

EXTRAORDINARY



ST PAUL'S
CASTLE HILL

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

This is only suggested if time permits as it may be a slightly longer activity. You may design something to remember the verse or do some fun games or activities to aid in remembering the verses.

WEEK 1: Feb 4-10

DAY 1

INTRO:

Think of a big job that you had to do. How did you prepare for it? What did you have to do to get ready for the work?

RECAP:

What did your children learn about at church on Sunday?

READ ACTS 1:1-4

¹In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach ²until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen.³After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.

EXPLORE:

What had Luke's former book been about? (*All that Jesus had begun to do and teach until he suffered and died*)

What had Jesus done for the next forty days? (*Convinced his apostles that he was alive, instructed them and spoken about the kingdom of God*)

What did Jesus do next? (*He was taken up into heaven*)

APPLY:

A sense of anticipation for big things to happen is created in this introduction: Jesus has been preparing his disciples and getting them ready for what he has only begun to do! Speaking of Jesus' earthly ministry as only the beginning of his work means something much more exciting and important is coming, so when we are then told he was taken up to heaven it seems like a bit of an anticlimax. However the book of Acts is anything but, as we will see!

PRAY:

Thank our Heavenly Father that Jesus began his ministry while he was here on earth but is still about his work today. Pray that we might prepare ourselves today to learn what Jesus is doing now he is in heaven throughout this new series.

MEMORY VERSE: (OPTIONAL ACTIVITY TIME PERMITTING)

You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses.

Acts 1:8

Draw a picture of Jesus going up into heaven, using cotton wool as clouds. Add this week's verse in a speech bubble and keep it in a place where you can see it and begin to learn it.

WEEK 1: Feb 4-10

DAY 2

INTRO:

Think about some jobs that need doing (homework, unpack dishwasher, mow lawn etc) and brainstorm what you need to do these things.

RECAP:

What had Luke written about in his former book?

READ ACTS 1:6-8

⁶ Then they gathered around him and asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" ⁷ He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

EXPLORE:

Who would provide the power necessary for the disciples to do their job? (*The Holy Spirit*)

What job did Jesus give his disciples? (*To be his witnesses*)

Where did Jesus command his disciples to do this? (*In Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and ultimately to the ends of the earth*)

APPLY:

In our previous devotion we saw that Jesus' ministry would continue from heaven. We see now how it would continue: in the power of his Spirit his followers would witness about him. Jesus' rule is seen as his Word is powerfully used by his Spirit!

PRAY:

Thank our Heavenly Father that Jesus' ministry continues from heaven. Pray that we will be filled with the Holy Spirit so that we might witness for Jesus in the week ahead.

MEMORY VERSE: (OPTIONAL ACTIVITY TIME PERMITTING)

You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses.

Acts 1:8

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

WEEK 1: Feb 4-10

DAY 3

INTRO:

Hide something for your kids to look for and find.

RECAP:

How would Jesus' disciples continue his ministry?

READ ACTS 1:9-11

⁹After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. ¹⁰They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. ¹¹"Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."

EXPLORE:

What were Jesus' disciples looking for? (*Jesus, who, while talking to them, ascended into heaven*)

What happened while they were looking for Jesus? (*Two messengers appeared*)

What did these men say? (*Jesus would return in the same way that he was taken*)

APPLY:

In Acts 1:1 we read of the things that Jesus has begun to do. In Acts 1:8 we learnt that Jesus' disciples would witness to what they had seen and heard from him. This passage emphasises that the disciples saw Jesus taken up to heaven like Enoch or Elijah. Having been crowned king by his death and resurrection he now began his reign!

PRAY:

Thank our Heavenly Father that Jesus rules in heaven over the world, defeating all his enemies (1 Cor 15). Pray that we will expect Jesus to return in the same amazing way that he left, and that he might return soon, having defeated all of our enemies!

MEMORY VERSE: (OPTIONAL ACTIVITY TIME PERMITTING)

You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses.

Acts 1:8

Get each member of your family to write this week's verse from memory and then hide it for someone else to find.

WEEK 2: Feb 11-17

DAY 1

INTRO:

How many languages can the members of your family speak? If you could learn to speak any language which one would you choose and why?

RECAP:

What did your children learn about at church on Sunday?

READ ACTS 2:1-7, 12

¹When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.²Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. ⁵Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. ⁶When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. ⁷Utterly amazed, they asked: "Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans?"

¹²Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?"

EXPLORE:

What unusual things happened on the day of Pentecost? (*The sound of a mighty wind filled the house, something like tongues of fire rested on each person, & different languages were heard as the disciples spoke*)

Why did these things happen? (*Because the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples*)

How did the crowd respond? (*They gathered feeling bewildered, amazed & perplexed*)

APPLY:

Many unusual phenomenon accompanied the arrival of the Holy Spirit but we are told that what affected the crowd's response the most was the message they heard! This is what the passage goes on to focus upon, as will we. It reminds us that one of the main jobs the Spirit does is to allow people to hear and respond to God's word.

PRAY:

Thank our Heavenly Father that the Holy Spirit has been given to everyone who believes. Pray that we might not seek extraordinary acts of the Spirit but the ordinary response of hearing God's word as the Spirit helps us to understand it.

MEMORY VERSE: (OPTIONAL ACTIVITY TIME PERMITTING)

"What shall we do?" Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized". **Acts 2:37-38**

Make a paper headband and write on it this week's verse. Staple a flame to the front to remind you that we all have the Holy Spirit who has come upon each one of us!

WEEK 2: Feb 11-17

DAY 2

INTRO:

When was the last time you had to explain yourself to someone? What happened? What did you say? How was your explanation received?

RECAP:

What happened when the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples?

READ ACTS 2:14-18

¹⁴Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. ¹⁵These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! ¹⁶No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ¹⁷"In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. ¹⁸Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy".

EXPLORE:

Who explained to the crowd what was going on? (*Peter*)

What did he say was the reason? (*God had sent his Holy Spirit onto the disciples*)

Who did he say would receive the Spirit? (*All people: young & old, men & women*)

APPLY:

One of the most extraordinary things about the events of Pentecost is that the Spirit would be given to all people. No longer would only prophets or kings receive God's power and presence, but all believers!

PRAY:

Thank our Heavenly Father that we are all given the Holy Spirit when we trust in Jesus. Pray that like the disciples on Pentecost when we are filled by the Holy Spirit we will be able to explain the good news about the Lord Jesus.

MEMORY VERSE: (OPTIONAL ACTIVITY TIME PERMITTING)

"What shall we do?" Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized". **Acts 2:37-38**

Have a family member ask 'What shall we do' and another answer it using the rest of this week's verse. Take turns asking or answering in this way, using different voices and tones to do so each time.

WEEK 2: Feb 11-17

DAY 3

INTRO:

What do you think the Holy Spirit does?

RECAP:

Who explained to the crowd what was happening on the day of Pentecost?

READ ACTS 2:36-40

³⁶ "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah." ³⁷ When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" ³⁸ Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call." ⁴¹ Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

EXPLORE:

How did Peter end his explanation? (*He assured the crowd that they had killed their Lord and Messiah*)

How did Peter answer the crowd when they asked what they should do about this? (*He said that they needed to repent & have their sin washed away*)

How many people agreed to do this? (*About three thousand people*)

APPLY:

The Holy Spirit not only enabled Peter to challenge the crowd in a pretty bold way, but he also 'cut the crowd to the heart'. It is only through the Spirit that people can repent when they hear the Word of God; the most extraordinary thing about Pentecost is that three thousand people would repent of their sins after hearing Peter's message!

PRAY:

Thank our Heavenly Father that he sends his Spirit into everyday people so that they can hear God's Word and repent. Pray that we will see a mighty outpouring of God's Spirit as many people are 'cut to the heart' and become assured that Jesus is both Lord & Messiah.

MEMORY VERSE: (OPTIONAL ACTIVITY TIME PERMITTING)

"What shall we do?" Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized". **Acts 2:37-38**

Use this week's verse in your prayer above, asking that many people might respond in these ways in the year ahead.

WEEK 3: Feb 18-24

DAY 1

INTRO:

What would you say you are devoted to? That is, what things do you do repeatedly and consistently?

RECAP:

What did your children learn about at church on Sunday?

READ ACTS 2:41-42

⁴¹Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. ⁴²They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

EXPLORE:

How many new believers joined the church after Pentecost? (*3000, taking the total of believers to about 3120*)

What did these new believers devote themselves to? (*The apostle's teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread and prayer*)

* How many of these would you say you are devoted to?

APPLY:

Luke listed four things that characterised the early church. Each is explained in the verses that follow so that we will understand what was important to the first followers of Christ. While each should characterise our devotion to the Lord, the most important one comes first in his list as it leads to the others. Luke repeatedly stresses in the book of Acts that devotion to the apostolic teaching or the word of the Lord is what shapes the church.

PRAY:

Thank our Heavenly Father for the devotion of the early church. Pray that we will be devoted to the same things, especially the apostle's teaching as found in the New Testament.

MEMORY VERSE: (OPTIONAL ACTIVITY TIME PERMITTING)

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Acts 2:42

What do you think each of these terms means? Try to come up with a picture / icon of each one so that you can start to remember this week's verse.

WEEK 3: Feb 18-24

DAY 2

INTRO:

What about God do you find awesome? Have each family member share two or three things.

RECAP:

What four things did the early church devote themselves to?

READ ACTS 2:42-46

⁴²They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. ⁴⁴All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. ⁴⁶Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts.

EXPLORE:

What filled everyone with awe in the days of the early church? (*The signs and wonders done by the apostles*)

What did these early believers do when they were together? (*They shared and helped the needy*)

How often would they meet to praise God? (*Every day*)

APPLY:

In Luke's writings signs and wonders confirm the message of the apostles. This means that as the apostles spoke of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ they did things that showed it (for example the healing of the lame man in the very next chapter). The believers' response to the gospel of grace was to be generous themselves in sharing both their money and time. Is God's grace something that you find awesome? How does God's generosity motivate you each week?

PRAY:

Thank our Heavenly Father that he is the source of all things and he delights to share them with us. Pray that we might image God to our world as we also delight to share and care for the needy in our world today.

MEMORY VERSE: (OPTIONAL ACTIVITY TIME PERMITTING)

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Acts 2:42

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

WEEK 3: Feb 18-24

DAY 3

INTRO:

Have a friendly competition: see who in your family can fill a cup the most with water without it spilling over.

RECAP:

How did the new believers respond to God's grace?

READ ACTS 2:42, 46-47

⁴²They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

⁴⁶Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

EXPLORE:

Besides the temple, where else did the new believers meet? (*In their homes*)

How did people feel about this? (*Their hearts were glad & sincere, and they enjoyed the favour of all people*)

What happened as a result? (*The Lord added to their number daily*)

APPLY:

In these sentences Luke shows that the fellowship of the new believers spilled over to affect others: it became worship, and worship led to witness. When we are generous too it should lead to us praising God and impacting the lives of others. In what concrete ways has your experience of God's grace spilled over into worship and witness?

PRAY:

Thank our Heavenly Father that he uses the way we live to impact those around us. Pray that our lives and the work of our church might cause more people to be added to God's family regularly.

MEMORY VERSE: (OPTIONAL ACTIVITY TIME PERMITTING)

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Acts 2:42

Break this week's verse up into phrases ('They devoted themselves to'; 'the apostles' teaching' etc) for the different members of your family to say. Then swap who says which phrase until you have all said the whole verse.

WEEK 4: Feb 25 – Mar 3

DAY 1

INTRO:

What places have you come across that you are not allowed in (e.g. Out of Bounds area at school, special access areas at work etc)? How do you feel about such restrictions?

RECAP:

What did your children learn about at church on Sunday?

READ ACTS 3:1-8

¹One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer—at three in the afternoon. ²Now a man who was lame from birth was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful, where he was put every day to beg from those going into the temple courts. ³When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money. ⁴Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, “Look at us!” ⁵So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them. ⁶Then Peter said, “Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.” ⁷Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man’s feet and ankles became strong. ⁸He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God.

EXPLORE:

Where were Peter and John going? (*To the temple to pray*)

Where was the beggar placed? (*At the temple gate that was called 'Beautiful'*)

What was the man able to do once he was healed? (*Walk into the temple praising God*)

APPLY:

This story really emphasises the hopelessness of this man’s situation: he had to be carried to his spot outside the temple and he didn’t even look at Peter and John as he begged. The contrast at the end of the story is huge: he jumped to his feet, delighting in being able to walk for the first time since he was born. Such is the power of the name of Jesus: the man could not only walk but for the first time in his life he danced into God’s presence!

PRAY:

Thank our Heavenly Father that, despite our sin, we too can enter his presence in the name of Jesus. Pray that we might enter with joy as this man did!

MEMORY VERSE: (OPTIONAL ACTIVITY TIME PERMITTING)

By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see & know was made strong. Acts 3:16

Draw a picture of the story above as Peter said this week’s verse to the crowd that gathered as a result of the healing.

WEEK 4: Feb 25 – Mar 3

DAY 2

INTRO:

What was the last thing that you were blamed for doing? How did you feel?

RECAP:

What was the man whom Peter & John met at the temple able to do for the first time?

READ ACTS 3:12-15

¹²When Peter saw [the crowd forming], he said to them: "Fellow Israelites, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? ¹³The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate – though he had decided to let him go. ¹⁴You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. ¹⁵You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this".

EXPLORE:

Why did Peter think the crowd was staring? (*It seemed they thought Peter & John had healed the man by their own power or godliness*)

Why did Peter blame the crowd (*Because they handed Jesus over to be killed*)

* How do you think the crowd felt to be blamed for this?

APPLY:

In his first few speeches in Acts Peter continually blames the Jews for disowning their Messiah. After Pentecost three thousand people were 'cut to their heart' as a result. After this story we are told nearly two thousand people were convicted of their sin (4:5). Peter did this because he wanted to point out that just as faith in Jesus healed a crippled man so it would heal those crippled by sin.

PRAY:

Thank our Heavenly Father that through faith we too have been healed of sin by Jesus. Pray that when we feel crippled by sin we will confess it to Jesus and receive forgiveness and delivery from guilt and shame.

MEMORY VERSE: (OPTIONAL ACTIVITY TIME PERMITTING)

By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see & know was made strong. Acts 3:16

Use this week's verse as a prayer as you confess your sins together as a family.

WEEK 4: Feb 25 – Mar 3

DAY 3

INTRO:

Sit down to do devotions with your family and then announce that you have changed your mind about where to sit and do them. Repeat this a few times until your family asks what is going on. Explain today's passage is about changing one's mind.

RECAP:

Why did Peter point out the crowd's sin in the previous devotion?

READ ACTS 3:16-20

[Peter continued] ¹⁶ "By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has completely healed him, as you can all see. ¹⁷ "Now, fellow Israelites, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. ¹⁸ But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Messiah would suffer. ¹⁹ Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, ²⁰ and that he may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus".

EXPLORE:

Why does Peter say the Israelites killed Jesus? (*Because they acted in ignorance*)

What does Peter say they should do in response? (*Repent and turn to God*)

What does he say will happen if they do? (*Their sins will be wiped out, times of refreshing will come and the Jesus will return*)

APPLY:

When God's people rejected Jesus they didn't know or realise who he was and that he was sent by God. The correct responses to this sin are to repent, which means to change one's mind, and to turn back to God, recognising his Son. Doing so would wash away the people's sin and refresh them as they begun to live under the rule of their Messiah.

PRAY:

Thank our Heavenly Father that he is quick to forgive and that he wants to refresh our understanding of all that he has done for us. Pray that he will daily change our minds away from sin so that we can keep turning back to living his way.

MEMORY VERSE: (OPTIONAL ACTIVITY TIME PERMITTING)

By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see & know was made strong. Acts 3:16

Rejoice that this week's verse can be true of each one of us when we repent and turn back to God! Celebrate by joyfully calling out each word one at a time until your family has covered the whole verse.

WEEK 5: Mar 4-10

DAY 1

INTRO:

Brainstorm with your children fitting punishments for different things: e.g. not doing one's chores, arguing with a one's teacher, stealing something etc.

RECAP:

What did your children learn about at church on Sunday?

READ ACTS 4:1-3

¹The priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to Peter and John while they were speaking to the people.²They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people, proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. ³They seized Peter and John and, because it was evening, they put them in jail until the next day.

EXPLORE:

Who else joined the crowd after Peter and John healed the lame man? (*The priests, the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees*)

How did they feel about Peter and John teaching the people? (*Greatly disturbed*)

What did they do? (*Seized them and put them in jail*)

APPLY:

It hardly seems fair to teach about resurrection and end up in jail! However back then, and still today, people can react very strongly to our beliefs about Jesus. There are still people all over the world today who run the risk of being thrown in jail for teaching about Jesus!

PRAY:

Thank our Heavenly Father that we can safely teach and follow Jesus in Australia. Pray that Christians around the world who suffer for following Jesus may continue to be courageous and to trust in the resurrection.

MEMORY VERSE: (OPTIONAL ACTIVITY TIME PERMITTING)

Jesus is 'the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone'. **Acts 4:11**

Find a nice stone big enough to write on it this week's verse but small enough to carry around in your bag or pocket this week. After you do so whenever you see it pray for the persecuted church.

WEEK 5: Mar 4-10

DAY 2

INTRO:

Share with your family a time when you felt rejected (perhaps left out of something, not picked for a team, not liked by someone etc).

RECAP:

What happened to Peter and John when they started to teach the crowd?

READ ACTS 4:5-11

⁵The next day the rulers, the elders and the teachers of the law met in Jerusalem. ⁶Annas the high priest was there, and so were Caiaphas, John, Alexander and others of the high priest's family. ⁷They had Peter and John brought before them and began to question them: "By what power or what name did you do this?" ⁸Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: "Rulers and elders of the people! ⁹If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a man who was lame and are being asked how he was healed, ¹⁰then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. ¹¹Jesus is 'the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone'".

EXPLORE:

What did the Jewish leaders want to know? (*By what power or name Peter and John had healed the lame man*)

How did Peter answer? (*It had happened in the name of Jesus*)

What did Peter particularly point out about Jesus? (*They had rejected Jesus by crucifying him, but God had raised him and made him the cornerstone*)

APPLY:

We saw in the previous devotion that Peter and John did not get into trouble for healing a lame man but for teaching about Jesus and the resurrection of the dead. Peter's speech above shows that he recognises that he is simply following Jesus; just as the Jewish leaders rejected Jesus' message and miracles so they now rejected Peter's.

PRAY:

Thank our Heavenly Father that Peter helps us realise that to follow a crucified Lord means that people may reject us too. Pray that we might be filled with the Spirit like Peter so that we too can continue to speak out courageously for our Lord.

MEMORY VERSE: (OPTIONAL ACTIVITY TIME PERMITTING)

Jesus is 'the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone'. **Acts 4:11**

Cut out some squares of brown paper. Use them to make a stone wall and write on the cornerstone this week's verse.

WEEK 5: Mar 4-10

DAY 3

INTRO:

What do you think is the bravest thing you have ever done?

RECAP:

What had happened to both Jesus and Peter?

READ ACTS 4:13-20

¹³When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus. ¹⁴But since they could see the man who had been healed standing there with them, there was nothing they could say. ¹⁵So they ordered them to withdraw from the Sanhedrin and then conferred together. ¹⁶“What are we going to do with these men?” they asked. “Everyone living in Jerusalem knows they have performed a notable sign, and we cannot deny it. ¹⁷But to stop this thing from spreading any further among the people, we must warn them to speak no longer to anyone in this name.” ¹⁸Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. ¹⁸Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. ¹⁹But Peter and John replied, “Which is right in God’s eyes: to listen to you, or to him? You be the judges! ²⁰As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.”

EXPLORE:

What did the Jewish leaders particularly notice about Peter and John? (*Their courage and that they were ordinary people*)

Why did they warn them to no longer speak of Jesus? (*They wanted to stop the spread of the good news about Jesus*)

How did Peter and John respond? (*They said they would obey God rather than these men*)

APPLY:

Peter and John did an amazingly courageous thing; they risked angering the Jewish leaders and being kicked out of the temple, the centre of Jewish life. This might have lost further opportunities to tell their fellow countrymen the good news! Instead they trusted the Lord Jesus and chose to obey his command to witness about him.

PRAY:

Thank our Heavenly Father that the Holy Spirit gave these ordinary men such courage. Pray that we too might have wisdom and courage to know when to speak out for the Lord.

MEMORY VERSE: (OPTIONAL ACTIVITY TIME PERMITTING)

Jesus is ‘the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone’. **Acts 4:11**

Take turns saying this week’s verse in the bravest voice you can.

WEEK 6: Mar 11-17

DAY 1

INTRO:

Think about the last time you got into trouble. What was the first thing that you immediately did?

RECAP:

What did your children learn about at church on Sunday?

READ ACTS 4:23-24

²³On their release from jail, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. ²⁴When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God.

EXPLORE:

Where had Peter and John been? (*in jail*)

What was the first thing they did when they were released? (*They went and reported to the church what had happened*)

What was the first thing the church did? (*They prayed*)

APPLY:

As Christians we know that God is in charge. Yet we so often forget this and try and deal with things on our own! The early church challenges us to make prayer our first response whenever trouble (or things to celebrate!) come our way.

PRAY:

Thank our Heavenly Father that he is in control of all things that happen to us each day. Pray that through his Holy Spirit he might make prayer and praise our first response to all of life's situations.

MEMORY VERSE: (OPTIONAL ACTIVITY TIME PERMITTING)

"Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness". Acts 4:29

Write out each word of this week's verse separately and get your family to consider trying to put the verse in the correct order.

WEEK 6: Mar 11-17

DAY 2

INTRO:

When you suffer or go through bad times how do you picture God? Do you picture him as the loving Father who cares for you while you're hurting? Perhaps as the brother who understands what you're going through? Or something else?

RECAP:

What was the first thing the believers did when they heard the report of Peter and John?

READ ACTS 4:24-28

²⁴ When they heard [the report], they raised their voices together in prayer to God. "Sovereign Lord," they said, "you made the heavens and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. ²⁵You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David: 'Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? ²⁶The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together against the Lord and against his anointed one'. ²⁷Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. ²⁸They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen".

EXPLORE:

How did the early believers picture God when they suffered? (*As the Sovereign Lord*)

Whose suffering did they link their suffering too? (*Jesus' suffering*)

What did they conclude about Jesus' suffering? (*God had allowed it in his power because it was part of his plan*)

APPLY:

This is a pretty extraordinary prayer! The early church didn't just picture God as someone to cry out to but someone whose power was so great even the rejection of his people would advance his plans for the world! Do you picture God as able to use everything, even the bad things that happen to you, to make you more like Jesus?

PRAY:

Thank our Heavenly Father that nothing can stop his plans for us to become more like Jesus. Pray that when we are hurting we might trust God as the Sovereign Lord who can use everything for his glory and for our good.

MEMORY VERSE: (OPTIONAL ACTIVITY TIME PERMITTING)

"Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness". Acts 4:29

Turn this week's verse into a prayer for anyone you know who is going through a tough time at present.

WEEK 6: Mar 11-17

DAY 3

INTRO:

What are some ways that your family serves at church? If you could serve in any way what would it be?

RECAP:

What did the early church understand God to be doing when they suffered?

READ ACTS 4:24, 29-31

²⁴ When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God.

²⁹ "Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness.³⁰ Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus." ³¹ After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.

EXPLORE:

How did the early church view themselves? (*As the servants of the Lord*)

How did they want to serve their Lord? (*By speaking his word with boldness*)

How was their prayer answered? (*They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and able to do so*)

APPLY:

In the previous devotion we saw that the church pictured God as the Sovereign Lord who had power to bring good things from bad. Here we see that they picture themselves as humble servants entrusted with his word. There are many ministries in the church today but none will grow the church more than speaking God's word with great boldness. Imagine what might happen if we prayed the same prayer as the early church!

PRAY:

Thank our Heavenly Father that although he is the Almighty and Sovereign Lord he has entrusted us with his word. Pray that he might also enable us as his servants to speak his word with great boldness in the weeks ahead.

MEMORY VERSE: (OPTIONAL ACTIVITY TIME PERMITTING)

"Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness". Acts 4:29

Use this week's verse as a motivation to sign up to serve at our church if you are not already in ministry. Alternatively if you are encourage those you serve with by sharing with them this verse!



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