in his day, Van Kooten states, "Many family altars appear to be in a bad state of disrepair; many have disappeared altogether. This is even true of many who call themselves evangelical Christians."⁹ Van Kooten saw the church and school to be somewhat responsible for the decline of family worship, but he held homes to be primarily responsible.¹⁰ However, while the home is certainly

⁶Anna L. Gebhard and Edward W. Gebhard, *Guideposts to Creative Family Worship* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1953)

⁷Ibid., 28-31.

⁸Tenis Van Kooten, *Building the Family Altar* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1969).

⁹Ibid., 16.

¹⁰Ibid., 17.

responsible, one must not underestimate the responsibility of the church. The church holds the responsibility to equip parents for their task at home, and when it fails to do so, the home will suffer. Therefore, it is best to hold the church and home equally responsible for the decline of family altars in the latter half of the twentieth century.

Van Kooten's concern in his book is the renewal of intentional family worship. Instructing how to build better family altars, he teaches:

There must be system—system that will make the family altar be what it should be. Not only must certain things be done, but they must be done with purpose. . . . The remedy is meaningful planning, conscientious work, and purposeful effort to build and to improve the family altar.¹¹

Van Kooten understands the importance of intentionality, just as Scripture has instructed.

One beneficial aspect of Van Kooten's work is an extended section on the doctrine of Scripture. In these chapters he clearly and systematically shows that the Bible is the Word of God, teaches parents the message of the Bible, and provides wisdom for how to read Scripture, an often overlooked part of preparing parents to teach the Word of God at home. Assumptions are made that parents know how to read and teach Scripture. However, many do not understand biblical hermeneutics at any level, and many more who lack the confidence to teach what they do know. As parents are trained to lead family devotions, they must be equipped to rightly handle the Word of God.

Van Kooten also includes a chapter on how to build a better family altar, offering guidance for the logistical concerns parents often have for leading family devotions. He makes the following suggestions: Family devotions should be done at mealtime; everyone must be willing to sacrifice the time to do a good family devotion; consistent family devotions will require hard work; the Bible must be kept central; all people in the family should participate in some way; the way in which the Scripture is read should vary; discussion of the Scripture passage is essential; Scripture should be

¹¹Ibid., 21.

memorized; and aids should be used as needed or desired.¹² Van Kooten provides a list of aids for parents and for children, but they are not geared toward adolescent children.

One author who wrote adamantly about the role of parents in the late 1960s and early 1970s was Lawrence (Larry) O. Richards. In his biography of Richards, Phillip Sell calls Richards “the most prominent and prolific Christian education writer in evangelical circles during the last half of the Twentieth Century.”¹³ In 1970, Richards wrote *Creative Bible Study: A Handbook for Small Group, Family, and Personal Bible Study with “Adventure” Questions for Discussion*.¹⁴ While this work does not contain specific instruction for leading family devotions, the tagline begins to reveal what would later become a prominent part of his teaching on Christian education—that parents should be teaching the Bible at home. Richards expresses his understanding of the importance of parental teaching at home in *Youth Ministry*, stating:

[T]he role of parents in communicating the Christian faith is far more significant than that of the teacher, and the context of life far more determinative than the classroom, in fixing the child’s attitudes and behaviors, if not his formal beliefs. Thus Christian educators might well focus on the training of parents as communicators of faith, rather than on the training of teachers and the creation of curriculum.¹⁵

Richards’ stance was that the church needed to rethink the ways in which it communicated Scripture to children.¹⁶ Instead of using only the sterile classroom environment, he called churches to lead their people to teach the Word at home. Richards shared a study he completed on how to best teach adolescents the Scriptures which

¹²Ibid., 75-89.

¹³Phillip W. Sell, “Lawrence O. Richards,” Talbot School of Theology: Christian Educators, http://www2.talbot.edu/ce20/educators/view.cfm?n=larry_richards (accessed October 18, 2012).

¹⁴Lawrence O. Richards, *Creative Bible Teaching: A Handbook for Small Group, Family, and Personal Bible Study with “Adventure” Questions for Discussion* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971).

¹⁵Larry Richards, *Youth Ministry: Its Renewal in the Local Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1972), 188.

¹⁶Ibid., 187.

showed that relying only on classroom education for teaching biblical truth “is unwarranted and dangerous” and that “far more concern must be given to helping parents fulfill their nurturing role.”¹⁷ This work by Richards was important because it began pointing his readers (presumably youth pastors) back to the truth that biblical teaching must be done in the home, and in order for this to happen the church must equip parents.

In 1974 Richards wrote *You, the Parent*, providing general parenting wisdom based on God’s call in Deuteronomy 6:1-7, and in so doing, a chapter on family worship.¹⁸ Here, Richards gives a list of seven hindrances to family worship: time, self-discipline, atmosphere, inexperience, lack of participation, age differences, and lack of meaning.¹⁹ He then teaches parents how to give importance to family devotions and guidelines for leading them effectively. These guidelines include involving family members, fitting specific interests and needs of family members, making them relevant, teaching the Bible in different ways, and adding variety to the devotional times.²⁰ In addition, Richards provides a family worship evaluation exercise at the end of the chapter for parents and older children.²¹

Richards wrote his Parents’ Pocket Guides, a series of eight small booklets dealing with specific aspects of Christian parenting, in 1975. The guides helped parents know how to teach their children to know Christ, love, memorize Scripture, be obedient, overcome fears, pray, and share. Of particular interest for the present discussion is

¹⁷Ibid., 196. Additionally, this study provided by Richards contains an “Intergenerational Interaction Index” that can be given to adolescents to gain a better understanding of what they are being taught at home about God and how effectively it is being taught. See Richards, *Youth Ministry*, 187-200 for the full study report.

¹⁸Lawrence O. Richards, *You The Parent* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974).

¹⁹Ibid., 88-89.

²⁰Ibid., 92-95.

²¹Ibid., 95-97.

Richards' guide *Helping My Family Worship*.²² Here, he makes a distinction between family worship and family devotions, writing, "Usually family devotions focus on learning, on fun together, on talking about real-life situations, and how God guides us in the Bible. Family worship . . . focuses on nurturing a special awareness of God and a heart-response to Him."²³ Building on this distinction, Richards explains that family worship is the foundation for helping one's children worship and provides six ways for parents to lead their children in worship: family festivals, weekly observances, daily remembrances, music, prayer, and liturgy.²⁴

A Theology of Christian Education, one of Richards' more substantial works for pastors, was published in 1975, by which point the home had gained an even more prominent place in his writing.²⁵ A foundational argument that Richards puts forth in this book is that mere classroom education through Sunday school is perceived only as academic if it is not practiced, taught, and lived out at home.²⁶ True life-change will occur in children when what they are taught at home and church is consistent. Richards makes a strong appeal for pastors to lead teaching to be done at home as well as in the classroom, even lamenting over the problem that the church knows much about educating children in the classroom, but little about equipping parents to teach children at home.²⁷

Richards, however, does not expose the problem without posing a solution. He provides pastors with several ideas for teaching parents their biblical role of instruction at

²²Lawrence O. Richards, *Helping My Family Worship*, Parents' Pocket Guides (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing, 1975).

²³Ibid., 4.

²⁴Ibid., 18-31.

²⁵Larry Richards, *A Theology of Christian Education* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975).

²⁶Ibid., 191-193.

²⁷Ibid., 195.

home. These ideas include a bulletin insert for parents about their role, writing articles for the church on the subject of parental responsibility, finding curriculum that promotes the family, and distributing a “Self-Analysis Chart for the Home,” which he provides.²⁸ Additionally, as a result of his doctoral work, Richards developed a curriculum called *Sunday School PLUS*, which was “home-centered.”²⁹ As such, the curriculum description states that “(1) a Christian education system must link Sunday school and home in an integrated total teaching/learning program; (2) system elements must provide help for both in-church teachers and for parents.”³⁰ The system elements for parents includes help for them to teach their children the biblical truth from the lesson that week, discussion questions based on the lesson, and practical activities to assist parents in applying the truth to the lives of their children throughout the week.

Ruth McRoberts Ward published a small book entitled *Devotions, A Family Affair: A Guide to Family Worship* in 1977.³¹ Only fifty-one pages in length, it is a helpful book containing practical insight and encouragement. Ward rightly speaks of the church as a helper in the teaching of a child rather than the primary teacher, giving parents no room to blame the church. Noteworthy of Ward’s work is that she specifically addresses teens in regard to prayer and Bible reading. She recommends reading the Bible a chapter or less at a time with teens and quotes one of her own children saying, “The thing I like best about devotions is reading just a little bit of Scripture and being able to

²⁸Ibid., 195-205.

²⁹Ibid., 219-27. *Sunday School PLUS* (Phoenix: Renewal Research Associates, 1976). The Sunday School PLUS Pack included a filmstrip, two cassettes, one leader guide, three teacher guides, three parent guides, and eight student guides.

³⁰Ibid., 221.

³¹Ruth McRoberts Ward, *Devotions, A Family Affair: A Guide to Family Worship* (Kalamazoo, MI: Master’s Press, 1977).

ask questions about it to see what it means.”³² This response reiterates the importance of allowing teens a time to discuss the Scripture passage after reading it.

As the twentieth century entered its final two decades, the resources available to parents that encouraged family worship began to decline. However, in 1985 Wesley and Sandra Black wrote *Discipleship in the Home*, a book intended to spur parents on to actively disciple their children.³³ The Blacks wrote of the home as a place in which parents were to teach their children in cooperation with the church. This book does not provide any devotional resources or go in-depth concerning family devotions, but it was one of the few resources available in this time for parents to access.

Books to Use for Leading Family Devotions

As the authors above penned books calling parents to disciple their children, others sought to provide resources to be utilized by parents in the home. One resource available to parents in the 1950’s was *Thoughts of God for Boys and Girls*, a book containing devotions to be used by families for each day of the year.³⁴ Each reading is approximately one page in length and contains a short story followed by either a Scripture reading, prayer, or song. However, some devotions only contain a story. The book makes no age designation for its users, but it is more suitable for younger children. Another devotional resource from this time period written for parents with younger children was Edward Staples’ *Prayer Time: Daily Devotions for Families with Young*

³²Ibid., 42.

³³Wesley Black and Sandra Black, *Discipleship in the Home* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1985).

³⁴Edith Francis Welker and Aimee Angus Barber, eds., *Thoughts of God for Boys and Girls* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1948).

Children, compiled in 1952.³⁵ This guide contains over two-hundred brief devotions that consist of a Bible verse, a brief story, and a suggested prayer.

In 1957, Concordia published *Little Visits with God: Devotions for Families with Grade School Children*.³⁶ As with the previous two resources, each of the two hundred devotions in this book is written with younger children in mind. Each reading begins with a Bible verse (sometimes only a portion of the verse) and is followed by a story. However, a unique trait of this book is that it also contains a Bible reading for youth and adults that most often directs them to read the original verse in context.

The *Family Bible Study Book*, published in 1975, contains devotions suitable for all ages within a family.³⁷ The introduction describes this resource as “a book that the entire family could use in discovering the Scriptures—one so flexible that it could be used in any family, regardless of its size and the ages of its members.”³⁸ It contains over two hundred pages of devotions from five books of the Bible: Genesis, Proverbs, John, Acts, and Ephesians. The format of the devotions varies according to the author, but each one is usable for all ages, with many of them having age-specific questions for discussion. The devotions are also intended to be engaging for family members, involving them in various ways by utilizing questions, share times, pop quizzes, fill-in-the-blank exercises, singing, and drama. In addition, the book contains a very helpful index for parents to find devotions according to theme, book, or character. This was one of the few resources written with teens in mind.

³⁵Edward D. Staples, *Prayer Time: Daily Devotions for Families with Young Children* (Nashville: The Upper Room, 1952).

³⁶Allan Hart Jahsmann and Martin P. Simon, *Little Visits with God: Devotions for Families with Grade School Children* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1957).

³⁷Betsey Scanlan, ed., *The Family Bible Study Book* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1975).

³⁸*Ibid.*, 7.

Reuben Herring served in the Family Ministries Department of the Southern Baptist Convention for twelve years and was a long time contributor and editor of the *Home Life* magazine. Herring understood the importance of family devotions, as he warned, “When a child grows up in a home where there is little or no worship he is almost certain to conclude that worship is only for certain places and certain occasions.”³⁹ His desire was to see families worshipping at home, just as he led his own family to do. Therefore, in 1978, he wrote *Your Family Worship Guidebook* as a resource for parents seeking to teach the Word of God at home.⁴⁰ The first three chapters of the book provide instruction for leading family devotions, while the remainder of the book provides over fifty-five devotions to be used by parents with their children. Herring recommends activity-centered learning, but he echoes the sentiment of the authors of *The Family Bible Study Book*, exhorting parents to adapt his devotions to the needs and learning styles of their own children.⁴¹ If children respond better simply reading and discussing the Scriptures, parents need not feel obligated to lead the learning activities. However, if they learn better by doing hands-on activities, then parents should creatively teach the Word so that the children will effectively learn. The underlying principle here is that the method of teaching is not as important as ensuring that the children learn the Word of God. Herring’s devotions are suitable for all ages, although parents with teens will find them to be most usable without much change. Parents with younger children will most likely need to adapt the devotions to the abilities of their children.

In 1979, Donald and Nancy Whitehouse wrote *Pray and Play: A Guide for Family Worship*, which is a summary of the method they used to teach their children the

³⁹Reuben Herring, *Your Family Worship Guidebook* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1978).

⁴⁰Ibid., 10.

⁴¹Ibid., 19; 41.

Bible at home.⁴² This book is written primarily for the family with younger children, suggesting a very engaging style of family worship that includes serving food, changing locations within the worship time, stories, games, and dialogue. The Whitehouses include 151 pages of devotions, but these would need much adaptation for parents with adolescents.

Seeking to provide parents of adolescents with a resource for family devotions, Matilda Nordtvedt wrote *The Family Idea Book: Praying and Playing Together* in 1984.⁴³ Nordtvedt recommends that parents with younger children simplify the lessons. In writing about the challenge of having children of different ages, she recommends, “[E]nlist the help of your older children to teach the younger ones.”⁴⁴ She then provides a chapter for each month of the year containing a brief word of instruction or encouragement for parents, four devotions, and activities that would engage the family.

Magazines Containing Family Devotions

Along with the books above, parents also had magazine resources available to them for leading family devotions. In January of 1947, the Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention began publishing its monthly magazine *Home Life*. Interestingly, the progression—or better yet, digression—of *Home Life* in regard to family devotions is telling of the overall focus of the church on biblical teaching done in the home. The original purpose of the magazine was to respond to the perilous state of the home, and in the introductory letter of the publication Clifton J. Allen wrote:

Our homes demand and deserve our best. They are at the center of God’s plan for the race. They are the fountain of our nation’s life. They are set to preserve the heritage

⁴²Donald S. Whitehouse and Nancy S. Whitehouse, *Pray and Play: A Guide for Family Worship* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1979).

⁴³Matilda Nordtvedt, *The Family Idea Book: Praying and Playing Together* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1984).

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, x.

of civilization and to perpetuate the ideals of godliness. The use of this magazine will help to make them altars of worship, sanctuaries of love, strongholds of character, and havens of happiness.⁴⁵

Under this conviction, the Sunday School Board made “Altar Fires” a regular component of the magazine. The “Altar Fires” section included a family devotion for each day of the month consisting of a brief passage of Scripture, followed by a short explanation, and then a suggested prayer. These devotions were simple enough that they could be used with and adapted for any age child. Joe Burton, editor of *Home Life* at this time, estimated that 500,000 parents were utilizing the devotions so, in 1955, he compiled *Altar Fires*, a compilation of nine years of devotions from *Home Life* into one book.⁴⁶

In July 1959, *Home Life* changed the name of its family devotional section from “Altar Fires” to “The Family Worships.” In explaining this change, the writers of the magazine stated, “The phrase ‘family worship’ implies a spiritual experience. It points up togetherness in the family. It denotes spiritual values, God’s worth to each member of the family and to the home relationships.”⁴⁷ This change in terminology also brought the addition of a “For the Parent” section at the beginning of each devotion, which helped parents to think more about the idea of that particular devotion.

Another change came in June of 1982, as “The Family Worships” became a dual-focused section called “Family Worships and Bible Study.” The “Family Bible Study” portion used Scripture passages from the “Family Worships” sections for a “more intensive Bible study [for individual family members] than may be possible during daily family devotions.”⁴⁸ Each edition included four “Family Bible Study” sections for personal study. “The Family Worships” section continued in the same format.

⁴⁵ Clifton J. Allen, “Our Utmost for the Highest,” *Home Life*, January 1947, 1.

⁴⁶ Joe W. Burton, ed., *Altar Fires* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1955).

⁴⁷ Jessie Funston Clubb, “The Family Worships,” *Home Life*, June 1959, 23.

⁴⁸ Reuben Herring, “How to Use ‘Family Bible Study’,” *Home Life*, June 1982, 49.

The demise of *Home Life*'s daily family devotions came in October of 1993 when, in response to its readers, the magazine became more visually stimulating, added a health and fitness section, included a recipes and crafts section, highlighted popular Christians, and gave financial advice, all while chopping the daily family devotions down to a four page pullout guide. This guide was provided in a calendar format containing "family activities designed for family worship" that a family could participate in.⁴⁹ This change was a shift away from content and brought a more activity-based approach that continued in *Home Life* until September of 1997. From this point on, *Home Life* offered only a "Family Discipleship Calendar" that had very little content. In its latest issue, October 2012, the "Family Discipleship Calendar" included a daily Scripture reading with a single statement pertaining to that particular text.

Another magazine published by The Sunday School Board from 1978 to 1986 was *Home Bible Study Guide*.⁵⁰ While this publication was primarily intended for personal Bible study at home, it originally included a "Family Bible Study" at the end of each study. However, the "Family Bible Study" section ceased to be included at the end of each lesson in January of 1980, and beginning the next month it became a one-page section at the end of each issue. Again, the gradual demise of the "Family Bible Study" section is indicative of the church's decreasing provision of teaching and resources for parents to lead family devotions during this time period.

Resources for Family Devotions from 1990 to 2005

Other than the dwindling family devotions in *Home Life*, the early 1990's saw very few resources published for family devotions in comparison to the vast array of what

⁴⁹Ann Vandergriff, "Helping Your Family Understand God's Word," *Home Life*, October 1993, Pullout.

⁵⁰Sunday School Board, *Home Bible Study Guide* (Nashville: The Southern Baptist Convention, 1978-1986).

was published for the professional youth minister. Publishers, pastors, and parents had all but fully embraced the age-segregated ministry model that was led by the professional youth pastor. Parents had come to accept that their role was to get their child to church so that the youth pastor could disciple them, just like they took them to basketball practice to learn from the coach. Publishers such as Youth Specialties, Group, and LifeWay led the way in equipping youth pastors to plan and lead retreats, camps, mission trips, and all-nighters. While devotions were published, they were predominantly for private use. Resources for family devotions were scarce.

A striking development in this time period was the sudden prevalence of the terminology “family friendly” in book titles and writings. For example, Steve Thomas wrote *Your Church Can Be Family Friendly* in 1996, and in 1997, Chap Clark stated that his book *The Youth Worker’s Handbook to Family Ministry* was for “tired youth workers who know they need to become more family friendly.”⁵¹ Understanding the importance of the family, Doug Fields included one chapter devoted to being “family friendly” in his highly influential book *Purpose Driven Youth Ministry: 9 Essential Foundations for Healthy Growth*.⁵² However, Fields confessed, “Of all the chapters in this book, I write this one more out of necessity than credibility.”⁵³ Fields was calling student ministry practitioners back to being “family friendly”, while knowing that he had not effectively ministered to the parents of the youth at his church. This wordage of “family friendly” implied an important truth: The church had so distanced itself from equipping families that it had to now show itself to be friendly to the family.

⁵¹Steve Thomas, *Your Church Can Be Family Friendly: How You Can Launch a Successful Family Ministry in Your Congregation* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1996); Chap Clark, *The Youth Worker’s Handbook to Family Ministry: Strategies and Practical Ideas for Reaching Your Students’ Families* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 9.

⁵²Doug Fields, *Purpose Driven Youth Ministry: 9 Essential Foundations for Healthy Growth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998).

⁵³*Ibid.*, 252.

Resources to Equip Parents and Pastors

In looking at the resources that began to be published in the mid 1990's, glimpses of a revival for family ministry in America can be seen. Substantial works were published that would serve to refocus Christian parents on their task and exhort pastors to equip parents to raise godly children. Kent and Barbara Hughes wrote *Common Sense Parenting* in 1995, a book that would later be republished under the title *Disciplines of a Godly Family*.⁵⁴ While this book does not explicitly have a section devoted to family devotions, it does teach parents the value of intentionality in raising their children. The spiritual growth of children is the parents' primary responsibility, and at this point in history Christian parents needed a book like the Hughes' as a reminder.

Another book that was published in 1995 and continues to shape godly parents is Tedd Tripp's *Shepherding a Child's Heart*.⁵⁵ In his closing section on parenting teenagers, Tripp briefly addresses the topic of family worship, appealing, "Family worship must connect with the world and life as your teenagers experience it. Family worship must address in lively ways the issues your teenagers face."⁵⁶ There is great wisdom in making sure that family devotions clearly intersect the lives of adolescents. Parents must be diligent to show teens that God's Word is always relevant to their lives.

Many of the books published during this time did not make direct reference to family devotions, but they were important in returning the focus of youth ministry back to families. Clark's book *The Youth Worker's Guide to Family Ministry* was one of the first to sound the siren for a return to ministry focused on the entire family. However, the focus in this return to family ministry was on programming activities for families because

⁵⁴Kent Hughes and Barbara Hughes, *Common Sense Parenting* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1995); R. Kent Hughes and Barbara Hughes, *Disciplines of a Godly Family* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004).

⁵⁵Tedd Tripp, *Shepherding a Child's Heart* (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd Press, 1995).

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 192.

the need that youth ministry practitioners sought to fill was that of reconnecting parents and teens relationally. However, other books such as Paul David Tripp's *Age of Opportunity: A Biblical Guide to Parenting Teens* called parents back to the task of godly leadership at home.⁵⁷ Tripp's book is an incredibly important work for the equipping of godly parents, but family devotions are not a priority in this resource.

A final book that served to equip pastors in this time period was Jim Burns and Mike DeVries' *Partnering with Parents in Youth Ministry: The Practical Guide to Today's Family-Based Youth Ministry*, written in 2003.⁵⁸ There is a notable change of attitude that comes with this book—not only should youth workers seek to be family friendly and avoid conflict with parents, they should actually partner with them. The church and home should work together. Burns and DeVries offer valuable wisdom for not only getting along with parents, but equipping them to be spiritual leaders. This desire to equip parents is demonstrated in the book by providing fifty-two devotional ideas for families.⁵⁹ However, these devotional ideas are just that—ideas. They do not provide much guidance, but they do again signal an awakening to the need for families to rebuild the habit of studying the Word together at home.

Resources to Use for Leading Family Devotions

Resources for family devotions during this time period were few. However, in 1991, Walk Thru the Bible Ministries published *Family Walk*.⁶⁰ *Family Walk* contains

⁵⁷Paul David Tripp, *Age of Opportunity: a Biblical Guide to Parenting Teens*, Resources for Changing Lives (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2001).

⁵⁸Jim Burns and Mike DeVries, *Partnering with Parents in Youth Ministry: The Practical Guide to Today's Family-Based Youth Ministry* (Ventura, CA: Gospel Light, 2003).

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, 87-107.

⁶⁰Bruce H. Wilkinson, ed., *Family Walk: 52 Weekly Devotions for Your Family* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991).

fifty-two weeks of devotions arranged topically, with each week containing five devotions on its theme. There is no designation in the book regarding what age it is written for, but the devotions are more appropriate for adolescents due to the nature of the questions and stories used. Additionally, each devotion includes a key question that could be used catechistically, which is a unique characteristic of family devotional resources from this time period. Later, in 1998, Tom Nettles would publish *Teaching Truth, Training Hearts: The Study of Catechisms in Baptist Life*, a book providing parents with multiple historical Baptist catechisms to use with their children.⁶¹ Prior to listing the catechisms, Nettles makes a compelling argument for their usage at home as a way for parents to fulfill the calling to intentionally teach children about God and to prepare young people for the worldview challenges they will confront in life.⁶²

Jim Cromarty provided families with *A Book for Family Worship* in 1996, a resource containing fifty-two family devotions.⁶³ These devotions are longer than those in most other devotional resources, with each devotion being three pages long. The length of the devotions and the nature of the discussion questions for each devotion make this resource better suited for adolescents than young children. A unique aspect of these devotions is the “Meditate” section containing a related passage of Scripture. A weakness of this resource is that Cromarty only provides just over a page of introductory material and does not give any real guidance on how to use the book or how to lead a family devotion.

In 1997, Josh McDowell and Bob Hostetler published *Josh McDowell’s Family Devotions: A Daily Devotional for Passing Biblical Values to the Next*

⁶¹Tom J. Nettles, *Teaching Truth, Training Hearts: The Study of Catechisms in Baptist Life* (Amityville, NY: Calvary Press, 1998).

⁶²Ibid., 31-32; 43.

⁶³Jim Cromarty, *A Book for Family Worship* (Durham, UK: Evangelical Press, 1996).

Generation.⁶⁴ According to the introduction, “The daily stories and questions are designed for use with children of all ages, from toddlers to teenagers.”⁶⁵ Each devotion contains a Bible reading, story, discussion questions, and suggested prayer. An interesting component of this resource is that it was written in conjunction with *The One Year Book of Josh McDowell’s Youth Devotions* so that the two could be studied together. Doing so would both allow parents to hold their child accountable for their personal devotion time and prepare youth beforehand for the family devotion. Parents could certainly utilize this resource with adolescent children.

In 1998, Terry L. Johnson published *The Family Worship Book: A Resource Book for Family Devotions*, which is a very intentional and Bible-focused approach to family devotions.⁶⁶ Johnson makes a strong appeal for families to make family worship a vital part of their home and provides an extensive outline for family worship.⁶⁷ The weakness with Johnson’s outline is that it is quite rigid and liturgical, providing no opportunities to engage children. Using this format offered by Johnson will provide much theology, but it will likely fall on deaf ears, as teens will never be engaged. However, in the remainder of the book, he does provide useful resources for parents such as a Bible reading plan, catechism, and key Scriptures to memorize.

David and Heather Kopp authored *Praying the Bible with Your Family: Grow Closer and Stronger in Faith and Fun* in 2000.⁶⁸ This resource seeks to provide parents

⁶⁴Josh McDowell and Bob Hostetler, *Josh McDowell’s One Year Book of Family Devotions* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1997).

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, xi.

⁶⁶Terry Johnson, *The Family Worship Book: a Resource Book for Family Devotions* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 1998).

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, 23.

⁶⁸David Kopp and Heather Kopp, *Praying the Bible with Your Family: Grow Closer and Stronger in Faith and Fun* (Colorado Springs: WaterBrook Press, 2000).

with simple times of reading the Scripture with their children followed by Bible-guided prayer times. The book includes one-hundred devotions, with most of them including a Bible reading, brief explanation, discussion questions, and a prayer. While the book can be used for any age, it is better suited for young children.

Finally, Richard Ross and Gus Reyes developed *30 Days: Turning the Hearts of Parents and Teenagers toward Each Other* in 2001.⁶⁹ The purpose of this resource is to engage individual parents and teens in God-centered, intimate discussions on a daily basis for thirty days. Therefore, while this resource demands that parents take a step of spiritual leadership at home, it is not usable as a family devotion guide.

Resources for Family Devotions from 2005 to Present

The years leading up to 2005 saw significant shifts in the focus of youth ministry. However, these were mere tremors warning of the shake-up that would come after 2005, as discontented youth ministry practitioners, pastors, and parents sought an answer for how to best minister to youth, and that answer was found in family ministry.

Resources to Equip Parents and Pastors

Realizing the need to resource pastors and parents for the task of returning spiritual leadership to the home, authors and publicists have put forth many quality books over the past seven years. Due to the number of these resources, only a few of the key resources will be referenced here. The years 2006 through 2008 saw an increase in books that contributed to the dialogue of family ministry and equipped parents for their task of teaching the Word of God at home. Donald Whitney's booklet *Family Worship: In the Bible, in History, and in Your Home*⁷⁰ is a small but significant book for parents,

⁶⁹Richard Ross and Gus Reyes, *30 Days: Turning the Hearts of Parents and Teenagers Toward Each Other* (Duncanville, TX: Josiah Press, 2001).

⁷⁰Donald Whitney, *Family Worship: In the Bible, in History, and in Your Home* (Shepherdsville, KY: The Center for Biblical Spirituality, 2005).

specifically parents at Grace Baptist Church because it was the first book they were exposed to that was fully devoted to leading family worship in the home. Whitney teaches three elements to family worship: Scripture, prayer, and singing. In the following year, Voddie Baucham released *Family Driven Faith: Doing What It Takes to Raise Sons and Daughters Who Walk with God*, a book that caused quite a stir among many evangelicals.⁷¹ Baucham writes from the belief that there should be no age segregation within the church for any reason and, while his model is not without its flaws, Baucham's book forced many pastors to examine their own practices of equipping and ministering to families.

In 2008, Steve Wright authored two books that have been very influential for parents in leading family worship. First, his book *Rethink* challenges youth pastors to evaluate their purpose and practices in student ministry.⁷² Wright teaches that the church must break away from an unbiblical framework for student ministry that isolates parents and embrace a biblical framework that co-champions the home and the church.⁷³ Second, Wright wrote *ApParent Privilege: That the Next Generation Might Know—Psalm 78:6*, a book calling parents of teens to view their role as a parent to be a privilege and blessing.⁷⁴ Regarding family worship, Wright teaches,

If a casual observer were to visit our homes, what practice would he or she see that is distinctly “Christian”? In many families today there is little noticeable difference between the home lives of Christians and the home lives of the unchurched. . . . It is my conviction that children need to see dad and mom leading in the study of God's Word, sincere in their prayer life, and faithfully pointing to eternity.⁷⁵

⁷¹Voddie Baucham, *Family Driven Faith: Doing What It Takes to Raise Sons and Daughters Who Walk with God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007).

⁷²Steve Wright, *Rethink: Decide for Yourself Is Student Ministry Working* (Wake Forest, NC: In Quest Publishing, 2008).

⁷³*Ibid.*, 74.

⁷⁴Steve Wright, *ApParent Privilege: That the Next Generation Might Know-- Psalm 78:6* (Wake Forest, NC: In Quest Publishing, 2008).

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, 117.

He then provides suggestions for starting family worship under the following headings: “Start small. Stick with it. Be realistic. Have a plan. Give it time. Make it interactive. Don’t overwhelm them. Be transparent.”⁷⁶ This is a small, non-threatening book to put in parents’ hands to challenge them to see their responsibility as a God-given privilege.

Another essential book for student pastors followed in 2009 from Richard Ross, *Student Ministry and the Supremacy of Christ*.⁷⁷ Ross’s book is helpful because it provides a sweeping view of student ministry that partners with and equips parents for their role. In his chapter on parents, Ross calls youth pastors to equip parents to teach their children Scripture at home. This teaching of Scripture in the home is of prime importance because, according to Ross, “If parents allow other activities to squeeze out family worship, they will have taught a permanent lesson about what really is most important in the home.”⁷⁸

Two additional resources published in 2011 are of grave importance for helping pastors equip parents for their role at home. First, *Trained in the Fear of God: Family Ministry in Theological, Historical, and Practical Perspective*, edited by Randy Stinson and Timothy Paul Jones, provides a solid foundation for what family ministry should look like. As pastors consider the basis for why and how they minister to families, this book will provide much wise counsel. Second, Timothy Paul Jones wrote *Family Ministry Field Guide: How Your Church Can Equip Parents to Make Disciples* to give pastors practical ideas and guidance for equipping parents to be spiritual leaders.⁷⁹

⁷⁶Ibid., 119-21

⁷⁷Richard Ross, *Student Ministry and the Supremacy of Christ* (Bloomington, IN: CrossBooks, 2009).

⁷⁸Ibid., 150.

⁷⁹Timothy Paul Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide: How the Church Can Equip Parents to Make Disciples* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2011).

Calling family devotions “faith talks,” Jones writes, “For parents to become primary disciple-makers in their children’s lives, they must become Bible teachers in their homes.”⁸⁰ Parents must be challenged to see the importance of teaching the Word at home if they are going to fulfill their task. In order to equip parents to be teachers at home, Jones recommends that churches provide tools rather than programs.⁸¹ Programs add time to busy schedules, while tools add wisdom to parents teaching at home.

Resources to Use for Leading Family Devotions

As a result of the revived desire to equip parents to teach the Word at home, multiple family devotion resources have been written since 2005. The great challenge facing parents of adolescents is finding quality devotional resources that are suitable for use with teenage children. While the parents of young children have a multitude of family devotion resources to choose from, the options for use with older children are few and far between.⁸²

Richard Ross began writing *Heart Connex* devotions in 2008 for LifeWay.⁸³ These devotions were emailed weekly until June of 2011, when the publishing of additional *Heart Connex* materials was suspended indefinitely. However, an archive of these devotions is still available and may be printed out in PDF format. Ross wrote *Heart Connex* specifically for parents to use with adolescent children. Each devotion includes a

⁸⁰Ibid., 155.

⁸¹Ibid., 156-57.

⁸²Biblically sound family devotions available for parents with young children include Marty Machowski, *Long Story Short: Ten-Minute Devotions to Draw Your Family to God* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2010); Sally Michael, *The Righteous Shall Live By Faith: Family Devotional Guide* (Minneapolis: Children Desiring God, 2005); Sally Michael, Jill Nelson, and Bud Burk, *Helping Children Understand the Gospel* (Minneapolis: Children Desiring God, 2009); Ruth Younts, *Get Wisdom* (Walwallopen, PA: Shepherd Press, 2011); and “Splink” weekly email devotions from www.d6family.com.

⁸³Richard Ross, *Heart Connex*, LifeWay, <http://www.lifeway.com/Article/heart-connex-family-devotions> (accessed October 28, 2012).

parent page and a student page that engages teens by having them lead various portions of the devotion. *Heart Connex* was, and still is, a good resource for parents to utilize.

Jim Burns' book *Faith Conversations for Families* is another devotional guide written for families with adolescents.⁸⁴ While adaptable for younger children, the length of each devotion and the questions are certainly geared toward teenagers. Each devotion leads families to read the Word, discuss it, reflect on the passage, and apply the truths to their individual lives. These devotions are engaging and useful for parents with teens.

Two other works published in recent years are not specifically designated for use with adolescents, but they are written in such a way as to make them suitable for all ages. First, in 2009 Bruce Ware authored *Big Truths for Young Hearts*, a book that guides parents through a study of theology with their children.⁸⁵ This resource is not as interactive as many of its counterparts, but the readings and questions are provided for parents to use in teaching the Word of God at home. Second, in 2010 Zondervan published the *NIV Family Reading Bible*.⁸⁶ This resource was compiled "to help [parents] successfully lead family devotions"⁸⁷ by providing a guided walk through the stories of the Bible in the chronological order. Each reading engages the family in factual questions based on the text read, discussion questions, a section telling why that particular passage is important, and key points of interest. These devotions are suitable for teens.

Conclusion

In light of the above overview of resources that were available to parents and pastors for establishing and maintaining family devotions in the home, four conclusions

⁸⁴Jim Burns, *Faith Conversations for Families* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2011), Kindle e-book.

⁸⁵Bruce Ware, *Big Truths for Young Hearts: Teaching and Learning the Greatness of God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009), Kindle e-book.

⁸⁶*NIV Family Reading Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010).

⁸⁷*Ibid.*, vii.

can be drawn. First, while it is commonly believed by contemporary practitioners in youth and family ministry that resources for family devotions are relatively new to the scene, the truth is that there have been resources available in recent history for parents and pastors. The problem was that the shadow of the professional youth minister so covered the landscape of the church that many of these resources were hidden from the spotlight. Both pastors seeking to equip parents for their task at home and parents seeking to lead family devotions would have had to diligently seek the resources that became buried under the “how-to” guides and books of ideas for leading exciting youth groups.

Second, the family devotion resources parents have had and currently have at their disposal are predominantly written for parents with young children. Yes, many of these may be adapted for use with teens or a parent can involve their adolescent children in teaching. However, teenage children have specific needs and challenges that demand resources be provided for parents to teach them the Word of God at home.

Third, family devotions are a common way that both historical and contemporary church leaders believe parents should carry out the intentional teaching of Scripture in the home. These church leaders represent various denominational leanings, but they agree upon the importance of diligent instruction by parents of their children.

Finally, several basic elements should be included in family devotions: the centrality of Scripture, involvement of the whole family, a story or explanation that helps families understand the text, discussion questions, and a suggested prayer. These elements serve to provide structure to the family devotion and allow parents to become comfortable with the flow and process of leading their family in the Word. Consequently, in response to these conclusions, the remainder of this project will seek to provide parents of adolescents with a resource to equip them for leading family devotions.

CHAPTER 4

PROVIDING A FAMILY DEVOTION RESOURCE FOR PARENTS OF ADOLESCENTS

Introduction

The disparity between the biblical foundation for the practice of family devotions and the low number of quality resources currently available for parents of adolescents led to the implementation of this project, which provided parents of adolescents at Grace Baptist Church, Somerset, Kentucky, with a family devotion resource. In implementing this project I had three goals: (1) to evaluate the present practices of the parents of adolescents at Grace Baptist in leading family devotions, (2) to train parents how to lead a family devotion, and (3) to equip parents with a theologically sound and usable resource for leading their teenage children in family devotions.

This project consisted of three phases. In the first phase, I promoted a parent luncheon that would serve as the beginning of the project, obtained the proper approval for conducting the project from the Research Ethics Committee of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and wrote thirteen family devotions. Phase 2 was the actual implementation of the project with the parents of adolescents at Grace Baptist Church. This phase began with the parent luncheon and concluded with another parent luncheon thirteen weeks later. The final phase lasted one week after the concluding parent luncheon. During this week, I conducted personal interviews with parents to gain a greater understanding of their experience with leading the family devotions.

Phase 1

The parent luncheon was a critical component for ensuring that a large number of parents would be involved in the project. Therefore, promoting it well was an important aspect of the first phase. Eleven weeks prior to the parent luncheon, I began promoting its date in our weekly parent newsletter, *The Parent Line*. Three weeks prior to the luncheon, I began explaining its purpose to our parents in *The Parent Line*. Then, eleven days before the luncheon, I sent a personal letter to the parents explaining in detail the luncheon as it related both to them as parents and to my studies (Appendix 1). For the parent luncheon, I put together a packet that included an agreement to participate, general questions for parents, and the Parent Perspectives and Practices Survey (Appendix 2).¹

In order to be able to survey the parents, I had to gain the proper approval from the Research Ethics Committee. After filing the Permission to Use Human Subjects in Research packet, it was determined that my research was low-risk, and I was able to proceed with the project using the Low Risk Informed Consent statement at the beginning of the parent survey (Appendix 2).

The final aspect of phase 1 was the writing of the family devotion resource (Appendix 3). The opening pages of the devotional booklet included three sections that served to equip parents to lead family devotions. The first section, entitled “How to Study and Teach the Bible,” provided parents with a basic understanding of the doctrine of Scripture. I included this section because resources for family devotions commonly assume that parents have a solid understanding of the doctrine of Scripture and the confidence to teach the Word of God. However, parents do not always have this understanding or confidence. As mentioned in Chapter 3, few resources since 1950 have sought to provide parents with a foundation in the doctrine of Scripture before calling

¹The Parent Perspectives and Practices Survey was developed by Timothy Paul Jones and used by permission (Appendix 2).

them to teach the Bible to their children.² The second section taught parents how to lead a family devotion. This section included challenges they should expect and tips for leading family devotions effectively. My goal with this section was to give parents adequate guidance to lead a devotion without establishing an unrealistic expectation of what a family devotion had to look like. I wanted to help parents approach family devotions with a flexible attitude. The final introductory section taught the parents how to utilize the devotional guide they held in their hands. The devotions were intended to be very easy to use by parents regardless of their level of education, makeup of the home, or the resources they had at their disposal. Each devotion consisted of seven sections: This Story in THE Story, Be Together, Hear Together, Learn Together, Talk Together, Pray Together, and Serve Together. This page in the devotional guide explained the seven sections contained in each devotion so that parents would have a clear understanding for how to use the particular devotional guide I was giving them.

Overview of the Family Devotions

The thirteen devotions written for this project were intended to be one segment of what would eventually be a fifty-two week devotional resource for parents of adolescents covering the metanarrative of Scripture. Therefore, these devotions spanned the life of Christ from his birth through his triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Following is a summary of each devotion:

Devotion 1, “Promise Kept”: The Scripture passage for this devotion was Matthew 1:18-25, and the key truth of the lesson was “God always keeps his promises.” The devotion led parents to teach their children of how the coming of Jesus was God’s fulfillment of the promises he made through the prophets. Therefore, this devotion taught families about the faithfulness of God, calling them to trust in his faithfulness. Families

²Of the resources found in my research, only Tenis Van Kooten, *Building the Family Altar* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1969) taught the doctrine of Scripture to parents.

were then led to apply the lesson by encouraging a fellow church member going through a difficult situation with the truth that God is faithful.

Devotion 2, “Prepare the Way”: The passage studied in this devotion was Matthew 3:1-12, which taught the key truth, “We should bring glory to God in all that we do.” This study looked at the ministry of John the Baptist, a man whose sole purpose in life was to point to Jesus. In this devotion, parents were led to help their children think about how their lives could bring glory to God. The devotion concluded by exhorting families to serve someone they knew while clearly giving God all of the glory in what they did.

Devotion 3, “The Baptism of Jesus”: This devotion led families to study the baptism of Jesus found in Matthew 3:13-17. The key truth of the lesson was, “Baptism was the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry and publicly marks the beginning of our life with Christ.” The lesson was very careful to explain that Jesus was sinless and that his baptism was the beginning of his public ministry. Similarly, we are called to be baptized after we are brought to salvation by God as a public testimony of our new life in Christ. Parents were encouraged in this lesson to discuss each person’s life with Christ and the importance of baptism. At the conclusion of this devotion, families were led to make gift packets to be given to people who would be baptized at Grace in the future.

Devotion 4, “The Temptation of Jesus”: This devotion took families into Luke 4:1-13 to learn the truth, “Jesus resisted temptation and lived a sinless life.” Parents were led to teach their children how his knowledge of Scripture guarded Jesus’ heart and mind from the temptations of Satan. The role of Scripture in the sanctification process and in guarding the hearts of believers was a primary area of discussion in this devotion. As a way to apply this devotion, families were instructed to send notes of encouragement to college students from Grace Baptist since they endure such a great amount of intense temptation.

Devotion 5, “Fishers of Men”: The Scripture passage for this devotion was Luke 5:1-11, which taught the truth, “God has called us to be fishers of men.” Parents were led to teach their children in this lesson that the greatest thing they can do for others is to tell them about Christ. This devotion made a strong appeal for each person in the family to be actively engaged in sharing the Gospel. It also led the family as a whole to be on mission and seek to develop a Gospel-centered relationship with a non-Christian family.

Devotion 6, “Jesus’ Power to Heal—Physical and Spiritual”: Beginning with this devotion, the guide began focusing on the supporting evidence for Jesus’ claims that he was God. Families studied Mark 2:1-12 in this lesson and learned the truth “Jesus has the power to heal our greatest sickness—sin.” This passage told about the time that four friends brought a paralytic to Jesus and the Lord healed him. The purpose of this lesson was to demonstrate the power of Jesus as seen in his ability to heal both physical and spiritual sickness. This devotion then led families to take part in a ministry project for individuals in the church who were physically ill.

Devotion 7, “Jesus’ Power over Creation”: The demonstration of Jesus’ power continued in this devotion as families studied the story of Jesus calming the storm in Mark 4:35-41. The truth of this lesson was, “Jesus is sovereign over all of creation.” This lesson served to remind families that even in the midst of the many natural disasters that happen so frequently, Jesus is sovereign. It also showed that his power over creation testified to his deity. In light of Jesus’ sovereignty over creation, and in view of the numerous natural disasters that have occurred, families were encouraged to make a plan for being involved in the disaster relief efforts of the North American Mission Board.

Devotion 8, “The Rich Young Man”: The Scripture studied in this devotion was Mark 10:17-27, and the key truth was, “God expects us to love Him above all other things.” This study challenged the idea of vain religion, which tempts people to be merely rule followers instead of genuinely loving God with all their heart, soul, and strength.

Parents led their children to consider the fact that they must be willing to make sacrifices for Jesus. An unwillingness to do so is indicative of a heart that loves something or someone else more than Jesus. Families were led to apply this devotion by sacrificially selling some of their possessions in order to help someone in need for the sake of the Gospel.

Devotion 9, “Jesus’ Amazing Claim”: In this devotion, families were led to study John 8:31-59, one of the most intense encounters Jesus had with the Pharisees. In this account, Jesus made a bold claim of deity, so the truth was, “Jesus is God.” Parents were led to teach their children that even though people attempt to claim that Jesus never said he was God, he clearly claimed to be God. This amazing claim of Jesus was supported by the demonstrations of Jesus’ power studied in the previous lessons and in the next devotion. This devotion concluded by encouraging families to send letters of thanksgiving to the people who had taught each of them about Jesus.

Devotion 10, “Jesus’ Power over Death”: If Jesus was truly who he claimed to be, then his power was surely without limit. John 11:1-44 verifies that Jesus truly held unlimited power, and he demonstrated this power by raising Lazarus from the grave. The truth of this lesson was, “Jesus is the resurrection and the life.” This lesson was the final evidence of Jesus’ deity in the devotional series. Families were led to minister to those at Grace who had lost loved ones in the past year as a way of applying the truths of this devotion.

Devotion 11, “Who Do You Say that I Am?”: After studying about the power and claims of Jesus, families were confronted with a very personal question in this lesson—Who do we each individually say that Jesus is? Parents were led to teach Matthew 13:13-16 to their children in this lesson, which is the confession of Peter. There was much speculation at the time as to the identity of Christ, but Jesus was only concerned with who the disciples believed he was. Peter’s confession became the foundation for the church and was the truth for the lesson: “Jesus is the Christ, the Son of

the living God.” This devotion concluded by leading families to become more involved in missions so that more people would come to know the true identity of Jesus and trust in Him.

Devotion 12, “Jesus Predicts His Death”: The Scripture passage studied in this devotion was Mathew 20:17-9, where Jesus foretold his death and demonstrated his omniscience. The truth of the lesson was, “Jesus’ plan was to die for our sins and rise from the dead.” This lesson reminded families that Jesus’ death was not an accident, but, instead, it was a part of God’s sovereign plan to redeem his people. This demonstration of love by Jesus calls believers to worship him with thanksgiving. Families were then led to encourage other believers with the glorious truth of God’s love displayed on the cross.

Devotion 13, “The Triumphal Entry”: The final devotion led families to study Matthew 21:1-11. In this passage, Jesus entered Jerusalem as a victorious, yet humble, king. Therefore, the key truth of the lesson was, “Jesus was and is the triumphant King of kings.” This lesson led families to consider the kingship of Christ. He did not claim his kingdom by force but, instead, through the sacrifice of his own body for the sins of the world. The beautiful truth of this passage, however, is that Jesus sacrificed himself willingly and in full knowledge that he would raise victoriously from the dead. In application of this devotion, families were encouraged to send notes of encouragement to government officials offering prayers and encouragement.

Phase 2

The second phase of the project was its actual implementation among the people of Grace Baptist Church. The project began on Sunday, November 11, 2012, with a parent luncheon that was held immediately following the morning worship service. During Sunday school on the morning of the luncheon, I briefly spoke to our teens about what I would be doing with their parents that afternoon. The purpose for speaking to the youth was to make an appeal for them to encourage and support their parents as they

sought to begin leading family devotions. Adolescents need to be reminded of their role within the family (Exod 20:12, Lev 19:3, Prov 1:8-9, Prov 6:20, Eph 6:1-3, Col 3:20) just as much as parents do theirs. Therefore, I often teach on the biblical role of children within the home, and the beginning of this project was a perfect opportunity to encourage them to be willing learners of what their parents would be teaching them. In addition, I wanted our students to know that teaching the Word of God at home was one way in which their parents could fulfill God's instructions in Deuteronomy 6:4-9.

A total of 61 parents were invited to the luncheon; 40 attended. I told parents that the luncheon would be finished by 1:30 to honor their time and in an effort not to make their Sunday overly busy. The luncheon began with a time of fellowship, giving parents the opportunity to eat and relax together. I then began the training portion of the luncheon. As I led the training, I had our pastoral intern record it on video. Later that afternoon, he posted the training video on the Internet so that parents who missed the luncheon could receive the same training.

I began the training portion by explaining the project and how it fit into my area of study. I attempted to make it very clear that their honesty in answering the survey questions was imperative to the success of the project and my ability to equip them in the future. We discussed the nature of the survey and their agreement to participate. After answering a few questions, I distributed the surveys and allowed everyone to fill them out before we moved on so that the parents' answers would not be influenced by what I taught them. The 40 parents present at the luncheon completed 35 surveys because five couples submitted a joint survey rather than filling it out individually.

The first page of the survey packet was composed of general demographic questions for the parents to answer (Appendix 2). I felt three areas of information were vital to know in relation to this project. First, the marital status of the parents was important to know. My suspicion was that single parents would have a more difficult time leading the family devotions. Second, I wanted to know how the presence of

children of various ages influences parents as they led family devotions. Families with a wide age range of children tend to struggle with family devotions, so I wanted to see if the devotional guide I provided was usable for families with both teens and younger children in the home. Finally, I was very interested to see how the length of time a parent had been under our ministry at Grace Baptist correlated with their perceptions and practices at the beginning of the project. I hoped that the surveys would reveal that parents who had been a part of our ministry for an extended time had a biblical understanding of their role as spiritual leader for their children and that they were actively seeking to carry out this role. In addition to this demographic information, I also used this page to find out which parents were willing to sit down for personal interviews at the conclusion of the project.

Once the parents completed the survey, we distributed the devotional guides. As the parents received the guides, I asked and answered the question, “Why should we lead family devotions?” I cited three reasons for the practice of leading family devotions at home: (1) the influence of parents, (2) the biblical command and precedent for parents to teach their children about God (Deut 6:7, Eph 6:4, Ps 78:1-8, Exod 12:1-28, Josh 4:1-24), and (3) the teachings and examples of pastors and theologians throughout church history. These three reasons, I explained, make it imperative that we teach our children about God in our homes, and, according to the biblical precedent, we should do so in an intentional manner.

As I explained these reasons with the parents, I was careful not to establish the idea that family devotions are the sole mark of a Christian home or that they are the only way for parents to teach their children at home. I did not minimize their importance, but I also did not elevate family devotions to a level of importance that would open the door to a legalistic view of leading family devotions in order to be successful Christian parents.

I then led the parents through the first three sections of the devotional guide. First, I spent time discussing the doctrine of Scripture with them. For some parents, this

was the first time someone had explained to them some of the basic principles of hermeneutics. I spent the largest portion of my time on this section for two reasons: (1) I wanted to make certain that they had a robust view of the doctrine of Scripture, and (2) I wanted to instill in them the confidence to teach Scripture to their children. In order for parents to successfully teach the Word of God at home, they must have confidence in their ability to read, understand, and teach the Scriptures to their children. Second, we discussed how to lead a family devotion. The majority of my teaching in this area was spent addressing the challenges that they would face. I did not want our parents to be surprised by the obstacles that awaited them, nor did I want parents to encounter these obstacles believing that they were the only parents that experienced them. Finally, I explained how to use the devotional guide. We discussed each section of the individual devotions so that they would understand the purpose of the section, how to navigate it, and how to lead it. The primary point I made in reference to using the devotional guide was that it was just that—a *guide*. I explained that they should be careful not to become too rigid by simply reading the devotional to their children (unless they found that to be the most effective way to teach their children). I also explained to them that my primary purpose for this project was that they develop a habit of leading family devotions. My ultimate goal was not for them to teach my devotional guide verbatim.

After training the parents in these three areas, I had them mark on their calendars the date for the post-project luncheon, and we dismissed. The ensuing response after the luncheon was threefold. First, some parents shared their excitement about beginning family devotions. Second, others explained to me the challenges they were expecting to face. Third, a few parents asked for advice on how to lead family devotions in their specific setting.

The night of the parent luncheon, and continuing through the first week of the project, I contacted parents who were not present for the training. During this time, I contacted all 21 of the remaining parents. In doing so, I gave them a very brief overview

of the training, referred them to the video of the luncheon on the Internet, and made arrangements to give them the survey and devotional guide. From these 21 parents, I received eight additional surveys, and the video of the luncheon that was uploaded to the Internet was viewed eight times.

The following week, I distributed a survey (Appendix 4) to each of the pastors at Grace Baptist. The intent of this survey was to determine the accuracy of the perceptions that the pastoral staff held in regard to the family devotion practices of parents of adolescents at the church. This was an important aspect of the project because the perceptions of church leadership determine how they lead the people. By comparing pastoral perspectives to the attitudes and practices of parents, I was able to analyze the effectiveness of our ministry in the specific area of parental leadership at home.

My contact with the parents regarding the family devotions over the course of the thirteen-week project was informal. I did not organize any additional training, appointments, or meetings with the parents. However, I had numerous impromptu conversations with parents during this time about their experience with the devotions.

Throughout the 13 weeks that parents were to lead family devotions, I wrote brief weekly articles related to leading family devotions in our weekly parent-equipping e-letter (Appendix 5). There was a two-fold purpose to the articles. First, I wanted to further educate our parents in the biblical foundations for leading family devotions, which is why eleven of the thirteen articles were based upon the biblical passages from chapter 2. Second, I wanted to send a weekly reminder to the parents that was edifying and motivational without being redundant. I felt that if parents were going to lead these devotions, I would need to keep the biblical precedent in front of them so that they would not forget the devotions due to the busyness of life.

Overview of the Weekly Parent Articles

Article 1, “Persevering for the Sake of Your Children”: This first article had

three purposes. First, I wanted to express my thankfulness to the parents who attended the luncheon. Second, I wanted to relay to parents who did not attend the luncheon that they missed a lot of important information. In light of what they missed, I wanted them to be expecting to talk to me and to be aware of the luncheon video that was posted on the Internet. Third, I wanted to encourage the parents to persevere in leading their family devotions. One of my great concerns with the project was that, while the parents would leave the luncheon excited about the devotions, the excitement would likely wear off rather quickly. In this article I wanted to encourage them to set their minds on persevering through the following weeks so that they would establish a habit of having family devotions.

Article 2, “Let It First Be on Your Own Heart”: The second article led parents to Deuteronomy 6:4-9, where I briefly challenged them to make sure they were loving the Lord wholeheartedly before they attempted to lead their children to do so. My goal was to help parents understand that if they love God, then it will be much easier to teach their children to love him.

Article 3, “Diligent Spiritual Leadership at Home”: Deuteronomy 6:7 was the focus of this article, as I challenged parents to remain diligent in teaching their children about God amidst the unexpected twists and turns of life. This article was intended to help parents think about what they were teaching their children and of the eternal value of teaching them about God. In light of this goal, I encouraged them to remain diligent in what they sought to teach their children about God.

Article 4, “Bring Them Up”: The fourth article provided parents with instruction from Ephesians 6:4 to bring up their children in the ways of the Lord. The goal of this article was to remind parents that in order to raise godly children, we must intentionally seek to rear them in a God-centered home that establishes godliness as the primary goal for children above success, popularity, and any other worldly goal that is common for parents to have for their children.

Article 5, “Nurture and Admonish”: This article focused on Paul’s appeal in Ephesians 6:4 for fathers to raise their children in the nurture and admonishment of the Lord. The purpose of this article was to clarify the meaning of these terms so that parents would have a better understanding of their roles as spiritual leaders at home. I gave parents a basic explanation of the Greek terms, translating *paideia* as “training” or “instruction” and *nouthesia* as “admonition.” I then explained that family devotions both provide a consistent opportunity to instruct children in the Lord and initiate natural conversations in which parents can verbally admonish children in their relationship with Christ.

Article 6, “Tell Them”: Using Psalm 78:1-8, this article focused on the responsibility parents have to *tell* their children about God. The key teaching of this article was that while parents may not have the *gift* of teaching, they do have the *responsibility* to tell their children about the Lord. I have spoken to far too many parents who do not verbally share their lives of faith with their children. So, I encouraged them to share with their children their salvation testimony and how God is currently working in their lives.

Article 7, “Teaching Life Lessons from the Past”: The Psalmist knew how powerful of a teaching tool the past can be, so he reminded the people of the errors of the past in Psalm 78:1-8 in order to spur them on to tell their children about God. Likewise, this article encouraged parents to be open with their children about their own past successes and failures in order to teach them the value of following Jesus.

Article 8, “The Goal of the Godly Parent”: This article asked parents a critical question: “Why do you parent the way you do?” In Psalm 78:1-8, the psalmist instructed parents to tell their children about God in hopes that they would place their trust in the Lord. Likewise, my hope was that this article would remind parents that the goal of Christian parenting is the salvation of our children. In light of this goal, parents were encouraged to continue to work toward developing the habit of leading family devotions

to teach their children to place their hope in the Lord.

Article 9, “Sending out Missionaries”:
This article confronted parents with the truth that their children will have the opportunity to take the Gospel to a generation of people that we as parents will never know. Therefore, parents need to realize that they are raising future missionaries to generations to come. Using Psalm 78:1-8, I encouraged parents to lead family devotions not only in view of their own children, but also in view of the coming generations that their children would have the opportunity to reach with the Gospel.

Article 10, “Traditions that Teach”:
In Exodus 12, God instructs his people to use the Passover Meal and the Feast of Unleavened Bread to teach children about the works of the Lord. Using these examples, I encouraged parents to establish traditions in their own homes that would serve as mediums for teaching their children about God.

Article 11, “When Your Child Asks”:
The goal of the celebrations in Exodus 12 and the memorial of Joshua 4 was to cause children to ask questions related to God. The assumption, then, is that parents are ready, willing, and able to answer these questions. The reality today is that some parents are equipped to handle their teen’s questions while others are terrified of the possibility of being asked a question about God that they do not know the answer to. The goal of this article was to encourage parents to be students of both theology and culture so that they would be ready to answer the questions their teens ask. In order to equip them with the knowledge and confidence to answer these questions, I recommended several web-based resources they could take advantage of.

Article 12, “Establishing Memorials”:
This article directed parents to the final foundational Scripture passage, Joshua 4, where God instructs Joshua to erect a memorial for the purpose of reminding the future generations of God’s great act. I wrote this article hoping to encourage parents to set up some sort of memorial in their home as a reminder of God’s greatness and grace. I wrote in this article that the memorials they established

would need to be distinct, visible, and for a God-glorifying purpose.

Article 13, “Where Do We Go from Here?”: This final article sought to give parents guidance on what to do after finishing the devotional series. My goal for this article was to help parents think beyond the devotional guide provided by this project and direct them toward the *FaithTalk* resource we provide them each week. In addition, I encouraged them to attend the concluding luncheon so that they would be able to provide me feedback on the devotions.

At the end of the 13-week project, I hosted a post-project luncheon on Sunday, February, 10, 2012, after the morning worship service, which was the same time as the pre-project luncheon. During the week prior to the luncheon, I sent a letter to the parents requesting their attendance (Appendix 10). I also emailed parents to ask them to let me know if they would be unable to attend the luncheon so that I could give them the surveys to fill out and return to me if they would not be able to attend. Of the parents who came to the first luncheon, 30 came to the second luncheon. However, four sets of parents contacted me prior to the luncheon to let me know they would not be able to attend, and each of these parents was given the survey prior to the luncheon. After the luncheon, I emailed the survey to nine parents who had completed a survey at the initial luncheon but were not present at the final luncheon.

The first thing I did at the luncheon was to have the parents fill out the Parent Perceptions and Practices survey again in order to gain a pre- and post-project comparison of their responses. Then, I initiated a time for parents to share about their experiences leading family devotions over the past thirteen weeks. I wanted to allow parents to hear one another’s successes, failures, frustrations, and joys from this process as a way of encouragement. Too often we allow the people of our churches to imagine that other people have everything together and do not struggle. I wanted to use this time as an opportunity to encourage and teach parents in a very non-threatening and relaxed

manner. I was very pleased and somewhat surprised at how open the parents were in sharing about their experience leading the family devotions.

After this time of discussion, we talked about the family devotion guide in comparison to the *FaithTalk* guides provided each Sunday in the worship bulletin (Appendix 11). We had been providing *FaithTalk* guides for the past two years, but many parents had not been using them. Therefore, I had two purposes for discussing the *FaithTalk* with them. First, I wanted to help the parents to see that they have an easy-to-use resource at their disposal every week for leading family devotions. A natural step to take after completing the family devotion guide I had prepared would be to begin using the *FaithTalk* at home, and I wanted to exhort them to take this next step. Second, as I listened to their encouragement and positive feedback regarding the family devotion guide, I wanted to find out how they felt we could improve our *FaithTalk*. I then allowed for an open question and answer time in which the parents were able to ask me questions about leading family devotions. Finally, I closed our time together by reading Psalm 78:1-8 and challenging the parents to lead their homes in view of the future generations.

Phase 3

The final phase of this project occurred the week after the post-project parent luncheon. Following the luncheon, I immediately began compiling the data from the post-project parent surveys. The results of these surveys were entered on a spreadsheet in order to compare the pre- and post-project survey results. In order to make this comparison, I established a numeric value for each answer to the survey questions. A value of 1 was given to the least desirable answer, and a value of 6 was given to the most desirable answer for each question (See Appendix 6). Therefore, 48 was the highest possible score for each portion of the survey, and 96 was the highest score possible for the entire survey. In order to process the data, I recorded each individual's scores in three areas: (1) the total survey score, (2) the parental perspectives score, and (3) the parental

practices score. In each area there were two columns, one for the individual parent's pre-project score and one for the coinciding post-project score

Using these scores, the results were then compared and analyzed using a T-Test to determine whether the difference observed between the first and second luncheon was a significant difference brought about by the project (Appendices 7, 8, and 9). Therefore, I performed a T-Test for dependent samples in order to measure the impact of the project on those parents who completed surveys at both the initial and concluding luncheons. The null hypothesis for the T-Test was that the project made no impact upon the practices of parents in leading family devotions ($H_0: \mu_{\text{pretest}} = \mu_{\text{posttest}}$). The research hypothesis was that the project made a significant difference in the perceptions and practices of parents in leading family devotions ($H_1: \mu_{\text{pretest}} < \mu_{\text{posttest}}$). The alpha for the T-Test was .05, with a degree of freedom of 42. Based upon this data, the T-Test had a critical value of 2.0181, meaning that if the T-Test score was less than -2.0181 or greater than 2.0181 the null hypothesis would be rejected.

The results for the T-Tests were as follows: There was an average increase of 6.721 in the respondents' scores on the combined survey (parent perspectives and practices) taken at the beginning and the end of the project. The value of the T-Test for the combined survey was 5.662. The parent perspectives surveys showed an average score increase of 2.07 over the course of the project, with a T-value of 3.68. Likewise, the project also brought an average increase of 4.37 in the scores for parent practices and a T-value of 4.968. All three of these T-values were greater than the critical value of 2.0181. Therefore, the T-Tests verified the research hypothesis, showing that the project did make a significant difference in the perceptions and practices of parents in leading family devotions.

I then analyzed the data from the parent surveys by frequency of response and percentage in order to gain a more precise understanding of the perceptions and practices of the parents (Appendices 13 and 14). This data was analyzed for both the pre- and post-

project surveys completed by the parent sample pool so that I could discern which areas showed progress or regress over the course of the project. The data was compiled into five categories: all respondents, parents who had been at Grace three or less years, parents who had been at Grace four or more years, parents who presently had both children and adolescents currently in the home, and single parents.

As I compared the total scores for the pre- and post-project surveys, I looked carefully for parents whose scores showed a significant increase or decrease over the course of the project. A change was deemed significant if the individual's score differed by ten or more points on the overall survey score. Upon determining which parents showed a significant change, I formed a list of parents to interview and made sure that each had indicated a willingness to be interviewed on their survey. A thirty-minute interview appointment was then arranged with each parent for the upcoming week. During these interviews, I asked the parents the questions found in Appendix 9.

My primary objective during these interviews was to gain a greater understanding of the effectiveness, or lack thereof, of the family devotion guide. If a family did not respond well, I wanted to learn whether it was due to something within the devotion guide, insufficient equipping on my part, or a hindrance unique to that family. In addition, I hoped to spend time with families together so that I could encourage them and better equip them for their ministry at home.

If a family responded to the family devotions in a positive way, my objective was to discern what led to their successful experience. I wanted to know what aspects of the devotional resource were most useful to them and what best prepared them to lead devotions at home. I also wanted to hear any advice they might have that would help me better equip families who were struggling to have family devotions.

Conclusion

This project was developed to equip parents of adolescents at Grace Baptist to lead family devotions and sought to accomplish the goals that were originally set forth in order to help parents fulfill their biblical responsibility of teaching their children at home. The following chapter will reveal and analyze the results of this project.

CHAPTER 5
EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

Introduction

An endeavor that makes no impact on the lives of those it is intended to influence is quickly forgotten. This fact is true whether it is a doctoral project completed to meet educational standards or an idea that is implemented in the context of a local church's ministry. The beauty of completing a doctorate of ministry is that the final project blends education and research with the needs of a local church for the purpose of making a difference in the lives of God's people. The ultimate goal of this project was to equip and build up the household of God, and the following pages will evaluate the effectiveness and impact of this doctoral project in its context at Grace Baptist Church, Somerset, Kentucky.

Evaluation of the Project Purpose and Goals

The stated purpose for this project was twofold in nature: First, the project was intended to evaluate the present practices of parents with adolescents at Grace Baptist Church, Somerset, Kentucky, in leading family devotions. The presupposition going into this project was that the parents at Grace knew what their role was as spiritual leaders of their children. This presupposition was validated by questions 3, 4, 6, and 7 of the parent perspectives portion of the survey (see Appendix 12, Table A7 and Appendix 13, Table A27). According to the responses to these questions, 72 percent of the parents "disagree" or "strongly disagree" that the church is where children out to receive most of their biblical teaching; 88.3 percent "disagree" or "strongly disagree" that they would prefer their children ask a pastor their biblical and theological questions; 93.1 percent "agree" or

“strongly agree” that parents have a responsibility to engage in a discipleship process with their children; and 86 percent “disagree” or “strongly disagree” that church leaders are the people primarily responsible for discipling their children.

Second, the project purposed to equip parents with the knowledge and skills to lead family devotions. Based upon the analysis of the research done in this project, both aspects of its purpose were fulfilled. A T-Test was conducted showing that the project made a significant impact on the practices of parents; and 33 out of 43 parents showed an increase in their score on the parent practices portion of the survey (see Appendix 7, Table A5). Tables 1 and 2 below contain a full comparison of the pre- and post-project survey results. Therefore, the completion of this project has provided a better understanding of the perspectives and practices of the parents of adolescents of Grace Baptist, enabling the pastoral staff to better equip parents for their God-ordained role at home.

In order to fulfill the above-stated purpose, three strategic goals needed to be met. The first goal was to evaluate what parents of adolescents at Grace were actually doing in the area of leading family devotions. The achievement of this goal was measured by using the parent perspectives and practices survey taken at the pre-project luncheon. Questions 9, 11, 13, and 15 from the survey (see Appendix 12, Table A9 and Appendix 13, Table A29) were used to determine the practices of parents in the area of family devotions because each of these dealt with various aspects of what was hoped to be achieved through family devotions—parents praying with their children; parents discussing and teaching the Bible with their children; and parents applying Scripture in a way that engages those around them.

Regarding prayer, 22 out of 43 parents reported that they had “never” prayed with their child during the preceding week. Questions 11 and 13 showed that 26 out of 43 parents had read or discussed the Bible with their children during the month preceding the project. However, 19 out of the 43 parents who participated had not led a family

Table 1. Parent perspectives results comparison chart

Question:		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I prioritize consistent family devotional or worship times in my family’s schedule.	PRE	11.6%	30.2%	16.2%	23.3%	16.2%	2.3%
	POST	4.6%	13.9%	13.9%	30.2%	27.9%	9.3%
2. I would like to do regular family devotions or Bible reading in our home, but my family is just too busy for that right now. It will probably be that way for quite a while.	PRE	9.3%	16.2%	27.9%	25.5%	16.3%	4.6%
	POST	16.2%	16.2%	23.2%	23.2%	11.6%	9.3%
3. The church is where children ought to receive most of their Bible teaching.	PRE	27.9%	44.1%	6.9%	16.2%	4.6%	0.0%
	POST	37.2%	39.5%	11.6%	6.9%	2.3%	2.3%
4. When my child spontaneously asks a biblical or theological question, I really wish that my child would have asked a minister or other church leader instead of me.	PRE	53.5%	34.8%	2.3%	6.9%	0.0%	2.3%
	POST	60.4%	23.2%	11.6%	4.6%	0.0%	0.0%
5. I want to do whatever it takes for my child to succeed in certain sports or school activities—even if that means my family is too busy some weeks to eat meals together.	PRE	37.2%	32.5%	13.9%	9.3%	6.9%	0.0%
	POST	41.8%	39.5%	11.6%	4.6%	0.0%	2.3%
6. Parents, and particularly fathers, have a responsibility to engage personally in a discipleship process with each of their children.	PRE	2.3%	0.0%	0.0%	4.6%	32.6%	60.5%
	POST	2.3%	2.3%	0.0%	2.3%	20.9%	72.0%
7. Church leaders are the people primarily responsible for discipling my children and teaching them to share the Gospel with others.	PRE	34.9%	51.1%	6.9%	6.9%	0.0%	0.0%
	POST	53.4%	32.5%	9.3%	4.6%	0.0%	0.0%
8. My church has helped me to develop a clear plan for my child’s spiritual growth.	PRE	0.0%	0.0%	4.6%	20.9%	37.2%	37.2%
	POST	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	11.6%	41.8%	46.5%

Table 2. Parent practices results comparison chart

Question:		Never	Once	A Couple of Times	Three or Four Times	Five or Six Times	Seven or More Times
9. Other than mealtimes, how many times in the past week have I prayed aloud with any of my children?	PRE	51.1%	11.6%	6.9%	2.3%	18.6%	9.3%
	POST	30.2%	4.6%	27.9%	6.9%	18.6%	11.6%
10. How many times in the past week has my family eaten a meal together with television, music, and other similar media turned off?	PRE	2.3%	13.9%	23.2%	23.2%	32.5%	4.6%
	POST	2.3%	4.6%	34.8%	23.2%	25.5%	9.3%
11. How many times in the past month have I read or discussed the Bible with any of my children?	PRE	9.3%	2.3%	27.9%	25.5%	13.9%	20.9%
	POST	4.6%	4.6%	13.9%	23.2%	16.2%	37.2%
12. How many times in the past month have I discussed any biblical or spiritual matters with any of my children while engaging in day-to-day activities?	PRE	0.0%	4.6%	25.5%	25.5%	16.2%	27.9%
	POST	2.3%	2.3%	16.2%	20.9%	20.9%	37.2%
13. How many times in the past two months has my family engaged in any family devotional or worship time in our home?	PRE	44.1%	11.6%	11.6%	6.9%	4.6%	20.9%
	POST	13.9%	4.6%	20.9%	9.3%	13.9%	37.2%
14. How many times in the past two months have I talked with my spouse or a close friend about my children's spiritual development?	PRE	4.6%	4.6%	39.5%	18.6%	11.6%	20.9%
	POST	0.0%	6.9%	20.9%	20.9%	18.6%	32.5%
15. How many times in the past year have I intentionally participated with one or more of my children in witnessing to a non-Christian or inviting a non-Christian to church?	PRE	30.2%	9.3%	39.5%	2.3%	16.2%	2.3%
	POST	25.5%	9.3%	25.5%	6.9%	18.6%	13.9%
16. How often in the past year has any church leader made any contact with me to help me to engage actively in my child's spiritual development?	PRE	11.6%	6.9%	25.5%	13.9%	11.6%	30.2%
	POST	4.6%	2.3%	37.2%	18.6%	4.6%	32.5%

devotion in the two months preceding the beginning of this project. An additional 10 had only done so twice in that same period of time, meaning that 29 out of 43 parents had led family devotions two or fewer times in the two months leading up to the project. It should be noted, however, that while parents were not leading intentional times in the Word, this did not mean they were neglecting to talk to their children about God. Of the parents surveyed, 30 out of 43 reported that they had discussed biblical or spiritual matters in day-to-day activities three or more times, with 12 having done so seven or more times. Finally, question 15 revealed that 34 of the parents had done some sort of evangelistic outreach with one of their children two or fewer times over the previous year.

The evidence thus shows that prior to this project, the majority of parents at Grace were engaging in God-centered conversations with their teens; however these conversations were not of the intentional or systematic sort initiated through the leading of family devotions. Additionally, parents were not praying or doing evangelistic outreach with their teens in a consistent manner.

The post-project interviews that were conducted and the concluding luncheon provided insight as to the challenges that commonly kept parents from leading family devotions. Busyness was the greatest challenge parents faced and will be addressed in the following pages. Additional challenges that parents made reference to included husbands who would not lead out, disengaged teens, and conflict that arose during devotions from non-Christian teens.

The second goal was to train the parents at Grace Baptist how to lead family devotions. In chapters 2 and 3 of this project, I provided the foundational knowledge necessary to train the parents at Grace. The scriptural examples expounded in chapter 2 provide guidance for some of the basic skills that parents need in order to pass on their faith. These skills include verbally telling children about their faith (Ps 78:1-8), using the past as a teaching tool (Ps 78:1-8), maintaining a generational perspective for teaching children about God (Ps 78:1-8; Exod 12:1-28; Josh 4:1-24), establishing spiritual

traditions (Exod 12:1-28), establishing God-centered memorials (Josh 4:1-24), and teaching in a way that initiates questions about God from children (Exod 12:1-28; Josh 4:1-24). As I indicated in chapter 3, many of the devotional resources that have been available to parents since 1950 lack sufficient training for parents to be equipped to effectively and confidently lead family devotions.

This goal was achieved in two ways. First, parents were trained at the initial parent luncheon. This training provided them with the knowledge of the importance of family devotions biblically (Deut 6:7; Eph 6:4; Ps 78:1-8), historically, and practically; advice for how to lead a family devotions; and guidance for how to use the devotional guide that was developed and distributed during the project. Second, the family devotion guide that was provided helped parents to develop necessary skills for leading family devotions. In personal interviews conducted with parents after the conclusion of the project, each parent cited the provision of the family devotion guide as being what best equipped them to lead family devotions.

The third goal of the project was to equip parents with a theologically sound and usable resource for leading their teenage children in family devotions. The development of this resource was greatly impacted and informed by the research conducted for the writing of chapters 2 and 3. The biblical and theological foundations informed the preliminary material in the devotion, as well as the goals for many of the individual devotions. It was evident from the study of the biblical texts that the purpose of parental teaching should be the salvation of children and the passing on of the faith to the coming generations. Therefore, at every point possible in the devotional guide, parents were instructed to apply the Word of God in a missional manner.

The research of resources conducted for chapter 3 greatly impacted the writing of the devotion guide. The lack of training provided in these resources coupled with finding only a few books that sought to teach parents how to faithfully handle the Word of God led to the inclusion of the “How to Study and Teach the Bible,” “How to Lead a

Family Devotion,” and “How to Use this Devotional Guide” sections. Additionally, the lack of theological depth in most of the resources affirmed the need for a solid teaching component under the “Learn Together” segment of the devotions. Finally, studying the various questions asked in devotional resources for different-aged children helped formulate the way questions were asked in the devotions.

Based upon the results of the post-project parent practices surveys (see Appendix 12, Table A10 and Appendix 13, Table A30), the parent feedback at the concluding luncheon, and the post-project interviews, this goal was achieved. In answering question 13 (“How many times in the past two months has my family engaged in any family devotional or worship time in our home?”), the number of parents who had done so three or more times rose from 14 to 26; and those who had done so seven or more times rose from 9 to 16 (see Appendix 12, Tables A9 and A10). Feedback from parents at the final luncheon included the following: parents liked the opening questions, the devotions were appropriate for all ages, the depth of teaching was appropriate, the devotions were flexible enough to be adapted to any family, and the length of the devotions was good.

The end hope of this goal was that parents would establish a habit of leading family devotions, and the parent interviews affirmed this hope to be the case. The first question asked during the open question and answer time at the concluding luncheon was, “What are you planning to write next?” The response from all but two of the parents interviewed was that they do plan to continue leading family devotions. These responses indicate that once parents experienced success leading family devotions, and led them on a consistent basis, they gained the desire to make this a habit for their family.

Key Findings of the Project

As a result of this project and the research conducted to measure the achievement of the above goals, four key findings became apparent

Busyness is the Greatest Challenge

The greatest obstacle to the practice of family devotions for the parents at Grace Baptist is busyness. The surveys that were conducted at the beginning of the project found that 46.4 percent of the respondents agreed at some level that their family was currently too busy to do family devotions or Bible reading at home (See Appendix 13, Table A29). All four of the pastors at Grace also perceived busyness to be a challenge, with one responding that he “somewhat agreed” that parents allow busyness to prevent them from leading family devotions while the other three pastors all responded that they “agree” that this is true (see Appendix 4, Table A1). At the conclusion of the project this number decreased to only 44.1 percent, which is a difference of one less parent who expressed this perspective on busyness.

The source of busyness was varied, according to the parents. At the concluding luncheon, parents agreed that navigating work, school, sports, and other extracurricular activities that their family was involved with consumed their time. However, non-church activities were not the only source of busyness. A mother who has both children and teens in her home and is very active in ministry at Grace noted during the luncheon that church life is often a source of busyness, observing how often they are at church many weeks. In one of the interviews, a mother with only one child noted that the greatest challenge she and her husband faced in leading family devotions was “busyness—just actually doing it and making it a part of the routine.”

However, while busyness remains a substantial challenge for parents, the project did seem to help parents to realize that they should, and *can*, take control of their busy schedules for the sake of teaching the Word at home. In observing the challenge of busy schedules, one parent interviewed noted, “We make time to do what we want to do.” The reality is that life in the United States is busy, and this reality is not likely to change anytime in the near future. Therefore, parents are going to have to take control of their

family's schedule with boldness and intentionality to ensure they are not neglecting their God-ordained role of discipling their children.

Perhaps one of the best moves pastors can make to equip parents to lead family devotions is to simply help them develop a desire to do so, which was one of the results of this project. The consensus response of the parents at the concluding luncheon was that the devotions were “doable” because they “were not overwhelming in the amount of time they demanded.” One parent noted that they were “easy to pick up and go with” and another that the “length was just right.” Equipping parents with a resource that can realistically be used in the midst of the busyness of life is essential to helping parents develop a desire to use that resource. The result of providing such a resource to the parents at Grace Baptist was that at the final luncheon, 67.4 percent of the parents agreed at some level that they prioritized consistent family devotional or worship times in their family's schedule. This was a notable increase from only 42 percent who answered the same way at the beginning of the project. Prior to the project, 44.1 percent of the parents had not engaged in any form of family devotional or worship time at home. However, at the end of the project, 51.1 percent of the parents had led five or more devotions, while 37.2 percent had led seven or more. Parents who are equipped with the right resources will develop a desire to lead family devotions and, thus, prioritize the leading of these devotions in the midst of the busyness of life.

Parents Need and Want Help Applying Scripture

In seeking to equip their people, pastors are often guilty of thinking that just because they convey knowledge of the truth through teaching that the laypeople will be able to apply this knowledge in their own lives. However, this assumption simply is not the case. Each of the pastors at Grace Baptist “agree” that a clear plan for the spiritual formation of children has been developed for parents (see Appendix 4, Table A1), but in

view of the disparity between the perspectives and practices of the parents at Grace, it is possible that many of the parents need more focused help implementing the plan.

According to the pre-project survey responses, 92.9 percent of the parents agree or strongly agree that parents, and particularly fathers, have a responsibility to engage in a discipleship process with their children. However, although this was their perception, it was not being translated into the practice of basic spiritual disciplines such as prayer, the study of the Word, and evangelism. Over half (51.1 percent) of the parents surveyed were not praying with their children, 44.1 percent were not engaging in any intentional Bible teaching through devotions or Bible reading, and 30.2 percent had not participated in witnessing to non-Christian or invited a non-Christian to church. What this disparity reveals is that perception does not always equal, or even lead to, practices. Thus, it can be said that possessing biblical knowledge of one's role does not mean that the person will apply it to his life.

What is the solution to this disparity? Provide teaching, resources, and experiences that help people live out their faith. One couple with a high school-aged child explained, "The final application exercises worked really well. We were able to apply what we had learned into real life situations, and they helped us equip our daughter to live out her faith. We liked them because they helped us live out our faith as a family." Another father noted that the application of Scripture brought the most participation from his son because it showed him how the Word applied directly to his life. The application portions of the devotional resource was vital for helping families understand how Scripture intersects everyday life and provided them with opportunities to live out what they were learning.

The data taken during the project demonstrates that the devotions helped parents live out their faith. At the conclusion of the project, more parents prayed with their children, as seen by the fact that the number of parents who had not prayed at all with their children in the week leading up to the survey decreased from 51.1 percent on

the initial survey to 30.2 percent on the final survey. The percentage of parents who had not engaged their children in a family devotion or worship time dropped from 44.1 percent to 13.9 percent, with 51.1 percent leading their family to study the Word five or more times in the two months prior to the final survey. However, while the devotions did not make as drastic of an impact on witnessing to non-Christians and inviting them to church, they did make a small difference. The number of parents who had done some sort of evangelistic outreach with their children almost doubled, rising from 9 parents to 17. The provision of future resources that help parents apply the Word in the life of their family should continue to raise these numbers.

Balance is Vital in Devotional Resources

The number of parents who took part in leading family devotions two or more times in the two months preceding the initial luncheon greatly increased over the course of the project, rising from 19 to 35—and only six parents involved with the project did not lead any devotions by its conclusion. Why did such a large portion of the parents begin leading the devotions? The devotions were well-balanced, which made them very easy and enjoyable to use. According to the parents involved in this study, an effective family devotional resource needs to be well-balanced in three areas: length; discussion and teaching; and theological depth and simplicity. The parents at the luncheon explained that one strength of the devotion guide was that the devotions were just the right length—not so short that they had no real substance, but also not so long that they were unrealistic to lead. A second strength was that the devotions had a good blend of questions and activities that engaged their children with solid teaching. A final strength was that the parents felt the devotions had a good balance of simplicity for younger children and/or new believers with theological “meat” for older, more mature children. Balance in each of these areas is important because every family is different.

Many Parents are Teaching— Just not Systematically

This project contends that the practice of leading family devotions is a very important aspect of discipleship in the home and should be a goal that parents seek to work towards with their children, but the temptation to equate the leading of family devotions, or lack thereof, with the spiritual health of the family must be resisted. Family devotions are not the *only* way of teaching one's children or of exerting spiritual leadership at home. According to the research done at Grace, parents were talking about the Word of God at home prior to the project, although not in a systematic, planned manner. This finding is reflected in that 60.3 percent of the parents had read or discussed the Scriptures with their children a minimum of three times in the month leading up to the survey and 69.6 percent had discussed biblical matters three or more times with their children while engaged in day-to-day activities over this period.

At the conclusion of this project, two reasons for not doing family devotions were given by parents who were actively seeking to lead their children spiritually, but who did not find family devotions to be the most effective way to do so. First, there are situations in which families are not ready for family devotions. One mother with an adolescent child who is not a believer explained, “[My child] is not receptive to family devotions, and they created conflict for us. Daily, as-you-go teaching is just more effective for us right now.” This mother is seeking to intentionally teach her child through everyday conversations into which she weaves the threads of the Gospel.

Second, a few parents said that family devotions just “don’t work” for their family. One reason for this response was that some parents felt like leading family devotions was too difficult in comparison to simply dialoguing with their children about Scripture on a day-to-day basis. A mother of three shared this perspective: “A family devotion book is hard to get in the habit of doing, but the as-you-go teaching of your children comes naturally.” Another reason for this response was based upon the difficulty of having uncooperative teens. A mother of two disengaged teens shared, “Personally I

find the best spiritual conversations come about from day-to-day occurrences in which we can share how someone in the Bible handled a similar situation. That seems to work best for us.” Parents who find themselves in these situations should be encouraged to continue in the intentional discipleship of their teenage children even if they do not use family devotions as the means to do so.

There is a Correlation between the use of Family Devotions and As-You-Go Discipleship

Perhaps the most significant finding of this project is that there seems to be a direct correlation between the use of family devotions and as-you-go discipleship. Over the course of this project, the number of parents who were actively dialoging about the Bible with their children at home increased, as the percentage of parents who had discussed the Bible with their children rose from 60.3 percent to 76.6 percent. Likewise, the percentage of parents who had discussed the Bible with their children during day-to-day activities increased from 69.6 percent to 79 percent. This increase shows that while spiritual leadership and biblical teaching can and does occur outside of family devotions, the use of them as a form of intentional teaching increases the amount of dialogue in the home that is centered upon Scripture.

In relation to the previous key finding, this correlation is of particular importance because some parents cite as-you-go discipleship as more natural for their family dynamic. The data from this project actually shows that the two forms of discipleship are complementary. Day-to-day discipleship will add weight and validity to times of family devotions, as well as provide opportunities for parents to apply what was taught in family devotions to everyday life experiences. Deuteronomy 6:7-9 calls parents to practice both forms of discipleship with their children rather than to choose between the two. Parents should be commended for practicing either of the two, but should strive to weave both into the fabric of the discipleship of their children.

Strengths of the Project

The overall success and effectiveness of this project translates into multiple strengths that are worthy of noting, the first being that parents gained the much-needed confidence to lead family devotions. One mother of four expressed the reality that the vast majority of contemporary parents live in: “I wasn’t sure what [a family devotion] was supposed to look like because my parents never did them.” This uncertainty led to a lack of confidence for this mother and other parents at Grace. However, every parent interviewed who stated he or she had a low level of confidence before the project said that his or her confidence rose as a result of the project. This result is quite significant because most parents will not lead something they are uncomfortable with. When parents have the confidence that they can fulfill their role, then they will step forward and lead as God has called them to do.

A second strength of the project was that it caused parents to examine themselves in their role as the spiritual leader of their children. Before submitting his survey, one father of three wrote beside question 9, “Great question—very revealing!” Parents did not simply read the questions and fill in mindless answers. Instead, the questions caused them to think back on their practices over the preceding weeks to see how they had actually been leading their children. The road to apathy is paved with mindless knowledge that is never applied to one’s life. A task of the effective leader is to put his people in a position in which they not only learn, but they apply what they learn to their own lives. This project did just that—it took what the parents knew to be true, made them examine their own practices, and then gave them the opportunity to apply their knowledge of what should be done to their own family.

The provision of a family devotion that can be used outside of the context of Grace Baptist Church was a third strength of this project. The lack of biblically sound family devotional resources for parents of adolescents is a problem for the parents of Grace Baptist, but it is also a problem for the church in general. The family devotion

guide written for this project was written for the people of Grace Baptist first and foremost, but it was written in view of the possibility that it may be used elsewhere to train, equip, and resource parents to lead their children in the purposeful study of God's Word.

A final strength of the project was that it heightened parental awareness of the *FaithTalk* guide that is included in the weekly worship bulletin. The *FaithTalk* has been provided for over two years at Grace Baptist, but many of the parents were not using it. As a result of the project, parents now understand that they are given a resource for family devotions every week. The hope is that this awareness will help parents to continue in the habit they have established, just as so many of them indicated they would.

Weaknesses of the Project

Although this project was successful in achieving its purpose, it had several weaknesses that should be improved upon if a similar project is done in the future. First, there should have been more accountability established for parents during the project. Establishing a new routine or habit in the life of a busy family is no easy task, and multiple parents shared that they went through some periods in which they simply forgot or neglected to lead family devotions. It appears that parents would have benefited from a luncheon midway through the thirteen-week project. This luncheon would need to simply be a time of fellowship, encouragement, and exhortation to press on in leading family devotions.

Second, the project would have benefited from some additional strategic questions in the parent survey packets. One question that should have been asked in both packets was the person's gender so that the research could have compared the perspectives and practices of fathers and mothers. Additionally, the questions used for the post-project interview (Appendix 10) should have been distributed to all parents in the concluding parent survey. Confining these questions, and thus the information contained

in their answers, to a limited group of participants who were willing to do an interview did not allow as many people to be interviewed as originally hoped. A much better process would have all parents answer these questions at the conclusion of the project, after which the researcher could arrange personal interviews to discuss in-depth the answers to the surveys and the additional questions. The benefit of requiring all participants to answer the questions is that the research will include the answers from every participant instead of just a few.

Third, more time should have been spent with parents during the project. Personal contact and strategic conversations about the family devotions were sporadic, but they should have been much more intentional. Future researchers in this area should plan to dialogue with a set number of parents each week so that each parent involved with the project will have personal contact from the leader at least two times during the course of the project.

Fourth, the project was not very effective in drawing out fringe families. The parents who had a strong desire to lead spiritually came out for the project and happily took part. However, it was not nearly as successful at getting parents who were nominally involved in the ministry at Grace Baptist to participate. Therefore, seven families who could have greatly benefited from the project were not involved. If this project is repeated, a plan should be in place for involving parents who are nominally involved.

Finally, the devotional resource did not set parents on a course to lead family devotions without the use of a resource. In chapter 1, I stated that the ultimate benefit of this project was to provide parents with a devotional guide that would not foster dependency upon a resource. However, at the end of this project, the parents I spoke to expressed the need to have a resource to guide them. While I am not convinced that this outcome could have been reached with this set of devotions, resources that are provided for parents in the future should seek to equip them in such a way that they are able to lead family devotions without depending on a guide.

Theological Reflections

Paul warns God's people in Colossians 2:8, "See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ" (NASB). The reality is that many parents have been taken captive by false worldviews that draw them away from teaching their children about God at home. Busyness rules the home and drives the family, leaving little time for parents to gather their family for a time of study and worship. Materialism plagues homes with a desire to have more, so parents work longer hours in order to give kids what they never had. All the while, the greatest gift Christian parents can give their children is their Lord, Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, the world today does not define success by godliness or obedience to God's commands, but by athletic prowess or academic excellence. Therefore, students are pushed to excel on the court and in the classroom to the detriment of their spiritual health. There is nothing innately wrong or sinful about being busy, having material goods, being a great athlete, or achieving high academic standards—as long as these do not eclipse God. However, in too many homes God is eclipsed by these areas. Busyness, materialism, sports, and academics have so eclipsed parents' Godward gaze that they fail to purposefully instruct their children in the Lord at home. It is time for Christian parents to take back the home and the lives of their families for the glory of God and the good of their kids.

A distinctive of Pauline theology is his already/not yet perspective. Christians live in the middle of two worlds—the finite world that will soon pass away and the infinite glory of Heaven in which they will stand in worship of the King of kings. Parents who keep one eye fixed on eternity as they go about their daily lives will find themselves more in tune with the need to teach their children about the Lord. "Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth," Paul appeals in Colossians 3:2 (NASB). Parents who do set their minds on Heaven will view their children as more than their children; they will view them as brothers and sisters adopted by the Father. They will

understand the importance of teaching the Gospel at home because they will be ever mindful that the Gospel is the only thing that can bring their children home to Heaven. Parents must maintain an eternal perspective. Doing so will keep them focused on the importance of intentionally imparting their faith to those who will be missionaries to the next generation.

Deuteronomy 6:7-9 teaches two forms of parental instruction—diligent, intentional teaching of children and as-you-go instruction that is mixed into daily living. While this project has focused on the diligent instruction of children as taught in Deuteronomy 6:7 and Ephesians 6:4, parents must not neglect the opportunities daily life presents for them to teach their children about the Lord. Likewise, parents must realize that neither of the two forms of teaching should be neglected. Instead, godly parenting calls for a balance of both of these forms of teaching because these two ways of teaching their children are complimentary ways to lead their children in the Lord. As-you-go teaching is enhanced and strengthened by consistent, systematic instruction, and it is where the organized instruction that occurs through family devotions is applied to real life. Likewise, the integrity and influence of family devotions is strengthened by as-you-go teaching because children are more apt to willingly learn from parents who they know are constantly aware of and focused on their spiritual growth. Children need to see parents applying biblical truth to life and intentionally training them in the way of the Lord—the two go hand-in-hand.

Pastors need to answer the biblical call to equip the saints for ministry (Eph 4:11-12) and stop complaining about what parents are not doing. For too long, pastors—and particularly youth pastors—have viewed parents as obstacles and thorns in the flesh instead of partnering with them for the sake of equipping them to fulfill their ministry in the home. It is time for pastors to lose this perspective. Parents need, and even want, to be equipped to lead their children in the Lord. However, due to a lack of parental spiritual leadership being modeled by their parents and the failure of church leadership to equip

them to lead at home, many of today's parents have no idea how to exert the spiritual leadership that they know God has given them.

Therefore, pastors need to do four things in order to equip the parents in their ministry. First, they need to be an example of what godly parenthood looks like. The parents in the post-project luncheon agreed that one of the difficulties of leading family devotions was that they had not *seen* it done in their own homes growing up. However, the pastor has the opportunity to lead his home in a way that *shows* parents how to lead their own home. 1 Timothy 3:4 teaches that if one aspires to be an elder, or pastor, he must manage his own household well. Therefore, the flock should *see* this pre-requisite for pastoral leadership found in 1 Timothy 3:4 so that they can have a model many parents likely have been deprived of in the past.

Second, pastors need to encourage, affirm, and promote parents as the primary spiritual leaders of their children. The latter part of the Twentieth century was a period in which the church was championed at the expense of the family. However, as Steve Wright cautions, "Let's all be cautious of anyone that would insist on championing one institution at the demise of the other. God gave us the two institutions, so we cannot ignore one in favor of the other."³ Deuteronomy 6:7-9 gave parents the responsibility of spiritual leadership long before the pastoral office was established, so pastors should do all within their means to champion their God-ordained role of spiritual leadership.

Third, pastors need to teach parents clearly and consistently what it means to be a spiritual leader *and* how to live out the role of spiritual leader. As previously noted in the "Key Findings" section of this project, parents need and want help applying Scripture within the context of their family. Ephesians 4:12 reveals that the task of the pastor is to equip the saints for the work of ministry, and there is no greater ministry before parents than that of discipling their children. Therefore, pastors must strive to

³Steve Wright, *Rethink: Decide for Yourself is Student Ministry Working* (Wake Forest, NC: InQuest Publishing, 2008), 90.

equip parents both with the knowledge of what it means to be a spiritual leader and with the opportunities to exert their leadership at home. Pastors need to provide opportunities for parents to lead their children spiritually, carefully ensuring that they themselves are not usurping the parental role at home. As footnote 4 of chapter 3 explains, the rise of the modern youth minister usurped the role of parents as spiritual leaders in many homes across the United States. In view of past errors, pastors, and particularly youth pastors, should provide opportunities for parents to take active leadership in the spiritual formation of their teens.

Finally, pastors need to resource parents with tools they can use to carry out their role of spiritual leader at home. The parents who took part in this project referred to the provision of the family devotion guide as what best equipped them to lead family devotions. Just as the Passover celebration of Exodus 12 and the memorial stones of Joshua 4 gave parents the opportunity to teach their children about God, biblically sound resources that are placed in the hands of parents will do the same today. Pastors, therefore, should seek to find resources that will equip parents with the knowledge of their role and aid them in carrying out that role.

Personal Reflections

Just as the survey questions caused parents to examine themselves and their practices of spiritual leadership, this project has led me to examine my own role as the spiritual leader of my home and how I am equipping the parents under my ministry to fulfill their own roles at home. The project has granted me, as a parent of four, a heightened awareness of the benefit of the family devotions we lead. Quite honestly, it is very easy to allow busyness to steal away times of family devotion, prayer, and ministry. However, the completion of this project has reminded me of the challenge that busyness presents and that I must guard my family from doing so many peripheral activities that my wife and I neglect the opportunity we have to teach them about our glorious God.

As a pastor, this project has influenced my ministry in two primary ways. First, it has reminded me that the parents under my care are all at different points in their walk with Christ. Some of the parents under my ministry challenge me to be a better parent and give me examples to look to for how to lead my children, while others are captivated by the false worldviews of materialism and success. Therefore, I must carefully minister to each family in a way that is most beneficial to them and their needs.

Second, in view of the fact that every parent has unique challenges and giftedness for the same role at home, I need to do a better job of spending personal time with the parents in our ministry. Of the 43 parents surveyed, 19 (44.2 percent) of them responded that a church leader has only contacted them two or fewer times in the past year to help them actively engage in their child's spiritual development. This number tells me that I need to do a better job of prioritizing strategic, personal ministry to parents over the course of the year. Specifically in regard to this project, I should have set aside more time to speak to parents about their experience, listen to the challenges they were facing, and encourage them in their role. While I did spoke to parents a little, I did not do it as intentionally as I should have. The intentional and strategic exhortation of individual parents in their roles at home needs to be a greater focus in my ministry. Being that I am a very task-oriented individual, this project has reminded me that I must not allow the planning and preparation of ministry to overshadow the people in my ministry.

Implications for the Future

In light of the research and findings of this project, there are several important implications for future ministry and research. First, in response to the feedback given by parents regarding the effectiveness of the devotions written for this project, we need to make a few improvements to the *FaithTalk* guides that we provide each week for the people of Grace Baptist. These improvements should bring additional balance to the *FaithTalk*, provide additional questions about the Scripture passage, and better help

families apply the Word of God to their lives. The application portion has been a section that is not always included depending on the text of the sermon. However, we need to provide parents with a practical way to apply God's Word each week. Suggestions for further study should also be added since multiple parents shared that this would be beneficial for families with teens who are spiritually mature.

Second, one of the more alarming findings of the project was that a large number of parents were not actively engaging in prayer or outreach ministry with their children. However, family communion with God through prayer and being families on mission for the spread of the Gospel should be integral parts of Christian families. These basic habits should be the fabric of godly families. Therefore, the future ministry to families at Grace should entail two strategic discipleship focal points—leading families to pray together and to be on mission together.

Third, additional devotional resources need to be provided to parents of adolescents—both at Grace and beyond. The parents involved in this project have a desire for more resources to utilize in the discipleship of their children. These resources need not only to equip parents to lead devotions, but also train them to lead devotions in the future without depending on a devotional guide. Resources will always be limited. However, the opportunities to lead a family in the study of God's Word are infinite. The greatest thing future devotional resources can do for parents is to train them to open up the Word of God without any additional help and teach it to their children. These resources should also deal strategically with key topics and issues that confront teens. Multiple parents expressed an interest in a devotional resource of this nature that would provide them with Bible studies that could be used either systematically or on a situational basis depending on the needs of their children and family.

Fourth, an area of further research that should be done in response to this project is to perform a closer analysis of the various demographics of respondents. I analyzed the survey data among four groups: parents who had been at Grace three or less

years, those who had been at Grace four or more years, parents with both children and youth currently in the home, and single parents (See Appendices 12 and 13). As anticipated, parents who had attended Grace three years or less had a pre-project average score of 61.29 (the lowest of all demographic breakdowns in the survey), while they also showed the highest percentage of increase to their overall score at 12.7 percent (as compared to a 9 percent increase for those who had been there longer). However, surprisingly, parents with both kids and youth in the home scored significantly higher on their surveys than did those with only youth in the home (71.27 compared to 63.34 on the pre-project survey). I have included the survey results of these demographical segments in Appendices 11, 12, and 13 for the purpose of comparison with other similar research projects in the future. These statistics need to be compared across multiple congregations to determine whether or not they are consistent in various contexts of ministry. Additional demographics that should be studied should also include fathers, mothers, and how long the tenure of a pastor at a church influences parental perspectives and practices, none of which were included in the present research.

Finally, future family devotion resources for parents of teens need to include an option for further and/or deeper study related to each devotion. The parents at Grace offered two suggestions to accomplish this addition: First, they suggested the inclusion of an addendum providing additional biblical texts, teaching points, and discussion questions that would help them teach the devotion at a deeper level. Second, the parents suggested the development of a text box at the end of each devotion with suggestions for further or deeper study related to each devotion.

Conclusion

Originally, I had two purposes for seeking a doctorate of ministry—for my personal growth as a pastor and for the good of the people I have the blessing to pastor. The whole of my studies has fulfilled these purposes, but this project has most definitely

been the capstone that has pushed me further as a pastor and helped me to implement what I have learned in a way that will best equip those to whom I minister. I pray that this project will serve the people of God for their good and God's glory for years to come.

APPENDIX 1

LETTER TO PARENTS PROMOTING THE INITIAL PARENT LUNCHEON

October 31, 2012

Dear Parent,

As many of you know, I am in the final phase of my doctoral work at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville. I felt that God led me to pursue this degree and better equip myself to pastor the families here at Grace and it has been a very fruitful endeavor for me. The final component of my degree is to complete an extensive doctoral project that is specifically designed to meet the needs of our church body.

As I have sought to minister to your families and spent many hours researching the spiritual formation of adolescents, I have been reminded of the importance of parents teaching their children Scripture in the home. You, the parent, have the greatest amount of influence in the life of your teen, so when you teach them the Word of God at home it makes a resounding impact on their worldview and, thus, their life.

However, I also understand that most of you already know that your responsibility as a parent is to lead your child spiritually. A lack of knowing your “job” isn’t the problem. Instead, the problem most parents have is that there are no good resources to help you lead devotions at home. Publishers have provided parents of young children with resources to teach Scripture at home, but biblically sound resources for parents of adolescents are almost non-existent. Therefore, as my doctoral project I would like to provide you with a resource to help you teach Scripture to your teen at home. This resource will be biblically sound, practical, and written with your family in mind.

On Sunday, November 11, I would like to invite you to a special luncheon after the morning worship service. At this luncheon I will provide you with two things: First, I will provide training for you in how to lead family devotions at home. The reality is that most of us did not grow up in homes that had family devotions, so we don’t know what it looks like. Therefore, I want to equip you to lead family devotions. Second, I am going to provide you with a resource to use in leading family devotions at home. This will be a resource I have written for this project and which will serve as a critical piece of research for the future development of family devotional resources for parents of teens beyond Grace Baptist.

I would like to ask that you make the luncheon a priority because your assistance, feedback, and participation are vital to this portion of my research. I will be providing you with a survey at the beginning and end of the project that you can fill out anonymously to provide feedback on this resource. It will be your feedback that will be used in the future as I and some colleagues seek to develop a resource for publication that will be used not only here at Grace, but by parents across the nation. I understand that you are very busy and I know that your time is valuable, so I greatly appreciate your willingness to help out.

Also, please know that we will be finished by 1:30 on the day of the luncheon so you will still have the afternoon to spend with your family. If you are going to be out of town and unable to attend on the 11th, please let me know so that I can arrange a time later that week to meet with you and provide you with the devotional resource so that you can be a part of this endeavor.

Thank you for all of your encouragement and support over the past couple of years, and now for helping me complete my studies. Each of you are a rich blessing to my life and it is a blessing to pastor here at Grace. I pray that this project will be a fruitful endeavor for us all!

In Christ,

Todd

APPENDIX 2

PARENT PERCEPTIONS AND PRACTICES
SURVEY PACKET

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure your perceptions and practices regarding family devotions. This research is being conducted by Todd W. Meadows for the purposes of a ministry project at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. For the purpose of this research, you will be asked to answer the following questions both before and after we provide you with training and resources to lead family devotions at home. Any information or responses that you offer will be kept confidential, and at no time will your name be used in this project. Participation in this project is voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time.

Please provide the following demographic information:

1. Please provide your date of birth in numeric form (Ex: 051977 for May 19, 1977) to be used as identification during the project: _____
2. What is your marital status?
Married Separated Divorced Single
3. Please circle the ages of your children living at home:
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 Other:

4. What is the highest level of education you have achieved?
5. How long have you been a member of Grace Baptist Church?
6. At the end of this project, would you be willing to take part in a thirty-minute personal interview regarding your experience?
Yes No
7. If yes, please provide your name and phone number below:
Name: _____
Phone: _____

Please answer the following questions regarding your role as a parent:⁴

1. I prioritize consistent family devotional or worship times in my family's schedule.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Somewhat Disagree Somewhat Agree Agree Strongly Agree

2. I would like to do regular family devotions or Bible reading in our home, but my family is just too busy for that right now. It will probably be that way for quite a while.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Somewhat Disagree Somewhat Agree Agree Strongly Agree

3. The church is where children ought to receive most of their Bible teaching.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Somewhat Disagree Somewhat Agree Agree Strongly Agree

4. When my child spontaneously asks a biblical or theological question, I really wish that my child would have asked a minister or other church leader instead of me.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Somewhat Disagree Somewhat Agree Agree Strongly Agree

5. I want to do whatever it takes for my child to succeed in certain sports or school activities—even if that means my family is too busy some weeks to eat meals together.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Somewhat Disagree Somewhat Agree Agree Strongly Agree

6. Parents, and particularly fathers, have a responsibility to engage personally in a discipleship process with each of their children.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Somewhat Disagree Somewhat Agree Agree Strongly Agree

7. Church leaders are the people primarily responsible for discipling my children and teaching them to share the Gospel with others.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Somewhat Disagree Somewhat Agree Agree Strongly Agree

8. My church has helped me to develop a clear plan for my child's spiritual growth.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Somewhat Disagree Somewhat Agree Agree Strongly Agree

⁴These final sixteen questions in this evaluation have been used with permission from Timothy Paul Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan House, 2011), 202-03.

Please answer the following questions regarding your practices as a parent:

9. Other than mealtimes, how many times in the past week have I prayed aloud with any of my children?

Never Once A couple of times Three or four times Five or six times Seven or more times

10. How many times in the past week has my family eaten a meal together with television, music, and other similar media turned off?

Never Once A couple of times Three or four times Five or six times Seven or more times

11. How many times in the past month have I read or discussed the Bible with any of my children?

Never Once A couple of times Three or four times Five or six times Seven or more times

12. How many times in the past month have I discussed any biblical or spiritual matters with any of my children while engaging in day-to-day activities?

Never Once A couple of times Three or four times Five or six times Seven or more times

13. How many times in the past two months has my family engaged in any family devotional or worship time in our home?

Never Once A couple of times Three or four times Five or six times Seven or more times

14. How many times in the past two months have I talked with my spouse or a close friend about my children's spiritual development?

Never Once A couple of times Three or four times Five or six times Seven or more times

15. How many times in the past year have I intentionally participated with one or more of my children in witnessing to a non-Christian or inviting a non-Christian to church?

Never Once A couple of times Three or four times Five or six times Seven or more times

16. How often in the past year has any church leader made any contact with me to help me to engage actively in my child's spiritual development?

Never Once A couple of times Three or four times Five or six times Seven or more times

APPENDIX 3
FAMILY DEVOTION GUIDE

The Life of Christ

**Family Devotions on the Virgin Birth
through the Triumphal Entry**

Unless otherwise identified, all Scripture references are taken from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version (ESV), © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.

A Word to Parents

The discipline of leading family worship has been an important and common part of Christian families since the birth of the church---until recent history. Unfortunately, busy-ness and the popularity of the "professional" youth minister caused many parents in the latter part of the twentieth century to neglect the teaching of Scripture at home. However, God's Word is clear that parents have the primary responsibility of passing on their faith to their children (see Deut 6:4-7, Ps 78:1-8, and Eph 6:4). Therefore, it is time for Christian parents to pick the mantle back up and make the teaching of Scripture an important part of their life at home.



In the following pages you will find thirteen devotions from the life of Christ written for your family. These times of study in God's Word are designed to focus your family on how God fulfilled His promise to send the Messiah, the Savior, to redeem His people. Specifically, over the next thirteen weeks your family will study thirteen of the most significant events in the life of Christ leading up to His triumphant entry into Jerusalem. May you be blessed as you seek to tell the coming generation--your own children--of the glorious works of our God!

Table of Contents

How to Study and Teach the Bible	3
How to Lead a Family Devotion	5
How to Use this Devotional Guide	6
Family Devotions	
Promise Kept (Matthew 1:18-25)	7
Prepare the Way (Matthew 3:1-12)	9
The Baptism of Jesus (Matthew 3:13-17)	11
The Temptation of Jesus (Luke 4:1-13)	13
Fishers of Men (Luke 5:1-11)	15
Jesus' Power to Heal: Physical and Spiritual (Mark 2:1-12)	17
Jesus' Power over Creation (Mark 4:35-41)	19
The Rich Young Man (Mark 10:17-27)	21
Jesus' Amazing Claim (John 8:31-59)	23
Jesus' Power over Death (John 11:1-44)	25
Who Do You Say that I Am? (Matthew 16:13-16)	27
Jesus Predicts His Death (Matthew 20:17-19)	29
The Triumphant Entry (Matthew 21:1-11)	31

How to Study and Teach the Bible

Sometimes parents don't study the Word of God at home with their family because they don't feel confident in their ability to understand, teach, and answer questions about Scripture. It is impossible to give you all of the answers to questions your kids may ask about God and the Bible, but you *can* gain the necessary tools for understanding and teaching the Bible at home. In order to equip you to teach the Word at home, you need to understand three things about the Bible:

You Don't Have to Know All of the Answers!

Three words parents hate to say to their children are "I don't know." We like to have the answers, especially when it comes to our children. However, don't be fooled--no one knows all the answers about God and the Bible. Your job is not to graduate your kids from your home with a seminary degree. Instead, your job is to pass on your faith to the next generation (Ps 78:1-8). How do you do this? Simply by carrying out the instructions of Deuteronomy 6:4-7--know who the true God is, love Him wholeheartedly, teach His words to your children with diligence, and talk about His words constantly in everyday life. Here is the truth: Your children will be more impacted by your faithfulness to live out your faith and lead them in the Word than they will be by your intellectual knowledge of the Word. So, do your part to pass on your faith to your children, and when a question comes up that you don't know the answer to just call one of the pastors. That is one of our responsibilities--to equip you for your task.

You Do Need to Know what the Bible Is.

The short answer is that the Bible is the Word of God. But, what does that mean? It means that we approach the Bible differently than any other book, and that we should interpret and teach it with the utmost of diligence and care. Here is a quick summary of the doctrine of Scripture:

Key Passages: Ps 19:7-11; Jn 17:17; 2 Tim 3:14-17; Heb 4:12; & 2 Pet 1:16-20

6 Qualities of Scripture:

1. The Bible is *inspired*.
This means that Scripture was written by godly men led by the Holy Spirit. Our beliefs about Scripture hinge on this fact.
2. The Bible is *inerrant*.
This means that Scripture in its original form is without error and is true in all that it teaches. It does not mean that the Bible tells us every fact and detail of life, but that what it does tell us is the truth.
3. The Bible is *authoritative*.
This means that Scripture is the authority in the life of the believer and every other person ever created. This is logical—if the God of the universe wrote it and we know it is without error, then it must be the authority in our life.
4. The Bible is *necessary*.

This means that we need God's Word. Why? Simply because it is the authority on all things and tells us about God, ourselves, and salvation.

5. The Bible is *relevant*.

This means that it applies to our everyday lives. It is not just some dusty old history book. Isaiah 40:8 talks about the fact that God's Word endures forever!

6. The Bible is *clear*.

This means that every Christian can read and study God's Word and understand what it means. Yes, this means that you, the parent, can understand the Word of God good enough to teach it to your family. You do not need a theology degree.

You Can Study and Teach the Bible to Your Family.

In light of all of this, the question remains: How do I study and teach the Bible to my family? Here is some basic guidance for you as you study and teach the Word of God:

Read it Right

- *Pick a good translation*: The New American Standard is a very literal, but excellent translation. Two other good translations that are easier to read are the New International Version and the English Standard Version. I would recommend any of these three.
- *Read with a purpose*: Don't randomly skip around in the Bible. It is much better to pick a particular book of the Bible and study it from beginning to end. This will help you make sure that you understand the context of the passage.

Ask the Right Questions

Remember, Scripture is Truth. That means there is always an original meaning and timeless principle that is true. Don't fall into the "to *me* it means..." trap that never looks at the original meaning of the text.

- Who? (...wrote it? ...are the main characters? ...originally read it?)
- What? (...does this mean? ...is the main point? ...is happening in the text?)
- Where? (...was the author? ...were the readers? ...did it take place?)
- Why? (...did the author write this? ...is this important?)

Stay Centered on God

The ultimate purpose of all that God does is to bring glory to Himself. So, the ultimate purpose of the Bible is to bring glory to God by teaching us about Him and how to live a life that brings glory to Him. Don't just focus on yourself. In every passage you need to first see what it tells you about God before you apply it to your life. Ask these questions:

- What do I learn about God's plan?
- What do I learn about His purpose?
- What do I learn about His will?
- What do I learn about His activity among His people?
- What do I learn about His character?

Apply the Word

James 1:22-25 tells us to be "doers of the Word," so don't be guilty of reading God's Word and not applying it to your life. Remember, Scripture is inspired, inerrant,

authoritative, necessary, clear, and relevant—we must apply it! Ask yourself this question: “What does this passage mean to my life and how can I apply it?”

Here are some things to consider that will help you with the question:

- Is there a promise that I can claim?
- Is it telling me to praise God for something?
- Is it calling me to change something I’m doing?
- Is it calling me to start doing something I’m not doing?
- Is it showing me a sin to avoid or confess?

Teach the Word

When you study the Word of God correctly, teaching the Word of God is much easier.

There are three basic things you want to do when you teach Scripture:

1. Read the passage in context.
2. Communicate what the passage teaches us about God.
3. Apply it to the lives of those you are teaching.

As you teach through these devotions, they will help you develop this framework for teaching Scripture. Ultimately, the hope is that when you finish this guide you will continue in the habit you have developed of studying the Word as a family, and begin reading through a book of the Bible together using the above principles for studying and teaching the Bible at home.

How to Lead a Family Devotion

A family devotion is a time when your family sits down and studies the Word of God together. It is an opportunity for your family to worship and talk about Scripture together. Take a moment to read Psalm 78:1-8. Who is better to tell your children about the “wondrous works that [God] has done” than you, the parent? Who has more influence in their life than you? No one. Who has more opportunities to teach them about the Lord? No one. This is why family devotions are so important—we are guiding our children in the way of the Lord as God has instructed.



Challenges for Family Devotions:

As you seek to carry out the discipline of family devotions, you need to be prepared to meet some challenges. Here are a few common challenges you should expect:

- **Attitude.** Your children will see, learn from, and follow your attitude. Approach your family devotions with the same attitude that you would like your children to have.
- **Time.** We live in a busy culture, however, we must not allow it to steal away the valuable years that we have with our children at home. You have been given a window of opportunity to shape the worldview of your children. Make the most of the opportunity by making time for family devotions.
- **Age Differences.** When you have children of varying ages present, it can be very difficult to keep everyone engaged and learning. One of the best things to do is to

keep everyone involved using the opening exercises, reading, and discussion. Make the most of the discussion questions that are geared toward various ages.

- Inexperience. The reality is that most of you have never been led in or led a family devotion. That's okay. The best way to learn is by doing it. There will be nights they go great, and nights that are disastrous. We all experience that, so press on.

Tips for Leading Family Devotions:

1. Pick a time. Use a time when your family already gathers together on a consistent basis. For example, do it during dinner or breakfast. It's easy to turn family mealtimes into an intentional time of discussion and family devotions. However, every family is different so pick a time that works best for your family.
2. Keep it brief. There is no set length of time for a "successful" family devotion. The main thing is to teach your children a biblical truth and to stay within their capability. Some days it may be ten minutes long, other days it could be thirty.
3. Be consistent. If you decided to do it each Wednesday night after church, then discipline your family to stick to the commitment. We are all busy, so if we let schedules rule our homes we will never lead a family devotion.
4. Establish a leader. If at all possible, dads, you should lead. However, we know that this is not always possible for a multitude of reasons. If the father is unable to lead, then the mother should do so.
5. Engage your family. Lectures do not teach nearly as well as discussions. Use the ideas in the devotions (or your own) to get your family talking, then dive into the Scripture. Continue to interact as a family while you do the devotion—ask questions about what you read. Be conversational. Let your children share their thoughts. Involve them in reading, praying, and sharing feedback.
6. Make it relevant. Direct your prayers towards what you read and what is going on in the life of your family that day/week.
7. Have fun. Be intentional about making the time enjoyable.



How to Use this Devotional Guide

It is important for you to understand that successfully leading a family devotion is not contingent on how closely you follow this guide. Instead, success comes when you faithfully tell your children of the works and truths of God. Therefore, this devotional guide is just that--a guide. Use it as much or as little as you need to teach each lesson. With that said, you will find the following features in each lesson to help you lead your family:

This Story in THE Story Have you ever wondered how everything fits together in the Bible? This box contains a very brief explanation of the role each particular passage plays in the overall story of Scripture.

Be Together This section provides you with ideas for opening your time together as a family in an engaging way. Every family is different, so adapt these ideas to suit your needs and dynamics. The goal is to simply get your family talking and having fun together.

Hear Together This is the most important part of every lesson because it is the time in which your family reads Scripture together. Never underestimate the power of the reading and hearing of God's Word. You may do it in different ways, such as dramatic readings or acting out the Scripture, but always make sure you read it aloud together.

Learn Together Use this section to help your family understand the biblical passage. Here, you will find additional information regarding the background of the passage, its meaning, key points, and application. Feel free to read this section directly to your family, or read through it beforehand and summarize it for them after you have read the passage together.

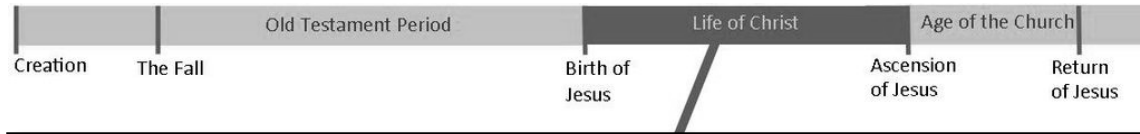
Talk Together This is where learning really occurs--through talking about what you have heard. Asking questions builds an environment at your home in which your children feel free to share their own thoughts, ideas, struggles, and even their own questions. Use these questions to help your family consider how the truths of the passage affect their own lives.

Pray Together Here, you will find a suggested prayer to offer to God on behalf of your family. Don't feel constrained to pray these exact words, but, instead, use it as a guide. Seek God's will for your family, offer up your needs to Him, and ask Him to do mighty and glorious works in you for His glory.

Serve Together Truth not applied is wasted knowledge. The purpose of this section is to provide you with a way to live out your faith as a family. Yes, life is busy and time is short, but never underestimate the power of serving together. As you close each time of family devotion, discuss how you will apply the teaching that week and then make a plan for doing so.

Promise Kept

Matthew 1:18-25



This Story in THE Story...

God has always had a plan to redeem his people from the bondage of sin—even before creation. After man sinned it was clear that there was nothing he could do on his own to remove his sinfulness, but God promised to send a Messiah to redeem his people. God kept his promise and sent Jesus as a ransom for many.

Be Together: Would You Rather?⁵

Ask your family to choose between the following options—and, yes, they must pick one. Begin each by asking, “Would you rather...?”

- ...have a high IQ or common sense?
- ...have false teeth or a glass eye?
- ...have discovered fire or electricity?
- ...be in a straightjacket for a week or handcuffs for a month?
- ...bite your tongue or stub your toe?
- ...have someone make a promise and keep it or tell you nothing and surprise you?

Explain that today’s devotion is going to show us how God made an incredible promise to his people and showed his faithfulness by keeping it.

Hear Together:

Read Matthew 1:18-25 together.

Learn Together: "God always keeps His promises."

When was the last time someone promised you something? How long did you have to wait? Was it difficult waiting on the promise to be fulfilled? We have all been promised something only to then have to wait on that promise to be fulfilled. At times, it seems as though the time will never come when the promise will be officially "kept" by the person who made it. Sometimes you have to wait so long that you begin to question whether or not the person will keep their promise.

⁵ Some of the ideas for the “Would You Rather?” activities in this guide were taken from Doug Fields, *Would You Rather...? Four Hundred and Sixty-five Provocative Questions to get Teenagers Talking* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995) and Doug Fields, *More Would You Rather...? Four Hundred and Sixty-five More Provocative Questions to get Teenagers Talking* (Grand Rapids: Youth Specialties, 2004). These are both very good resources to use in getting discussion started with your family.

For hundreds of years, God's people had lived seeking to obey God. However, they had wavered on their commitment to God, at times being a beautiful display of the power and mercy of God, while at other times following the ways of the world around them. God had shown them both grace and discipline, but through it all he promised that he would send a Messiah--the Anointed One.

Isaiah prophesied, "Therefore, The Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isa 7:14). God would not forget his people. He would one day send a Savior. But, Malachi was the last prophet to speak this message of hope, and he had been dead for close to four hundred years. Had God forgotten His promise? Was he still faithful? Would the promise be kept?

The people had longed for salvation, and God had been silent for many years, but the silence is ended in Matthew 1:18-25. We need to understand three truths from this passage. First, Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit (1:18, 20). Why is this important? Because, had he been conceived by man he would have inherited Adam's sin nature (Rom 5:12). However, Jesus was not born with a sinful nature, but, instead, he was born sinless. Second, Matthew 1:21 reveals the purpose of Jesus' coming: "He will save his people from their sins." God's plan from before the foundation of the world included the sending of his Son to do for man what man could not do for himself---save him from his sins. Jesus was the long-awaited Savior. Finally, Matthew 1:22-23 reveals the glorious faithfulness of God--"All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by [Isaiah]." When God makes a promise, he keeps it. He is faithful and remembers his Word. Not only do we find our salvation in Jesus, but we also find the greatest demonstration of God's faithfulness.

Today's passage gives us hope, telling us that God has provided a way of salvation to a people who are in bondage to sin. May your family ever trust Jesus' power to save, and always be blessed by the knowledge of God's faithfulness. God always keeps his promises.

Talk Together:

Preschoolers and Younger Children:

- a. What does "faithful" mean?
- b. Is God faithful?

Older Children and Middle Schoolers:

- a. How did God demonstrate his faithfulness?
- b. Knowing that God kept this promise, what does that tell you about the rest of his promises?

High Schoolers and Young Adults:

- a. Share a promise from Scripture that you have trusted or are trusting God to keep.
- b. In what area of your life do you find it to be the most difficult to trust God to keep his Word?

Pray Together:

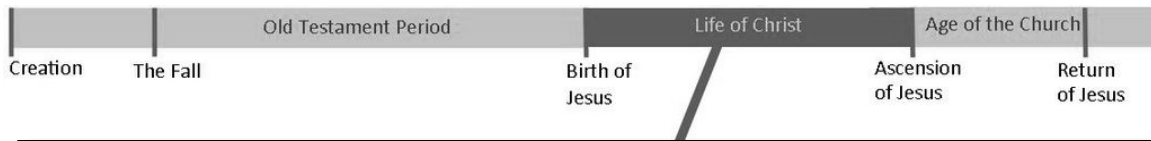
A suggested prayer for your family: “Father, we praise you for your faithfulness. You have shown us that you always keep your promises and that we can trust you to keep your Word. Thank you for sending Jesus to save us from our sins. We ask that you help us to always trust your Word, even when we are tempted to do otherwise. Strengthen our faith, Father. We ask this in the name of our Savior, Jesus. Amen.”

Serve Together:

Discuss some people in the church who are going through a time of trial. Think of their situation and Scripture passages in which God has made promises that would strengthen their faith. Then, take the time as a family to put together a card, note, or some other simple gift to encourage the person(s) with a reminder that God is faithful to keep his promises.

Prepare the Way

Matthew 3:1-12



This Story in THE Story...

All of creation had long been groaning from the presence and consequences of sin. However, God had promised to send a Messiah, and he kept his promise—Jesus had been born. Now, John came upon the scene to announce the beginning of Jesus' ministry. He was the voice calling in the wilderness preparing the way for the promised Messiah.

Be Together: Reflectors

You will need to grab a small mirror, flashlight, and turn off the lights for this exercise. Put your family in teams of two or three. Think of five objects around your room (picture, television, door, etc.) and instruct each team to have one person hold the mirror while another person holds the flashlight. The object is to arrange the two in such a way that when the person with the flashlight turns it on, the mirror will reflect the light and shine it on the designated object. This must happen as soon as the light is shined, and the mirror cannot be moved. See which team is able to shine the light on the most objects.

Share with your family that today's devotion is about whom our lives shine upon—us, or God.

Hear Together:

Read Matthew 3:1-12 together.

Learn Together: "We should bring glory to God in all that we do."

Think back on a time when you did something that brought you a lot of attention. Maybe it was when you scored the game-winner, when you earned a prestigious scholarship, or when you helped roof a house on last year's mission trip. How did it feel to get all of the attention? How did you respond? Our temptation is to use these times to make our name great. However, if we follow the example of John the Baptist, we will seek to use these moments to reflect God's glory.

John the Baptist entered the scene in Judea in a quite peculiar manner—wearing camel skin and a leather belt, possibly looking like a caveman out of a modern cartoon. We can learn much from John, but the primary point we need to consider is that he was entirely focused on bringing glory to God. Just imagine

how many people must have been coming to be baptized by John, and how tempting it would have been to allow popularity to captivate your heart if you were in his shoes. But John did not allow his fame to overshadow his life purpose: bringing glory to God.

In Colossians 3:17 Paul says, “And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” We learn two principles here: First, all that we do should honor the name of Christ. Just like John’s life was constantly pointing to Jesus, so should our words and actions. Second, we should always remain thankful to God the Father. When success comes, it is easy to become arrogant and forget that every good gift is from God. Never forget to thank God. This will keep you humble and focused on reflecting His glory to those around you.

We have the same life purpose as John--to bring God glory. And, like John, there are times when we may become very popular or receive great acclamation. However, the question is this: In the times in which we experience success, will we point people to ourselves or to Christ? When you make the winning basket or earn valedictorian, will people know how great *you* are, or how richly you have been blessed by God? Will you do good works to make *your* name great, or will people "see your good deeds and praise your Father in Heaven" (Matt 5:16)? May we follow John's example and remember that we should bring God glory in all that we do.

Talk Together:

Preschoolers and Younger Children:

- a. Who was John the Baptist?
- b. Whom did John the Baptist tell people about?

Older Children and Middle Schoolers:

- a. What was the purpose of John's life?
- b. How can we model our own lives after John's in the way he pointed people to Jesus?

High Schoolers and Young Adults:

- a. What area of your life do you struggle the most with pridefully making your own name great instead of God's name?
- b. What are two things that you can do to point others to God in this area?
Make a plan together and hold your child accountable in this area.

Pray Together:

A suggested prayer for your family: "Father, you are a mighty, awesome, and holy God. You alone are worthy of praise and glory, and we ask that you would

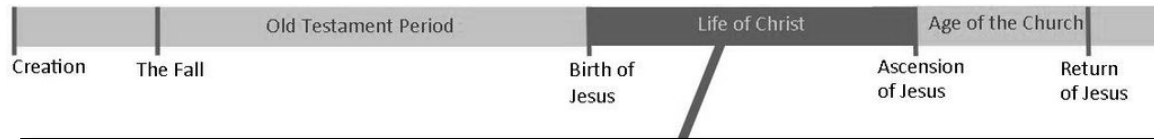
help our family to bring you glory in all that we do. Father, use our minds, our words, and our actions to reflect to others how great you are; help us to make the most of every opportunity to point other people toward you; and, Father, guard our hearts from allowing sin to deceive us into thinking that we should make our names great. To you be the glory, the honor, and the praise from our family and from our lives. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen."

Serve Together:

Plan a ministry project for your family to do for someone in your neighborhood who you are fairly certain is not a Christian. Depending on the time of year, this project may include raking leaves, washing their car, delivering them a meal or baked goods, mowing their lawn, or taking them a small basket filled with goodies and practical items you know they would enjoy and use. Pray prior to doing the project that God would receive the glory through your family's generosity and think of a way to make God the focus of your project. This can be done by verbally telling your neighbor that God's love for you compels you to love them, by placing a tract in the basket, or by writing a note to them explaining that you are serving them so that they will have a small glimpse of the love of God.

The Baptism of Jesus

Matthew 3:13-17



This Story in THE Story...

God's people had long awaited a Savior to cleanse them from their sins. John had burst onto the scene preparing the way for the Messiah and, now, Jesus comes to him to be baptized. The ministry of the Messiah would now begin.

Be Together: What's the Answer?

Have fun seeing how your family answers these tough questions:

- If a fork were made of gold, would it still be considered silverware?
- Where would you sit if you were told to sit in the corner of a round room?
- Do stairs go up or down?
- Why do we yell "heads up" when we want people to duck?
- Why do the numbers on phones go down while the numbers on calculators go up?
- Why did Jesus get baptized if He was sinless?

Explain that this devotion will help us to see that Jesus was not baptized because He was a sinner, but, instead, to initiate the beginning of his ministry here on earth.

Hear Together:

Read Matthew 3:13-17 together.

Learn Together: "Baptism was the beginning of Jesus' public ministry and publicly marks the beginning of our life in Christ."

The opening ceremony of the Olympics is a spectacular event because it kicks off the games in an unforgettable fashion and is surrounded with joy, anticipation, and excitement. Our passage this week is much like the opening ceremonies of the Olympics, but it is much more important. The baptism of Jesus is the opening "ceremony" of the ministry of the spotless Lamb of God who came to save the people of God from their sins.

The interesting thing about this passage is that Jesus did not *need* to be baptized. He was sinless, so He had no need to repent. Why, then, did Jesus come to be baptized? Fundamentally, this was an opportunity for Jesus' ministry to be publicly initiated as the people saw Jesus' identity for the first time. The

scene from Matthew 3:16-17 must have been spectacular--the heavens were opened, the spirit of God descended upon him, and a voice came from Heaven. There was no doubt that this man John baptized was the Messiah. From this point onward, Jesus would be in the spotlight as he went about the land calling the people to repent for the kingdom of heaven was near (Mt 4:17).

Not only does Jesus' baptism initiate his public ministry, it also establishes baptism's importance for those who follow Christ. As the New Testament continues to unfold, baptism continues to be an important part of following Christ. In the Great Commission (Mt 28:19-20), Jesus commands his people to baptize believers in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. As the church is founded in Acts, we read of men like the Ethiopian Eunuch being baptized once he comes to believe in Christ (Acts 8:26-40). Then, in Romans 6:1-4, Paul declares that baptism is symbolic of the new life that Christ has given a believer. As believers we have died and been buried to our sinful way of life, and God has raised us to new life in Christ. Baptism is important because it marks a new beginning in a person's life. For Jesus, it was the beginning of his public ministry. For us, it marks the beginning of our life in Christ as we confess him before men.

Talk Together:

Special Note: *If someone in your family has not been baptized, make sure they understand that it is not baptism that brings salvation. Discuss the symbolism of baptism and the importance of confessing Christ before men. Use this devotion to discuss their life with Christ.*

Preschoolers and Younger Children:

- a. What is baptism?
- b. Was Jesus baptized? What happened when he was baptized?

Older Children and Middle Schoolers:

- a. Did Jesus need to be baptized? Discuss.
- b. How did Jesus' baptism signal the start of his public ministry?

High Schoolers and Young Adults:

- a. What is the significance of baptism in the life of a believer?
- b. Discuss the baptism of each person in your family. Reflect on its meaning and how God used it in your lives of faith.

Pray Together:

A suggested prayer for your family: "Father, we praise you for sending Jesus to live a perfect life and die on the cross as our substitute. Thank you for the work you have done in our lives to defeat sin and death, and to raise our dead hearts to life. Please give us the boldness to daily confess you before men as we did when we were baptized, and may our lives of faith result in men and women

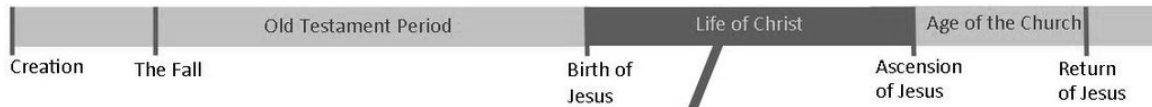
praising your holy name. We ask this in the name above all names, Jesus Christ. Amen."

Serve Together:

Find out when the next baptism service will be at church. Work together as a family to put together a special packet for the person(s) who are being baptized. This packet should be an encouragement to them and a reminder that others in your church family are celebrating what God has done in their life. Consider including an age-appropriate, biblically sound book; a card or handwritten note; a homemade treat; and an invitation to have dinner at your home in the near future. Make plans to give this packet to the person on the day they are baptized. If someone is not currently scheduled to be baptized, go ahead and make the packet and have it ready to personalize in the future.

The Temptation of Jesus

Luke 4:1-13



This Story in THE Story...

From the moment Adam and Eve rebelled against God, sin had plagued the human race. God's people offered constant sacrifices to atone for their sin, but none could permanently remove their guilt. They needed a spotless sacrifice, and Jesus was God's chosen Lamb. He had to live a sinless life to be a sufficient sacrifice. Satan knew this, so he tempted God's Son to sin in a vain effort to thwart God's sovereign plan.

Be Together: "Better or Worse?"⁶

Ask your family to pick what they think would be better or worse:

- What's better: going to the beach or to the mountains for vacation?
- What's worse: waking up with a spider on your pillow or a snake by your bed?
- What's better: going to your favorite sports event or watching it on a big screen television with all of your friends?
- What's better: reading the book or watching the movie?
- What would be worse: fasting for forty days or being tempted by Satan for forty days?

Explain that this devotion will show us that Jesus did both of these at the same time---he fasted for forty days and was tempted by Satan for forty days.

Hear Together:

Read Luke 4:1-13 together.

Learn Together: "Jesus resisted temptation and lived a sinless life."

Temptation is something we deal with everyday. However, we do not struggle through temptation alone because we have a High Priest who has been tempted in every way just as we are and did not sin (Heb 4:14-16). Luke 4:1 tells us that the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to fast for forty days. Note that the Scriptures tell us that Jesus was tempted for the entirety of the time he was in the desert. This was not a one-time temptation, but, instead, a constant barrage from

⁶ Some of the ideas for the "Better or Worse?" activities in this guide were based on Jim Aitkins, *Tough Topics: 600 Questions that will Take Your Students Beneath the Surface* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004). This is a very good resource to use in getting discussion started.

Satan in an attempt to cause Jesus to sin. He understood what hung in the balance--the righteousness of God Himself.

This passage is of supreme importance to believers for two reasons. First, we see that Jesus was tempted but did not sin. The onslaught of Satan did not taint the sinlessness of Christ. He remained pure, spotless, and worthy to be called the Lamb of God. We must not miss the importance of this, because if Jesus had fallen to this temptation and sinned, he would no longer have been the worthy sacrifice. The glorious truth of 2 Corinthians 5:21, that "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God," would have been erased had Jesus sinned. Praise God he didn't! Second, we should learn the value of Scripture from the model Jesus provides. David wrote that he hid God's Word in his heart so that it would guard him from sin (Ps 119:11), and this is exactly what we see happening in the temptation of Jesus. As Satan's temptations culminated in the three recorded in Luke 4, he appealed to Jesus' power, dominion, and deity. However, Jesus knew the Scriptures and responded to each temptation with the Word. The truth guarded him from sin.

This week, as you experience temptation, do not forget the temptation Jesus went through. He can sympathize with what you are experiencing. He has also provided us with a model for how Scripture will guard our hearts from sin. Hide it in your heart and trust its truth when you are tempted to act according to your sinful nature.

Talk Together:

Preschoolers and Younger Children:

- a. What was Jesus doing when He was tempted?
- b. Who tempted Jesus?

Older Children and Middle Schoolers:

- a. What did Jesus do when he was tempted?
- b. How does God's Word guard your heart from sin?

High Schoolers and Young Adults:

- a. Why was Satan tempting Jesus?
- b. How have you experienced God's Word guarding you from sin when you were tempted? Discuss specific times together.

Pray Together:

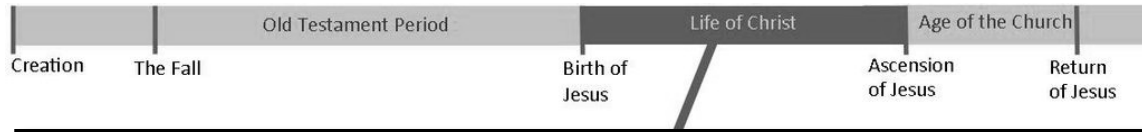
A suggested prayer for your family: "Lord Jesus, we praise you for living a sinless life. Thank you for your Word and for using it to guard our hearts from sin. Please use your Word to sanctify us in the truth as we follow you. Help us to resist temptation and seek your strength when we experience it. We ask this in the name of Christ, our sinless Savior. Amen."

Serve Together:

College students live in a culture where they experience temptation as they never have before. If they are attending a secular university, evolution is being thrust upon them, drugs and alcohol are readily available, and alternative lifestyles are applauded. Take the time this week as a family to write a note of encouragement to a college student from church. Encourage them with a card of Scripture passages and challenge them to hide God's Word in their heart to guard them from sin. Mail the card to them along with a small treat, such as a small gift card to a restaurant in their town.

Fishers of Men

Luke 5:1-11



This Story in THE Story...

God created man and man sinned. The entirety of the Old Testament beyond Genesis 3 tells of God's work of redeeming his people out of their bondage to sin. He promised to send a Savior whose kingdom would never end, and Jesus was that Savior. But how would this kingdom be established? How would it grow? In this week's passage we see that God's plan for expanding his kingdom included using his followers to spread the good news that God had sent the Savior.

Be Together: "Unfinished Sentences"⁷

Read each of the following sentence starters to your family and have each person finish the sentence. Encourage them not to give one-word answers and remember that there is not a "right" or "wrong" answer. Use this exercise to laugh together and get the family talking. Here are the sentences:

- The first thought I have when I wake up is...
- People would describe my bedroom as...
- My favorite thing we have done as a family is...
- If I could invent something that would make life easier it would be a...
- The greatest thing I can do for others is...

Today's devotion will show us that God has given us the privilege and responsibility of sharing the Gospel with others, and this is truly the greatest thing we can do for others!

Hear Together:

Read Luke 5:1-11 together.

Learn Together: "God has called us to be fishers of men."

We have a lot of friends and acquaintances around us every day. Just think about how many people you see and talk to each day at school, work, the gym, and in the neighborhood. How many of them would you say are Christians? Are

⁷ Some of the ideas for the "Unfinished Sentences" activities in this guide were based on Les Christie, *Unfinished Sentences to Get Teenagers Talking and Thinking* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000). This is a very good resource to use in getting discussion started.

all of them? If they are not Christians, who is going to tell them about Jesus? How will they hear the Gospel? How can Jesus use you in their lives? The truth that we are learning today is that all followers of Jesus have the responsibility to share the Gospel with those around them. Jesus began teaching his followers this truth in a remarkable way—he used a fishing trip to help them see that they would be fishing for men.

Imagine the scene: People are everywhere, and you have fished all night. It wasn't a great night of fishing, and you are exhausted. You are now on shore cleaning your nets when a man named Jesus gets into your boat and asks you to take him offshore. From the boat he begins to teach, and you are astounded—you've never heard teaching like this. Then, he suddenly tells you to drop your nets over the side. You are certain this will be a worthless attempt to catch a fish, but after hearing him teach, something urged you to try it. Amazingly, the number of fish that filled your nets almost sank the boat! You were so astonished that you fell to your knees in humble awe and repentance for your sinfulness in the presence of this man named Jesus. However, nothing could prepare you for what happened next—Jesus looked at you and said, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men." From that point on you follow Jesus, leaving everything else behind.

This is exactly what happened to Peter, James, and John in Luke 5. Jesus did an amazing miracle and called them to follow him. Within a few short years, these disciples became expert fishers of men, catching thousands with the Gospel for the glory of God. It was through their ministry that the church grew and expanded. The critical truth for us to realize is that we are just like these early disciples—we are fishers of men. God has called us to make disciples of all nations—to be fishers of men. How is your family spreading the Gospel? Where are you "fishing"?

Talk Together:

Preschoolers and Younger Children:

- a. Who were Peter, James, and John?
- b. What did Jesus tell them to do?

Older Children and Middle Schoolers:

- a. What did Jesus mean when he told Peter, James, and John that they would become fishers of men?
- b. How does God use us to expand his kingdom?

High Schoolers and Young Adults:

- a. Who are you currently seeking to share the Gospel with?

- b. What is the greatest faith challenge you face in sharing the Gospel?
Discuss.

Pray Together:

A suggested prayer for your family: "Holy Father, thank you for involving us in your plan to save the lost. We know that you could have chosen any way to spread the Gospel, but you have chosen to use us. Thank you for our salvation, and for allowing us to be a part of bringing salvation to others. Please help us to be faithful fishers of men. Give us courage and faith as we share the Gospel. And, Father, we pray a special prayer tonight for the following people who we know are not followers of yours: *(Pray for specific people your family is sharing the Gospel with or can share the Gospel with)*. God, please work in their lives and save them from the bondage of sin. We ask this in the name of our gracious Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen."

Serve Together:

Take a few minutes after you have finished praying to think of a non-Christian family that you know in the community, or a family that has at least one person in it that is not a Christian. Make a plan for a time to have them over for dinner, a bonfire, sledding, a game night, etc. Explain that you are going to make this an intentional time for building a relationship with this family so that you can share the Gospel with them. Discuss ways each person in your family can be involved and how they can share the Gospel. Encourage them to make the most of every opportunity God provides you as you build this relationship for the glory of God and the good of those God has put in your life that do not know him.

Jesus' Power to Heal: Physical and Spiritual

Mark 2:1-12



This Story in THE Story...

God had told his people through the prophet Isaiah that he would send a Savior who would bring healing—both physical and spiritual. When the Messiah came, the lame would leap like deer (Isa 35:6), and as Jesus' ministry begins we see that he indeed has power to heal. The lame are literally leaping like deer! However, Jesus comes not only to bring physical healing, but also spiritual healing as he does what only God can do—forgive sins. The physical healings of Jesus are simply signs that support the greater spiritual healing from sin that he brings.

Be Together: "Better or Worse"

Ask your family to pick what they think would be better or worse:

- Which would be *worse*: Losing your memory or losing your friends?
- What would be *better*: Being one of Robin Hood's merry men or one of Luke Skywalker's rebel alliance fighter pilots?
- What is *worse*: Being too hot or being too cold?
- Which is *better*: Eating whipped cream with pie or a scoop of ice cream with pie?
- What would be *worse*: Never being healed of a physical problem or never being healed of your sin?

Explain that today's devotion will look at Jesus' power to heal us both physically and spiritually, but that we will see that spiritual healing is the most important way in which we need healing.

Hear Together:

Read Mark 2:1-12 together.

Learn Together: "Jesus has the power to heal our greatest sickness--- sin."

Have you ever broken a bone, sprained your ankle, or jammed your finger? Not only is it painful, but it also really hinders you from doing things that are normally easy to do. Now, imagine that this condition is permanent. You can never use

your leg or your arm. For many people (perhaps even someone in your family) this is exactly how life is--they do not have the use of some part of their body. This is also the condition of the man who was brought to Jesus in Mark 2:1-12. He was paralyzed and could not do anything on his own, so his friends had to carry him to Jesus.

Many times when this story is read and taught, the focus is placed on the faith of the friends. However, while the friends did indeed demonstrate great faith in Jesus, they are not the primary focus of the passage. Instead, this story gives us one of our first glimpses of Jesus' identity as the Son of God. We learn two very important truths about Jesus that testify to His divinity: First, Jesus has the power to bring physical healing because he is sovereign over the natural world. He is the great physician and there is healing in his hands. He did not call on a doctor to heal the man, but, instead, he simply commanded the man to pick up his mat and walk. Second, and more importantly, Jesus has the power to bring spiritual healing, as he demonstrates by forgiving the man of his sins (Mk 2:5). Romans 5:12 teaches us that we have all been infected by the sin of Adam, and the result is eternal death. We are in need of deep, spiritual, heart healing that only God can bring. In this passage, Jesus demonstrates his power to heal physically *and* spiritually.

It is also important to note the response of the religious scribes in this passage. They accused Jesus of blasphemy. Why did they do this? It seems like healing a paralytic and forgiving his sins would be a great thing! The reason they reacted this way is very important—Jesus was doing something that only God has the authority to do: forgive sins. Sin is transgression against God. Therefore, only God can forgive it. Now, Jesus is saying that he can forgive sins. He is declaring and demonstrating that he is God! This is a truth we will continue to see over the next few weeks, and, as we do, never forget this truth: Jesus has the power to heal our greatest sickness—sin.

Talk Together:

Preschoolers and Younger Children:

- a. What was wrong with the man that was brought to Jesus?
- b. What did Jesus do for the man?

Older Children and Middle Schoolers:

- a. In what two ways did Jesus demonstrate His power?
- b. How do you experience Jesus' power today in the same way?

High Schoolers and Young Adults:

- a. Explain how telling the man his sins were forgiven demonstrated that Jesus was God.

- b. How does knowing that Jesus has forgiven your sins influence your life and the way you worship?

Pray Together:

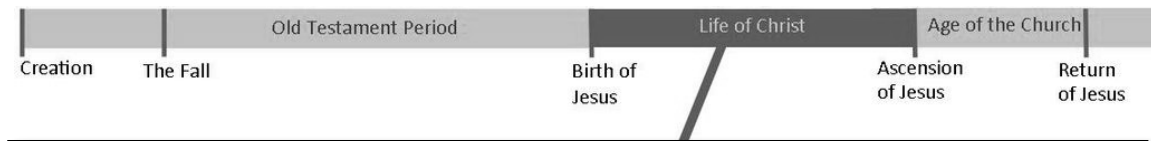
There are two areas in which your family may want to pray in response to this devotion--physical healing or spiritual healing. "Holy and merciful God, our family bows before you knowing that you are sovereign over all things. Because you are sovereign, we know that you have the power to heal _____ (person) from his/her problem with _____ (a physical struggle or sinfulness). We ask that you work in his/her life according to your wisdom and will. Amen."

Serve Together:

Discuss someone your family knows who is in the hospital or is sick at home. Talk about how you could minister to them this week by visiting, sending flowers, making a card, or giving them a call. Pray for them daily and make contact with them in an appropriate way to let them know that you are praying for their healing and for their God to grant them strength and perseverance in the meantime. If they are lost, ask God to use this physical trial to bring about spiritual healing.

Jesus' Power Over Creation

Mark 4:35-41



This Story in THE Story...

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen 1:1). Therefore, God is the supreme, sovereign ruler over all of creation. His power was demonstrated when he parted the Red Sea and made the sun stand still. The people of the Old Testament knew this, and if Jesus was truly the Son of God, then he would display authority over creation. This is exactly what he did—he spoke and nature listened. The creator God had broken into his creation and dwelt among us, but he had not been diminished in power or authority.

Be Together: "What would you do if...?"

See how each of your family members would answer these questions beginning with "What would you do if...":

- ...you were being chased by a bear?
- ...you were at a concert and were asked to dance on stage?
- ...your friend was giving a speech and their zipper was down?
- ...you were locked in Walmart overnight?
- ...you had the power to control nature?

Explain that this devotion will show that Jesus has power over all of creation because he is the sovereign Lord of creation.

Hear Together:

Read Mark 4:35-41 together.

Learn Together: "Jesus is sovereign over all of creation."

Hurricane Sandy, earthquakes, tornados across the land--is all of creation out of control? Can God not do something? Is he not powerful enough to control nature?

The answer is clear in Mark 4:35-41, where Jesus continues to reveal his divine identity by showing His authority over nature. Consider the scene: Jesus and the disciples were in a boat when a great windstorm arose. These men had been in storms on the water before—they were fishermen. But something was different about this storm. The boats were taking on water, and the disciples were fearful for their lives. However, in the midst of this storm Jesus was sleeping. Sleeping! So, they woke him in desperation. His response was not panic; it was not

despair; and it was not uncertainty. He did not beg the storm to stop or pray to another god. Instead, Jesus "rebuked the wind and said to the sea, 'Peace! Be still!'" He spoke with authority, and nature obeyed. Jesus displayed his power over nature for all to see.

The disciples' response in 4:41 is quite significant for us. Notice what happens to their fear. It does not vanish, but, instead, it is transferred. They go from fearing the storm to fearing Jesus. They were awestruck by this demonstration of authority—he simply spoke, and nature listened.

Our world today is groaning through the pains of sin because natural disasters are a consequence of the Fall and sin's presence in the world. Does this mean that Jesus is weak and powerless? No. It did not mean he was weak and powerless when the storm arose in Mark 4, and it does not mean that today. Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Know today that as Christians, we serve Jesus as Lord—the God who is sovereign over all creation.

Talk Together:

Preschoolers and Younger Children:

- a. What happened when Jesus and the disciples were in the boat?
- b. What did Jesus do?

Older Children and Middle Schoolers:

- a. How does this story show us that Jesus is God?
- b. Why were the disciples filled with fear when Jesus calmed the storm?

High Schoolers and Young Adults:

- a. If Jesus is sovereign over all of creation, then why doesn't he prevent every natural disaster from occurring?
- b. How does this passage strengthen your faith in regard to the possibility of tragedies or natural disasters that could happen to our family?

Pray Together:

A suggested prayer for your family: "Lord, we worship you, knowing that you are the sovereign Creator of all things and that you are Lord of all creation. You have all power and all authority. There is nothing outside of your control. God, keep us mindful of this and use it to strengthen our faith in you. Always keep us mindful of who you are so that when we are tempted to fear situations in life, we will respond in courageous faith because we know who you are. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen."

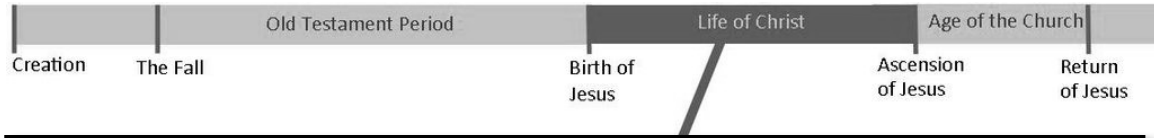
Serve Together:

Prepare your family this week to be ready to serve the Lord in the event of a natural disaster. When tragedy strikes, disaster relief teams from around the

United States respond to help the victims. This is a great opportunity to minister to those in need for the sake of the Gospel. Consider the ages and abilities of your family and go to www.namb.net/dr/ (The Southern Baptist Disaster Relief webpage) to see what steps you can take to help with a current disaster relief effort or to prepare to help in the future.

The Rich Young Man

Mark 10:17-27



This Story in THE Story...

God had given his people the Ten Commandments to guide them in living a life in obedience to him. After he gave them the Law, the people spent the rest of the Old Testament attempting to live in perfect obedience to God's commands, only to experience failure time and time again. Some of the people, such as the Pharisees, made it their life goal to live a perfect life in obedience to God. However, when Jesus has this conversation with the rich young man we find out that our heart motivation behind our obedience is just as important as obedience itself.

Be Together: "Simon Says"

This classic game will seem ridiculous to your teens, but that's the point. Try to get them to play, and they most likely will resist. When they do, lay some money (or some other coveted prize) on the table and tell them the winner gets the prize. Have fun with it, having them do outrageous things that will bring some laughter. Once you are finished, give the winner the prize and debrief. Why did they play? What motivated them to do what "Simon" said?

Explain that today's devotion will look at the heart motivation behind our obedience to God. Are we motivated by a prize? Do we begrudgingly obey because "we have to"? Why do we *really* follow the rules?

Hear Together:

Read Mark 10:17-27 together.

Learn Together: "God expects us to love Him above all other things."

Are you a rule follower? Do you like to break the rules? *Why* do you follow the rules? (*Note to Parent: This would be a great place to talk about how your teen followed or rebelled against the rules as a kid by telling a few funny memories you have of them.*) Most of us have learned to follow the rules in life, but the question is this: *Why* do we follow the rules?

In Mark 10:17-27, a rich young man comes to Jesus seeking eternal life. This is certainly a natural thing to desire, and apparently he has done all he knows to do in order to earn the approval of God. According to the young man, he had kept all

of the commandments since childhood. However, what Jesus told him in response to this proud statement shocked the young man—Jesus told him to go and sell all of his possessions. The young man was dumbfounded. How could Jesus ask such a thing?

What we learn here is very important. Obedience is worthless if our heart is not committed to Jesus. This man had sought obedience but given his heart over to his possessions. He loved "stuff" more than he did Jesus, and, therefore, had violated the first command: "You shall have no other gods before me" (Exo 20:3). The young man's obedience was divorced from his heart. He obeyed for the prize, but his heart was on his "stuff."

This passage confronts us with two important questions we must ask ourselves: Do I obey God out of love for him? Is there anything that I love more than Jesus? This story does not teach that everyone must sell all of their possessions to follow Jesus, but it does show us that God could certainly call us to do so. If he does, will we follow him or cling to our "stuff"? God expects us to love him above all other things, and it is this love that should drive us to obey him.

Talk Together:

Preschoolers and Younger Children:

- a. What did the rich young man ask Jesus?
- b. What did Jesus tell the rich young man?

Older Children and Middle Schoolers:

- a. How did the rich young man respond to Jesus' answer?
- b. What was wrong with his response?

High Schoolers and Young Adults:

- a. Share a time in which you sensed God calling you to do something that required you to give something up. What did you do?
- b. What is something in your life that you are tempted to set your heart's affections on more strongly than Jesus? How can you guard against doing so?

Pray Together:

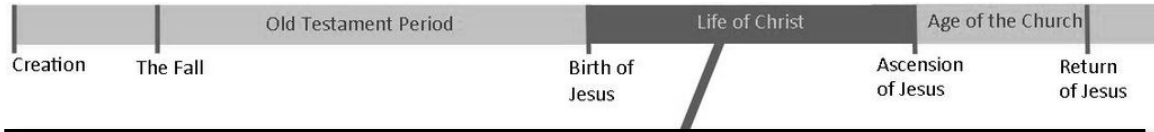
A suggested prayer for your family: "Father, you alone are God. Our desire is to worship you, but we know that we have sinful hearts that are often tempted to care about other things more than you. Lord, guard our hearts from idols. Give us the humility to know when we are beginning to care more about 'stuff' than we do you. Help us, Father, to love you with all of our heart, all our soul, and all our strength. And, God, may our obedience to you demonstrate our love for you. In the name of Christ we pray, Amen."

Serve Together:

One of the greatest ways to show your family that you love God more than "stuff" is to give of your material possessions in a way that is God-glorifying and furthers the Gospel. Here are a couple of different ways you can do this, if you are not already doing so: First, consider planning a yard sale for the specific purpose of raising money for a Gospel-centered ministry in your area, to fund one of your family members on a mission trip, or to support a missions need. Second, go to www.compassion.com (Compassion International) and look at ways your family can help those who are poor and needy around the world. Discuss this as a family and give enough that your family knows you are making a sacrifice of love.

Jesus' Amazing Claim

John 8:31-59



This Story in THE Story...

During the Old Testament period, the Pharisees had risen to a position of great religious authority and prestige. Experts in the Law and fountains of new traditions, these leaders, who should have rejoiced in Jesus' coming, quickly became the source of constant conflict with Him. As Jesus carries out his teaching ministry, the Pharisees continuously seek to find reasons to discredit him. Now, in John 8, the time has come in which Jesus stands toe-to-toe with the Pharisees to expose their motives and boldly declare his divinity.

Be Together: "Who Am I?"

Grab some tape, a marker or pen, and some paper for this simple game (you will need enough to stick one sign on the back of each family member). Think of some famous people your family would know (Examples: Elvis Presley, Mickey Mouse, LeBron James, Taylor Swift, etc.) and write the name of one famous person on each piece of paper. Then, stick a name on the back of each person in your family without them knowing who their person is. The object of the game is for everyone else to describe the person so that that your family member can answer the question, "Who am I?"

Explain that in today's devotion, we don't see Jesus asking, "Who am I?" but, instead, we see him declaring, "This is who I am."

Hear Together:

Read John 8:31-59 together. (Note: The emotion and tension in this passage escalates as it goes. Since it is a longer passage, you may want to prepare beforehand to have a couple of people in your family read it more dramatically. This will help get the feeling across of what is going on and how significant the claim of Jesus really is here.)

Learn Together: "Jesus is God."

Have you ever heard someone say that Jesus was just a good teacher? There are various ideas and opinions about who Jesus was. Some people say he was a great teacher, some say he was a prophet, others think he was just a good man, and still others think he was crazy. However, Jesus was very clear about his identity—he proclaimed that he was God. And, not only did he claim to be God, he did it in an unforgettable way.

We first need to put ourselves in the sandals of the Pharisees, who prided themselves on obedience to the Law and were fountains who constantly spouted new traditions for the people to follow. Jesus begins by telling the Pharisees that the only way to know the truth is to abide in *his* teaching. It was his teaching that could bring freedom—not their traditions or the Law. This definitely shook them up, but not as much as what he said next—he told them that their father was the devil! This really got their attention and escalated the conversation because Jews took great pride in Abraham being their father. However, as Jesus pointed out, they were not living in the legacy Abraham left. Instead, they were showing fruits of the devil's work. Additionally, Jesus tells them that while they were dismayed at his work, Abraham rejoiced in his coming. He is the one that Abraham looked forward to because he is the Messiah. At this point the Pharisees stood baffled--"You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham" (Jn 8:57)? They may be confused; they may be speaking sarcastically; or, it could be a little of both. Regardless, what Jesus says next infuriates the Pharisees: He claims to be God! "Before Abraham was, I am" (Jn 8:58). Upon hearing this, the Pharisees attempted to stone Jesus. They knew what he had done. He had claimed the name of the Most High God--Yahweh, the Great "I AM" from Exodus 3--as his own.

The significance of this dialogue must not be missed. Jesus claimed to be God. How could he make such a bold claim? Before we answer this question, consider what we have already learned the past few weeks: Jesus was born of a virgin in fulfillment of prophecy, he demonstrated the power to heal, he forgave sins, and he showed His power over nature. Jesus claimed to be God because that is exactly who he is. Jesus is God.

Talk Together:

Preschoolers and Younger Children:

- a. Who were the Pharisees?
- b. Who did Jesus tell the Pharisees that he was?

Older Children and Middle Schoolers:

- a. Why do you think the Pharisees disliked Jesus?
- b. How does the reaction of the Pharisees in John 8:59 indicate that they understood he was claiming to be God?

High Schoolers and Young Adults:

- a. Why is it important that Jesus is God and not just a good teacher?
- b. What evidence proves to you that Jesus is God?

Pray Together:

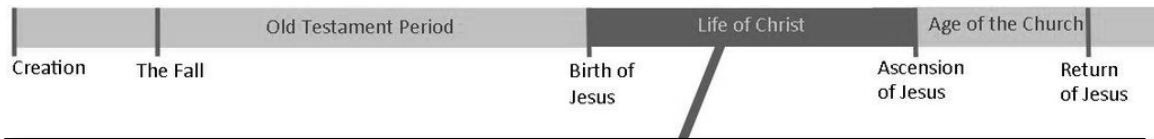
A suggested prayer for your family: "Lord Jesus, thank you for coming to earth as a man to live a perfect life and die in our place. We praise you and worship you because we know that you are God. There is no other god like you, and we worship you alone. Give us the boldness to tell others that you are God and that salvation is found in no other name under heaven but in the name of Jesus. Amen."

Serve Together:

We often take for granted the people who teach us about God. Talk to your family about ways God has blessed you so that you know that Jesus is God. Discuss the people He has placed in each of your lives that have clearly taught you the truth of Scripture and helped you grow in your faith. Take a few minutes as a family to plan a way to thank them. This may be done by sending them a card, calling them, or treating them to ice cream. We all know about Jesus because someone has told us about Him. Make sure they know you are thankful for their faithfulness and testimony--it may be just the encouraging word they need to hear to press on and tell others that Jesus is God.

Jesus' Power Over Death

John 11:1-44



This Story in THE Story...

When Adam and Eve rebelled against God, death entered creation. From that point on, man would experience the fear, uncertainty, loss, and grief of death. However, God gave his people hope. He promised One who would deliver them from their sins. Now, claiming to be God, Jesus has come demonstrating power over nature, the spiritual realm, and even sin, but is he sovereign over the great antagonist of life itself? If Jesus is truly God, then he must have power over death. The event of Lazarus' raising gives mankind its first glimpse of Jesus' power to bring the dead to life.

Be Together: "What would you do if...?"

Have some fun with your family by asking some of these questions (begin each one with "What would you do if...?"):

- ...you won a million dollars?
- ...you were the President of the United States?
- ...you were invisible?
- ...you could fly?
- ...someone you knew died and came back to life?

Explain that although the last question may seem outrageous, that is exactly what happened in John 11:1-44.

Hear Together:

Read John 11:1-44 together.

Learn Together: "Jesus is the resurrection and the life."

Death is one topic that no one likes to talk about, but it is also the one topic that everyone must confront. Romans 5:12 says, "Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned." There is no way around it—death is the problem that is common to all of us.

This is exactly why the account of Jesus raising Lazarus to life fills Christians with such joy and hope. The grief, uncertainty, and fear of death is removed when we realize that Jesus is powerful even over death itself.

As we consider this passage, we must not miss three important points. First, in John 11:4, we see Jesus' omniscience (he is all-knowing) and the ultimate purpose of Lazarus' death. Consider how amazing it is that Jesus knew all along that this seemingly untimely death of his beloved friend would not end in death. That sounds contradictory at first, but Jesus can bring life out of death. So, why did it happen? "It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it." Could Jesus have simply sat and taught the people that he was the resurrection and life? Certainly. But what a life-changing impact it had on those present and millions since to see and hear that Jesus actually commanded a dead man to arise and he did!

Second, Jesus claims again that he is God in John 11:25 by declaring, "I am the resurrection and the life." "I am" in the Greek language would have told everyone listening that he was claiming God's name for his own, just as he did in John 8:58. Jesus is God, and, therefore, he has authority even over death because he *is* life.

Third, John 11:26 confronts us with both a truth to believe and a question to answer. The truth: "[E]veryone who lives and believes in [Jesus] shall never die." The question: "Do you believe this?" Every one of us must come face-to-face with the claim that Jesus is God, and, as God, he is the resurrection and the life. No one nor nothing else can defeat death. There is no other answer. Jesus states definitively that he *is* the life. He doesn't just teach about life or give advice on how to find life—he *is* life. So, each one of us must personally answer this question: Do you believe this? So, do *you*? Know this with certainty—Jesus is the resurrection and the life. Do you believe?

Talk Together:

Special Note: *This devotion presents you with a wonderful opportunity to share the Gospel with your family. If you have a child who is lost, using wisdom and discernment based on the age and understanding level of your children, ask them the question Jesus asked, "Do you believe this?"*

Preschoolers and Younger Children:

- a. What happened to Lazarus?
- b. What did Jesus do?

Older Children and Middle Schoolers:

- a. How could Jesus say that Lazarus' sickness would not end in death?
- b. According to John 11:25-26, how can a person have the life that Jesus speaks of here?

High Schoolers and Young Adults:

- a. Are you living life in fear of death? Explain.

- b. How does knowing that Jesus is the resurrection and the life strengthen your faith and give you the boldness to follow him wherever He leads?

Pray Together:

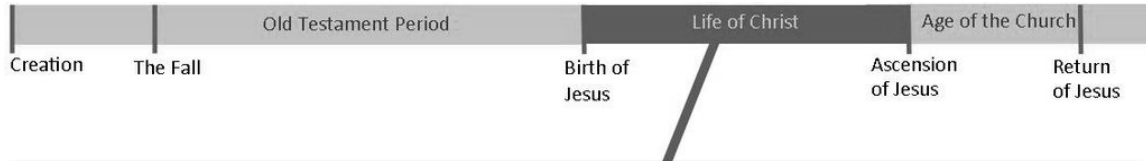
A suggested prayer for your family: "Lord Jesus, you are the resurrection and the life. In you death has lost its sting and will not be victorious over those you have saved. Thank you for bringing life to our dead hearts. We pray that we will live in full knowledge of your life-giving power and, therefore, never fail to follow your leading or fail to stand for the Gospel out of fear of death. Strengthen our faith, we pray. In the life-giving name of Christ, amen."

Serve Together:

Think of someone in our church who has lost a loved one who was a Christian in the past year. Take the time as a family to pray for this person, asking God to encourage them and give them peace in the fact that He gives eternal life to all who have trusted in Christ. Then, make a card and send it to the person letting them know that your family has been praying for them and hopes they will find peace in knowing that Jesus is the resurrection and the life. A simple reminder from people like you that a loved one is not forgotten and that Jesus is the life will be a blessing.

Who Do You Say that I Am?

Matthew 16:13-16



This Story in THE Story...

In the Old Testament we read of God's work in establishing a people for himself. The Israelites were to be a distinct people set aside as a nation for his glory. Being a Jew was a matter of birth and a national identity. However, when Jesus came, he called all people unto himself—both Jews and Gentiles. A person no longer would become a part of God's people by birth, but, instead, by faith. The question of today's devotion would become the distinguishing mark of God's people: Who do you say that he is? Is Jesus your Lord?

Be Together: "Guess Who?"

Have someone in your family pick a famous person (don't let them tell who it is). The rest of the family should then take turns asking yes/no questions about the identity of the person (Example: Is this person a male? Is this person an athlete?). Keep asking questions until someone guesses the correct identity of the person. Repeat as much as you would like.

Explain to your family that today's devotion will look again at the identity of Christ, but this time we will be asked who we believe Jesus is.

Hear Together:

Read Matthew 16:13-16 together.

Learn Together: "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Over the past several weeks we have studied significant events in the life of Christ that testify to his identity as the Messiah. We discussed how His coming was in fulfillment of prophecy, and his power over nature, sin, physical ailments, and even death. We read of his claims to be God and the only source of life. Now, Jesus looks at his disciples and asks them a crucial question that we too must each answer: "Who do you say that I am?"

In Matthew 16:1, the Pharisees and Sadducees asked Jesus for a sign to show them that he was the Messiah. However, Jesus told them that they already had all of the signs they would get. The answer was right in front of them, yet they refused to accept it. Jesus had proven himself to be the Messiah, yet they continued to deny it.

While with his disciples in Caesarea Philippi, Jesus asked his disciples who people said that he was. The disciples gave an array of responses they must have heard being said among the people. So, Jesus then asked them a very important question: "Who do you say that I am?" This is the heart of the matter. This is the key. We must not get so caught up in who others say Jesus is that we miss who he is ourselves. Peter answers, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." How would you answer? Who is Jesus in your life? Is he the Savior? Is he your Lord?

Talk Together:

Preschoolers and Younger Children:

- a. What did Jesus ask his disciples?
- b. Who is Jesus?

Older Children and Middle Schoolers:

- a. Who were people saying that Jesus was?
- b. What was Peter's answer to Jesus' question?

High Schoolers and Young Adults:

- a. Why do you think there is so much debate about who Jesus is?
- b. Who do people around you commonly say that Jesus is?

Note to Parents: If one or more of your family members is not a Christian, this is a perfect time to ask them the question of who they believe Jesus is. If they state the same as Peter did, then follow their response by sharing with them that if they believe Jesus to be who he said he was and showed himself to be, then they need to consider why they have not repented of their sin and confessed him as Lord. Call them to confess the Gospel. Also, keep in mind that this conversation might be better on an individual basis after the devotion. Just make sure you don't neglect to share the Gospel with your family!

Pray Together:

A suggested prayer for your family: "Lord Jesus, we live in a day in which people believe all kinds of mixed up things about your identity, but we know that you are the Son of the living God. You alone are Lord and Savior. You are the Word made flesh, the resurrection and the life, and light of the world. There is no one like you. Lord, we pray that you would help us to boldly show and tell people who you are. Use us, Lord Jesus, to spread your name and to help people see that you are God alone. It is in and for your name that we ask this, amen."

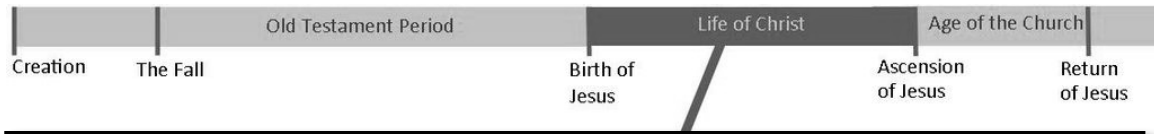
Serve Together:

How is your family involved in missions? What are you actively doing to make sure the people in your community and around the globe truly know who Jesus is? Take a few minutes to discuss the missions opportunities at church. Think

about local, weekly missions as well as national and international trips that are coming up. What opportunities do you have for multiple family members to go on a mission trip together or to be involved in weekly missions together? Discuss this and make a plan for being involved in missions as a family so that you can help people know Son of the living God.

Jesus Predicts His Death

Matthew 20:17-19



This Story in THE Story...

After the Fall in Genesis 3, God told Satan that a man would come who would crush his head. Satan would be defeated. In Isaiah 53 we read of the suffering servant who would bear the sins of the world. In Acts 2:23 and 1 Peter 1:20 we read that Jesus' death was predetermined by God before the foundation of the world. What does this tell us? Jesus came for a specific purpose--to give his life as a ransom for many (Mt 20:28). He knew this, and he knew how it would occur. So, in our passage today, we see Jesus displaying his omniscience (all-knowingness) by telling his disciples that he would die.

Be Together: "Would you rather...?"

Have fun discussing these questions, beginning each one with "Would you rather...":

- ...have sweaty hands or sweaty feet?
- ...drink cold coffee or warm milk?
- ...shave your head or not wash your hair for a month?
- ...sing a solo or dance in front of room full of people?
- ...be able to tell the future or change the past?

Explain that today's devotion shows that not only did Jesus fulfill the prophecies from the Old Testament, but he also foretold His death on the cross.

Hear Together:

Read Matthew 20:17-19 together.

Learn Together: "Jesus' plan was to die for our sins and rise from the dead."

A common question from a small child when riding in a car is, "Where are we going?" They want to know the destination and the purpose for being in the car. And, hopefully, the person driving the car has a plan for where they are headed! When Jesus came to live among his creation, he did so with a plan and a destination. His plan was to live a perfect life and die a sacrificial death. His destination was the cross.

One characteristic of God is that he is all-knowing. There is nothing past, present, or future that he does not know. Therefore, if Jesus was God, then we should

rightly expect him to be able to tell what would happen in the future. This is exactly what he did in Matthew 20:17-19. Taking his disciples to the side for a private conversation, he told them quite specifically what was going to happen to him—he would be handed over to the religious officials, sentenced to death, beaten, and crucified. But that wasn't all! After three days he would rise from the grave.

Consider the detail Jesus went into here: He told the way in which he would be tried, how he would be beaten, how he would die, and how long he would be dead before he arose. It is one thing if he looks at the disciples and says in general terms, "Guys, I just want you to know that I am going to die one day." However, Jesus gives a specific, detailed prophecy of his death and resurrection. What more evidence do we need to show us that Jesus' death was all a part of God the Father's plan for Jesus to die for our sins and rise from the dead? Jesus' death would not be an unfortunate event he was unable to avoid. Instead, it was the reason he came and the carrying out of God's plan from before the foundation of the world. All along, Jesus' plan was to die for our sins and rise from the dead.

Talk Together:

Preschoolers and Younger Children:

- a. What did Jesus tell his disciples?
- b. Did Jesus' words come true?

Older Children and Middle Schoolers:

- a. How does Jesus' prophesy show that he is all-knowing?
- b. How does Jesus' prophesy show that his death and resurrection were part of God's plan?

High Schoolers and Young Adults:

- a. How do Jesus' prophetic words of his own death affirm his deity?
- b. What does it mean to you to know that Jesus knew all along how his life would end?

Pray Together:

A suggested prayer for your family: "Father, we worship you because you are a mighty God who knows all things past, present, and future. We are thankful for your perfect plan for saving us from our sins through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Thank you for your grace and love. In the name of Christ we pray, amen."

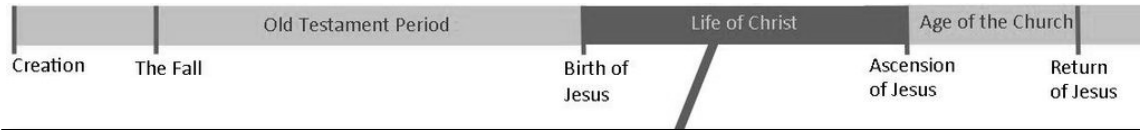
Serve Together:

Romans 5:8 is a powerful verse: "God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Grab a container of sidewalk chalk from the store

this week and plan to go out with your family late one evening to do some "chalk encouragement" at some homes. Simply pull up to someone's home and write out Romans 5:8 on their driveway along with some other words of encouragement about God's love for them. Help those around you never forget the love displayed in the cross of Christ.

The Triumphal Entry

Matthew 21:1-11



This Story in THE Story...

Creation. The Fall. The giving of the Law and God's covenant with his people. Bad kings, good kings. Rebellion after rebellion. God's punishment by sending the people into exile. Prophecies of the coming Messiah. All of this led up to the coming of Christ. Now, he has lived a perfect life and the time has come for him to enter Jerusalem for the final time. He would enter in praise only to be handed over to death on a cross. But let there be no mistake about it—his entry was that of a king.

Be Together: "Unfinished Sentences"

See how your family would finish these sentences:

- The most useless thing in our house is...
- Ten years from now I...
- My favorite thing we do as a family is...
- My funniest memory I have of our family was when...
- If I were a king I would drive a...

Explain that in today's devotion we will learn that Jesus entered Jerusalem as a humble king who knew the agony *and* the triumph that awaited him.

Hear Together:

Read Matthew 21:1-11 together.

Learn Together: "Jesus was and is the triumphant King of kings."

Have you ever gone to the doctor knowing that you would get a shot when you were there. It would be painful, but you knew you had to do it. Jesus, at some level, was in a similar situation as he approached Jerusalem for the final time. However, he was not merely anticipating a shot, he was anticipating his own sacrificial death on the cross for the sins of the world. In view of this, he did not turn back and cower from what the Father had planned. Instead, he roared into town as a king, knowing he would be crucified as a criminal.

It was quite common for kings in this time to ride into town after being victorious in battle, but they typically did so in a chariot or on a warhorse. They would come into town at the applause of the people, with much laud and cheer. However, Jesus entered in humility on the back of a donkey. Zechariah had prophesied

years earlier, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; he is just and endowed with salvation, humble and mounted on a donkey" (Zech 9:9). Jesus was this king whom Zechariah had spoken of. He was the one who was just and endowed with salvation, and he rode triumphantly into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey.

We need to understand three points about the Triumphal Entry. First, Jesus entered as a king. Make no mistake about it--Jesus came as a man, but he never set aside his sovereign rule over all of creation. On this day he rode in as the humble King about to triumph over death, but in Revelation 19:16, we are told that when he returns, it will be in victory and power with the name "King of kings" written on His thigh! Second, Jesus' kingship is different. Jesus rode in on a donkey as a meek and humble king. He did not take His kingdom by force, and he did not assemble a mighty army. Instead, Jesus brought about his kingdom by an outpouring of love and grace on the cross that demanded the humility of a suffering servant of God. Third, Jesus entered triumphantly because he knew what he was there to do. Remember, Jesus was not ignorant of what awaited him in Jerusalem. The cross had been the plan of God from before time began, and so was the resurrection. The sovereign King of all creation did not approach the cross *hoping* to prevail over sin and death. He approached the cross *knowing* that he would rise victorious.

Recall that we have been studying how Jesus revealed his identity and the people's response. As He enters, the people shout, "Hosanna to the Son of David; Blessed is he who comes in the name of The Lord; Hosanna in the highest!" Then, they ask and answer the question we have discussed over the past few weeks: "Who is this?" Their answer--"The *prophet* Jesus." They missed it! They praised him in excitement and still did not truly know who he was. He is not a mere prophet, He is the very Son of God, the triumphant King of kings.

Talk Together:

Preschoolers and Younger Children:

- a. What was the Triumphal Entry?
- b. How did the people respond when Jesus entered on the donkey?

Older Children and Middle Schoolers:

- a. Why did Jesus ride a donkey?
- b. Why was Jesus' entry into Jerusalem triumphant?

High Schoolers and Young Adults:

- a. How have you seen people mistakenly shout praises to Jesus while they don't know who he truly is?
- b. How does an accurate view of who God is influence your life and worship?

Pray Together:

A suggested prayer for your family: "Lord Jesus, we praise you as the King of kings. You alone are the ruler of all creation and were triumphant over sin and death on the cross. God, we pray that you would keep our hearts and minds fixed on you and your majesty. Lord, help us to always remember and know who you truly are, regardless of who the 'crowd' thinks you are. Lord, be glorified in our family. We ask this in the name of our King, Jesus Christ. Amen."

Serve Together:

Romans 13:1-7 teaches us to be good citizens of our country, and in order to be a good citizen we need to remember that our ultimate King is Jesus. Take a few minutes as a family to write cards of encouragement to some of the elected officials in your town (regardless of your political leanings). Let them know that you are praying for them and hope that they will serve Christ as King as they lead your town.

APPENDIX 4

PASTORAL PERSPECTIVES OF PARENTAL ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES OF LEADING FAMILY DEVOTIONS

Please answer the following questions regarding your perception of the attitudes and practices of parents of adolescents at Grace Baptist Church, Somerset, Kentucky:

1. The parents prioritize consistent family devotional or worship times in their family's schedule.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
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2. Parents allow busyness to prevent them from leading family devotions.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
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3. Parents believe that church is where children ought to receive most of their Bible teaching.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
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4. Parents do not feel equipped to answer theological questions from their adolescent children, and, therefore, would rather their children ask a pastor these questions.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
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5. Parents are willing to make great sacrifices, such as eating family meals together, in order to help their children succeed at sports or school.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
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6. Parents, and particularly fathers, understand that they have a responsibility to engage personally in a discipleship process with each of their children.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
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7. Parents believe that church leaders are the people primarily responsible for discipling their children and teaching them to share the Gospel with others.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Somewhat Disagree Somewhat Agree Agree Strongly Agree

8. The pastoral staff has helped parents to develop a clear plan for their child's spiritual growth.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Somewhat Disagree Somewhat Agree Agree Strongly Agree

Table A1. Pastoral perspectives survey results

Question:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. The parents prioritize consistent family devotional or worship times in their family's schedule.	0	2	1	1	0	0
2. Parents allow busyness to prevent them from leading family devotions.	0	0	0	1	3	0
3. Parents believe that church is where children ought to receive most of their Bible teaching.	1	1	1	1	0	0
4. Parents do not feel equipped to answer theological questions from their adolescent children, and, therefore, would rather their children ask a pastor these questions.	0	0	2	1	1	0
5. Parents are willing to make great sacrifices, such as eating family meals together, in order to help their children succeed at sports or school.	0	0	0	0	4	0
6. Parents, and particularly fathers, understand that they have a responsibility to engage personally in a discipleship process with each of their children.	0	0	1	1	2	0
7. Parents believe that church leaders are the people primarily responsible for discipling their children and teaching them to share the Gospel with others.	1	1	1	0	1	0
8. The pastoral staff has helped parents to develop a clear plan for their child's spiritual growth.	0	0	0	0	4	0

APPENDIX 5

WEEKLY ARTICLES SENT TO PARENTS

Week 1: Persevering for the Sake of Your Children

Thank you to all who came to the luncheon yesterday! I hope you found it to be a blessed time of fellowship and equipping. I'm excited to see how God uses these devotions in your family and to hear your feedback over the coming weeks. As we discussed, family devotions are a great way to intentionally teach your children about God. However, a lot of parents don't know how to lead them or don't have access to a resource to help them lead family devotions. My prayer is that we will all be able to use this project to provide parents at Grace, and Christian parents of adolescents everywhere, with a resource for teaching Scripture at home.

If you were unable to attend the luncheon, I will be contacting you this week to provide you with the *Family Devotions* guide and to update you on what you missed. In addition, you can click [here](#) to watch a video of the luncheon. Please take the time this week to watch this video, read through the packet you will be given, and complete the survey that was given out at the luncheon.

For the next thirteen weeks I am going to provide you with an article related to the leading of family devotions. I hope you will find these articles both encouraging and educational. This week, I want to encourage you with one simple word: perseverance. One of the greatest challenges to leading family devotions is simply persevering in them long enough to develop the habit. There are two ways in which you will find it challenging to persevere: First, you are busy. You are running from school functions, to church, to work, to ball practice, etc.—it just never seems to end. Life is hectic, and none of us have a lot of downtime. The challenge, then, is to not allow busyness to cause us to set aside the practice of teaching the Word at home. Persevere in controlling your schedule in a way that provides time for family devotions.

Second, new habits are not begun easily (unless, of course, they are bad habits—it always seems like those begin easily). Over the next few weeks, there will be times in which you feel incapable, discouraged, or tired. You will likely struggle with either your attitude or the attitude of your teens toward family devotions. However, we must not let any of these challenges derail us from our God-ordained task of diligently teaching our children about the Lord. Push through the weariness, discouragement, feelings of incapability, and attitudes—these are all tools Satan will use to deter you from passing your faith on to your children. Stay focused on Christ, and trust him to use you in mighty ways. Persevere for the sake of the Gospel and the good of your children!

Week 2: Let It First be on Your Own Heart

It has been great hearing from many of you about how your first week of devotions has gone and how excited you are about this resource! Thank you for your

encouragement and partnership. Keep pressing on!

This week I want to encourage you to read Deuteronomy 6:4-9, the foundational passage that provides us with the understanding of parental responsibility for spiritual leadership at home. The passage begins with the Shema, the highly revered statement of the Jews: “*Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.*” What comes next is of utmost importance for us, as parents—“*And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.*” Where are they to be? On *your* heart and on *my* heart. Before Moses instructs the people to teach their children the words and works of our God, he tells them to make sure these words are on their own heart. Why is this? Because you cannot lead your child to a place where you are not. If you want them to love God, make sure *you* love God. If you want them to do missions, make sure *you* are doing missions. If you want them to study the Word, make sure *you* are studying the Word. Do you love the LORD with all of your heart, soul, and might? Is He the purpose and goal of your life? If so, then leading your child to love God will be easy. We cannot teach our children to love God wholeheartedly if we do not love God wholeheartedly.

Take a few moments today and seek God in prayer. Ask him to reveal areas of your heart that are callous to him and areas of your life in which you do not love him wholeheartedly. Ask God to deepen your love for him, increase your hunger to know his Word, and to strengthen your faith in him so that you might be even more effective in leading your children at home.

Week 3: Diligent Spiritual Leadership at Home

Life as a parent is filled with twists and turns; mountains and valleys; successes and failures. In the midst of all this, we are called to be diligent in the way we teach our children about God. Turn back to Deuteronomy 6:7. Here, Moses writes, “You shall teach them *diligently* to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.” Parents, we are to teach our children about God in two ways—“diligently” and “when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.” While both of these methods for discipling children in the home are beneficial, necessary, and even intentional, the “diligent” discipleship of children is of utmost importance for family devotions because diligence implies a methodical, focused, and determined effort to accomplish a set task or objective.

Concerning the diligent training of children in the home, theologian Eugene Merrill writes, “[The parent] must impress the words of covenant faith into the thinking of his children by inscribing them there with indelible sharpness and precision. . . . The image is that of the engraver of a monument who takes hammer and chisel in hand and with painstaking care etches a text into the face of a solid slab of granite. The sheer labor of such a task is daunting indeed, but once done the message is there to stay.” Think about that for a moment—what are you teaching your children that you want to be so engraved upon their hearts that it never leaves them? Is it about Kentucky basketball? Cars? Fashion? Hunting? Cooking? Success? Or, is it the Word of God that leads to salvation, guards them from sin, equips them to live for God’s glory, and sanctifies them to be more like Christ? My hope and prayer is that I will be a father who diligently passes on the works and truths of God to my children. There is no greater gift that I can give them! I pray this is also your longing as a parent.

This is your third week in the family devotions series. Don’t give up. Press on

and utilize this resource to diligently teach the Word of God at home. Stay focused. Be determined. Persevere. Remember—the daunting labor of teaching your children will engrave the Word of God upon their hearts and set their feet upon the solid foundation of Christ.

Week 4: Bring them up

Week four of the devotional series is upon us, and it has been a blessing to hear your stories of how your family devotion times are going. You've had great times, humorous moments, and even some devotions that seemed like an absolute train wreck! However, regardless of what your experience has been so far, remember the message you are sending your children. Every time you lead them at home in the Word, you are teaching them that God and His Word are of vital importance to you. This message rings true regardless of how the devotion turns out.

In Ephesians 6:4, Paul writes, “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” Here, Paul is establishing a contrast between parenting practices that would exasperate a child and parenting practices that intentionally nourish a child toward godliness. In Roman culture, fathers were endowed with the utmost power and authority, both of which could easily be used to provoke anger within children. Therefore, Paul instructs fathers to bring their children up in the Lord, which stands in contrast to the ways many fathers lored their position over their children. In our culture, parents are also prone to exasperating their children by abusing their authority. However, as Christian parents, we are called to intentionally bring our children up in the Lord.

We should note two aspects of Paul's appeal. First, Paul's words express intentionality. It is important for us to diligently and purposefully build habits into the life of our family that will guide our children towards Christ. This is one reason that family devotions are healthy and beneficial for our children—they serve to help us “bring them up” in the Lord. Second, we see the context in which we are to bring them up—“the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” We'll talk more next week about “discipline and instruction,” but this week we need to consider that we are to bring them up in the ways of God. Our goal as parents is to raise godly children, and this must be the priority over raising successful children, Wildcat fans, or great athletes. Our goal is to bring our children up as Christ followers. Be encouraged this week as you lead your family devotions, knowing that they are serving to help you bring up your children in the Lord.

Week 5: Nurture and Admonish

Last week, we saw that Paul instructed us to intentionally bring up our children in the Lord. The truth is that godly parenting must be purposeful parenting if we are going to raise godly men and women.

This week, I want to turn your attention to two aspects of how we are to bring up our children in the Lord—nurture and admonition. The ESV and NASB translate Ephesians 6:4 as “bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” However, neither of these translations convey the meaning of the Greek as clearly as they should. The first word, “discipline” (*paideia*), is best translated as “training” or “instruction” because it refers to the general education of children. The continuous training and instruction of children in the Lord includes corrective discipline, but it is not limited to it. The second term used, “instruction” (*nouthesia*), is better translated as “admonition,” a

term that refers more to the verbal correction of children that is done in response to wrong behaviors or attitudes. As parents, we are to verbally admonish our children when appropriate to direct their hearts toward Christ.

How do family devotions relate to these two terms? First, we need to understand that our role as parents is one of training. As we teach our children to follow Christ, we are training them in righteousness and to be missionaries to the next generation! In order to do this, we must continuously seek to instruct them in the ways of the Lord. Family devotions are one way to insure that we are continuously leading them in the Word so that they will be adequately equipped to live God-honoring lives. Second, family devotions provide a context for natural, healthy, and godly admonition in the Lord. As we teach Scripture to our children, we will have natural conversations about our struggles with sin and lives of following Christ. These conversations will occur at non-threatening and low-tension times in which teens are typically more responsive since their emotions are not escalated. During these times, we are to lovingly admonish them in a way that does not exasperate them, but instead strengthens their faith in Christ.

As you embark on week five of family devotions, do so knowing that this is one way you can continuously train your children in the Lord, and always be aware of opportunities to correct the sinful attitudes and behaviors in their lives—for God’s glory and their good.

Week 6: Tell Them

Psalm 78:1-8 is a very important passage in Scripture in order for us to understand our task as parents. In these eight verses, the psalmist calls us to pass on our faith to the next generation so that they will put their trust in God. If this is going to happen, then we must understand the truth of Psalm 78:4, in which the psalmist says, “We will not hide [the teachings about God] from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders that he has done.” How will the teachings about God be relayed to the next generation? By telling them.

Parents, we may not have the “gift” of teaching, but we do have the responsibility of parenting. Telling our children about God is not contingent on our giftedness. If we are Christian parents, then we have the responsibility to tell them about God. We must not remain silent, but, instead, we must testify of the grace and glory of our God to our children. Specifically, the psalmist identifies three things we should tell our children. First, we are to tell of His glorious deeds. Do your children know what God has done in your life? Have you told them about how and when He saved you? Have you shared how He has answered your prayers? Have you told them of what God did in Scripture that amazes you every time you read it? If not, then start telling them today. Second, we are to tell our children of His might. Heaven forbid that we allow our children to go about life and leave our homes with a small view of God! We must tell them of His mighty deeds and make sure they know that He alone is God. There is no one like Him. Finally, we are to tell our children the wonders that God has done. Tell them about the time He divided the Red Sea. Or, what about the time He raised Lazarus from the dead? Have you told them about the time He provided the money for your family to pay the bills when you were broke and desperate? Did you tell them how He answered your prayers for a child? And, how He heard your prayers and brought salvation to your child? Did you remember to tell them how He gave you the words to say to your coworker yesterday when they were grieving the loss of a parent—words you would have never guessed you could have said? Tell them. Tell them today. Tell them of “the

glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders that he has done.”

Week 7: Teaching Life Lessons from the Past

I often think back on my life as a teen, and, depending on the memory, it causes me to chuckle or just shake my head. I certainly have some memories that I wish I could relive, but I also have more than my fair share of memories I would like to erase. However, one thing I have learned is that God can use all of my experiences—both good and bad—to teach my children about Him. The reality is that the past is one of our greatest treasure chests of stories to share with our children and impart wisdom to them.

In Psalm 78, the psalmist uses the past as a motivating factor for teaching the next generation about God. The desire of the psalmist was that the future generation would not follow the example of their fathers. Read Psalm 78:8—“...and they should not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation whose heart was not steadfast, whose spirit was not faithful to God.” There are times when we try to ignore poor examples from the past, whether they are examples from our lives or someone else’s. However, we must also understand that poor examples can serve as warning signs for our children. Use the past as a teaching tool, letting your children see the dangers of not following God and the blessings of a life founded upon the solid rock of Christ.

As parents, we also realize that many in the past generation neglected to teach the Word at home, and now we are seeing the fruit of such neglect. Homes in America are a wreck. Let us not follow that path. Instead, let us be a generation of parents who teach their children about God in our homes so that they will not be a stubborn and rebellious generation, but will rather be a generation that places their trust in God.

So, as you seek to teach your kids about God at home, don’t shy away from sharing your past failures. This does not mean you glorify them, but it does mean that you are honest with your kids and teach them to avoid making the same mistakes you once made. Warn them of pitfalls and stumbling blocks. Tell them of the danger of a callous heart or of a family consumed by a busy schedule. Point them to the great and mighty God we serve. Teach them the Word. Pray with them and for them.

I pray that this week your family would be richly blessed with special times together. As you celebrate Christmas, don’t neglect your family devotion. Find a time to slow down, gather together, and study the Word. Merry Christmas!

Week 8: The Goal of the Godly Parent

Why do you parent the way you do? Are you raising your children with a particular goal in mind? What are your hopes for your children? What defines success as a parent? Is this definition different for a Christian parent as compared to a non-Christian parent?

As Christian parents, it is imperative that we raise our children with a God-centered goal in mind. But what should this goal be? In order to answer this question we need to turn our attention to Psalm 78:1-8 again. In this passage, the psalmist instructs parents in to tell their children “the praises of the LORD, and His strength, and His wondrous works that He has done” in hopes that the coming generation “should put their confidence in God” (Ps 78:4; 78:7 NASB). That is the goal—that our children would put

their confidence in God. A goal such as this promotes intentionality because seldom is a goal reached without purposeful work to achieve the desired outcome. Especially a goal of this magnitude! Unfortunately, everything in our culture stands in contrast to this goal. Therefore, we must be purposeful in our instruction of our children. John Calvin writes in his commentary on the Psalms that this objective should cause parents to “be the more powerfully stirred up to instruct their children.” We should purposefully teach our children in a way that warns them of the sins of their ancestors in view of them growing up to live faithful lives for the Lord. When this is our goal, we will be more intentional in how we raise our children because we understand that it will not happen by accident.

The truth is this: If we are going to achieve the goal that the psalmist sets before us (to see our children put their confidence in the Lord), then we must intentionally seek to instruct them in the works and ways of God. Family devotions are not the only way to do this, nor should they be the only way we do it. However, family devotions are certainly a great way to intentionally direct the hearts of your children toward the Lord. You have gotten “over the hump” regarding this 13-week devotional series. Keep pressing on and setting aside time to teach your children at home. It is a great habit to establish to teach your children to place their confidence in the only One who is mighty to save and will never disappoint—Jesus Christ.

Week 9: Sending Out Missionaries

What will you be doing fifty years from today? More than likely, if you are a Christian, you will be standing before the throne of God in worship. Now, another question—what will your children be doing fifty years from today? The reality is that the majority of our children will outlive us. When we are gone from this place, our children will still be carrying on their lives and living out their faith.

What does this have to do with family devotions? Turn back to Psalm 78:1-8 and take special note of verses 5-7—Why did God establish a testimony and appoint a law for fathers to teach their children? So that the next generation would know them and that the children who were not even born yet would learn them in such a way that they would teach their own children the ways and works of God. In these verses, the Psalmist speaks of four generations: fathers, their children, children yet unborn, and the children of the children yet unborn. This means that the psalmist has generations in view that he would never meet. His desire is that these future generations would set their hope in God rather than in vain pursuits of the world, false gods, idols, or themselves. How would this happen? Through the teaching of the children. Like the psalmist, we need to realize that our own children will be equipped to take the Gospel to future generations through the diligent, intentional teaching of the Word of God. What better way to do this than through leading family devotions?

Essentially, the psalmist viewed children as missionaries to the next generation, and so should we. As I raise my four children, I understand and hope that they will all outlive Steph and me. And, assuming that will happen, I hope that they will take the Gospel to a generation of people that I will never meet or have the opportunity to personally reach with the Gospel. My desire is to raise four missionaries to the next generation. What about you? Are you aware of the fact that you have missionaries living in your home? How are you preparing them to take the Gospel to a generation of young people you will never meet while you are alive?

My prayer this week is that as you continue teaching the Word of God at home through family devotions, you will see do so with the understanding that you are

equipping your children to be missionaries to the coming generations. May God guard our eyes and minds from being so nearsighted that we fail to see the missionaries living in our homes. Let us look forward to the future generations and prepare our children to reach their children, and their children's children, with the Gospel.

Week 10: "Traditions that Teach"

What are the most meaningful memories you have from your childhood? Were there any particular traditions your family had that left an impact on you? Every family has their own traditions they take part in year after year. Some of these traditions may be as simple as going to a movie each year after Thanksgiving, or it may be gathering each Saturday night for a family game night. The reality is that traditions are meaningful. What I want to encourage you to do this week is to establish traditions that intentionally teach your children about God.

As we seek to fulfill our calling to be intentional in spiritually leading our children, God provides passages in his Word that are examples of how to teach children purposefully about him. The institution of the Passover meal and the Feast of Unleavened Bread in Exodus 12:1-28 are two such examples. Both of these traditions were intended to pass on His works and truths to the next generation within the context of the family. Not only were they to be done in the context of the family, but they were also meant to have an enduring effect. Exodus 12:14 says, "Now, this day will be a memorial to you, and you shall celebrate it as a feast to the LORD; throughout your generations you are to celebrate it as a permanent ordinance." "Throughout your generations" indicates the longevity of this memorial and is repeated in Exodus 12:17 in relation to the Feast of Unleavened Bread. These are not onetime meals observed merely for the consecration of the people—they are much more. The meal was to serve as a testimony of the acts of God for future generations.

Exodus 12:26-27 also provides a valuable principle for *how* we should go about purposefully teaching children at home. Namely, we should seek to establish traditions, habits, teachings, and methods that will cause our children to ask about God. As parents, we should demonstrate intentionality by leading our families in ways that invoke questions from our children about God. None of us can use the excuse that our child did not ask about God, for the burden to be taught lies not on the shoulders of our children. Instead, we carry the responsibility to teach our children about the Lord, and we should carry out this responsibility in an intentional manner.

The bottom line is this: We need to be diligent to establish habits and traditions as families that will teach our children about the Lord. Perhaps this means setting up a yearly tradition for your family that has a God-centered meaning. Or, it may mean establishing a weekly tradition of studying the Word together over a family meal. It will look different in each of our families. The important thing is that we be faithful to pass on Christ to the next generation. Why is this important? Hear the appeal of theologian Douglas Stuart: "[W]hat is not carefully remembered by a community is very naturally and easily forgotten—and virtually completely forgotten as soon as the oldest members of that community who experienced the original event die." My prayer is that we will be a generation of parents who diligently lead our families in the study of God's Word so that our children will ever remember his grace and truth.

Week 11: “When Your Child Asks”

Do you remember the times when it seemed as though “why” was the only word in your child’s vocabulary? Why is the sky blue? Why do frogs jump? Why do we have hair? Why do you like pizza? Why do my feet have toes? I’ve always found it humorous to listen to my kids’ questions, and there have been more than a few times when this one word has driven me to the brink of insanity. However, as my kids get older, the questions seem to get more complex. And, now, I’m sure many of you dream of going back to the “Why?” questions of early childhood!

Last week we looked at Exodus 12, where God establishes the Passover Meal and Feast of Unleavened Bread for the purpose of telling the coming generations about the Lord. As you remember, these celebrations were intended to cause children to ask questions. So, here is a question for you this week: When your child asks you about God, what will you say?

Leading family devotions will open up all kinds of great opportunities for your children to ask you questions about God. Some of these questions will be easy; others will be very difficult. Some may even require a lot of study to figure out and be able to answer. There is no doubt that the questions become more complex than the “Why?” questions of the past. However, they are questions that deserve an answer and questions that your teen both needs *and* wants you to answer. Your teen needs to hear you answer questions about God because doing so will show him that you think about your faith, that you are a learner, and that you spend time in the Word. Likewise, your teen wants to hear you answer questions about God because you are his parent and carry the most influence in his life.

My encouragement for you this week is to do what it takes to prepare yourself to answer their questions. This does not mean we have to know all the answers, but it does mean that we are prepared to find the answers we don’t know. It means that we, as parents, should be learners so that we can be their teachers. We need to be students of theology so that we can answer their theological questions. We need to be students of youth culture so that we can apply God’s truth to the world our teens live in. We need to prepare ourselves now for when our children ask us questions about God later.

Here are some resources to prepare yourself as a parent:

- www.cpyu.org (A great website to stay educated about youth culture in light of biblical truth.)
- www.biblicaltraining.org (On this site, you can begin taking classes to grow as a Christian and to equip yourself to answer more theological questions. The classes range in level from new Christian to seminary and feature some of the leading theologians as teachers.)
- www.cbmw.org (This is the website for The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood. It is filled with numerous helpful articles for living as a godly man/woman.)
- www.truewoman.com (A site to help you stay equipped to raise a godly young lady.)

Week 12: “Establishing Memorials”

There are only two weeks remaining in your family devotions guide—I hope you are finishing well! We have covered a lot of ground over the past few months concerning the practice of family devotions. This week I would like to turn your attention to Joshua 4. Here, we see that Joshua has just led the people across the Jordan River to enter the

Promised Land. Upon doing so, God instructs Joshua to erect a memorial of twelve stones as an enduring sign for the people to remember what the Lord had done. Specifically, the stones Joshua was instructed to gather served to invoke deliberate conversations between parents and their children about this great miracle of God. He tells Joshua in 4:6 that this memorial will be a sign “*when* your children ask,” not *if* they ask. The memorial would be built in such a way that it *would* spur conversation.

The importance of Joshua’s building a memorial is rooted in the need for the people to remember God. As they had demonstrated shortly after crossing the Red Sea, God’s people were prone to forgetting what he had done in the past. (Think about how quickly they began grumbling even after they saw God’s great deliverance from the hands of the Egyptians.) This memorial would serve as an intentional reminder of who their God was so that their hearts would hold fast unto him. This constant reminder of God’s work in parting the waters of the Jordan would serve to guard the hearts of the people as they encountered a multiplicity of gods in the land they would conquer. Parents, our children are also growing up in a culture that places a multiplicity of gods before them, all of which compete for their hearts. Therefore, we would be wise to erect purposeful memorials for our family that will serve as reminders of God’s acting in our lives.

As you near the end of this devotional series, I want to encourage you to consider the things God has done in the life of your family. What significant events have occurred? At what points in your life, and in your teens’ lives, did God do something that you need to always remember? How can the remembrance of God’s working in those times guard your hearts from doubt and unbelief?

Over the next couple of weeks, think of a memorial you can establish that would serve to remind your family about God’s work in your lives. As you do this, here are a few things to keep in mind:

- The memorial should be set up in such a way that it is distinct from typical decoration. For example, if you wanted to set up a memorial at the end of this devotional series to remind your family of when you committed to and began studying the Word together at home, you might want to purchase a large family Bible to set in a prominent place in your home. This Bible should be one that is obviously too large for common use, making it distinct from others you may have.
- Make the memorial visible. Place it in a spot in your home that will be seen by your children. Your goal is for it to remind them of something God has done. Also, if it is in a visible spot, there will be times in which it invokes questions from visitors to your home.
- Make the purpose of the memorial very clear. It is not something to be worshipped. Instead, it is simply a reminder of the awesome God we worship and how he has worked in your lives.

Week 13: “Where Do We Go from Here?”

This is it—the final week! I hope and trust that your family has been blessed as you have studied the Word together, and I hope that you found the devotional guide to be helpful. My prayer, as I shared with you at the beginning, is that the past thirteen weeks have enabled you to establish a habit of studying the Word at home with your family.

The question that now looms before you is this: Where do we go from here? The simple answer is that you continue to move forward. Keep having family devotions. The past three months have been much more than simply a time for you to help me with something I needed to do for school. These past three months have been an opportunity for you to

form a habit of studying the Word of God as a family. It has been a time for you to learn your strengths and weaknesses as a teacher at home. It has been a time for you to learn how to communicate the truths of God to your teens. Now that you have accomplished this, why stop? Keep studying the Word together!

Some of you may ask, “What if we *didn't* develop a habit of leading family devotions?” I know the reality is that every family did not do enough of the family devotions to truly build a habit, and I know that there are numerous reasons for this to be the case. My goal is not to browbeat you or to send you on a guilt trip. Rather, my goal is to continue to equip you for your responsibility of spiritual leadership at home and to push you toward teaching the Word at home to your children. Therefore, if you didn't make it through the devotions, I want to encourage you not to give up—keep pressing on! Set some reasonable goals for your family and work towards consistently studying the Scriptures together. Start simple and feel free to keep working through the devotional guide wherever you left off.

At this point, I want to direct all of you to our weekly *FaithTalk* sheets that are found in the worship bulletin. These are simple family devotions formatted similarly to the devotions you have been using and based upon the sermon each week. Some of you have been using them, while others of you have been discarding them. Now is the time to use them. They are a great resource for you to tap into. So, don't miss the opportunity that lies before you.

Also, don't forget that this Sunday we will have a concluding parent luncheon. At the luncheon, I will be asking you to fill out the same survey you completed at the November luncheon. In addition, I hope to hear your feedback regarding the devotions—your successes, failures, joys, and frustrations. It will be a great time of learning and encouragement for all of us as we seek to pass on our faith in Christ to the next generation.

APPENDIX 6

PARENT SURVEY SCORING KEY

Table A2. Scoring key for parent surveys

Question:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I prioritize consistent family devotional or worship times in my family's schedule.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. I would like to do regular family devotions or Bible reading in our home, but my family is just too busy for that right now. It will probably be that way for quite a while.	6	5	4	3	2	1
3. The church is where children ought to receive most of their Bible teaching.	6	5	4	3	2	1
4. When my child spontaneously asks a biblical or theological question, I really wish that my child would have asked a minister or other church leader instead of me.	6	5	4	3	2	1
5. I want to do whatever it takes for my child to succeed in certain sports or school activities—even if that means my family is too busy some weeks to eat meals together.	6	5	4	3	2	1
6. Parents, and particularly fathers, have a responsibility to engage personally in a discipleship process with each of their children.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. Church leaders are the people primarily responsible for discipling my children and teaching them to share the Gospel with others.	6	5	4	3	2	1
8. My church has helped me to develop a clear plan for my child's spiritual growth.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Table A2 Continued. Scoring key for parent surveys

Question:	Never	Once	A Couple of Times	Three or Four Times	Five or Six Times	Seven or More Times
9. Other than mealtimes, how many times in the past week have I prayed aloud with any of my children?	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. How many times in the past week has my family eaten a meal together with television, music, and other similar media turned off?	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. How many times in the past month have I read or discussed the Bible with any of my children?	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. How many times in the past month have I discussed any biblical or spiritual matters with any of my children while engaging in day-to-day activities?	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. How many times in the past two months has my family engaged in any family devotional or worship time in our home?	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. How many times in the past two months have I talked with my spouse or a close friend about my children's spiritual development?	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. How many times in the past year have I intentionally participated with one or more of my children in witnessing to a non-Christian or inviting a non-Christian to church?	1	2	3	4	5	6
16. How often in the past year has any church leader made any contact with me to help me to engage actively in my child's spiritual development?	1	2	3	4	5	6

APPENDIX 7

RESULTS OF PROJECT T-TESTS

Table A3. T-Test results for combined parent surveys

Parent	Pre-Project	Post-Project	Difference
1	58	70	12
2	50	56	6
3	60	65	5
4	69	92	23
5	74	89	15
6	62	65	3
7	65	87	22
8	69	75	6
9	86	93	7
10	50	62	12
11	76	70	-6
12	67	73	6
13	53	72	19
14	59	77	18
15	60	74	14
16	66	64	-2
17	60	72	12
18	48	44	-4
19	44	44	0
20	70	71	1
21	55	62	7
22	63	67	4
23	52	66	14
24	57	62	5
25	48	49	1

Parent	Pre-Project	Post-Project	Difference
26	76	83	7
27	64	77	13
28	66	85	19
29	83	80	-3
30	78	80	2
31	78	75	-3
32	88	90	2
33	56	68	12
34	70	66	-4
35	61	64	3
36	76	82	6
37	59	82	23
38	59	59	0
39	68	72	4
40	73	76	3
41	84	90	6
42	67	67	0
43	84	83	-1
Avg =	65.37	72.09	6.72
SD =	11.18	11.98	7.78
CV=	2.0181		
t=	5.662		
P=	0.000001		

Table A4. T-Test results for parent perspective survey

Parent	Pre-Project	Post-Project	Difference
1	41	42	1
2	27	32	5
3	36	40	4
4	39	46	7
5	42	46	4
6	38	33	-5
7	33	42	9
8	40	41	1
9	38	45	7
10	28	34	6
11	40	39	-1
12	42	39	-3
13	35	38	3
14	31	34	3
15	41	41	0
16	42	39	-3
17	36	43	7
18	32	31	-1
19	31	30	-1
20	37	37	0
21	34	37	3
22	33	35	2
23	31	39	8
24	33	38	5
25	29	29	0

Parent	Pre-Project	Post-Project	Difference
26	44	45	1
27	40	40	0
28	41	46	5
29	42	41	-1
30	42	43	1
31	42	40	-2
32	44	44	0
33	33	36	3
34	40	41	1
35	30	39	9
36	42	45	3
37	37	47	10
38	41	37	-4
39	37	36	-1
40	39	42	3
41	43	45	2
42	36	36	0
43	46	44	-2
Avg =	37.40	39.47	2.07
SD =	4.88	4.66	3.69
CV=	2.0181		
t=	3.68		
P=	0.000656		

Table A5. T-Test results for parent practices surveys

Parent	Pre-Project	Post-Project	Difference
1	17	28	11
2	23	24	1
3	24	25	1
4	30	46	16
5	32	43	9
6	24	32	8
7	32	45	13
8	29	34	5
9	48	48	0
10	22	28	6
11	36	31	-5
12	25	34	9
13	18	34	16
14	28	33	5
15	19	33	14
16	24	25	1
17	24	29	5
18	16	13	-3
19	13	14	1
20	33	34	1
21	21	25	4
22	30	32	2
23	21	27	6
24	24	24	0
25	19	20	1

Parent	Pre-Project	Post-Project	Difference
26	32	38	6
27	24	37	13
28	25	39	14
29	41	39	-2
30	36	37	1
31	36	35	-1
32	44	46	2
33	23	32	9
34	30	25	-5
35	31	25	-6
36	34	37	3
37	22	35	13
38	18	22	4
39	31	36	5
40	34	34	0
41	41	45	4
42	31	31	0
43	38	39	1
Avg =	27.98	32.40	4.37
SD =	7.95	8.14	5.77
CV=	2.0181		
t=	4.97		
P=	0.000011		

APPENDIX 8

LETTER SENT TO PARENTS FOR THE CONCLUDING LUNCHEON

February 5, 2013

Dear Parent,

As you know, this is the final week of the family devotion guide that I distributed in November. I hope that you found the devotions to be beneficial for your family. It has been encouraging to hear some of your stories of using them, so I am excited to hear from you this Sunday regarding your experience.

Please do not forget that we will have our concluding parent luncheon this Sunday, February 10, to debrief and discuss your experience with these devotions. Childcare will be provided, and I will have you out of the church by 1:30.

In light of the luncheon on Sunday, here are **a few things I want you to know.**

- *I need to hear your feedback regardless of how many of the devotions you completed.* I know that some of you did them all, while others may not have done any. However, it will greatly benefit both my research and my ability to minister to you by hearing your feedback.
- *I need to hear your feedback regardless of your opinion of the devotions.* If you liked them, I want to know why. If you did not like them, I also want to know why. I would also like to hear from you regarding what aspects of the devotions were most beneficial and which parts were not very useful.
- *I would like to hear your ideas for how to improve the family devotions.* What have I neglected? Is there anything we could do better? What would help you more as you lead devotions at home?

I hope this has been a learning experience for you—I know it has been for me thus far, and I am anticipating that I will learn more this Sunday from our time together. Again, I appreciate your help and support during this course of study. Each family at Grace is a blessing to me and my family, and I hope that through this project I will be better prepared to equip you to lead your children to follow Jesus Christ.

In Christ,
Todd

APPENDIX 9

SAMPLE FAIHTALK GUIDE



Use this sheet to guide you in a discussion with your family or friends about what God taught you this week in our time of corporate worship.

"Jesus Our Scapegoat"

Be Together:

See how your family would finish these sentences:

- My ideal vacation would be...
- I'm looking forward to...
- The funniest memory I have of our family is when...
- When I hear the word "blessing" I think of...

Explain: This week in the sermon we were reminded of how amazing the good news of Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross is. Today, we want to consider the blessing that the Gospel brings those who trust in Christ.

Hear Together: Read Galatians 3:10-14 together.

Learn Together: Galatians 3:10-14 talks about the curse of the Law and the blessing of faith. We spent most of our time Sunday examining how Jesus became a curse for us. We see in 3:14 that as a result of His work on the cross, we are the beneficiaries of God's blessing. There are three things we need to know about this blessing: First, this blessing comes through faith in Jesus Christ. You do not earn God's blessing, it is a gift from God. Second, this blessing is available for all people—Jews and Gentiles. The power of the Gospel is displayed in people regardless of their nationality, financial standing, gender, or history. Salvation comes to all who trust in the name of the Lord, Jesus Christ. Third, as a result of this blessing, we are given the gift of the Holy Spirit. God is always present in the life of the believer! He will never leave nor forsake you. What a rich blessing this is to those who believe. The question is this: Are you living under the curse of the Law or the blessing of Christ?

Talk Together

Note: This sermon and Faith Talk provide you with great opportunities to share the Gospel at home if you have a family member who is not a Christian. If that is the case, use this time to clarify and share the Gospel with your family.

For young children: What is God's blessing for people who trust Jesus as their Lord?

For older children and middle schoolers: The blessing of God is given to those who trust the Gospel. Explain the Gospel in your own words.

For high schoolers and adults: If someone has not trusted Christ as Lord, what are they living under? What are they trusting?

Pray Together:

Thank God for your salvation that He has given you through faith. Pray for family members and friends who are not believers and ask God to use each of you to take the Gospel to them.

Serve Together:

What are you doing to take the Gospel to our community and world? Discuss as a family ways that you can share the Gospel with others. Here are a few ideas:

- Get involved with our ministries at Hope Way or Colonial Village.
- Talk to Ricky about helping with the Angel Tree ministry in which we will share the Gospel with children and adults in our area.
- Make plans to go on one of our mission trips in 2013.
- Plan to have a lost family over for dinner and build a Gospel-centered relationship with them.

APPENDIX 10

POST-PROJECT PARENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How many weeks out of the thirteen did you lead your family in a devotion?
 - a. If you stopped, what caused you to do so?
 - b. Do you plan to continue leading family devotions? If so, what is your plan for doing so?
2. How would you describe your confidence level in leading devotions with your family before this project?
3. How would you describe your confidence level in leading devotions with your family after this project?
 - a. Why do you think your confidence level changed?
4. What part of this process best equipped you to lead family devotions?
5. Describe the response of your teen to these family devotions.
 - a. Did he or she actively participate?
 - b. What portion of the devotional guide brought the most participation from your teen?
 - c. Did his or her involvement and/or attitude change in any way over the course of the thirteen weeks?
6. What was the greatest challenge you faced in leading these family devotions?
 - a. Why did this pose such a challenge?
7. Did you find the devotions to be helpful and practical to use?
 - a. If so, what was most helpful for you?
 - b. If not, what do you think could be done to improve the material?
8. What recommendations do you have for future devotional resources that we provide for you to use with your family?

APPENDIX 11

SELECTED DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY RESULTS

Table A6. Demographic survey results

Demographic	Pre- Project	Post- Project	Difference	% Increase
All Respondents	65.37	72.1	6.7	10.0%
Parents who have been at Grace 3 or less years	61.29	69.14	7.8	12.7%
Parents who have been at Grace 4 or more years	66.17	72.22	6	9.0%
Parents with Teens & Young Children in the Home	71.27	76.8	5.5	7.7%
Parents with Only Teens in the Home	63.34	70.16	6.8	10.7%

APPENDIX 12
PARENT SURVEY RESULTS BY FREQUENCY

Table A7. Pre-project parent perspectives by frequency:
All respondents

Question:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I prioritize consistent family devotional or worship times in my family's schedule.	5	13	7	10	7	1
2. I would like to do regular family devotions or Bible reading in our home, but my family is just too busy for that right now. It will probably be that way for quite a while.	4	7	12	11	7	2
3. The church is where children ought to receive most of their Bible teaching.	12	19	3	7	2	0
4. When my child spontaneously asks a biblical or theological question, I really wish that my child would have asked a minister or other church leader instead of me.	23	15	1	3	0	1
5. I want to do whatever it takes for my child to succeed in certain sports or school activities—even if that means my family is too busy some weeks to eat meals together.	16	14	6	4	3	0
6. Parents, and particularly fathers, have a responsibility to engage personally in a discipleship process with each of their children.	1	0	0	2	14	26
7. Church leaders are the people primarily responsible for discipling my children and teaching them to share the Gospel with others.	15	22	3	3	0	0
8. My church has helped me to develop a clear plan for my child's spiritual growth.	0	0	2	9	16	16

Table A8. Post-project parent perspectives by frequency:
All respondents

Question:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I prioritize consistent family devotional or worship times in my family's schedule.	2	6	6	13	12	4
2. I would like to do regular family devotions or Bible reading in our home, but my family is just too busy for that right now. It will probably be that way for quite a while.	7	7	10	10	5	4
3. The church is where children ought to receive most of their Bible teaching.	16	17	5	3	1	1
4. When my child spontaneously asks a biblical or theological question, I really wish that my child would have asked a minister or other church leader instead of me.	26	10	5	2	0	0
5. I want to do whatever it takes for my child to succeed in certain sports or school activities—even if that means my family is too busy some weeks to eat meals together.	18	17	5	2	0	1
6. Parents, and particularly fathers, have a responsibility to engage personally in a discipleship process with each of their children.	1	1	0	1	9	31
7. Church leaders are the people primarily responsible for discipling my children and teaching them to share the Gospel with others.	23	14	4	2	0	0
8. My church has helped me to develop a clear plan for my child's spiritual growth.	0	0	0	5	18	20

Table A9. Pre-project parent practices by frequency:
All respondents

Question:	Never	Once	A Couple of Times	Three or Four Times	Five or Six Times	Seven or More Times
9. Other than mealtimes, how many times in the past week have I prayed aloud with any of my children?	22	5	3	1	8	4
10. How many times in the past week has my family eaten a meal together with television, music, and other similar media turned off?	1	6	10	10	14	2
11. How many times in the past month have I read or discussed the Bible with any of my children?	4	1	12	11	6	9
12. How many times in the past month have I discussed any biblical or spiritual matters with any of my children while engaging in day-to-day activities?	0	2	11	11	7	12
13. How many times in the past two months has my family engaged in any family devotional or worship time in our home?	19	5	5	3	2	9
14. How many times in the past two months have I talked with my spouse or a close friend about my children's spiritual development?	2	2	17	8	5	9
15. How many times in the past year have I intentionally participated with one or more of my children in witnessing to a non-Christian or inviting a non-Christian to church?	13	4	17	1	7	1
16. How often in the past year has any church leader made any contact with me to help me to engage actively in my child's spiritual development?	5	3	11	6	5	13

Table A10. Post-project parent practices by frequency:
All respondents

Question:	Never	Once	A Couple of Times	Three or Four Times	Five or Six Times	Seven or More Times
9. Other than mealtimes, how many times in the past week have I prayed aloud with any of my children?	13	2	12	3	8	5
10. How many times in the past week has my family eaten a meal together with television, music, and other similar media turned off?	1	2	15	10	11	4
11. How many times in the past month have I read or discussed the Bible with any of my children?	2	2	6	10	7	16
12. How many times in the past month have I discussed any biblical or spiritual matters with any of my children while engaging in day-to-day activities?	1	1	7	9	9	16
13. How many times in the past two months has my family engaged in any family devotional or worship time in our home?	6	2	9	4	6	16
14. How many times in the past two months have I talked with my spouse or a close friend about my children's spiritual development?	0	3	9	9	8	14
15. How many times in the past year have I intentionally participated with one or more of my children in witnessing to a non-Christian or inviting a non-Christian to church?	11	4	11	3	8	6
16. How often in the past year has any church leader made any contact with me to help me to engage actively in my child's spiritual development?	2	1	16	8	2	14

Table A11. Pre-project parent perspectives by frequency:
 Attended Grace Baptist three or less years

Question:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I prioritize consistent family devotional or worship times in my family's schedule.	1	2	3	1	0	0
2. I would like to do regular family devotions or Bible reading in our home, but my family is just too busy for that right now. It will probably be that way for quite a while.	0	1	4	1	1	0
3. The church is where children ought to receive most of their Bible teaching.	3	1	0	3	0	0
4. When my child spontaneously asks a biblical or theological question, I really wish that my child would have asked a minister or other church leader instead of me.	3	2	0	2	0	0
5. I want to do whatever it takes for my child to succeed in certain sports or school activities—even if that means my family is too busy some weeks to eat meals together.	2	3	2	0	0	0
6. Parents, and particularly fathers, have a responsibility to engage personally in a discipleship process with each of their children.	0	0	0	1	2	4
7. Church leaders are the people primarily responsible for discipling my children and teaching them to share the Gospel with others.	4	1	0	2	0	0
8. My church has helped me to develop a clear plan for my child's spiritual growth.	0	0	0	3	2	2

Table A12. Post-project parent perspectives by frequency:
Have attended Grace Baptist three or less years

Question:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I prioritize consistent family devotional or worship times in my family's schedule.	0	1	2	0	4	0
2. I would like to do regular family devotions or Bible reading in our home, but my family is just too busy for that right now. It will probably be that way for quite a while.	0	3	1	1	1	1
3. The church is where children ought to receive most of their Bible teaching.	2	2	2	1	0	0
4. When my child spontaneously asks a biblical or theological question, I really wish that my child would have asked a minister or other church leader instead of me.	2	2	1	2	0	0
5. I want to do whatever it takes for my child to succeed in certain sports or school activities—even if that means my family is too busy some weeks to eat meals together.	3	3	1	0	0	0
6. Parents, and particularly fathers, have a responsibility to engage personally in a discipleship process with each of their children.	0	1	0	0	1	5
7. Church leaders are the people primarily responsible for discipling my children and teaching them to share the Gospel with others.	3	1	2	1	0	0
8. My church has helped me to develop a clear plan for my child's spiritual growth.	0	0	0	1	3	3

Table A13. Pre-project parent practices by frequency:
Have attended Grace Baptist three or less years

Question:	Never	Once	A Couple of Times	Three or Four Times	Five or Six Times	Seven or More Times
9. Other than mealtimes, how many times in the past week have I prayed aloud with any of my children?	5	0	2	0	0	0
10. How many times in the past week has my family eaten a meal together with television, music, and other similar media turned off?	1	2	1	2	1	0
11. How many times in the past month have I read or discussed the Bible with any of my children?	0	1	2	3	0	1
12. How many times in the past month have I discussed any biblical or spiritual matters with any of my children while engaging in day-to-day activities?	0	0	1	2	2	2
13. How many times in the past two months has my family engaged in any family devotional or worship time in our home?	4	1	0	0	0	2
14. How many times in the past two months have I talked with my spouse or a close friend about my children's spiritual development?	1	0	3	2	0	1
15. How many times in the past year have I intentionally participated with one or more of my children in witnessing to a non-Christian or inviting a non-Christian to church?	2	0	4	0	1	0
16. How often in the past year has any church leader made any contact with me to help me to engage actively in my child's spiritual development?	0	1	2	0	2	2

Table A14. Post-project parent practices by frequency:
Have attended Grace Baptist three or less years

Question:	Never	Once	A Couple of Times	Three or Four Times	Five or Six Times	Seven or More Times
9. Other than mealtimes, how many times in the past week have I prayed aloud with any of my children?	2	0	2	1	1	1
10. How many times in the past week has my family eaten a meal together with television, music, and other similar media turned off?	0	1	1	4	1	0
11. How many times in the past month have I read or discussed the Bible with any of my children?	1	0	0	2	0	4
12. How many times in the past month have I discussed any biblical or spiritual matters with any of my children while engaging in day-to-day activities?	0	0	1	0	2	4
13. How many times in the past two months has my family engaged in any family devotional or worship time in our home?	3	0	1	0	1	2
14. How many times in the past two months have I talked with my spouse or a close friend about my children's spiritual development?	0	1	1	2	2	1
15. How many times in the past year have I intentionally participated with one or more of my children in witnessing to a non-Christian or inviting a non-Christian to church?	2	0	2	1	1	1
16. How often in the past year has any church leader made any contact with me to help me to engage actively in my child's spiritual development?	1	0	4	0	0	2

Table A15. Pre-project parent perspectives by frequency:
Have attended Grace Baptist four or more years

Question:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I prioritize consistent family devotional or worship times in my family's schedule.	4	11	4	9	7	1
2. I would like to do regular family devotions or Bible reading in our home, but my family is just too busy for that right now. It will probably be that way for quite a while.	4	6	8	10	6	2
3. The church is where children ought to receive most of their Bible teaching.	9	18	3	4	2	0
4. When my child spontaneously asks a biblical or theological question, I really wish that my child would have asked a minister or other church leader instead of me.	20	13	1	1	0	1
5. I want to do whatever it takes for my child to succeed in certain sports or school activities—even if that means my family is too busy some weeks to eat meals together.	14	11	4	4	3	0
6. Parents, and particularly fathers, have a responsibility to engage personally in a discipleship process with each of their children.	1	0	0	1	12	22
7. Church leaders are the people primarily responsible for discipling my children and teaching them to share the Gospel with others.	11	21	3	1	0	0
8. My church has helped me to develop a clear plan for my child's spiritual growth.	0	0	2	6	14	14

Table A16. Post-project parent perspectives by frequency:
Have attended Grace Baptist four or more years

Question:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I prioritize consistent family devotional or worship times in my family's schedule.	2	5	4	13	8	4
2. I would like to do regular family devotions or Bible reading in our home, but my family is just too busy for that right now. It will probably be that way for quite a while.	7	4	9	9	4	3
3. The church is where children ought to receive most of their Bible teaching.	14	15	3	2	1	1
4. When my child spontaneously asks a biblical or theological question, I really wish that my child would have asked a minister or other church leader instead of me.	24	8	4	0	0	0
5. I want to do whatever it takes for my child to succeed in certain sports or school activities—even if that means my family is too busy some weeks to eat meals together.	15	14	4	2	0	1
6. Parents, and particularly fathers, have a responsibility to engage personally in a discipleship process with each of their children.	1	0	0	1	8	26
7. Church leaders are the people primarily responsible for discipling my children and teaching them to share the Gospel with others.	20	13	2	1	0	0
8. My church has helped me to develop a clear plan for my child's spiritual growth.	0	0	0	4	15	17

Table A17. Pre-project parent practices by frequency:
Have attended Grace Baptist four or more years

Question:	Never	Once	A Couple of Times	Three or Four Times	Five or Six Times	Seven or More Times
9. Other than mealtimes, how many times in the past week have I prayed aloud with any of my children?	17	5	1	1	8	4
10. How many times in the past week has my family eaten a meal together with television, music, and other similar media turned off?	0	4	9	8	13	2
11. How many times in the past month have I read or discussed the Bible with any of my children?	4	0	10	8	6	8
12. How many times in the past month have I discussed any biblical or spiritual matters with any of my children while engaging in day-to-day activities?	0	2	10	9	5	10
13. How many times in the past two months has my family engaged in any family devotional or worship time in our home?	15	4	5	3	2	7
14. How many times in the past two months have I talked with my spouse or a close friend about my children's spiritual development?	1	2	14	6	5	8
15. How many times in the past year have I intentionally participated with one or more of my children in witnessing to a non-Christian or inviting a non-Christian to church?	11	4	13	1	6	1
16. How often in the past year has any church leader made any contact with me to help me to engage actively in my child's spiritual development?	5	2	9	6	3	11

Table A18. Post-project parent practices by frequency:
Have attended Grace Baptist four or more years

Question:	Never	Once	A Couple of Times	Three or Four Times	Five or Six Times	Seven or More Times
9. Other than mealtimes, how many times in the past week have I prayed aloud with any of my children?	11	2	10	2	7	4
10. How many times in the past week has my family eaten a meal together with television, music, and other similar media turned off?	1	1	14	6	10	4
11. How many times in the past month have I read or discussed the Bible with any of my children?	1	2	6	8	7	12
12. How many times in the past month have I discussed any biblical or spiritual matters with any of my children while engaging in day-to-day activities?	1	1	6	9	7	12
13. How many times in the past two months has my family engaged in any family devotional or worship time in our home?	3	2	8	4	5	14
14. How many times in the past two months have I talked with my spouse or a close friend about my children's spiritual development?	0	2	8	7	6	13
15. How many times in the past year have I intentionally participated with one or more of my children in witnessing to a non-Christian or inviting a non-Christian to church?	9	4	9	2	7	5
16. How often in the past year has any church leader made any contact with me to help me to engage actively in my child's spiritual development?	1	1	12	8	2	12

Table A19. Pre-project parent perspectives by frequency:
Parents with teens and young children in the home

Question:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I prioritize consistent family devotional or worship times in my family's schedule.	0	1	1	5	3	1
2. I would like to do regular family devotions or Bible reading in our home, but my family is just too busy for that right now. It will probably be that way for quite a while.	2	1	3	2	2	1
3. The church is where children ought to receive most of their Bible teaching.	4	5	0	2	0	0
4. When my child spontaneously asks a biblical or theological question, I really wish that my child would have asked a minister or other church leader instead of me.	6	4	1	0	0	0
5. I want to do whatever it takes for my child to succeed in certain sports or school activities—even if that means my family is too busy some weeks to eat meals together.	5	4	2	0	0	0
6. Parents, and particularly fathers, have a responsibility to engage personally in a discipleship process with each of their children.	1	0	0	1	2	7
7. Church leaders are the people primarily responsible for discipling my children and teaching them to share the Gospel with others.	4	6	1	0	0	0
8. My church has helped me to develop a clear plan for my child's spiritual growth.	0	0	0	2	4	5

Table A20. Post-project parent perspectives by frequency:
Parents with teens and young children in the home

Question:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I prioritize consistent family devotional or worship times in my family's schedule.	0	0	1	4	5	1
2. I would like to do regular family devotions or Bible reading in our home, but my family is just too busy for that right now. It will probably be that way for quite a while.	2	2	5	1	1	0
3. The church is where children ought to receive most of their Bible teaching.	4	6	0	0	1	0
4. When my child spontaneously asks a biblical or theological question, I really wish that my child would have asked a minister or other church leader instead of me.	7	2	2	0	0	0
5. I want to do whatever it takes for my child to succeed in certain sports or school activities—even if that means my family is too busy some weeks to eat meals together.	7	3	1	0	0	0
6. Parents, and particularly fathers, have a responsibility to engage personally in a discipleship process with each of their children.	0	0	0	0	2	9
7. Church leaders are the people primarily responsible for discipling my children and teaching them to share the Gospel with others.	7	3	0	1	0	0
8. My church has helped me to develop a clear plan for my child's spiritual growth.	0	0	0	1	6	4

Table A21. Pre-project parent practices by frequency:
Parents with teens and young children in the home

Question:	Never	Once	A Couple of Times	Three or Four Times	Five or Six Times	Seven or More Times
9. Other than mealtimes, how many times in the past week have I prayed aloud with any of my children?	3	1	2	0	4	1
10. How many times in the past week has my family eaten a meal together with television, music, and other similar media turned off?	0	3	5	0	3	0
11. How many times in the past month have I read or discussed the Bible with any of my children?	0	0	4	2	0	5
12. How many times in the past month have I discussed any biblical or spiritual matters with any of my children while engaging in day-to-day activities?	0	0	3	1	2	5
13. How many times in the past two months has my family engaged in any family devotional or worship time in our home?	4	0	2	1	0	4
14. How many times in the past two months have I talked with my spouse or a close friend about my children's spiritual development?	0	0	3	2	3	3
15. How many times in the past year have I intentionally participated with one or more of my children in witnessing to a non-Christian or inviting a non-Christian to church?	1	1	4	0	5	0
16. How often in the past year has any church leader made any contact with me to help me to engage actively in my child's spiritual development?	1	0	1	4	3	2

Table A22. Post-project parent practices by frequency:
Parents with teens and young children in the home

Question:	Never	Once	A Couple of Times	Three or Four Times	Five or Six Times	Seven or More Times
9. Other than mealtimes, how many times in the past week have I prayed aloud with any of my children?	2	0	2	1	3	3
10. How many times in the past week has my family eaten a meal together with television, music, and other similar media turned off?	0	0	6	3	2	0
11. How many times in the past month have I read or discussed the Bible with any of my children?	0	1	2	0	3	5
12. How many times in the past month have I discussed any biblical or spiritual matters with any of my children while engaging in day-to-day activities?	0	0	3	0	1	7
13. How many times in the past two months has my family engaged in any family devotional or worship time in our home?	0	0	4	0	2	5
14. How many times in the past two months have I talked with my spouse or a close friend about my children's spiritual development?	0	0	3	2	1	5
15. How many times in the past year have I intentionally participated with one or more of my children in witnessing to a non-Christian or inviting a non-Christian to church?	2	2	1	1	3	2
16. How often in the past year has any church leader made any contact with me to help me to engage actively in my child's spiritual development?	0	0	4	1	2	4

Table A23. Pre-project parent perspectives by frequency:
Single parents

Question:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I prioritize consistent family devotional or worship times in my family's schedule.	0	1	0	1	0	0
2. I would like to do regular family devotions or Bible reading in our home, but my family is just too busy for that right now. It will probably be that way for quite a while.	0	0	1	0	1	0
3. The church is where children ought to receive most of their Bible teaching.	1	0	0	1	0	0
4. When my child spontaneously asks a biblical or theological question, I really wish that my child would have asked a minister or other church leader instead of me.	1	1	0	0	0	0
5. I want to do whatever it takes for my child to succeed in certain sports or school activities—even if that means my family is too busy some weeks to eat meals together.	1	1	0	0	0	0
6. Parents, and particularly fathers, have a responsibility to engage personally in a discipleship process with each of their children.	0	0	0	0	1	1
7. Church leaders are the people primarily responsible for discipling my children and teaching them to share the Gospel with others.	1	1	0	0	0	0
8. My church has helped me to develop a clear plan for my child's spiritual growth.	0	0	0	1	0	1

Table A24. Post-project parent perspectives by frequency:
Single parents

Question:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I prioritize consistent family devotional or worship times in my family's schedule.	0	1	0	0	1	0
2. I would like to do regular family devotions or Bible reading in our home, but my family is just too busy for that right now. It will probably be that way for quite a while.	0	1	0	1	0	0
3. The church is where children ought to receive most of their Bible teaching.	1	0	1	0	0	0
4. When my child spontaneously asks a biblical or theological question, I really wish that my child would have asked a minister or other church leader instead of me.	1	0	0	1	0	0
5. I want to do whatever it takes for my child to succeed in certain sports or school activities—even if that means my family is too busy some weeks to eat meals together.	1	1	0	0	0	0
6. Parents, and particularly fathers, have a responsibility to engage personally in a discipleship process with each of their children.	0	0	0	0	1	1
7. Church leaders are the people primarily responsible for discipling my children and teaching them to share the Gospel with others.	1	0	1	0	0	0
8. My church has helped me to develop a clear plan for my child's spiritual growth.	0	0	0	1	1	0

Table A25. Pre-project parent practices by frequency:
Single parents

Question:	Never	Once	A Couple of Times	Three or Four Times	Five or Six Times	Seven or More Times
9. Other than mealtimes, how many times in the past week have I prayed aloud with any of my children?	1	0	1	0	0	0
10. How many times in the past week has my family eaten a meal together with television, music, and other similar media turned off?	0	2	0	0	0	0
11. How many times in the past month have I read or discussed the Bible with any of my children?	0	1	0	1	0	0
12. How many times in the past month have I discussed any biblical or spiritual matters with any of my children while engaging in day-to-day activities?	0	0	1	0	1	0
13. How many times in the past two months has my family engaged in any family devotional or worship time in our home?	1	0	0	0	0	1
14. How many times in the past two months have I talked with my spouse or a close friend about my children's spiritual development?	1	0	0	1	0	0
15. How many times in the past year have I intentionally participated with one or more of my children in witnessing to a non-Christian or inviting a non-Christian to church?	1	0	1	0	0	0
16. How often in the past year has any church leader made any contact with me to help me to engage actively in my child's spiritual development?	0	1	0	0	1	0

Table A26. Post-project parent practices by frequency:
Single parents

Question:	Never	Once	A Couple of Times	Three or Four Times	Five or Six Times	Seven or More Times
9. Other than mealtimes, how many times in the past week have I prayed aloud with any of my children?	1	0	0	0	1	0
10. How many times in the past week has my family eaten a meal together with television, music, and other similar media turned off?	0	1	0	1	0	0
11. How many times in the past month have I read or discussed the Bible with any of my children?	1	0	0	0	0	1
12. How many times in the past month have I discussed any biblical or spiritual matters with any of my children while engaging in day-to-day activities?	0	0	1	0	0	1
13. How many times in the past two months has my family engaged in any family devotional or worship time in our home?	1	0	0	0	0	1
14. How many times in the past two months have I talked with my spouse or a close friend about my children's spiritual development?	0	1	0	0	1	0
15. How many times in the past year have I intentionally participated with one or more of my children in witnessing to a non-Christian or inviting a non-Christian to church?	1	0	1	0	0	0
16. How often in the past year has any church leader made any contact with me to help me to engage actively in my child's spiritual development?	0	0	2	0	0	0

APPENDIX 13

PARENT SURVEY RESULTS BY PERCENTAGE

Table A27. Pre-project parent perspectives by percentage:
All respondents

Question:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I prioritize consistent family devotional or worship times in my family's schedule.	11.6%	30.2%	16.2%	23.3%	16.2%	2.3%
2. I would like to do regular family devotions or Bible reading in our home, but my family is just too busy for that right now. It will probably be that way for quite a while.	9.3%	16.2%	27.9%	25.5%	16.3%	4.6%
3. The church is where children ought to receive most of their Bible teaching.	27.9%	44.1%	6.9%	16.2%	4.6%	0.0%
4. When my child spontaneously asks a biblical or theological question, I really wish that my child would have asked a minister or other church leader instead of me.	53.5%	34.8%	2.3%	6.9%	0.0%	2.3%
5. I want to do whatever it takes for my child to succeed in certain sports or school activities—even if that means my family is too busy some weeks to eat meals together.	37.2%	32.5%	13.9%	9.3%	6.9%	0.0%
6. Parents, and particularly fathers, have a responsibility to engage personally in a discipleship process with each of their children.	2.3%	0.0%	0.0%	4.6%	32.6%	60.5%
7. Church leaders are the people primarily responsible for discipling my children and teaching them to share the Gospel with others.	34.9%	51.1%	6.9%	6.9%	0.0%	0.0%
8. My church has helped me to develop a clear plan for my child's spiritual growth.	0.0%	0.0%	4.6%	20.9%	37.2%	37.2%

Table A28. Post-project parent perspectives by percentage:
All respondents

Question:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I prioritize consistent family devotional or worship times in my family's schedule.	4.6%	13.9%	13.9%	30.2%	27.9%	9.3%
2. I would like to do regular family devotions or Bible reading in our home, but my family is just too busy for that right now. It will probably be that way for quite a while.	16.2%	16.2%	23.2%	23.2%	11.6%	9.3%
3. The church is where children ought to receive most of their Bible teaching.	37.2%	39.5%	11.6%	6.9%	2.3%	2.3%
4. When my child spontaneously asks a biblical or theological question, I really wish that my child would have asked a minister or other church leader instead of me.	60.4%	23.2%	11.6%	4.6%	0.0%	0.0%
5. I want to do whatever it takes for my child to succeed in certain sports or school activities—even if that means my family is too busy some weeks to eat meals together.	41.8%	39.5%	11.6%	4.6%	0.0%	2.3%
6. Parents, and particularly fathers, have a responsibility to engage personally in a discipleship process with each of their children.	2.3%	2.3%	0.0%	2.3%	20.9%	72.0%
7. Church leaders are the people primarily responsible for discipling my children and teaching them to share the Gospel with others.	53.4%	32.5%	9.3%	4.6%	0.0%	0.0%
8. My church has helped me to develop a clear plan for my child's spiritual growth.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	11.6%	41.8%	46.5%

Table A29. Pre-project parent practices by percentage:
All respondents

Question:	Never	Once	A Couple of Times	Three or Four Times	Five or Six Times	Seven or More Times
9. Other than mealtimes, how many times in the past week have I prayed aloud with any of my children?	51.1%	11.6%	6.9%	2.3%	18.6%	9.3%
10. How many times in the past week has my family eaten a meal together with television, music, and other similar media turned off?	2.3%	13.9%	23.2%	23.2%	32.5%	4.6%
11. How many times in the past month have I read or discussed the Bible with any of my children?	9.3%	2.3%	27.9%	25.5%	13.9%	20.9%
12. How many times in the past month have I discussed any biblical or spiritual matters with any of my children while engaging in day-to-day activities?	0.0%	4.6%	25.5%	25.5%	16.2%	27.9%
13. How many times in the past two months has my family engaged in any family devotional or worship time in our home?	44.1%	11.6%	11.6%	6.9%	4.6%	20.9%
14. How many times in the past two months have I talked with my spouse or a close friend about my children's spiritual development?	4.6%	4.6%	39.5%	18.6%	11.6%	20.9%
15. How many times in the past year have I intentionally participated with one or more of my children in witnessing to a non-Christian or inviting a non-Christian to church?	30.2%	9.3%	39.5%	2.3%	16.2%	2.3%
16. How often in the past year has any church leader made any contact with me to help me to engage actively in my child's spiritual development?	11.6%	6.9%	25.5%	13.9%	11.6%	30.2%

Table A30. Post-project parent practices by percentage:
All respondents

Question:	Never	Once	A Couple of Times	Three or Four Times	Five or Six Times	Seven or More Times
9. Other than mealtimes, how many times in the past week have I prayed aloud with any of my children?	30.2%	4.6%	27.9%	6.9%	18.6%	11.6%
10. How many times in the past week has my family eaten a meal together with television, music, and other similar media turned off?	2.3%	4.6%	34.8%	23.2%	25.5%	9.3%
11. How many times in the past month have I read or discussed the Bible with any of my children?	4.6%	4.6%	13.9%	23.2%	16.2%	37.2%
12. How many times in the past month have I discussed any biblical or spiritual matters with any of my children while engaging in day-to-day activities?	2.3%	2.3%	16.2%	20.9%	20.9%	37.2%
13. How many times in the past two months has my family engaged in any family devotional or worship time in our home?	13.9%	4.6%	20.9%	9.3%	13.9%	37.2%
14. How many times in the past two months have I talked with my spouse or a close friend about my children's spiritual development?	0.0%	6.9%	20.9%	20.9%	18.6%	32.5%
15. How many times in the past year have I intentionally participated with one or more of my children in witnessing to a non-Christian or inviting a non-Christian to church?	25.5%	9.3%	25.5%	6.9%	18.6%	13.9%
16. How often in the past year has any church leader made any contact with me to help me to engage actively in my child's spiritual development?	4.6%	2.3%	37.2%	18.6%	4.6%	32.5%

Table A31. Pre-project parent perspectives by percentage:
Have attended Grace Baptist three or less years

Question:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I prioritize consistent family devotional or worship times in my family's schedule.	14.2%	28.5%	42.8%	14.2%	0.0%	0.0%
2. I would like to do regular family devotions or Bible reading in our home, but my family is just too busy for that right now. It will probably be that way for quite a while.	0.0%	14.2%	57.1%	14.2%	14.2%	0.0%
3. The church is where children ought to receive most of their Bible teaching.	42.8%	14.2%	0.0%	42.8%	0.0%	0.0%
4. When my child spontaneously asks a biblical or theological question, I really wish that my child would have asked a minister or other church leader instead of me.	42.8%	28.5%	0.0%	28.5%	0.0%	0.0%
5. I want to do whatever it takes for my child to succeed in certain sports or school activities—even if that means my family is too busy some weeks to eat meals together.	28.5%	42.8%	28.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
6. Parents, and particularly fathers, have a responsibility to engage personally in a discipleship process with each of their children.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	14.2%	28.5%	57.1%
7. Church leaders are the people primarily responsible for discipling my children and teaching them to share the Gospel with others.	57.1%	14.2%	0.0%	28.5%	0.0%	0.0%
8. My church has helped me to develop a clear plan for my child's spiritual growth.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	42.8%	28.5%	28.5%

Table A32. Post-project parent perspectives by percentage:
Have attended Grace Baptist three or less years

Question:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I prioritize consistent family devotional or worship times in my family's schedule.	0.0%	14.2%	28.5%	0.0%	57.1%	0.0%
2. I would like to do regular family devotions or Bible reading in our home, but my family is just too busy for that right now. It will probably be that way for quite a while.	0.0%	42.8%	14.2%	14.2%	14.2%	14.2%
3. The church is where children ought to receive most of their Bible teaching.	28.5%	28.5%	28.5%	14.2%	0.0%	0.0%
4. When my child spontaneously asks a biblical or theological question, I really wish that my child would have asked a minister or other church leader instead of me.	28.5%	28.5%	14.2%	28.5%	0.0%	0.0%
5. I want to do whatever it takes for my child to succeed in certain sports or school activities—even if that means my family is too busy some weeks to eat meals together.	42.8%	42.8%	14.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
6. Parents, and particularly fathers, have a responsibility to engage personally in a discipleship process with each of their children.	0.0%	14.2%	0.0%	0.0%	14.2%	71.4%
7. Church leaders are the people primarily responsible for discipling my children and teaching them to share the Gospel with others.	42.8%	14.2%	28.5%	14.2%	0.0%	0.0%
8. My church has helped me to develop a clear plan for my child's spiritual growth.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	14.2%	42.8%	42.8%

Table A33. Pre-project parent practices by percentage:
Have attended Grace Baptist three or less years

Question:	Never	Once	A Couple of Times	Three or Four Times	Five or Six Times	Seven or More Times
9. Other than mealtimes, how many times in the past week have I prayed aloud with any of my children?	71.4%	0.0%	28.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
10. How many times in the past week has my family eaten a meal together with television, music, and other similar media turned off?	14.2%	28.5%	14.2%	28.5%	14.2%	0.0%
11. How many times in the past month have I read or discussed the Bible with any of my children?	0.0%	14.2%	28.5%	42.8%	0.0%	14.2%
12. How many times in the past month have I discussed any biblical or spiritual matters with any of my children while engaging in day-to-day activities?	0.0%	0.0%	14.2%	28.5%	28.5%	28.5%
13. How many times in the past two months has my family engaged in any family devotional or worship time in our home?	57.1%	14.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	28.5%
14. How many times in the past two months have I talked with my spouse or a close friend about my children's spiritual development?	14.2%	0.0%	42.8%	28.5%	0.0%	14.2%
15. How many times in the past year have I intentionally participated with one or more of my children in witnessing to a non-Christian or inviting a non-Christian to church?	28.5%	0.0%	57.1%	0.0%	14.2%	0.0%
16. How often in the past year has any church leader made any contact with me to help me to engage actively in my child's spiritual development?	0.0%	14.2%	28.5%	0.0%	28.5%	28.5%

Table A34. Post-project parent practices by percentage:
Have attended Grace Baptist three or less years

Question:	Never	Once	A Couple of Times	Three or Four Times	Five or Six Times	Seven or More Times
9. Other than mealtimes, how many times in the past week have I prayed aloud with any of my children?	28.5%	0.0%	28.5%	14.2%	14.2%	14.2%
10. How many times in the past week has my family eaten a meal together with television, music, and other similar media turned off?	0.0%	14.2%	14.2%	57.1%	14.2%	0.0%
11. How many times in the past month have I read or discussed the Bible with any of my children?	14.2%	0.0%	0.0%	28.5%	0.0%	57.1%
12. How many times in the past month have I discussed any biblical or spiritual matters with any of my children while engaging in day-to-day activities?	0.0%	0.0%	14.2%	0.0%	28.5%	57.1%
13. How many times in the past two months has my family engaged in any family devotional or worship time in our home?	42.8%	0.0%	14.2%	0.0%	14.2%	28.5%
14. How many times in the past two months have I talked with my spouse or a close friend about my children's spiritual development?	0.0%	14.2%	14.2%	28.5%	28.5%	14.2%
15. How many times in the past year have I intentionally participated with one or more of my children in witnessing to a non-Christian or inviting a non-Christian to church?	28.5%	0.0%	28.5%	14.2%	14.2%	14.2%
16. How often in the past year has any church leader made any contact with me to help me to engage actively in my child's spiritual development?	14.2%	0.0%	57.1%	0.0%	0.0%	28.5%

Table A35. Pre-project parent perspectives by percentage:
Have attended Grace Baptist four or more years

Question:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I prioritize consistent family devotional or worship times in my family's schedule.	11.1%	30.5%	11.1%	25.0%	19.4%	2.7%
2. I would like to do regular family devotions or Bible reading in our home, but my family is just too busy for that right now. It will probably be that way for quite a while.	11.1%	16.6%	22.2%	27.7%	16.6%	5.5%
3. The church is where children ought to receive most of their Bible teaching.	25.0%	50.0%	8.3%	11.1%	5.5%	0.0%
4. When my child spontaneously asks a biblical or theological question, I really wish that my child would have asked a minister or other church leader instead of me.	55.5%	36.1%	2.7%	2.7%	0.0%	2.7%
5. I want to do whatever it takes for my child to succeed in certain sports or school activities—even if that means my family is too busy some weeks to eat meals together.	38.8%	30.5%	11.1%	11.1%	8.3%	0.0%
6. Parents, and particularly fathers, have a responsibility to engage personally in a discipleship process with each of their children.	2.7%	0.0%	0.0%	2.7%	33.3%	61.1%
7. Church leaders are the people primarily responsible for discipling my children and teaching them to share the Gospel with others.	30.5%	58.3%	8.3%	2.7%	0.0%	0.0%
8. My church has helped me to develop a clear plan for my child's spiritual growth.	0.0%	0.0%	5.5%	16.6%	38.8%	38.8%

Table A36. Post-project parent perspectives by percentage:
Have attended Grace Baptist four or more years

Question:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I prioritize consistent family devotional or worship times in my family's schedule.	5.5%	13.8%	11.1%	36.1%	22.2%	11.1%
2. I would like to do regular family devotions or Bible reading in our home, but my family is just too busy for that right now. It will probably be that way for quite a while.	19.4%	11.1%	25.0%	25.0%	11.1%	8.3%
3. The church is where children ought to receive most of their Bible teaching.	38.8%	41.6%	8.3%	5.5%	2.7%	2.7%
4. When my child spontaneously asks a biblical or theological question, I really wish that my child would have asked a minister or other church leader instead of me.	66.6%	22.2%	11.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
5. I want to do whatever it takes for my child to succeed in certain sports or school activities—even if that means my family is too busy some weeks to eat meals together.	41.6%	38.8%	11.1%	5.5%	0.0%	2.7%
6. Parents, and particularly fathers, have a responsibility to engage personally in a discipleship process with each of their children.	2.7%	0.0%	0.0%	2.7%	22.2%	72.2%
7. Church leaders are the people primarily responsible for discipling my children and teaching them to share the Gospel with others.	55.5%	36.1%	5.5%	2.7%	0.0%	0.0%
8. My church has helped me to develop a clear plan for my child's spiritual growth.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	11.1%	41.6%	47.2%

Table A37. Pre-project parent practices by percentage:
Have attended Grace Baptist four or more years

Question:	Never	Once	A Couple of Times	Three or Four Times	Five or Six Times	Seven or More Times
9. Other than mealtimes, how many times in the past week have I prayed aloud with any of my children?	47.2%	13.8%	2.7%	2.7%	22.2%	11.1%
10. How many times in the past week has my family eaten a meal together with television, music, and other similar media turned off?	0.0%	11.1%	25.0%	22.2%	36.1%	5.5%
11. How many times in the past month have I read or discussed the Bible with any of my children?	11.1%	0.0%	27.7%	22.2%	16.6%	22.2%
12. How many times in the past month have I discussed any biblical or spiritual matters with any of my children while engaging in day-to-day activities?	0.0%	5.5%	27.7%	25.0%	13.8%	27.7%
13. How many times in the past two months has my family engaged in any family devotional or worship time in our home?	41.6%	11.1%	13.8%	8.3%	5.5%	19.4%
14. How many times in the past two months have I talked with my spouse or a close friend about my children's spiritual development?	2.7%	5.5%	38.8%	16.6%	13.8%	22.2%
15. How many times in the past year have I intentionally participated with one or more of my children in witnessing to a non-Christian or inviting a non-Christian to church?	30.5%	11.1%	36.1%	2.7%	16.6%	2.7%
16. How often in the past year has any church leader made any contact with me to help me to engage actively in my child's spiritual development?	13.8%	5.5%	25.0%	16.6%	8.3%	30.5%

Table A38. Post-project parent practices by percentage:
Have attended Grace Baptist four or more years

Question:	Never	Once	A Couple of Times	Three or Four Times	Five or Six Times	Seven or More Times
9. Other than mealtimes, how many times in the past week have I prayed aloud with any of my children?	30.5%	5.5%	27.7%	5.5%	19.4%	11.1%
10. How many times in the past week has my family eaten a meal together with television, music, and other similar media turned off?	2.7%	2.7%	38.8%	16.6%	27.7%	11.1%
11. How many times in the past month have I read or discussed the Bible with any of my children?	2.7%	5.5%	16.6%	22.2%	19.4%	33.3%
12. How many times in the past month have I discussed any biblical or spiritual matters with any of my children while engaging in day-to-day activities?	2.7%	2.7%	16.6%	25.0%	19.4%	33.3%
13. How many times in the past two months has my family engaged in any family devotional or worship time in our home?	8.3%	5.5%	22.2%	11.1%	13.8%	38.8%
14. How many times in the past two months have I talked with my spouse or a close friend about my children's spiritual development?	0.0%	5.5%	22.2%	19.4%	16.6%	36.1%
15. How many times in the past year have I intentionally participated with one or more of my children in witnessing to a non-Christian or inviting a non-Christian to church?	25.0%	11.1%	25.0%	5.5%	19.4%	13.8%
16. How often in the past year has any church leader made any contact with me to help me to engage actively in my child's spiritual development?	2.7%	2.7%	33.3%	22.2%	5.5%	33.3%

Table A39. Pre-project parent perspectives by percentage:
Parents with teens and young children at home

Question:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I prioritize consistent family devotional or worship times in my family's schedule.	0.0%	9.0%	9.0%	45.4%	27.2%	9.0%
2. I would like to do regular family devotions or Bible reading in our home, but my family is just too busy for that right now. It will probably be that way for quite a while.	18.1%	9.0%	27.2%	18.1%	18.1%	9.0%
3. The church is where children ought to receive most of their Bible teaching.	36.3%	45.4%	0.0%	18.1%	0.0%	0.0%
4. When my child spontaneously asks a biblical or theological question, I really wish that my child would have asked a minister or other church leader instead of me.	54.5%	36.3%	9.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
5. I want to do whatever it takes for my child to succeed in certain sports or school activities—even if that means my family is too busy some weeks to eat meals together.	45.4%	36.3%	18.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
6. Parents, and particularly fathers, have a responsibility to engage personally in a discipleship process with each of their children.	9.0%	0.0%	0.0%	9.0%	18.1%	63.6%
7. Church leaders are the people primarily responsible for discipling my children and teaching them to share the Gospel with others.	36.3%	54.5%	9.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
8. My church has helped me to develop a clear plan for my child's spiritual growth.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	18.1%	36.3%	45.4%

Table A40. Post-project parent perspectives by percentage:
Parents with teens and young children at home

Question:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I prioritize consistent family devotional or worship times in my family's schedule.	0.0%	0.0%	9.0%	36.3%	45.4%	9.0%
2. I would like to do regular family devotions or Bible reading in our home, but my family is just too busy for that right now. It will probably be that way for quite a while.	18.1%	18.1%	45.4%	9.0%	9.0%	0.0%
3. The church is where children ought to receive most of their Bible teaching.	36.3%	54.5%	0.0%	0.0%	9.0%	0.0%
4. When my child spontaneously asks a biblical or theological question, I really wish that my child would have asked a minister or other church leader instead of me.	63.6%	18.1%	18.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
5. I want to do whatever it takes for my child to succeed in certain sports or school activities—even if that means my family is too busy some weeks to eat meals together.	63.6%	27.2%	9.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
6. Parents, and particularly fathers, have a responsibility to engage personally in a discipleship process with each of their children.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	18.1%	81.8%
7. Church leaders are the people primarily responsible for discipling my children and teaching them to share the Gospel with others.	63.6%	27.2%	0.0%	9.0%	0.0%	0.0%
8. My church has helped me to develop a clear plan for my child's spiritual growth.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	9.0%	54.5%	36.3%

Table A41. Pre-project parent practices by percentage:
Parents with teens and young children at home

Question:	Never	Once	A Couple of Times	Three or Four Times	Five or Six Times	Seven or More Times
9. Other than mealtimes, how many times in the past week have I prayed aloud with any of my children?	27.2%	9.0%	18.1%	0.0%	36.3%	9.0%
10. How many times in the past week has my family eaten a meal together with television, music, and other similar media turned off?	0.0%	27.2%	45.4%	0.0%	27.2%	0.0%
11. How many times in the past month have I read or discussed the Bible with any of my children?	0.0%	0.0%	36.3%	18.1%	0.0%	45.4%
12. How many times in the past month have I discussed any biblical or spiritual matters with any of my children while engaging in day-to-day activities?	0.0%	0.0%	27.2%	9.0%	18.1%	45.4%
13. How many times in the past two months has my family engaged in any family devotional or worship time in our home?	36.3%	0.0%	18.1%	9.0%	0.0%	36.3%
14. How many times in the past two months have I talked with my spouse or a close friend about my children's spiritual development?	0.0%	0.0%	27.2%	18.1%	27.2%	27.2%
15. How many times in the past year have I intentionally participated with one or more of my children in witnessing to a non-Christian or inviting a non-Christian to church?	9.0%	9.0%	36.3%	0.0%	45.4%	0.0%
16. How often in the past year has any church leader made any contact with me to help me to engage actively in my child's spiritual development?	9.0%	0.0%	9.0%	36.3%	27.2%	18.1%

Table A42. Post-project parent practices by percentage:
Parents with teens and young children at home

Question:	Never	Once	A Couple of Times	Three or Four Times	Five or Six Times	Seven or More Times
9. Other than mealtimes, how many times in the past week have I prayed aloud with any of my children?	18.1%	0.0%	18.1%	9.0%	27.2%	27.2%
10. How many times in the past week has my family eaten a meal together with television, music, and other similar media turned off?	0.0%	0.0%	54.5%	27.2%	18.1%	0.0%
11. How many times in the past month have I read or discussed the Bible with any of my children?	0.0%	9.0%	18.1%	0.0%	27.2%	45.4%
12. How many times in the past month have I discussed any biblical or spiritual matters with any of my children while engaging in day-to-day activities?	0.0%	0.0%	27.2%	0.0%	9.0%	63.6%
13. How many times in the past two months has my family engaged in any family devotional or worship time in our home?	0.0%	0.0%	36.3%	0.0%	18.1%	45.4%
14. How many times in the past two months have I talked with my spouse or a close friend about my children's spiritual development?	0.0%	0.0%	27.2%	18.1%	9.0%	45.4%
15. How many times in the past year have I intentionally participated with one or more of my children in witnessing to a non-Christian or inviting a non-Christian to church?	18.1%	18.1%	9.0%	9.0%	27.2%	18.1%
16. How often in the past year has any church leader made any contact with me to help me to engage actively in my child's spiritual development?	0.0%	0.0%	36.3%	9.0%	18.1%	36.3%

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ABSTRACT

EQUIPPING PARENTS OF ADOLESCENTS AT GRACE BAPTIST CHURCH, SOMERSET, KENTUCKY, TO LEAD FAMILY DEVOTIONS

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2013
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This project first measures the perceptions and practices of the parents of adolescents at Grace Baptist Church, Somerset, Kentucky, in the area of leading family devotions. It then seeks to equip parents of adolescents with the knowledge, skills, and habits necessary to lead family devotions through the provision of a thirteen-week family devotion guide. Chapter 1 provides the ministry context, defines key terms, explains the limiting factors, shares the rationale, and describes the research methodology used for the project.

Chapter 2 provides the biblical and theological foundations for the project. Five biblical texts provide a foundation for how parents are to teach their children about the Lord in intentional ways (Deut 6:7, Eph 6:4, Ps 78:1-8, Exod 12:1-28, Josh 4:1-24). The leading of family devotions is one way in which parents can fulfill the instruction of Scripture to intentionally teach their adolescent children about God.

Chapter 3 is a survey of the family devotion resources that have been available to parents and pastors since 1950. These resources are evaluated based upon their usefulness in helping pastors equip parents to lead their children spiritually and in equipping parents to lead family devotions.

Chapter 4 describes the project in detail. Parental perceptions and practices regarding family devotions are evaluated initially, followed by training for how to lead

family devotions. Parents are then presented with a thirteen-week devotional guide. At the end of this time period, the parents are re-evaluated to determine the success of the project.

Chapter 5 is an evaluation of the project in which it is determined whether the goals have been met; and the strengths and weaknesses of the project are revealed. The chapter concludes with personal reflections from the author regarding the project.

This project provides a greater understanding of how to best equip parents of adolescents to lead family devotions and ultimately results in a resource for parents beyond Grace Baptist Church to utilize in leading their adolescent children in family devotions

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