

Children's Church Parent's Guide

For January 23, 2005

Overview of this Week's Message

Theme: Don't Waste Your Life

Key Passage: Ephesians 5:15-17

Bible Memory Verse for the Week: Ephesians 5:17

Background:

Paul, in chapters 4 and 5, writes to the Ephesians about living the new life, the life they (and we) find in being born again in Christ. He counsels them to put away previous sinful behavior and to live a life imitating Christ Himself. In verses 15-21 of chapter 5 Paul talks about behaving consistently. Our focus passage only comprises verses 15-17. Verses 18-21 are his command not to become drunk but to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Focusing on the key verses, Paul says:

1. We must pay careful attention, making sound decisions in our lives. (v.15)
2. We must make the most of the time we have as the days themselves are evil. We're surrounded by a sinful world and we can't expect things to get better over time unless we make an earnest effort to live a changed life impacting the world around us. (v. 16)
3. We must try to understand what God's will is for our lives. Going along without seeking His guidance, advice, and direction is foolish. (v. 17)

Monday: Reinforcement

Theme: Focus on the opportunities from God

Key Passage: Ephesians 5:15-17

You'll need to have a piece of ice and a small glass of lukewarm (not cold) water for this Bible lesson. Put the ice in a small dish beside the water. You'll add it into the water later.

Have your child test the temperature of the water by putting his or her finger in it. Then have your child touch the ice. Ask your child how soon the glass of water should cool down since you've pulled out a piece of ice for it. This might get you a strange look or a question about putting the ice in the glass. However, be clear that you mean the ice beside the glass of water, not in it.

Explain to your child how God has blessed each one of us with certain gifts: our talents and abilities. It is up to us to make the proper choices with those gifts. If we choose to use our gifts poorly, the results will be likewise. Point out to your child how the ice outside of the glass of the water doesn't do anything to cool down the water. The ice has the ability to cool down the water. However, if it's not placed in the water, its cooling "power" will be wasted. Then put the ice cube in the glass of water.

Point out some of the talents and abilities you see in your child. Compare your child's gifts to the ice. Explain that when your child chooses to use his or her abilities in ways that are pleasing to God, your child is like the ice cube in the glass of water. Your child will impact

the world in a positive way. However, if your child chooses to use his or her gifts in ways which aren't pleasing to God, it'll all go to waste, just like an ice cube outside the cup of water it is supposed to cool.

Review the Bible memory verse with your child and help him or her repeat it several times.

Tuesday: The Real World

Theme: We must live wholeheartedly for God

Key Passage: Judges 4:8-10

Our real world example is Franklin Graham, the son of Billy Graham. Begin by reading the Bible passage. Explain to your child that God had called Barak to fight for Israel. Deborah, then leader of Israel, called upon Barak to obey God and fulfill his calling. However, Barak wasn't so eager to go along with God's plan. In fact, he only did so after asking if Deborah would go with him. While God did use Barak to accomplish part of the plan, God also had to use someone else to complete His plan.

Franklin Graham is now in charge of the ministry his father, Billy Graham, started. However, when Franklin Graham was a young man, he was in what he describes as a period of rebellion. He wasn't following Christ and he wasn't interested in doing things that were pleasing to God. However, at the age of 22, Franklin committed his life to Jesus, making Him the boss of his life. When Franklin Graham made that decision, he put himself in a position where he could use his talents and abilities for Christ.

All of us are called not only to make a decision to choose Christ but also how to respond in a way pleasing to God after that. Since that decision in Jerusalem, God has used Franklin Graham in many ways, including in some ways Franklin never thought possible. The same can be true of us if we choose to follow God's lead and put our talents and abilities to whatever He directs us to do.

Review the Bible verse with your child.

Wednesday: Missions Focus

Theme: We must set aside our prejudices to make the most of our calling.

Key Passage: Jonah 4:1-4

Read the Bible passage to your child. Explain the situation Jonah faced. God wanted His prophet to go to the city of Nineveh, home to a people who were hostile to Israel. Jonah, being an Israelite, hated the people of Nineveh. Yet God had a plan to save the city. Jonah was the one God wanted to tell the people of their sins against Him so they would turn from their sins and follow Him. However, Jonah's hatred for these people is why he ran from God's call in the first place.

After Jonah had told the people of Nineveh about their sin, the people did exactly what God wanted: they chose God. Jonah knew this was God's intent the whole time and that was the reason he was angry with God. Jonah even asks God to take his life because he can't stand the fact his hated enemy was saved by God's mercy.

In missions we will come across many people who have very different customs and practices from what we have. Some of these customs will seem wrong to us. Others are wrong according to the word of God. However, we cannot let our prejudices for a people or for their practices to interfere with our work: to tell them about Jesus Christ. Even if some of their practices are unacceptable to God, we still have a responsibility to reach the lost. For those who choose God as the boss of their lives, we are also supposed to take the next step, and that's to teach them about what the Bible says and help them begin to live their lives according to God's commands. But it all starts with putting our prejudices aside so we can use our gifts for God's work.

Review the Bible verse. Your child should be able to say it with no more than one or two prompts from you as your child recites the verse.

Thursday: Personal Application

Theme: Rejoice as you strive to give God your very best.

Key Passage: Philippians 2:16-18

Take some time before beginning this lesson to think about cases where your child tried his or her very best to do something. Make a short list. If possible, include both instances when your child succeeded as well as times when your child didn't.

Read verse 16 to your child. Explain to your child that Paul is talking about giving his best for God. Take some time to cover those cases you thought of before. Make sure you take the time to affirm your child and tell your son or daughter how proud of him or her you are. Explain to your child, especially in cases when your child didn't succeed, that you're proud of him or her because they gave their best. Point out that neither you nor God can ask or rightfully expect any more out of your child than his or her very best.

Read verse 16 to your child one more time. Spend some time talking about how God is pleased when we do our best as He calls us. Also remind them that if God calls us to do something that is beyond what we can do, it's a chance to lean on Him and see Him at work. He'll never set us up to fail. If we follow Him, do our best, and trust God to do what we can't, His plan in our lives will succeed. Therefore, we must always strive to do our best, even if the situation looks impossible.

Review the Bible verse. Your child should be able to say it without prompting from an adult.

Friday: Family Time

Theme: Support one another as you live for Christ.

Key Passage: Ephesians 6:1-4

Read the entire passage to your child. Initially focus on the last verse, which is a command to fathers. If you're a mother giving this lesson to your child, explain that God would expect the same of you, too. As parents we are here to instruct our children and we should never do anything to anger or exasperate them. This isn't to say that our child won't get frustrated at our instruction, especially if we have to discipline our children. Rather it's saying we

shouldn't do things just to drive our children crazy. Take the time to explain this difference to your child.

Then focus on verses 1 through 3. Explain to your child this obedience to parents is trumped by obedience to God. If our parents ask us to do something against God's instructions, we must first honor our commitment to God. However, in all other instances, God expects children to obey their parents. Take the time to explain how God is our spiritual Father. How we act towards our parents is often how we act or will act towards God. Therefore, He wants us to behave properly with our parents because that helps us behave properly with Him.

Explain that as a family there will be times when differences will come up. There will be times when family members will be angry at each other. This is all part of being human. However, we should try and get along and love one another. This is what Paul was trying to explain in these passages.

Take a few more minutes to talk about how you might do a better job relating to one another as a family. If you've had a recent family disagreement, now might be a good time to discuss it and talk about how to avoid a similar situation in the future.

Have your child recite the memory verse. Provide prompts if necessary. When your child finishes reciting the verse, take the time to celebrate your child's hard work this week.