

Welcome Blended Families

When parents with children remarry, there is a need to bring the two families together or blend families. As we seek to welcome all God's children into our congregations and into our hearts during this UIM year. If your family is blended, we are providing this article to make sure you know we care about you. If you know a blended family, please share this article with them and invite them to your congregation!

Love and respect for and between members is needed to keep all families strong. But God created each person to be different, so each member will blend differently. Some will blend well and others will not. Some may even act in disrespectful and unloving ways even if they never have before. Blending families will definitely need patience and wisdom from God to understand why these members act the way they do.

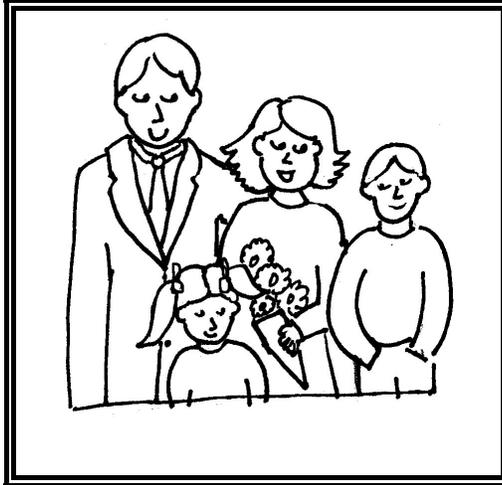
Children in blended families can have complicated emotions they need time to deal with. They may not always feel the security they felt before the blending. Even though their parents dearly love them, children in blended families may fear losing their parents love or some other part of family life, such as the time they spend with their parents - their own space - going to a favorite place - even having a favorite food or meal. Some of their fears may seem trivial, but because they cause children who are in blended families deep distress, they need to be understood.

One of the basic things to understand is that children will lose something in the blend. Never deny that they will not lose anything, because they will. It is sure to happen when two families blend. Parents who help children accept their loss can help to save themselves and their families a great deal of frustration during the blending of two families into one.

Rather than overlook or minimize losses, help children share how they feel and what they fear they will lose openly and freely without passing judgement or even giving your opinion. Never allow them to act in disrespectful or in unloving ways and discipline them

if they do, but give them free reign to share how they feel and assure them that you will do everything in your power to help them resolve their feelings and deal with their loss.

Of course, if there is something that can be done to alleviate their fears or losses, work hard to do it. However, no matter how hard parents try, they cannot give their children everything they had as a family before the blending of two families.



The good news is that parents can give their children all they need by giving them God. Children who are helped to become strong in their faith will more readily and easily work through their losses and overcome their fears. They will also be better able to see the blessings God provides in a blended family, such as more people to love them, have new experiences with, help them in

difficult times, etc. Parents who strengthen their own faith and the faith of their children will be able to provide far more than they realize in terms of giving their children what they need during the time their family is blending and, indeed, for the rest of their lives.

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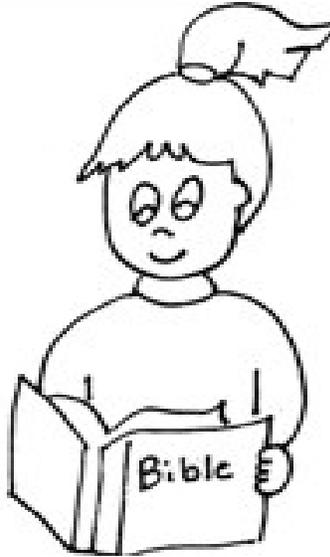
Contentment Guaranteed

Being content or satisfied is wonderful, but it is hard to achieve in an imperfect world. How many people can actually say they are content in *every* situation? Paul tells us in Philippians 4:11, “...*I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content.*” which implies that Paul was not always content, but had to learn to be content in whatever situation he was in, which, by the way, was usually not the best of situations. Paul constantly faced hardship, persecution, floggings, and eventually death. Paul did not have what most people would call a “good life.” Yet, because he had learned to be content, he had the most wonderful life of all - and as we consider his life and contentment so can we.

This newsletter is being offered to help our congregation welcome and reach out to singles. Still, it can easily speak to any person who is discontent or dissatisfied. Just like everyone else, singles can be discontent with jobs, homes, how they look, their friends, etc. Even if the discontent singles feel might be distinct to the single life, it remains the same discontent that others might feel. This is why with so much discontent going around, we all need to read this article that offers the guaranteed contentment that comes through Christ.

Our discontent is fairly easy to understand. We are living in a world of abundance and as sinners, we want it all. We don't need it all. We can't afford it all. But the world advertizes we can have it all, and when we can't, we become discontent and like Paul, we need to learn to be content.

It is also easy to think we can help ourselves feel content by getting a better job, finding new friends, remodeling the house, marrying or remarrying, etc. And these things can make us content for a time. But when they go wrong or away they leave us discontent. That is because contentment that lasts does not come from anything we do. Only as we read God's Word will we discover the contentment that comes from God through Christ, who alone can give contentment that will abide in us as long as He abides in us.



Paul learned to be content in and through Christ who lived in him, and so can we. Our God promises to supply all of our needs, and He does. However, it is only as we realize that we have all that we need through Christ and have nothing left to be discontent about that we learn in whatever situation we are in to be content. Then, even when we become discontent, and as sinners we will become discontent, God will forgive and restore us over and over again. God's continued restoration of our souls proves He truly does fulfill all of our deepest needs through Christ so we can be content.

As we seek to be content, we may think we need something new, while in reality, we need what is very, very old: God's Word made flesh to dwell among us and He is Jesus Christ (John 1:14). So, each time you feel discontent, partake of God's Word and be filled with the contentment that only Jesus gives through the Holy Spirit. Not only will you be content, but you will be filled with the peace of Christ that surpasses human understanding (Philippians 4:7). As you live in the peace of Christ, you will be content and pass contentment on. As it flows from you to others, it welcomes them to Christ for faith that is able to learn to be content in whatever situation just like Paul. This is how contentment is learned, passed on, and guaranteed for believers in every generation.

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Count Your Blessings and Dance!

“Tiptoe Through the Tulips” is an old song that paints a picture of the freedom felt dancing around in flowers - completely free of every problem. What would we give if we could only be that free? The truth is Christ gave His life to set sinners free. By faith, all who believe in Him are free, absolutely and completely free. This is a great blessing and cause for thanksgiving and dancing this Thanksgiving and every day of our lives.

This article welcomes and offers help for those facing divorce or death or any situation that keeps people from dancing. Pain can overshadow and overpower any ability to count our blessings or give thanks and dance. This is why we need to remember and tell others about our God, who turns our mourning into dancing (Psalm 30:11). Sharing what our God can do can help to welcome people to Christ. But, first we must count our blessings so we can share them, and thank the Lord and dance! So, let's start counting our blessings with thankfulness in our hearts so we can share them to welcome people to Christ.



- Are you alive today? That did not happen by accident. God gave you life on earth and He sent His only Son to make it possible for you to receive eternal life in heaven. Count this blessing from God with a thankful heart and dance!

- Are you hungry? There are those who are starving, not only for physical food, but for spiritual food. You may or may not have physical food, but through Christ, you are filled spiritually with every good thing. Count your blessings and share them so all who hunger can be filled and dance!

- Do you have a place to sleep? Whether you do or not, Christ will give you rest. Count your blessings and share His rest in words and deeds, being kind and generous to those who lack shelter. Help to take away the loneliness of others and count the warmth that caring for others offers you as a blessing, thank the Lord, and dance!

- Are you healthy? You may or may not be physically healthy, but you can be spiritually healthy through faith in Christ. Count your blessing of faith that will sustain you in sickness and health, be thankful, and dance!

Through faith in Christ, counting your blessings with a thankful heart can have you “tiptoeing through the tulips” in the best and worst of times. Because you are the Lord’s by faith, whether you live in famine or want, or face failure or illness or even death, you have the Lord - so dance!

Absolutely nothing can harm you because you are the Lord’s. In the midst of situations that bring you down, God will lift you up. He who has you will also help you count your blessings, be thankful, and dance! Others might think are you crazy, or at least in denial of your painful situation, but let them see you dance. Be a witness to the world of the joy you have through Christ. Let your faith become a testament of what faith in Christ can do for all who believe in Him. Your spirit of joy in sorrow, light in darkness, and strength in weakness will help to welcome people to Christ for faith to count their blessings with thankful hearts and dance! You will welcome all who like what they see to Christ.

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Joy in Depression?

Welcoming people who face depression to Christ is one of the most difficult yet necessary works of individual and congregational ministry. Christmas is a season of joy and would seem to be a time that lifts depression, especially in people of faith who know that “A Savior is Born!” In reality, people of faith are struck by depression just like all other people. They just have more strength available to fight against depression. Still, depression can cause people to lose their strength. So, our congregation is reaching out to remind those facing depression and the people who love and desire to help them of the extra strength God gives to fight depression.

It will help to understand the Christian fight against depression. When Christians fall into depression, they can feel guilty because they believe their faith isn't strong enough to prevent them from becoming depressed or to help them out of depression. When they fail to keep from or rise above depression, it can increase their depression. When they ask God for stronger faith and even to forgive them for weak faith (even when their faith is strong) and their depression continues, they can be left feeling deserted by God and even more hopeless and helpless.

This article and sharing it can help to assure people struggling with depression that God is with them even when He does not seem to be because He promises to be with all believers and He has kept every one of His promises. While it is wonderful for all of us to be reminded that God is with us every Christmas, it is important for people who are depressed to hear this promise every day. It is a fact of faith that God, even if we do not realize it, is with us always. We receive more strength from Him each time we partake of His Word and Sacraments and pray, but He is always with us. We are His. However, *it is our believing it* that helps to alleviate depression like nothing else can.

God has provided therapy and medication to help all people through depression, but He gives believers even more. Through daily contact with God in His Word and as we pray all those fighting depression receive God's powerful help and strength 24/7. If you or someone you know is suffering from depression and would like God's extra strength, read on:

- First and foremost, understand that pretending to be happy on the outside takes a great deal of hard work on the inside. It is when we stop thinking we need to do all the work to be happy on the outside and let the joy of the Lord do its healing work deep inside that we rise above depression, *not by our power but by His*.

- Also realize that the inner joy and peace Christ offers is not made up of deep belly laughs, even though laughter has proven to be the best medicine.

The joy that comes from the Lord fills our souls even when we do not feel joyful because when *God is with us*, so is His joy. This is a fact of faith and promise of God we can depend on and cling to for help and strength in every need.

- **Warning:** Never give up therapy and medications, just add God's extra strength to them. Know for a fact that you are never alone. Don't wonder; don't guess; don't worry; KNOW, because there is no doubt *God is with you!*



With Christ living in you, depression may linger, but it has no power over you as you rest in God's arms. Place yourself there; trust that you are there; know that God is lovingly caring for you; and believe without a doubt that God is filling you with His joy *deep inside where it counts* because that is exactly what He is doing this Christmas and every day of your life.

Joy to the World; God is With Us!

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Helping Grandchildren through Divorce

Divorce causes pain. Our loving God agonizes over our pain. He desires to heal our pain. That is why God sent His Son to suffer, die, and rise again to forgive our sins. As we go about welcoming people touched by divorce to Christ, they need to hear about His forgiveness and love because these help to heal the pain of divorce.

FORGIVE THE SINNER

Grandparents who desire to help heal the pain of divorce can find a helpful comrade in the forgiveness of Christ. When divorce hurts those we love, it is easy to become angry and hand out blame rather than offer the forgiveness of Christ. Yet once the sin of divorce is forgiven, it is the forgiveness that begins to heal the pain of divorce. Grandparents who are able to give forgiveness to all of the people involved in a divorce can help to heal the pain of divorce.



CONDEMN THE SIN

It is important to condemn divorce as sin but love and forgive all of the sinners involved. There is also a critical need to encourage couples to seek help and council to prevent divorce, resolve their differences, and be reconciled. However, once divorce is eminent, the need for forgiveness should be predominant. Also, when abuse is present, it may be unhealthy, even dangerous, to remain in a marriage. Grandparents who share that the sin of divorce can be forgiven can actually aid in escape from dangerous marriages and help save lives! Because it is necessary to both condemn and forgive divorce at the proper times, grandparents need the wisdom that can only be found in God's Word to help them discern which they should do when.

BE A SOURCE OF FAITH

Grandchildren cannot only survive divorce, but thrive through the love and support of their grandparents. The pain of lost family and stability that comes with divorce should not be overlooked or minimized. Grandparents can help by praying for and with their grandchildren, sharing God's Word, and giving extra praise and so much love their grandchildren will not feel the full extent of their loss.

PREVENT FUTURE DIVORCE

It is unwise to think the sin of a divorce will not be repeated by the next generation. It can all too easily become one way to solve a problem marriage. While grandchildren can be deeply hurt by divorce, their pain may not keep them from using divorce to solve problems in their own marriages. Once again, God's forgiveness can help stop the spread of divorce to the next generation. Grandparents who lay a foundation of faith and forgiveness can help future marriages and families forgive one another and destroy the need for divorce.

SUPPLY CONSTANT LOVE

The constant love of grandparents can help their grandchildren and also their children. Couples experiencing divorce can easily be overwhelmed and unable to give love to their children in full measure until their own pain is diminished. Grandparents can step in with the constant reassurance of God's love and their own. Even when they do not agree with divorce, they can lovingly offer to help in any way possible. And they will receive strength and wisdom to do all of this and more through their own daily contact with God by partaking of His Word and Sacraments and as they pray.

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Truly Healthy Food

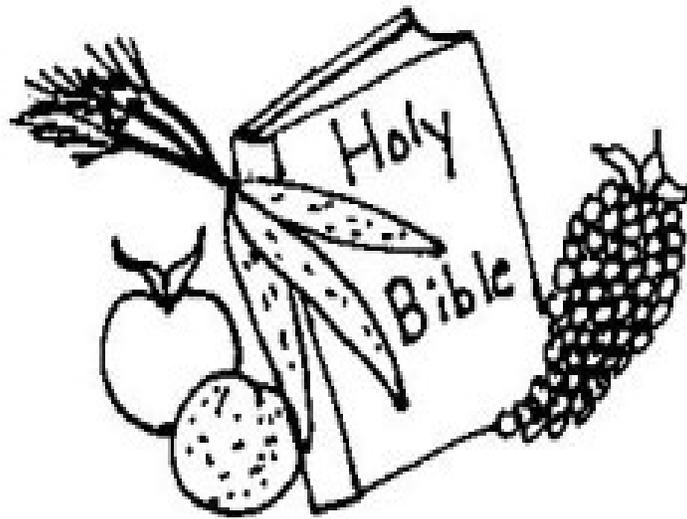
There's a huge push for healthy eating in our country and that is good. Still, there are controversies over which foods are healthy. One report cautions *not to eat* the same food another report tells us *to eat*. "No Preservatives" and "Organic" are splashed on food labels and a wonderful idea, except when food spoils because it does not have preservatives and we can't eat it.

There are those who will not eat meat and this is ok as long as their bodies receive the nutrients provided by meat through other sources. Some people obsessed with eating healthy are being labeled addicts. They follow a very strict diet and do not budge. Such discipline could be commended except when they develop serious health problems because they lack the nutrients their diet does not provide but their bodies need.

While parents may become confused about which foods are the best, there is one food they should always eat and always feed to their children. Each morsel is healthy. It has no fat and needs no preservatives. It contains no harmful effects and is absolutely pure. It can maintain and improve physical, emotional, and spiritual health. It will never spoil. In fact, it will last forever!

The food described above is often called "food for the soul" and it can be found or gathered any time, day or night, at no cost in the Bible. And, by all means, go ahead and become addicted to this food because it is God's Word and absolutely healthy and necessary for all who partake of it. There is no food like it on earth that can claim the healthy benefits for body and soul that God's Word offers, and offering it to others welcomes them to Christ, the mission of our UIM year.

Experts report that feeding infants and toddlers healthy food can help them learn to eat healthy foods all their lives. And the chance of them providing the same healthy food for their children is extremely high. The same thing happens when we feed God's Word to our children: they do not depart from it (Proverbs 22:6) and they feed it to their children. So, start early when your children are babes in your arms. Read them simple Bible Stories. Sing or play recordings of Bible songs. By the time they are old, they will crave the healthiest food they will ever digest, God's Word.



The wisdom and strength that comes through God's Word and Sacraments can help parents make healthy choices for themselves and for their children in all areas of their lives. As parents turn to God in prayer and ask for His help, He will guide them to know and do the things that help to keep them and their children healthy in their bodies and in their souls now and for eternity.

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Helping Children Learn To Share

We often witness children unwilling to share. Refusing to share is a very early and normal reaction to having something taken away. We don't want to give up something we think we have some ownership of or right to retain. It's as normal and natural as original sin and, therefore, can be extremely hard for parents to teach to their children. We pray this article focused on children will offer parents some insights into teaching children to share and welcome children and parents to our congregation.

There are educators who propose giving something to children specifically so they can be taught or trained to share it. In some cases this works and it depends on what children are given to share. Giving children money to place in an offering plate usually works because they see everyone else doing it and the money isn't theirs. My grandson places the offering given to him in the plate because he has been taught to do so and being told "good job" makes him feel good. On the other hand, if I asked him to give me (his much loved grandma) his piano, he would protest. While an offering is given to him specifically so that he can share it, he clearly claims ownership of and will not share his piano with anyone under any circumstances.

It is also good to remember that while the concept of sharing can be taught to a child, it may not always be understood by a child. Years ago, I heard our two small daughters fighting over two lawn chairs we had bought for them some time earlier. One chair had a broken armrest. Neither wanted it. When I asked, "Whose lawn chair is the broken one?" one daughter proudly admitted she owned the broken chair but that she was "sharing it with her sister." It was evident that the concept of sharing needed a little more work in our home.

Over the years I have learned that one of the best ways to teach children to share is by our example. When we share what we have with others, the chances are good that our children will do the same. Still, some children will not share no matter how clearly we explain the need to share or how good of an example we set. We

have to accept the reality of the situation and not despair. No parent likes to see their child rip a toy out of the hand of another child. But, thankfully, we can use each time children refuse to share as a teachable moment.

It can help to take a child and the coveted toy aside and gently explain that this toy needs to be shared. It does not necessarily need to be shared at that exact moment, but in the future, the child should prepare to share that toy. Preparing a child to share is a good strong step toward helping a child share. Being prepared for the child not to share even after we have carefully prepared him or her is also important because it will happen to the best of parents.



Some children will rebel and refuse to share no matter how gentle, loving, and firm we persist in being. We may become so frustrated we do not know what to do or say to help our child share. Thankfully,

God, through His Word, comes to our aid. As we read God's Word, His Spirit will help us to be gentle, loving, and firm just like Jesus. We will know what to say and do because God will be teaching us. And as we teach God's Word to our children, Jesus, Himself, will teach them to be more like Him: kind, gentle, and caring, and to not only learn, but actually feel His desire to share.

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Teach Purity To Prevent Pain

This article has been written to reach out and welcome teens but it is excellent for every age surrounded sinful impurity. Today, children at very young ages are drawn into sexual impurity. Sadly, some are having sex. We can't shield them from sex or sin completely, but we can teach purity. I am not talking about sex education. I am talking about sharing the extraordinary love God has for them in and through Christ. Love from God grows love for God, self, and others. It is love that is so pure it does not think impure thoughts much less act in impure ways. It gives those filled with it desire and strength to keep trying to be pure when they are tempted by impurity or any other sin.

The best way to teach purity is to live pure lives. If we have been impure in thought, word, or deed, we need to confess our sin to God, who will forgive us. Our confession assures us forgiveness and the strength of faith we need to keep trying to be pure and teach others to do the same. Seeing Christians trying to be pure helps to welcome people who like what they see to Christ.

Every generation of parents, if they have sinned sexually, wonders if they should tell their children about their sin. Some children may think it gives them permission to sin. Others who find out their parents are keeping secrets about sex may keep secrets about sex or think their parents cannot be trusted to tell them the truth. This is why praying for wisdom to know what to say to children and teens is crucial. Parents sharing the negative effects of sexual impurity in their own lives can help children who need to hear it. However, teaching purity can eliminate the need for doing so, because it shares the best way to live free of the negative effects of all sin, and that is God's way. No matter what parents choose to tell or not to tell their children, they should always be prepared to share the following:

- Sexual sin and all sin separates us from God and His love, which is painful all by itself. On top of that, sexual sin is a sin committed against our own bodies (1 Corinthians 6:18), making it one of the most

harmful sins we can commit. Having sex outside of a marriage relationship between a man and a woman hurts us personally in places we cannot see and the damage is not always immediately recognizable. But the damage is done. It can come sooner or later in the form of lost trust, or inability to commit or love in present and future relationships. While God designed and created sex within marriage to bind one man and one woman together in love for God and for each other for a lifetime, sex outside of marriage separates couples from God and from the love and bond only He gives through marriage.

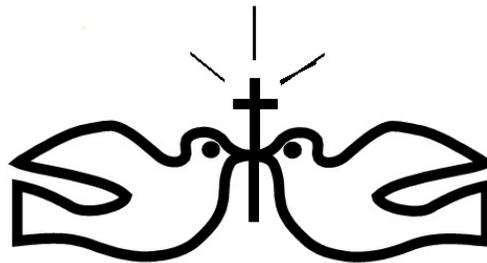
- Because sin declares having sex outside of marriage to be acceptable for those mature enough to handle it, some people do not know having sex outside of marriage will hurt them. With birth control available, some think they will not become pregnant, though 1 in 100 women do become pregnant. Others believe birth control will keep them from getting sexually transmitted diseases, which it does not. Too many know nothing about the pain suffered deep inside souls that are always damaged spiritually by sinful sex. This is why teaching purity to prevent pain has become so critical in the world today.

- Along with teaching purity by being pure and sharing the purity of God and His ways that are best, we must always teach that sinful impurity confessed to God is forgiven through Christ and that His forgiveness makes us pure again. As we teach purity we welcome people who like what they see to Christ and passed purity on for generations to prevent the pain caused by impurity and all sin.

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“Giving Moms to God”

Have you ever thought of giving your mother to God? Moms are expected to raise children, tend to their husband and home, and still work full time inside and outside the home. They are on call 24/7 every day and it has always been this way. They need a break! But because of who they are and why they have been placed on this earth, they never seem to get a break. We hope this article will help all moms feel welcome in our congregation and inspire their children to give them to God for the rest they deserve.

Children, there are many things you can do to give your moms rest: Tell her to sit down. Then, do the dishes for her. Don't fight with your sibling(s). Clean your room. Even dads can give moms a break by pitching in with housework and helping kids with their homework. All of the above will give mom a break, but how about going one step further? Don't stop with giving your Mom a temporary break. Give her rest that will last.

Lasting rest comes when you give your mom or wife to God. Even tell her you are going to do it as a gift just for her because you love her so much. Here's how: Begin and end each day with this prayer: **Father, I want to give my (mom/wife) to You. Fill her life with Your love. Bless her with patience. Strengthen her faith. Fill her with the joy that can only come from You. In Jesus name, I pray. Amen.**

You may think this prayer is too simple. As you try to pray it day and night, you will find out how hard it really is. You will probably need to place reminders up around your bed and breakfast table to help you remember to pray. You will need to make copies of the prayer or memorize it. To say giving your mom to God will be easy is a vast understatement. It is going to take time and require commitment from you. Yet, this is a wonderful gift that will give your (mom/wife) lasting rest. It will lift her up during all of the responsibilities and cares that weigh her down every day because it will give her God's help and strength and rest.

And giving your Mom to God can work out pretty well for you, also.....

- when she is feeling unappreciated and even unloved - your prayers will be filling her soul with God's love. Compelled by His love, she will be better able to reach out in love and touch the lives of all the people she comes in contact with each day, *including you.*

- when she becomes impatient - your prayers will give her patience from God. Filled with patience from God, she will be able to be more patient with all of the people around her, *including you.*

- when her faith becomes weak or it needs to be strengthened - your prayers will give her the faith necessary to sustain her and all those God gives her to care for in her busy day and life, *including you.*

- when her joy is diminished - your prayers can fill her with the joy of the Lord. Then, she can be joyful to all the people around her, *including you.*



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Creative Family Devotions For Dads

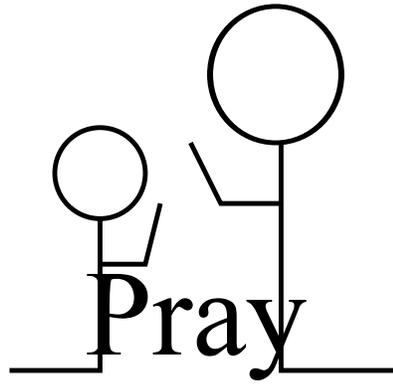
The chief hindrance fathers (and mothers) give for not having family devotions is time. There is never enough of it. So, begin small. First, pray for time to have devotions. Then, we hope this article provided by our congregation as a welcome for fathers and filled with creative ways to have devotions will help your family to have devotions in your busy life.

Often, we try to make time for prayer and devotions without taking our specific need for “time” to the Lord in prayer. We look at getting up earlier in the morning and getting everyone else up too. That is met with rebellion and soon falls by the wayside because it really doesn’t work well for them or for us. No one likes to get up earlier than they already do.

Next, we attempt to get everyone together for a meal to have devotions. But our family just doesn’t get together for meals like we used to. We think about having prayer and devotions before bed, but everyone comes home and goes to bed at different times.

It quickly becomes evident that prayer and devotions are not going to happen in our home without divine intervention. Thankfully, God is only a prayer away and is always ready to help us. Ask Him to help you. You will be surprised at how time for devotions appears once you place God in the driver’s seat. He is already helping you “get creative” as you read on:

- If meeting together with the whole family won’t happen every day, schedule a time when you can get together with one or more members or meet once a week with the whole family or with some members. Ask questions about the things member’s are doing and take time to pray for members concerns and needs. Certainly, read a portion of Scripture and even a devotion as God provides you time, and He will as you continue to ask Him for time. But in the end, while a meal is nice, so is a snack - or a walk - or just talk and pray!



- Family members can’t come to you? Go to them! E-mail or text them Bible passages and ask how they are doing or what they are doing to get a reply. Search the internet for devotions you can send them, make them specific for their age. Always read them yourself first and comment on them when you see them.

- Still have little ones at home but you are not always at home? Download Bible Stories and Bible Songs they can listen to when you are gone. Then, ask them about the stories when you see them and sing the Bible songs. Can’t sing? Ask them to sing them for you or play them when you are playing with them.

- Last but not most importantly, do not neglect prayer and personal daily devotions for yourself. Each day, pray for God to open up your mind and eyes to more ways to be creative in leading your family to pray and have devotions. God will help you search for and find the perfect devotions for you and for your family. He may help you write prayers that can be read by family members when you are apart. Even lay them in places where they can be found by family members. Make copies of Bible passages and stick them into pockets and backpacks, even on night-stands or under a pillow. Then, share what the passage means to you with each member as you see them throughout the week. If they are hesitant, keep inviting them to share what the passages mean to them when they are ready.

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Enjoying The Second Half of Marriage

The second half of marriage can be even better than the first because you have all the bugs worked out. But you have to make it to the second half. Today, far too many marriages end in divorce before the best part of marriage begins. We pray this article will not just help married couples feel welcome and loved in our congregation, but that it will help them stay married.

The key to making the second half of marriage even better than the first is all about working through problems. Couples who have worked through their problems report not only being happier in the second half of marriage, but being happier personally than couples who have divorced. This is very good reason to stay and enjoy the second half of marriage.

It's true some married couples seem to sail through life happily together. They may have problems but are blessed with the ability to work through them, each depending on the other for support and strength.

There are even couples who fail to work through their problems and still remain committed to each other and married for life for a variety of reasons. Sadly, the second half of their marriage may be as problematic as the first, *but it does not need to be*. There is no need to hide problems and pretend they do not exist just to stay married. Working through problems can make for a wonderful second half of marriage. Try it! Ask God to help you because He will.

Always remember spending time with God in His Word gives you a much different perspective on life and every problem of life - God's perspective. Worship, partaking of God's Word and Sacraments, prayer, and the fellowship of believers all encourage and uplift us in our personal and married lives. In fact, if we are experiencing marriage problems, it is best to avoid spending time with those who may not consider marriage as sacred as God ordains and fellow Christians remind us it is.



Praying and reading God's Word together as a couple strengthens every marriage, but when there are problems between a husband and wife, this is hard to do. If you are not willing to try, ask God to make you willing. If you are willing, invite your spouse to join you or at least think about joining you. Keep reading God's Word and praying by yourself until your spouse joins you and if your spouse does not join you. God's Word and prayer will both (1) equip and strengthen you to work with and love your spouse through problems, and (2) create in you the desire to enjoy your spouse and the second half of marriage in ways you never thought you could.

As always, we must warn that marriages that are unsafe because of physical violence may need to end in divorce unless they become safe. If your marriage is safe but problematic, work through your problems with God's help. *What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate* (Mark 10:9).

Remember, divorce makes you miss a wonderful second half of marriage. And because some of the problems in your marriage have to do with you, they will not go away with your spouse. In fact, spouses often stay connected problems and all, so divorce solves nothing. When you consider that you will also lose about half of your friends, working through your marriage problems and enjoying the second half of your marriage can become very appealing and it is very God-pleasing.

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Choosing Good Companions For Life

It seems simple enough just to tell college students to choose companions who know and love the Lord so they can have the best college experience. This would be excellent advice if the devil were not alive and well. Christian students headed out into our big, bad world can be tempted to sin as much as and perhaps even more than other college students.

This does not mean Christian college students will not look for companions who know and love the Lord on their own, because they will. It means that even the most devoted Christian students can be tempted and fall into sin during their “freedom and self-discovery” college years. It also means college students need to be in the minds and prayers of congregations. This UIM article is designed to be read by college students, their families, and their congregations, who can all support them in prayer during their college years.

Just like many UIM articles, this one designed for college students can speak to every Christian. The fact is, Christians should never underestimate or fail to recognize the people God sends to be our companions during college and throughout our lives.

- You will know them by their language. It will be clean and honorable.
- You will recognize them by their spirit. It will be joyful and pure.
- You will identify them by their deeds. You will see that they treat others well and hear how they talk about others with kindness.
- You will see their faith through what they say and do. Some may personally share their faith.



AVOID AND FLEE:

- Sin: Read God’s Word for guidance and strength; Romans 12:2, 9, and 18; 1 Corinthians 6:18; 2 Corinthians 6:14; Galatians 6:1; Philippians 4:8; Ephesians 5:18; 2 Timothy 2:22, etc.
- Companions that you feel are wrong for you.
- Companions who show disrespect to others.
 - Companions who try to influence you to do things you do not want to do or know you should not do or to go places you do not want to go or know you should not go.
 - Companions that you know rebel against or hear speak against God.

College and all of our lives can be filled with wonderful experiences, and many solid friendships can be formed with those who love the Lord and with those we may have opportunity to bring to the Lord. To make sure your college and life experiences are the best, choose companions who will help you enjoy remembering each stage of your life without regrets. God will guide you to these companions as you stay close to Him through His Word and Prayer.

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