

Christian Home Emphasis



**Strengthening Families
By Studying
God's Word**

**Pray for God's guidance to continue
family devotions.**

Sunday

Father's Day

Read Ephesians 6:1-5

Walk a Little Plainer Daddy

*Walk a little plainer daddy
Said a little boy so frail
I'm following in your footsteps
And I don't want to fail
Sometimes your steps are very plain
Sometimes they are very hard to see
So walk a little plainer daddy
For you are leading me.*

*I know that once you walked this way
Many years ago
And what you did along the way
I'd really like to know
For sometimes when I am tempted
I don't know what to do
So walk a little plainer daddy
For I must follow you*

*Someday when I'm grown up
You are like I want to be
Then I will have a little boy
Who will want to follow me
And I would want to lead him right
And help him to be true
So walk a little plainer daddy
For we must follow you.*

-Author unknown

*Each year the Southern Baptist
Convention sets aside the time from Mother's Day
through Father's Day as Christian Home Emphasis.
It is my hope that you and your family will set aside
10-15 minutes each day for this six week emphasis
and share these devotions together.*

*Please read one devotion per day rather than reading
the entire booklet at once. This will strengthen the
usefulness of the devotions.*

*May this booklet be the beginning of many wonderful
times to come.*

Kenny Hoomes

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Saturday

Week Six

Day Seven

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**“ O Give Me a Home, Where the Cell Phones
Don't Roam”**

Read Ephesians 5:22-23

Today, we live in a world of fast communication with satellites, computers, and telephones. In fact most of us have more than one phone and scientists are telling us we will gain two extra pounds per extension this year.

Communication has been mastered on a global scale but yet in our homes, it remains a problem. A study of married couples revealed that the average couple spends less than twenty-six minutes a week in conversation.

In the passage we read, Paul draws a parallel between the relationship of Christ and the church and the relationship of husband and wife. For the church to become what God intends it to be, it must maintain contact with the Spirit of Christ. Likewise, family members are to maintain their contact with each other through good communication.

**Commit yourself now to make an effort to be a
good communicator.**

Friday

Week Six

Day Six

The Importance of Worship

Read Deuteronomy 6:4-7

Before the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C., the family was the chief educational institution for the Hebrews. There were no formal schools so each day the family would meet together for a time of worship and religious nurture. The family as a whole was a web of love and support. They increased their faith in God through that web of love. Later, when the children married, the web of love and support would be passed on and the cycle would start all over.

Verse seven of the passage we read describes the way in which the parents would instruct their children: "*When you sit, walk, lie down, or rise up.*" In short, as they went through all the avenues of their daily life, they were to experience God together. How appropriate this passage is to our family today. We should bring our family up in such a way that God is worshipped through our daily experiences - both joys and trials.

"He who influences the life of a child,

Influences generations to come."

Plan a time when you as a family can worship

God together.

Sunday

Mother's Day

Week one, Day one

A Virtuous Woman

Read Proverbs 31:10-31

Who can find a virtuous woman?

She is worth more than jewels.

Her husband can always trust her.

She will satisfy his needs.

She works with her hands, she loves with her heart,

She seeks to do good all her days.

She's up before sunrise, she plans the days work

And carries it into the night.

Thinking of others always first.

Loving the Lord with her heart.

Thinking of others always first.

Doing as Jesus taught.

Oh, that we all would be liken unto her trusting in God always

Letting our heart always be in our actions

Watching what we think, do, or say.

Allowing Christ's Lordship to be o'er our life,

In every single day.

Allowing our lives to be in our Lord's hands to do with as He may

Thinking of others always first.

Loving the Lord with our heart.

Thinking of others always first

Doing as Jesus taught

They who fear the Lord shall be praised

-Kenneth A. Hoopes

**What good qualities are you thankful for in your
Mother?**

Monday

Week One
Day Two

A “Rose” Above the Roses

Read 1 Corinthians 1:27

While driving down the Interstate one October day, I noticed the hills ablaze with color. The trees are beautiful in the fall of the year and looking at them on a hillside makes them that much more enjoyable.

One brilliant red bush stood out among the colors in the bright sunshine. As I looked closer to see what kind of bush this might be, I saw one near the highway. To my surprise, the beautiful bush was none other than sumac.

Sumac is a worthless weed that grows wild and is poisonous to the touch for many people. Yet in this bouquet of autumn colors, it stood out like a hybrid rose. The one worthless weed among the beautiful trees had caught my eye and had become a treasure in my sight.

No doubt there are times in all our lives when we feel like sumac. We have our “touchy” moods when we are just as dangerous as a poisonous plant to those with whom we come in contact.

Feel like sumac today? Cheer up! God looks at you as a treasure in His sight—a “rose” above the roses in His beautiful creation.

Think one positive thought about each member of your family.

Thursday

Week Six
Day Five

Establishing Priorities

Read Genesis 1:27-28 and 18:1-19

If we were to list our priorities in life in order of importance, obviously our first order of priority would be our personal relationship to Jesus Christ. For He is “*the chief cornerstone*” around which, “*all the building fitly framed together groweth unto the holy temple in the Lord.*” (*Ephesians 2:20-21*).

The second priority would be that of our relationship to our spouse. Third would be the priority of our family as a whole.

The family is an institution divinely ordained by God and is much older than the institution of the church. Our family is an area of extreme importance in our lives. The family is constantly being attacked from all sides to destroy its very being.

In a survey, fathers of preschoolers were asked, “How much time do you spend actually talking to your child?” The average answer given by the fathers was “about 40 minutes a day.” However, the children wore tape recorders to record the conversations. The true average taken from the tapes was that these fathers only spent one minute per day in conversation with their child. Compare that with six hours per day in front of the T.V. Now ask yourself, “Who is teaching values to our children?”

May this devotion time remind you of the important responsibility we have as Christian families; for if we do not spend time with our family... someone else will.

Pray together asking God to grant your family the peace it needs to become a better family in the days ahead.

Wednesday

Week Six

Day Four

Practice, Practice, Practice

Read Psalm 37:1-5

A lady once said to the famous violin player Fritz Kreisler, "I'd give my life to play a violin as you do!" Kreisler's answer was, "Madam, I did." How true this answer was for in order to become a great violinist, he had committed his entire life to doing only that.

Commitment is a word that needs to be added to our family life as well. Webster defines commitment as "an agreement or pledge to do something in the future." We have all been guilty of making a commitment to someone or something only to break that commitment later.

As we apply Webster's definition of commitment to our family life, let's commit our family to be faithful and committed in all areas of our lives.

**Pray together for commitment to be faithful in
all areas.**

Tuesday

Week One

Day Three

Memories of a Mighty Mimosa

Read Ecclesiastes 6:12

The law mower cut deep into the grass near the ground as I pushed it across my parents' lawn. Suddenly, I crossed the spot where a large mimosa tree once grew. I looked carefully at the ground for some hint of the tree's past existence, but there was none. There was no hole in the ground, not even a small dent. There was just a thick carpet of Saint Augustine grass that completely grew over the spot where the tree once stood.

I began to recall my childhood and the mighty mimosa. I remembered climbing its sprawling branches. The tree was so easy to climb and all the neighborhood children would play in the midst of its shade. Now the tree had fulfilled its purpose and vanished without any evidence of every growing in that place. What was once a reality was now just a fond memory of days gone by.

The lesson of the tree is all the more reason to remember the truth that life is short. Our days are numbered and time marches on. We must grasp those things that matter and make them a part of our lives. Do not dwell on the temporal. Honor God in all we do. Take time to love others. Seek to better our health.

These commitments will not stop the inevitable. They will, however, accomplish two things. First, life will have a sense of meaning and purpose. Second, the positive influence we have on others will help them as they make their journey through life.

**What priorities do you need to change in your
lifestyle?**

Wednesday

Week One

Day Four

Driving Down Stobs

Read Matthew 5:38-42

As many mothers and fathers do, my parents let me sleep with them. One child would sleep in their bed until the next one rooted the older child out. Needless to say, being the last of seven children, there was no one to root me out! My parents tried diligently to break me from sleeping in their bed. I learned to make deals with them—things like...“Please let me sleep in your bed until ten cars pass” or “Let me sleep with you until Willie Thomas (our neighbor) turns out his porch light.” Reluctantly, but lovingly, my daddy would agree. With a tiny foot on the rail and a knee in his stomach, over I would go into the security and warmth of being between Mama and Daddy. There I would lay, praying that Willie Thomas would forget to turn out his light or cringing as I heard the approaching tenth car. Willie never forgot his light and living on Highway 29 that ran from Brewton to Andalusia meant ten cars always passed. Yet, when the established limits had been fulfilled, I would get out of my parent's bed, traipse across the hard, cold floor and get into my own bed.

People in general, be they children or adults, are always setting limits on what is expected of them. Jesus said it this way, “And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.” (Matt. 5:41 R.S.V) Roman law allowed soldiers to force Hebrews to carry their baggage or supplies for one mile. Young Jewish lads would go out from their house for one mile and drive down a stob to mark the limit. There he would throw down the equipment he had been forced to carry and walk sullenly back to his home. Jesus shattered the limits by suggesting that one do double the distance required.

What stobs have you driven down in your family relationships?

Tuesday

Week Six

Day Three

Forgiving Freely

Read Matthew 18:23-34

Forgiveness is a word which we must apply daily in our lives. However, it is much easier to say “I forgive” without truly believing you forgive in your heart.

The unmerciful servant demonstrated how easy it is for one to live by a double standard. It is far easier to receive mercy than to show mercy. The tragedy is that the forgiven servant's heart had not been touched. His outward circumstances had changed greatly, yet he left the king's presence “the same servant” (v.38). If his inward attitude had been changed, he would have forgiven his brother. The kind of forgiveness Jesus was talking about comes from the heart. It is not human nature to have this forgiving spirit, yet through this parable Jesus teaches that we should.

Jesus taught His disciples a different kind of forgiveness than practiced by the people of His day. His forgiveness is one that must first originate in the heart, with a limitless scope. Secondly, when one practices genuine forgiveness toward his fellow-man, he is assured of receiving God's forgiveness.

Ask forgiveness for one selfish act you have committed against someone.

Monday

Week Six

Day Two

Following Through

Read Matthew 26:36-46

One of the most important things about hitting a baseball is following through on your swing. No one has ever hit a homerun without proper follow through on your swing. Likewise in dealing with our children, proper follow-through is required. Whether we are promising a reward of discipline, follow-through is a must. We have to allow our words and our actions to be one and the same.

In today's scripture, Jesus contemplated His follow-through. Here in the garden in great agony, He committed Himself to carry out His mission, no matter what the cost.

In the Garden

In the garden went my Lord, thinking only of me.

In the garden prayed my Lord, there upon His knee.

In the garden wept my Lord, there in agony.

Soon to be denied my Lord, by Peter of Galilee.

Oh how He wanted to live.

Oh how He wanted to give

His life for me on Calvary.

Oh how He wanted to live.

Yet, He chose to give

His life for me on Calvary.

-Kenneth A. Hoomes

Pray together asking God to grant you the courage to follow-through on your mission in life.

Thursday

Week One

Day Five

The Wheel of Fortune

Read Jeremiah 18: 1-10

With a dull thud, the lump of clay was dropped onto the wheel. As the wheel began to turn, the potter used his hands with great expertise to shape and mold the clay. He carefully began to form the clay, making certain he used just the right touch with the proper amount of water. Amazingly I watched as the lump of clay climbed higher and higher. In a matter of minutes, the useless mass of clay had been transformed into a 2.5 gallon cooler. The sign displayed before the potter read "E. J. Humpheries, Master Potter since 1946." I imagine that in doing this for more than forty years, Mr. Humpheries had made a fortune. At least a fortune for someone.

As I watched Mr. Humpheries work, I was reminded that I was not the first person to observe this type of transformation. While observing a potter, the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah received a message from the Lord. The Lord said to Jeremiah, concerning Israel:

Oh house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter has done?...

behold, like clay in the potter's hand, so are

you in my hand, O house of Israel...

Jeremiah 18:6

Just as the potter takes the clay and makes from it what he will, so God is capable of taking our lives and making of them what He desires. Rather than resist the work of God in our lives, we should welcome the activity of the Lord as He shapes and molds us for service in His Kingdom. After all, spinning through life, what greater fortune could we acquire?

How is God shaping your life? How is God shaping your family?

Friday

Week One

Day Six

On Being Compassionate

Read Matthew 9:35-38

Back in the 1970's a popular song by B. J. Thomas went something like this, *"No love at all is a child in the street, dodging traffic and begging to eat; with no place to go he's feeling low. A man hurts a woman and a woman hurts a man when neither one of them won't love and understand, take it with a pain and sorrow."*

How many times in our own lives have we experienced much the same situation as described in the song and done nothing to help. We have all be guilty of passing someone along the interstate or walking on past someone on the street whom we knew was hurting. We may feel pity for them, but we do not show compassion. Compassion is a word that has action. It is seeing a need and then doing something to meet that need.

I'm sure we have also been guilty of not showing compassion in our homes as well. Many times those nearest to us are hurting. They may be hurting from problems at school, a break up with a boy friend or maybe even hurting because of an argument they had with you. Now is the time to go to that person and try to meet their need and heal the wound.

Pray together that God will grant to you more

compassion **in your home.**

Sunday

Week Six

Day One

Hidden Treasure

Read Colossians 2:1-3 and Matthew 13:44

A few years ago my home church sold an old house that had stood on the church property for many years. The house wasn't worth much so the church thought if someone would be willing to move it, they could buy the house for \$600.00

After the house was moved, the new owner's children were playing under it and discovered two bags filled with twenty pieces of gold! The approximate value of the gold was around \$2,000.00! These children discovered a treasure that had been hidden for a hundred years and unknown to anyone.

Today you may look at your own life as being of little value to those around you. Yet inside each of us, there is a special hidden treasure waiting to be discovered and released. Discover what that hidden treasure is and give it away.

Think of something of value that each one can

contribute to the family.

Saturday

Week Five

Day Seven

Out of the Mouths of Babes

Read Proverbs 16:24

Once a father overheard his young child say her prayers before going to sleep. The child prayed. "Lord, make all the bad people good and all the good people nice..."

This child has stumbled onto an important principle for us to learn in relating to others. It is possible for us to be "good" without being "nice." In the midst of a hard day's work and constant interruptions from the children, it is hard to be nice at times. In dealing with their families, some parents seldom smile, say a word of encouragement, and speak only when they have to.

It is such a sad testimony for our Lord when a Christian does not have a nice attitude about his life. If we as Christians stopped long enough to think of the many things Christ has done for us, it would be easy to be nice. Few things can dampen the spirit of a home quicker than good people who do not have a nice attitude.

Share one nice word of encouragement about each person.

Saturday

Week One

Day Seven

The Art of Marriage

Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

Wilfred A. Peterson, wrote his understanding of what a good marriage should be. I have included it below.

A good marriage must be created. In the art of marriage the little things are the big things...It is never being too old to hold hands. It is remembering to say, "I Love You," at least once a day. It is never going to sleep angry. It is having a mutual sense of values and common objectives. It is standing together facing the world. It is forming a circle of love that gathers in the whole family. It is speaking words of appreciation and demonstrating gratitude in thoughtful ways. It is having the capacity to forgive and forget. It is giving in each other an atmosphere in which each can grow. It is finding room for the things of spirit. It is a common search for the good and the beautiful. It is not only marrying the right partner. It is being the right partner.

-Wilfred A. Peterson

Pray together that your marriage would be made stronger.

Sunday

Week Two, Day One

Corny, But True

Read Philippians 3:12-14

As a child, I was always amazed to listen to my Mama tell stories of growing up on a farm. On one occasion, she and her brothers and sisters were picking cotton. While doing so, the children decided to play a game of who could tell the biggest “story.” The winner would not have to pick cotton and could wait for the others in the shade. My Uncle Haynes was the winner. His “story” was to tell of their granddaddy’s mule who was kept in the barn. Popcorn was stored in the loft above the mule. It was an extremely hot August day and the popcorn began to “pop” and fall down on the mule. According to my uncle, the mule thought the popcorn was snow and froze to death. Today in America, we have set aside October as National Popcorn month. Did you know these facts about popcorn?

- ◆ The average American consumes sixty-four quarts of ready-to-eat popcorn annually.
- ◆ There is not minimum daily requirement for popcorn, except in movie theaters. There, the minimum daily requirement jumps to forty-six ounces per person.

When you make popcorn at home, an interesting transformation occurs. Most kernels become what God intended them to be. Yet, once you finish a bowl of popcorn, you discover some kernels that did not pop near the bottom of the bowl. The unpopped kernels can be taken and recooked and many will pop when given a second chance. I began to think about the Christian life. Many Christians become exactly what God intends for them. Still others never change or grow. Some, when given a second change, do make the change and mature. In today’s scripture passage, Paul was near the end of his life and was in prison. Yet, he could still say with all humility that he was continuing to become what God intended for him to be. He knew the value of making change and maturing along the way. So when you find yourself under pressure and experience the heat, remember popcorn. It may be “corny, but true.” even in the worst of environments, popcorn can still become what God intended.

Pray together for God’s leadership as you become what He would have you become.

Friday

Week Five

Day Six

Selfless Love

Read 1 John 4:7-21

Love is a word that is used in many different ways. We say we love our job, dog, mother, wife, or brother. Each of these are different types of love. John was writing about love in our passage. This type of love in the Greek was **Agape**. He meant love was to be giving, selfless and respectful. He was saying we should love each other the same way God loved us. Jesus showed us the prime example of love by giving his life and suffering for us.

The Suffering Servant

The Suffering Servant came to earth to live and die for man.

The nails, the thorns, they pierced His flesh, his brow, his feet, and hands.

He took upon himself our sin;

That we would one day live with Him.

He claims His kingdom now within;

The hearts that do his will

Despised, rejected, cursed by all who did not understand.

The purpose of his mission here to save the sinful man.

A King who left his home above

Became the sacrifice of love.

He won the victory over sin

By shedding His own blood.

The Suffering Servant lives today within believers’ hearts.

All serve as His own body; each plays a special part.

He gave His live for you and me;

That from our sins we’d be set free.

As you go, do all you can

To tell your fellow man.

-Kenneth A. Hoomes

Complete this sentence aloud to each member in the room, “ I love you because...”

Thursday

Week Five

Day Five

Temporary Structures

Read Joshua 24: 14-15

The Mirabeau Apartments at New Orleans Baptist Theological seminary were always a topic of discussion on campus. This was particularly true in the early 1980's when the apartments were painted bright colors. Students appropriately began to call them "Rainbow Row."

In June of 1989, the apartments were torn down. The apartments had stood for nearly 40 years. They were build as "temporary" student housing when the seminary moved from the Garden District to its present location.

Many times in our relationships we have "temporary" structures standing in the way. We may say to ourselves, " If I can work extra hours for just a few years, then I'll get my promotion and have enough money to live on." Maybe we say, " Just a few more courses, or one more college degree, and my situation will change." Even in our work at church we may be guilty of having six different responsibilities and accept teaching a class "temporarily."

We have a tendency to think that our situation is only temporary and soon, very soon, things will change. Yet, they don't change. One day we wake up, 40 years later, only to find the "temporary structure" still standing.

Beginning today, let us like Joshua of old, commit ourselves and our household to the Lord. Don't allow "temporary" structures to stand between our relationship to God and our relationship to each other.

God give us the serenity to accept what cannot be changed;

Give us the courage to change what should be changed;

Give us the wisdom to distinguish one from the other.

Reinhold Niebuhr

What temporary structures need to be removed in your relationships?

Monday

Week Two

Day Two

Pen Top People

Read Matthew 5: 13-16

In the early 1970's the American Embassy in India placed an order to the United States for a case of writing pens. Much to their surprise they found nothing in the box but pen-tops when the order arrived. Instead of sending the order back they simply threw it away. That night the janitor found the pen tops and decided to sell them. They sold like hot cakes! People were taking the pen tops and sticking them in their pockets to make it look as if they had a pen. You see, in India the pen is a status symbol. Only the elite can read or write thus only the elite need a pen. The people were making themselves look like something they were not.

How true it is for us in our Christian life as well. Many times people look like one thing from the outside, but when the truth is known they are nothing more than hollow shells.

Many times we find ourselves worrying about the impression we are going to make on someone else. Because of this we bend our morals to be accepted as "one of them."

Let us all be careful in the days ahead to be concerned about our total person. Being a Christian involves our inner attitudes as well as our outward acts.

Ask yourself this question... "How do my actions and attitudes differ?"

Tuesday

Week Two

Day Three

Make a Difference

Read Matthew 6:1-4

A story was told of a hurricane that struck a coastal community. As the high waters receded, thousands of starfish were left helplessly dying on the sand. An elderly man walking down the beach observed a little girl making her way toward him. The little girl was frantically throwing the starfish back into the sea. Upon meeting the girl the man stated, "Little girl, there are thousands of starfish on the beach. It would be impossible to throw them all back. What possible difference could you make?"

The little girl looked at the man, then looked at the starfish in her hand and said, "I can make a difference to this one," and tossed the starfish into the sea.

Today, we do not have to look to far to find lives that have been washed ashore from the storms of life. There are millions of people the world over. Yet, somewhere deep inside us comes the haunting voice, "What possible difference could I make?" We heed the voice's call and fail to do anything.

The reasons for these people dying on the sand may vary. However, they need the same thing- - someone willing to reach down, pick them up and make a difference in their lives. The task may seem impossible, but taking responsibility for the ones with whom we have been entrusted is what being a Christian is all about.

In whose life can you make a difference?

Wednesday

Week Five

Day Four

Family Organization

Read Romans 12:3-8

Excitement finally gave way to sleep on the eve of Jonathan's first day of Kindergarten years ago. The next sound I heard was that of drawers opening and closing as excitement once again prevailed at 6:15 a.m.

The ride to work on this day was different. I turned my usual radio news program off and gave my son my total attention. Today I was not only going through school traffic, I had become a part of it.

Upon turning into the school from the free flowing highway, I suddenly found myself in a highly structured atmosphere. One lane became three as cars, vans, and trucks lined up to deposit their children for the start of a new school year. I watched as the traffic officer signaled for all three lanes to move up, stop, open doors, and children walk safely into the building.

Now it was our turn. We pulled up and Jonathan slowly exited the car and walked into the building. Then it happened. The officer signaled for us to go. Three cars proceeded to move into one lane. Suddenly, we were free and on our own. I wisely gave the right-of-way to the two young mothers who hurried off to work.

Organization is an interesting thing. Someone once said that organization is like your digestive system. As long as it is functioning properly you never know it's there; but, let it go awry, and all you can do is think about it.

How true this is of organization in our families as well. When organization is present and functioning properly you never think about it. However, once an imbalance is present, look out for trouble! Each family member has an important role to play.

Ask, "How can I contribute more and make our family organization complete?"

Tuesday

Week Five

Day Three

Harvest Time

Read Matthew 9:35-38

As a little boy the best part of having a father who farmed was harvest time. For the most part the hard work was over. We sat back and watched the large combine and trucks enter our field and begin to harvest the wheat or soybeans. It was extremely fun to crawl over into the bed of that large truck and get into the millions of soybeans. I could never imagine there were that many beans in the whole world, much less in our field. Harvest time was a time for my father to look back and count the cost of the hard work.

Harvest time doesn't just happen. Many months before the harvest, plans had been made for that very day. Preparation of the soil and planting of the seed had been done. Protective measures for the crop had been taken. Much pain had gone into that harvest. The harvest was simply a time to reap the benefits of the pain.

You may now be standing on the edge of your field with just a few more days until Harvest. Harvest time for all of us is different. It may involve graduation from High School, the completion of a career, or even nurturing a child into the Kingdom of God.

What will the result of your Harvest be? The Harvest you reap is solely dependent on the amount of pain you have put into the event. But, as they say, 'NO PAIN, NO GAIN!'

Pray together concerning your "Harvest Time."

Wednesday

Week Two

Day Four

Change

Read Luke 12: 22-31

The colorful sign greeted me as I walked into the local fitness center. The sign read "New Member Drive, no join fee, free tee shirt!" I began to think, I don't want any more members. Even now I have to wait for a treadmill and when I finally get one, I am limited to twenty-five minutes. And if I come by after work, there is no place to park. Besides, I paid a joining fee and didn't get a free shirt!

Mark Twain said it this way. "Nobody likes change except a wet baby." For a fitness center, a church, or a family, change will come. The important thing in our relationships is to be flexible and maintain a positive open mind. From time to time, it is good to get out of our comfort zones. Avoid the "ruts" in your family relationships. Plan to do something very exciting and different with your spouse or children.

ASK: How comfortable am I with change?

Thursday

Week Two

Day Five

The Trial

Read Mark 14:53-65

Court was about to reconvene. Anticipation filled the air as people awaited the jury's decision. "Have you reached a verdict?" asked the judge. "We have, Your Honor," responded the foreman. "We find the defendant, not guilty." Joy filled the room as the accused walked out—a free man.

Jesus' trial did not have the same ending as the one described above. Even though He was innocent, Caiaphas and the other seventy-one members of the Sanhedrin were determined to find Him guilty. They were so determined to find Jesus guilty that the process described in Mark's gospel violates their own rules from the Mishnah. According to the Mishnah, a trial could only be conducted during the daylight hours. A conviction could not be reached until the following day. Nor could the trial be conducted on a feast day or the day before the Sabbath. The Sanhedrin willfully broke their own rules in order to dispose of their hated enemy.

Finally as a sign of mourning, (but probably more in relief) the high priest tore his mantle. Now a charge could be made—blasphemy. Those who had totally disregarded their own religious laws would now use a religious charge to condemn Jesus to death.

Is it possible that we are guilty of misusing our religious values in order to accomplish our own selfish motives? Often the answer is "yes." Someone has said that the church is the only army that shoots its wounded. The next time someone stands before you accused, try using a little gospel compassion instead of shooting them with a gospel gun!

Pray for God's forgiveness in your life and for His leadership in your family.

Monday

Week Five

Day Two

Under Construction

Read 11 Peter 2:17-18

As you drive down the road at this time of year, sometimes you see the sign "under construction". This means that something is changing and improving. In the same way, "under construction" is a term that should be applied permanently to the Christian's life. We must realize that God has not yet finished with us and that we are to be growing in Him constantly. Psychologists today tell us that as adults we do not become mature, rather we are maturing. Maturity is seen as a continuous aspect of life. So it is with the Christian life as well. We do not become mature Christians rather we should be Christians who are constantly maturing. We are to keep on growing in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We are to allow God to mold us into what He would have us to be - His image.

It is up to the Christian to allow his life to be "under construction". It is God's will that all Christians be maturing Christians; yet, we must be willing to sacrifice our time and energy and allow God to be top priority in our lives. Peter understood that the Christian life was to be characterized by a continuous struggle and commitment. He also understood that we were to be constantly growing - always "under construction."

How is your family "under construction" for

Christian maturity?

Sunday

Week Five

Day One

Leading by Example

Read Luke 2:41-52

In my years of work in the ministry, I am always amazed at parents who want their children to be in church and yet not take advantage of attendance themselves.

Some adults think of Sunday School as being only for children. Yet children learn about church attendance from their parents the same as they learn anything else - from the parent's actions. The following is a recent survey on whether or not children will remain faithful to the church.

If both parents attend regularly

72% remain faithful

If only the father attends regularly,

55% remain faithful

If only the mother attends regularly,

15% remain faithful

If neither parent attends regularly,

only 6% remain faithful

How faithful will your children be?

Friday

Week Two

Day Six

Dirty Fighting

Read Psalm 128

One of the most interesting things I've noticed about married couples is the different ways they fight. Below I have listed some techniques of dirty fighting. These were originally done by Wade Rowatt of Southern Seminary. I have adapted his ideas and added one.

1. **COLDWAR:** The couple freezes each other out with silence; no one talks; intimacy is lost.
2. **SNIPER:** This is the person who waits until they are in public then shoots down the spouse in front of other people. This discourages retaliation.
3. **TORTURE TREATMENT:** One that makes sarcastic remarks and when the spouse retaliates says, "but I was just joking!"
4. **PROPAGANDA:** Name calling, putting each other down in ways that eat at the core of your marriage.
5. **SABOTAGE:** The one who suggests that the spouse do something perhaps for his/her own enjoyment; then does everything possible to make them feel guilty for doing what they suggested.
6. **ATOMIC BOMB:** This is raising the stakes so high that one dare not challenge them, "if you do that again I'll..." The problem with this technique is that you can never drop an Atomic Bomb and run fast enough to get away from the fall out.

What methods do you use in fighting?

Saturday

Week Two

Day Seven

What Do You Want on Your Tombstone?

Read Matthew 25:35-36

In Harold Kushner's book, When All You've Ever Wanted Isn't Enough, he tells an interesting story about the founder of the "Nobel" prizes. The story is as follows...

"Alfred Nobel, a Swedish chemist, made a fortune by inventing more powerful explosives and licensing the formula to governments to make weapons. One day, Nobel's brother died, and one newspaper by accident printed an obituary notice for Alfred instead. It identified him as the inventor of dynamite and the man who made a fortune by enabling armies to achieve new levels of mass destruction. Nobel had the unique opportunity to read his own obituary in his lifetime and to see what he would be remembered for. He was shocked to think that this was what his life would add up to, to be remembered as a merchant of death and destruction. He took his fortune and used it to establish the awards for accomplishment in various fields which would benefit humanity, and it is for that, not his explosives, that he is remembered today."
-Kushner

So, what do you want on your tombstone? Will people say of you that you were selfish and a power seeker? Or will you be remembered for kind service?

Think of one act of service each member has done. Encourage them in their kind acts.

*You would wrinkle your brow, and move your hand,
A sweet and precious child in the eyes of this man.*

I knew right then what every you might do

Would not dampen my love for you.

The first time ever I prayed for you,

God told me exactly what to do.

I must recommit my life to Him each day,

In order to lead you in the true and right way.

I should live my life by word and deed,

For in your life to plant a righteous seed.

I accept the task which is to come,

To teach you, Jonathan, my beloved son.

-Kenneth A. Hoopes

**Spend the remainder of the time praying aloud
for each person in your family.**

Saturday

Week Four

Day Seven

For This Child, I Prayed

Read 1 Samuel 1:9-18, 26-28

Perhaps all parents can remember a time before their child was born when they prayed earnestly for the unborn baby. Prayer is a way whereby we as human beings can come into the very presence of God. We can speak openly with Him, as well as allow God to speak to us. After Samuel was born, Hannah never forgot the way she "Poured out her soul before the Lord." Likewise, Samuel always remembered what his mother and Eli shared with him about the way God had answered Hannah's prayer.

Prayer is a powerful source of peace and understanding that is many times neglected in our family life. As parents, we need to let our children know that we pray for them. No child will every be the same after he knows that someone has prayed for him

To Jonathan

The first time ever I saw you,

I was reminded of what God can do.

Your hair was dark, your eyes were gray,

You were looking at me, as if to say...

"Here I am Day, your responsibility,

Yours to keep and control my destiny."

A bundle of love sent to me

To become a man of integrity.

The first time every I touched your skin,

I felt a ray of joy from within.

You were very soft and so small,

A tiny lad dependent on all

Sunday

Week Three

Day One

Transformers

Read Romans 12: 1-2

As a child I remember playing with toy trucks and cars. Back then the best toy trucks you could buy was a Tonka. I never would have guessed that a company that built such a good product at an affordable price would ever have financial problems, but they did. It seems that children in the 1980's were not as interested in toy trucks as I was in the late 1960's. Tonka needed help and they needed it fast. Thus they introduced a new toy that not only saved the company but revolutionized the toy industry.. GoBots. These "transformers" were capable of looking like one toy then transforming into something totally different by moving a few parts. What looked like a harmless car could be transformed into a mighty robot ready for battle. Children loved them and they still sell in various forms today.

The thought occurred to me recently that we as Christians are like "transformers." For when we become Christians we are changed into a totally new creation. What once looked like one thing becomes something of totally different use and value in the hands of the Master.

How is God transforming you?

Monday

Week Three

Day Two

Does God Wear Fur-lined Boots?

In his book [A Theology for Children](#), Dr. William L. Hendricks asks the question... "Does God wear fur-lined boots?" as a way of describing a very difficult element in our understanding of God. That element being the love and wrath of God. Fur-lined boots are very important to people living in colder regions of our world. These people need a tough outer boot that will repel cold and rain while at the same time have a soft fur lining inside to give their feet needed warmth and comfort.

The love of God is thought of as a selfless love. A love that is giving of His all. God's love is one that is unchanging. It continually reaches out for the good of others. His love is all inclusive, including all mankind.

The wrath of God is generally associated with anger, hostility and hatred. Yet these words are not really what wrath is all about. Dr. Hendricks describes wrath in the following ways: "the firmness required to exclude evil", the willingness to do what has to be done in order to make things right"; being able to exclude whatever is not for the good of others.

Sound like a lot of love? If you think so, you are exactly right. Love and wrath are not to be considered as opposites. Someone once described wrath not in opposition to God's love, but as "God's left hand."

Love and wrath are to be considered as two parts of the same boot. One for the tough exterior to keep out harm and one for the warm interior to provide comfort and love.

**Share with your children about your love and
wrath.**

Friday

Week Four

Day Six

The Home—A Place of Joy

Read Psalm 127:3-5

In the midst of a hard freeze, the thermometer read 0oF as I left for work. My mind was preoccupied with visions of pipes bursting and other problems that accompany cold weather. Then I noticed some children playing in a frozen drainage ditch—running, skating, and having a great time. I began to remember back when I was a child, now the ponds and streams would freeze over and we would play on the ice. All at once my entire outlook on the day began to change.

Children certainly have a way of bringing joy to our lives. Each of us has experienced that smile and good feeling that only a child can bring. Perhaps Gordon Cosby was right when he wrote, "the first and foremost responsibility of any parent is to enjoy his children." What could do more for a child's self esteem than knowing his very being brings delight to his parents?

**Give your child a kiss and tell them you love
them.**

Thursday

Week Four

Day Five

Tackling Difficult Tasks

Read Mark 14:32-36

While visiting in South Louisiana, a lady from New York City eyed a rugged Cajun wearing a necklace made of alligator teeth. The woman spoke, "I imagine those teeth are like pearls to you." The Cajun answered in his gruff voice.. "No! anyone can open an oyster."

No doubt the Cajun was right. Quite often in life we come upon some tasks that are hard and rewards are scarce. These are the tasks that we ignore or try to work around. There always seems to be something easier to do with greater rewards in the eyes of those watching us.

In the days ahead, let us be careful to tackle the difficult tasks that may lie before us. Chances are that task is an important one and needs our attention. Like the alligator teeth mentioned above, the rewards may not be worth much in the eyes of others, but in our hearts the reward is priceless.

**What difficult task in your family
are you avoiding?**

Tuesday

Week Three

Day Three

Tuning In On Other's Needs

Read Proverbs 23:12

The new pastor of a small country church was invited by one of his deacons to go "coon hunting." Having never been coon hunting before, the pastor hesitantly agreed. The time was a cold night in December and the pastor was a bit underdressed for the night air.

While the dogs were running, the men sat around a warm fire. The avid coon hunter was listening to his dogs run and bark as never before and remarked to the pastor, "Listen to that music." The freezing pastor replied without thinking. "I can't hear any music for those dogs barking!"

Quite often in our daily lives, we are much like the pastor in the story. Not listening to the needs being expressed by others or taking no thought in the interests others have, is no way to be a Christian example. As we search for ways to be involved in our lives on a daily basis, let us be "tuned in" to opportunities before us. After all what they are saying may mean something else entirely.

Work together to be better listeners.

Wednesday

Week Three

Day Four

The Home - A Place of Self Control

Lazily the alligator moved through the water with motionless ease, except for the slow movement of his huge tail. Despite his calm and serene attitude, this was still the most movement I had seen from the alligators in dozens of trips to the zoo. The young girls that were with us began to throw cubes of ice from their drinks down onto the alligator's head. Slowly he swam over near where we were and in one quick movement snapped his mouth open and shut with a loud thud! The movement was so quick and unexpected that it scared all of us.

This gator reminded me of how we as human beings can act from time to time. We may seem harmless, yet when someone rubs us the wrong way we try to bite their head off! Why is it that we have such a hard time controlling our temper? Perhaps being able to control one's temper is a part of Christian maturity.

Jesus said it this way, "*The meek shall inherit the earth.*" He wasn't talking about weak, wimpy individuals, but rather those that had been brought under control. The difference is like that between a wild animal and one that has been tamed. The strength is still there, but it has been brought under control and made usable. May each of us strive to allow Him to make us usable today.

Discuss together how you can become more in control of your temper.

Wednesday

Week Four

Day Four

If You Dance to the Music...

Read Matthew 6:24

If ever there was a musical genius it would have to be Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Born in Salzburg, Austria, in 1776, Mozart soon began impressing royalty and common people alike with his musical talent. By the age of six, he was on tour across Europe. By the age of fifteen, he had written and conducted an opera. At the ripe age of seventeen, Mozart was a mature composer. He list of musical accomplishments far exceeds those of most composers.

In the recent years, we have seen increased interest in Mozart across America. Millions saw an award winning movie about his life. A rock song that shared portions of his life hit the top of the charts. Most recently, an auction of original manuscripts by the composer went for an exorbitant price.

Despite his vast accomplishments as a musician, Mozart had a problem. He was broke! His wife, Constance Weber, always seemed to need more money than Mozart could earn. His years of adulthood found him writing music for his next meal. At the age of 35, Mozart died without even enough money for a proper burial. He was given a pauper's funeral and buried in an unmarked grave. Imagine that - perhaps the greatest composer the world has ever known - yet we do not know where he is buried!

As we look back at Mozart's life, let us be careful to learn from his mistakes as well as his accomplishments. If it was easy in the late 1700's to live beyond one's means, think how much more guilty we are of making the same mistake today.

Discuss together some areas you could "cut-out" and save money.

Tuesday

Week Four

Day Three

Putting Away Childish Things

As a young teenager, I remember rushing home from school and turning on the T.V to watch the Monkees. All the kids watched them. We had Monkee posters, cards, records, etc...

In past years I listened with interest as this singing group, the Monkees, began a comeback. Everywhere I turned I heard something about them. Good Morning America interviewed them; MTV ran a special about them; popular radio stations played their songs.

Finally the moment of truth arrived. While I was visiting in the hospital, a patient was watching a rerun of one of the very episodes I had admired as a kid. There I stood, reliving my past and to my amazement completely nauseous by the silliness of the program. What was once of great importance to me was now making me sick! Brought to life again was the temporal nature of adolescence. Those things of great importance to us as teenagers become meaningless symbols of our immaturity as adults.

The Apostle Paul said it this way..."When I was a child, I used to speak as a child, think as a child, reason as a child, when I became a man, I did away with childish things." (1 Corinthians 13:11 N.A.S)

Parents, what rock star is on your child's wall, tee-shirt, or notebook? Fret not, chances are it is only a part of growing up.

Share together who your idols were while you were growing up.

Thursday

Week Three

Day Five

On Having Integrity

Read Psalm 15:1-5 and Proverbs 20:7

Integrity is a trait which we should all strive to have. It is seen as a wholeness or oneness throughout oneself. Often we do not show integrity in our families because we say one thing and think another. Let us be careful to allow our outward self to be one with our inward being both in actions and attitudes.

The Mirror

I hide behind my designer jeans, my team's Starter coat;

I hide behind my foreign car, my extravagant ski boat.

But there at home on the bedroom wall

Stands the one who will expose all.

The hidden tear in my eye;

The mirror does not lie.

The mirror does not lie my friend.

It's there to meet me at the long day's end.

It looks beyond what others see

And reveals my inward self to me.

-Kenneth A. Hoomes

Pray together asking God to grant you integrity.

Friday

Week Three

Day Six

A Place for Giving

Read Luke 20: 19-26

The young boy was excited as he opened another birthday card. "Great!" he responded, "Two more dollars toward my video game."

"Not so fast," said his father. "Remember, part of this money belongs to God." The boy placed the money in his bank and stormed out of the room. "I'm not giving any money to God!"

And he said unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's and unto God the things which be God's. (Luke 20:25)

In the passage above, the chief priests and the scribes were filled with rage at Jesus. A plan was developed. Send spies to trick him with a question. If he answers one way, the Romans will not like it. If he answers another, the crowds will turn against him.

Jesus was aware of their plan and outsmarted them. He gave a two-sided answer. We have the responsibility to support government as well as to give to God.

Think of things God has given you and ways you can give to God. Are you willing to render unto "Caesar" and render unto God?

Monday

Week Four

Day Two

Warmed-Over Wrath

Read Colossians 3:12-13, Ephesians 4:32

In his tale of "Tam O'Shanter", Robert Burns described Tam's wife with this type of patience:

"Whare sits our sulkly, sullen dame,
Gathering her brows like gathering storm,
Nursing her wrath to keep it warm."

This is not a very pretty picture of patience but it's one we've all experienced from time to time. There's not a man who stayed too late fishing, a woman who's spent too much time at the mall, or a child who's forgotten to call to tell they were at a friend's house who has not experienced this type of patient wrath. Granted there are times in our relationships where one is taken advantage of and warmed over wrath may be good for the soul of the hurt party; yet, let us be careful not to allow this type of attitude to become the norm in our behavior every time we are wronged.

When we are faced with a situation like those listed above, let us be careful to show compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, forgiveness, and patience.

Pray asking God to grant you more patience in dealing with family members.

Sunday

Week Four

Day One

Remembering the Challenger

Read Psalm 8

On January 28, 1986 the nation was brought to its knees with the explosion of the space shuttle, Challenger. One could not help but feel deep empathy for the families of these seven people. The loss was great and will never be forgotten by any of us that witnessed that event. Two things came to my mind as I viewed the hours of programming following the explosion.

First, we had witnessed a real tragedy. This horrible event really happened. This was no leisurely viewing of the television and no one getting hurt. The terror on the faces of family and friends told the story. Those grief stricken faces entered our homes, weighted down our hearts and were sketched permanently in our minds.

Second, I was reminded of how over confident we have become in our own technology. We live in a world of high-tech computers, mass communication, satellites, etc. No one ever expected anything to malfunction. So much for our lofty dreams. The possibility of an explosion had always been present with shuttle launches. Yet, firing off the shuttle had become as common place as firing off your automobile.

Two truths human nature continues to deny were driven home once again. Bad things do happen to good people and no matter how intelligent we become, we are still finite in comparison to God.

How much dependence do you place on God in your life?

Saturday

Week Three

Day Seven

Sound Effect Artists

Read Proverbs 17:4

I listened with interest to a Public Radio news story that dealt with "sound effect" artists. These people work with the motion picture industry to provide various sounds for movies. The amazing part of the story was the sounds we hear on the screen are not necessarily the sounds needed for the movie. They may choose any item from coffee grounds to aluminum pans. When the sounds are recorded onto the film they seem to be very real to the listening audience. The sound effect artists are few in number, but make their presence known in movies on a daily basis.

After hearing the story I began to think about our church. Is it possible that we have sound effect artists as members? I think the answer is yes. I am not speaking of members employed with the movie industry, but rather about a limited number of people that set out to change the outcome of a situation through the use of sound effects. These people who present only a portion of a story, twist a story, or just plain start rumors are sound effect artist. The total outcome of a situation is changed because these artists use their talents to the best of their abilities. When this happens, the listening audience is fooled into thinking the sounds they hear are the real thing.

In one way or another each of us has been guilty of being a sound effect artist! We have all given into our own evil desires to share the latest piece of gossip with someone. Now is the time for us to evaluate those past instances, as well as make a commitment for the future. May we never be guilty of being a sound effect artist again.

Commit to speak only "the facts" in all relationships.