



# River Oak Grace Family Devotional Guide

## *Instructions*

River Oak Grace is beginning a journey and we are asking your family to travel with us. Our destination is total dependence on God. We have made this our goal because we want God to be glorified as we take next steps toward His heart in our individual lives, so that the world will see in us an accurate reflection of who God is and what He means to us.

This journey will provide an opportunity for your family to learn more of what it means to live dependently on God for everything in life. These devotionals are designed to help us focus on three things in which we must be actively involved if we are going to reach our destination together: Showing The World What God Is Like, Sharing What We Have With Others, and Trusting God To Meet Our Needs. Each of the 14 daily devotionals is divided into 5 parts:

- **The Verse** - If you have children in your home, it is a good idea to let them take turns reading the verse or verses for the day. It is important that children be participants and not just spectators in this journey.
- **The Illustration** - Share the illustration and talk about it.
- **The Application** - Give the application; then ask your family how they think this truth can be applied to their lives.
- **The Quote** - Read the quote for the day and ask a family member to explain what he or she believes it means.
- **The Prayer** - End with a simple prayer asking God to help each family member receive and apply the truth they have learned that day. Use this time for prayer requests, and include prayer for your church and its leadership.

Choose a time of day when your whole family can gather together with the least number of distractions and interruptions. Make this an interesting and fun time for your family. Teach your children, by example, that spiritual things are to be taken both seriously and enjoyed. Also, let them know that what your family and what they, as individuals, are doing are important to the future of our church family.

In I Samuel 2:30, God says, “Those who honor Me I will honor.” As we travel together on the journey the Lord has set before us, we want to honor Him with every step we take. As we do, we are asking Him to meet our needs and to let His blessings rain down on us all.

# DAY 1

## Showing The World What God Is Like

**The Verse:** *Matthew 5:16 – “. . . let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”*

### **The Illustration:**

A preacher moved to a new town, and, a few weeks after he arrived, he had occasion to ride the bus from his home into downtown. When he paid the fare and sat down in his seat, he discovered the driver had accidentally given him a quarter too much change.

As the preacher considered what to do, he thought to himself, “Give the quarter back, it would be wrong to keep it.” Then he thought, “Oh, forget about it, it’s only a quarter. It’s too small an amount to worry about. The bus fare is too high anyway; They’ll never miss it.”

When he came to his stop, the preacher paused for a moment at the door. Then he handed the quarter to the bus driver and said, “Here, you gave me too much change.” The driver smiled and said, “Aren’t you the new preacher in town? I’ve never gone before, but lately I’ve been thinking about going to church. I just wanted to see what you would do if I gave you too much change.”

When the preacher stepped off of the bus, he grabbed the nearest light pole and sank to his knees sobbing. “O God,” he cried, “I almost sold your Son for a quarter!”

### **The Application:**

Say: “What people who don’t know Jesus think of Him will usually be determined by what they think of those of us who do know Jesus.”

First, ask each family member if they think that this truth should affect the choices they make each day and how they live their lives.

Secondly, ask each family member if they can think of a time when they had the opportunity to do the wrong thing but chose to do the right thing instead. Explain that if they ever have done that, they were obeying what Jesus said in Matthew 5:16.

### **The Quote:**

“Do all the good you can. In all the ways you can. In all the places you can. At all the times you can. To all the people you can. As long as you can.”

John Wesley

### **The Prayer:**

*“Father, help us to always remember that the people in our world are watching us every day and that what they see in us will determine what they think of You.”*

**The Verse:**

*Matthew 13:35 – “By this all men know that you are My disciples, if you love one another.”*

**The Illustration:**

A few years ago, at the Seattle Special Olympics, six contestants, all physically or mentally disabled, assembled at the starting line for the one hundred-meter run. There were 50,000 people in the stadium to watch them compete. The kids had prepared all year for this event and they all wanted to win.

The starting gun went off, and all six began to run. Although they couldn't run very well, they were all giving it their very best. At about the 50-meter mark, one of the six runners stumbled and fell down, face first on the track. The little boy who fell began to cry.

The other five took a few more steps, but then heard the boy cry. They all slowed down and looked back at the fallen runner. The five turned around and went back--every one of them. One girl with Down's Syndrome bent down and kissed him and said, "That will make it better."

Then the six linked arms and walked to the finish line together--all of them crossing the finish line at the same moment. Each one received a gold medal.

**The Application:**

Say: "That true story is a perfect picture of how God cares for us and how He wants us to care for hurting people in His name. God wants us to help others up when they fall down, kiss their hurts and make them better, link arms with those who have fallen, and encourage each other to keep on, keeping on."

Ask each family member to share something they can do this week to show God's love to a hurting person.

**The Quote:**

"When somebody needs a helping hand, he doesn't need it tomorrow or the next day. He needs it now, and that's exactly when you should offer to help. Good deeds, if they are really good, happen sooner rather than later."

Marie T. Freeman

**The Prayer:**

*"Father, please help each of us care about hurting people the way you do and show we care by the way we live our lives."*

**The Verse:**

*Ephesians 4:32 – “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”*

**The Illustration:**

Corrie ten Boom, the great woman of faith who was the only member of her family to survive a Nazi concentration camp during World War II, told the true story of addressing a church in Munich, Germany in 1947. She had come from Holland to speak to the German people about the forgiveness of God. That evening she told the crowd that anyone who is willing to confess their sins can be forgiven and have their sins cast into the deepest sea by God to be remembered no more.

Corrie said that the service had just concluded and people were filing out when she saw a balding, heavyset man in a gray overcoat working his way to the front of the room. The instant she laid eyes on him the horrible memories of Ravensbruck came flooding over her.

The man making his way toward Corrie had been one of the guards in the concentration camp--one of the most cruel of all the guards. The man stuck out his hand to Corrie and said, “A fine message, Fraulein! How good it is to know that, as you say, all sins are at the bottom of the sea.”

Corrie said that even though she had just finished speaking on forgiveness she pretended to fumble in her purse rather than take his hand. The man evidently didn't remember her from Ravensbruck, but she remembered him all too well.

“You mentioned Ravensbruck in your talk,” he said. “I was a guard there. Since that time I have become a Christian. I know God has forgiven me for the cruel things I did there, but I would like to hear it from the lips of someone who was there. Fraulein, will you forgive me?” The former guard put out his hand again.

Corrie said that she stood there--a person whose sins had been paid for by the Lord Jesus--a person who had been forgiven, but yet, could not forgive. She had watched her sister die in that horrible place. Could this man possibly erase her sister's terrible death simply by asking? Corrie said forgiving would be the most difficult thing she had ever had to do, but she knew she must.

Since the end of the war she had run a home in Holland for victims of the Nazi brutality. Over and over she had seen those who forgave their enemies return to the outside world and rebuild their lives; and she had seen those who refuse to forgive become bitter, emotional cripples.



“Jesus, help me!” She prayed silently. “Help me lift my hand.” Corrie said that as she thrust out her hand, not because she wanted to or felt like it but only in obedience to God, something incredible happened. She said it was as if healing seemed to wash over her whole body and tears immediately came to her eyes.

“I forgive you, brother!” She cried. “With all my heart, I forgive you!” For a long time the two grasped each other’s hands, the former guard, and the former prisoner. Corrie ten Boom said that she had never known God’s love so intensely as she did at that moment.

### **The Application:**

Say: “If we have been forgiven by God, then we must forgive others if we want to show the world what God is like. We must also be willing to ask for forgiveness when we have offended someone else. There are six little words we must make a part of our vocabularies and practice using every day. Those words are, ‘I was wrong, please forgive me.’”

Ask your family members to explain how forgiving others and asking others to forgive us shows the world what God is like.

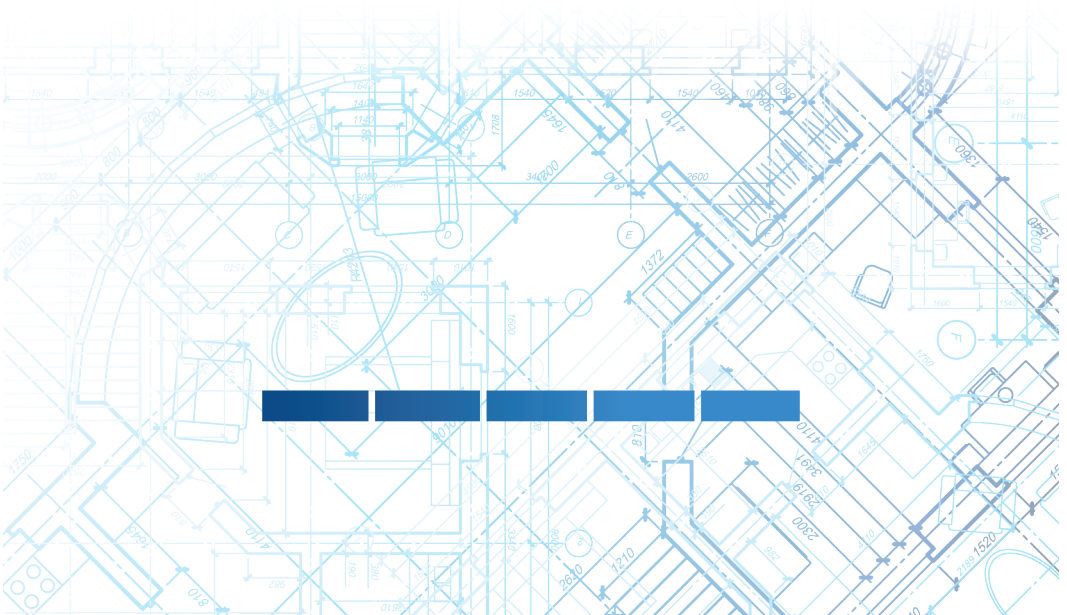
### **The Quote:**

“If we have the true love of God in our hearts, we will show it in our lives.”

D. L. Moody

### **The Prayer:**

“Father, please help us be willing to ask for the forgiveness of others when we are wrong. Help us also forgive others just like You have forgiven us in order that we may show the world what You are really like.”



# DAY 4

## Showing The World What God Is Like

### The Verse:

*Matthew 5:14-15 – “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.”*

### The Illustration:

Years ago in a small mid-western town, one man’s job was to watch the railroad crossing. When a train approached at night, he was to wave a lantern to warn those driving on the narrow road that a train was approaching, and to stop until the train passed by.

One night the train was coming down the tracks as usual, and the man took his place to warn any oncoming cars. He could see a car in the distance approaching the railroad tracks, so he began to wave his lantern in the moonlit sky. The car continued to come, so the man waved his lantern even harder.

The train was only seconds away from the crossing but the car was not slowing down. He waved the lantern harder; still the car kept coming. Again, he frantically waved his lantern, and the car continued to come at full speed.

Finally the man jumped out of the way as the car sped by and was hit by the train. Everyone in the car was killed. At the investigation, the grief-stricken man explained to the authorities how he tried to warn the car, but it would not stop. The officer in charge said to the man, “Sir, you waved your lantern--but you forgot to light it.”

### The Application:

Say: “Christians are not the source of light, but we are to light up this dark world by reflecting the light of Jesus.”

Next, hold up a small hand mirror in front of a lit candle. Say: “Just like a mirror reflects light, our lives are to be like a mirror which reflects the light of Jesus (the candle) to our world.”

Now hold up a second mirror that has been smeared with soap in front of the candle. Say: “When our lives get smudged by sin, Jesus can’t clearly shine through our lives.”

Ask: “How important is it to people who are lost in the darkness of sin that our lives be able to reflect the light of Jesus?”

### The Quote:

“It is a great deal better to live a holy life than to talk about it. Lighthouses do not ring bells; they just shine.” D. L. Moody

### The Prayer:

*“Father, the people in our world need to see You. Please help our lives to clearly and accurately reflect what You are really like.”*

## The Verse:

*Philippians 2:5-7 – “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made of Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.”*

## The Illustration:

A man who was an alcoholic came to know Christ at a Bowery mission in Chicago. Prior to his conversion, Joe had gained the reputation of being a drunk for whom there was no hope, only a miserable existence in the ghetto.

But following his salvation experience, everything changed in his life. Joe became the most caring person that anyone associated with the mission had ever known. Joe spent his days and nights at the mission doing whatever needed to be done.

There was never any task that was too lowly for Joe to take on. There was never anything that he was asked to do that he considered beneath him. Whether it was cleaning up the bathroom after someone had been sick or scrubbing the filthy floors, Joe did what was asked of him with a soft smile on his face and with seeming gratitude for the chance to help.

He could always be counted on to feed the men who wandered into the mission off of the streets. He would undress those who were too drunk or sick to care for themselves and tuck them into bed.

One evening, when the director of the mission was delivering his evening evangelistic message to the usual crowd of pitiful men, there was one man who looked up and came down the aisle to the altar. The man knelt to pray, crying out to God to help him to change.

The repentant drunk kept shouting, “Oh God, make me like Joe! Make me like Joe! Make me like Joe!” The director of the mission finally leaned over and said to the man, “Son, I think it would be better if you prayed, ‘Make me like Jesus!’” The man looked up at the director with a quizzical expression on his face and asked, “Is he like Joe?”

## The Application:

Say: “Jesus said in John 14:9, ‘He who has seen Me, has seen the Father.’ The same thing was true of Joe’s life that was true of Jesus’ life--to see them was to see God. Could that be said of us? If we are going to show the world what God is really like then we must have the same humble attitude Christ had when he lived here on earth.”

Ask your family members if they can think of anything they have done

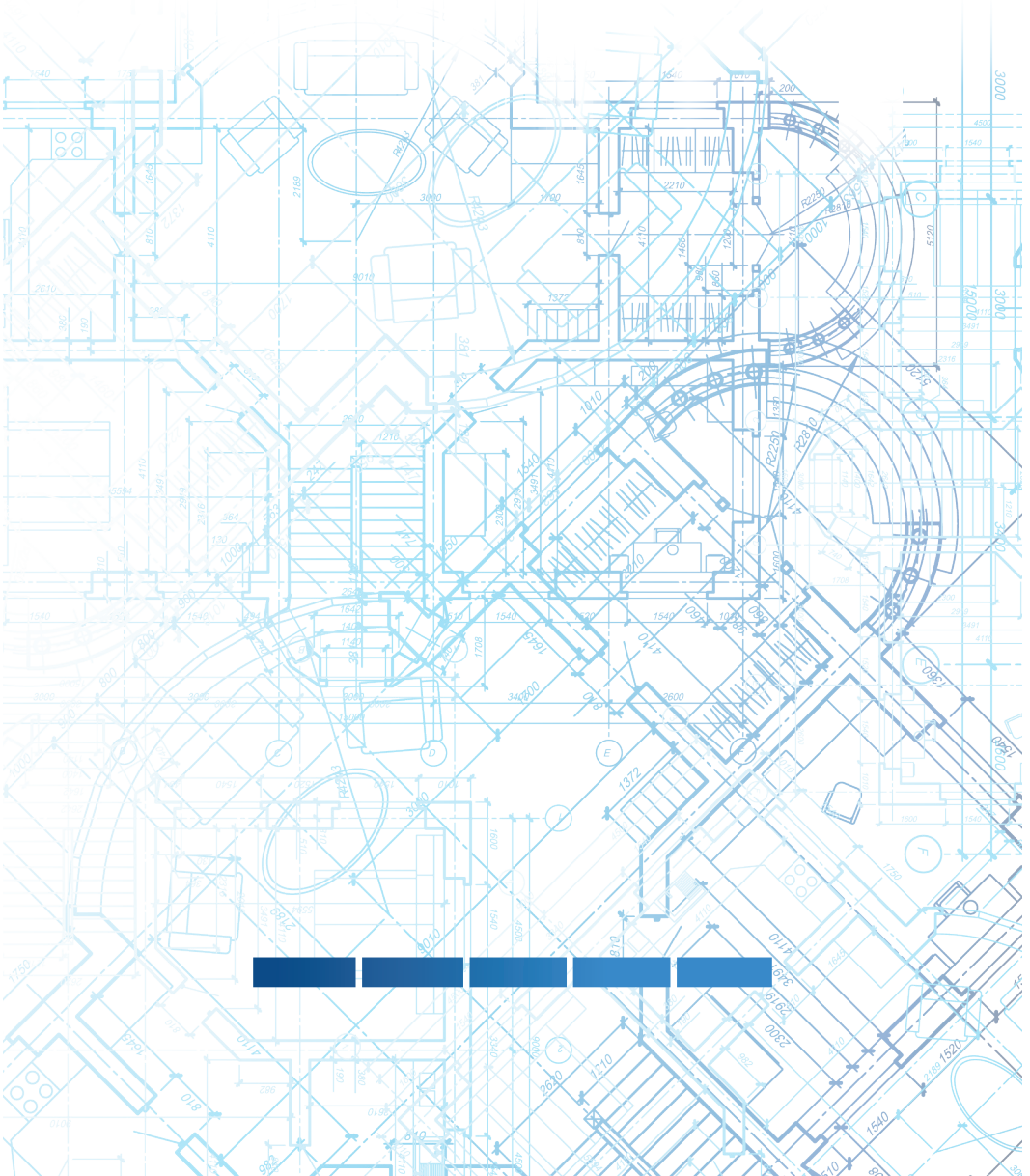
recently for someone else that only Jesus would have done.

**The Quote:**

“Our walk counts far more than our talk, always!” George Mueller

**The Prayer:**

*“Father, please give us a heart for people who need to know what You are really like. Help us see others through Your eyes and love them with Your love.”*



**The Verse:**

*Colossians 3:2: "Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God."*

**The Illustration:**

One day, an Indian brave found an eagle's egg and put it into the nest of a prairie chicken. The eaglet finally hatched with the brood of chicks and grew up with them. All his life, the eagle, thinking he was a prairie chicken, did what the prairie chickens did. He scratched in the dirt for seeds and insects to eat. He clucked and cackled, and he flew in a brief thrashing of wings and flurry of feathers no more than a few feet off the ground. After all, that's how prairie chickens were supposed to fly.

Years passed, and the eagle grew very old. One day, he saw a magnificent bird far above him in the sky. Hanging with graceful majesty on the powerful wind currents, it soared with scarcely a beat of its strong golden wings. "What a beautiful bird!" He said to his neighbors. "What is it?" "That is an eagle, the chief of birds," the neighbor clucked. "But don't give it a second thought. You could never be like him." So the eagle spent his life looking up at the eagles in the sky and longing to join them among the clouds. It never once occurred to him to lift his wings and try to fly himself. Until the day he died, the eagle lived his entire life thinking he was a prairie chicken.

Growing up among prairie chickens, the eagle thought he was a prairie chicken, so he acted like a prairie chicken. How sad that he never realized who he really was and that he, too, could soar with the eagles.

**The Application:**

Say: "If we are going to give the world an accurate picture of what God is like by the way we live our lives, then first we must know who we are. Christians are meant to soar in the heavens like eagles and not live in the dirt of this world like prairie chickens.

Secondly, we must learn to live our lives like the eagles God created us to be." Ask each family member to share what they think that statement means. Ask them if they can think of an example of how some Christians live like prairie chickens.

**The Quote:**

"A person ought to live so that everybody knows he is a Christian." D. L. Moody

**The Prayer:**

*"Father, we need to live like what you have created us in Christ to be, so the world will know You for who You really are. In order to do that, we need to keep our eyes and our minds on You. Please give us the desire to do that every day."*



**The Verse:**

Acts 3:6 – *“Then Peter said, ‘Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give to you.’”*

**The Illustration:**

Edward Kimball was concerned about one of his young Sunday school students who worked at a shoe store in town. One day Kimball visited him at the store and found the student in the back stocking shoes. Mr. Kimball led the boy to Christ then and there. Dwight L. Moody was the boy’s name, and he eventually became one of the greatest preachers and evangelists of all times.

Moody, whose international speaking took him to the British Isles, preached in a little chapel pastored by a young man with the imposing name of Frederic Brotherton Meyer. In his sermon, Moody told an emotionally charged story about a Sunday school teacher he had known in Chicago who personally went to every student in his class and led every one of them to Christ.

That message changed Pastor Meyer’s entire ministry, inspiring him to become an evangelist like Moody. Over the years, Meyer came to America several times to preach. Once in Northfield, Massachusetts, a confused young preacher sitting in the back row heard Meyer say, “If you are not willing to give up everything for Christ, are you willing to be made willing?” That remark led J. Wilbur Chapman to respond to the call of God on his life.

Chapman went on to become one of the most effective evangelists of his time. A volunteer by the name of Billy Sunday helped set up his crusades and learned how to preach by watching Chapman. Sunday eventually took over Chapman’s ministry, becoming one of the most dynamic evangelists of the 20th century. In the great arenas of the nation, Billy Sunday’s preaching turned thousands of people to Christ.

Inspired by a 1924 Billy Sunday crusade in Charlotte, North Carolina, a committee of Christians there dedicated themselves to reaching that city for Christ. The committee invited the evangelist Mordecai Ham to hold a series of evangelistic meetings in 1932. A lanky 16-year-old sat in the huge crowd on evening, spellbound by the message of the white-haired preacher, who seemed to be shouting and waving his finger at him. Night after night the teenager attended and finally went forward to give his life to Christ.

The teenager’s name was Billy Graham--the man who has communicated the gospel of Jesus Christ to more people than any other man in history.



## The Application:

Say: “Remember the man named Kimball? He wasn’t rich or famous. He wasn’t a preacher or an evangelist or a missionary. He was simply an ordinary man who cared enough about a boy to take the time to share Jesus with him. By sharing what he had to give with others, Mr. Kimball helped change the world. Millions of people have had their lives affected over the years, and millions more will continue to be touched by the Gospel because of Edward Kimball. God wants us to share what we have and make a difference in our world, too.”

Ask your family to think of just one thing they can do to make a difference in their world.

## The Quote:

“I’m thankful for a church that remembers that we exist primarily for those who aren’t here yet.” Bob Record

## The Prayer:

“Father, help us love lost people the way You do and please show us practical ways to demonstrate that love every day.”



### The Verse:

*Colossians 3:23-24: "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving."*

### The Illustration:

Little River Community Church was located just down the street from First Memorial Church. Since they were located on the same street in the same town, the two youth groups from the two churches were often competing with each other. They participated in the same softball league, the same basketball league, and had become intense rivals. Little River Community was always trying to outdo First Memorial, and vice versa.

One Sunday, following a Bible study on serving others, the youth group at Little River Community Church fanned out into the neighborhood and started serving. One group washed cars for people up and down the street. Another group pumped gas for free at a self-service gas station. Another group went to a convalescent home and sang songs to the shut-ins who lived there.

After the time was up, all the ministry teams returned to the church and reported what they learned and how it made them feel. One of the groups told of how they had gone to serve an older woman who lived close to First Memorial Church. "We mowed her grass, raked leaves, and did yard work for her," said one of the students. "She was real nice. After we were through, she invited us in and prayed for us. Then she said, "You young people from First Memorial Church are always doing such nice things for us old folks."

"Oh no!" said the youth pastor. "She thought you were from First Memorial? Well, I hope you set her straight. Did you tell her that you weren't from First Memorial but from Little River Community?" "Well, no, we didn't," said the student, surprised by the youth pastor's question. "You told us to do what Jesus would do, didn't you? We decided that Jesus wouldn't care who got the credit."

### The Application:

Say: "If we are going to share with others and serve them the way Jesus would, then we can't be concerned about who gets the credit. Everything we give and everything we do, should be as if we are giving it to, and doing it for, the Lord. He, and He alone, is deserving of any praise. Our goal should not be to call attention to ourselves, but to turn people's attention to God."

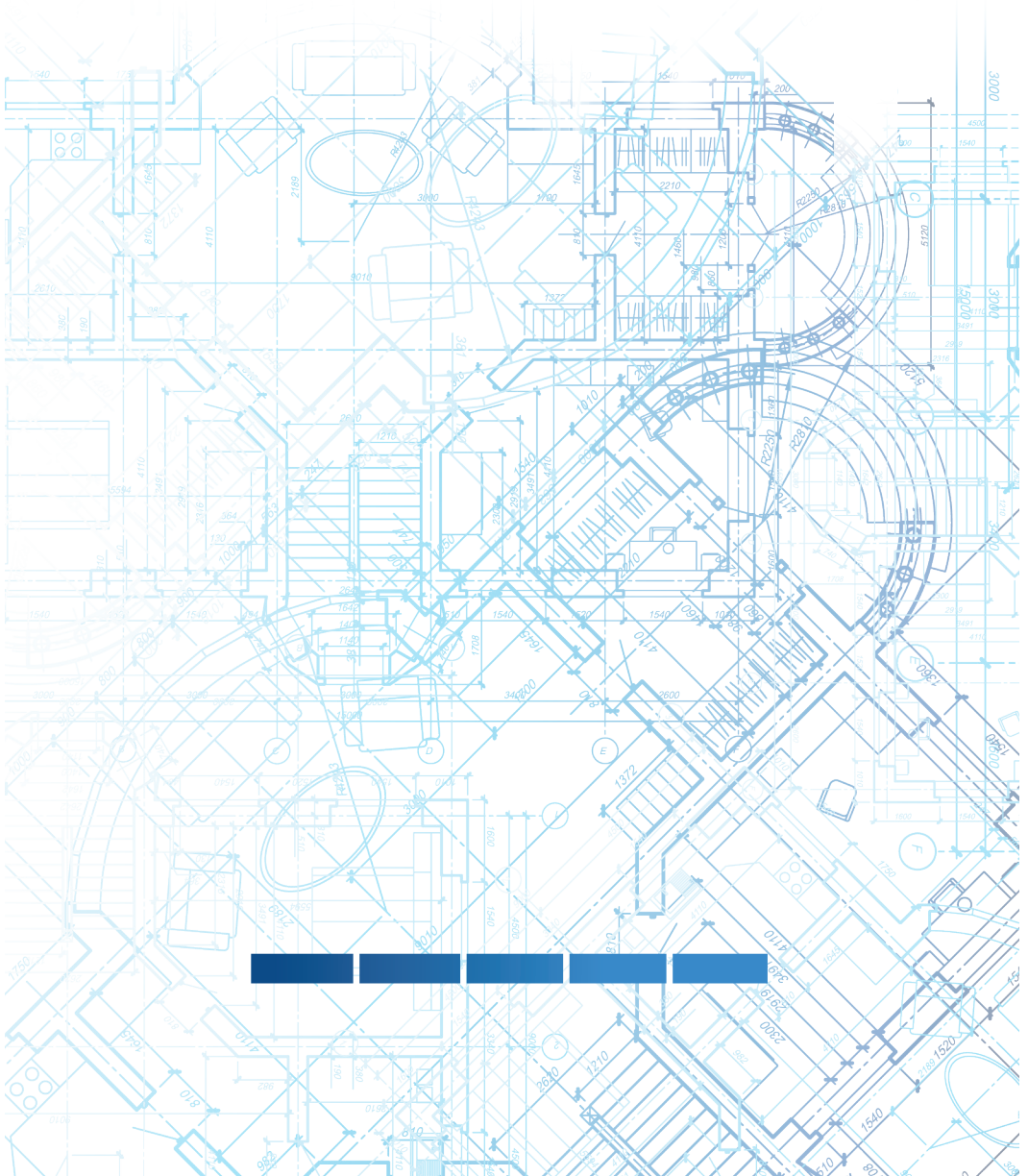
Ask your family members if they can think of a time when they shared something of theirs (time, money, possessions, food, etc...) with someone who needed help, and no one else knew but God.

## The Quote:

“Nothing is really ours until we share it.” C. S. Lewis

## The Prayer:

*“Father, please help us to remember every day that in all we do, we are to honor and bless You; then help us to bless others in Your name.”*



### The Verse:

*James 1:17: "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows."*

### The Illustration:

A man once worked in the Sporting Goods section of a big Department Store. His area was right next to the candy counter. One day he noticed a little boy about six years old with his nose pressed against the glass looking at all the different kinds of candy. The man could tell from the way the little boy and his mother was dressed that neither he, nor she, probably had any money for extras like candy.

The kind man felt sorry for the little boy, so he went up to the little boy's mother and asked her if it would be okay for him to buy her son some candy. She smiled gratefully and said, "Yes." The man turned to the little boy and told him to pick out whichever candy he would like to have. The boy's eyes lit up, and he hurriedly pointed to the chocolate-covered caramels that he had been looking at longingly.

The man told the clerk behind the candy counter to give the boy a pound of the candy he had chosen. Then the man took out his wallet and paid the clerk for the candy, and the clerk handed the bag of candy to the little boy.

The little guy immediately opened the bag and began to eat the candy. The man who had purchased the candy for the boy said, "Son, may I have a piece of your candy?" The little boy looked up at the man who had just paid for the candy and shouted, "NO--this is all my candy," and he ran away!

### The Application:

Say: "Do we ever treat God like the little boy treated the man who bought him the candy? God gives us everything we have. All He asks is that we give back to Him a small portion of what He has given us.

Do we ever act like God has no right to ask that of us? Do we ever act like all the money and possessions we have belong to us?"

Ask your family members how they would have reacted to what the little boy said if they had been the one who bought the candy for him.

### The Quote:

"How generous you are does not depend on how much you give, but how much you have left." Anonymous

### The Prayer:

*Father, please help us to remember that we don't have anything that didn't come from You. Convict us to give as freely to You and to others as You have given to us.*



**The Verse:**

*Matthew 25:40 "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for Me."*

**The Illustration:**

Miss Thompson was a schoolteacher who said the same thing to her students every year: "Boys and girls, I love you all the same. I have no favorites." But that wasn't completely truthful. Teachers are human, and they do have favorites. What's worse, most teachers have students that they simply don't like.

Teddy Stallard was a boy that Miss Thompson simply didn't like, and for good reason. He didn't seem interested in school. He wore a deadpan, blank expression on his face, and his eyes were glassy and unfocused. When she spoke to Teddy, he merely shrugged his shoulders. His clothes were messy and his hair was unkempt. He wasn't an attractive boy, and he certainly wasn't likable.

Whenever she marked Teddy's papers, she got a certain perverse pleasure out of putting X's next to the wrong answers. When she put the F's at the top of the papers, she did it with a flair. She should have known better. She had Teddy's records, and she knew more about him than she wanted to admit. The records read:

1st Grade: Teddy shows promise with his work and attitude, but poor home situation.

2nd Grade: Teddy could do better, Mother is seriously ill. He receives little help at home.

3rd Grade: Teddy is a good boy, but too serious. He is a slow learner. His mother died this year.

4th Grade: Teddy is very slow, but well-behaved. His father shows no interest.

At Christmas, the boys and girls in Miss Thompson's class brought her presents, piled them on her desk, and crowded around to watch her open them. Among the presents was one from Teddy Stallard. She was surprised that he had brought her a gift. Teddy's gift was wrapped in brown paper and held together with Scotch tape. On the paper were written the simple words, "For Miss Thompson, from Teddy." When she opened Teddy's present, out fell a gaudy rhinestone bracelet, with half the stones missing, and a bottle of cheap perfume.

The other boys and girls began to giggle and smirk over Teddy's gifts. But Miss Thompson at least had enough sense to silence them by immediately putting on the bracelet and dotting some of the perfume on her wrist. Holding

her wrist up for the other children to smell, she said, "Doesn't it smell lovely?" The other children, taking their cue from their teacher, readily agreed. When school was over and the other children had left, Teddy lingered behind. He slowly came over to her desk and said softly, "Miss Thompson?" "Miss Thompson, you smell just like my mother and her bracelet looks real pretty on you, too. I'm glad you like my presents."

When Teddy left, Miss Thompson got down on her knees and asked God to forgive her. The next day when the children came to school, they were welcomed by a new teacher. Miss Thompson had become a different person. She was no longer just a teacher—she had become an agent of God, committed to loving her children and doing things for them that would live on after her.

She helped all the children, but especially the slow ones and especially Teddy Stallard. By the end of that school year, Teddy showed dramatic improvement. He caught up with most of the students and was even ahead of some. Once the school year ended, Miss Thompson didn't hear from Teddy for a long time. Then one day she received a note that read:

*Dear Miss Thompson,  
I wanted you to be the first to know. I will be graduating second in my class.  
Love,  
Teddy Stallard*

Four years later, another note came:

*Dear Miss Thompson,  
They just told me I will be graduating first in my class. I wanted you to be the first to know. The university has not been easy, but I have had a good four years.  
Love,  
Teddy Stallard*

And, four years after that:

*Dear Miss Thompson,  
As of today, I am Theodore Stallard, M.D. How about that? I wanted you to be the first to know. I am getting married next month, the twenty-seventh to be exact. I want you to come and sit where my mother would sit if she were alive. You are the only family I have now. Dad died last year.  
Love,  
Teddy Stallard*

Miss Thompson went to that wedding and sat where Teddy's mother would have sat. She deserved to be there because she had given something to Teddy



that changed his life.

### The Application:

Say: “We can also be like Miss Thompson and share with others what we have to give. We can give them love, acceptance, encouragement, support, friendship, and hope. We can believe in them and help them to not only believe in themselves, but in the God who created them and loves them.”

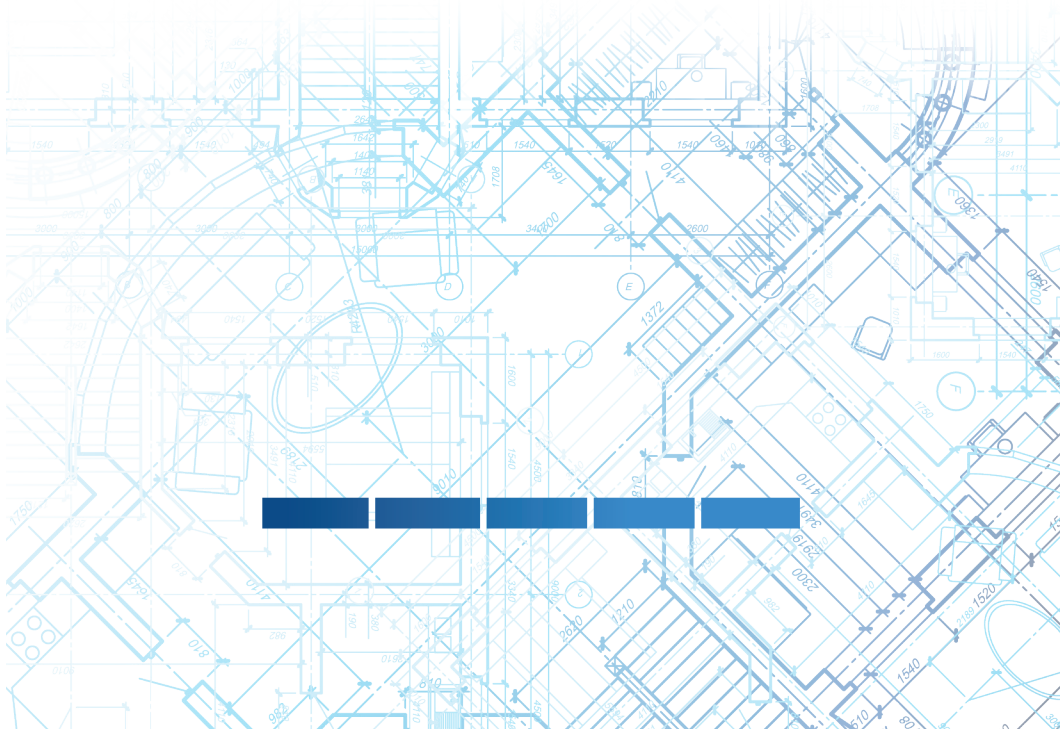
Ask your family members if there is a Teddy in their lives right now who needs what they can share. If there isn't, ask them to be actively looking for someone they can be a blessing to.

### The Quote:

“There have been meetings of only a moment which have left impressions for life, for eternity. No one can understand that mysterious thing we call influence...yet...every one of us continually exerts influence, either to heal, to bless, to leave marks of beauty; or to wound, to hurt, to poison, to stain the lives of others.” J. R. Miller

### The Prayer:

*“Father, please help us to be sensitive to the needs of the people You place in our paths each day and show us how to help meet their needs with what You have given us to share.”*



**The Verse:**

*Jeremiah 9:24: "But let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows Me, for I am the Lord who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight."*

**The Illustration:**

This story is told about a family who was awakened in the middle of the night by their smoke detector to discover that their house was on fire. The father ran into the upstairs bedroom of his children, and carried his baby in his arms while dragging his four-year-old son by the hand.

They were halfway down the stairs when the little boy remembered that he had left his teddy bear in the bedroom, so he broke free from his father's hand and ran back into the bedroom to get his beloved bear.

In the confusion, the father didn't notice that his son wasn't with him until he got outside. By that time, the little boy was trapped by the flames and the smoke. As the smoke swirled around him he cried out from the upstairs window, "Help me, Daddy, help me!"

His father yelled from below, "Jump out of the window, Andy! I'll catch you!" In the darkness and smoke, the little boy yelled back, "But Daddy! I can't see you!" His Daddy shouted back, "It's okay, son. I can see you! Jump!"

When you are afraid of the future and afraid of the dark, and can't see what lies ahead, God simply says, "It's okay. I can see. Jump and I'll catch you."

**The Application:**

Say: "Do you think that little boy jumped out of the upstairs window in the dark or not? Do you think his decision to jump or not to jump had anything to do with how well he knew his father?"

Nothing brings more joy to the heart of God than to have His children trust and obey Him. But in order to obey Him, we must first know our heavenly Father is trustworthy, and we can't know that until we know Him."

Ask each of your family members if trusting God is an easy or a hard thing for them to do. Next, ask them to share how they can get to know God better.

**The Quote:**

"God's mark is on everything that obeys Him." Martin Luther

**The Prayer:**

*"Father, please give us the desire to trust and obey You, and then the strength to do so every day."*

### The Verse:

*Matthew 6:33 – “But seek first the kingdom of God and righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”*

### The Illustration:

A father had just settled into his recliner one afternoon after church, looking forward to reading his Sunday paper, when his five-year-old son Bobby came running into the room. “Daddy! Daddy!” said the little boy, “Can you play with me now?”

The father tried to be gentle in his response to his son. “Bobby, Daddy wants to read his paper for a little while. But if you will come back in twenty minutes, I’ll play with you.” Though he was not happy about having to wait, Bobby left the room so his father could read the paper.

Since Bobby was too young to tell time, he was back in just a matter of minutes. “Daddy, can we play now?” “Not now, Bobby,” said the father. “Don’t bother me until I’m finished with my paper.” Bobby left the room again to wait. But before his father could even get to the sports pages, Bobby returned.

He stuck his head up under his father’s paper and said, “Daddy, can we please play now?” The father realizing he would never get a moment’s peace without giving in, looked on the floor and noticed that there was a full page map of the world included in his newspaper.

Bobby’s dad reached for the scissors on his desk and proceeded to cut the map into about twenty pieces. Leading his son to the kitchen table, he told Bobby to put together the puzzle of the world as the first of their afternoon games.

“When you finish the puzzle, then I’ll play with you,” the father promised. He knew it would take his son a long time to put the puzzle together, and that would give him plenty of time to read his paper. But not five minutes had passed when Bobby flew back into the room. “Daddy, I’m through with the puzzle! What can we play next?”

“What? You’re finished already?” asked the father. He got up from his chair and went into the kitchen to look. Sure enough, the puzzle was complete with every piece in its proper place. “Bobby, how did you ever do this so fast? Where did you learn how to do this?” asked the father in amazement. “It was easy, Daddy,” said Bobby. “You see, on the back of the map of the world was a picture of a man. I put the man together first, and, when I did that, the world seemed to fit right into place!”

### **The Application:**

Say: "When we put God first place in our lives, everything else in our world falls into its proper place, just like the little boy's puzzle."

Read Matthew 6:25, 31-32 to your family: *"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food or the body more important than clothes?...So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For even the pagans run after all these things, and your Heavenly Father knows that you need them."*

Say: "Jesus commanded us three times in Matthew 6:25-34 not to worry." Ask each family member to share what the things are that they worry about.

Say: "Jesus also asked the question in this passage, 'Why do you worry...?'" Ask your family to share why they believe they worry.

Next say: "Do you think that trusting God and believing Matthew 6:33 would help us not to worry as much?"

Encourage your family to memorize Matthew 6:33 together.

*Spend time as a family in discussion and prayer over your steps of commitment. When you have reached a decision as a family, please complete the commitment card and bring it with you on Sunday, October 14 or return it by mail to the church office.*

### **The Quote:**

"When you worry about what you don't have, you won't be able to enjoy what you do have." Charles Swindoll

### **The Prayer:**

*"Father, please show us ways to put you first in our lives and help us to trust You, and You alone, to meet our needs."*



*Here is the giving chart to assist you in calculating your giving.*

STEPS OF COMMITMENT			
Weekly	Monthly	Yearly	3-Year Total
\$6,410	\$27,777	\$333,333	\$1,000,000
\$5,000	\$21,666	\$260,000	\$780,000
\$2,000	\$8,666	\$104,000	\$312,000
\$1,500	\$6,500	\$78,000	\$234,000
\$1,000	\$4,333	\$52,000	\$156,000
\$750	\$3,250	\$39,000	\$117,000
\$500	\$2,166	\$26,000	\$78,000
\$250	\$1,083	\$13,000	\$39,000
\$100	\$433	\$5,200	\$15,600
\$75	\$325	\$3,900	\$11,700
\$50	\$216	\$2,600	\$7,800
\$40	\$173	\$2,080	\$6,240
\$30	\$130	\$1,560	\$4,680
\$20	\$86	\$1,040	\$3,120
\$10	\$43	\$520	\$1,560

*Your gift of ANY size makes a BIG difference!*

*“This commitment is not a contract, but a faith statement to God in obedience to how He has led you and/or your family. It is understood that your commitment may be adjusted up or down over the giving period as your financial situation changes.*

**3-Year Commitment** - Make a decision to give a specific amount weekly, monthly, quarterly, or annually over the next three years.

**One Time Cash Offering** - Make a decision to give a single contribution on Celebration Sunday, October 28.

**Gift of Assets** - Make a decision to give stocks, bonds, real estate, or other items of value.

**Estate Offering** - Make a decision to include River Oak Grace in your estate plan as a beneficiary.

## The Verse:

*Galatians 1:10 "Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ."*

## The Illustration:

An ancient story is told about a father and his son who were walking along a road one day with their donkey. Soon they met a man who told them how foolish they were to walk when they had a donkey that could be ridden. So the father and son hopped on the donkey's back.

They hadn't gone very far when another man criticized them both for riding on the donkey. He said they were too heavy for the donkey and were being inhumane; so the boy got off. It wasn't long before a third traveler accused the father of being inconsiderate because he made his son walk while he rode; so the father and the boy switched places.

Soon they met a fourth man who charged the boy with not being thoughtful of his father who was much older than he. When they were last seen, the father and son were trudging down the road carrying the donkey.

## The Application:

Say: "The temptation to please other people so they will like us is a battle that we all will fight for the rest of our lives. We must learn that the only acceptance and approval we need in this life are God's. If we belong to Him, then we already have been accepted by God because of what Jesus did on the cross for us. When we know that we are loved and accepted by God, we can trust Him more. The more we trust Him to meet our needs, the less the acceptance and approval of others will matter."

Ask your family members if they can think of a time when they tried to please people instead of pleasing God and what they learned from that experience.

## The Quote:

"Happiness is obedience to God." C. H. Spurgeon

## The Prayer:

*"Father, give us the desire to trust and obey you, regardless of what others think, and give us the grace to allow You to be the most influential thing in our lives."*



## The Verse:

*Hebrews 4:15-16: "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."*

## The Illustration:

There was a farmer who had a beautiful Golden Retriever named Cindy. She had a litter of puppies; and when they were old enough to be weaned, the farmer put a sign in his yard that said, "Puppies For Sale."

One day a little boy knocked on the farm house door and when the farmer opened the door the little boy said, "Hi Mister, I'd like to buy a puppy!" The farmer could see from the looks of the little boy that he was poor.

The farmer smiled and said to the boy, "Son, I'm afraid you couldn't afford one of my puppies. You see, their mother is a champion and the puppies are worth a lot of money." The little boy dug deep down in his pocket and pulled out some change. "I got twenty-five cents, Mister. Will that at least buy me a look?"

"Sure it will, Son." The farmer replied. So, he stepped down off the porch and led the little boy around back. Then the farmer whistled and called, "Here, Cindy." From a big dog house at the back of the yard, came running the most beautiful dog the little boy had ever seen, and right behind her came five adorable puppies.

The boy knelt down and squealed with delight as the puppies jumped all over him, licking his face. Then he looked up, and standing at the door of the dog house was another puppy who was much smaller than the rest.

When this puppy started down the ramp of the dog house, he just rolled head over heels onto the ground. The little puppy picked himself up and tried to run to join his brothers and sisters, but he stumbled a lot and ran sideways. As the puppy jumped into the little boy's arms, the child screamed, "This is the one I want, oh please, Mister, this is the one I want." "But son," the farmer said, "you don't want this puppy. You see, he is the runt of the litter and he will never be able to run and play with you like these others."

The little boy slowly stood up and pulled up the leg of his pants to reveal a brace on one of his legs. "See, Mister, I don't run so good either and I just thought he needed somebody who could understand."

## The Application:

Say: “The Bible tells us that Jesus came willingly to this earth to take on the handicaps of this life so that He could identify with our pain and understand our problems.”

Ask each family member if that fact makes it easier for them to trust God to meet their needs. Why, or why not?

## The Quote:

“Christ’s love is like a river that never stops flowing.” Jonathan Edwards

## The Prayer:

*“Father, we thank you for sending Jesus to earth, not just to be our Savior but to identify with all our hurts. Thank you that we can trust a Savior who understands, and cares about meeting all our needs.”*

