



# ENCOURAGEMENT FOR PARENTS IN CHALLENGING TIMES



'Almighty God, heavenly Father, you have blessed us with the joy and care of children: Give us calm strength and patient wisdom as we bring them up, that we may teach them to love whatever is just and true and good, following the example of our Savior Jesus Christ - Amen' From The Book of Common Prayer



## Dear Parents and Caregivers -

We want to set the next few weeks aside to give you our attention. This complex and painful time has created many challenges for parents, but we believe it has created great opportunities as well for families of faith. We love the privilege we have of ministry with your children in the Church, but unable to gather in the way we are accustomed, the moment calls for us to support you as those who have always had the greatest influence in your children's walk of faith. With that in mind we want to encourage you for the next few weeks to take this time to recalibrate, to pause, to have intentional conversation, to rest weary muscles and develop stronger ones. **Raising your children in faith is your vital work.** Be encouraged knowing that the Spirit equips you in that calling, and your Church Family comes alongside you.

So choose a time that will be "yours," tell a friend or another couple about your plans to devote this time to being encouraged in helping your children grow as followers of Jesus, and let's get started!

### **We are in prayer for you!**

As you set aside moments this month to reflect on these offerings, we commit to pray for you guided by this verse from Malachi 4: "And he will turn the hearts of [mothers and] fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers..." The verse speaks not only of reconciliation in families, but of children's hearts turned toward the faith of their parents. May your families be unified, strengthened and refreshed by the Spirit so that the Church is fully alive to the moment in which we find ourselves.

With love,  
Children's Leaders Team



## **A Place to Start**

### **Anchor your efforts for the next month in this text from Romans:**

“Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality.” Romans 12:9-13 NIV

- Perhaps you want to read these verses each morning and evening for a month
- Consider journaling around these words, or create a piece of art
- Take the effort to write it out and put around your home or workplace
- Include your spouse or a friend to join you in saying it out loud

By next month you will have taken this text to heart; it will work its way into your life!

## **Week 1: God Calls You**

When it comes to our Christian faith, do you ever feel like you don't know enough? Do you ever feel like you don't do enough? I know I do! And when it comes to teaching your kids about faith, when you hear the call to "train up your children" (Prov 22:6) does it sometimes give you more anxiety than excitement? It does for me!



In these quaking moments, I like to remind myself of a quote by A.W. Tozer, a spiritual powerhouse, who said, "Others before me have gone much farther into these holy mysteries than I have done, but if my fire is not large, it is yet real, and there may be those who can light their candle at its flame."

God has called you, and given you the blessed responsibility of raising your children to know, love, and serve Him. Challenging times especially call us to tend to the flame of our faith. So be encouraged; share from an honest and sincere heart, and trust that He who calls you to this work is faithful. He will surely do it. (1 Thes 5:24).

### **A Scripture to Ponder**

#### **Deuteronomy 6:7-9**

"You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."

## **A Conversation to Have**

- 1. As Christians we have a mutual call in the Great Commission to “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.”**

How does this commission relate to the one found in Deuteronomy? In this outward rippling of discipleship to our communities and to the nations, how is the discipling of our children more difficult than to those outside of our home? In what ways is it easier? In what ways can our children participate with us in this commission?

- 2. The Deuteronomy passage contains four “you shall” directives. What are the four verbs connected to those directives?**

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When and where does it say we are to do these things? Which of these four actions pertains to you in this time in your life, and in your stage of parenting? Which of these words is the most challenging to you, or which one might you choose to leave out if you could?

- 3. If we picture our spiritual lives as a journey, how does the parent and child relationship fit into the metaphor?**

- 4. How does the discipling of our children have the potential to stir up and refresh our own faith life?**

Consider how a parent's faith evolves throughout the life stages of his or her children: in early childhood, middle childhood, the teenage years, and adulthood.

## **A Way to Pray.**

-Spend a few minutes in silence, asking God to show you the moments with your children this past week that have been joyful or hopeful. Name those aloud in a posture of thanksgiving.

-Ask God to be present with you in the areas of challenge or of needed healing in your relationship with your children. Pray for clarity, wise counsel, and grace-filled conversations.

-Pray for a renewed vision in the important work of discipling your children.



## **Week 2: The Spirit Equips You**

My son is an animator. He takes stationary images and makes them move so they are “brought to life”. We have just celebrated the Feast of Pentecost and the Pentecost images of wind, fire and inspired speech are all animators! They create movement; they bring to life. What a great comfort to know that in the realm of faith, it is the Holy Spirit who brings to life, and that as a Person he is our Guide, Comforter, Helper, Friend. He is also all those things to our children – there is no Jr. Holy Spirit. Do you believe this for yourself? For your children? Ask Him this week for a greater experience of his help. Breathe in the Life of God.

Covid-19 at its worst robs people of breath. George Floyd died, as his Savior Jesus did, because he could not breathe. In these days of stress and heartbreak we need to breathe, maybe more deeply than we ever have. So this week, take time to receive the Spirit. Breathe in deeply as a reminder and a prayer for the Breath of Life to expand your lungs, your vision, animate your body, mind and spirit. Ask Him to train your muscles to breathe more deeply. Holy Spirit, train us not to inhibit your breath in us by fear, which constricts. Release the anxieties we feel so we can breathe and come to life in your Life.

### **A Scripture to Ponder**

#### **Romans 8:26-27**

“Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.”



## **A Conversation to Have**

- 1. As Christian parents, our desire is for our children to love, adore, and depend on Christ in their own lives. Even more perfectly does the Spirit desire this for our children. Through the Spirit, the Father God is in intimate relationship with our children.**

Knowing of this activity on the part of the Trinity in the lives of our children, what burdens are we released from as parents?

How does this truth refocus us in our work of parenting? What distracts us in this focus?

- 2. When we strip away the worldly burdens and distractions often attached to the role of parenting, we are left with the very significant calling as parents to disciple our children.**

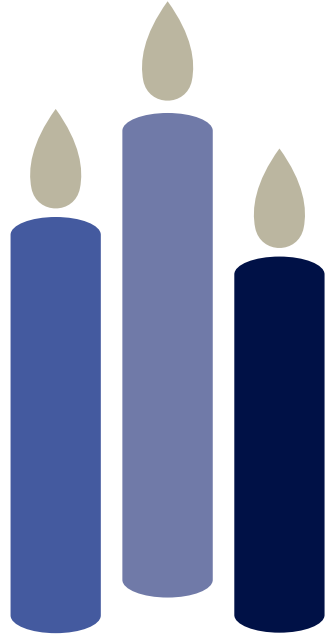
How does the Spirit co-operate with us in this calling? Looking back at Deuteronomy 6, we are told we shall teach, talk, bind, and write the Lord's commands. How does the Spirit lead and guide us in this work?



### **A Way to Pray.**

- Express to God the areas where you feel lack of strength, of wisdom, of patience, or of energy in your calling as a parent. Ask that He would use those lacks as empty sails to fill with the wind of his power and direction.
- In John 21 the disciples fished futilely all night, and they needed the Lord's leading to change their tactics. Ask that the Spirit would bring to your awareness areas of futility in your parenting, and guide you in a change of approach.

**Notes**



## **Week 3: The Church Comes Alongside You**

To be welcomed into the church at baptism is a picture of faith and of belonging. A kernel of faith, or more, is present as a gift of God to say, "Jesus is Lord", and we are welcomed into a Family. As part of one Body, we are not independent of one another. No amount of trying harder or knowing more will fully support us in the times of life we all face, when faith is weak and fragile. God knew we needed each other. Being together and walking alongside one another is our calling and joy as brothers and sisters! The time we are living in is hard, and has come with both great challenges and opportunities not to be missed! It is a moment to be reminded and refreshed in what we know, and also one that is calling forth change that God will shepherd. This week, press into our scripture below: "that you (and your household), being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."

### **A Scripture to Ponder**

#### **Ephesians 3:14-19**

"For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."



## **A Conversation to Have**

- 1. During a time when you are not able to gather with the entire congregation, you still remain rooted and grounded in the spiritual body of Christ.**

What are some specific ways you can embody that connection in your life right now?

Which things in your life obscure your sense of rootedness in Christ? Which behaviors or patterns of thinking might need to be set aside at this time in your life?

To which aspects of congregational togetherness do you most deeply long to return?

- 2. In Philippians, the Apostle Paul states that he has learned contentment in all circumstances, in that he can do all things through the strength of Christ.**

In the circumstance you are in at this time, what are some creative ways you and your children can reach out to others?

What do you notice, understand, or see differently now than you did before? What has the Spirit brought to the forefront of your mind recently? How are you being guided to use that new perspective going forward?

### **A Way to Pray.**

- Take time to lift up with gratitude those in your life who contribute to your spiritual nourishment. Pray that you also would be a channel of spiritual nourishment to those in your life.
- Pray that God would teach you contentment at this time in your life. Ask that he would breathe a freshness and renewed vigor into a time that might feel stagnant or without purpose.
- Taking Paul's words for your own, take the time this week to pray Ephesians 3:14-19 for each one of your children.



## **Further Steps**

- Pray through the included House Blessing. Invite someone to join you.
- Meditate on the additional scriptures listed below
- Take Covid Inventory
- Take the Couple Check-Up ( [www.couplecheckup.com](http://www.couplecheckup.com) )
- Write a Family Mission Statement or create a project that helps you be intentional about who you are as a family and reminds you what it means to be "us"

## House Blessing

*Gather together holding a cross and ready to walk from room to room  
or to walk around the perimeter of the home.*

### Introduction

Leader: The Lord be with you

All: And with your spirit.

Leader: Father, as we undertake this work to which you have called us, We ask that your will be done. We give thanks to you and we praise you for the assurance of your Presence with us. In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

Leader: Peace be with this house and with all who live here.

All: Blessed be the name of the Lord. Amen.

Read **Colossians 3:12-17**



### At the Entrance - Read **Psalm 121**

Heavenly Father, we acknowledge that you are Lord of heaven and earth. Protect our going out and our coming in. As your children and in the strong name of your son Jesus, we ask your blessing on this entryway. May the hospitality of Christ be shared with all who visit, that those who enter here may know your love and peace.

### Living Room - Read **1 Peter 4:8-11**

Bring peace to this place, O Lord, and fill it with your presence. Be ever present in the hearts of all who frequent this place. Let the words of your servants be kindled in your fear and seasoned with salt, that when they who have come here have departed, they may proclaim the glory of your holy name.

### Kitchen/Eating Area - Read **John 6:27, 33-35**

Lord of heaven and earth, may this place become a haven for the nourishment of body, soul and spirit. Help us be grateful for all your mercies, Lord, and mindful of the needs of others. May your abiding presence rest upon this room and this table, and may your blessing be upon all those who gather here to share in the abundance of your goodness.



Bathroom - Read **Proverbs 11:24-25**

Father, refresh us and keep us in good health that we might serve you. May all our hearts be drawn to you in hopeful expectation as we prepare for each new day, in peace and comfort as we ready ourselves for sleep, and always in an awareness of your interest and concern in even the smallest details of our lives. Thank you, Lord, for your unconditional love.

Office/Study - Read **Psalms 25:3-14; Colossians 3:23-24**

O Lord, we thank you that you are the God of truth and light. May your Holy Spirit come and fill this place, that all business transacted here may be to your glory, all study lead to a deeper understanding of truth and greater commitment to your ways.

Bedrooms - Read **Isaiah 32:17-18; Matthew 19:14**

Protect us, Lord, when we are awake, watch over us as we sleep; that awake we may keep watch with Christ, and asleep we may rest in his peace. Holy Spirit, we ask you to fill this place, and minister to the hearts of those who abide here, bringing comfort, peace and rest as they sleep.

Closing - Read **Deuteronomy 6: 4-7 The Lord's Prayer**

Be our shelter, Lord, when we are at home, our companion when we are away, and our welcome guest when we return, and at last receive us into the dwelling place you have prepared for us in your Father's house, where you live forever and ever. Amen..

***Sing the Doxology together as a final benediction.***

## **Notes**

## **Additional Bible References**

### **Psalm 78:4**

“We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders that he has done.”

### **Proverbs 22:6**

“Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.”

### **1 Corinthians 12: 7 -11**

“To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.<sup>8</sup> For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, <sup>9</sup> to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, <sup>10</sup> to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. <sup>11</sup> All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.”

### **Joel 2:28-32**

“And it shall come to pass afterward,  
that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh;  
your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,  
your old men shall dream dreams,  
and your young men shall see visions.  
Even on the male and female servants  
in those days I will pour out my Spirit.”



### **Acts 2:38-39**

“And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”

## **Rule of Life for COVID-19**

COMMON GOAL: Abide in Christ's Love & Prepare to Bear Fruit

*A Rule of Life frees us to walk with God in every area of life, including the unusual circumstances of the COVID-19 quarantine. Rather than limiting us, a Rule of Life liberates us by providing life-giving rhythms and structures to our day and week. We cannot control the larger events of the crisis. But we can make God the center of our life as we keep ourselves in a state of spiritual and physical health.*

*A Rule of Life is not meant to be a legalism, but a way to enter into the grace of God. Don't worry about making it perfect; it takes trial & error and adjustments along the way.*

### **STEP 1: ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS:**

#### **1. Even under these extraordinary conditions, what refreshes your soul?**

*Consider any physical, relational or creative outlets still available to you: walking outside, enjoying or creating art, gardening, exercise, people who refresh you, spiritual exercises that anchor you in Jesus. Write down anything that comes to mind:*

**2. Which activities or relationships do you need to stop or limit in order to abide more fully in Christ's love?** *List the besetting sins, habits, activities, vices, commitments or unhealthy connections that the Lord might be asking you to limit or renounce.*

**3. What are the particular challenges of life during this crisis for you that impact your rhythms?** *Homeschooling kids while working from home, financial pressures, loneliness, zoom fatigue...*

**STEP 2: FILL OUT THESE CATEGORIES:**

**CATEGORY**

**IDEAS & COMMITMENTS**

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PRAYER: time & space  
to receive God's love  
(daily office, solitude,  
Scripture, journaling)

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HEALTH: care of my  
physical body (nutrition,  
exercise, sleep and play)

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RELATIONSHIPS: people  
who encourage me and  
draw me closer to Christ

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WORK & CREATIVITY: activities  
that draw out my best contributions  
(artistic, vocational, simple love of  
neighbor)

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**STEP 3: SHARE WITH A FRIEND**

\_\_\_ **DONE!** I have shared this rule of life with \_\_\_\_\_  
and asked them to check in with me (in two weeks)/(in four weeks).

## Notes

