



Summer 2010

## Family Devotions

Week 1

June 18, 21—25

Fathers Day edition

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June 18, Friday before Fathers Day

Our Father in Heaven... ~ Matthew 6:9

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Consider: God could have chosen to call Himself any Name He wanted to, in His “new” relationship with His redeemed ones. He chose this name: Father. In doing so, God not only honored the role of father, but also put heavy responsibility on all fathers.

Think of it: every father is responsible for being a child’s first impression of “father.” Therefore, when that child is old enough to understand God’s being called “Father,” what will his first impression be?

Many wonderful Christians have struggled with calling God “Father” and accepting fully His love and grace—all because they had awful experiences with their earthly fathers.

Dear men of God, be a “John the Baptist” for your children, by giving them a positive impression of “father” to “prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for Him” (Mark 1:3).

*A righteous man who walks in his integrity - How blessed are his sons after him.*  
(Prov 20:7, NASB)

Monday, June 21

Here's another Message from God to the people of Judah and Jerusalem: *Plow your unplowed fields, but then don't plant weeds in the soil!* ~ Jeremiah 4:3 (The Message)

You—and your children—are God's field (1 Corinthians 3:9), and your fruitfulness comes only from Him (Hosea 14:8).

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- If your family has a garden, use it as an object lesson. If not, purchase some seeds, perhaps flower seeds, and plant them in pots or a bed during this devotion time. The assignment is to tend the seeds, water, etc. and check their progress weekly.
- Read the scripture passages. Lead a conversation about how your family can be God's garden this summer.
- If age-appropriate, read the passage below.

The great British writer Samuel Taylor Coleridge, once found himself in a conversation with an acquaintance who felt that children should receive no formal religious instruction. The man spouted the secular philosophy of the day: that children should be free to choose their own religious faith when they reached a more mature age.

Coleridge, though he disagreed, did not say much, but later invited the man into his home and took him to see his garden.

“You call this a garden?” the visitor exclaimed. “There are nothing but weeds here!”

“Well, you see,” Coleridge replied, “I did not wish to infringe upon the liberty of the garden in any way. I was just giving the garden a chance to express itself and to choose its own production.”

- Read: *A healthy tree produces good fruit, and an unhealthy tree produces bad fruit.*  
<sup>18</sup> *A good tree can't produce bad fruit, and a bad tree can't produce good fruit.* <sup>19</sup> *So every tree that does not produce good fruit is chopped down and thrown into the fire.*  
<sup>20</sup> *Yes, the way to identify a tree or a person is by the kind of fruit that is produced.*  
 Matt. 7:17-20 (NLT)
- Pray to bear good fruit this summer.

Tuesday, June 22

Ronald Reagan said, “All great change in America begins at the dinner table. So, tomorrow night in the kitchen I hope the talking begins.”

Preparation: Chuck Swindoll, pastor and Christian author, found his hectic lifestyle overwhelming his Christian sensibilities at home. He ate fast, talked fast, and expressed irritation when he was interrupted from his work.

“I distinctly remember after supper one evening,” Swindoll relates, “the words of our younger daughter, Colleen. She wanted to tell me something important that had happened to her at school that day. She began hurriedly, ‘Daddy, I wanna tell you something, and I’ll tell you really fast.’

Suddenly realizing her frustration, I answered, ‘Honey, you can tell me— and you don’t have to tell me really fast. Say it slowly.’ I’ll never forget her answer: ‘Then listen slowly.’”

Time is something that can’t be recovered. Take time with your family...slowly.

- Conduct this devotion at the supper table.
- Suggested discussion starter questions:
  - If you found a \$100 bill on the ground, what would you do with it?
  - What was the most fun part of your day?
  - If you were president for one day, what would you do?
  - If you were going on a long trip and could take only one toy, what would it be?
  - For younger children, blow bubbles; as bubble pop ask to name something they thank God for.
- For the remainder of this week, commit, as often as possible, to have at least one family meal together each day.
- Read: *So, my friend, listen closely; don't treat my words casually.* ~ Proverbs 5:7 (The Message)
- Talk about how your family can honor each other by respecting God’s Word, the Bible, and respect each other with our words.
- Read: *Don't use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them.* Eph 4:29 (NLT)
- Pray for time to enjoy and love each other.

Wednesday, June 23

- Preparation:
  - This week be alert to teachable moments. What is going on in the world that your family can talk about?
  - Make a sign reading: “There is no such thing as a dumb question.”
  - Prepare a brown paper bag with slips of paper; write the words: *who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, and *how*.

And he said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." ~ Matthew 18:3

A preacher asked the rhetorical question: “Do you know what Jesus said about that?” A little boy named Christopher, after he paused, said, “What?” Folks laughed, and his mother even mildly chastised him; but I thought it was great! We SHOULD ask “What?” in childlike faith when we don’t understand. Why do we allow layers of maturity to stifle our once raw, unpretentious questions?

Curiosity is the key to learning. It is part and parcel of what Jesus said when He declared, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven BELONGS to such as these" (Matthew 19:14). To benefit maximally from your Christian life and to be most effective, you will both enter the kingdom with childlike faith and curiosity (Matthew 18:3) and then maintain that curiosity with eager questions. God will give you answers, in His way and His time (Matthew 7:7-8).

- Have each family member, one at a time, pull a slip of paper out of the bag and ask a question beginning with the word they picked.
  - Display the sign.

We have much to learn from children’s curiosity and questions. You will not enter the kingdom of God unless you change and become like little children, and you will also enjoy and maximally benefit the kingdom when you retain some of that child-likeness.

- Pray for wisdom to know how to ask the right questions in order to learn from God.

Thursday, June 24

Do this one out doors.

Preparation:

- Gather:
  - Dirt, hand-held shovels, water, cookie sheets, dish pan of water for hand-washing, white towels
  - Make mud-pies, get sloppy.
- Read: Come near to God and He will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ~ James 4:8

Ah, the lessons we can learn from children!

- One day at school, a young Daniel Webster, having been caught doing something he ought not to have done in class, was called to the front of the room to have his right palm caned, befitting the custom of punishment of the times. Nervously aware of his filthy condition, he tried, as he approached the schoolmaster's desk, to rub some of the dirt off his hands, but it was no use.

When the teacher saw the appallingly grungy hand, the schoolmaster glared at the boy. "Daniel," he growled, "if you can find another hand as dirty as that in this schoolroom, I'll let you off."

After a moment's hesitation, Daniel presented from behind his back... his own left hand! "Here it is, sir!" he exclaimed—and the teacher was obliged to keep his word.

- Wash hands, dry on the white towels. Were your hands clean? Is there any griminess on the white towels?

As we come near to God, child-like like the young Daniel Webster, we will be aware of our own dirty hands. As with the schoolmaster, God—with infinitely more love and compassion—is simply asking us to present our dirty hands to Him, to be washed clean by Jesus' Blood when we confess. When we do that, the cleaning goes deeper, even into our hearts, as our text says. Our minds go from double to single, which is a "transformation" and "renewal" of it (Romans 12:1-2).

- God will be more careful to keep His Word, than even the schoolmaster: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).
- Pray for clean hands and a clean heart. Ps. 24:3-5.

Friday, June 25

Preparation:

- Gather:
  - A FBC Milton church directory, a Wednesday night prayer sheet, or other prayer list possibly including a missionary prayer list.
  - Note cards, pens, pencils, or crayolas
  - Postage stamps.
- Read: *Therefore encourage one another and build each other up*, 1 Thess 5:11 (NIV)
- Look over the prayer lists and write a note of encouragement, at least one person per family member
- Pray for those persons.