

Family Devotions

Dear Parents,

No two families are exactly alike, but the consistent message of the Bible is that God's plan and purpose for every family is still the same: He wants parents, grandparents, and other people of God to pass along their faith to the next generation (Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Psalm 78:1-8). Two of the ways we can carry out this important calling from God within our homes is to have faith conversations with our children throughout the course of the day, and also at intentional times.

On the following pages you'll find the first week's devotion for families. It begins with a devotional reading for you to go through with your youths. You'll also find suggestions for shared activities and discussions that would help you and your kids connect with each other and to engage in meaningful and productive faith conversations related to each week's topic.

If in your conversations your youth asks a question that you don't have an answer for, don't be afraid to say, "I don't know," or "Let's look in the Bible," or "Let's ask another friend at church about that."

Here are some additional ideas for you to consider:

- Choose any day of the week to do the family devotion as long as you can get everyone to participate. One suggestion could be to have it right before our Sunday's online service so that you could end with some worship songs during the service.
- Begin and close each devotional time with a short time of prayer.
- Try to make the devotions as fun and inviting for your kids as possible. You can do them outdoors (after the circuit breaker) or in different rooms of the house, in the morning, at nighttime before bed – anywhere and anytime that works for your family and promotes interaction!
- Keep it simple. Consider paraphrasing or condensing the readings and discussion questions to make the concepts easier to understand and to reinforce the main idea behind each topic.
- Keep it short. These Family Devotions are designed to foster conversations, but remember that kids (and some adults too!) have short attention spans.
- Be intentional. Families are busier now than ever, so the more intentional you are about having family devotions together, the more likely they will actually take place.

May God use these **Weekly Family Devotions** to center your family's focus on God's redeeming love as expressed through the cross, inspire you to pursue unity within your relationships, and enable you to make family memories together, especially during this uncertain times. ¹

¹ Adapted from <https://www.connectbcc.org/>

Week 1 (3-9 May 2020)

God's Desire - Unity

"20 My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, 21 that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. 22 I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—23 I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

John 17:20-23

Imagine wanting to build a playground with your family or friends. What would happen if there were no blueprints or instructions and everybody was free to decide how they think the playground should be built? And what would happen if everybody that wanted to help out also refused to communicate with each other or started taking tools from one another without asking? How difficult would it be to maintain unity among the group and to make sure that the project got finished safely and properly?

Everyone in a family or on a team plays an important role in maintaining unity. However, if one person decides that they want to do their own thing, that they should be in charge, that they are more important than the rest of the group, or that they don't need anybody else, then it suddenly becomes much more challenging to work towards the same goal and to have unity with one another.

Unity is especially important to God. In fact, on the same night that Jesus was arrested and about to die on the cross for the sins of the world, He prayed that all of His followers would be *perfectly one*. Just think: He could have been more focused on so many other things that night, but in His last moments with His disciples before He was crucified, Jesus chose to pray that we would have perfect unity with one another.

What does unity mean? Well first, here's what unity *doesn't* mean: It doesn't mean that everybody should look alike and think alike, and unity also doesn't mean that everybody will always agree with one another. God made you one-of-a-kind, and He gave you and everyone else unique personalities with unique interests and unique talents, so it's okay – in fact it's good - to be uniquely different from the rest of the world!

For Christ-followers, however, unity *does* mean that we will do whatever we can to not let our differences divide us. It means that we will work at getting along and being at peace with each other. It means that we will be committed to sacrificially love one another and to focus more on the shared life we have through faith in Christ than we will upon our own individual preferences and opinions. And it means that, as the family of God, we have one common purpose, and that is to please God in everything that we do (1 Corinthians 10:31).

God wants us to live in unity with one another so that everyone will know that God sent Jesus into the world and that He loves them. Living in unity is not always easy to do, but we must never forget that we are called by God as His children to "make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:1).

Are you willing to do your part?

Do

- Brainstorm together something you can make and place within your home to symbolize and remind you of your family's commitment to unity with one another and within the Body of Christ. For instance, you might want to take a family portrait and create a frame for it together, or make a wall hanging that has each family members' handprints on it and displays important messages or Bible verses related to the topic of unity.
- Have a 3-legged race as a family in the living room. Start by taking a bandana or a sheet and strapping the left leg of one family member to the right leg of another family member. The object is for each team to run together without falling over. After the race, talk about what you observed and experienced regarding the importance of working together.

Discuss

- Share about a time when you were part of a team and experienced good cooperation. Follow that by sharing about a time when you were part of an activity in which there was little unity or cooperation. What did you learn from those experiences?
- What are some examples of everyday activities in which unity and cooperation are essential?
- How would you rate your family when it comes to maintaining unity?
- What are one or two goals you have for your family as it applies to pursuing unity?