

Family Chemistry

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PREFACE

What thoughts come to mind when you see the word Chemistry?

Many think back to their school days when they were doing science experiments. They remember combining substances to see what reaction would take place. Others may be more philosophical and imagine the emotional interaction between two people. Those in the sporting world may recall the valuable element of team chemistry.

Family Chemistry combines all of these definitions. It shows how the Chemistry concepts of bonded, combustion, radioactivity, and chain reaction correspond to a healthy family through loving well, responding well, rejecting evil, and loving righteousness.

Family Chemistry consists of four study guides for personal or group discussion and twenty-four devotions to help you grow in love, respect, appreciation, and communication within your family. Each lesson is accompanied with a science experiment that serves as an object lesson to convey an aspect of a healthy home.

01

BONDED

JAYSON COMBS,
FAMILY PASTOR



"Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind." 1 Peter 3:8

Bonded - The linkage or force holding two neighboring atoms of a molecule in place and resisting their separation, usually accomplished by the transfer or sharing of one or more electrons or pairs of electrons between the atoms *(dictionary.com).*

Do any of you 80's kids remember the Crazy Glue commercial? It was the commercial where they would glue a man's construction hat to a metal beam, and he would hang from it. They were trying to sell that their glue had the best bond. Every time I do premarital counseling I tell a story about two pieces of wood being bonded together. It was told to me as a young married man, and I have never forgotten it. Think about taking two pieces of wood and gluing them together with something like Crazy Glue. If you were to let the glue set and bond, what would happen if you would try to pull those pieces of wood apart? You would get a mess. Some parts would stick together while others would fracture and break into pieces. When we talk about bonding today, we are going to talk about those things in the family that God brings together. Taking those things apart will never be an even or clean break.

Have you ever had a glue mishap?

_____

_____

_____

Here are a few verses where God talks about strong bonds.

"And said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'?" Matthew 19:5

"Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, 'The two will become one flesh.'" 1 Corinthians 6:16

"Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." Genesis 2:24

What does this say about the bonds of marriage? What do you think it means to become one?

_____

_____

_____

"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one." John 10:27-30

What does this say about the bond in our relationship with Christ?

_____

_____

_____

"I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit - just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call - one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all." Ephesians 4:1-6

Who do you think Paul is addressing here? What do you think it means to eagerly fight for unity and the bond of peace?

_____

_____

_____

How do you think this applies to you in your family?

_____

_____

_____

"And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony." Colossians 3:14

What does Colossians say binds things together? How would you define that word?

_____

_____

_____

How can you work on your bonds in marriage? As a parent? As a son or daughter?

_____

_____

_____

What is making that difficult?

_____

_____

_____

A few years ago a cartoon movie came out called *"How to Train Your Dragon."* The movies set up where Vikings have lived their lives to

fight off dragons. If you are a Viking, you hate dragons and dragons hate you. One of the Vikings (Hiccup) finds a hurt dragon and begins to train it. He realizes that the relationship between the Vikings and dragons has been looked at the wrong way. Hiccup brings this up to his father, who is the king of the village. When Hiccup's father realizes that Hiccup cares for the dragons he makes a crazy awful statement. He tells Hiccup, "You are no longer my son." Wow. To say something like that is to tear at a bond. For me, it reminds me of couples who allow the word divorce to be thrown around. It is an awful saying that wants to tear apart a bond that God has brought together.

Why is being careful with our words so important when it comes to the bonds of family?

_____

_____

_____

"Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind." 1 Peter 3:8

What must we strive for in our family if our bonds of family are to be strengthened?

_____

_____

_____

What do each of these things look like in your family setting?

Unity of Mind (To work together even in the midst of diversity) Ephesians 4:3

_____

_____

Sympathy (To love in both joys and trials) Romans 12:15

_____

_____

Brotherly Love (To love like the bonds of a family) Romans 12:10

_____

_____

Tender Heart (To show compassion) Ephesians 4:32

_____

_____

Humble Mind (To put others first) Ephesians 4:2

_____

_____

What is your biggest struggle with these?

_____

_____

_____

I hope you read this lesson and it urges you to fight for your family. I challenge you, “To eagerly fight for the unity of faith and the bonds of peace.”

BONDING EXPERIMENT



Names of Scientists: _____

Materials Needed

¾ cup of warm water
1 cup of glue
A large bowl
A cup
An additional ½ cup of warm water
2 tsp borax
A spoon

STEP 1 • PURPOSE:

What are the goals of this experiment?
The goal of the project is to demonstrate the power of bonding and how these reactions relate to family.

STEP 2 • HYPOTHESIS (testable prediction):

If… then… statement below.
If I mix water, borax, and glue together, then the mixture will

_____
_____
_____

STEP 3 • EXPERIMENT:

Do a test to confirm or disprove your hypothesis.
1. Pour the ½ cup of warm water into a cup and stir in 2 tsp of borax.
2. Pour ¾ cup of warm water into a separate cup with the 1 cup of glue and stir.
3. After stirring for a minute start pouring in the borax and water solution while still stirring.
4. Continue stirring until the solution is solid.

STEP 4 • OBSERVATION:

Record what you see.

Before: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

During: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

After: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Our first experiment during the family month is going to help your family understand how we are going to bond through this experience.

Read I Peter 3:8 as a family, ***"Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind."***

Talk about these qualities that are listed.

Unity of Mind - (To work together even in the midst of diversity) Ephesians 4:3

Sympathy - (To love in both joys and trials) Romans 12:15

Brotherly Love - (To love like the bonds of the family) Romans 12:10

Tender Heart - (To show compassion) Ephesians 4:32

Humble Mind - (To put others first) Ephesians 4:2

Now, take out the ingredients needed for your first family experiment.

The large bowl will once again represent your home. The spoon represents the Word of God. It is so important to center your family around God's Word. It is the very thing in which God communicates to us. The ½ cup of water and borax represents mom and dad (have fun with who is the borax). The rest of the ingredients are the kids. Now, pour the ½ cup of warm water and the two tsp of borax into the cup and stir them together. Tell your kids this represents the union God has blessed you and mom. Take time to tell your children things that made mom and dad want to get married. Tell them how you met. Tell them what your first impression was of each other. Tell them how long have you been married.

Next, add the glue and ¾ cup of water into the bowl and stir for a minute. You could continue to ask your kids what their favorite things about mom and dad are while you stir. Once it is stirred, pour the cup of water and borax into the bowl. Now all the ingredients are in the "home." Explain to your children that this represents when everyone in your family comes together. It is like you are now and when you read God's Word. It stirs your soul. It brings the family closer together and allows you to have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. God's Word is the spoon. It bonds us together. Stop stirring and show them that all of the individual liquids have bonded together and became solid.

Read Ephesians 4:1-6 together, ***"I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."***

Say to your family, "If we want to have a solid family, we will walk in a manner worthy of our calling as a family. We must take on the character traits God lays before us in His Word. We must come together and read that Word. His Word is the only thing that makes us bond, become stronger, and become solid." Now pray with your family.

UNITY

BONDED, DEVOTION 1

Mark O'Connor | Student Director

Have you ever disagreed with someone who is very close to you? Chances are yes. Do you let those hang out there for awhile or do you address them quickly?

If you pay close attention to my wife and me, you will have a hard time ever seeing more than a moment of annoyance on either of our faces that is as a result of either one of us. That does not mean you will not see moments of annoyance on my face, seeing as I have three kids in their teens at the time of this writing. Oh, and there is the little fact that I work with the teens in this church.

That also does not mean that we agree on everything all the time. We have our differences of opinion. But we always rally around Jesus. We do the same thing with our children. We mess up as parents; they make mistakes as kids. At the end of the day though, we know that if we are not together in unity as man and wife, we cannot be together as a family. We are warned of this in 1 Peter. We are warned to be like-minded.

Ephesians 6:4 tells us not to provoke anger, ***"Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."*** Psalm chapter 133 verse 1 tells us how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity, ***"Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!"***

Unity in the home creates peace. Unity in Christ in the home creates peace and purpose. When the whole family is in on the same cause, to glorify God, it is a beautiful thing to witness and live.

Parents: stay together. Do not let disagreements or differences in personality hang out there and let them cause long-lasting strife and division between you. The same goes for your kids. Sure, they are going to do things that annoy and anger you. Talk to them. Let them talk to you without you showing anger. Practice showing each other just a little bit of the grace that Jesus has shown us.

Kids: Believe it or not, whether they are using the best tactics or not, they do want the best for you. Practice patience and use them to help you navigate this world in which you live. I tell my kids all the time, do not be like your mother and me, we want you to be better. Use Jesus as the bar you set for yourself.

Unity in the family starts with being rooted and united in the cause of Christ and nowhere else.

SYMPATHY

BONDED, DEVOTION 2

Michelle Moshier | Nursery & Pre-K Director

We are called to be sympathetic and Christ-like. When I hear the word sympathy, I think of Jesus and how He could sympathize with everyone and everything because He had encountered the worst pain and heartache. As children of God, we are called to do the same.

"Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind." 1 Peter 3:8

Webster's Dictionary defines the word sympathy as:
1. feelings of pity and sorrow for someone else's misfortune.
2. understanding between people; common feeling.

This can come in many scenarios for families, but for me, it comes in the form of pain and heartache. I think about my family who is very broken and has not yet found the love of Jesus. I grew up in a home where many of my family members struggled with addictions to drugs and alcohol abuse. I had to go through the experience of neglect from both of my parents and my older brother with whom I still to this day have no relationship because he is immersed in alcoholism. I do not believe there is such a thing as a perfect family dynamic out there. Even now into my adult life, I feel my family believes the pain is just beyond what Jesus can heal. The truth is, I have been there in the very pits of despair. I felt like I was never good enough for anyone. I felt like I was not a good enough mother to my four growing boys, or wife to my husband. I even felt that even God Himself would not want to call me a child of His kingdom. I felt like I would never have a relationship that truly reflected love because I did not know what that

was. However, I can have the mercy and forgiveness for my family, because I had it modeled to me when He forgave me. I can pray daily for each of them and show them Jesus through my actions and testimony. Most of us share this common feeling.

Psalm 40:2 says, ***"He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure."*** Sympathy is not just offering some advice or helping with a temporary fix. Sympathy is feeling and sharing the pain of others and is a close friend of compassion.

Matthew 14:14 adds, ***"When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick."*** God deeply cares about people; this is a theme that is seen all through the Bible.

Let me ask you something. Have you had that moment where you went to show someone in your family a sympathetic gesture and missed the opportunity because you were worried about being judged or looking like the judge? Overcome that fear and know that any gesture you show is out of love and compassion from one human being to another.

We need to face it; none of us are sinless. We are maturing as believers and want to pursue the attitude of Christ-likeness.

TENDER HEART

BONDED, DEVOTION 3

James Clouse | Student Pastor

To be tender-hearted means to be "easily moved to love, pity, or sorrow" according to Merriam-Webster's dictionary. Why is this a must within a family? Is being moved to sorrow or pity a good thing within our family? I want to look at this in two different ways.

I was reading an article by John Piper that talked about being tender-hearted; he mentioned praying for tender-heartedness as well as being firm and resilient. I believe that both of these things are important when it comes to a family. This can be seen in the story of Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve both sinned in front of God. God had a tender heart and spared them their lives yet still punished them for their transgressions.

How can we have this same balance in our homes? How can we show a tender heart to our spouse and children and yet still make sure that we are firm and resilient when we need to be?

Ephesians 4:31-32 says, ***"Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you."***

As a family, we cannot let the sin of bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, or slander poison our homes. Malice can cause friction within the home that not many things can heal other than the love of Christ. By being tender-hearted in our home, we are showing that we are allowing Christ to change the hearts of our homes.

It is easy to love our children. But is it always easy to love them when they are not listening? When your teenager does not listen to your advice on friends or relationships, is it easy to feel pity for them when things go wrong? No. But when we are allowing Christ to change our hearts, then those things become easier. Remember that God first forgave and had pity and sorrow for us and it becomes easier to provide that same thing for our family.

In saying all of this, I do believe that we also need to show firmness and resiliency in our homes. I believe that our culture sometimes shows too much tender-heartedness and not enough firmness. When our kids or students are misbehaving or not listening it can be easy to be manipulated into showing too much mercy without accountability. This can lead to enabling. We have to remember that while God was tender-hearted with Adam and Eve, they did not go without their punishment. But the key to doing this is doing it in love. Do not show wrath in your punishment. Do not let bitterness eat away at your relationships. God was still with Adam and Eve outside of the garden even in their punishment.

HUMBLE MIND

BONDED, DEVOTION 4

Kyle Wendel | Children's & Student Director

"Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind." 1 Peter 3:8

Humble: having or showing a modest or low estimate of one's importance.

Humility is something that is a very close subject for me. Pride and humility go against each other completely. Being humble means to put yourself under or below others and to make others more important.

When I came out of High School, I knew I wanted to go into youth ministry. I could feel God calling me to it, and I could not get away from it. Ministry was not something I saw myself ever doing. I am a pretty quiet and shy guy. Also, I hated public speaking. So in ministry, you kind of need to be someone that can talk with others and to be able to speak to a crowd. That was the complete opposite of what I was. So as I felt God's calling to it, I laughed. But after months of prayer, I knew that is what He wanted. My thought was that I would get to go into ministry right away. God had some different plans for me.

For the first three years of my time on staff here at The River, I was a maintenance guy. I went from thinking I was going straight to youth director to cleaning toilets. At the time I thought it was awful, but today I can tell you it was the best thing for me. God knew I was not ready for leading just yet. Being the maintenance guy taught me a lot of things. First off, it taught me I needed to be willing to do anything

for the Lord. Cleaning toilets was serving Him and taught me that to be the leader, I needed to be able to do the lowly items. Second, I was able to see behind the scenes of ministry. I saw all the cleanup and set up that people do not notice or realize. I learned many more things, but most importantly I learned to be a servant no matter what the circumstance is.

We see this same attitude with Jesus. In all ways, Jesus humbled Himself and had a humble mind. Jesus could have easily come to Earth and told everyone to worship Him as a king here on Earth. But instead, we see that Jesus came and humbled Himself to human form. We also see in John chapter 13 that Jesus washed His disciples' feet. That was something that was for the lowest servant of the house. Feet back then were disgusting. They did not have the roads and such that we have now. Roads were dirty, and feet were gross. Jesus, of all people, showed humility to the point of washing His own disciples' feet. If that is not humility, I do not know what is.

Matthew 20:28 (NIV) says, ***"Even as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many."***

Jesus came as the Son of God to serve His people. Nowhere do you see in history kings serving their people as Jesus did. Ultimately, Jesus served us by giving up His life on the cross to save us from our sins. He put us before Himself. He humbled Himself even to the point of death on a cross. That is what our example is. Jesus shows us that if we want to serve God that we need to be willing to do anything for Him. Washing feet, cleaning toilets, chair setup, teaching, and preaching are all things that glorify God. We need all of those things to work.

What are some ways you can work on being more humble?

BROTHERLY LOVE

BONDED, DEVOTION 5

Max Sinclair | Children's Director

Brotherly love is a term to talk about a love for humanity and compassion for your fellow man. Most would say that brotherly love in a family is always present, that it is never absent, but I can tell you first hand that it is not. My father's side of the family is that part of the family that most in the church probably do not want to talk about or meet. Most are alcoholics, a few believe, but they are those Christmas and Easter Christians. Growing up my Dad would take us to a few things here and there, but mostly we stayed in Michigan away from the house my dad grew up in Wisconsin. Around October of 2013, I got a phone call from my dad saying that his dad had passed away and the funeral was later that week. Now, I adored my grandfather; he was a smart, diligent, good man who worked hard. When I heard the news, I was broken but held myself together. I got on a plane meeting my parents and sister in Chicago where we drove up to the Green Bay area. As we arrived, I remember that the drinking had already started, my father was angry to be around them, he did not care for this behavior and tried for most of my life to protect my sister and me from it, but as the funeral ended, my father in anger cut his family out of his life. This affected not just them but my view of them. Now I am trying to reach back out, to try to re-establish that lost connection, but it is something that is so very difficult to do.

Brotherly love in a family is what holds us together; it is what keeps us together. We see today so many broken families, and broken homes because we can not see the sanctity of brotherly love, yet brotherly love is not something easy. As I was studying for this lesson, I kept finding myself remembering an old sermon by Pastor Jim Combs. His message was that a sword from a brother is hard to take and that at

certain times advice and love from your family is not always what you want to hear. We can see this story played out in 1 Samuel 20:14-15 (CSB) where David, who was not yet king, made a covenant with his predecessor's son, Jonathan. Even though they were not family, the Bible tells us that they loved each other as they loved themselves.

They loved each other so much that when God's hand had departed from Saul and came upon David, they still maintained their love and devotion to each other. ***"If I continue to live show me kindness from the LORD, but if I die, don't ever withdraw your kindness from my household-not even when the lord cuts off every one of David's enemies from the face of the earth."*** This act of brotherly love is significant because at this time when a new king came to power they would usually kill off all political rivals so that they could consolidate power. Instead of killing Jonathan, David acted with love to his brother and spared him and his house. Saul would later die at the hands of the Philistines along with his son, Jonathan. Mephibosheth, Jonathan's son, would come to live in David's house, eat from his table, and be given high honor in the house of David. This is something that we need to exercise in our families today. We need to start looking to help out our family, extend that brotherly love to create a united front from the evil that tries to assail the family every day.

GOSPEL

BONDED, DEVOTION 6

Tommy Youngquist | Children's Pastor

Why have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind? It is because family life is better when everyone is practicing those character traits! But, is there a bigger reason? Dad, what if there is a more powerful reason you are to treat your children with those qualities? Wife, what if there is a reason you are to hold to these values that is far greater than the well-being of your marriage? What if that reason is the Gospel? What if it is all about Jesus? Is our existence here on earth basically about Jesus or us? In other words, do I hold to those characteristics in my family life because it is what I must do or about what He has done?

Jesus bled, died, was buried, and rose again for you, me, and all of humanity. WOAH! Let that sentence marinate for a minute. Remind yourself that because of that, you can live life here on earth abundantly and then live life eternally afterward. Remember the Gospel. Personally, I am so grateful. Because of the Gospel, I get the opportunity to be a husband and a father. That is the base motivation for everything. Showing our family who Jesus is, is the reason we take on those character traits Paul talks about in 1 Peter 3:8.

We strive to create unity within our family because Jesus created a way to have unity within the church. We have sympathy for our family members because Jesus sympathized (and when He lived here, truly empathized) with us. We love each other because He first loved us. We keep our hearts tender toward our spouse and children because Jesus' heart is unconditionally tender towards all people. We set our pride aside for the betterment of our families because Jesus humbled Himself for our future. Do you see why Jesus needs to be the base motive for everything we do?

It is my prayer for your family that the Gospel is why you do what you do. When we finally realize that Jesus is the reason for everything, we begin to love as He loved. We start to show our families, instead of just say, who Jesus is. They, in turn, will start to do the same.

02

COMBUSTION

JAYSON COMBS,
FAMILY PASTOR



"Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing. For 'Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit.'" 1 Peter 3:9-10

Combustion - A chemical change, especially through the rapid combination of a substance with oxygen, producing heat and, usually, light *(dictionary.com).*

This is one of those stories I hesitate to put in writing. The statute of limitations should have expired, so I should be okay. My high school days were spent in the wonderful town of Pigeon, Michigan. Its a little town of 1200 people in the thumb of Michigan. It is a wonderful farming community. My father was a pastor of a small church on the corner of a cornfield. One of the drawbacks though was that there was not much going on for a high school student. So my friends and I had to make up games to have fun. We had our crazy cruise routes that we would take through town. We made up car games which included throwing tennis balls at each other (that may have been a little dangerous). One of our crazy adventures was blowing things up. We would drive down a random abandoned dirt road and take out a propane tank, light it on fire, and then shoot it with a 22 rifle. Yes, we stood back a few feet, but it was a crazy explosion. I am not sure what is so fascinating about this fireball rising in the air, but it was something that we thought was pretty amazing.

Are there specific topics that seem to get you to explode quickly? Why do you think that is?

_____

_____

_____

How do you explode when anger gets the best of you? Do you yell and battle until you get your way, give up and give in to whatever, or clam up and just walk away?

_____

_____

_____

What do you think causes you to respond poorly when you become angry?

_____

_____

_____

Last week we studied I Peter 3:8, this week we will look at verses 9 and 10 in the same passage. ***"Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing. For 'Whoever desires to love life and see good days let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit.'"*** 1 Peter 3:8-9

What do you believe the difference is between evil and reviling/ insults?

_____

_____

_____

What makes it difficult for you to respond correctly in these situations?

_____

_____

_____

According to verses 9-10, what should those do who want to ***"love life and see good days?"***

_____

_____

_____

"Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." Ephesians 6:4

Are there ways that you are the one who provokes people in your family to anger? If so, how?

_____

_____

_____

Do you ever feel that you are the one giving the insults? Or giving into evil?

_____

_____

_____

As a parent, I can remember times where I have allowed anger to get the best of me. I recently remember thunderously yelling at my son. I just stopped bellowing and started thinking to myself, "Did I really just yell that loud?" I do not even remember why he was in trouble; I just remember being convicted that instead of disciplining and discipling my son well, I let anger take over words, tone, and expression. I am not one who says to never raise your voice with your children, but I was guilty of raising my voice in anger. I needed to go and ask my son for forgiveness because I had let other things throughout the day influence the way that I was treating him. Hebrews 12:15 says, ***"See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no 'root of bitterness' springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled."***

I realized that I had let things from the day take root in my life and it caused me to be defiled. I had allowed those things to take me to sin. Do you every struggle with this?

_____

_____

_____

"When words are many, transgression is not lacking, but whoever restrains his lips is prudent." Proverbs 10:19

"Whoever restrains his words has knowledge, and he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding." Proverbs 17:27

"Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who has a hasty temper exalts folly." Proverbs 14:29

What do these verses tell us about our words?

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James 1:19-21 is an amazing passage of the scripture that helps me when dealing with anger: ***"Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls."***

In dealing with anger it says, ***"Put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness."*** What do you think that means?

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It says the implanted Word is able to save your soul? What does it mean?

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What are areas in your family where you can learn to respond better? What are some things that you have done to help you get better at this?

_____

_____

_____

THE RISING WATER EXPERIMENT



Names of Scientists: _____

Materials Needed

A shallow bowl or dish
A candle
Water
Food Coloring
Lighter
A glass jar

STEP 1 • PURPOSE:

What are the goals of this experiment?

The goal of the project is to demonstrate the power of combustion and how these reactions relate to family.

STEP 2 • HYPOTHESIS (testable prediction):

If… then… statement below.

If I cover the candle with the jar, then the water will _____

_____

_____

_____

STEP 3 • EXPERIMENT:

Do a test to confirm or disprove your hypothesis.

1. Add food coloring to the water. (This makes it easier to see).
2. Pour about a half inch of water onto the plate.
3. Set the candle straight up on the plate and light it.
4. Put the jar over the candle.

STEP 4 • OBSERVATION:

Record what you see.

Before: _____

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During: _____

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After: _____

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This week, gather your family together for another experiment. Do your best to be pumped about it. The more pumped you are, the more your family will be, too. Explain to them what combustion is. Combustion is a chemical change, especially through the rapid combination of a substance with oxygen, producing heat and, usually, light *(dictionary.com)*.

Now read I Peter 3:9-10 with your family, ***"Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing. For 'Whoever desires to love life and see good days let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit.'"***

Explain to them that God's Word says we need to respond well to each other in the way we speak. It is so important to keep our words in check. Our words can be extremely hurtful if we do not watch it.

Now do the "The Rising Water" experiment with everyone watching. Bring out the items and set them on the table. Take a piece of masking tape and place it on all the items and label each of the items. Each item in the experiment represents something:

Shallow bowl or dish - Your home
Candle - God
Water - Life within the home
Food coloring - Just a visual so you can see the water more clearly
Lighter - The power of God in your home
Glass jar - Kind words to each other

First, tell them that the dish represents your home. Ask them if they want their home to be awesome and honoring God? Of course (we hope), they will say YES! Now pour some water into the dish and pour some food coloring in the water. This colored water will represent life

in your home. Like our verse said, whoever desires to love life and see good days will control their tongue. Because I mean, what is a home if it does not have a vibrant life in it? Now place the candle in the center of the dish filled with colored water and light the flame. Next, explain to your family that the candle is God. God should be at the center of our lives in everything we do. When you light the flame, tell them this represents the power of God when He is at the center of the home. Now here is where the good stuff happens. Grab the glass jar and tell your family, "When we say kind words to each other and treat others with respect it does something to our lives. Through the power of God, our kind words will build each other up and raise our quality of life." Now place the jar over the candle. Watch as the water will be drawn into the glass jar and raise the water.

Now read James 1:19-21 together. You could even have one of the kids read it out loud. ***"Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls."***

Have your family make a commitment to God and each other to build each other up with their words. Ask them to be quick to hear and slow to anger. Now, pray with them.

EVIL FOR EVIL

COMBUSTION, DEVOTION 1

Katrina Young | Nursery & Pre-K Director

"Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing." 1 Peter 3:9

I think my siblings would agree that the only form of communication that we knew growing up was to argue. It is hard to admit, but in a dysfunctional family we did not even recognize it was wrong; it was our way of life! We had more heated exchanges and explosive arguments than I care to remember. Honestly, I do not even remember the cause or the reason for any of them, only that in the end someone was hurt. Thankfully those were my BC (before Christ) days and I vowed to break the mold and never conform to that means of communication again - and then my boys became teenagers! Those of you who have gone through these years with your children can relate to the explosive nature of their personalities and emotions. A simple conversation can lead to a misunderstanding and flip on you in a heartbeat. My son reminds me often of something that he believes I said in the midst of one of those disagreements. It is something I have no memory of, "but he does," and it hurt him deeply! A discussion gave way to an emotional disagreement; an exchange of words that resulted in "COMBUSTION!"

In scientific terms, Combustion reactions always involve molecular oxygen O2. Anytime anything burns (in the usual sense), it is a "combustion reaction." Combustion reactions are almost always exothermic (they give off heat). We all know that oxygen feeds a fire. When we exchange words, or "evil" for "evil," we are breathing life into smoldering emotions. The verse in 1 Peter says very clearly that

we are not to exchange evil for evil, but on the contrary, ***"Bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing."***

The chemistry that makes us who we are as a family is also what makes us so enticing to the enemy. He would like nothing better than to create division and pain between the ones that we love the most. Our words can build up and bless or can be harsh and bring tension and separation. Proverbs 18:21 teaches us, ***"Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit."***

With the power of our words, we can ***"Bless."*** Proverbs 15:4 says, ***"Gentle words bring life and health; a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit."*** I believe the conversation I had with my son years ago crushed his spirit. I am thankful for forgiveness and the love we have, but I will forever regret falling into the trap of exchanging words resulting in a memory of pain for him rather than a memory of a blessing.

"Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger." James 1:19

REVILING FOR REVILING

COMBUSTION, DEVOTION 2

James Mann | Children's Director

Dictionary.com defines revile: "to assail with contemptuous or opprobrious language; address or speak abusively." The sad truth about our society is that we live in a world where verbal abuse is everywhere. It is at school, work, and even at home. Studies tell us that for many children, their first bully was one of their parents. This is the honest to God sad truth. I see this all the time in my position. Then, once they get older, parents get mad at their children for doing this to other children, that the parent was doing to their child just the previous night. God created parents to guide and love their children. The family is like a team. We are supposed to be working together. The Bible even goes far enough to say, ***"Anyone who does not provide for their relatives, and especially for their own household, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever"*** (1 Timothy 5:8).

I see parents demanding respect from their children, but they are saying such harsh and uncalled for things. Children look to their parents for spiritual guidance. If a parent is talking about how amazing God is in one sentence and the following sentence tells their child how worthless they are, do you think they will want to follow Christ when they get older? Proverbs 22:6 says, ***"Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it."*** I truly believe that part of the reason we see a huge drop off rate in people following Jesus right after high school comes down to the parenting that was done before that point. If we are showing our children the true love of God through our speech, that child will want to grow closer to God in years to come.

"The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord: but the words of the pure are pleasant words" Proverbs 15:26.

As believers, everything we say should be pointing directly to our Lord. I believe that there is no such thing as a list of "bad words." That is a general list created by society throughout time to try and guide children verbally. The truth is that anything we say that is not pleasant to God is a "bad word." If we cannot say these things to God directly, then we should not be saying them to anyone at all, especially our family. If we do not stay strong together as a family, our household will crumble to the enemy. All our enemy needs is one crack in the foundation to take control. The things we say to one another out of anger creates these tiny cracks. They keep building up and building up until there is a hole large enough to take down the entire house. I urge families to consider what they are saying to their children and to think about the impact they are creating in their lives. Make sure the impact is positive and points your children towards a life of loving and honoring God.

BLESS

COMBUSTION, DEVOTION 3

Danielle Hardenburg | Nursery & Pre-K Director

"Do not repay evil with evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing." 1 Peter 3:9

Wait for a second, what? Bless people who have hurt me? Bless people who have betrayed someone in my family or my circle? Bless someone even when the cost can equal more stress or hurt? Oh, ouch. That is not easy. Okay, it takes a serious heart-check here. I admit that is not the first thought flying through my mind at that moment or often well after that moment has even passed. I think we can agree blessing someone who has caused us pain and heartache can be flat tough and appear impossible or overwhelming. We need to get real honest. Sometimes I feel I do not even bless the amazing people God placed in my life enough, let alone my efforts to bless the ones who have let me down. But yes, it is a heart check!

Christine Caine shares in her devotional book, *Unshakeable*, about her painful childhood and how the Lord shaped and healed her heart piece by piece. She writes, "Defense mechanisms can be great, if they're serving a purpose. You duck and cover when something comes flying at you. But spiritually, defense mechanisms can be a problem." Whether your response is fight or flight at that moment or reviewing and calculating your plan afterward, we have to check our hearts. Yes, we have to be safe and guard our families, but also God has called you and me to be a blessing to others. The Bible does not say just to bless those who have blessed you. It says, ***"Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you"*** (Matthew 5:44). Why in the world should we live this way?

Check out these verses from Romans chapter 5. ***"For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person-though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die- but God shows his love for us in that while were still sinners, Christ died for us… For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life."***

If you know who Jesus is and your heart has been reconciled to God, then you have the understanding of a gift given that was not deserved or earned. The Bible says while in our sin we were enemies of God, yet His perfect and sinless Son redeemed us in spite of our vast intransigent flaws and separation. We have been blessed and not repaid equally for what we deserve. Who else is overjoyed that grace is not earned or given tit for tat? If you have not accepted this gift of grace and reconciliation, please know He is there for you no matter where you are. Because Jesus gives us this ultimate gift of grace, we are called to do the same for others. This is not an easy thing, but when you grasp what Jesus has done for each of us, this is how we are called to live.

Caine writes an illustration at the end of her devotional about what the transformation can look like when we choose to bless instead of repaying. She shows how over time we can transform our hearts with God's help and even become blessed right back in return.

"And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh." Ezekiel 36:26

"This divine exchange may begin quite subtly. But over time you will see transformations like these:

- Hurt people hurt people, *but helped people help people.*
- Broken people break people, *but rebuilt people build people.*
- Damaged people damage people, *but loved people love people.*
- Wounded people wound people, *but healed people bind up wounds.*
- Bound people bind people, *but freed people lead others to freedom."*

Friend, I challenge you today to check your heart. Pray for His Holy Spirit to help you lift up those who may be the very hardest for you to pray. I truly have found in my own life that when it is the hardest to pray, or worship, or fall to my knees, that is when I need to do it the most.

KEEP YOUR TONGUE FROM EVIL

COMBUSTION, DEVOTION 4

Mark O'Connor | Student Director

"There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing." Proverbs 12:18

Oh, let us count the ways that our tongue causes us to do evil! It is always amazing to me how little control students have of their words. It is even more amazing how little control adults have of their words. Not only does it amaze me, but it also annoys me in a way that few other things do.

I can remember times when in stores, public places, and even in the church where a parent says downright degrading things to their child. At the same time, I watch students do the same thing to or towards their parents, their peers, and any adult in general.

We see in our culture today, a mindset to speak first, get your feelings and your opinion out there, and have no regard for who it affects and how. We live in a share before you read, copy and paste society. Our kids, whether they are yours or not, are learning from watching how we react and then how we speak. When kids are watching their parent do nothing but rant and complain, they will naturally do the same thing.

I am a naturally very sarcastic person, as is my wife. Actually, both sides of the O'Connor and Meyecic clan excel at sarcasm. We saw fairly early on the effect that this had on our kids and the way they interact with others. This is something I have had to stay very focused on in dealing with both adults, my kids, and the students in the church.

It is imperative that we learn to control our tongue in our homes and within our families. It does not mean we are perfect. I am certainly guilty of speaking before I think. It is something that I work very hard to control and keep in check. James tells us this:

"So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire!" James 3:5

Left unchecked, our word can burn our worlds to the ground, even worse, it will burn our kid's world to the ground. It is our responsibility to tame that fire. It takes very little to shift those words from a fire, tearing things down, to a place of edification. We can lift up those around us. We need to be an encouragement to our spouses, lift our kids up to the Lord, and spur them on to do incredible things in the name of Christ rather than tether them down.

So the next time we start to react to a social situation, and most importantly our family, let us stop and consider what we are going to say. Let our words glorify Jesus and not tear others down.

KEEP YOUR LIPS FROM SPEAKING DECEIT

COMBUSTION, DEVOTION 5

Michelle Moshier | Nursery & Pre-K Director

"Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing. For 'Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.'" 1 Peter 3:8-12

Anyone remember that old saying "sticks and stones can break my bones, but words will never hurt me?" I said it constantly throughout grade school. I am sure many of us find that to be an untrue statement including myself. Our words have power and can instantly demolish someone's spirit. Peter says if we desire to love life and see good days, we must keep our lips from speaking deceit. The word deceit is the act of representing as true what is known to be false; a deceiving or lying, a dishonest action or trick; fraud or lie. Many women fall into the trap of gossip, especially with other women. I have teenagers who can be dishonest at times and speak harsh words directly to another sibling. These are fair examples of deceit. Deceit is very destructive and can cause an immense amount of pain to another.

Proverbs 16:28 says, ***"A dishonest man spreads strife, and a whisperer separates close friends."*** Speaking deceit is the opposite of what we are to be to one another. ***"Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is***

helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen" (Ephesians 4:29 NIV).

"The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell." James 3:6 NIV

When I was growing up I had to witness this between my parents who would verbally abuse one another, so it felt like second nature to fight just like them in my marriage. This is something I struggled with for many years. I never thought I would be able to tame my tongue. I would fight with the most hurtful words and wait to see the impact my words could have. I had to be sure "I had won."

"Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing." 1 Peter 3:9

The good news is there is hope! The Bible tells us that with the help of the Holy Spirit we can have power and control over our tongue.

GOSPEL

COMBUSTION, DEVOTION 6

Ryan Story | Student Pastor

The definition in chemistry terms for combustion is "rapid chemical combination of a substance with oxygen, involving the production of heat and light." Just reading that takes me back to the horrors of my high school chemistry class. After reading that definition over and over again, I started to see combustion in a very interesting biblical way.

There are certain steps of combustion.

1. Rapid Chemical Combination

For combustion to happen there has to be elements that will change. The reality is Jesus is in the life-changing business. Anyone who has had their life rescued knows what this "rapid change" looks like. Ephesians 2:5 says ***"Even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved."*** The combination of understanding that our sin can be overcome by His love is the strongest combination in existence. To add one element into something that is dead to bring about life, that is power. The truth is when we accept that Jesus is Lord and we cry out for repentance, there is a gigantic change in our life. We go from life to death.

2. Oxygen

Oxygen is one of the most necessary elements to produce combustion. We have all seen a flame suffocate because there is not enough oxygen getting to it. In the same way, if we are not getting the proper amount of breath in our lives, our life can become suffocated. Our breath comes from God. Our air is Him. Genesis

2:7 says, ***"Then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature."*** Our Heavenly Father gave us the very breath we take.

3. What it Produces

When we understand that there has been a chemical change and that it is fueled by the breath that God has given us, two things are produced.

a. Heat

When there is combustion, there should be heat. In the same way, when there is Jesus, there should be passion. Now passion looks different for every person. Some people are more external with their passion, while others are an inferno on the inside. The reality is there has been that combination of His love and grace. When there is the breath of God, there will be a source of passion.Jeremiah 20:9 says, ***"If I say, 'I will not mention him, or speak any more in his name,' there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones,and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot."***

b. Light

When we have heat, we have light. When we have Jesus, we have The Light. When we have The Light, Jesus says in Matthew 5:14, ***"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden."*** When our passion becomes visible, and others start to see that there is something different, we go from just spectating in God's plan, to being used in God's plan.



03

RADIOACTIVE

JAYSON COMBS,
FAMILY PASTOR



"Let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it." 1 Peter 3:11

Radioactivity - Spontaneous emission of radiation, either directly from unstable atomic nuclei or as a consequence of a nuclear reaction *(dictionary.com).*

There is just no way to get it by him. I feel like my 7-year-old son is one of the pickiest eaters in the world. I cannot even count the times my wife has prepared a meal, and my son finds that one ingredient that he hates. My wife can chop it very small, but my son has his radar set on finding those certain items. There are times when my son asks what is for dinner and I name off the six foods that I know he hates the most.

Do you have a food that you loathe/despise? What have you done to not allow this in your life? Has anyone ever tried to sneak it into your meal?

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In our passage of Scripture that we are studying this month, I Peter 3:11 says, ***"Let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it."*** The KJV's translation of the Greek here uses the word "eschew" in place of "turn away." Now I know this is not a common word in our lingo, but it does help us understand what Peter is saying. The word eschew means to despise and loathe. It is more than just avoiding evil; it has the feeling of completely shunning it.

Other passages in the Bible help us understand the response we as believers are supposed to have toward sin.

"O you who love the Lord, hate evil!" Psalm 97:10

"Through your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way." Psalm 119:104

"Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good." Romans 12:9

In the book of Romans, it uses the word abhor when describing our reaction to sin. This means to completely reject and turn away from something. The Bible is clear that sin has a radioactive consequence in our family. It makes things unstable and brings great consequence.

What do you think it means to hate sin when it comes to your family?

_____

_____

_____

There is a famous Old Testament passage of Scripture in Ezekiel. Ezekiel 22:30 (KJV) says, ***"And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none."***

When you hear the statement ***"stand in the gap,"*** what comes to mind?

_____

_____

_____

I have to be honest, I have read this verse many times in my life, but never really understood it. I always pictured someone "standing in the gap" as in reference to someone who was helping someone get from one side to the other side. Or I have pictured it as someone who

was there to connect God to someone else. But when you study it, that is not what it means at all.

Warren Wiersbe said this about the verse, "God searched among his people for one person in authority who would stand in the gap so that the enemy wouldn't penetrate the wall and invade the city, but he found none."

God was not looking for someone to bridge the gap; He was looking for someone to stand in that gap to protect the city. In Amos, we find a similar truth. Amos 5:15 says, ***"Hate evil, and love good, and establish justice in the gate."***

As I studied this, I could not help but see how this relates to the family. Wiersbe also said, "The Lord is still seeking men and women who will take their stand for the moral laws of God - stand in the gap at the wall and confront the enemy with God's help. As you read history, you meet godly men and women who had the courage to resist the popular evils of their day and later to expose the breaks in the wall and seek to mend them."

In regards to the family, I believe the Lord is looking for leaders in the family who have been placed with the authority of God to stand in the gap in their homes. Yes, we are called to help connect our family to Jesus, but we are also called to stand in the gap and protect them. I had a mom meet with me a few weeks ago. She has a high school daughter who is struggling. The struggle is all the "normal" struggles of this world for a teenager, alcohol, friendship, addictions, and technology. The parents had been taking their daughter to a counselor. The counselor informed the parents that this is all normal and they should let these things take their course. In the end, the counselor implied that their daughter would be fine. The counselor even rebuked the parents for taking away her phone because that

was how the girl communicated. She said that the girl would need to figure it out herself. I was appalled by that statement.

The Bible tells us that "foolishness is in the heart of a child." I do not just let radioactive sin come into my family and act like there will not be consequences. I am all for helping children learn to make right decisions. I am all for working on giving them more and more responsibility so that when they move out, they have the tools to make the right decisions. What I am not ok with is telling parents to be okay with radioactive sin in the home. I told the mom that she is to fight for her daughter and to let her know that she will be a wall as long as she is in the home. I believe God is looking for parents who will stand and fight against whatever sin is trying to break into their home. I will never take the stance that it is just normal. I cannot look at sin in my house and be fine with it; I take it as something I hate and something that brings nuclear disaster.

I have seen way too many parents just not want to be in the fight. It is difficult to be in the fight. It takes work; the enemy is good at hidden attacks.

What do you think it looks like for parents to stand in the gap for their homes?

_____

_____

_____

What areas are difficult for you? In what ways do you feel you fail at this?

_____

_____

_____

Jude 1:23 says, ***"Save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh."***

What do you think fire is referencing?

_____
_____
_____

What do you think it takes to snatch your family out of the fire?

_____
_____
_____

"You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness."
2 Peter 3:17 (NASB)

What does this tell us about the war in our homes?

_____
_____
_____

Galatians 6:1 adds, ***"Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted."***

How do we deal with sin when it enters our home?

_____
_____
_____

Battling for our family does not mean we live to provoke our family to anger, it does mean we live a loving controlled life that constantly rejects sin.

Romans 6:12-14 says, ***"Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace."***

What do these verses say about the importance of watching sin in our own lives?

_____

_____

_____

What do you think the difference is between being a helicopter parent and parents who "stands in the gap" for their home?

_____

_____

_____

I want to encourage you in the battle that you are encountering. But I want you to know it is a battle that has radioactive consequences. Know that you are in a war in this world. Stand in the gap and be the wall for your family. Just as my son could find bits of food he did not like, so must we have an eye for the radioactive things that can cause great harm to our family.

CRYSTAL CLEAR EXPERIMENT



Names of Scientists: _____

Materials Needed

Iodine
Bleach
A clear container
Water
Masking Tape
Marker

STEP 1 • PURPOSE:

What are the goals of this experiment?

The goal of the project is to demonstrate the power of chemical reactions and how these reactions relate to family.

STEP 2 • HYPOTHESIS (testable prediction):

If… then… statement below.

If I put iodine into the water, then the water will turn

_____

_____

_____

If I put bleach into the iodine and water, then the mixture will turn

_____

_____

_____

STEP 3 • EXPERIMENT:

Do a test to confirm or disprove your hypothesis.

1. Pour water into the clear container.
2. Drop iodine into the water.
3. Pour in the bleach.

STEP 4 • OBSERVATION:

Record what you see.

Before: _____

_____

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_____

_____

_____

During: _____

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_____

After: _____

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_____

_____

_____

_____

Gather your family together. First, take time to pray and ask God to guide your discussion and give everyone a clear understanding of what you are going to discuss. Read Deuteronomy 6:5-7 together. Explain to your family that this is what you are trying to do – Teach them to love the Lord with all of their hearts.

Bring out the items and set them on the table. Take a piece of masking tape and place it on all the items and label each of the items. Each item in the experiment represents something:

Iodine - Sin
Bleach - God's Forgiveness
Clear container - Home
Water - Our family

This week we are learning about protecting our home from sin. Sin is radioactive, and it affects all of us. If I sin, it affects you and your sin affects me. Explain to them that the clear container represents your home. Pour the water into the container to represent the life that your family brings to that home. The container protects the water and holds the water. This represents the guidelines God has given us to protect us. Here are some examples of God's guidelines:

Husbands, love your wives – Ephesians 5:25
Wives, submit to your husbands – Ephesians 5:22
Children, obey and honor your parents – Ephesians 6:1-3
Parents, teach your kids to love God – Deuteronomy 6:5-7
Forgive your brother or sister – Colossians 3:13
Be patient with each other – Ephesians 4:2

Explain that when we disobey God's guidelines for our lives, we let sin into our life. Now drop some iodine in the water and watch as it turns black and red.

Sin is doing something that God does not want us to do. The word sin means to miss the mark. Can you name some things that are a sin? Whenever we choose to do what we want, instead of what God wants, it always leads to pain and consequences. The Bible says in Numbers 32:23, ***"Be sure your sins will find you out."*** That just means we do not get away with sin. When sin is brought into our homes, it makes things messy. I have to admit, I have let sin into my home in some way, shape, or form. I am sorry for that. I have asked God to forgive me, and He did. When I asked God to forgive me, this is what happened.

Now pour the bleach into the clear container and watch the water turn clear again. This is what happens when we ask for God's and each other's forgiveness and repent – the sin goes away, and we can try to honor God more. It says in 1 John 1:9, ***"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us of our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*** What do you think the word cleanse means? If there is something you are doing to let sin into your home, ask God to forgive you and change. He will make your family's water clear again, and you will be closer and better because of it!

GUARD THE DOOR

RADIOACTIVE, DEVOTION 1

James Clouse | Student Pastor

Monsters, Gremlins, Oogey Boogeyman, and things that go bump in the night, remind me of an old Carman song:

Don't want no monsters in my house tonight!
Don't want no monsters in my house!
You won't get me screaming,
You're nothing but a demon, it's time for you to go now!

While Carman may have been talking about literal monsters in his house, we are here to talk about other types of demons. It is the demons that affect our homes and our families. These are the ones that are harder to get out than just screaming at them.

We live in a world where there are demons and sin that disguise themselves. When we used to think of monsters, we would think vampires, werewolves, and mummies. But now we have to worry about forms of monsters like anger, lust, and bad influence. It is difficult to keep Christ strong in our homes when so many in the world and our culture are not teaching our families the difference between right and wrong. However, it is important to realize that there is a doormat at our front doors to get rid of all the dirt before entering the home. The dirt is sin and worldly desires.

Galatians 5:16-17 says, ***"But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do."***

We need to teach our families to walk by the Spirit rather than the desires of the flesh. While the world and culture may be trying to teach our families things that are in opposition to what the Spirit teaches, if your passion for the Spirit in the home is strong enough, then those things will not be let inside your home.

To do this, your family needs to spend a healthy dose of time together in the Word of God. It is hard to understand the difference between right and wrong if we are not first allowing God to teach us. The only way to learn what is allowed in our home and what is not is allowing the Spirit to guide our families. Read the Word of God together so that your kids know when they go into the world, what is allowed there is not always what is going to be allowed in your home.

Shout to those demons, “It’s time for you to go now!”

COVER YOUR EYES

RADIOACTIVE, DEVOTION 2

Max Sinclair | Children's Director

Growing up, I had an overactive imagination. To this day, I can see my overactive imagination get the best of me when I get mad at a situation and think that someone is trying to purposely sabotage an event or even just my day. I perceive or see things that affect the way I live my day to day, not only that but my life. I was young, around five years old, when I saw *Star Wars: A New Hope.* I was so enthralled and loved every second of it that I wanted to become a Jedi. I remember many times playing make believe that I would watch something and want to be just that. I went from being a firefighter to Jedi, from acting as a police officer to being a spy and even President of the United States. All of these things came from me watching or seeing something. To this day I try to move stuff from across the room with "the force" just to feel my wife playfully smack me on the head.

Even though these are not necessarily bad things, how my mind is wired could cause me some problems. If I allow myself to let negative and corrupt ideas and things into my mind, that begins to affect my heart. In the Bible, we see many times the command or the instruction to guard our heart (Proverbs 4:23; Romans 12:2), yet we can see that it is the last line of defense. In the military, the goal of ultimate security is to have something to stop the threats before they happen, to intimidate or to have a large enough defense to stop the storm of attackers; our first line of defense is what we see. As I prepared for this devotion, I decided to start where it all began, Genesis chapter 3. In this chapter of the Bible, we see the fall of man from the perfect nature we were meant to walk with God. You see after Adam and Eve had taken the fruit, their eyes were opened, ***"Then the eyes of both***

of them were opened, and they knew they were naked" (Genesis 3:7 CSB). We see that once sin had entered into the world, our eyes began to corrupt our heart. What they saw were shame and fear, and that is not what God had planned.

Now we live in this broken world, sin has run rampant throughout society, and we see it everywhere. We are affected from scantily clothed women trying to sell products or fantasy, to just seeing what others have and comparing our lives to it. Our eyes are what cause us to sin, so we need to protect what we see. So how do we do that, how do we protect what we see? Hebrews 12:2 (CSB) says, ***"Keeping our eyes on Jesus, the source and perfecter of our faith."*** Stop looking around, and start looking at Jesus. Focusing on Jesus and keeping our eyes on Him will stop us from looking around, it will stop us from falling into temptation. In my own life, this has spoken truly just in the past two years. I came from sin and shame of not guarding my eyes to the world and what it offered to train my eyes on Him and not allowing myself to focus or fall into what I have in the past. My life has begun to change, my relationship with my family has drastically changed, and I know that my relationship with God has moved to where it needs to be heading.

WASHING YOUR HANDS

RADIOACTIVE, DEVOTION 3

James Mann | Children's Director

In a household, if one person is sick, everyone is likely to get sick. You are near everyone and unless you quarantine yourself, you may spread the illness. Most of the time, sin is brought into the household by one of the family members. Once it is brought in to the home, it is likely to spread to everyone, and before you know it, your household is infected. I may not be a parent or a head of a household, but I have been in a household long enough to see this happen first hand.

As a God-loving household, we are constantly under attack from the enemy. The devil is using everything in his arsenal to tear down our walls and take control. Often, he tries to make it seem like the grass may be greener on the other side. When in reality, the grass is not any greener at all. In fact, the grass is dead and infectious. In 1 Peter 5:8-9, it says, ***"Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith."*** We live in a world that temptation is around every single corner. You can barely drive to work and back without seeing or hearing something trying to tempt you. As believers, we must be checking ourselves constantly. All it takes is to be exposed to the tiniest amount of the infection before we become infected ourselves. Once we get infected by the world, we then go home and expose our families to it. The scariest thought to me is that babies have lower immune systems. If we carry the infection, and they grow up within the infected radius, they will contract this disease and not even know it, because it is how they grew up.

God has called every single one of His followers to not be of this world. Instead, we must rise and fight against this infection that the enemy is trying so hard to get us. We cannot afford to take this thought lightly. Our families and their lives are way too important to expose them to this. Unfortunately, it only takes a father to be unfaithful to his wife one time, a wife to try something to numb the pain one time, a child to try and "fit in" one time, and then the whole family is destroyed. It is not easy to avoid the enemy and his temptations. If it were easy, we would not see families everywhere completely engulfed in this disease. We could easily be the single vessel to bring this into our family. We need to remain strong during our lives. We need to ask God daily to provide us with the tools to go through this world that is trying so hard to bring us down.

"In all these things, we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us." Romans 8:37

"But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Corinthians 15:57

WEARING A MASK

RADIOACTIVE, DEVOTION 4

Tommy Youngquist | Children's Pastor

My wife and I became homeowners in June of 2016. Shortly after that, we had our first child, Heidi Lou. She has filled our hearts with so much love; we cannot even contain it. We want the world for Heidi. We want to love her, take care of her, be there for her, and protect her. Now that she is walking around and wanting to be outside, I keep thinking to myself that I need to fence in the backyard. In case you have not noticed, we live in a crazy world. I do not want to constantly worry about something happening to Heidi while she is focused on fun and playing outside. I want to protect her from cars, stray dogs, other animals and honestly, creepers! So, I will slave for multiple hours putting that fence up. Why? To protect her.

Let me ask you something. How come we, as parents, will go the extra mile to physically protect our children, but slack in the area of spiritual protection? I am guilty. I will let things into my home (the very institution structured to protect my family) that spiritually harm them in the form of movies, music, video games, and social media. In 1 Peter 5:8, it says, ***"Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour!"*** Why do we let him prowl in our homes?

I recently counseled with a couple that needed help with their fourth-grade son. He was suspended from school because of a violent game he had created on paper to play with other kids during recess. The game involved multiple "weapons" to use to kill each other. The object of the game was to be the last person standing. When I asked the couple what types of video games he was allowed to play at home, I heard games like "Call of Duty, GTA, and Fortnite." You could

see the parents immediately put two and two together. They had allowed something into their home that was desensitizing their son to the value of human life. They had not spiritually protected him.

That is just one example. I could go on and on about movies that I hear elementary age kids talk about, lyrics I have heard them sing, and posts that I see on their social media accounts (How do they have these accounts when they are not even old enough?). We, as parents, are charged by God to protect them. The protection is not only physical, but emotional and spiritual as well. Most of the time, with children, protection means withholding something that they want because we know it is not good for them. Spiritual protection also entails teaching them to love God with all their heart, soul, and mind (see Deuteronomy 6:7).

It is not too late fellow parent! You can make a change in your family today. It is my prayer that you place extreme importance on spiritual protection in your home. Lead your family. Set a godly example for them. Put a fence up around their hearts. Protect them from the enemy. Then watch God do amazing things with your children as they learn to love Him with all of their heart, soul, and mind.

HUNKER DOWN

RADIOACTIVE, DEVOTION 5

Michelle Moshier | Nursery & Pre-K Director

Hunker Down: to hide, hide out, or take shelter.
Prepare: to put in proper condition or readiness.

As a Nursery Director, one of my favorite things to hear in my classrooms is the children singing, especially the song *"I'm in the Lord's Army."* God begins to prepare us (His army) by training and encouraging each of us throughout the entire Bible. He proceeds to condition us through what I would call a "war zone." Peter warns us in 1 Peter 5:8, ***"Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith."*** In Ephesians 6:13-18, the Bible tells us what it means to put on the whole armor of God. This is a defensive strategy. According to Wikipedia, "strategic defense is a type of military planning and a set defense used for the purpose of deterring, resisting and repelling a strategic offensive, invasion or attack." The enemy's strategy is to kill, steal and destroy.

God has given us everything we need to have victory. We have to acknowledge each part of this armor God has to offer. If we do, we will be able to combat Satan's attacks on our family. The truth of God's Word should always be close around us, like a belt. Memorizing Scripture is a powerful way to be ready to combat Satan's lies. Next, we must put on the breastplate of righteousness. Proverbs 4:23 (NIV) says, ***"Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it."*** Without righteousness, we leave the door open for Satan to attack. A person who claims he or she is a child of God should have the works of righteousness. Then we have spiritual footwear. Your first reaction to this might be to run away; however, shoes made a soldier "ready" to run into battle.

Faith protects us in many ways. Think about the story of Daniel in the lion's den or Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; they were not alone. God was with them in the midst of their battle. Just like He is with each of us if we have faith. Taking up the helmet of salvation protects our minds from the discouragement and despair in this world. The sword of the spirit is an offensive weapon that we have access to at all times. Hebrews 4:12 explains: ***"For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."*** Our sword will not sharpen itself; therefore, we must be diligent with regular and focused time in the Word of God.

Paul ends this passage by encouraging us to pray fervently for ourselves, for each other, and for the work of the Church. I like how praying reminds us of the fight, along with showing us where we get our strength. I want to be fully committed to God to show Him I am ready to hunker down and be a faithful soldier *"In The Lord's Army - Yes, Sir!"*

Remember, we are all in different combat zones. We need to be aware of Satan and his different ways of attack. Are you using your armor?

GOSPEL

RADIOACTIVE, DEVOTION 6

Ryan Story | Student Pastor

A moment ago I just read an article about the Marjory Stoneman High School students returning to school. I know that in a year most of us, including myself, will have forgotten about this tragedy. We have all read stories about tragic events; young children dying, someone taking their own life, or families being broken and split apart. I love moments where you see a community rally around a family, but too often we see society quickly move on from these situations, and a family still left trying to deal with their grief. I read these articles, see these news stories, and know that no words can even begin to articulate the hurt, pain, and numbness that is in each situation. We empathize with how those going through these situations feel, but certainly do not understand the full weight of the darkness they are facing.

In your life, bad things will happen that feel as if they will destroy you. In your life, there will be nukes that land in your life and seemingly level everything around you. There are times evil seems to prevail. There are times when the most unforeseeable circumstances happen, and it leaves us wondering "why." We have all experienced and suffered from some sort of death, hurt, abuse, divorce, neglect, pain, or manipulation. We have all woken up after a fallout, looked at our life, and had to figure out how to start putting the pieces back. Life is hard, life hurts, and bad things happen, but that does not take away from how great our Jesus is.

In the book of Daniel, three men are sentenced to death. These men are taken to a furnace that is so hot, it killed a man because he got too close. These men were being pressed hard to forsake the God

of their fathers. A king that wanted them to relent their worship was attacking these men. We have been in similar spots in our life. We have all stood in front of a blazing inferno. We have all stood in front of scenarios we never thought we would encounter. We have stood and looked upon our lives and felt that the only thing we can see is the horrible fate that awaits us. I take refuge in something that these godly men said. Daniel 3:17-18 says, ***"If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."***

To stand in front of such horrible circumstances and say, even if God does not deliver you in the way that you deem appropriate, that He is still worthy of your worship is beautiful! The three men were looking at the end of their life, and they did not just call out to God to save them from their circumstances; they called out to God and worshiped Him for who He was. Life is hard. Bad things happen. Evil will attempt to destroy your life. But even then, He is always there. No matter what has happened, or what will happen, Jesus is in every situation we encounter. He is too faithful to abandon us. He is too loving not to offer us comfort. He is always with us.

04

CHAIN REACTION

JAYSON COMBS,
FAMILY PASTOR



"For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil." 1 Peter 3:12

A chain reaction is a series of events in which each induces or influences the next *(dictionary.com)*.

I love watching Tiger baseball. I wish they were better, but I still enjoy watching them (I hope when you read this book they are amazing because I will still be watching). In his second start of the 2018 season, Jordan Zimmerman was pitching for the Tigers. He threw a 92 mile per hour fastball to the plate. Jason Kipnis of the Cleveland Indians swung and hit the ball right back at the pitcher. The ball traveled 105.6 mph before striking Jordan in the face. Zimmerman ended up being okay but watching the replay in slow motion is a crazy event. The amazing part is that Jordan almost got out of the way. His reaction was just milliseconds too slow.

Have you had something happen in your life where you just did not have time to react?

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We are constantly reacting to things in life. Sometimes we have good reactions, and sometimes we do not. When it comes to our family, having bad reactions can be costly. The way we react to our children, parents, or spouse has consequences. Sometimes it is good, and sometimes it is not.

"For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil." 1 Peter 3:12

What is the consequence for being righteous? What does it mean to be righteous?

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What do you think it means ***"for the eyes of the Lord"*** to be upon us? In contrast, what does it mean for His face to be against those who do evil?

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Daniel chapter 3 is probably my favorite story of the entire Old Testament. King Nebuchadnezzar is a crazy king who tended to explode in anger. The king built a large golden statue and then threw a party so that everyone in the kingdom would bow down to it. Three godly men (Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego) were placed in a very difficult situation. They had to decide how they would react to the king's demands.

Daniel 3:13-15 says, ***"Then Nebuchadnezzar in furious rage commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought. So they brought these men before the king. Nebuchadnezzar answered and said to them, 'Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image that I have set up? Now if you are ready when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, to fall down and worship the image that I have made, well and good. But if you do not worship, you shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?'"***

What type of justified responses could they have given to the king?

_____

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Daniel 3:16-18 adds, ***"Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, 'O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.'"***

Why do you think they said, ***"O king"*** multiple times?

_____

_____

_____

Why do you think they said we do not need to give you an answer?

_____

_____

_____

What is so bold about their answer in verse 18?

_____

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_____

As I examine their response, I find three specific details. First, I find that they responded respectfully to the king. Second, they responded in truth. Lastly, they responded in obedience to their King. Having godly reactions is so important in our family. If we can learn to respond with respect, truth, and obedience, I believe the chain reaction from those encounters can be so much better.

In your family, how do you struggle to respond in respect? Why do you think this is so important?

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_____

"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

What are ways that you can grow in truth to help you better react to your family?

_____

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_____

"Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ." Ephesians 4:15

Why is obedience to Christ so important when it comes to dealing with our family?

_____

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_____

"And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments." 1 John 2:3

What is the chain reaction that was started by Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego?

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Sometimes the chain reaction is not what we would like. I think this is why Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego said, ***"If this be so."*** They knew the outcome might not be what they would like, but that did not change their reaction. They knew whatever would follow would be in God's hands. In our family, we may not always get the results we want or deserve, but that does not change what our reactions must be. If we can learn to respond with respect, truth, and obedience, let the chips fall where they may. We know that God is watching over those who are righteous.

VOLCANO EXPERIMENT



Names of Scientists: _____

Materials Needed

Balloon
Small bottle (cleaned glass pop bottle works best)
Small funnel
Baking soda (2 tablespoons)
Vinegar (4 ounces)

STEP 1 • PURPOSE:

What are the goals of this experiment?
The goal of the project is to demonstrate the power of chain reactions and how this relates to the family.

STEP 2 • HYPOTHESIS (testable prediction):

If… then… statement below.
If we put baking soda into vinegar, then the balloon will

_____

_____

_____

STEP 3 • EXPERIMENT:

Do a test to confirm or disprove your hypothesis.
1. Using the funnel, add the baking soda to each balloon.
2. Pour the vinegar into the bottle.
3. Carefully fit the balloon over the bottle opening. (Do not drop the baking soda into the vinegar yet!)
4. Once the balloon is fitted snugly on the bottle, hold up the balloon and allow the baking soda to fall into the vinegar.

STEP 4 • OBSERVATION:

Record what you see.

Before: _____

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During: _____

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After: _____

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One of the biggest factors that creates friction in a family is our words. We all have hurt someone in our families with something that was said. For about two months, my son would always say that I was the Ice Golem that Elsa creates in Frozen. While I know he did not mean much by it, it still hurt my feelings. The reality is words have power.

As a family, select one brave soul to drink a teaspoon of vinegar. Ask them how it tastes. Proverbs 16:24 says, ***"Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body."*** In this experiment, vinegar is going to represent the words we use that are not "sweetness to the soul," because vinegar itself is not a very sweet thing. It is bitter much like the words we can say or the actions we unfortunately do.

The baking soda represents the reaction we have when we hear those nasty words. We can all think of the time when someone said something mean to us, and we responded horrifically.

When our reaction and bad words come in contact with each other, it creates a gas that can expand. When the balloon was being filled up, the balloon was being pushed away from itself. Simply put, the balloon was expanding away from itself. This is what causes friction in families. When one person, a parent, a child, an aunt, or an uncle happens to act against the will of God; a separation takes place not only between God and us but also between our families and us.

When nasty words (vinegar) come in contact with bad reaction (baking soda), it will cause the balloon (your family) to drift apart.

PURSUE RIGHTEOUSNESS

CHAIN REACTION, DEVOTION 1

Mark O'Connor | Student Director

Flee - think of a time when you have heard this word in the news. Sometimes people have fled their homes because a wildfire is approaching the neighborhood. We see refugees fleeing their countries because of persecution. The point is, there is always danger lurking somewhere when we hear the word "flee." I can recall a time when I was a child that our fire alarm went off in the middle of the night. It was very loud and disorienting. I recall my mom coming into my room to wake me up (as if I could have somehow been sleeping), quickly got me out of bed, and dragged me out of the house. Thankfully, nothing was wrong, and we and our house were fine.

Paul tells us, and more specifically you, this action in 2 Timothy 2:22, ***"So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart."***

He says to flee youthful passions. Like we discovered above, this implies danger. Our natural reaction when we recognize danger is to run, but it is the hidden dangers that we do not see that can bring some of the greatest pain. Satan tries to pull us away from chasing the righteousness for which Jesus has called. While it is important that we flee from the things that pull us away from Jesus, it is equally important that we move in the other direction and chase after Him.

Attaining righteousness is an unreachable goal. Do not fret, that is why Paul tells us to pursue it. Knowing full well that only Jesus will ever have perfect righteousness here on Earth, we are simply called

to seek it out and pursue it. So, we are called to live out a moral life to the standards the Bible sets for us. It is also a bit of a relief that we do not have to worry about being perfect.

Long story short - flee. Turn and run as fast as you can from the things that tempt you to walk away from Jesus. Then chase after Him with all you have. Never stop and do not slow down.

TRAIN IN RIGHTEOUSNESS

CHAIN REACTION, DEVOTION 2

Kyle Wendel | Children's & Student Director

"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." 2 Timothy 3:16-17

I want to start out by asking a question, for what are you training? I played hockey growing up and had to train to be able to be good at it. I was one that took practice seriously. Some would want to skip practice and go straight to games. But I knew that you had to take practice serious to get better. Your practice would show during a game. I trained to become a better player. When I was not on the ice for practice, I was running, practicing in my driveway, or watching videos of players and how they played. I spent the majority of my time on hockey and training myself to become a better player and teammate. We all have something that we are training for in some way. These things do not have to be a sport either. Some things we could be training for are parenting, being a good employee, or playing an instrument. While some of these things may be good, they are not the most important thing that we should focus our training.

In 2 Timothy 3:16-17, the Bible tells us that all Scripture is breathed out by God. This is saying that the Bible as a whole is God's Word. Yes, the Bible was written by human hands, but it was inspired by the Holy Spirit. God was giving them the words to write. When we look at the Bible this way, it changes how we should view it. It is no longer just a book written by man, but it is a Word from our God! The importance of the Bible now becomes infinitely greater. If we continue in verse 16, we see all the things the Bible is profitable for

such as teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness. We cannot focus on only verse 16; we must also see the reason for these things in verse 17.

I want to focus on ***"training in righteousness"*** and what that means for us. To be righteous means to have the quality of being morally right or justifiable. We see in Scripture God's righteousness and His call for us to be righteous. Now we are only made righteous by the blood of Jesus alone, and we can do nothing to become righteous. However, that does not mean we do not change when we accept Jesus as Lord. Now we are living life to worship Him. When that is our focus, our lives change, and we want to become more and more like Jesus.

The Bible is the way we can train ourselves in righteousness and be more like Jesus. The Bible is God's Word to us on how to follow Him. If we want to become better followers of Him, then we will take God's Word and not only read it but apply it to our lives. We must train ourselves to be in the Word daily. The more we are in the Word, the closer we will become to God. The less you are in it, the more you fall into sin and draw yourself further from Him. It is our way to train to be like Him. We must discipline ourselves to make the Bible a huge priority in our lives. It is living and active and can change our hearts and lives. We do this so that we may become a man of God that is complete and equipped for every good work. We should want to become the best follower of Jesus that we can. Not that we can be the best, but that we can live as a sacrifice to Him for what He did for us on the cross.

There are a few questions you should discuss as a family this week:
For what are you training?
How can you be training yourselves in righteousness more?
How often are you and your family spending time in the Word?
Are you applying the Word to your life?

PRACTICE RIGHTEOUSNESS

CHAIN REACTION, DEVOTION 3

Tommy Youngquist | Children's Pastor

Everyone has heard of the saying, "Practice makes perfect," right? Yeah, I want to punch whoever coined that phrase right in the face. In my life, it seems like no matter how hard I practice righteousness, I never get better at it. How about you?

The Bible says in 1 John 3:7-9, ***"Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning since the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God."***

That is an incredibly powerful Scripture! From what did Jesus save us? It was sin. It is the very thing that separated us from God and condemned humanity to Hell in the first place. If we have accepted Jesus Christ as our Savior from sin, we begin to live in Him; we no longer continue to live for sin. We have the power, through Christ, to practice righteousness.

It is important to remember, God cares more about what is on the inside of a man than the outside. That means that God cares more about the motives of why you do what you do, instead of what you do. He wants to discern why you choose to obey or disobey Him. Now, we are all human, fallible, and sinful. Those who are genuinely saved still sin. It is one of the reasons we should be looking forward to the return of Jesus. Then we will no longer have to battle with

temptation and choosing poorly. But those who are saved do just that; they battle with sin. When they disobey God, their hearts and minds are not right until they seek forgiveness and try again. John speaks clearly to this battle in our verses. Those whose motives are to please God, try to practice righteousness.

We can use these very verses as a barometer to measure within our hearts if we truly are different than natural man (those who have not believed in the Gospel). Do you continue to sin and sin with no conviction from the Holy Spirit to practice righteousness? If you do, maybe you need to get to the root of your problem. Ask yourself this question: Do you truly believe with all your heart in Jesus and what He came to change? If the answer is yes, then that belief changes your motives. You no longer live for selfish desire, but for something bigger. It is something that is a greater cause than just your gain. You will start to outwardly express qualities like kindness, sacrificial love, and self-control.

Living for Christ almost always means denying self. I have a general rule I live by in my own life: If I want to do something, I should probably do the exact opposite. I know that seems weird, right? But it is true. Self-denial is the synonym of practicing righteousness. Man's righteousness is as filthy rags. But Christ works in me daily. Therefore, it is like the motto that practice becomes perfect. Ok, I do not want to punch that person in the face anymore.

PRAYER OF THE RIGHTEOUS

CHAIN REACTION, DEVOTION 4

Max Sinclair | Children's Director

One of my fondest memories of my life is watching the movie *Gladiator* with my father. I recall us sitting down and my dad telling me how awesome of a movie it is, and we began to watch it. I think I was around age 14 when we did, and I still can see Russell Crowe saluting his officers and saying, "Strength and Honor."

James 5:16 says, ***"The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working."***

To prepare for this devotion and the writing of it, I decided to go to a commentary set that I love, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary.* As I read the section on James 5:16, I see this quote which has inspired me to write this, "Weak prayers come from weak people; strong prayers come from strong people. The energetic prayers of a righteous man are a potent force in calling down the power of God for restoring weak, struggling believers to spiritual health." It hurts reading that because I know I am not a strong prayer warrior. I remember a time where I was down, and I needed encouragement. I was up at a youth camp with the church, and I was struggling. A man who I can honestly say is one of the strongest men I know, placed his hand on my back and prayed for me. At that moment I felt an energy I had not had in me, I felt this pushing of my soul, and with that, I was able to keep going.

Men, it is our duty as the spiritual leader of our house not to be weak, we need to be strong. Our job is to defend our house, and with that, we need this strength, we need to pray to strengthen not only ourselves but our families. I see more times than not, weak men who

do not let their families move. I see men who would rather sit on the sidelines and not pray and dig deep. Our job is to move and see the Holy Spirit move in our families.

Women, encourage your husbands. I say this with love and with the utmost respect, but your husbands do not need you to convict them of their wrongdoings. If they know Jesus that is already done. Instead pray for them, with them, and over them. Encourage them where they need to be and motivate them to go there.

Do not forget that quote, “Strong prayers are from strong men.” Stay strong and do not stop praying.

SUFFER FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS

CHAIN REACTION, DEVOTION 5

Ryan Story | Student Pastor

Being a godly husband or wife is difficult. Raising godly children is difficult. Making sure your family unity is all moving forward in the same God-honoring direction is hard. There is nothing in the family dynamic that comes naturally. Everything that you want your family to be takes work. From prayer to athletics, there will have to be some work that goes into your family. Sadly, just because you put in the work does not mean that you will see instant results. Recently my wife and I started to pray with our oldest son, Broly. At night we can get Broly to pray for everyone. For whatever reason during mealtime prayers, Bro wants nothing to do with praying. At one point I got super frustrated and said words that I will never forget. I looked at my son in frustration and said, "If you do not pray with us, you are going to get a spanking." At that moment I realized how wrong my parenting was. I cannot punish my son's spiritual immaturity. It was my job to suffer through the difficulty and show my son what was right.

In 1 Peter 3:13-14, it says, ***"Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed."*** I cannot think of anything more worthy for me to suffer for than the cause of Christ. What Peter is trying to say is that if you are truly passionate about something, if you truly believe it is right, you will be willing to suffer for a cause. It is better to suffer doing God's will than to be pain-free and be void of His will. In my own life, I have had to give up habits, give up music, and I have had to distance myself from family and friends all for the sake of living out what is good and godly in my life. I look back at every decision I have made, and I know how hard it was when I made it, but I am so blessed to know that my children will

never have to wonder if their dad is coming home drunk one night. I am blessed to know that my children will never have to worry if their parents will stick it out or get a divorce. In my life, I started fighting for what was godly the moment I became a Christ follower. I know I have done all of those things for myself, why not for my family? I cannot think of four people I would rather suffer for than for them. I would suffer until there is no longer a pulse in my being for my wife and children.

Suffering for righteousness sake is one of the most Christ-like things a person can do. To realize you will go through hardships for the sake of another person is exactly what Jesus did for us. He wept and sweat drops of blood while He pled with God in Gethsemane. Our Savior was tormented with the thoughts of knowing exactly how He would have to suffer for our sake. He endured the cross gladly! We must fight for our families. If you have a marriage that needs to get back to where God intends marriages to be, suffer through the conversation, and be honest with your spouse. If you have an unruly teenager who seems to make life hard when they do not get their way, suffer through their tantrum. Suffering is hard, it hurts, it is exhausting, but if there is one thing I know that is worth fighting for, it is family. Endure suffering, because there is a blessing on the other side.

GOSPEL OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

CHAIN REACTION, DEVOTION 6

James Clouse | Student Pastor

There is an old country song that I have always loved to listen to called *"A Father's Love"* by George Strait. In this song, Strait talks about growing up and his dad telling him that, no matter what, that daddies love will never end. The song goes on to talk about dying and coming before the gates to Heaven. He gets worried and thinks that he was not good enough to get into Heaven. Then God says that no matter what that God always loves His children.

This song is great but misses something. It misses the responsibility that we, as God's children, have for the Father. While true that God always loves His children, as God's children we need to come before Him to seek the forgiveness that He is willing to give. That is the amazing thing about our Father, that He is willing to forgive when we ask. We do not always have to worry if we are good enough to get into Heaven.

Psalm 32:1 says, ***"Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered."*** It is so interesting that David wrote this hundreds of years before Jesus even came to Earth. Jesus' blood has covered up our transgressions, and all we need to do is recognize the free gift that God has offered.

There is a chain reaction in the gift that God has given. By God offering His Son to the world by dying on the cross, we now have the opportunity of coming before the gates of Heaven and not having to worry about getting in or not based on our transgressions.

Romans 5:1-2 says, ***"Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.***

Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

By faith in Christ and what he has done for us, we are made righteous before God. We have been justified by faith in Jesus, and God can now look at us and not see our sin but rather see His Son's blood that has been shed for you and me.

John 3:16 says, ***"For God so loved the world, that He gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."***

You do not have to go through this world wondering if you are good enough for your Father. Jesus already has done that for you. Our "Daddy" loved us so much that we do not have to be looking over our shoulders all the time wondering if we have done enough good. We have been saved through faith in Jesus Christ. So when we come before those gates, our Father can say that He loved us that much.

OUR MISSION

Matthew 28:19-20: ***"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."***

REACH

At The River Church, you will often hear the phrase, "We don't go to church, we are the Church." We believe that as God's people, our primary purpose and goal is to go out and make disciples of Jesus Christ. We encourage you to reach the world in your local communities.

GATHER

Weekend Gatherings at The River Church are all about Jesus, through singing, giving, serving, baptizing, taking the Lord's Supper, and participating in messages that are all about Jesus and bringing glory to Him. We know that when followers of Christ gather together in unity, it's not only a refresher it's bringing life-change.

GROW

Our Growth Communities are designed to mirror the early church in Acts as having ***"all things in common."*** They are smaller collections of believers who spend time together studying the Word, knowing and caring for one another relationally, and learning to increase their commitment to Christ by holding one another accountable.

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BOOKS BY THE RIVER CHURCH







