

Summer 2021 Devotions for Families Jesus Meets Us

Overview/Introduction

Throughout our lives, we experience a variety of different emotions. These emotions are part of the beauty of being human and give us a kaleidoscope view of that experience. The devotions in these series remind us that Jesus meets us in these emotions and makes God's gift of love and life more real to us in those experiences.

These devotions are created to be explored as families--in the variety of expressions that families take. For those who live together, they might be experienced in a regular rhythm and ritual of time set apart for conversation, reflection and activity. For those who do not live together, they might become topics for phone calls, Zoom chats, FaceTime or Text conversations, or even letter-writing.

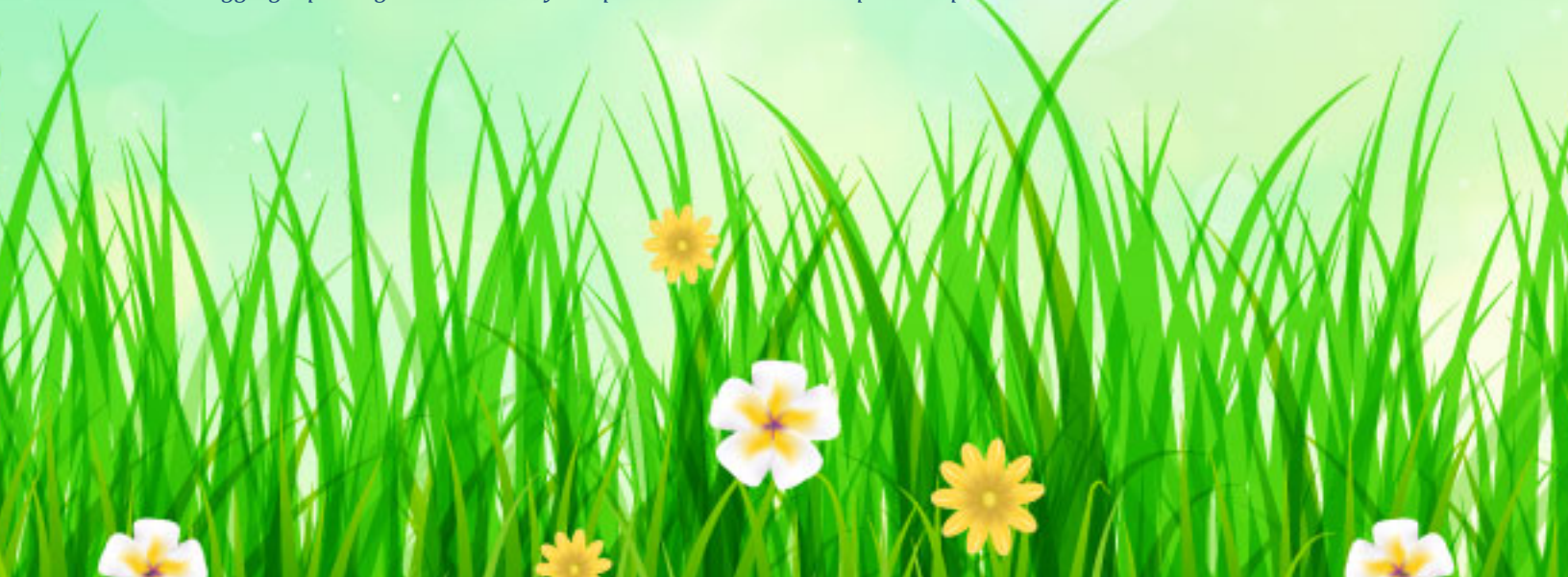
Each devotion includes a variety of activities that are appropriate for various ages and levels of development. Choose the activities that resonate with you, your family, and your context...or use the suggested activities as inspiration to spark additional ideas.

Each devotion includes prompts for conversation, as well as multi-sensory prayer practices. If your family does not have a habit of guided conversation, these conversation starters can give you a place to start. If your family does not have a habit of praying together, the prayer practice suggestions give you a variety of ways of exploring prayer that might expand your understanding and experience of connecting with God.

These devotions can be used daily for a week, or weekly for a month. However you choose to engage them, may you discover that Jesus meets you wherever you are...however you are doing...and offers you a word of hope and encouragement.

As you do the activities in these devotions, consider taking a picture and either posting it to social media and tagging @mnosynod or #mnosynod, or emailing the picture and a brief description to Deacon Michelle Collins (mcollins@elcic.ca) to share your activity with the synod*. We'd love to see how you experience these activities and devotions this summer!

**Tagging a photo gives the MNO Synod permission to share the photo in print and electronic communications.*



Format:

- **Getting Started:** questions and prompts for conversation. Conversation Starters included as an appendix.
- **A Word for the Journey:** content for reading and reflection
- **Prayer Ritual:** practices that invite an experience with God or an opportunity to show care/support for others
- **Into Action:** follow-up activities for deeper learning

Roadmap:

- Jesus Meets Us When We're Lonely
Mark 3:20-25 -- Jesus expands the definition of "family"
- Jesus Meets Us When We're Tired
Mark 14:26-34 -- Jesus prays in the garden
- Jesus Meets Us When We're Scared
Mark 4:35-41 -- Jesus calms the storm
- Jesus Meets Us When We're Sick
Mark 5:21-43 -- Jesus heals and brings back to life

Content created by: Deacon Michelle Collins & Candace Kostna, MNO Synod, June 2021

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Week/Day 1: Jesus Meets Us When We're Lonely

Getting Started

Check-in/Activity: Choose a question from the Conversation Starter list

This year we've learned new ways of connecting with people, and some of the ways we used to connect with people have changed. Make a list/draw a picture/make a collage of all the ways you connect with people. What new ways do you have of staying connected with old relationships? What old ways do you have of staying connected with new relationships?

A Word for the Journey

Read: Mark 3:31-35

Wonder...

- I wonder why Jesus didn't just want 'family' to be his mother and brother and sisters?
- I wonder who else Jesus might have included in his family?

Prayer Ritual

Bubble Prayers: Have some fun blowing bubbles and praying together. Take turns praising God, thanking God, praying for family & friends, saying sorry, etc. This can be silent & when that bubble pops, you are reminded you are forgiven. Watch your "prayers" float up to God!

Into Action *(Choose one or two activities to do individually or with others)*

Look through a family photo album (or scroll through on the phone) and identify familiar faces. Identify a loved one and say "[name of loved one] loves [name of child] and is part of God's family."

Cut out/print pictures of familiar faces and create a family (include a variety of relationships to expand 'family' beyond nuclear relationships) mobile (hang pictures on a string from a hanger, paper plate, etc.)

Draw a picture or make a card for someone in the church who has been an encouragement (teacher, parent of friend, etc.). Learn the sign language for 'family' or the word for 'family' in a different language.

Go on a walk and collect a variety of rocks (different sizes). Create a rock garden, with each rock signifying a different relationship. Start with the relationships "closest to home," but then add rocks for other relationships that are supportive and significant (teachers, coaches, mentors, pastors, etc.)

Week/Day 2: Jesus Meets Us When We're Tired

Getting Started

Check-in/Activity: Choose a question from the Conversation Starter list.

Have you ever felt too tired to help someone who asked for your help? Have you ever fallen asleep while trying to pray at the end of the day? How do you feel when you want to help but just don't have the energy?

A Word for the Journey

Read: Mark 14:26-34

Wonder...

- I wonder how the disciples felt when they realized they'd fallen asleep?
- I wonder why Jesus didn't wake them up?

Prayer Ritual

Dice Prayer:

Take turns rolling a dice and saying the prayer related to the number you roll:

1. Thank you, God, for...
2. Please help...
3. I praise you, God, because...
4. One question I have, Lord, is...
5. One big problem I see in the world that I wish would be solved is...
6. Help me to know you love me even when I feel...

Learn a simple prayer (with actions) and begin the practice of saying a prayer before bed
Here is an example from www.rachelwojo.com

Dear God, I'm thankful for (*hands together in prayer position*)
For all You give (*arms extended*)
For food, (*fingers to mouth*), For love, (*arms crossed over chest*),
A place to live (*arms above head, hands connected to make a roof*)
I thank you for my family too (*hands on shoulders of others*)
and I want You to know that I love You (*hands together at heart*)
Amen.

Into Action (*Choose one or two activities to do individually or with others*)

Take a pillow and sheet/blanket outside and lay down, listening to and observing the sky, grass, trees, etc. Notice signs of life and beauty while taking a rest.

Look through a magazine for pictures that connect with 'rest' and make a collage.

Use fabric markers to decorate a pillowcase for a shut-in, including a message that God gives rest when they are weary.

Week/Day 3: Jesus Meets Us When We're Scared

Getting Started

Check-in/Activity: Choose a question from the Conversation Starter list.

What does it feel like when there's a storm outside? How does it feel when you're experiencing an emotional storm? What helps you find calm when you are scared?

A Word for the Journey

Read: Mark 4:35-41

Wonder...

I wonder how Jesus could fall asleep in the boat?

I wonder what the disciples thought when Jesus spoke to the storm?

Prayer Ritual

Breath Prayer

Say *"Be still (inhale) and know that I am God" (exhale)*. Repeat until you feel a sense of calmness.

Into Action *(Choose one or two activities to do individually or with others)*

Look in a mirror and make different faces associated with different emotions--happy, sad, scared, frustrated.

In a bath or pool, practice swirling the water to create waves and then say, "Peace...be still!" and watch the water calm.

Talk through the significant events of the last week/month/year. Encourage others to name how they felt in the midst of each experience. After the feeling has been named, encourage each person to say "Do you not care that we are... [fill in emotion]".

Write/draw the emotion on a 4x6 blank notecard with crayon, and then color the whole notecard black. Using a sharp object (paper clip, etc.), scratch the words *"Peace! Be Still"* into the black color, revealing the color of the words beneath it.

Find a location where sound will echo. Experiment with crying out *"Do you not care!"* and listen to the sound carry. Shift to shouting *"Peace! Be Still"*.

Week/Day 4: Jesus Meets Us When We're Sick

Getting Started

Check-in/Activity: Choose a question from the Conversation Starter list.

Who takes care of you when you are sick? How has your experience of being sick/taking care of those who are sick changed throughout the Covid-19 Pandemic?

A Word for the Journey

Read: Mark 5:21-43

Wonder...

- I wonder how the girl felt when she got better?
- I wonder why she chose to start serving food?

Prayer Ritual

Healing Prayer:

On a piece of paper, draw a large heart and write a simple healing prayer (*example: Dear God, please help those who are sick to get better. Amen*). With a Sharpie marker or pen, write the names of the people you are praying for on Band-Aids to stick on the heart as you pray.

Into Action (Choose one or two activities to do individually or with others)

Create a pretend play space with dolls, stuffed animals, etc., and pretend taking care of those who are sick. Bring out a box of Band-Aids and invite children to apply Band-Aids on themselves or other family members with the words "Jesus will take care of you".

Make a 'get well card' for someone who is sick. Give it to your pastor to share with someone in the congregation whose family may not be close by. Decorate a paper place mat with words of encouragement and affirmation, and give it to a senior member of your church.

Interview someone who provides care to others--a pastor who visits people in the hospital, a nurse, a doctor, etc. What are the easiest/most challenging parts of providing care for others? How do they experience the presence of God in that work?

Conversation Starters

Adapted from <https://www.buildfaith.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/trip-talks.pdf>

One way we pass on our faith to our children is through our conversations. When we share our stories, our values, and our care for others, we are sharing the Gospel and shaping our children's faith!

Here are some conversation starters for you to try while in the car, while doing chores, taking a walk – anytime you are together.

Don't feel that you have to do ALL of them! Choose those that work for your family. Blessings to your family!

1. Who is a famous person you'd love to meet?
2. What personal skill are you most proud of?
3. Who is your favorite teacher?
4. What is something that really upsets you?
5. Where is your favorite place in the house? Why?
6. What is something you'd like to do more often as a family?
7. What is your favorite holiday? What makes it your favorite?
8. If you had a whole day to do anything you want, what would you do?
9. If you got a special gift for your birthday and someone wanted to borrow it, what would you do?
10. Finish this sentence: I'd like to learn how to . . .
11. How is your family's love like God's love?
12. If you could choose a spot in your house for family prayer and stories, where would it be?
13. What are you really good at? How could you use this skill to help God?
14. How do you think God felt on the day you were baptized?
15. At the end of a busy day, would you rather be with people or be alone?
16. If you could be a character on television, which would it be?
17. Why do you think God created families?
18. What do you like to do on Saturday mornings?
19. What's easiest about being a kid? What's hardest?
20. What does it mean to be inspired?
21. Who sets a good example for you? Do they inspire you to be a good person?
22. When you do something nice for someone else, how does it make you feel?
23. What do you think it would be like to be very poor?
24. If you were given \$1,000 to use to help other people, how would you spend it?
25. What do you think it would have been like to be one of Jesus' disciples?
26. What's the best dream you've ever had?
27. Is there anyone at school or church that you look up to or want to be like? If so, why?
28. What's your favorite Bible story, and what do you like best about it?

29. What would you say to God if God was sitting here with us?
30. If your friend was sick in bed, name three things you could do to brighten their day.
31. What do you think Jesus was like as a little boy?
32. If you were to write a book, what kind of story would it be?
33. What's the best way to spend a rainy day?
34. How do you think we could become closer as a family?
35. Why do you think God loves us so much?
36. What gifts or talents do you think God has given you?
37. What's your favorite thing about Grandma and/or Grandpa?
38. Has God been teaching you anything new lately?
39. What is one thing you prayed about today?
40. What does faith mean to you?
41. If you could start a new family tradition, what would it be?
42. Do you know how much your family loves you? How can you tell?
43. How would you describe God?
44. If you had three wishes, what would they be? (You're not allowed to wish for money or another wish!)
45. What is the hardest thing about being ____ years old?
46. What is the best thing about being ____ years old?
47. What job would you never want to have? Why?
48. Who is your best friend? Why are they your best friend?
49. What's the most important thing people need to know about God?
50. If you could change one thing in the world, what would you change?
51. If you could ask God one question, what would it be?
52. What do you think makes a good parent?
53. How do you think God wants us to respond to difficult people?
54. Why do you think God created families?