

**Friday: Remember...our actions matter**

**Read:** 2 Kings 17:21b-23a And Jeroboam drove Israel from following the LORD and made them commit great sin. <sup>22</sup> The people of Israel walked in all the sins that Jeroboam did. They did not depart from them, <sup>23</sup> until the LORD removed Israel out of his sight

<p><b>Reflect:</b> Here is a clear example of how the actions of parents matter. Jeroboam was the first king of Israel in the north (after the Israel-Judah division). He could have set a precedent of following YHWH. In fact, he was promised blessing if he was obedient to God (cf. 1Kgs11:31-39). Unfortunately he was not.</p> <p>Subsequently his son, Nadab (cf. 1Kgs15:25-26) followed in his evil footsteps. Unfortunately, all of the kings of Israel (though not all direct descendants of Jeroboam) were evil. Many were said to have walked directly in the sinful footsteps of Jeroboam (e.g., Baasha – 1Kgs15:33-34; Zimri – 1Kgs16:19; etc.). The picture is bleak when sin is modeled for others. Yet even though the picture is bleak, not all is lost.</p> <p>Even though Judah (Israel in the south) had evil kings, they also had kings who followed God. We learn how some kings followed God despite the evil influence of a parent (e.g., Hezekiah following Ahaz – cf. 2Kgs16:2-3,20ff; Josiah following Amon – cf. 2Kgs21:19-20ff). Our actions do matter...fortunately God’s grace matters more. Our children (and others) are not destined to follow in our sin. Praise God!!</p>	<p><b>Respond:</b> What actions in your life direct others toward God?</p> <p>Remember, if your sin starts to get you down, God’s grace is sufficient for you (cf. Ps103:8-13; Titus 2:11-15).</p> <p>Who has been a godly model in your life? Have you thanked them?</p>
<p><b>Pray:</b> Pray for King Solomon Christian Service Camp; a mission New Life supports. Thank God for His willingness, and ability, to forgive our sins. Pray for Bob Griffin and Larry Hayes, New Life’s elders; pray they will continue to faithfully follow God. Pray for protection from sin and strength during times of testing.</p>	

**Saturday: Remember...current circumstances are not final**

**Read:** 3 John 4 <sup>4</sup> I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.

<p><b>Reflect:</b> The apostle John was one of Jesus’ closest friends (cf. Jn13:23; 20:2; Mt17:1). Due to his closeness with Jesus while on earth, and his submissiveness to the Holy Spirit after the day of Pentecost, John grew to be a highly respected man in the early church.</p> <p>Here in 3 John, an elderly John writes to his “spiritual children” through the “beloved Gaius.” As an older man (with spiritual, not just chronological maturity) John says nothing could bring him greater joy than knowing those he has shared Jesus with, perhaps baptized, and likely taught, are living a life worthy of the gospel.</p> <p>Perhaps this can be a bit of an anchor for those of us with children. All of our children’s academic and athletic accomplishments (or “failures”), all the happiness they bring us by their silliness, all the help they may be around the house, <u>everything</u> should pale in comparison to knowing they are responding in appropriate ways to God’s love. Perhaps this can also get some of us through challenging times, like if they are not currently walking with the Lord. There is still hope. For sure this should give us direction when we consider what receives priority in our lives and those of whom we love.</p>	<p><b>Respond:</b> Were you ever not seeking God as a child or adult? If you are now it points to hope for anyone who may not be currently walking with God.</p> <p>What can you do today to prepare yourself for worship tomorrow at New Life’s building?</p> <p>Stop and realize God loves you.</p>
<p><b>Pray:</b> Pray for the National Missionary Convention; a mission New Life supports. Pray for Ed Asbury, Keith Krause, and Mike Haag, deacons at New Life; pray they continue to walk in God’s truth. Pray for our worship tomorrow at the Church Building. Thank God for the comfort we can receive in knowing our sins are forgiven.</p>	

**Oh to Be a Kid Again...**

**January 31 – February 6**

Virtually any stage of our life can teach us many valuable lessons. Take, for example, being a child.

Quite possibly you have very fond memories of being a child; memories of being loved, accepted, great friends, etc. In fact, your childhood may have been so wonderful you often find yourself longing for the ability to return to it. This obviously is intertwined with difficulties, one of which is the difficulty of impossibility. Another difficulty could be how, as an adult, you are not coping with life well and you want to “escape” to a simpler time.

- Much can be learned from those examples. Yet perhaps the most striking lesson to be learned is the need to be safe and secure. There is nothing wrong with wanting to trust everything will be OK.

Others may have had a very hard childhood. Perhaps you suffered abuse, or were neglected, or did not have many friends, etc. Perhaps you learned the world is a cruel place at a young, tender age.

- While certainly not the childhood any of us would want, valuable lessons can still be learned. Since the world around us is unstable, and can teach us cruel lessons, learning of our Heavenly Father’s unconditional love can be priceless.

A reality is most of us likely had a childhood somewhere in the middle of those two extremes. Not a storybook childhood...but not one out of a horror film either. Yet the lessons we learned (if we reflect and remember – especially with hindsight) are likely the same; feeling safe is a good thing – it is OK (even good) to trust, and the unconditional love of a Heavenly Father is priceless.

Speaking of trust, it is amazing how “good” children are at trusting. Even if a parent (inadvertently) harms a child, to whom does the child turn for comfort? Yep, to those they trust – their parents. It seems there is something ingrained in children leading them to trust.

- Jesus said something about the need to trust didn’t He? O yeah, if we do not turn and become like little children (and among other things trust) then we will not enter the kingdom of heaven (cf. Mt18).

Perhaps life is too complicated and overwhelming for us at times because we do not trust God enough. Now stop rationalizing with yourself. Is it at least possible we do not trust God enough?

I am not advocating we seek to live as children while being chronologically-aged adults. Yet I am advocating we can learn much from children and their ability, their willingness, to trust. Let’s face it; there will be times in our life when we will not have the answers. But we can trust God will be here for us, willing to help us. This does not mean we cease planning, or asking questions, or anything like that. Yet at the end of the day we must trust (which is another way of saying have faith).

Oh to be a kid again...at least in the ability to trust

**Monday: Remember...they will ask**

**Read:** Deuteronomy 6:20-21a <sup>20</sup> “When your son asks you in time to come, ‘What is the meaning of the testimonies and the statutes and the rules that the LORD our God has commanded you?’ <sup>21</sup> then you shall say to your son...

<p><b>Reflect:</b> I do not know how many times the average child (whatever that means) asks “why” in a given day. I saw one estimate of 525,600. This seems a bit excessive; especially since it equates to 6 times a second...if a child never ate or slept (i.e., was up all 24 hours and continually asked “why”). A study in the UK said 346. This still seems like a lot; about once every two minutes (if awake for 12 hours). Who really knows?</p> <p>The point is not how many times will a child ask “why” in a given day. The point is children <u>will</u> ask “why” in a given day, and experience dictates it will be multiple times. The reality of being asked “why” begs a question – are we ready to answer them?</p> <p>In the text above Moses directed the Hebrew people to recount for their children the marvelous working(s) of YHWH (the LORD). This is sound advice for us as well. Remember, there is no harm in asking why. Inquisitive minds are not bad – in fact encouraging them can be a good thing. Yet our answers must recall how God has acted first...</p>	<p><b>Respond:</b> Of the questions your children ask, how many are prompted by things you do since you are a Christian?</p> <p>If you do not have children, what type of questions would you want to be asked?</p> <p>When was the last time you shared your faith with your children (or someone else)? What prevents you from repeating it?</p>
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**Pray:** Pray for Ryan Nelson and “33 Church” in Olathe; he is the latest “church planter” hired by the CEA. Thank God for what your salvation means to you. Thank God for our time of worship together yesterday at the Church Building. Continue to pray for workers in God’s Kingdom (Mt9:36-38).

**Tuesday: Remember...make time**

**Read:** Matthew 19:13-15 <sup>13</sup> Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked the people, <sup>14</sup> but Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.”

<p><b>Reflect:</b> In Jesus’ day children were loved, but they were also socially powerless (e.g., no commercials targeting them for consumer loyalty) and totally dependent (e.g., even children today need their parent’s resources). So apparently what we have here is not the disciples despising children...if anything it seems they valued Jesus’ time.</p> <p>In the Old Testament, Elisha’s servant Gehazi sought to keep a powerless person seeking his master’s help (time) from taking his master’s time (cf. 2Kgs4:27). Interestingly, Gehazi’s greed later led to him being cursed with leprosy (2Kgs5:27). Granted, this curse came about as a result of greed – but greed can (and often does) reveal a condition of the heart.</p> <p>We must remember we need to make time to raise children in godly ways. We need to make time to answer them in ways which will broaden their perspective of God (cf. Monday). We need to make time to play with them. We need to make time to show a daughter how a godly man should treat her. We need to make time to show a son how a godly man treats women too. Who knows, we just may gain a better perspective on life as we do this.</p>	<p><b>Respond:</b> When was the last time you thanked teachers and Children’s Worship servants at New Life?</p> <p>Have you considered serving in our Children’s Ministry?</p> <p>Did anyone model (and tell) for you how to be a godly man/woman?</p>
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**Pray:** Pray for God to be at work at LCS, MCC, and OCC; missions we support. Pray for God to raise up servants for New Life. Pray for the parents of New Life – pray God grants them wisdom to raise their children in a godly way. Continue to pray for God’s people to have boldness to speak for Him (Acts4:29).

**Wednesday: Remember...Whom It is they should serve**

**Read:** 1 Samuel 1:10-11 <sup>10</sup> She was deeply distressed and prayed to the LORD and wept bitterly. <sup>11</sup> And she vowed a vow and said, “O LORD of hosts, if you will indeed look on the affliction of your servant and remember me and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a son, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and no razor shall touch his head.”

<p><b>Reflect:</b> Her name was Hannah; the son YHWH gave her was Samuel. Yet before we go too far let’s keep one thing in mind. This is a story about a specific event. I.e., it is not good Bible study (and it is dangerous) to say difficulty in conceiving today is God’s fault.</p> <p>However, we will note the sincerity of Hannah. Due to facing an extremely difficult situation (cf. 1Sam1:5) it seems she was forced to look at things differently. In spite of children being a natural outcome of human intercourse, they are a blessing from God (as are all good things). Hannah realized this (cf. today’s text), and in response gave her child to God in service (cf. 1Sam1:21ff). This is the best thing any parent can do (the safest place to be is in the middle of God’s Will).</p> <p>Do we have the strength to do that? Do we have the strength to let our children develop and serve God in the way(s) He desires (even if it means living far from home...or some other sacrifice)? I think asking if we have the strength is the wrong question. We need to ask if we trust God enough on this one...</p>	<p><b>Respond:</b> How do you pray for your children? Do you pray for them to know God’s unconditional love and in turn serve Him?</p> <p>If you want your child to be a “good kid” – Who are they going to have to love and serve? (Remember, all goodness has its source in God.)</p> <p>What if “church” baby showers spent half of the gathered time praying over and for the unborn child and parents?</p>
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**Pray:** Pray for Shiloh Home of Hope and Emporia Christian Schools. Pray for all the children who come to New Life to know God loves them and serve Him out of gratitude. Pray for your desire to serve God to increase. Continue to pray for God’s Word to spread rapidly (2Thess3:1).

**Thursday: Remember...our actions matter**

**Read:** Exodus 34:6-7 <sup>7</sup> keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation.”

<p><b>Reflect:</b> As we saw last week, this verse should not be taken as some sort of an arithmetic formula. It is better to take “third and fourth generation” as a Semitic phrase denoting continuity, not an equation to figure out how far a sin will persist (cf. Exod20:5 and the present “hate” of the generation which receives trouble).</p> <p>Yet even with the above fact, there is no denying the choices parents make deeply influence their children (e.g., the steadfast love for thousands). The choices parents make matter; children are watching (and let’s be honest, it is funny to see a child mimic a parent). Yet do not let that burden be overwhelming...</p> <p>The reality is the choices every Christian makes matter. We are always being watched. This does not mean we must be perfect (only God is), nor does it mean if we sin God no longer loves us (He loves sinners too). What it means is we need to continually seek to be led by, and submissive to, the Holy Spirit (e.g., Gal5:22-26).</p>	<p><b>Respond:</b> What good tendencies of yours do you see in your children? Which bad ones do you see?</p> <p>Take one fruit of the spirit (from Gal5) and pray for it to shape you today. Pick another for tomorrow.</p> <p>What was one good thing that happened to you today (or yesterday)? What is one bad thing? How can you respond to these in a godly way?</p>
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**Pray:** Pray for the ministry of Cookson Hills (a Christian Children’s home and mission New Life supports). Thank God for His grace. Pray for Brent McCrory, the preaching minister at New Life Christian Church; pray he will submit even more to God’s Holy Spirit. Continue to pray for open doors to share God’s Word (Col4:2-6).