



Background

This devotional can be used to help you grow as Christians together. Just follow the steps.

1. Parent(s): Read this ahead of time to prepare

Sometimes we get afraid. Maybe it has to do with things being different or changing. Maybe we fear getting hurt, being sick, something happening to someone we care about, or being alone. This week's family devotional is about how to get closer to God so that we feel less afraid. After all, he's bigger than our fears. The devotional includes setting up some activities—to do throughout the week, that will draw us closer to God. It's based on James 4:8: "Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you."

2. Materials Needed

- a. Four jars or containers.
- b. Four paper cut-out symbols (praying hands, a Bible, a brain, and a helping hand). These are provided at the end of this handout.
- c. Strips of paper with various ideas for each jar (ideas for prayers, ideas for Bible-reading, ideas for acts of service, verses for memorization). Again, these are provided at the end of this handout.

3. Activity

- a. Read James 4:8 together: "Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you." Some translations say, "Come near to God, and he will come near to you." This passage was written by James, the half-brother of Jesus in the years after the crucifixion and resurrection. Ask: When was a time that you felt close to God, even though you couldn't see him?
- b. Cut out the four symbols and tape them to the four jars/containers you've prepared.
- c. Cut out the other strips of paper as well and put them in the corresponding jars/containers.
- d. For the 'Acts of Service,' the strips are blank. Brainstorm together some doable ways to help or serve others that will work in your particular situation, either as a family or as individuals. You might want to have one or two ideas people can do together, but also some to do alone. Write them on the strips of paper and place them in the jars/containers.
- e. Talk about how there many ways to "draw closer to God" like it says in James 4:8, including:
 - Praying
 - Reading the Bible
 - Memorizing Scripture verses
 - Acts of Service (helping and caring for others)
 - Worshiping God

When we “draw close to God” in these ways, he “draws close to us” as well! The closer he is, it helps us to be less afraid. After all, he is almighty and bigger than our fears!

f. Each day of the week, each person should do an activity from a different jars/container. If they are having trouble with the strip of paper they picked, it’s okay to put it back and choose another. This is a helpful way to introduce “spiritual disciplines” to the family—time-tested ways to draw near to God and deepen our relationship with him.

g. On Sunday (or another day in your schedule if Sunday doesn’t work), be sure to worship together as a family. That’s the only activity listed above that doesn’t have a jar. You can live-stream the worship service at Westminster; if you have little ones, perhaps watch up to the kids’ time, and then either have a time of singing and prayer together, or do another jar/container selection from this activity.

h. At dinner through the week, discuss what jar/container/activity each other did that day.

Reminder:

1 - Parents, remember that you don’t have to be a Bible expert. One of the things that will resonate most with your child(ren) is that you took the time to do this important activity with them!

2 - For those who aren’t used to doing family devotionals together, this will perhaps feel different and push you beyond your comfort zone. That’s a good thing! Now is the time to grow together and to be firmly rooted in these godly habits.

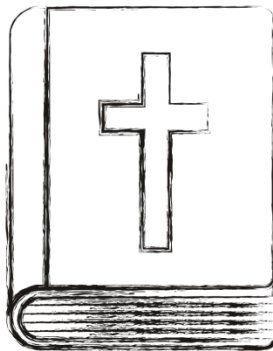
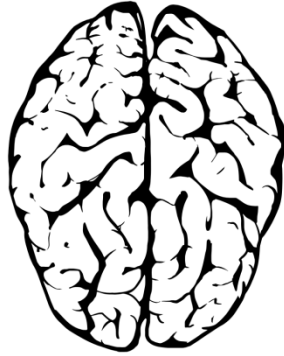
CUT OUT THESE FOUR SYMBOLS and tape them to the different jars/containers

The hand corresponds to "acts of service"

The brain corresponds to "memorizing Scripture"

The praying hands correspond to "praying"

The Bible corresponds to the Bible



Memorizing Scripture (Brain Symbol)

(Many of these are the 'vital verses' learned each month in the Sunday School.)

Come near to God and he will come near to you. -James 4:8

And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. Micah 6:8

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" -Luke 10:27

He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge -Psalm 91:4

Therefore encourage one another and build each other up... -1 Thessalonians 5:11

Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances... -1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

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

If you love me, keep my commands. -John 14:15

Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path. -Psalm 119:105

Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom. -Luke 23:42

Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Mark 10:14

Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away. -Mark 13:31

The LORD is my shepherd; I have all that I need. -Psalm 23:1

Do to others as you would have them do to you. -Luke 6:31

We love because he first loved us. -1 John 4:9

When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. -Psalm 56:3

Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. -Mark 8:34

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. -Matthew 6:33

Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. -Matthew 6:34

But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you -Matthew 5:44

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. -Galatians 5:22-23

For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline. -2 Timothy 1:7

Prayer (praying hands symbol)

PRAISE - Spend some time telling God how wonderful he is and why you think so.

THANK - Spend some time thanking God for the good gifts he has given you, and all of the good things, people and opportunities in your life. Be specific.

CONFESS - Spend some time telling God about ways you haven't loved or paid attention to him, or how you haven't followed his teachings, or how you have said or done things to others that weren't nice. Ask for his forgiveness in Jesus' name.

ASK - Spend some time asking God for help, for your own life, for the people around you, and for things in our world in general.

Bible (Bible symbol)

GOSPELS. Read a story from one of the four gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke or John)—either by yourself or with someone else. At the end ask yourself (or each other), What do you think this story teach us about what God wants?

EXPRESS. Read a story from one of the four gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke or John), and then find a creative way to express what you think someone was feeling in the story. You could draw a picture, build something (with Lego or other random supplies/materials), act something out, write a poem, play a piece of music, or (your choice).

PSALMS. Read a Psalm. After you are done, pick one verse from the psalm that you really liked most. Tell someone why you liked it and/or how it inspires you to follow Jesus. (Here are some suggestions about Psalms that are not too long and would be good to read: Psalm 1, Psalm 23, Psalm 46, Psalm 121, Psalm 131, Psalm 133, Psalm 150.)

10 COMMANDMENTS. Read the 10 commandments that God gave to Moses for his people in Exodus 20:1-17. Talk to with someone about what you think they mean using language and words we might use today.

Acts of Service (helping hand symbol)

IDEA #1

IDEA #2

IDEA #3

IDEA #4