

# Focus 40

## Devotionals for Children

### Calling the Church to Focus on 40 Days of Prayer and Fasting

*Compiled by Dr. Melissa Pratt*

The Church of God is being called to unite in a time of prayer and fasting during the forty days leading up to Easter. These devotionals are designed for children to use on the weekdays of the five full calendar weeks of Focus 40

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## Devotion 1

*I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.*

—John 14:18

Jesus promises that he will not leave us as orphans. Regardless of whether we have an earthly father or not, Jesus promises that he will be our “Forever Father.” He will be our Father who will never forsake us nor leave us. He will be our Father who will always provide for our needs and comfort us when we cry. He will be our Father who hears the deepest joy we hold in our heart and who comforts the deepest fear we may have inside. All we need to do is ask him to be our Forever Father, our Savior, the King of our heart and he will embrace us as his own child.

There are many girls and boys who do not have a father at home anymore. They are waiting for someone like you to tell them they have a heavenly Father who loves them. They are waiting to hear about the heavenly Father who will be their Father today and always. Likewise, there are many girls and boys who do have a father at home, and they still need the heavenly Father also. Who do you know who does not have Jesus as their heavenly Father? Would you be willing to share this Bible verse with them?

By Rev. Judy Weeks

## Devotion 2

*Some men came carrying a paralytic on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus. When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus.*

*When Jesus saw their faith, he said, “Friend, your sins are forgiven.”*

*The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, “Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?”*

*Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, “Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? Which is easier: to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk’? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...” He said to the paralyzed man, “I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.” Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God. Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, “We have seen remarkable things today.”*

—Luke 5:18–26

This paralyzed man had great friends! These friends did all they could do to help their sick friend get to Jesus. Because they were faithful to carry him on a mat and to lower him through the ceiling, the man was able to see Jesus face to face and be healed of his sins and his paralysis. Can you imagine how happy this man was when Jesus forgave his sins and then healed him so he could walk? Can you imagine how he must have jumped up and down with joy? Can you imagine how thankful he was to have such good friends who would carry him to Jesus?

Many people we know are like this man who was on the mat. They need a good friend to bring them to a place where they can meet Jesus and be healed inside their heart. Would you be willing to be a

good friend like that for someone? Ask a parent or grandparent to help you carry someone to church this Sunday in their car!

By Rev. Judy Weeks

### Devotion 3

*Do everything without complaining or arguing,<sup>so</sup> that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life.*

—Philippians 2:14–16

We live in a world where there is much arguing and complaining and where there are many people who do not live like God desires us to live. Paul tells us that we need to be different than the others. We need to stop complaining and arguing so our life can shine brightly like the stars in the universe. When others behave badly, our behavior is to be good and brightly shining.

However, Paul does not just tell us to have shining good behavior. He tells us that we need to be doing something while our behavior is good. He says we are to “hold out the word of life.” That means you and I are to be sharing with others God’s Word, because it is the word of life. The next time someone tries to encourage you to misbehave, shine strong and tell them you choose to follow God’s word of life. Maybe they will join you in shining brightly instead!

By Rev. Judy Weeks

### Devotion 4

*The boy Samuel ministered before the LORD under Eli. In those days the word of the LORD was rare; there were not many visions.*

*One night Eli, whose eyes were becoming so weak that he could barely see, was lying down in his usual place. The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was. Then the LORD called Samuel.*

*Samuel answered, “Here I am.” And he ran to Eli and said, “Here I am; you called me.”*

*But Eli said, “I did not call; go back and lie down.” So he went and lay down.*

*Again the LORD called, “Samuel!” And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, “Here I am; you called me.”*

*“My son,” Eli said, “I did not call; go back and lie down.”*

*Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD: The word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him.*

*The LORD called Samuel a third time, and Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, “Here I am; you called me.”*

*Then Eli realized that the LORD was calling the boy. So Eli told Samuel, “Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, ‘Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.’” So Samuel went and lay down in his place.*

*The LORD came and stood there, calling as at the other times, “Samuel! Samuel!”*

*Then Samuel said, “Speak, for your servant is listening.”*

—1 Samuel 3:1–10

Just as God desired to speak to the boy Samuel, he also desires to speak to you. The Lord wanted Samuel to give a message to the adult prophet Eli. God uses kids to speak important messages to adults when the kids are willing to spend time with the Lord in prayer and when they have a heart that says, “Here I am Lord! I want to listen to you!”

Is God telling you to tell an adult you know who is going through a hard time that God loves them and he can help? Is God telling you to invite an adult in your family to come to church with you? Is there an adult you know who does not know Jesus, who you should pray for? If Jesus is speaking to you to share a message of love and encouragement with an adult, be obedient like Samuel and deliver the message!

By Rev. Judy Weeks

### Devotion 5

*Now Naaman was commander of the army of the king of Aram. He was a great man in the sight of his master and highly regarded, because through him the Lord had given victory to Aram. He was a valiant soldier, but he had leprosy.*

*Now bands from Aram had gone out and had taken captive a young girl from Israel, and she served Naaman’s wife. She said to her mistress, “If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy.*

—2 Kings 5:1–3

Thank God for the testimony of that faithful little Israelite servant girl. Because this little Israelite girl told the commander Naaman to go to the prophet Elisha to seek healing, Naaman was healed from a deadly disease. More importantly, Naaman came to believe in the one true God. All this happened because a little servant girl knew the true God, and she shared what she knew with an adult who had a really, really big problem. No person could help Naaman except the little girl, who directed him to go see Elisha, and the prophet Elisha, who could pray to the one true God for his healing.

People with really big problems need a really big God. Who do you know who has a really big problem that no one else can fix? Maybe you could suggest they go see your pastor, who could pray for them, or maybe you could tell your pastor about the problem and pray with your pastor for them.

By Rev. Judy Weeks

### Devotion 6

*People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.*

—Mark 10:13–16

This story shows us that Jesus was greatly upset when people tried to keep children from coming to him. Jesus loves to talk to children and he sees children as very valuable.

Sometimes adults are busy and maybe even a bit cranky. Sometimes kids might even feel like they are not being treated kindly or that they are being bounced from place to place. Jesus is never too busy for you, and he wants you to feel that you can come to him in prayer anytime. He wants nothing to keep you from him.

Do you have a friend who seems to have something in the way of being able to come to know Jesus? Pray for your friend and share this Bible passage with them. Jesus sees them, Jesus loves them, and Jesus wants nothing in the way of you or your friend coming to him.

By Rev. Judy Weeks

## Devotion 7

*And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?* —Esther 4:14

These are the words spoken to young queen Esther by her uncle, who raised her. Esther grew up without her own mother and father because they had died when she was young. Thankfully, her uncle loved her and raised her as his own daughter. God had now raised her up from being a poor orphan to being the richest woman in the land, as the queen of a great kingdom.

Esther was challenged to be very brave. She was asked to help save God's people from a bully named Haman. Haman had an evil plan to kill all of God's people in the kingdom. Esther prayed that God would save her people, and God answered her prayer and stopped Haman's evil plan.

Esther was very brave because she went to the king to ask him to stop Haman's evil plan. She could have suffered the loss of her own life, because in those days if you came to see the king without the King asking you to come, you could be killed.

Is there a bully in your school? How might you show God's love by helping those who are being bullied? And who knows but that you are in your school "for such a time as this"?

By Rev. Judy Weeks

## Devotion 8

*Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."*

—Matthew 22:37–40

Can a five-year old boy love his neighbor and make a difference? Yes. An eternal difference can be made by one five-year-old boy. That is just how old Caleb was when he made friends with the elderly lady across the street from us. She was shy and did not leave her house often. She kept to

herself and did not visit with any of the neighbors. Her life consisted of tending to the hundreds of roses in her yard.

This elderly lady did not have the joy of having any grandchildren. Sadly, she did not have the joy of knowing God either. She had not had anyone in her life share the love of Jesus with her until a little boy named Caleb moved in across the street from her.

My grandmother lived too far away to see very often, so I asked if she would mind if Caleb could treat her like he would treat his own great-grandmother. The elderly lady warily agreed. Every Monday a men's prayer group met at our home, so each week Caleb helped me prepare the desserts. I would prepare the pie for the men and Caleb would prepare a single-serving sized pie for the neighbor, who he now called Grandma Angie. Each week little Caleb would joyfully skip over to Grandma Angie's home and deliver a warm pie that he had prepared for her. Each week, Grandma Angie became friendlier and friendlier toward Caleb. Caleb's love and friendship softened Grandma Angie's heart as the weeks and months continued on. He became to her the grandson she never had.

After a year and a half, the day came for Grandma Angie's eighty-second birthday. Instead of pie, Caleb helped me bake a birthday cake. Caleb carried it over to her, followed by the rest of our family. When she came to the door, we sang "Happy Birthday" to her. She was overwhelmed by the love she had been shown. In the course of that birthday conversation, Grandma Angie asked if she could have the same kind of love that she had received from Caleb. Caleb held her hand and our family led her in a prayer to receive Christ. On her eighty-second birthday, she was born again as a child of God—because one little boy loved his neighbor as his own great-grandmother. Do you have a neighbor you might show the love of Jesus?

By Rev. Judy Weeks

## Devotion 9

*"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

—Matthew 28:18–20

This Bible verse is called the Great Commission. Jesus has given us a great mission to accomplish. We call it a commission because it is not a mission that we do alone. It is a mission that we do together with God. We cannot accomplish the mission by our own effort. We cannot accomplish the mission with our own wisdom. We must work with Jesus. We must listen to Jesus to know how to go about it.

The mission is an exciting one! We have the mission to bring an eternal difference to others by sharing Jesus with them, so they can also come to know Jesus and to grow in his likeness. Are you working with God to stay on mission for him and with him?

By Rev. Judy Weeks

## Devotion 10

*Then the Lord said, "Rise and anoint him; he is the one."*

*So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the Lord came upon David in power.*

—1 Samuel 16:12–13

Who did the prophet Samuel anoint? It was the youngest son of Jesse. It was not a man. It was a boy who was assigned to watch his father's sheep. God looked upon this boy and was impressed by his heart. God saw within David a heart that was pleasing to him. David had a heart that desired to make God happy and to be obedient to him. This is the kind of heart with makings of a great king. Inside every girl and boy is the potential of greatness when their heart is one that desires to please God.

David accomplished many heroic deeds before he was king and after he became king. He demonstrated great leadership by asking God in prayer for wisdom for decisions he needed to make. He demonstrated great leadership in worshiping God because he brought back the Ark of the Covenant, which at that time represented the presence of God. King David led the people in praise and worship of God. Many people learned how to worship God by King David's example of loving God.

David's greatness started in his heart as a boy. God did not look at the boy David and say "I will make him into a king"; God looked at the boy David and saw a king inside of the boy! Your greatness starts in your heart right now. It starts with making the decision to desire to please God and doing it. God will do great things through you in leading others to him if you have a heart like David. The heart of a great king or queen starts in a kid. Even now, there are friends who watch how you live in following Jesus. Just like David, you have opportunities to influence your friends to follow Jesus.

By Rev. Judy Weeks

## Devotion 11

*"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."*

—Luke 19:10

God sent his son Jesus for us. He sent his son for every person on this planet. We as Christians are not lost, but we still sin and because of this Jesus was sent to save us as well. If you know someone who does not know Jesus, or who has wandered away from Jesus, help that person by praying for him. God knows he or she is lost, but God wants us to help others who are lost as well. The best way for us to do this is pray that they would come to know him.

By Ryan Hodges

## Devotion 12

*For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

—Romans 6:23

When I was in high school I had a friend who I found out stole things from the store every time he went to the store. This was obviously bad since stealing is a sin and against the law. I told him so and he told me to stay out of his business and stopped talking to me. I did so, but I did not stop caring about him. I prayed for him. As Romans 6:23 says, sin is death and the gift of God is eternal life, so I prayed that he would stop stealing and that he would come to know God so his soul would not be lost to sin and evil.

It took several years for my friend to stop stealing, but one day he did. He called me and asked me if I would take him to church so he could learn about God. Remember that no one is truly lost to sin. Everyone can be saved, so pray for them that God would change them so that their soul is not lost forever.

By Ryan Hodges

## Devotion 13

*But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel."*

—Acts 9:15

Did you know that you are a chosen instrument of God? Just as God told Ananias to go to Saul because he was the chosen instrument to spread his name, we are also chosen to spread God's name. Witnessing to nonbelievers is very important for the kingdom of God. Everyone is needed to help spread God's name across your school, your city, your state, country, and even the world.

By Ryan Hodges

## Devotion 14

*"Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity."*

—1 Timothy 4:12

When I was younger, growing up in the church I could not see how I could be important to God. I would look around my church and see so many people, so many adults, who had responsibilities. Some had gone on mission trips and helped many people all across the world. How could God use me? I thought, "I am just a little kid, how could God use me for his kingdom?"

Eventually I grew up. When I was a college student, I moved away from my home church. During Christmas vacation, I was able to visit my home church; a man came up to me and gave me a hug. He told me that when I was a boy going to church, he had doubts and questioned God. When he

saw me in church, he saw a boy in love with God; he saw a boy who wanted to be used by God, a boy worshiping and praising God with all his heart. Ten years later I discovered how God used me for his kingdom. I did not know it, but my being who I was as a young man of God was all I needed to do to witness to this man. I was truly doing God's work.

So remember, although you are young, God can always use you. As this verse states be ready to be used by God as I was.

By Ryan Hodges

## Devotion 15

*"Do not spread false reports. Do not help a guilty person by being a malicious witness."*

—Exodus 23:1

God calls us to be witnesses to his kingdom. But did you know that there are malicious or bad witnesses? As a witness for God's kingdom, we are called to spread the gospel and God's love. However, bad witnesses are those people who spread lies about the gospel and lies about God. Instead of bringing people closer to God, false witnesses take them farther away, thus hurting them spiritually.

Remember that God wants us to be good witnesses. There are two major things that we can do to help make sure that we are good witnesses. First, pray and read the Bible, seeking the truth of God. Second, watch what you say and do, making sure that it is right with the Lord.

By Ryan Hodges

## Devotion 16

*I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.*

—Romans 1:16

In high school, popularity is a big deal. Everyone wants to be the cool kid. When I was a teenager in high school, I also wanted to be cool. I wanted as many friends as possible; I wanted to be friends with the right kids, the cool kids. Most of the cool kids were not Christians, so as a Christian I kept my Christianity a secret. I did not want to lose my cool friends because I was a Christian.

After a while I was ashamed of myself for not being proud of my Christianity. I should not have hidden my Christianity but instead should have shared it with my cool friend who did not know the Lord. Like Paul in this passage, we should be proud of the gospel; we should be proud to call ourselves Christians. We should not hide something so amazing. Instead, we should embrace God's power and share the gospel.

By Ryan Hodges

## Devotion 17

*Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.*

—Colossians 4:6 ESV

Just like you would talk to your best friends and family with kindness and care, you should be prepared to use that same kindness and care with everyone. As God's witnesses to the world, we must be prepared to be witnesses. Using mean, harmful words does not show others God's love for them. Instead, share God's love and gospel with gracious speech.

By Ryan Hodges

## Devotion 18

*"Whoever has ears, let them hear."*

—Matthew 13:9 TNIV

Did you know that wherever you are, God can hear you? Just as God can hear you, if you listen you can hear him everywhere as well. It does not matter where you are; you could be in church, at home, at school, or the store, God can speak to you anywhere. The big question is, If he speaks to you, will you listen? Will you do as he asks?

At the store, if there is someone who looks down and upset and you feel called to speak to that person, will you? God can speak to us anywhere about witnessing to anyone and we must open our ears; hear him and follow his words.

By Ryan Hodges

## Devotion 19

*"But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect."*

—1 Peter 3:15 ESV

The Golden Rule states that you should do to others as you would want them to do to you. The same thing applies to how we witness to others. This Scripture tells us to keep Christ in our heart and honor him, which is vital as Christians. It also states that we must defend keeping Christ in our heart but in a way that is gentle and respectful. Yelling and telling someone he or she is wrong about Christ does nothing to show his love of them. Applying the Golden Rule in discussing Christ with others is necessary for success.

By Ryan Hodges

## Devotion 20

*For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*

—Hebrews 4:12 ESV

God's Word is a weapon that each and every one of us carries with us. It is more powerful than any man-made weapon. This great power we all carry with us is all we need to do anything within the kingdom of God. In times of both weakness and strength, we can depend upon God's Word and win. Seek his words in everything that you do so that you can be filled with his great power.

By Ryan Hodges

## Devotion 21

*Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul why do you persecute me?"*

—Acts 9:1–4

Is there someone in your life that you would think would be impossible to come to church? Maybe a bully at school or maybe even some on television and when you think about them you're like, "No way!" In the New Testament, there was a man who was just like that. The followers of Christ would have never thought he would become a follower of Christ. He was mean to Christians. He killed Christians for their beliefs, but guess what? God intervened in this man's life, and he became a Christian. And I don't mean a sit-on-the-back-row Christian. He became an active part of the earliest Christian church.

A large portion of the New Testament was written by him. Do you know who I am talking about? Paul! Saul, his name before conversion, was a Christian hater, but his life changed dramatically when he became a follower of Christ. So never think that anyone is out of reach. When you feel God leading to speak to someone about Christ, do it even if it seems impossible!

By Wendy Hicks

## Devotion 22

*He replied, "Because you have so little faith. I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.'"*

—Matthew 17:20

Telling others about Jesus may seem frightening at times. It can be frightening for some people to tell anyone about Jesus and church because talking to others might be hard. It could also be easy to tell your friends about Jesus, but telling a stranger or maybe another kid at school can be real scary. The Bible tells us that nothing is impossible for us if we trust in God and have faith that he will

always help us. The Bible says that our faith can be as small as a mustard seed. The mustard seed is one of the smallest seeds. It is super tiny, smaller than a freckle. Yet the mustard seed turns into a tree that is large enough for birds to land at the top. When we trust in the Lord and have faith that he will help us in the good times and difficult times, miraculous things can happen. So be confident! Telling a friend at school or maybe a teacher at day care about Jesus may seem difficult, but with God on your side you can do it!

By Wendy Hicks

### Devotion 23

*“In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see you good deeds and praise your father in heaven.”*  
—Matthew 5:16

Telling people about Jesus by using words is an important, very important, way to evangelize! There is another important way we tell others about Jesus. It is through the way we live. The choices we make each day are a witness to those around us. What kind of choices am I talking about? Well, our attitude, how we respond to people around us, is one area that reveals our allegiance to God. If we tell our friends about Jesus using our words but then our actions are mean or hateful, then we are not sending a clear message. This week as you interact with the world, show them Jesus by the choices that you make.

By Wendy Hicks

### Devotion 24

*“But I, with a song of thanksgiving, will sacrifice to you. What I vowed I will make good. Salvation comes from the LORD.”*  
—Jonah 2:9

Jonah and the whale is a Bible story about a man running from God. Did you know Jonah was running because he did not want to tell the Ninevites about God? Jonah was running from telling someone about salvation. He knew God loved and would forgive the people for all their sins. Jonah did not want God to forgive them because he thought they didn't deserve to be forgiven. So he ran. God found him running away on a ship. God caused a terrible storm to arise. Jonah was thrown overboard by the sailors after he told them he was running from God. God caused a whale to swallow Jonah whole.

It was while in the whale that God was able to talk to Jonah. This Scripture verse was spoken while Jonah was in the whale. Jonah understood that salvation is from the Lord and that as God's people we need to spread the news of God to the world. Sometimes we are like Jonah and we want to keep it for ourselves or we may not want tell the mean kid at school because we think they don't deserve it. The truth is God loves all of us equally, even the “bad kids” at school. Today, think about kids at school that you think don't know God and brainstorm ways you can show them God!

By Wendy Hicks

## Devotion 25

*“You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.”*

—Matthew 5:14–15

A classic children’s song expresses this verse and is fun to sing. “Hide it under a bushel? No! I’m gonna let it shine.” When I was a kid, I loved to act this song out and sing it loud! This song is very important for us as Christians. It is sometimes easy to hide our Christianity. Maybe we don’t tell our friends that we love God and go to church regularly. Maybe when we are hanging out with our friends we try to be like them and not let our “light” shine through.

As individuals we like to complicate things, but shining the light of Christ to the world isn’t complicated. It is really simple! Today, I encourage you to shine the light of Christ in the world. This can be done by saying “thank you”, by opening the door for someone, by helping a friend with their books, or by talking to the new student at school. Let it shine!

By Wendy Hicks

## Devotion 26

*The LORD is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid?*

—Psalm 27:1

The world is big! There are lots of people making good and bad choices. Television shows like to tell us of all bad things happening all over the world. It is a big place that is sometimes scary. Then, the pastor tells us to go into the world and spread the love of God, to spread the gospel. What? “I am supposed to go into the big scary world and tell people about Jesus? What if? But? I don’t know? Are you sure about this?” Yes! God is with you, always. Telling others about Jesus may seem scary at times, but God is with you. Walking up to tell someone about Jesus may seem crazy, but God will be with you. Trust in the Lord and the words will come through. Today, I want to encourage you to make a list of individuals that you know that you could tell about Jesus. Include in this list neighbors, family, friends, and other people you know. Then pray about how you can start the conversation with these people.

By Wendy Hicks

## Devotion 27

*He alone is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will never be shaken.*

—Psalm 62:2

Having a relationship with God is amazing! Having someone you can freely talk to in the middle of the night or in the middle of the day is great! Someone who has your back at all times, someone you

can trust when things get scary, and someone that you can lean on is wonderful. If it is so wonderful why do Christians keep it to themselves?

I have a Nintendo Wii. My Nintendo Wii is great, and I tell everybody that I think it is great. When people ask me about it, I give a glowing recommendation. I tell parents it is great for kids, and I tell kids how great it is as well. The games are fun and easy. I'm not even good at games and I can play them. If I can do it, anybody can play. Isn't Jesus greater than a Nintendo Wii? Yes! We should be more willing to tell our friends and family about God than we are recommending a new toy or gadget to them. God is our rock and fortress, according to the scripture, so let's tell others how great he is!

By Wendy Hicks

## Devotion 28

*I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.*

—Romans 1:16

In writing to the church in Rome, Paul states that he is not ashamed of the gospel. He is telling them that he will tell anyone about the gospel. He will show them how God had changed his life for the God. Upon conversion, Paul embarked on journey to spread the gospel to areas that may not have an opportunity to hear the good news of Christ. Paul would often get in trouble with officials and religious leaders for sharing the gospel. He spent time in jail. He spent time on the run. Paul didn't care. He continued to share the gospel. Paul was not ashamed to tell the story of Christ to the world.

If Paul was able to tell the world, we can tell our world. Not everyone is like Paul. Not everyone can take off and leave everything to spread the gospel, but we can be bold enough to share the gospel in our worlds—at school, after-school, sport clubs, friends' houses, and so on. As kids, there are lots of places we go and all of them are opportunities to share about Christ! Don't be ashamed. Be like Paul and be bold!

By Wendy Hicks

## Devotion 29

*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

—John 3:16

When I was a little girl, I attended church with my grandmother. She would take me every other week and most Wednesdays. The church I attended had Bibles in which they gave a Bible to anyone that did not have one. The front cover of the Bible said "The Good News." I remember thinking that was a funny name for a Bible. Isn't the Bible supposed to say "Bible" on the front?

I remember asking a teacher why the Bibles were titled "The Good News." She responded that the information in the pages is the good news and that was the reason for the title. If the Bible is the

good news for everyone, then we should tell them, right? Today, while at school, church, or wherever you are, look for someone and tell them about the good news. Maybe show them a copy of the good news. Perhaps you can save up your money and buy a Bible for someone who needs one. Maybe share a Bible verse from the pages of the good news. See what happens!

By Wendy Hicks

### Devotion 30

*“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”*

—Matthew 28:19

When I was a kid, my mom would leave me a chore list before she went to work. When she returned it was expected that I would finish the chore list. Does this happen to you? Does a parent or grandparent leave a list of chores for you to accomplish? It was a daily thing at my house.

When Jesus left to go to heaven he left us a “chore list.” The Great Commission was spoken to us by Jesus right before he went to heaven. This verse tells us what we need to be doing while on earth. Guess what? Telling others about Jesus and then getting them into the community of believers is the list. Right before going to heaven, Jesus told us to go and spread the gospel to all nations. He didn’t say some nations or just a few people. He said to spread the word to all nations! Use this as your encouragement and motivation to spread the gospel to everyone!

By Wendy Hicks

### Devotion 31

*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

—John 3:16

What is a Christian? Christians believe Jesus is the Son of God who died on the cross and came back to life to offer us salvation and eternal life. To live your life as a Christian is an amazing adventure.

God wants to give you a life filled with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self control, and much more.

God also gives you eternal life in the most wonderful place called heaven. He has made heaven a special place for everyone who believes in Jesus. The Bible says heaven is a beautiful place filled with love, beauty, and, best of all, God.

It is really quite easy to become a Christian. Simply talk to God. Ask him to forgive you for the things you have done wrong. Tell him you believe that Jesus died on the cross to save you from your sins and give you eternal life. Thank him for giving you the gift of salvation and eternal life in

heaven, and ask him to live in your heart. After you do, tell someone else about God’s amazing love and salvation.

By Rev. Lia Yost

### Devotion 32—Rev. Lia Yost

*“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

—Matthew 28:19–20

These are some of the last recorded words Jesus told his disciples. Because Jesus loves us all so much, he wanted to make sure everyone has the chance to hear about him. So he gave us a job; Jesus gave us a challenge. We are supposed to tell everyone the good news.

So, who are you able to tell about Jesus? Other kids on your soccer team. Kids in your class. Maybe your cousins. Why not make a list of people to start praying about. Ask God to help you tell them about Jesus.

By Rev. Lia Yost

### Devotion 33

*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

Everyone has the opportunity to receive forgiveness from God. It is a simple matter of confessing and receiving. It is so cool that we can count on him for anything, even forgiveness. In Mark 2:1–12, there is a great story of a time Jesus forgave a man’s sins and healed him. You can read it—with all of the details—in your Bible. Who do you need to forgive? Who do you need to ask to forgive you? Who can you tell about God’s forgiveness?

By Rev. Lia Yost

### Devotion 34

*“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”*

—Matthew 22:37–39

Jesus says it is most important to love God with everything in us. Everything we do, think, and say should come from our love of God. Then our love for God will spill over to everyone around us. When they see God’s love through us, it will help them begin a relationship with him.

Okay, how do you love the people around you? Are you kind to others? Do you help people? Are you respectful to parents, teachers, and coaches? Can you think of some other ways to show God's love? Get your friends together and make a list of ways you can show God's love to others. Come up with a plan to do so together.

By Rev. Lia Yost

### Devotion 35

*"In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."*

—Matthew 5:16

It is important for us to live our lives as examples for everyone. People will be watching us, and what are they going to see? When things get tough, when you get frustrated or scared, how will you react? Will you show faith in God?

Take, for example, the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Their courage and devotion to God turned the heart of a king and an entire nation of people. Their story is in Daniel 3. How we stay true to God and his Word will be a shining light to those who are watching our lives.

By Rev. Lia Yost

### Devotion 36—Rev. Lia Yost

*Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*

—John 14:6

To be a Christian requires believing in Jesus. No other person or thing can give you eternal life. There are some people who think there are other ways to enter heaven. Some think it takes being nice, or telling the truth, or giving money to the poor. All of those things are very good, and we should do them. But believing in Jesus is the only way to receive eternal life.

By Rev. Lia Yost

### Devotion 37

When you meet Jesus, it changes you. It changes how you feel on the inside, and it changes how you treat others. Saul's story is amazing. He was a man who did not believe Jesus was the Savior. He actually thought Jesus was a fake. He went from town to town arresting people who believed in Jesus.

Then one day, he was on his way to a town called Damascus, and he met Jesus. From that moment on he was never the same. He changed on the inside and in the way he treated people. Even his name changed, to Paul. Read about his story below from Acts 9:

*Never Be the Same*

On Saul's way to Damascus, a light from heaven shined brightly, and he heard a voice talking to him. The voice said, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"

Saul didn't know who was talking to him so he asked, "Who are you, Lord?" He was probably surprised by the answer. Jesus was the person talking to him.

The men with Saul were shocked. They heard the sound of the voice, but they didn't see anyone. And when Saul got up he couldn't see anything at all; he was blind.

So Saul's traveling companions helped him travel to Damascus. Then a man named Ananias came to visit Saul. He told Saul, "Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit." Well, immediately, Saul could see again. And then next thing Saul did was be baptized. What a great day.

"Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus. At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God."

By Rev. Lia Yost

## Devotion 38

Have you seen the movie or read the book *Percy Jackson and the Olympians*? In those stories, there are Greek gods that do all sorts of stuff. We know they are not real gods. There is only one true God. But people actually used to believe in gods like that.

Once when Paul and Barnabas were in a place called Lystra, a man was healed. The people were amazed and thought they must be one of their gods. It was a perfect opportunity to tell them about the one true God. Read about it below:

*In Lystra there sat a man who was lame. He had been that way from birth and had never walked. He listened to Paul as he was speaking. Paul looked directly at him, saw that he had faith to be healed and called out, "Stand up on your feet!" At that, the man jumped up and began to walk.*

*When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they shouted in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have come down to us in human form!" Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul they called Hermes because he was the chief speaker. The priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city, brought bulls and wreaths to the city gates because he and the crowd wanted to offer sacrifices to them.*

*But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of this, they tore their clothes and rushed out into the crowd, shouting: "Friends, why are you doing this? We too are only human, like you. We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made the heavens and the earth and the sea and everything in them. In the past, he let all nations go their own way. Yet he has not left himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy."*

—Acts 14: 8–17 NIV (2011)

By Rev. Lia Yost

## Devotion 39

*But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

—Romans 5:8

God is willing to accept us into his family just the way we are. He does not expect us to be perfect. We don't have to first quit our bad habits, or spend five years doing good deeds. He just loves us.

When we become a part of his family, he will help us overcome those things. He will help us to become more like Jesus every day.

By Rev. Lia Yost

## Devotion 40

Have you ever noticed that people have lots of questions? We ask questions about all sorts of things. Questions like these: Why is the grass green? What time is dinner? How tall am I?

We should be ready to answer the questions people might have about Jesus. If our friends, neighbors, classmates, teammates, or relatives have questions about Jesus, we can help them know who he is.

In the Bible there is a story about a man who had questions about Jesus and Philip was able to help him. The complete story is in Acts 8. Here are a few verses about a man who asked some questions:

### *Questions & Answers*

An angel told Philip to go to a desert road. So, of course Philip did just that. While he was on the road he met an Ethiopian who worked for the Queen of Ethiopia. He was sitting in his chariot reading the book of Isaiah.

When Philip heard him reading, he asked him a question. "Do you understand what you are reading?" The man said, "How can I unless someone explains it to me?"

Philip began explaining things to him. He told the Ethiopian that the prophet was writing about the savior who is Jesus. And then, Philip told him all about the good news of Jesus. The Ethiopian believed in Jesus and was even baptized.

By Rev. Lia Yost