

Lent 2019 @ First Pres

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Family Lenten Devotions—A Guide for Parents and Caregivers

Goal: Parents/primary caregivers (not pastors or Sunday School teachers) are the most important faith-influencers of their children. Research shows that the strongest indicator of faith among young adults is whether a parent took an active role in their faith formation as a child. The goal of these devotions is to support and equip you as parents/caregivers to encourage your children’s faith formation and to show your children that your faith is important to you too.

Devotion Format: Each devotion will follow the same format:

- **Memory Verse:** Begin each devotion by reciting this verse out loud together. Recite it together for the next few days and see if you can memorize it.
- **Openers:** Each devotion (except for Jesus Dies: Good Friday) will have three openers. These will be creative discussion questions or short activities that are in some way tied to the Bible story you’re about to read. Most won’t require anything special, but a few of them ask you to use common household items. If you’re short on time, choose just one or two of the openers. Or if you have another creative idea, come up with your own opening question or activity.
- **Context:** You can read these few sentences aloud before you get to your Bible story. They will help introduce the story you’re about to share.
- **Scripture:** The scripture printed in your devotions is from the Common English Bible, a relatively new translation that uses everyday English and has the lowest reading level of any English translation. The page number in parentheses next to the scripture passage will point you to the parallel story in the Spark StoryBible. See the “Unique Families” section below for more information on which is right for your family.
- **Wonder:** “Wondering” questions are reflection questions designed to invite children into conversation with the story and encourage ideas and questions instead of right-and-wrong answers. These wondering questions invite reflection on the Bible story itself. If other questions seem more appropriate for your family’s context, feel free to adapt these questions or add to them.
- **Video:** The videos will be creative re-tellings of the Bible story you’ve just read. Click on the image of the video in your devotion and then click the “play” icon to start the video. (Note: these videos have sound, but no real words in them—just sounds that mimic language.)
- **My Life:** These questions will help you move from the Bible story itself into its application for your lives today.

- **Pray:** The prayer for each devotion is connected to the day's devotion. Again, feel free to adapt prayers to fit your family's needs. A suggestion—take turns praying or pray communally. It's just as important for your kids to learn to pray as it is for them to see you praying.

Unique Families: No two families are exactly alike. Our families come in all different shapes, sizes, and ages, and we each come with our own unique set of experiences and faith journey. These devotions are written to try and create a baseline experience that can meet all families' needs. But of course no devotion can meet everyone's needs. So, it's up to you to adapt the devotions to fit your family. For example, if the "wondering" questions feel over or under your children's developmental thinking stage, try tweaking them.

In terms of which version of Bible stories to read, here are some general guidelines:

- Families with **3rd Graders and Older:** Read the Common English Bible translation provided in your devotions;
- Families with **2nd graders or younger:** Read the parallel stories from the Spark StoryBible. Page references are in parentheses beside the scripture each day. The church has a limited number of copies that we can loan out. You can borrow one from the church office, or you can [purchase your own online](#);
- Families with a wide mix of ages: You'll need to make a decision about what's most appropriate for your family: reading from the Common English Bible, reading the Spark StoryBible, or reading both versions together for each devotion.

Facebook: Feel free to post photos, comments, or questions from your family in our [First Pres Facebook group](#) ("First Pres Community"). This is a closed group only visible to church members who have requested to join.

Help!!!: If you run into issues with any of the devotions, please [email Pastor Ryan](#) or give him a call at the church.

Jesus Comes

Palm Sunday

Memory Verse: “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!” (Matthew 21:9)

Openers:

1. Put on a pretend parade. Decide what holiday your parade is celebrating, what floats or performances are part of it, and who is the “Grand Marshall” of your parade. (Or if it’s easier for your family, just talk about parades you’ve been to and what you’ve seen there)
2. Google “donkeys” and learn 5 fun facts about these stubborn animals.
3. Make a list of kings and queens (real or fictional). What do they have in common? What makes them different?

Context: Jesus had been traveling all around Israel and the surrounding areas for many months—teaching about God’s kingdom, healing people, and telling people to turn their lives around. Jesus wasn’t doing those things in big cities. Instead he spent almost all of his time in small towns where most people were very poor. As the Jewish holiday of Passover approached, Jesus knew it was time to travel to the big city—Jerusalem. And he told his disciples what would happen. There were a lot of people in Jerusalem who didn’t like what Jesus was teaching, and they would try to capture him and kill him when he came to Jerusalem.

Scripture: Matthew 21 (Spark StoryBible, P. 454)

When they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus gave two disciples a task. He said to them, “Go into the village over there. As soon as you enter, you will find a donkey tied up and a colt with it. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, say that their master needs them.” He sent them off right away. Now this happened to fulfill what the prophet said, Say to Daughter Zion, “Look, your king is coming to you, humble and riding on a donkey, and on a colt the donkey’s offspring.” The disciples went and did just as Jesus had ordered them. They brought the donkey and the colt and laid their clothes on them. Then he sat on them.

Now a large crowd spread their clothes on the road. Others cut palm branches off the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds in front of him and behind him shouted, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!” And when Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up. “Who is this?” they asked. The crowds answered, “It’s the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.”

Wonder:

- (1) I wonder...if Jesus is supposed to be the king (they call him “the son of King David”), why did he ride a lowly donkey into Jerusalem?
- (2) I wonder...why were some people so excited to see Jesus coming into Jerusalem? Who did they think he was?
- (3) I wonder...why did Jesus go to Jerusalem even though he knew some people there would try to kill him?

Video: Click image below



My Life:

- (1) If Jesus came today, how would you want to welcome him?
- (2) Have you ever been scared to do something, but you did it anyway? (*just like Jesus might have been a little afraid to enter into Jerusalem*)
- (3) If our world today looked more like the Kingdom of God that Jesus taught about, how would it be different?

Pray: Jesus our King, help us welcome you into our hearts and our lives like the people of Jerusalem welcomed you shouting “Hosanna,” and give us the courage to live for God like you did. Amen.

Jesus Eats

Maundy Thursday

Memory Verse: “Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to them, and said, “Take; this is my body.”” (Mark 14:22)

Openers:

- (1) Talk about your favorite family meal. It could be a holiday meal tradition or an everyday meal. Who is there? What do you do or eat that makes it so special?
- (2) [Watch this short family-friendly video](#) that explains the modern-day Passover Seder, the meal Jesus was sharing with his disciples the night before he died.
- (3) If you were moving far away and you had to say goodbye to all your friends, what would you want to tell them?

Context: Once Jesus arrived in Jerusalem during the week of Passover, he continued to teach about God and God’s kingdom. Some of the religious leaders in Jerusalem didn’t like what Jesus was teaching. They thought what he was teaching about God was wrong and it made them very angry. In fact, they were so angry that they wanted to kill him. One of Jesus’ disciples, Judas, found out about their plan and he decided to help them arrest Jesus. Even though Jesus seemed to know what was about to happen, his disciples didn’t realize that they were about to sit down for their last Passover dinner with Jesus.

Scripture: Mark 14 (Spark StoryBible, P. 462)

On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb was sacrificed, the disciples said to Jesus, “Where do you want us to prepare for you to eat the Passover meal?”

He sent two of his disciples and said to them, “Go into the city. A man carrying a water jar will meet you. Follow him. Wherever he enters, say to the owner of the house, ‘The teacher asks, “Where is my guest room where I can eat the Passover meal with my disciples?’” He will show you a large room upstairs already

furnished. Prepare for us there.” The disciples left, came into the city, found everything just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover meal.

That evening, Jesus arrived with the Twelve. During the meal, Jesus said, “I assure you that one of you will betray me—someone eating with me.”

Deeply saddened, they asked him, one by one, “It’s not me, is it?”

Jesus answered, “It’s one of the Twelve, one who is dipping bread with me into this bowl. The Human One goes to his death just as it is written about him. But how terrible it is for that person who betrays the Human One! It would have been better for him if he had never been born.”

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to them, and said, “Take; this is my body.” He took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, and they all drank from it. He said to them, “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. I assure you that I won’t drink wine again until that day when I drink it in a new way in God’s kingdom.” After singing songs of praise, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Wonder

- (1) I wonder...how you think Judas felt when Jesus said, “one of you will betray me”?
- (2) I wonder...how do you think Jesus felt saying goodbye to his disciples? (*see Mark 14:32-36/ Spark StoryBible, P. 468-69 for additional context*)
- (3) I wonder...why did Jesus share his “body” and his “blood” with his disciples?

Video: Click image below



My Life:

- (1) Have you ever betrayed someone? Or been betrayed? How does it feel?
- (2) What are some ways we can give thanks to God for our food? Share a meal with our neighbors? Share our food with our neighbors?
- (3) When we have communion in church, we're following Jesus' instructions to remember and re-live his last meal with his disciples. How do you feel when you take communion? ([See below for a brief Communion 101 resource.](#))

Pray: Jesus, Lamb of God, help us follow you wherever you go and share your bread with everyone around us. Amen.

Jesus Dies

Good Friday

Memory Verse: “Jesus said, ‘Father, into your hands I entrust my life.’” (Luke 23:46)

Context: After Jesus finished his last meal with his disciples, he went into a garden to pray to God. He was feeling sad and scared. He really didn’t want to die, but he was determined to keep living like God wanted him to—whatever the consequences. Just then, some soldiers arrived to arrest Jesus. Judas had betrayed him. And the rest of the disciples did too when they got scared and pretended not to know Jesus. They put Jesus on trial, and they found him guilty. They said he was pretending to be the Messiah, the Christ—and they sentenced him to die.

Scripture: Luke 23 (Spark StoryBible, P. 476)

As they led Jesus away, they grabbed Simon, a man from Cyrene, who was coming in from the countryside. They put the cross on his back and made him carry it behind Jesus. A huge crowd of people followed Jesus, including women, who were mourning and wailing for him...

They also led two other criminals to be executed with Jesus. When they arrived at the place called The Skull, they crucified him, along with the criminals, one on his right and the other on his left. Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they don’t know what they’re doing.”...

The people were standing around watching, but the leaders sneered at him, saying, “He saved others. Let him save himself if he really is the Christ sent from God, the chosen one.”

The soldiers also mocked him. They came up to him, offering him sour wine and saying, “If you really are the king of the Jews, save yourself.” Above his head was a notice of the formal charge against him. It read “This is the king of the Jews.”

One of the criminals hanging next to Jesus insulted him: “Aren’t you the Christ? Save yourself and us!”

Responding, the other criminal spoke harshly to him, “Don’t you fear God, seeing that you’ve also been sentenced to die? We are rightly condemned, for we are receiving the appropriate sentence for what we did. But this man has done nothing wrong.” Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”

Jesus replied, “I assure you that today you will be with me in paradise.”

It was now about noon, and darkness covered the whole earth until about three o’clock, while the sun stopped shining. Then the curtain in the sanctuary tore down the middle. Crying out in a loud voice, Jesus said, “Father, into your hands I entrust my life.” After he said this, he breathed for the last time.

Wonder:

- (1) I wonder...why did some people want to kill Jesus?
- (2) I wonder...what feelings do you think Jesus had throughout his last day?
- (3) I wonder...was God with Jesus when he was on the cross? Where do you see God’s love even in this sad story?

Video: Click image below



My Life:

- (1) Has anyone you love ever died? How did it feel? How do you remember them even though they aren't alive anymore?
- (2) When bad things happen, what kinds of things can we do to find hope that God is still with us?
- (3) Jesus gave his life to God and to us. How will you give your life to God and to others?

Pray: Jesus our Savior, give us the strength to follow in your footsteps, even when it means that we might have to suffer for others like you did for us. Amen.

Jesus Rises

Easter Sunday

Memory Verse: “Don’t be afraid. I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He isn’t here, because he’s been raised from the dead...” (Matthew 28:5-6)

Opener:

- 1) Decorate Easter eggs! As you do, try to think of different ways that Easter eggs connect to Jesus’ resurrection.
- 2) Have a relay race (like the disciples were running to tell the others the news about Jesus). (Hint: if your home is too small for running and it’s too cold to be outside, come up with a modified relay race that involves crab-walking)
- 3) Plan a pretend surprise party! Who is it for? What are you celebrating? What will the decorations look like? And what face will the person make when they’re surprised?

Context: After Jesus died, a man named Joseph from a town called Arimathea buried Jesus’ body. He carefully wrapped Jesus’ body in a cloth and he gently placed it inside a cave. Then he rolled a huge stone in front of the cave’s opening. Some of Jesus’ disciples planned to go anoint Jesus’ body with spices and oils (that’s what they used to do a long time ago), but since Jesus died on a Friday and Saturday was the Sabbath, they had to wait until Sunday to anoint him.

Scripture: Matthew 28 (Spark StoryBible, P. 482)

After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the tomb. Look, there was a great earthquake, for an angel from the Lord came down from heaven. Coming to the stone, he rolled it away and sat on it. Now his face was like lightning and his clothes as white as snow. The guards were so terrified of him that they shook with fear and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, “Don’t be afraid. I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He isn’t here, because he’s been raised from the dead, just as he said. Come, see the place where they laid him. Now

hurry, go and tell his disciples, 'He's been raised from the dead. He's going on ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there.' I've given the message to you."

With great fear and excitement, they hurried away from the tomb and ran to tell his disciples. But Jesus met them and greeted them. They came and grabbed his feet and worshipped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Don't be afraid. Go and tell my brothers that I am going into Galilee. They will see me there."

Wonder:

- (1) I wonder...what were Jesus' disciples (Mary Magdalene and Jesus' mother, Mary) expecting to find when they came to Jesus' tomb?
- (2) I wonder...how do you think they felt when they saw Jesus with their own eyes?
- (3) I wonder...what does it mean to Jesus' followers that he rose from the dead?

Video: Click image below



My Life:

- (1) What's the best surprise you've ever experienced? How did it feel when you were first surprised? How did it feel later?
- (2) Do you like to share good news, and who do you share it with first? What are some ways you can share the good news of Jesus' new life?
- (3) Does Jesus' resurrection change your everyday life? How?

Pray: Risen Jesus, our Christ, fill our hearts and inspire us with your spirit so that we can share the good news of the new life you've given us far and wide. Amen.

Communion 101

- ❖ **What do we call this meal?** It goes by many names—Communion, the Lord’s Supper, the Eucharist, the Breaking of Bread.

- ❖ **Is it different from other practices or rituals we do during our worship?** Communion is one of two “sacraments” in our tradition—sacred practices we keep because Jesus instructed us to. The second sacrament we celebrate is baptism.

- ❖ **Is it really the body and blood of Christ?** No. You may have heard that some Christian denominations believe that the bread and juice become the real body and blood of Christ. But Presbyterians believe the elements are symbols.

- ❖ **Do I need to take communion to be saved?** No. Taking communion is a sign and seal of the salvation we have already received by God’s grace alone through faith alone.

- ❖ **What does communion mean?** This meal carries many different meanings for Christians, but here are four important meanings for communion in our Presbyterian Reformed tradition:
 - Communion as Community—during communion, we believe that we come into community with every follower of Jesus around the world and even those who came long before us;

 - Communion as Appetizer—kind of like an appetizer, we believe that communion is a “foretaste” of the great kingdom feast—when God’s kingdom will come fully and God will bring all people together;

 - Communion Remembering—we remember Jesus’ life, death, resurrection, and his promise to come again;

 - Communion as Giving Thanks—when we have communion we give thanks to God for creating us, giving us new life, and being with us now and forever.