



THE

JOURNEY

**KIDS ALIVE
MATTHEW SERIES**



FAMILY DEVOTIONS

INSTRUCTIONS

For each week we will upload three devotions that build upon and link to our Kids Alive message on Sunday. Three devotions means:

- Those who already do devotions can continue these the other half of the week;
- Those for whom devotions are possible at most every second night of the week can also be included.

The devotions will follow this format:

INTRO

A short introductory activity or discussion

RECAP

A recap of the previous devotion

READ

A short passage will be printed. This makes it less time-consuming and also excludes the need to find a bible.

EXPLORE

Some simple comprehension questions that direct our understanding of the passage

APPLY

Something we can learn from the passage and apply to our own lives

PRAY

Suggested prayer points that come from the passage

MEMORY VERSE

You may design something to remember the verse or do some fun games or activities to aid in remembering the verses.

WEEK 1: 16th to 22nd Jul

DAY 1

INTRO:

Play 'Follow the leader' and, as the game goes on, do more and more weird or crazy things. See who follows you and who decides not to follow, thus rejecting your leadership.

RECAP:

What did your children learn about at church on Sunday?

READ MATTHEW 9:9-10

⁹As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him. ¹⁰While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples.

EXPLORE:

What was Matthew's job? (*Tax collector*)

How did people feel about tax collectors? (*They are partnered with sinners in v10*)

What did Jesus ask Matthew to do? (*Follow him*)

APPLY:

Matthew would have been rejected by his people as a sinner who had betrayed them by collecting taxes from them to give to an invading country. He chose to follow Jesus who would also be rejected by his people as a blasphemer. He wrote his gospel to those of his people who were also being rejected for following a Messiah who suffered and died. As we read Matthew's story over the following weeks we will see that following Jesus means both good news of acceptance for those who have been rejected but also rejection of believers by those who do not follow our crucified Lord.

PRAY:

Thank our Heavenly Father that, like Matthew, we who were once sinners have been loved and accepted. Pray that we will find value in our Father's love rather than in the love of others.

MEMORY VERSE: (OPTIONAL ACTIVITY TIME PERMITTING)

"Come, follow me," Jesus said. Matthew 4:19

Draw a picture of verse 9 to show Matthew leaving everything to follow Jesus. Add this week's verse and put it in a place where you will see it each day so that you can begin to commit the verse to memory.

WEEK 1: 16th to 22nd Jul

DAY 2

INTRO:

Share with your family what you do to prepare for something: e.g. cooking, how you get ready for school etc.

RECAP:

What did Matthew find when Jesus asked him to follow him?

READ MATTHEW 4:12-19

¹²When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he withdrew to Galilee. ¹³Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali ¹⁴to fulfil what was said through the prophet Isaiah ¹⁵"Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles— ¹⁶the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned." ¹⁷From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." ¹⁸As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ¹⁹"Come, follow me," Jesus said.

EXPLORE:

Where did Jesus go to prepare for his ministry? (*First Nazareth in Galilee, and then Capernaum by the lake in the lands of Zebulun and Naphtali*)

How did he begin his ministry? (*He preached 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near'*)

What was the next thing he did to begin his ministry? (*He called two brothers to follow*)

APPLY:

Jesus prepared carefully for his ministry. After all, it was the reason he had left heaven and come to live among us. Interestingly as Jesus began his ministry Matthew records that one of the first things he did was to gather people around himself. Matthew knew that as the Son of God Jesus could have done it himself; after all he alone was the great light shining on those living in the shadow of death. Nonetheless Jesus continued God's great history of gathering people to himself. How much more then do we need the community of other believers!

PRAY:

Praise our Heavenly Father that he has gathered people to himself throughout the history of our world. Pray that we will rejoice as we gather with others who also follow the Lord Jesus, recognising that we need each other even if we don't particularly feel that way.

MEMORY VERSE: (OPTIONAL ACTIVITY TIME PERMITTING)

"Come, follow me," Jesus said. **Matthew 4:19** Gather your family around you one by one by going up to them and saying this week's verse. Take turns being the 'gatherer' so that everyone gets a chance to say and remember the verse.

WEEK 1: 16th to 22nd Jul

DAY 2

INTRO:

Play 'Duck, Duck' Goose' with your family, but instead of tapping them on the head drop a hair elastic or something similar behind them. Your family member must respond quickly enough to try and catch you before you complete your circuit around the circle.

RECAP:

How did Jesus prepare for his ministry?

READ MATTHEW 4:18-22

¹⁸As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ¹⁹"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people." ²⁰At once they left their nets and followed him. ²¹Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, ²²and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

EXPLORE:

What did Jesus call Simon and Andrew to do? (*Follow him and be sent to fish for men*)

How did they respond? (*they immediately left their nets and followed him*)

What did James and John leave behind to follow Jesus? (*Their boats and their father*)

APPLY:

The disciples show that following Jesus is the most important thing we must do. They immediately left behind their way to earn money and their family! When it comes to living like Jesus what is more likely to stop you from responding him immediately.... your work? Your kids? What your friends might think?

PRAY:

Thank our Heavenly Father for the example of these first disciples. Pray that we will drop everything to follow Jesus and that nothing will be more important to us than following his commands,

MEMORY VERSE: (OPTIONAL ACTIVITY TIME PERMITTING)

"Come, follow me," Jesus said. Matthew 4:19

For the rest of the week use this verse as a challenge each time you are tempted to remind yourself how Jesus wants you to respond if you truly follow him.

WEEK 2: 23rd to 29th Jul

DAY 1

INTRO:

Share with your family a skill that you feel you have mastered.

RECAP:

What did your children learn about at church on Sunday?

READ MATTHEW 5:1, 6:24-25

¹ Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, ² and he began to teach them.

²⁴ "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money. ²⁵ "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes?"

EXPLORE:

Where did Jesus go to teach his disciples? (*Up onto a mountainside*)

What did Jesus say we cannot do? (*Serve two masters: God and money*)

What did he say this leads to? (*Not worrying about what we eat, drink or wear*)

APPLY:

In *Matthew* there are five main teaching sections. Each of these focuses on a different aspect of what it looks like to follow Jesus. In this passage Jesus shows that the real cause of our everyday worries is our lack of loving God wholeheartedly. If we truly loved God and served him as our master we would not worry about how we will pay for our next meal for we know that good masters care for their servants.

PRAY:

Praise our Heavenly Father that he cares for and provides for us. Pray that we will be mastered by love for him rather than by worry about the basic things of this world.

MEMORY VERSE: (OPTIONAL ACTIVITY TIME PERMITTING)

Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Matthew 6:33

Hide the words of this week's verse around your house and have everyone seek the words to put them into the right order.

WEEK 2: 23rd to 29th Jul

DAY 2

INTRO:

Share with your family something that you are currently worried about OR something that you regularly find to be on your mind.

RECAP:

What is behind our worry about life?

READ MATTHEW 6:25-30

²⁵ "I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? ²⁷ Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? ²⁸ Why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labour or spin. ²⁹ Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendour was dressed like one of these. ³⁰ If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith?

EXPLORE:

What things were Jesus' listeners worried about? (*Their life, especially what they would eat or drink or wear*)

What did Jesus challenge them to think about instead of worrying about food? (*Our Heavenly Father feeds the birds and so he will feed us because we're more important to him than the birds*)

What did Jesus challenge his listeners to think about instead of worrying about clothes? (*How beautiful God has made flowers in the field*)

APPLY:

To call someone "you of little faith" because they worry might sound a bit unfair to us. After all, doesn't everyone worry? Yet Jesus was speaking to everyday Israelites who, in that time, legitimately may not have known where their next meals would come from! He challenged them that nature reveals we can trust God to provide for us. How much more then should we not worry when we have not only nature to consider but our experiences of having so much as well!

PRAY:

Thank our Heavenly Father that he has graciously given us so much. Pray that because of this we will trust him so much that our worries might become things of the past.

MEMORY VERSE: (OPTIONAL ACTIVITY TIME PERMITTING)

Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Matthew 6:33 Write out the verse and decorate it with birds and flowers to remind you that when we see these things they remind us how much we can trust the Lord.

WEEK 2: 23rd to 29th Jul

DAY 3

INTRO:

Share with your family how you stop yourself from worrying.

RECAP:

What should we consider when we are tempted to worry?

READ MATTHEW 6:31-34

³¹ So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³² For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³ But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. ³⁴ Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

EXPLORE:

Who runs after food and clothing? (*The pagans: those who don't know our Heavenly Father*)

What should we do instead? (*Seek first God's kingdom and his righteousness*)

What will happen if we do this? (*Our Heavenly Father will give us these things because he knows we need them*)

APPLY:

Instead of worrying we are called to trust. God knows what we need and will provide it. Instead we are called to seek first the things of God. This means to make sure God is our king in every part of our lives, including what makes us worry. How will this passage affect the way you respond to worry the next time that you feel it?

PRAY:

Thank our Heavenly Father that he knows what we need and will provide it. Pray that we will focus on more important things like being right with him through his Son and leaving him in charge of every part of our lives.

MEMORY VERSE: (OPTIONAL ACTIVITY TIME PERMITTING)

Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Matthew 6:33

Say to yourself this week's verse whenever you start to worry this week.

WEEK 3: 30th Jul to 5th Aug

DAY 1

INTRO:

Take close-up pictures of parts of different items and see if your family can identify what the items are.

RECAP:

What did your children learn about at church on Sunday?

READ MATTHEW 8:14-17

¹⁴When Jesus came into Peter's house, he saw Peter's mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever. ¹⁵He touched her hand and the fever left her, and she got up and began to wait on him. ¹⁶When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick. ¹⁷This was to fulfil what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah "He took up our infirmities and bore our diseases."

EXPLORE:

Who did Jesus touch and heal? (*Peter's mother-in-law*)

How did he heal the demon-possessed? (*By speaking the word*)

Why did all of this happen? (*To fulfil God's word that Jesus would take on our weaknesses and experiences*)

APPLY:

In this section of Matthew's gospel we get glimpses of the type of kingdom that Jesus has been announcing. It is a kingdom of both personal, intimate care (Peter's mother-in-law) and of evil being powerfully defeated (the demon-possessed set free with a word). Above all else it is a kingdom where the king sympathetically understands his people's experiences firsthand. He has not only experienced these but relieved his people in doing so.

PRAY:

Thank our Heavenly Father that Jesus' love and power are both so evident in the type of king he is. Pray that we will manage to show loving, caring authority in our relationships with others.

MEMORY VERSE: (OPTIONAL ACTIVITY TIME PERMITTING)

"I will follow wherever you go". Matthew 8:19

Today's passage gives us a glimpse of the beauty of Christ's kingdom. Try to capture this as you design a poster with this week's verse.

WEEK 3: 30th Jul to 5th Aug

DAY 2

INTRO:

Take turns to blindfold someone in your family before guiding them into another room by giving them warnings.

RECAP:

What glimpse did Jesus give of his kingdom?

READ MATTHEW 8:18-22

¹⁸When Jesus saw the crowd around him, he gave orders to cross to the other side of the lake. ¹⁹Then a teacher of the law came to him and said, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go." ²⁰Jesus replied, "Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head." ²¹Another disciple said to him, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." ²²But Jesus told him, "Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead."

EXPLORE:

What did a teacher of the law say to Jesus? (*"I will follow you wherever you go"*)

What did Jesus warn him? (*He had no place to call home*)

How did Jesus answer his disciple? (*Following him is urgent and important*)

APPLY:

Jesus' answers here can seem strange or even harsh to us. However Jesus wanted to warn these people of the cost of following him. As we saw in the first week of our series following Jesus can mean leaving everything behind: even homes and family relationships. To follow someone who died on a cross means we must be willing to trust God above all else. What might you have to lose in your life in order to follow Jesus?

PRAY:

Thank our Heavenly Father that he has given us clear expectations of what it looks like to follow his Son. Pray that we will be willing to follow Jesus even when it costs us.

MEMORY VERSE: (OPTIONAL ACTIVITY TIME PERMITTING)

"I will follow wherever you go". Matthew 8:19

Repeat the Intro activity but this time have the blindfolded person follow you as you lead them into the next room. Get them to say this week's verse as you walk.

WEEK 3: 30th Jul to 5th Aug

DAY 3

INTRO:

As a family take turns sharing something you find hard to understand that other people do.

RECAP:

What warnings did Jesus give about following him?

READ MATTHEW 8:23-27

²³Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him. ²⁴Suddenly a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. ²⁵The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Lord, save us! We're going to drown!" ²⁶He replied, "You of little faith, why are you so afraid?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm. ²⁷The men were amazed and asked, "What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!"

EXPLORE:

Why did the disciples wake Jesus? (*They wanted him to save them from drowning*)

What did Jesus say their real problem was? (*They only had a little faith*)

How did the disciples respond when Jesus saved them? (*They were amazed and wondered how he could command the wind and the waves*)

APPLY:

In the first devotion this week we saw Jesus powerfully and lovingly cares for those in his kingdom. In the second we saw there is a cost and an urgency to following him. Today's passage therefore challenges us: do we have faith to leave our lives in the care of this man? We would be crazy not to!

PRAY:

Thank our Heavenly Father that Jesus has power over any forces that may stand against us. Pray that we will not be people of little faith but that we will trust him in all of life's situations.

MEMORY VERSE: (OPTIONAL ACTIVITY TIME PERMITTING)

"I will follow wherever you go". Matthew 8:19

Get each family member to follow one another by saying one word of this week's verse at a time, Work together to say the whole verse as quickly as you can!

WEEK 4: 6th to 12th Aug

DAY 1

INTRO:

Imagine you are hosting a big event. What is the most creative and effective way you can think of to invite others?

RECAP:

What did your children learn about at church on Sunday?

READ MATTHEW 10:1-8

¹ Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness. ² These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; ³ Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; ⁴ Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him. ⁵ These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. ⁶ Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. ⁷ As you go, proclaim this message: 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' ⁸ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give".

EXPLORE:

What did Jesus send his disciples to say? (*'The Kingdom of Heaven has arrived'*)

What signs did he give them to show this was true? (*They could heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those with skin diseases and drive out demons*)

Who were they specifically to invite? (*The lost sheep of Israel*)

APPLY:

Jesus is a very different type of king. Rather than conquering people he invited them to be a part of his kingdom. He invited the lost to something better: a kingdom free from sickness, death, uncleanness and evil. What's not appealing about that? Nonetheless as we know people rejected his invitation as they still do today.

PRAY:

Thank our Heavenly Father that through Jesus we are invited to know him AND we are given good things when we accept. Pray that we will be a community who shows the appeal of belonging to Christ's kingdom so that when we invite others they might want to belong.

MEMORY VERSE: (OPTIONAL ACTIVITY TIME PERMITTING)

Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me. Matthew 11:6

Design an invitation for someone in your family that includes this week's verse so that they can start to learn it in the week ahead.

WEEK 4: 6th to 12th Aug

DAY 2

INTRO:

Share with your family: how do you feel about reports? Whether it is a school report of a mid-year review do you look forward to them eagerly or somewhat dread them?

RECAP:

How did Jesus send an invitation to his kingdom?

READ MATTHEW 11:1-6

¹After Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and preach in the towns of Galilee. ²When John, who was in prison, heard about the deeds of the Messiah, he sent his disciples ³to ask him, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?" ⁴Jesus replied, "Go back and report to John what you hear and see:⁵The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor. ⁶Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me."

EXPLORE:

What was John's question? (*Are you the promised one?*)

What did Jesus tell John's disciples to report? (*What Jesus had done*)

* Why do you think Jesus drew attention to such things? (*They showed he was doing exactly what the promised one would do*)

APPLY:

John doubted Jesus because he wasn't doing the things that John expected the Messiah to do. Jesus' answer highlighted to him that he was doing the things that had been promised. We too can start to doubt Jesus when he doesn't deliver on our expectations. We also need to have our attention redirected to what he has done for us and his people throughout history.

PRAY:

Thank our Heavenly Father that Jesus has lived, died, and been raised for us and that he now prays for us before God. Pray that we might refocus our attention on what Jesus has done and is doing rather than what we feel he should do for us in any given situation.

MEMORY VERSE: (OPTIONAL ACTIVITY TIME PERMITTING)

Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me. Matthew 11:6

Get each member of your family to say only one word of this week's verse at a time until your family has said the whole verse. If anyone stumbles over any part of it start again and say it together until the whole verse has been said correctly.

WEEK 4: 6th to 12th Aug

DAY 3

INTRO:

Share with your family something that you have seen the Lord do for you in the past week.

RECAP:

What did Jesus tell John's disciples to report about what they had seen?

READ MATTHEW 11:7-9

⁷As John's disciples were leaving, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swayed by the wind? ⁸If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear fine clothes are in kings' palaces. ⁹Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. ¹⁰This is the one about whom it is written: "'I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.'"

EXPLORE:

Who did Jesus now speak to the crowd about? (*John*)

Why had the crowds gone to see John? (*Because he was a prophet*)

What else did Jesus say John was? (*The messenger who had gone ahead of the Lord to prepare the way for him*)

APPLY:

Jesus helps us to see two things by drawing our attention to John. Firstly he reminds us that what people have done is important. As we saw yesterday Jesus' deeds confirmed he was the promised one, and Jesus further confirms this by highlighting that John was the messenger who was to prepare the way for the Lord. However in showing that he was to follow John Jesus also reminds us that, since John had ended up in prison, the same might indeed happen to him. This passage therefore reminds us again that following Jesus is to follow someone who went to the cross; it is not always easy.

PRAY:

Thank our Heavenly Father that, knowing what was ahead of him, Jesus faithfully followed his Father's will. Pray that we will do the same and follow Jesus through the hard times by keeping our eyes on what Jesus has done for us.

MEMORY VERSE: (OPTIONAL ACTIVITY TIME PERMITTING)

Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me. Matthew 11:6

Say this week's verse through as a family without stumbling over any part of it. IF you do start again and try to say it together.

WEEK 5: Aug 13-19

DAY 1

INTRO:

If you could design a new family what would you have: all girls? Be an only child? As a family have some fun discussing why you would want whatever you said.

RECAP:

What did your children learn about at church on Sunday?

READ MATTHEW 12:46-50

⁴⁶While Jesus was still talking to the crowd, his mother and brothers stood outside, wanting to speak to him. ⁴⁷Someone told him, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you." ⁴⁸He replied to him, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?"⁴⁹Pointing to his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers. ⁵⁰For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."

EXPLORE:

Who wanted to speak to Jesus? (*His mother and brothers*)

Why were they waiting to speak to Jesus? (*He was busy teaching the crowds*)

Why did Jesus say his disciples were his new family? (*Jesus' family are those who live according to his Father's will*)

APPLY:

In this section of *Matthew* Jesus is repeatedly rejected by his own people until they finally plan to kill him (Matt 12:14). In today's passage Jesus shows who the real people of Israel are: those who actually do what God wants, not those who reject their King and plot to murder him! This stands as a challenge to us: are we people who merely call ourselves followers of Jesus or are we people who actually follow him in doing what our Heavenly Father wants?

PRAY:

Thank our Heavenly Father that we become a member of his family when we trust and follow Jesus. Pray that we will follow Jesus in doing what pleases our Father every day.

MEMORY VERSE: (OPTIONAL ACTIVITY TIME PERMITTING)

Someone who hears the word and understands it: this is the one who produces a crop.

Matthew 13:23

Praise God for the actual family he has given you! Then draw a picture of you all and add to it this week's verse. Use this to not only help you learn the verse throughout the week but also as a prayer for each member of your family.

WEEK 5: Aug 13-19

DAY 2

INTRO:

Think of a word. Try and get the other members of your family to guess it by saying other words to give them clues. Take turns doing this to find out who is good at finding out what they don't know.

RECAP:

Who did Jesus say was his true family?

READ MATTHEW 13:10-14

¹⁰The disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Why do you speak to the people in parables?" ¹¹He replied, "Because the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. ¹²Whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. ¹³This is why I speak to them in parables: 'Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand'; ¹⁴in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah.

EXPLORE:

What did the disciples ask Jesus? (*Why he spoke to the people in parables*)

Who did Jesus say had been given the secret knowledge of the kingdom of heaven? (*The disciples, not the people in general*)

What did Jesus say this fulfilled? (*the prophecy of Isaiah*)

APPLY:

Jesus' words here are quite surprising; verse 12 doesn't seem fair at first! What Jesus means is that those who have no interest in the kingdom of heaven are given knowledge about it but they simply don't care or try to understand it. He goes on to explain this by using the parable of the sower, which we will look at in the next devotion.

PRAY:

Thank our Heavenly Father that we have been given the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven. Pray that through the Holy Spirit we will work hard to understand the will of our Heavenly Father and then to do it.

MEMORY VERSE: (OPTIONAL ACTIVITY TIME PERMITTING)

Someone who hears the word and understands it: this is the one who produces a crop.

Matthew 13:23

Read Isaiah 6, which Jesus quotes in the passage above. Discuss what it meant for Isaiah to hear this so that you understand this week's verse a little more.

WEEK 5: Aug 13-19

DAY 3

INTRO:

Share with your family: how do you find reading God's word? Is it something you look forward to or find difficult? Is it something you struggle to understand or something you find easy?

RECAP:

Why did Jesus say he spoke in parables?

READ MATTHEW 13:18-23

¹⁸ "Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: ¹⁹ When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path. ²⁰ The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. ²¹ But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. ²² The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful. ²³ But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown."

EXPLORE:

What happens to those who don't hear and understand the message of the kingdom? (*The evil one snatches away what was sown in their hearts*)

What makes the second and third seeds fall away? (*Trouble or persecution; worry or wealth*)

How does Jesus want us to respond to the word? (*To hear it, understand it and be fruitful because of it*)

APPLY:

Whether we eagerly anticipate reading the bible or find it really hard ultimately what is important is that we understand and do what it says! Spend some time thinking about how you can encourage one another as a family with any struggles or difficulties raised so that you can help one another understand the word in order to be fruitful.

PRAY:

Thank our Heavenly Father that we can understand his word because of the Holy Spirit. Pray that we will be fruitful and put into practice what it says each time we read it.

MEMORY VERSE: (OPTIONAL ACTIVITY TIME PERMITTING)

Someone who hears the word and understands it: this is the one who produces a crop.

Matthew 13:23

Create this week's verse by pasting small seeds together.

WEEK 6: Aug 20-26

DAY 1

INTRO:

Share with your family where you like to go and what you like to do when you want to be alone.

RECAP:

What did your children learn about at church on Sunday?

READ MATTHEW 14:22-24

²²Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. ²³After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone, ²⁴and the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it.

EXPLORE:

Where did Jesus send his disciples? (*In a boat to the other side of the lake*)

Where did Jesus go when he was alone? (*He went up on a mountain by himself*)

What did he do there? (*He prayed*)

APPLY:

Jesus had just learnt that his cousin had been killed (Matt 14:13) and so had gone to be by himself. However the crowds followed him and, after graciously caring for them (Matt 14:14,16) Jesus again finally got a chance to mourn. Jesus' didn't just spend time thinking about how, if the one who went before him had been killed, it was likely that the same would happen to him. Instead he took his cares and concerns to his Heavenly Father in prayer. What a great reminder for us all!

PRAY:

Thank our Heavenly Father that 'he is our ever present refuge in times of trouble'. Pray that we will faithfully turn to him when we need strength or comfort, and not just escape to 'be by ourselves' when we're sad or worried.

MEMORY VERSE: (OPTIONAL ACTIVITY TIME PERMITTING)

Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." Matt 14:27

Draw a number of pairs of 'praying hands' and write this week's verse on them. Work together as a family to put this week's verse in its correct order.

WEEK 6: Aug 20-26

DAY 2

INTRO:

Take turns as a family to have each person share something miraculous that Jesus did that you would like to be able to do as well.

RECAP:

How did Jesus approach his disciples in the previous passage?

READ MATTHEW 14:25-28

²⁵ Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake.²⁶ When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear. ²⁷ But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." ²⁸ "Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water." ²⁹ "Come," he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus.

EXPLORE:

What did Jesus do at the start of today's passage? (*He walked on water*)

How did the disciples react to this? (*They cried out in fear because they thought he was a ghost*)

How did Peter react? (*He wanted to walk on water too!*)

APPLY:

Jesus is able to walk on water because he is the Lord himself (Job 9:8). It is fascinating then that he can command us to follow him and achieve such miracles amongst us, ordinary, everyday people!

PRAY:

Thank our Heavenly Father that Jesus is the Lord himself who uses his power for our good. Pray that we will follow his example and use our power in the situations we find ourselves in for the benefit of others as well.

MEMORY VERSE: (OPTIONAL ACTIVITY TIME PERMITTING)

Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." Matt 14:27

Write this week's verse at the top of a piece of paper and then draw a picture of the story underneath.

WEEK 6: Aug 20-26

DAY 3

INTRO:

How would you describe someone with not much faith? What would they do? What wouldn't they do?

RECAP:

What did Peter want Jesus to help him to do?

READ MATTHEW 14:28-33

²⁸ "Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water." ²⁹ "Come," he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. ³⁰ When Peter saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!" ³¹ Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?" ³² And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. ³³ Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

EXPLORE:

What made Peter take his eyes off Jesus? (*The strength of the wind*)

What happened when Peter stopped focusing on Jesus? (*He started to sink into the water*)

Why did Jesus say this happened? (*He had little faith and he began to doubt*)

APPLY:

Jesus addresses people 'You of little faith' five times in Matthew's gospel. Every time he says this it is to his disciples! Each time Jesus says it to them it is when they doubt or fear. Someone who doesn't have much faith seems to be a follower of Jesus who still worries, doubts or gets scared when really they should know better, for they are following the powerful Son of God!

PRAY:

Thank our Heavenly Father that Jesus frees us from fear, doubt and worry. Pray that we will trust him as the Son of God and keep our eyes focused on him in scary or worrying situations.

MEMORY VERSE: (OPTIONAL ACTIVITY TIME PERMITTING)

Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." Matt 14:27

Get three different people to say the three phrases of this week's verse in their bravest voices. Then swap phrases to see who can do each part best.

WEEK 7: Aug 27-Sep 2

DAY 1

INTRO:

Have each family member try to answer the question 'what good thing must we do to get eternal life?'

RECAP:

What did your children learn about at church on Sunday?

READ MATTHEW 19:16-22

¹⁶ Just then a man came up to Jesus and asked, "Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?" ¹⁷ "Why do you ask me about what is good?" Jesus replied. "There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, keep the commandments." ¹⁸ "Which ones?" he inquired. Jesus replied, "'You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, ¹⁹honour your father and mother,' and 'love your neighbour as yourself.'" ²⁰ "All these I have kept," the young man said. "What do I still lack?" ²¹ Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." ²² When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth.

EXPLORE:

What answer did Jesus provide to this man's question? (*Keep the commandments*)

Which commandments did Jesus tell him to keep? (*Don't murder, commit adultery, steal or give false testimony; honour your mum and dad, and love your neighbour*)

What one thing did he still lack? (*Selling his possessions and giving to the poor to gain treasure in heaven*)

APPLY:

'Treasure in heaven' is something that Matthew has already written about (6:20). There Jesus challenged his disciples that "you cannot serve both God and money". It is noteworthy that Jesus tells this man to keep all the commandments that are other-person focused, but that he doesn't mention any of the God-focused ones (like 'you shall have no other gods before me'). It seems this was a good man who ultimately loved his wealth more than God.

PRAY:

Thank our Heavenly Father that eternal life is his free gift to us when we put him first. Pray that we might keep the commandments out of thankfulness rather than out of trying to earn eternal life.

MEMORY VERSE: (OPTIONAL ACTIVITY TIME PERMITTING)

Peter answered him, "We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?"

Matthew 19:27

Do some coin rubbing and write the words of this week's verse on the back of the coins. Put them into the right order and then keep these for the next devotion.

WEEK 7: Aug 27-Sep 2

DAY 2

INTRO:

Get the members of your family to try to do some near-impossible things: lick their elbow, twitch your nose, wiggle your ears, put your fist in your mouth, or sneeze with your eyes open.

RECAP:

What did Jesus say this man had to do to get eternal life?

READ MATTHEW 19:21-26

²¹ Jesus answered the young man, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." ²² When he heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth. ²³ Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Truly I tell you, it is hard for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. ²⁴ Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God." ²⁵ When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and asked, "Who then can be saved?" ²⁶ Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

EXPLORE:

Who did Jesus say would find it hard to enter the kingdom of heaven? (*The rich*)

How did the disciples respond? (*They were greatly astonished and asked 'who then can be saved?'*)

What did Jesus say? (*"With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible"*)

APPLY:

From the previous devotion it might sound like we have to be good or give away all our possessions in order to get eternal life. Jesus explains in this passage that it is impossible for people to be good enough. God wants us to be perfect as he is perfect (Matt 5:48). Salvation is only possible for any of us because God makes us perfect by taking away our sin and giving us the righteousness of his Son.

PRAY:

Thank our Heavenly Father that he has made it possible for us to be saved. Pray that we will be more thankful for how impossible it is for us to be saved by ourselves and that we will praise God for his kindness in saving us.

MEMORY VERSE: (OPTIONAL ACTIVITY TIME PERMITTING)

Peter answered him, "We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?"

Matthew 19:27

Use the coins from the previous devotion to recap this week's verse. Leave out some of the coins each time you say it until there are none left.

WEEK 7: Aug 27-Sep 2

DAY 3

INTRO:

Tell your family about an unexpected reward that you have won or earned.

RECAP:

How has God made salvation possible for us?

READ MATTHEW 19:27-30

²⁷ Peter answered Jesus, "We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?"

²⁸ Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. ²⁹ And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. ³⁰ But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first.

EXPLORE:

What did Peter want to know? (*What reward the disciples would have for following Jesus*)

What did Jesus say the disciples would do while he sat on his throne? (*Rule with him*)

What else did he say they would receive? (*A hundred times as much as they had lost on top of eternal life*)

APPLY:

Although following Jesus is costly the rewards are literally out of this world! Eternal life living with our Lord would be enough, but reigning with him AND enjoying the blessings of the next life is truly generous! God is and always will be amazingly gracious.

PRAY:

Thank our Heavenly Father that he promises to reward us so richly for following his Son. Pray that we will keep our eyes on the prize of living with Jesus when we feel like salvation is impossible.

MEMORY VERSE: (OPTIONAL ACTIVITY TIME PERMITTING)

Peter answered him, "We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?"

Matthew 19:27

Get each member of your family to say this week's verse and then answer it using one of the answers from today's devotion.

WEEK 8: Sep 3-9

DAY 1

INTRO:

Have you ever been mistaken for someone else? What happened?

RECAP:

What did your children learn about at church on Sunday?

READ MATTHEW 21:1-9

¹ As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, ² saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. ³ If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away." ⁴ This took place to fulfil what was spoken through the prophet: ⁵ "Say to Daughter Zion, 'See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'" The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. ⁷ They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on. ⁸ A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹ The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David!"

EXPLORE:

How did Jesus enter Jerusalem? (*Riding on a donkey*)

Why did he do that? (*To fulfil the prophecy that the king would come riding on a donkey*)

How did the crowds respond? (*They recognised Jesus as the Son of David, the promised king*)

APPLY:

As Jesus drew near to the capital city he showed who he really was. What a contrast it is! A king who rides a donkey is not particularly impressive, but it shows both Jesus' power and humility.

PRAY:

Thank our Heavenly Father that Jesus showed he is the king God promised would rule forever. Pray that we will be humble like Jesus each day and not show off or consider ourselves better than we are.

MEMORY VERSE: (OPTIONAL ACTIVITY TIME PERMITTING)

The whole city was stirred and asked "Who is this?" Matthew 21:5

Draw a picture of this passage and add to it this week's verse so that you can begin to learn it.

WEEK 8: Sep 3-9

DAY 2

INTRO:

Share with your family a story about a time when someone did not recognise you.

RECAP:

How did Jesus enter Jerusalem?

READ MATTHEW 21:15-17

⁹The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!"
¹⁰When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, "Who is this?" ¹¹The crowds answered, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee." ¹²Then Jesus entered the temple courts and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the benches of those selling doves. ¹³"It is written," he said to them, "'My house will be called a house of prayer,' but you are making it 'a den of robbers.'" ¹⁴The blind and the lame came to him at the temple, and he healed them. ¹⁵But when the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things he did and the children shouting in the temple courts, "Hosanna to the Son of David," they were indignant.

EXPLORE:

Who did the crowds say Jesus was? (*The Son of David; the prophet from Nazareth*)

Who did Jesus say he was when he cleared the temple? (*The Lord God; he called the temple 'my house'*)

How did the religious leaders feel about this? (*They were indignant or upset and annoyed*)

APPLY:

The people of Jerusalem refused to recognise Jesus as the Lord God, the Son of David or The Prophet. We will see why in the next devotion.

PRAY:

Thank our Heavenly Father that Jesus is all of these things: God's Son, our king, the promised one who stand before God for us like Moses. Pray that we will recognise all these things that he has done for us and be thankful.

MEMORY VERSE: (OPTIONAL ACTIVITY TIME PERMITTING)

The whole city was stirred and asked "Who is this?" Matthew 21:5

Come up with some actions to help you remember this week's verse.

WEEK 8: Sep 3-9

DAY 3

INTRO:

What is your favourite parable?

RECAP:

How did the religious leaders feel about who Jesus was?

READ MATTHEW 21:33-41

³³ "Listen to another parable: There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a winepress in it and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and moved to another place. ³⁴ When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit. ³⁵ "The tenants seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. ³⁶ Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time, and the tenants treated them the same way. ³⁷ Last of all, he sent his son to them. 'They will respect my son,' he said. ³⁸ "But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, 'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him and take his inheritance.' ³⁹ So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. ⁴⁰ "Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" ⁴¹ "He will bring them to a wretched end," they replied, "and he will rent the vineyard to others, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time."

EXPLORE:

What did the landowner want from the farmers? (*His share of the fruit of the harvest*)

What did the farmers do to his servants and son? (*They hurt and killed them*)

What would the landowner do about this? (*Punish the farmers and give his land to others*)

APPLY:

This is not a very well known parable but it explains how God's people treated Jesus. Just as they had rejected the warnings of the prophets so Israel would reject the Son. Matthew wanted his people to know that those who didn't accept Jesus as king would be punished and others would receive the good things he has promised.

PRAY:

Thank our Heavenly Father that we have received these good things even though God's promises weren't originally given to us. Pray that we will listen to this warning and continue to respect God's Son each day by watching the way that we live.

MEMORY VERSE: (OPTIONAL ACTIVITY TIME PERMITTING)

The whole city was stirred and asked "Who is this?" Matthew 21:5

Write the words of this week's verse on different pieces of paper. Stir them all together into a jumble and then try to put the verse into its correct order.

WEEK 9: Sep 10-16

DAY 1

INTRO:

What is your family planning to do in the next school holidays? Discuss together any plans you might have.

RECAP:

What did your children learn about at church on Sunday?

READ MATTHEW 25:31-33

³¹ "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. ³² All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

EXPLORE:

How did Jesus refer to himself in this passage? (*As the Son of Man*)

What did he say he would do after he sat on his throne? (*Gather people of every nation and separate them*)

How would he separate these people? (*As a shepherd separates sheep from goats*)

APPLY:

For the last few chapters of *Matthew* Jesus, after being challenged by the religious leaders, had started to talk about the end of his ministry and the start of a new age. As Jesus began another parable he told his disciples his future plans. After dying and rising again he would receive all power and authority from his father as the Son of Man (Dan 7:13-14). He would use this to judge all the nations.

PRAY:

Thank our Heavenly Father that he has shared with us his future plans. Pray that, being aware of what the future holds for us, we will let these plans shape our present lives and prepare well for the judgement to come.

MEMORY VERSE: (OPTIONAL ACTIVITY TIME PERMITTING)

He will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.
Matthew 25:32

Use cotton wool and normal wool to construct a picture capturing this scene. Write the words of this week's verse above it. Keep the picture in a central place so that you can see it and start to learn the verse.

WEEK 9: Sep 10-16

DAY 2

INTRO:

Grab some items and sort them into two piles. See if the members of your family can guess the reason why you divided the items as you did.

RECAP:

What would Jesus begin to do after he took his throne in heaven?

READ MATTHEW 25:33-40

³³The Son of Man will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. ³⁴"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. ³⁵For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' ³⁷"Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?'³⁸When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? ³⁹When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' ⁴⁰"The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

EXPLORE:

Who did Jesus put on his right hand side? (*The sheep, the righteous (v37)*)

Why did Jesus put them on his right? (*They had cared for Jesus*)

How had they done these things? (*They had done these things for Jesus' people and so done them for Jesus*)

APPLY:

This is a very encouraging passage! It is encouraging to see how closely Jesus identifies with his people; what we do for other Christians we do for our Lord!

PRAY:

Thank our Heavenly Father that Jesus identifies with us his people so closely. Pray that we will care for others in the ways that Jesus describes in this passage.

MEMORY VERSE: (OPTIONAL ACTIVITY TIME PERMITTING)

He will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.
Matthew 25:32

Do the Intro activity again, but this time let your kids write the words of this week's verse onto separate pieces of paper that they can divide up into different piles. See if you can guess why they separated them as they did!

WEEK 9: Sep 10-16

DAY 3

INTRO:

What have your family members been challenged by in our series on *Matthew*? Reflect on the stories and the things you have learnt and share what you have found most challenging.

RECAP:

Who did Jesus separate into the group on his right?

READ MATTHEW 25:33, 41-46

³³The Son of Man will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

⁴¹"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ⁴²For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.' ⁴⁴"They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?' ⁴⁵"He will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.' ⁴⁶"Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

EXPLORE:

Who did Jesus separate into the group on his left? (*The goats, or those cursed by God (v41)*)

Why were these people put into this group? (*They had not cared for Jesus' people and therefore for Jesus*)

What happened to this group as a result? (*They were punished and didn't receive eternal life*)

APPLY:

This part of Jesus' story is very challenging. It shows that how we will be judged depends on how we treat Jesus and his people. This is shown by our acts of faith. Which of the things that Jesus specifically mentions are your family good at doing? On which ones do you need to work?

PRAY:

Thank our Heavenly Father that he has given us a clear warning about the judgement to come. Pray that we will increase in our care for the people of God in the practical ways you thought of above.

MEMORY VERSE: (OPTIONAL ACTIVITY TIME PERMITTING)

He will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.
Matthew 25:32

Divide your family into two groups. Alternate between the groups in saying the words of this week's verse until you have remembered and said the whole verse.

WEEK 10: Sep 17-23

PRAY:

Spend your Family Devotion time this week:

- Praying for your family and those in your Small Groups to follow Jesus well;
- Praying that as we go about our daily lives we might teach people as Jesus has commanded us (Matthew 28:18-20);
- Asking God to bless our upcoming Vision Series.

