

## ***The Family Together – Week 17 Daily Devotions For The Family***

### ***Sunday***

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Read together Matthew 18:1-6  
Hymn for the day: Jesus Love Me

#### **Child-Like Wonder**

It is easy for a child to love the things that God has made and to be drawn by these things to love God himself. Innocent and free, a child responds very naturally to goodness and beauty; he or she takes genuine delight in the multifaceted mysteries of creation. A cloud . . . a tree . . . a squirrel. There is nothing that is not of interest, nothing that does not make the heart throb with wonder and longing for . . . something or Someone beyond.

A time comes, however, if the child lives long enough, when these things begin to lose their interest. And the reason? Sin has entered the heart, throwing everything into disarray. There is now delusion and falsehood. Values have been turned upside down. Cynicism has set in. The child, now no longer a child, is busy, not enjoying the creation, but trying to own it and manipulate it to selfish advantage. Now, if he ever notices a cloud, a tree, or a squirrel, he goes to one of two extremes: either he (1) disregards them completely or (2) worships them rather than their Creator.

All of this is profoundly sad. Yet it would be far sadder if it were not for the gospel of Jesus Christ, through which it is possible to be forgiven and to recover the child-like wonder and honest humility with which we used to respond to God's goodness. The child that we used to be is not gone forever but simply buried under layers of adult pride and busyness. We should be encouraged to know that there are choices we're capable of making that will open our hearts back up to the powerful pull of truth and joy.

We need to make these choices and go back to our younger hearts. "Unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven," Jesus said. In the kingdom, there are many new things to be learned. But before we can learn them, there is a good deal of grown-up "stuff" that needs to be unlearned, not the least of which is our preference for counterfeit pleasures rather than real ones that God has provided. – Gary Henry

Pray together: As I worship today, Lord, give me the heart of a child.



## ***Monday***

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Read together Psalm 38

Hymn for the day: "When I Survey The Wondrous Cross"

### **Relief For A Hurting Self**

The conscience is at once a horrible and wonderful thing. If you do what you understand to be right, the conscience is a wonderful thing, bringing peace and quiet. But there is nothing more horrible than a nagging conscience, one that pains you in a deep, piercing way. David's psalm speaks of a hurting conscience. "Thine arrows stick fast in me," he says. He describes his burdens as "too heavy for me." He says, "I am troubled, bowed down; and I spend my day in mournful remorse." And if that weren't enough, he says, "My loins are filled with a loathsome disease." Talk about a conscience. David had one. Have you ever experienced this kind of conscience attack? It's horrible, isn't it? And the saddest part of all is there's no place to turn for relief nor is there any means of restoring one's own peace. Or is there? "For in Thee do I hope," David said. There is hope in God. He has made possible our salvation, the relief of our conscience. And what refreshment that is! Forgiveness is the answer to a troubled mind. Without it, we would never find peace. With it, there is quietude and our soul can be at rest. Being right with God is the starting place for conscience relief (1 Peter 3:21). God is greater than our conscience and can forgive. Praise Him for His favor! - Dee Bowman

Pray together: Thank you God for your peace, your love and your forgiveness.

## ***Tuesday***

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Read together Nehemiah 8:1-12

Hymn for the day: "Love Lifted Me"

### **The Great Reformation**

Nehemiah 8 is a story of reform. Its message is powerful. It speaks to us today revealing the elements of all religious reform. "The people gathered together as one man." The aim of reform is reconciliation, first with God and consequently with men. "They told Ezra to bring the Book of the Law." The basis of reform is the word of God. Any change that proceeds without God's direction is doomed. "The ears of all the people were attentive to the Book." Men must see past the messenger, past their fellow listeners, past themselves, past the occasion, and attend to the Book for reform to be a reality. "And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people." The rise of a clergy class is a curse to religion. For reform to take place, the people must be involved in biblical conversation. The people have a right to know from whence the message comes. "And when he opened the Book, all the people stood up." Truth without simple reverence and sincerity is no good. Reformation involves the search for true righteousness without becoming self-righteous in the process. "They read distinctly from the Book and gave the sense." Reformation involves persuasion. God wants man to see the sense of what He commands. That's the only way to make committed followers.

Religious reformation does not occur in a day. It takes a lifetime. But it starts with today.  
Ready? - Jason Moore

Pray together: Help me see your word as truth in my life today.

### ***Wednesday***

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Read together Acts 16:16-40

Hymn for the day: "Beneath The Cross of Jesus"

#### **Conduct Worthy Of The Gospel**

The story of Paul in the Philippian jail house is one of my favorites because of what it exposes in the heart of the Apostle Paul. It is the end of the story that impresses me. Paul and Silas, their legs and back just starting to scab over and bruises appear, are told that they are free to depart in peace. Paul objects and reveals their Roman citizenship to the terror of the magistrates. It was a criminal offense to scourge a Roman citizen. They came begging Paul and Silas to leave the city. Paul's actions on this occasion were extraordinary in at least two ways. First, the gospel was vindicated. The teaching of Paul had been misrepresented by the masters of the fortune-telling slave girl. The magistrates under the pressure of an angry mob did not inquire about Paul's citizenship nor allow him to make a defense. But by publicly escorting Paul and Silas from the prison the humiliated judiciaries testified to the innocence of these missionaries and their message. Secondly, Paul did not exercise his full legal right. Had he desired, Paul might have had the heads of the city's magistrates. However his interest lay not with personal vengeance but with public vindication of the gospel. By not fully exercising his rights, he showed that his gospel was different. "Conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel" Paul later wrote to the Christians in Philippi. If you need help learning the sense of that command, look again at the conduct of Paul. - Jason Moore

Pray together: May I have heart like Paul today in being a shining light for Christ.

### ***Thursday***

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Read together Luke 7:11-16

Hymn for the day: "Christ Arose"

#### **The Resurrection And The Life**

How long has it been since you made even a short journey without passing a funeral procession? And where have you been lately that you didn't see the grave yard – the city of the dead? We have a great fear of death. Even though Jesus came to "deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. 2:15), we naturally fear it; it is the great enemy of mankind, and an awesome one at that. The Lord Jesus Christ has power over death. He proved it when He raised the widow's son back to life. He proved it when he said to his friends Mary and Martha at the grave of Lazarus, "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25). Can you imagine the joy when the widow saw her son raised up from the dead? What power! What power is this that

speaks and the dead rise? The son of the widow at Nain was not the only one who will be raised. There will be a great resurrection, one where all the faithful will be resurrected to life eternal (John 5:29). The resurrection day will be the spectacle of the ages. Those who live godly in Christ need have no fear of what death can do. Jesus is the resurrection and the life; those who follow Him here will follow Him there. He will “change our vile body that it may be fashioned unto His glorious body” (Phil. 3:10). Remember the resurrection as you go about your activities today and live so that we need not fear what may happen. - Dee Bowman

Pray together: Lord come quickly. Lord, come today.

### ***Friday***

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Read together Proverbs 25:11-14  
Hymn for the day: “My Redeemer”

#### **A Word Fitly Spoken**

There are fewer more wonderful things than a word fitly spoken. There is great power in words. They may come from the small or the great, but they have an effect no matter who says them. A well-said word can change a person’s day, put a new perspective in place, or rejuvenate a broken spirit. The wise man speaks more about the tongue than any of the biblical writers. Listen to his admonitions in this little context: A word fitly spoken leaves a good impression. Here he compares it to “apples of gold in a picture of silver.” A word fitly spoken is beautiful like a fine portrait. A word fitly spoken is effective. When a person is disposed to hear constructive criticism or the gentle rebuke of a wise man, he makes himself wise. He adorns his life like an ornament of fine gold when he is disposed toward the advice of a wise friend. A word fitly spoken is encouraging. Encouragement is the great privilege of the follower of Christ. Each disciple counts it a great honor to say the encouraging word so that some soul is built up, lifted out of despair or caused to rejoice. It is the mission – even the privilege – of the disciple to edify and encourage. A word not fitly spoken has a hollow ring. A boaster, a braggart, or a pompous person leaves everyone around him with a kind of dented feeling. They are not encouraged by his words. They find no wisdom in them, nor do they get any real help from them. Make your plans early, speak well today. - Dee Bowman

Pray together: Give me opportunity today to say good things to my fellow workers, neighbors, friends and family.

### ***Saturday***

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Read together Matthew 7:13-14  
Hymn for the day: “To The Work”

#### **Two Ways: The Choice Is Yours**

The sermon on the mountain is full of contrasts, none more poignant than this. It speaks of laying up treasures in heaven or on earth, of serving God or mammon, of building on

rock or on sand. But the contrast here is most significant. Look carefully at it. The broad way is just that – broad. It's well lighted, easily traveled, and filled with traffic. Most people have chosen to go that way. But the end of that way is disastrous. There are not many stop signs; it is a thoroughfare, a freeway. There are no restraints, but the end is destruction, eternal destruction. It offers ease; it delivers damnation. The narrow way, on the other hand, is filled with warning signs. It's hard to maneuver, difficult to follow, and sometimes may even be discouraging. You don't see much traffic, since most folks are over on the freeway. But look at where it leads – to life eternal. That makes it worth whatever trouble you encounter as you travel this road. It promises difficulty; it delivers ease. You can take the easy way now and be relatively comfortable in your journey; or you can take the hard road with its difficulties and hardships. The choice is yours. But please be advised, at the end of the road there will be a result, a judgment. Those who have taken the easy way here will have had all the enjoyment they will ever have; but for the ones who traversed the difficult course, there will be comfort forever. The choice is yours. And you will go one way or the other today. - Dee Bowman

Pray together: Help me see my growth this week in trust; give me courage to make the right choice today; let me see next week as another time to grow in Christ.