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Family devotions

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For families all ages

Dear families and people of all ages and backgrounds,

Thank you for opening this document and for your willingness to share faith with the members of your family or other people you share life with. These family devotions are for you to use in your own home setting or in intergenerational small groups. You can use these devotions during the weekend of the International Day for Children and Youth as the material suggests, but feel free to also use it during any other moment that fits your situation.

We pray that you will be blessed, that your relationship with Christ and with each other will deepen and that God will open up your heart even further for the people around you.

Friday | Identity

Pause and pray

*Father, may your word be a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.
Spirit, may you breathe on us, so we may come to life and stand on our feet.
Jesus, may we follow in your footsteps in all we do and say.
Amen.*

Living word

'You are like a tree, planted by flowing, cool streams of water that never run dry. Your fruit ripens in its time; your leaves never fade or curl in the summer sun. No matter what you do, you prosper'

(Psalm 1:3 VOICE).

Devotion

As we write this devotion, the world is slowly moving away from a scary time, the COVID-19 pandemic. Pandemic restrictions required us to reduce our movements through social distancing, travel bans and lockdowns. This meant that we couldn't share the good news of salvation with each other in the ways that we knew. We were challenged to find new ways to make a mark in the lives of other people and to share the good news that brings salvation, peace and happiness to all humanity (Isaiah 52:7).

The Bible uses the metaphor of a tree that is planted by water to describe someone who is rooted in God's words. It is his or her focus – from dusk to dawn. He or she intentionally chooses to focus on God's words that bring life and light and they refuse to listen to people who are full of judgement, sarcasm and lies.



Here are some fun facts about a tree. Maybe you can find a few more yourself!

- A tree is a large plant that can live for many years.
- A tree has one stem.
- The stem supports the branches and leaves.
- The tree stands because of its roots which are hidden underground.
- The roots support the tree by transporting the water and nutrients that the tree needs to grow.

A tree depends on its roots for its strength and health. And by the fruit that the tree bears you can see how healthy and strong it is. It is the same with us. The strength and health of our relationship with Jesus is visible by what we do and what we say. That is our fruit.

When our relationship with Jesus is strong, we are not easily shaken, just like a tree with strong roots. The roots of our faith grow deep in Jesus, just like Paul says in his letter to the Colossians:

'Now that you have welcomed the Anointed One, Jesus the Lord, into your lives, continue to journey with him and allow him to shape your lives. Let your roots grow down deeply in him, and let him build you up on a firm foundation' (Colossians 2:6-7 VOICE).

Paul's advice to the people in Colossae is: make sure you create space for God, each and every day. You will flourish: your faith becomes stronger, your love increases and your joy grows. When we are in the presence of God, we do not fear. We will receive all that God has in store for us. The storms may come and go, but we will remain. The true character of God is revealed in us.

In John 15:5, Jesus says: 'I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.' Jesus is saying that if we stay connected to him, we produce fruit.

The fruits we produce are our footprints; the difference we make in this world. Our fruit can make a positive impact in the lives of other people.

Activity and questions for a conversation

- Look at the tree on the next page.
- When do you feel close to God? Write your answers near the stem.
- How can you make a difference in your house, neighbourhood or city? Write your answers near the fruit.
- Have a conversation with each other about the answers.
- Pray for each other.

Make your mark, knowing Jesus will be there every step on your way!

Challenge to the family

As a family, you are challenged to plant a tree. The tree is to be taken care of by the family, making sure that it is watered and nourished regularly for it to grow. The tree is a reminder of your identity in Christ and the difference you can make in the world because you are rooted in his love.



Prayer

Father, most gracious and loving. We come before your throne of grace knowing that you love us, and that you promised to never leave nor forsake us.

Spirit, guide us through this journey of life, so we live a life that makes you proud of us as we leave our footprint on this earth.

Jesus, help us to proclaim your name and your teachings in all we do and say.

Amen.

Saturday | Direction

Pause and pray

Father, may your word be a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

Spirit, may you breathe on us, so we may come to life and stand on our feet.

Jesus, may we follow in your footsteps in all we do and say.

Amen.

Living word

‘Commit your path to the Eternal; let him direct you. Put your confidence in him, and he will follow through with you’ (Psalm 37:5 VOICE).

Have you ever seen or used a compass? It is an instrument that has four main directions: north, south, east and west. It is used for direction and will help you find your way if you get lost. Have you ever followed a GPS only to end up at a dead-end? Perhaps you started on your journey without looking properly at the map.

God is much more reliable than a compass or Google Maps. If we type in an address and hit the road without asking him first, we might be left wishing we had checked the route to make sure it leads to the destination.

In the second book of Samuel, we see David anointed as the King of Judah. David had known he was going to be king prior to his anointing, and, with Saul’s recent death, it seemed like the perfect time to take the throne. He was ready. And he asked God what he should do next:

‘In the course of time, David inquired of the Lord. “Shall I go up to one of the towns of Judah?” he asked. The Lord said, “Go up.” David asked, “Where shall I go?” “To Hebron,” the Lord answered’ (2 Samuel 2:1 NIV).

David had a pretty good idea of his direction, but was very aware of God and the need for God’s guidance. So he double checked with God, to see if going to one of the towns of Judah was a good idea. God confirmed this direction and even gave David a very detailed destination: Hebron.



Sometimes you might have a good idea of the choice you have to make. Where shall I go to college? To what group of friends do I want to belong? Just like David, involve God in every decision you make or every step you take. And remember: you are a child of God, loved by God and now living in God's presence. Look at what Paul wrote about this:

'The bright light of Christ makes your way plain. So no more stumbling around. Get on with it! The good, the right, the true – these are the actions appropriate for daylight hours. Figure out what will please Christ, and then do it' (Ephesians 5:9-10 MSG).

When we stay connected to God we will – step by step – understand God's direction for our life. God's presence is like a light that shines on our path. Together with God we can rest assured that we are going the right way, even if it doesn't make sense to us.

God is so much greater than us. God alone sees the big picture of our life. When you walk with God, you can trust in his direction, even if it is beyond your understanding

Activity

Resources needed

- Fabric (old fabric will do) or paper
- String
- Scissors
- Markers/pens
- Glue/stapler/pegs
- A picture containing shape

Each person can create their own triangle of bunting. Write your favourite verse on one side and an answer to one of the questions below on the other side:

Where do I believe God is leading me in my life?
What is my wish for the future?

Find someone to combine all the bunting triangles with and hang them up in your home/church where others can pray over it.



Prayer

Father, most gracious and loving. We come before your throne of grace knowing that you love us, and that you promised to never leave nor forsake us.

Spirit, guide us through this journey of life, so we live a life that makes you proud of us as we leave our footprint on this earth.

Jesus, help us to proclaim your name and your teachings in all we do and say.

Amen.

Sunday | Journey

Pause and pray

Father, may your word be a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

Spirit, may you breathe on us, so we may come to life and stand on our feet.

Jesus, may we follow in your footsteps in all we do and say.

Amen.

Living word

As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them' (Luke 24:15 NIV).

Life can be like a journey filled with adventures. I remember my primary school trip when we visited the zoo. The fun part was getting a goodie bag and having fun on the bus with my friends.

There's a wonderful term that has been trending for a long time: 'greatest of all time'. One earns this title from not just being good at what they do, but being GREAT, surpassing everyone or anything else around them; from an athlete to an automobile. It is typically abbreviated as GOAT. 'Jesus Christ Superstar' is one of the greatest musicals of all time, Albert Einstein the greatest scientist, Lionel Messi the greatest football player and Nelson Mandela one of the greatest leaders of all time.

What makes someone the greatest of all time is simple. He or she needs to excel in their journey of life, especially in a talent or skill that God has given them. It's fair to say that the true greatest of all time (dating back 2,000 years ago) is Jesus Christ. We look at his journey in life: born in a manger, growing up to show the world the greatest love they could possibly ever find, and showing that we are all important in God's eyes.

Today, as we look at the Bible verse from Luke, we are also reminded of Jesus' desire to daily walk with us, whatever the road we are walking on looks like. You might feel insecure at this moment, because of some challenges that are ahead of you. You might be very excited about some events or adventure you are about to start.

Whatever your journey looks like: Jesus will be walking beside you. The greatest of all time, the one who is stronger than death, will keep you company. You are not alone!



This is July Ponce.

She is 19 years old. She is from Peru and is a member of the International Children and Youth Advisory Group (ICYAG).

She says the following about her relationship with Jesus:

'He has always been with me and has blessed me in the simplest and most beautiful ways. I see him when I come home from college late at night safe and sound, when I wake up and hear the birds singing, or when he gives me the opportunity to video call my family.'

My dream is to help other young people get closer to God and understand that having a relationship with God means having the best of the best friends by your side.'

JULY PONCE

Americas and Caribbean

South America West Territory

"I am happy to be part of this Advisory Group and really thankful to God for this opportunity."

My dream is to help other young people get closer to God and understand that having a relationship with God means having the best of the best friends by your side."



Talk it over

- ***When do you feel Jesus is with you?***
- ***Who helped you or reached out to you when you went through a difficult time? Write a card to him or her!***

Prayer

Father, most gracious and loving. We come before your throne of grace knowing that you love us, and that you promised to never leave nor forsake us.

Spirit, guide us through this journey of life, so we live a life that makes you proud of us as we leave our footprint on this earth.

Jesus, help us to proclaim your name and your teachings in all we do and say.

Amen.

