



ST. JAMES CHURCH

FAMILY DEVOTION PACK 1: PARABLES



BEFORE YOU START, READ THIS!



One of the best ways to grow faith in your family is to read the bible and pray together. If you already know this is true, then you probably also know it's easier said than done! Getting home late from work, the burden of homework, and arguing over chores can easily crowd out time for reading and praying together. The goal of this material is to give you a roadmap to family devotions that are short, simple, achievable, flexible and fun. You can tell your kids that reading the bible and praying is important, but they will only ever believe it if you *show* them it's important. If you think you can do one devotion a night, this pack will last you two weeks. But if you can only manage three a week, that's ok too. The goal is to start a new habit as a family, not to keep score.

The pages that follow are a guide for you, the parent. They are not designed to be given to each member of the family as a worksheet. There are no answers, but you will find a footnote if we think a little bit of explanation might be helpful. The format of these devotions begins with a sharing question, followed by three discovery questions. It's as simple as that! We've also added three optional age specific questions for you to use, depending on the make-up of your family. Each page finishes with an idea for prayer. Ideally, each devotion should take no more than 15 min. It's probably best to think of the questions as prompts. Some families will love the sharing question, others will find it tedious. If that's you, skip it! For those families with younger kids, even the discovery questions might be pitched a little high. If that's the case, then use them so that you have a good feel for the passage, and then ask questions that you know your kids will get. The questions are there to keep the conversation on track, and to give you something to fall back on should you lose your way.

DON'T

Talk too much. Avoid a lecture at all costs!

Pretend to have all the answers. If you get stuck, be honest and tell the family you'll ask someone for help.

Worry if you have a bad night. Success in family devotions is measured in faithfulness over time.

DO

Give everyone who wants, a chance to read and pray.

Make it fun, especially for the younger kids. Pick a key verse to memorise, and don't get cross if someone gets the giggles.

Use the same translation of the bible. Let little kids follow along in their picture bibles.

Try and stick to the same time every night so that it becomes part of your family routine.

In future editions, we will show you different ways of reading and praying together – variety is the spice of life! So as you work through this set with your family, take a mental note of what works and what doesn't. The ultimate goal is for you to be able to do them all by yourself. **Enjoy!**

THE SOWER AND THE SOILS



READ
Mark Ch 4:1-20¹

SHARE TOGETHER

When was the last time you didn't listen carefully? What was the result?

DISCOVER TOGETHER

- 1) What do the different seeds and the different soils represent?
- 2) According to Jesus' story, what are some of the things that will stop us from listening to and believing God's word?
- 3) Which of these things affects you the most? Which soil best represents you at the moment?

UNDER 7'S

(As you read, let the little ones draw what they hear).
What things make a seed grow best?
How does God make us grow?

OVER 7'S

What makes someone a good listener?
In v20, what does Jesus say is the key to listening to God?

TEENS / PARENTS

Can you think of someone you know who fits the description of one of the soils? What affect has this had on their life?



PRAY TOGETHER

Lord, please forgive us for the times when we hear your word but don't listen properly. Please help us to not only listen, but to humbly accept it and put it into action. Amen

¹ Verses 10-12 will no doubt raise some questions. Jesus quotes from Isaiah who was told he must preach to Israel even though they would not listen. For those who hardened their hearts against God's word, they would miss out on the gospel Isaiah was preaching. In the same way, to those on the outside (like the Pharisees and teachers of the law) their refusal to listen to Jesus' teaching confirms their unbelief.

THE PERSISTENT WIDOW



READ
Luke Ch 18:1-8

SHARE TOGETHER

If you only had three words to describe what God is like, what words would you choose?

DISCOVER TOGETHER

1) Why did the judge eventually listen to the widow? How is God like the judge? How is he different?¹

2) Why is prayer sometimes hard? List as many reasons as you can.

3) What have you learnt about God from this parable that can help you to pray and not give up?

UNDER 7'S

Prayer is talking to God. What kinds of things can we talk to God about?

OVER 7'S

In v7 there are two questions with no answers. Do you think Jesus expects us to answer yes or no? Why?

TEENS / PARENTS

What are some prayers you have prayed that God has answered quickly? Are there prayers you have prayed that God has not answered yet? How does this parable help you while you wait?



PRAY TOGETHER

Thank God that he is kind and generous and always ready to listen and act on behalf of his children. If you have talked about prayers that have yet to be answered, pray as a family about those things now. Amen

¹ Parent Note:

Jesus isn't saying that God is the same as the unjust judge. Rather, that if an uncaring judge eventually listened to the widow's request, how much more will God listen to his children when they pray to him. The reason we can pray and not get discouraged is because of who God is. His character is why we can pray and not give up.

THE LOST SHEEP



READ
Luke Ch 15:1-7

SHARE TOGETHER

What is the thing that you have lost that you miss the most? Why?

DISCOVER TOGETHER

1) In verse 7 Jesus explains the parable. Who is the shepherd and who are the sheep?

2) In this parable Jesus says there are only two kinds of people, those who are lost and those who are found. Can you explain in your own words what it means to be lost and found?

3) According to this story, what does God want most for sinners?

UNDER 7'S

What makes God happy?

OVER 7'S

When it comes to God, are you like the lost sheep or the sheep that has been found? Why?

TEENS / PARENTS

Luke gives us the context of Jesus' parable in verses 1 and 2. What lesson do you think Jesus wanted the Pharisees to learn from this parable?



PRAY TOGETHER

Father, thank you that Jesus is our good shepherd who has come to find us and bring us home. Pray now for someone you know who is still lost and doesn't know God.

THE PHARISEE & TAX COLLECTOR



READ
Luke Ch18: 9–14

SHARE TOGETHER

Who do you compare yourself to? How does that make you feel about yourself?

DISCOVER TOGETHER

- 1) Who do the two men in the story compare themselves to? How did it make each of them feel?
- 2) How are the two men's prayers different?
- 3) How are we justified (put right) with God?

UNDER 7'S

Which man does God like more?

OVER 7'S

What made the Pharisee think that he was okay with God?

TEENS / PARENTS

In what ways do we often think we are better than others? What happens when we do that?

Who should we rather compare ourselves to? What happens when we do that?



PRAY TOGETHER

Ask God to help us remain humble by always comparing ourselves to Him instead of thinking we are good by comparing ourselves to others.

THE PRODIGAL SON



READ

Luke Ch 15:11-32

SHARE TOGETHER

Have you ever made a decision that you regretted? What was it?

DISCOVER TOGETHER

- 1) Why do you think the youngest son's request was so shocking?
- 2) What was life like for him away from his father?
- 3) How did the son expect his Father to treat him when he got home? How did the father surprise him?

UNDER 7'S

How do you think the father in the story felt when he saw his son coming home?
How do we know this?

OVER 7'S

How do we know the son was really sorry? How did his attitude and actions show this?

TEENS / PARENTS

Why do you think the older son was so angry when his brother came home? What do we learn from his response? ¹



PRAY TOGETHER

Thank God that he is always ready to accept us back, even after we have run away from him. Ask him to help you to live lives that show we are truly sorry and that bring him honour and glory.

¹ Parent Note:

The youngest son in this parable is a picture of everyone who turns their back on God and chooses to live their lives their own way. He is the rebel. The older brother is the self-righteous person who thinks they can earn their fathers love. He is religious. But whether you are a rebel or religious, the lesson Jesus wants us to learn is that it's only the love of God the Father that makes it possible to find our way home.

THE RICH FOOL



READ

Luke Ch12: 13–21

SHARE TOGETHER

What is the best thing you can do to prepare for the future?

DISCOVER TOGETHER

1) What was most important to the rich man? What did he not think was important at all?

2) Why did God call him a fool?

3) What lesson did you learn from this parable?

UNDER 7'S

What does it mean to be greedy?

OVER 7'S

What mistake did the rich man make?

TEENS / PARENTS

In verse 15 Jesus warns us that life does not consist of the abundance of your possessions. Why will collecting more stuff not help us when Jesus returns?



PRAY TOGETHER

Ask God to help us remember that life is not about the stuff we have here. Ask him to help us to invest in being rich towards him long before we invest in being rich in this world.

THE TEN BRIDESMAIDS



READ

Matthew Ch 25:1-13

SHARE TOGETHER

Can you think of a time you fell asleep when you should have stayed awake?

DISCOVER TOGETHER

1) In the parable, who is the bridegroom, who are the bridesmaids, and what does the wedding banquet represent? ¹

2) What mistake did the five foolish bridesmaids make?

3) Verse 13 explains the meaning of the parable. What is the most important thing that Jesus wants us to be prepared for?

UNDER 7'S

Jesus is coming back soon!
What is the best way to get ready for heaven?

OVER 7'S

The bridesmaids fell asleep because they didn't know when the groom was coming back. Would you be ready to meet Jesus if he came tomorrow?

TEENS / PARENTS

Everything we do either helps us prepare for Jesus' return, or keeps us from being ready. What are some things that help keep you ready? What are the things that distract you?



PRAY TOGETHER

Father, thank you that Jesus is coming back soon. Help us to be ready when he comes. Keep us from foolish distractions. Make us more and more excited for heaven. Amen

¹ Parent Note:

The parable Jesus tells describes a part of the wedding celebrations typical in the first century. In some bibles the ten virgins are described as ten bridesmaids. That's compared to the equivalent role they played when compare to our modern wedding ceremonies, and may be easier to explain to little kids! You might have to explain details such as the lamps, which would have been small handheld clay lamps that looked similar to the lamp from Disney's Aladdin.

THE TREASURE AND THE PEARL



READ
Matthew
Ch13:44-46

SHARE TOGETHER

What makes something precious or valuable?

DISCOVER TOGETHER

1) There are 2 parables in this passage. What 2 things does Jesus compare the kingdom of heaven to? ¹

2) How do you know that the men in each parable treasured the thing that they found?

3) What makes being part of God's kingdom so good? List as many reasons as you can for why it's so valuable.

UNDER 7'S

Who do you think should be our greatest treasure? Why?

OVER 7'S

What does the world try to offer us that is better than Jesus? How do we know that it's not?

TEENS / PARENTS

This parable shows us how precious it is to be a part of God's kingdom and how we should pursue it above everything else. What kinds of things get in the way of us pursuing God's kingdom?



PRAY TOGETHER

Thank God that Jesus is the greatest treasure we could ever find. Ask Him to help you to treasure him above all else.

¹ Parent Note:

Matthew uses the phrase 'The kingdom of heaven' while Mark prefers the title 'Kingdom of God'. They both refer to the same thing. That is, God has begun a community of people in this world who acknowledge Jesus as their King (to have a kingdom you need people, place and a ruler!) Although his kingdom has begun, it will only be seen in its fullness when Jesus returns.

THE UNMERCIFUL SERVANT



READ
Matthew
Ch 18:21-35

SHARE TOGETHER

Can you think of a time when you owed something to a friend, but they cancelled your debt? How did that make you feel?

DISCOVER TOGETHER

1) What is this parable about according to verses 21 and 22?

2) What phrase does Jesus use in his story to describe forgiveness (v27, 32)? What does that tell you about forgiveness?

3) Why were the actions of the forgiven servant so shocking to both the king and his fellow servants? ¹

UNDER 7'S

In Jesus' parable, the King represents God. What is God like according to this story?

OVER 7'S

How does v33 help us apply this parable to our daily lives?

TEENS / PARENTS

'Forgiveness is just ignoring the wrong that someone has done to you.' After reading this parable, do you agree with that statement? Why or why not?



PRAY TOGETHER

Father, thank you that you cancel our debts even though we don't deserve it. Help us to be just like you in our relationships with others. Make us people who are quick to forgive, even though it means we have to carry the cost. Amen

¹ Parent Note:

Verse 35 doesn't mean that if you forgive others you can earn God's forgiveness. But rather that those who have been forgiven by God will show that same attitude to others. If, like the ungrateful servant, you refuse to forgive others, it may well indicate that you have not yet experienced forgiveness from God himself.

THE WEDDING BANQUET



READ

Luke Ch 14:15-24

SHARE TOGETHER

What is the best party you have ever been to? What made it so great?

DISCOVER TOGETHER

1) In the parable, the man is God, the banquet is heaven and the invited guests were his people, the Jews. Do you think the guests excuses are good ones? Why or why not?

2) What are some excuses people give today for not accepting God's invitation?

3) Once the Jews rejected God's invitation, he opened the invite to everyone! Who are the people you would never expect to see in heaven? According to the parable, what has God done for them?

UNDER 7'S

God doesn't want anyone to miss out on heaven! Why will heaven be so great?

OVER 7'S

What will happen if you don't accept God's invitation (v24)?

TEENS / PARENTS

In this parable Jesus gives us a warning. What is it?



PRAY TOGETHER

Thank God that he invites everyone, even those who don't deserve it, to accept his invitation. Ask God that you would not think there are other things better than heaven, or start to make excuses either.