



September 2021 Devotional Booklet

Educating our Children: a short devotional guide for September:

Introduction to the Series: Teach Our Children

Teaching is so much more than lesson plans and lectures. Ask any college graduate and they likely will tell you that it was what they were taught *outside* the classroom that meant the most--that professor who went out of their way to extend an encouraging word; the teacher that invested time and attention in a struggling child; the parent who modeled love and compassion instead of demanding it.

In this series, we are focusing on educating; as family members, mentors, children. Learning is not so much *taught* as it is *caught*, and while important content is disseminated in the traditional classroom, it is our character and compassion that make a lasting impact in our families--that cause all of us to grow in the fruits of the Spirit. How can we be more fruitful in our relationships and in our learning together?

These are the questions that will engage us as we journey through this series together. We invite you to ponder, pray and learn with us.

Krista

Pastor

Pete

Pastor

Week 1	Sun 12	On Being Awesome Grandparents
Week 2	Wed 15 & Sun 19	Celebrating Teachers and Educators
Week 3	Wed 22 & Sun 26	Learning Together as a Family

Church Education Resource Persons:

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On Being awesome Grandparents

Ruth 4: 13-17

Our Christian faith expects us to teach our children the way of the Lord. This is not confined to the nuclear family – in fact Scripture doesn't let grandparents (or seniors without their own children or grandchildren) off the hook for impacting the next generation. Psalm 145: 3-4 put it this way: "*Great is the LORD, and highly to be praised, And His greatness is unsearchable. One generation shall praise Your works to another, And shall declare Your mighty acts.*" In other words, we who are senior members of the community can't sit down in the easy chair and think we can wash our hands of the generations who follow us.

This is the essence of the story of Ruth and Naomi in the Book of Ruth. Ruth's baby belonged to Ruth and Boaz. But Naomi was going to take an active role in helping to raise the baby—as any grandmother would in their culture. Naomi's task was to *aman* or "support, make strong" the baby. It's interesting that the community also gets involved to such a degree that they named the baby. Here is an example of how being a Grandparent/Uncle/Aunt/ Neighbor can become a wonderfully rich calling on our lives. For this reason, Grandparents Day was put into place by President Carter in 1978, to celebrate how important grandparents are.

Avery Foley has this suggestion: "Have fun with your grandchildren. Build lifelong memories. Share wisdom. Serve the Lord alongside them, if possible. Listen when they are struggling. Be a shoulder to lean on. But, above all, be a godly example and influence".¹

Scripture Readings for the Week²

Monday: *Even to your old age and gray hairs I am He, I am He who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you. (Isaiah 46:4)*

Lord God: I pray for You to continue to sustain our senior citizens through every season. I pray that You cover them with Your love and help them to know just how important they are—not only to You, but to their families as well. In Jesus' name, Amen.

¹ <https://answersingenesis.org/bios/avery-foley/>

² With thanks to Jennifer Waddle <https://www.crosswalk.com/family/parenting/grandparenting/7-scriptures-that-show-how-important-grandparents-are.html>

Tuesday: *Children’s children are a crown to the aged, and parents are the pride of their children. (Proverbs 17:6)*

Gracious God, may every grandparent be able to see their grandchildren as crowns of joy. I also ask that every child would be able to see their grandparents as people they can look up to. Thank you, Lord, for the beautiful legacies they leave behind. I pray these things in Jesus’ name, Amen.

Wednesday: *I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also. (2 Timothy 1:5).*

Holy God, Thank You for the responsibility of leaving a legacy of faith. I pray that this divine calling will not cause us to be anxious. Instill in us an eagerness and anticipation of what You will do through us. Please raise us up to be the example of faith that is needed in the next generation. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Thursday: *They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green. (Psalm 92:14)*

Lord God, help us not to grow weary in bearing fruit for Your name. Strengthen us, and work through us, that we might remain full of vitality for Your purpose. Help us to remember that You have a mighty plan to fulfill in us. In Jesus’ holy name, Amen.

Friday: *Good people leave an inheritance to their grandchildren... (Proverbs 13:22).*

Lord, Thank You for blessing my life so that I can bless my children and grandchildren. Help me to make wise decisions regarding the good examples I leave behind. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

Saturday: *One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts. (Psalm 145:4)*

Gracious God, We praise You today. Thank You for motivating us to declare Your mighty acts to our family members. I do not doubt, that You love and value grandparents. Help our families to recognize their importance as well. In Jesus’ precious name, Amen.

Celebrating Schoolteachers & Educators

Acts 13:1-3 / Matthew 18:1-6

Christians treasure a rich history of Christian teachers, which include names such as such as John Wesley, Martin Luther, Augustine of Hippo, and Origen of Alexandria. This goes all the way back to the church at Antioch (Acts 13:1) which is recorded as having “*prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.*” Here are Christian teachers who shaped the next generation of disciples of

Jesus and left a lasting impact on the Christian Church. All who teach today walk in their footsteps. The teaching and example of educators provide an opportunity to help build a better future for our world.

Sadly some people see teaching as a mean to provide an income, and in the process do not care what impact they have on children. The words of Jesus need to be heard: *In Matthew 18:6 “whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea”.*

It is tough being a teacher right now, with anger and division about the teaching curriculum, masks, and budget constraints making a teacher’s life very difficult. Let us choose to encourage all who teach children – rather than to pile on yet more criticism.

Scripture Readings for the Week:

Monday:

*3 No doubt about it: children are a gift from the Lord;
the fruit of the womb is a divine reward.*

*4 The children born when one is young
are like arrows in the hand of a warrior.*

*5 The person who fills a quiver full with them is truly happy!
They won’t be ashamed when arguing with their enemies in the gate. (Psalm 127:3-5)*

Tuesday: *Be tolerant with each other and, if someone has a complaint against anyone, forgive each other. As the Lord forgave you, so also forgive each other. (Colossians 3:13)*

Wednesday: *Instruct the wise and they will be wiser still; teach the righteous and they will add to their learning..” (Proverbs 9:9)*

Thursday: *I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my loving eye on you. (Psalm 32:8)*

Friday: *Train children in the way they should go;
when they grow old, they won’t depart from it. (Proverbs 22:6)*

Saturday: *These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. 7 Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. (Deuteronomy 6:6-7)*

Learning together as a family

Ephesians 5: 25 – Ephesians 6:4

The family is the most determinative influence on the faith development of children. This can be either a positive or a negative influence. Some children admire the way their family leaders live out their faith, while (sadly) some children reject the faith of their parents because they do not see anything worth emulating.

While regular family devotions, discussions of faith at home, and worship in church are important, setting a Christian example is more important than theological knowledge. Children see though the hypocrisy of someone claiming to have faith in Jesus but refusing to live to his values. This is the essence of the instructions found in Ephesians Chapters 5 and 6.³ What is critical to note is the key to everything lies in Ephesians 5 vs 1 & 2: *Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.*² *And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.* Family relationships are at their best when informed by the self-sacrificial love of Jesus. When one member of the family walks in anger, or in arrogant dominance, then the family becomes dysfunctional. Each member of the family is to imitate the love of God so that the whole family can “walk in love”.

Let us get past the idealized view of a “family” as Mom and Dad and kids. If (as said above) Family is about love and commitment to support each other through thick and thin, then families come in many shapes and sizes. Family can be Grandparents, Uncles and Aunts and cousins. Family can also be life-long friends who have offered their time and money for the well-being of everyone. Learning our Christian faith is a communal activity, where everyone contributes so that all can become more like Jesus.

The family is at its best when everyone in the family grows in faith together. Children are inspired to grow when they see their parents growing in faith. Families are encouraged to a deeper faithfulness when the extended family of Grandparents, Uncles and Aunts and Godparents are all actively involved in seeking a deeper faith in God. Deuteronomy 6:5-7 is quite clear that teaching our faith is the task of all the family members: *“Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your being, and all your strength. These words that I am commanding you today must always be on your minds. Recite them to your children. Talk about*

³ A closer examination of this will be available on Wednesday 22nd and Sunday 26th. This will be preached in church, as well as available in podcast and video.

them when you are sitting around your house and when you are out and about, when you are lying down and when you are getting up.”

Honoring One Another

Ephesians 6:1-4

6 As for children, obey your parents in the Lord, because it is right. 2 The commandment “Honor your father and mother” is the first one with a promise attached: 3 “so that things will go well for you, and you will live for a long time in the land” 4 As for parents, don’t provoke your children to anger, but raise them with discipline and instruction about the Lord.

In this series we are focusing on the gift of families. Sunday, September 26th is Family Sunday; a day when we take time out to recognize the importance of healthy families. The writers of Scripture also recognized what a blessing and indeed a necessity healthy, nurturing families are in our society and in our own spiritual, emotional and psychological development.

What we have in our text for this week is a kind of “family code.” It hearkens back to the ancient law codes we find in Old Testament texts in Exodus, Deuteronomy, Leviticus and Numbers, and other ancient near Eastern texts like the Code of Hammurabi, the Code of Ur-Nammu, and other ancient Sumerian and Neo-Babylonian lists of vices and virtues.

But unlike those other ancient codes of conduct, the Judeo-Christian tradition preserves a code of *justice*. While other pagan traditions’ main concern was the preservation of law and order, our tradition seems to have a different motivation; that is, to create a *just society*. So, for example, in Exodus 20:12, the Hebrews are commanded to “honor your father and mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.”

The ancient command acknowledges that honoring our parents creates a society in which we take care of one another, and as a result, we ALL benefit and the entire society is elevated by the just practices of individuals within families. But our text this week takes it further: not only are children to honor their parents, but *parents* are to treat their *children* kindly as well. This indicates a relationship that is not top-down, but *reciprocal*. In Colossians 3, we have a very similar rendering of this family code: “**20** Children, obey your parents in everything, because this pleases the Lord. **21** Parents, don’t provoke your children in a way that ends up discouraging them.”

Our Judeo-Christian tradition emphasizes justice and equity. In a society that considered slavery and the subjugation of women and children as the norm, Jesus and the New Testament authors consistently bucked that system to elevate the position of those who in that society had a position of powerlessness--foreigners, women, slaves and children. This moves me to consider; who are the powerless ones in our society? The outsiders? The marginalized? Who in your family is the “black sheep”? How are they treated in your family system? How can you redress the balance and treat them with respect and compassion?

May we take the opportunity in these next days to re-think our family relationships in order to create more *just*, loving and equitable families, in Jesus’ name.

Scripture Readings for the Week

Monday: *But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.* (1 Timothy 5:8)

Tuesday: *And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”* (Joshua 24:15)

Wednesday: *This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you.* (John 15:12).

Thursday: *Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity. Honor widows who are truly widows. But if a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show godliness to their own household and to make some return to their parents, for this is pleasing in the sight of God.* (1 Timothy 5:1)

Friday: *My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments, for length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you. Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you; bind them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart. So you will find favor and good success in the sight of God and man.* (Proverbs 3:1)

Saturday: *Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.* (1 Peter 4:8).