

**Family Devotional
Sample
(The Devotional is a
Paperback Book)**



Family Devotional Guide

A Study for Children and Adults
on the Ten Commandments

by Sally Michael

Children Desiring God
Minneapolis, MN

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THE RIGHTEOUS SHALL LIVE BY FAITH

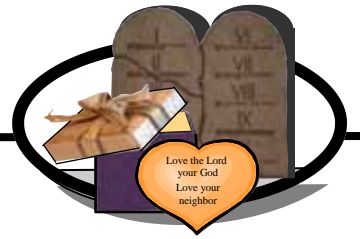
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THE RIGHTEOUS SHALL LIVE BY FAITH

Preface



A study of the Ten Commandments can be truly liberating because the more a person understands the implications of the moral code set forth in the Ten Commandments, the more he realizes that he is utterly unable to fulfill the law's demands. When a person recognizes this plight, he can cease from senseless striving to be justified by his own righteousness, and rest in the gift of salvation through Jesus Christ. The law as a mirror reflecting our sinful hearts points to our need for a Savior.

Kay Arthur writes in *How to Study Your Bible*, "In days gone by, children learned the commandments before they learned John 3:16, because only then did John 3:16 have real meaning for them. Likewise, John Eliot's first translation work among the Indians was not of John 3:16 but of the Ten Commandments, and he preached his first sermon on them. Did John Eliot think the Indians would be saved by the Ten Commandments? Of course not, but the Commandments would show them why they needed to be saved—they were law-breakers, and they needed a law-keeper to be their substitute.

"Similarly, John Paton, the great Presbyterian missionary to the New Hebrides, first taught the commandments. Why? Because people will never be properly interested in a relationship with the Redeemer until they see the terrible breach in the relationship to the Creator."¹

¹Kay Arthur, *How to Study Your Bible* (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publications, 1994), 10-11.

So at every point in a study of the Ten Commandments, where the depravity of man becomes alarmingly apparent, it is a cause for rejoicing that God has made a way for man to be reckoned righteous through the blood of Jesus Christ. Studying the Ten Commandments should repeatedly cause the Christian to fall on his knees and thank God for making a way of salvation. Oh, the wonderful grace of God to undeserving sinners!

To the non-Christian, studying the Ten Commandments should be a constant indicator that he will NEVER be saved by works of his own righteousness. As one studies God's moral law and its myriad of implications, the non-Christian should be continually and painfully aware that he consistently falls short of God's standard of perfect righteousness. Where else can the non-Christian turn except to Jesus, God's provision for sinful man? What wonderful news for sinful men!

The heart of a person who embraces Jesus Christ as Savior and the fulfillment of God's demand of perfect righteousness overflows with the desire to live in such a manner that his life pleases his Savior. Thus the law becomes a moral guide to the Christian, rather than the instrument of condemnation. As the Christian observes the Lord's commands, he will find that God's ways are right and good and truly satisfying.

*"Give me understanding, that I may keep your law
and observe it with my whole heart."
Psalm 119:34*

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Introduction



In the Hebrew system of education, learning took place in the context of relationship. Parents were instructed to teach their children diligently when they sat in their houses, when they walked by the way, when they lay down, and when they got up (Deuteronomy 6:7). In other words, instruction was continual—everywhere, at all times. Instruction in the scriptures took place in the course of everyday life.

Instruction can and should happen in a church setting but it will never replace the humble, face-to-face context of loving relationships in the home. It is in this relationship of trust and love that head knowledge becomes heart knowledge. Anyone can share information with a child, but when a child learns something from a trusted and loved person, the child is more likely to embrace that knowledge as truth. Especially if that truth is demonstrated in everyday life as it is modeled by that trusted mentor.

God has placed a unique call on parents to pass on His glorious deeds and the wonders He has done to the next generation (Psalm 78:4). This is a sacred trust. God is calling His people to make Him known to their children so that the next generation would set their hope in Him (Psalm 78:7).

Although both parents share this mantle of responsibility and privilege, fathers as the spiritual leaders of the home are especially appointed to initiate this teaching. Twenty-first century fathers often feel de-

feated in this task. So many short-lived efforts to gather the family together for devotions fizzle out, and fathers feel an acute sense of failure in their spiritual leadership again and again.

This need not be the case. Although the enemy rages against the consistent and sincere attempt to impart the teachings of God to the next generation, God Himself works to preserve His Word in every generation. He has promised to be the Christian's strength in every weakness. Humbly look to Him each day to give you the resolve and wisdom to instruct your children.

This guide has been prepared to encourage families to formally gather around the Word of God daily in a simple act of faith—reading God's Word, discussing it, and praying that God will cause His truth to penetrate the hearts of the hearers.

Continue to review, reinforce, and apply the truths from His Word as you sit around the supper table, ride in the car, tuck your children into bed, and when you rise to start each new day.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide has been prepared as a companion piece to the intergenerational curriculum, *The Righteous Shall Live By Faith*². Ideally, the curriculum lesson is taught in a church or small group setting to parents and children, and the Family Devotional Guide is used at home to reinforce and apply the lesson. However, the Devotional Guide, though enhanced by the curriculum study, is not dependent on the study of the

²Sally Michael, *The Righteous Shall Live By Faith* (Minneapolis, Children Desiring God, 2005), www.childrendesiringGod.org.

curriculum. Each curriculum lesson is summarized at the beginning of each lesson in the Family Devotional Guide.

Remembering and applying a few principles may help to make this time around the Word more life-giving for you and your family: be sincere; keep it simple; keep it short; set the tone; and solicit participation.

BE SINCERE: Deuteronomy 6 makes it clear that before we can teach our children diligently, we must have God's Word in our own hearts (Deut. 6:6). You must first love God's Word before you can genuinely lead another to love God's Word. You must treasure God before another can be drawn into a relationship with God through your efforts. There is no substitute for reading, praying, obeying, and asking God to work in your own heart first.

Read the lesson summary first on your own. Look at the key themes and look up the scripture passages. Meditate on the scripture and the POINT TO PONDER. Pray for God to open your mind and your heart. Ask Him how to apply His Word in everyday life. Ask God to help you see how you need to change, to mold your heart to His desires, to forgive your sins, and to guide you in all His ways. Pray for each member of your family.

KEEP IT SIMPLE: Each day's devotion consists of a scripture passage and a few questions. You need not do more than this unless your family is clamoring for more! It is better to establish a daily HABIT of simply turning to the Word together than to set forth on a complex plan that cannot be consistently executed. Set a specific, consistent time each day for your family devotions. Six days of devotional ideas are provided,

recognizing that it is rare that a family would be able to be 100-percent consistent. But if you are able to do so, you may want to choose a Psalm to meditate on for the seventh day.

KEEP IT SHORT: It is better to leave your family wanting more than to leave them wishing they could have escaped sooner. Resist the temptation to say, “just one more thing” or to feel like you must teach all you have gleaned from your own personal study. **THIS IS A BEGINNING.** You will have many more opportunities to instruct daily as you “sit in your house, walk by the way, lie down and rise.” Keep the Word of God fresh in your heart and seize these moments for informal instruction.

There are additional follow-up ideas for the week at the end of each lesson. If your family consists of older children (i.e. fourth grade and older, depending on your children’s comprehension of written material), you **MAY** be able to use one or more of these during your devotional time, but **DO NOT** push your children to the limit of their ability to participate with interest. It is better to use the whole day to informally implement some of these ideas. Plan how this will happen. If you decide to memorize a verse, this can be done during the devotional time—but it can also be done in the car, while washing dishes, or before bedtime.

There is also an optional **FAMILY NIGHT ACTIVITY** each week. If you decide to have a family night, be sure to include something to make this a special time—a favorite meal or snack, a game the whole family can enjoy, etc. Be sure to check in advance to see if you will need to make any special preparation for the family night activity. In some cases, you may need to pick up some materials.

SET THE TONE: Reading God's Word is serious business, so your tone should reflect that. However, it is not profitable to tonelessly bore children. God's Word is full of interesting stories, puzzling instruction, deep thoughts, and wise advice. Be winsome in your manner, not austere and judgmental. Read with enthusiasm and thoughtfulness. Make your comments interesting and thought provoking.

SOLICIT PARTICIPATION: A family devotional time is a time for sharing. Encourage everyone to be involved. This is not a time for you to show how much you have learned but to encourage others to discover the delight of God's Word.

In the LESSON SUMMARY you will find questions in brackets to ask your child. This will encourage your child to think, participate, and remember. If your child has heard the lesson at church, many of the statements can be turned into questions. These are marked with a question mark: [?] This will alert you to ask a review question rather than read the statement.

When looking at a text, resist the temptation to explain the text to your child. Instead, ask questions to help your child discover what the text is teaching. In the process, teach your child good observation skills. It is important that your child be able to answer the following questions about the text:

- What does the passage say? (observation)
- What does the passage mean? (interpretation)
- How does the meaning of the passage apply to me? (application)³

³Kay Arthur, *How to Study Your Bible* (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publications, 1994), 10-11.

In asking the question, "What does the passage mean?", be sure to help your child try to discover the author's point. Point him to words or phrases in the text that will help him to see the author's intent. The child should not understand the question as, "What does this mean to me?", but rather, "What is the author saying?"

When you ask a question, give your child time to think. If your child has difficulty, point him to the text for the answer (e.g., "look at verse 2"). You may need to give a hint, but encourage your child as much as possible to think about the text and its meaning. Don't hesitate to gently correct erroneous answers that your child gives as you point to specific words or phrases to help him understand. Little by little your child will acquire the skill of careful reading and thoughtful consideration. This process takes time and is difficult to learn, so work with your child patiently while he learns this critical Bible reading skill.

**TIPS TO HELP YOUR CHILD
UNDERSTAND THE MEANING
OF BIBLE PASSAGES:**

- Look for answers to the 5 W's and 1 H: Who?, What?, When?, Where?, Why?, and How?.
- Look for key words or repeated phrases.
- Look for "connections" within the text (e.g., conclusions, summaries, comparisons, contrasts, results, etc.) Words that may signal these include: therefore, for, so that, for this reason, because, but, however, nevertheless, as, like, and if...then.
- Look at the verse in context.
- Look for lists in the text.

The questions in the Family Devotional Guide are

based on the English Standard Version of the Bible. It is highly recommended that you use the ESV, although it is not essential. Try to avoid children's Bibles, which often omit key connecting words.

Once your child has discovered the author's meaning of the text, you can ask how the text applies to your child personally. It is important for your child to understand that the Bible speaks to individuals today. Help him to very practically apply the teaching of the passage to his life. He needs to know how he can be a "doer" of the Word and not just a "hearer".

End each devotional session with prayer, and encourage participation in the prayer time. Vary your prayer pattern—one day you may pray short sentence prayers, another day one member of the family may lead in prayer. It might be helpful to encourage your child to think about the text and to pray according to the content of the passage. Often, children don't know what to pray so it may be helpful to mention some things that could be touched on in prayer.

ADDITIONAL NOTES: In the back of the book is a removable mini-banner. The banner pieces are also in the back. You can use the banner as a tool for review

THE RIGHTEOUS SHALL LIVE BY FAITH



Lesson 1

THE LORD YOUR GOD

SCRIPTURE:

Exodus 19:4-6, 8a; Exodus 20:2; Psalm 89:11;
John 1:12

KEY VERSE:

Exodus 20:2—"I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery."

KEY THEMES:

- God declares His authority. God first shows Himself to be the one who has the right to command and to whom obedience is due (John Calvin). God shows His greatness.
- God declares Himself as the God of His people. God shows His goodness.
- God declares Himself as the Liberator. God frees His people from bondage.

LESSON SUMMARY

After freeing the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt and miraculously opening the Red Sea so they could escape Pharaoh's soldiers, God told Moses to give the Hebrews the Ten Commandments. [Can you tell me any of these Commandments?]

[?] The Ten Commandments starts with a Prologue. The Prologue is found in Exodus 20:2, "*I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.*"

God tells us three things about Himself in the Prologue. [What are these three things?] First, He is the LORD. [?] The Hebrew name for LORD is Jehovah. The name Jehovah is full of meaning. It tells us a lot about God. [?]It tells us that that God is in charge—it shows us His authority. It tells us that God is sovereign [What does sovereign mean?]*—*He has the right, wisdom, and power to do all that He pleases.⁴ The name Jehovah means that God is self-sufficient. [What does self-sufficient mean?]*—*God doesn't need anything or anyone.

Jehovah means that God is eternal. [What does eternal mean?] He has no beginning and no ending. God has always been and He always will be. (He lives forever.) Jehovah means that God is almighty. [What does almighty mean?] He can do anything. And the name Jehovah means that God is unchanging. [What does unchanging mean?] He is always the same; He never changes.

So God tells us in the Prologue that He is Jehovah—sovereign, self-sufficient, eternal, almighty, and unchanging. Jehovah God is a great and glorious God!

Let's look at the Prologue and see what else it tells us about God. [?] Moses told the Hebrews that God is "your God." [?]"Your God" means that God is personal and loving. He invites people to be in relationship with Him and to be a part of His family. It is a wonderful thing to have God as Your God and to be a part of His family.

Not everyone is a part of God's family. Only those who "receive Jesus"—who are trusting in Jesus as their Savior— can call God their God (John 1:12).

⁴This definition of sovereign is from the Children Desiring God curriculum, *The ABCs of God* by Jill Nelson.

[?] The last thing the Prologue tells us about God is that He is the Liberator. [What does liberator mean?] A liberator is someone who frees someone or something. Jehovah, the One who is almighty, in charge, and who loves His people, freed the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt.

But God is the Liberator in another way, too. [?] God frees His people from the burden of sin. The Hebrews made a great escape from Egypt, and from the soldiers of Pharaoh when God opened the Red Sea. And sinners can make a great escape from the punishment for sin, too. God, the Liberator, sent His Son to die for the sins of His people—to free them from the bondage of sin.

God is the Lord. He is a personal God. And He is the Liberator. This is great news for sinners!

POINT TO PONDER

The greatest slavery the Hebrews experienced was not the physical bondage in Egypt, but the spiritual bondage to sin. The wilderness wandering exposed many of their sinful heart attitudes. What were some of these attitudes that enslaved them? (This makes an enlightening study.)

WESTMINSTER LARGER CATECHISM

Question 101: What is the preface to the ten commandments?

Answer: The preface to the ten commandments is contained in these words, I am the Lord thy God,

which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Wherein God manifesteth his sovereignty, as being JEHOVAH, the eternal, immutable, and almighty God; having his being in and of himself, and giving being to all his words and works: and that he is a God in covenant, as with Israel of old, so with all his people; who, as he brought them out of their bondage in Egypt, so he delivereth us from our spiritual thralldom [servitude, bondage]; and that therefore we are bound to take him for our God alone, and to keep all his commandments.



DAY 1

READ: The Lesson Summary

READ: Exodus 20:2

QUESTIONS:

- I am your parent. That means you and I have a different relationship than you do with another adult who is not your parent. How is our relationship different? (How do I treat you differently than I treat your friend? What do I do for you that I don't do for other children? Why do I do those things? What responsibility do I have toward you that I don't have toward other children? How do you treat me differently than you treat your friend's parent?)
- God has a different relationship with His children than with other people. What is different about the relationship between God and His people than the relationship between God and those who are not His?

PRAY

(Remember to check the **ADDITIONAL IDEAS** at the end.)



DAY 2

READ: Exodus 5:1-6:13.

QUESTIONS:

- What was it like for the Hebrews to be slaves in Egypt?
- What kinds of things enslave people today?
- How can sin be like slavery or bondage?

PRAY



DAY 3

READ: About the plagues in Exodus 7, 8, and 9. (If your children are young, you may need to summarize parts or read a little at a time.)

QUESTIONS:

- What can you learn about God from these chapters?
- How did God show that He is Jehovah—sovereign, self-sufficient, eternal, almighty and unchanging? Write your answers on the chart on page 10.)

PRAY



DAY 4

READ: Read about the plagues in Exodus 10-12:32.

QUESTIONS:

- What can you tell about Pharaoh from what you have read?
- We read yesterday and today that Pharaoh “hardened his heart” or that Pharaoh’s heart was “hardened” or that God hardened Pharaoh’s heart. What does it mean to harden your heart? How does a person harden his heart?
- How did God show the Hebrews that He was their God? (Write your answers on the chart on page 10.)

PRAY



DAY 5

READ: Exodus 13:17-14:31.

QUESTIONS:

- What do these chapters tell you about God? How did He show Himself to the Hebrews as “the LORD your God?” (Write your answers on the chart on page 10.)
- How did God show Himself as the Liberator of the Hebrews? (Write your answers on the chart on page 10.)

SING: Sing a song of praise to God or try singing parts of Exodus 15, making up your own tune.



FAMILY NIGHT DEVOTIONAL AND ACTIVITY:

READ: Hosea 11:1-4

This passage shows God's fatherly love for Israel. Read through this passage verse-by-verse and talk about each verse. Then answer the questions.

QUESTIONS:

- What was Israel like?
- According to this passage, what is God like? How did God treat Israel? What does this show about God's heart for His people?

ACTIVITY:

Enjoy looking through old family albums. Pay special attention to pictures of when your children were learning to walk, and draw out the similarities between your parental care to your children and God's parental care over Israel. Be sure to note the differences between your parental care and God's parental care. As you look through old family pictures, talk about:

- A parent's love for his/her children.
- What it means to be part of a family (the benefits of being part of a family).
- What a good parent is like.
- What kind of parent God is to His children.
- God's love for His children and what it is like to be a part of God's family.

Take some pictures of your family or make a family video to remember this night.

If you have a video of your children when they were

young, you may want to show this at the end of the evening, as you enjoy a favorite family snack.

(**NOTE:** Do not use videos in place of albums, but rather as an addition to looking through albums, as the opportunity for discussion is diminished with videos.)

End with a time of prayer.



ADDITIONAL IDEAS:

- Work on memorizing the Key Verse. You may want to make a verse card.
- Read and discuss the Westminster Catechism section. (Some families with older children—4th grade and up—may want to memorize this portion of the Catechism.) You may want to make a Catechism card.
- Remove the mini-banner and pieces from the back of the book. Cut out the PROLOGUE (I Am the Lord Your God), CROWN, HOME, RED SEA and CROSS pieces. Glue the pieces on the banner; glue the CROSS on top of the RED SEA. Display the mini-banner (e.g., on the refrigerator or a bulletin board).



Parent Resources:

A good method of Bible memory can be found at www.fbcdurham.org: *An Approach to the Extended Memorization of Scripture*, by Dr. Andrew Davis.

For a family audio resource on the Ten Commandments:

- Rogers, Judy. *If You Love Me* (Wapwallopen, Pennsylvania: Shepherd Press). www.shepherdpress.com/judy_rogers.htm
From the website: *A new collection of songs based on the Ten Commandments. There is a song for each commandment. The opening song is a beautiful choral piece, sung partly in Latin, called Coram Deo. The last song is based on the greatest commandment. This CD is suitable for children. Young children sing on some of the songs.*

For a rich adult study of the Ten Commandments:

- Watson, Thomas. *The Ten Commandments*. (Edinburg: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1965). (Thomas Watson was a puritan preacher and writer.)
- Horton, Michael. *The Law of Perfect Freedom*. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1993).
- Ryken, Philip Graham. *Written in Stone: The Ten Commandments and Today's Moral Crisis*. (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 2003).