



APRIL MEMORY VERSE

Isaiah 30:18

Yet the Lord longs to be gracious to you; therefore he will rise up to show you compassion. For the Lord is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him!

TODDLERS

THIS WEEK + NEXT WEEK

Our God Saves - Part 1
Jonah 1–4

PARENT DEVOTIONAL

1 Kings 19:9–18

God chose Abraham and his descendants to proclaim His truth and identity to all people. However, the gift of relationship with God was never intended to be for Abraham's descendants alone; it was to come from Abraham's line to bring salvation to the world. God would often send His message through prophets to awaken the people so they would be moved to repentance and restoration. Jonah, a prophet of God, was given a message to take to the Gentile people of Nineveh. God said, "Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me" (Jonah 1:2).

But Jonah ran from the Lord. He boarded a boat manned by a small crew with plans to travel to Tarshish. During King Solomon's reign, when he sent ships to Tarshish, he didn't expect their return for three years. This indicates a trip of significant time and distance. Jonah tried to flee from the Lord because he was aware of the purposes behind God's message (Jonah 3:10–4:3). Nineveh was an important city in the Assyrian Empire. Although the Assyrians and the Israelites had a tumultuous relationship for many years, at this time, the Israelites had been free from Assyrian rule for approximately 50 years. Regardless, Jonah fled, for he knew God would call this Gentile city to repentance.

It seems strange to think a prophet of God would flee from His clear commands—especially when the goal of the message was to bring repentance and grace to its recipients. It's possible Jonah's response was reflective of the heart of the Israelite people. Perhaps he was jealous for the relationship his people had with God and didn't relish the thought of the Lord extending grace and compassion toward the enemies of Israel. After hearing and believing his message, the people of Nineveh repented and were shown grace and mercy by the Lord.

God is able to save us from a life of separation from Him. He wants to save us from having to figure out life on our own terms. Without a daily relationship with Jesus, we might be tempted to go our own way or take back control of areas best left in the hands of a loving God.

It isn't comfortable for some of us to think about giving up control of our lives. It also isn't comfortable for some of us to pray with other people who desire for God to save them. Maybe it would be helpful for you to develop your own simple prayer of salvation to remind you that God's desire is for everyone to know Him. Take time this week to think about how you'd pray with someone who wants to let God take control of his life.

TODAY WE EXPLORED

GREAT BIG FISH

We colored and big fish and glued Jonah inside.

SHOULD WE RUN?

Just as Jonah should have listened and obeyed God's voice, we worked on listening and obeying today. We ran around the mat in the room until our teacher said "stop." Then, we froze. We practiced other ways to move around the mat (like crawling, hopping, and walking) as well.

PIN JONAH ON THE WHALE

We held a small Jonah in our hands while our teachers spun us around 3 times. Then we tried to pin Jonah onto a big whale on the wall.

BOOK BASKET

Our book basket had storybooks that tell the Easter story. If your family would like to borrow a book from the book basket, please let Dani Beth know!

PREPARE FOR NEXT WEEK

Our God Saves

Jonah 1-4

God asked Jonah to go to Nineveh and deliver a special message. Instead, Jonah ran from God. He boarded a boat, but God sent a violent storm. Eventually, Jonah was thrown overboard and swallowed by a great fish. After three days in the belly of the fish, God rescued Jonah and he went to Nineveh to deliver the message.

PEEK-A-BOO

Your child may enjoy playing peek-a-boo. As you play and ask, "Where's baby?" remind your child that there's nowhere she can hide from God because He is always with her.

TOT TALK

Read Jonah 1:17–2:10. After reading, remind your child that it was God who saved Jonah from the belly of the fish.

How many days did Jonah spend inside the fish? Three days!

Who saved Jonah? God saved him!

BLESSING

(Insert your child's name), our God is a God who saves. May you trust in Him alone to save you.

MINUTE WITH GOD: GOD CELEBRATES

Below are quick devotions your family can use to read, discuss, and pray God's Word together this week!

MAY 2

Psalm 32:11

Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, you righteous ones; and shout for joy, all you who are upright in heart.

What things cause you to shout with joy?

Shout with joy to the Lord!

MAY 6

1 Samuel 2:1

Then Hannah prayed and said, "My heart rejoices in the LORD; my horn is exalted in the LORD, my mouth speaks boldly against my enemies, because I rejoice in Your salvation."

How good are you at forgetting the hurts others cause you?

What are some good things going on in your life that you should use as occasions to rejoice in the Lord?

Name some good things God is doing and rejoice in Him!

MAY 3

Zechariah 9:9

Rejoice greatly, daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you;

He is righteous and endowed with salvation, humble, and mounted on a donkey, even on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

Has anyone in your family ever been part of a victory parade? How does our salvation place us in a spiritual victory parade?

Thank God that you get to be part of Jesus' victory parade!

MAY 7

1 Thessalonians 5:16

Rejoice always!

How does this simple phrase affect you?

Ask God to help you learn to rejoice always.

MAY 4

Psalm 5:11

But rejoice, all who take refuge in You, Sing for joy forever! And may You shelter them, that those who love Your name may rejoice in You.

How does having God as a refuge make you rejoice?

Rejoice that God is your refuge and shelter!

MAY 8

Psalm 145:6-7

People will speak of the power of Your awesome acts, and I will tell of Your greatness. They will burst forth in speaking of Your abundant goodness, and will shout joyfully of Your righteousness.

What are some awesome, great, good, and righteous things about God?

Thank God for those things.

MAY 5

Romans 12:15

Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.

Tell about a friend who is really good at rejoicing and weeping with you.

Ask God to make you the kind of friend who can both rejoice and weep well when others need it.

MAY 9

Psalm 95:1-2

Come, let's sing for joy to the LORD, let's shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation. Let's come before His presence with a song of thanksgiving, let's shout joyfully to Him in songs with instruments.

Why are music and singing such a big part of most of our fun times?

Sing to the Lord!



screen-free summer

I have a challenge for your family. What if, from **Mother's Day to Father's Day**, your family went screen-free from **5 PM to 8 AM each day**? Do I sound crazy? Does this challenge seem impossible?

Before the microwave, car, and the internet people still only had 24 hours in each day. How, after all of these time and labor-saving inventions, do we still feel hurried, busy, and overwhelmed? Where has our time gone? We are giving our time to other things.

Researchers have found the average iPhone user touches their phone 2,617 times a day. Being in the same room as your phone (even if it is turned off) has been proven to hinder one's memory and problem-solving skills. Since the year 2000 the human attention span has dropped from 12 seconds to 8 seconds (a goldfish has the attention span of 9 seconds). Give your next 8 seconds of attention to let that sink in: our attention span is worse than a goldfish's.

I was listening to a podcast recently and heard this line, "What we give our attention to is the people we become." Annie Dillard once wrote, "How we spend our days is, of course, how we spend our lives." We have talked before as a church family about how our habits form us. We are all being formed. What is forming you? What are you and those in your household giving your attention to?

Growing up, my family would observe a TV sabbatical from Mother's Day to Father's Day. My brother and I would groan about it every year, but I am so thankful for that special family time and all of the memories we have from those long and slow days. Think about those evenings when the power goes out. Your family may dust off old board games and play by candlelight or learn how to make shadow puppets. You spend the night creating instead of just consuming. Or consider those first couple weeks of quarantine. I bet your family got creative about how you spent your time inside.

My prayer is that, as we **remove the distraction of screens (phones, computers, tablets, TVs, etc.)** from our evenings, we will find the time and space we need to pursue God and truly enjoy the good gifts He has given us. I don't think this screen sabbatical will be easy, but I believe it will be so very good.

You/your family is not required to do this screen-free challenge, but I do hope you will consider it. Your family may need to adapt this challenge, based on your work schedule, etc.

If your family does choose to take the screen-free challenge, please let me know! I am creating tools & resources to assist your family during this time. I also hope those who participate in the challenge and find ways to encourage one another—maybe we can do a game swap or some screen-free beach time together.

**Screen-Free Summer
May 9-June 20
5 PM-8 AM (each day)**

I look forward to unhurrying my evenings alongside you!

Grace & Peace,

Dani Beth