

## 2024 Family Devotional

*Greetings, Family; this week, your youth will wander through the theme of "Always." As they embark on a journey through the wisdom-filled words of the Apostle Paul in 1 Thessalonians 5:16-22, we invite you to join your camper in this journey. In this passage, Paul provides guidance not merely for the ancient Thessalonian church but for us today, illuminating principles that enrich our lives and deepen our walk with God.*

*This week, we open our hearts and minds to the timeless truths of these verses. Let us embark on this journey with open hearts, eager spirits, and a readiness to apply these timeless principles. As we do so, may the Holy Spirit guide us, illuminate our understanding, and transform us into vessels of God's grace and truth.*



*Together, let us delve into the richness of God's Word and allow it to shape and mold us into the likeness of Christ. This week, while your youth is at camp, we encourage you to join in on the journey through our theme, hold all of us in your prayers, and may you meet Christ amid our devotions. These devotions are brief and based on the same themes the youth use at camp.*

*During this week, we encourage you to read through the scripture verses your youth will read. Read the scripture once or twice, and note what verses stick out. What parts of the scripture does your mind wander to? Does it remind you of any other scripture? After you have read through and mediated on the scripture, wrestle with the questions provided. Close your time in devotions with the prayer provided (or one of your own).*



## Sunday: Rejoice Always

**Read: Philippians 4:4-6** out of the Message translation: "Celebrate God all day, every day. I mean, revel in him! Make it as clear as you can to all you meet that you're on their side, working with them and not against them. Help them see that the Master is about to arrive. He could show up any minute! Don't fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns."

**Reflect:** God's love for us is known as agape love, or love without condition, limits, or wavering. We do nothing to deserve this love, and God expects nothing in return; it comes as a free gift. What sort of feelings does that bring up in you? Happy? Overwhelmed? Excited? Unworthy? Do you lift all your concerns to God? Why or Why not?

**Pray:** God, thank you for calling our kids to camp. Help them grow as disciples, make new friends, deepen old friendships, keep them safe, and have a ton of fun. God, please hear all of my prayers (insert whatever prayers you have here). Thanks, God, for all you do. I love you. Amen.

## Monday: Love Always

**Read: Acts 16:9-15 (GNT)** "That night, Paul had a vision in which he saw a Macedonian standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us!" As soon as Paul had this vision, we got ready to leave for Macedonia, because we decided that God had called us to preach the Good News to the people there. We left by ship from Troas and sailed straight across to Samothrace and the next day to Neapolis. From there we went inland to Philippi, a city of the first district of Macedonia; it is also a Roman colony. We spent several days there. On the Sabbath, we went out of the city to the riverside, where we thought there would be a place where Jews gathered for prayer. We sat down and talked to the women who gathered there. One of those who heard us was Lydia from Thyatira, a dealer in purple cloth. She was a woman who worshiped God, and the Lord opened her mind to pay attention to what Paul was saying. After she and the people of her house had been baptized, she invited us, "Come and stay in my house if you have decided that I am a true believer in the Lord." And she persuaded us to go."

**Reflect:** Name one gift that you have received in the past that you still remember today. God's love for us is known as agape love, or love without condition, limits, or wavering. We do nothing to deserve this love, and God expects nothing in return; it comes as a free gift. Where did God's love show up in our Bible story today? How did God's love impact Lydia? What are ways we seek out God's Love? Jesus tells us to love everyone the way he loves us. Is this easy or hard? How can we try to love others better the way God loves us? How have you received God's love in the past month? Is it always easy to show God's love to others? Why or why not?

**Pray:** Good and gracious God, thank you for loving me. Thank you for showing up in my life in a multitude of ways. Thank you for loving me without holding back, for loving me when I follow your way and when I stray. Please give me eyes to see how you love me and the world you created. Thank you for loving me so that I can love your world. Help me live as a disciple who radiates your love to all your creation. In Jesus' name, I pray, Amen.

## **Tuesday: Pray Always**

**Read: Matthew 6:5-15**

'And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly, I tell you, they have received their reward. But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.\*

'When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

'Pray then in this way:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one.

For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

**Reflect:** What stood out to you in this text? How often do you say this prayer without thinking about the words that you are saying? What do you think the Lord's Prayer is telling us? How can we better understand this prayer each time we say it? Why do you think this is the prayer the church has been repeating for hundreds of years, week after week? Do you have any prayers that you often use? Ex: Come Lord Jesus be our guest.... or Now I lay me down to sleep....

**Pray** Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

## Wednesday: Forgive Always

**Read: Genesis 45:1-15 & 50: 15-21**

**Joseph Makes Himself Known:** "Joseph was no longer able to control his feelings in front of his servants, so he ordered them all to leave the room. No one else was with him when Joseph told his brothers who he was. He cried with such loud sobs that the Egyptians heard it, and the news was taken to the king's palace. Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph. Is my father still alive?" But when his brothers heard this, they were so terrified that they could not answer. Then Joseph said to them, "Please come closer." They did, and he said, "I am your brother Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. Now, do not be upset or blame yourselves because you sold me here. It was really God who sent me ahead of you to save people's lives. This is only the second year of famine in the land; there will be five more years in which there will be neither plowing nor reaping. God sent me ahead of you to rescue you in this amazing way and to make sure that you and your descendants survive. So it was not really you who sent me here, but God. He has made me the king's highest official. I am in charge of his whole country; I am the ruler of all Egypt. "Now hurry back to my father and tell him that this is what his son Joseph says: 'God has made me ruler of all Egypt; come to me without delay. You can live in the region of Goshen, where you can be near me—you, your children, your grandchildren, your sheep, your goats, your cattle, and everything else that you have. If you are in Goshen, I can take care of you. There will still be five years of famine, and I do not want you, your Family, and your livestock to starve.'" Joseph continued, "Now all of you, and you too, Benjamin, can see that I am really Joseph. Tell my father how powerful I am here in Egypt, and tell him about everything that you have seen. Then hurry and bring him here." He threw his arms around his brother Benjamin and began to cry; Benjamin also cried as he hugged him. Then, still weeping, he embraced each of his brothers and kissed them. After that, his brothers began to talk with him.

**Joseph Reassures His Brothers** After the death of their father, Joseph's brothers said, "What if Joseph still hates us and plans to pay us back for all the harm we did to him?" So they sent a message to Joseph: "Before our father died, he told us to ask you, 'Please forgive the crime your brothers committed when they wronged you.' Now please forgive us the wrong that we, the servants of your father's God, have done." Joseph cried when he received this message. Then his brothers themselves came and bowed down before him. "Here we are before you as your slaves," they said. But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid; I can't put myself in the place of God. You plotted evil against me, but God turned it into good in order to preserve the lives of many people who are alive today because of what happened. You have nothing to fear. I will take care of you and your children." So he reassured them with kind words that touched their hearts."

**Reflect:** Why is forgiveness important? When have you experienced forgiveness? Put yourself in the shoes of Joseph and his brothers. Whose shoes would it be more challenging to be in? Is it harder to ask for forgiveness or grant forgiveness? Why?

**Pray:** Forgiving God, thank you for always forgiving us no matter what. Please help us to forgive those who have hurt us. Allow us to let go of the hurt and disappointment just like you. In your name, we pray, Amen.

### **Thursday: Give Thanks Always**

**Read:** 1 Kings 17:8-16 "Then the word of the Lord came to him, saying, 'Go now to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and live there; for I have commanded a widow there to feed you.' So he set out and went to Zarephath. When he came to the gate of the town, a widow was there gathering sticks; he called to her and said, 'Bring me a little water in a vessel, so that I may drink.' As she was going to bring it, he called to her and said, 'Bring me a morsel of bread in your hand.' But she said, 'As the Lord your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of meal in a jar, and a little oil in a jug; I am now gathering a couple of sticks, so that I may go home and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it, and die.' Elijah said to her, 'Do not be afraid; go and do as you have said; but first make me a little cake of it and bring it to me, and afterwards make something for yourself and your son. For thus says the Lord the God of Israel: The jar of meal will not be emptied and the jug of oil will not fail until the day that the Lord sends rain on the earth.' She went and did as Elijah said, so that she as well as he and her household ate for many days. The jar of meal was not emptied, neither did the jug of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord that he spoke by Elijah.

**Reflect:** We are given everything we have from God, and we are stewards of what God has given us. Sometimes, we live out of a scarcity model and worry that we will not have enough. In our story today, we bear witness to how God provides. How hard would it be to be the widow, assuming you only had so many resources and being asked to share them with Elijah? Would it be more challenging to be the widow or Elijah? What concerns do you think both would have? What parts of this story stood out to you?

**Pray:** God, thank you for continually providing for us. I praise you for all that you are doing. Please help me to rely on you faithfully, trusting you in everything I do. Lead me and guide me. Please help me continue to live as your disciple each and every day. Amen.

## **Friday: With you Always**

**Read: Matthew 28:16-20** (The Message Translation) "Meanwhile, the eleven disciples were on their way to Galilee, headed for the mountain Jesus had set for their reunion. The moment they saw him, they worshiped him. Some, though, held back, not sure about worship, about risking themselves. Jesus, undeterred, went right ahead and gave his charge: "God authorized and commanded me to commission you: Go out and train everyone you meet, far and near, in this way of life, marking them by baptism in the threefold name: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Then instruct them in the practice of all I have commanded you. I'll be with you as you do this, day after day, right up to the end of the age."

**Reflect:** What stood out to you in this story? What do you hear Jesus tell the disciples to do in our reading? How do you "Go out and train everyone you meet, far and near, in this way of life, marking them by baptism in the threefold name: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? Then instruct them in practicing all I have commanded you"? How can we be like the disciples and live out this command that Jesus gave them? As you get ready to head home, how will you live out this command?

**Pray:** Gracious God, thank you for this week at camp for my youth, the relationships that have formed, the faith that has grown, and so much more. As they prepare for their final time together, wrap your arms around them as they continue to grow and learn. Please help them continue to grow in your community as our youth come home, grant us safe travels to and from camp, and lead us in following you daily. Help our Family grow in you each and every day. In your name, we pray, Amen.