

FAMILY TOGETHERNESS WEEK OF PRAYER | SEPTEMBER 3 - 9, 2023

*Keys to*

# HEALTHY MINDS



FLOURISHING FAMILIES



*A week focused on positive*  
**MENTAL HEALTH**  
*for your family*

**“What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.” Philippians 4:9, ESV**

The COVID-19 pandemic was a traumatic experience for the entire world. Many individuals, couples, and families had already been experiencing a level of distress, while trying to hold it together physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

Within this context, the apostle Paul emphatically urges: “Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice” (Philippians 4:4). Paul is writing from a prison cell and clearly understands that in every life trying times will interrupt the normal flow of things. Yet, he knew there was no situation beyond God’s help.

In a world filled with overwhelming anxiety, depression, and emotional unrest, Paul offers the believers an answer. The peace of God. The same offer of peace is available to us today. This is no ordinary peace. Paul says: “and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:7). There is a place for scientific and psychological interventions. However, God’s peace goes beyond human intervention. It is the kind of peace that sustains during times of hardship.

If we practice a healthy thought life “whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely...meditate on these things...and the God of peace will be with you” (Philippians 4:8, 9); He will walk with you, talk with you, and comfort you during challenging times. Your circumstances may not change, although He is able. But God will help transform your approach to trials.

One thing we know for sure, the founders of modern psychology did not invent this kind of peace. This is not positive psychology, or new age thinking. This intervention is straight from the Word of God. This kind of peace resides in those who believe in what Paul shares in Philippians 4:4-9. For when we pray and practice the mental disciplines of rejoicing, praying, meditating, gratitude, and thinking right thoughts, we can stave off anxiety, depression, and other emotional anguish, which can help us foster good mental health.

Maintaining good mental health is vital for everyone. When fostered within a family, it can bring significant benefits: better communication, understanding, empathy, less conflict, higher self-esteem, and resilience among family members. Good mental health goes together with good physical health. When families prioritize good mental health, they tend to also prioritize good habits like adequate sleep, regular exercise, and a healthy diet. Parents or guardians in the home who care for their mental health are good examples for their children.

Karen Holford—the principal contributor of this year's *Family Togetherness Week of Prayer* resource—will share how we can flourish as individuals and families. We hope this will be the experience of each of you as you allow God's peace, joy, hope, and healing to abide in your hearts.

Maranatha,

## A note from the Principal Contributor **KAREN HOLFORD**



This year the focus of the week is developing positive mental health in our families. We will do this by choosing carefully what we think about, and by focusing together on the positive, healthy emotions of gratitude, wonder, joy, kindness, peace, and hope. These ideas are not new! Paul described how he used these positive emotions to help him flourish, even in a Roman prison. Jesus also taught His followers to be grateful, to experience wonder at creation, to enjoy life, to be kind, to experience peace, and to have hope. Jesus came to give us a more abundant life (John 10:10), and choosing positive emotions is an important way to have the amazing abundance of His love and joy.

**Karen Holford is the Family, Children's, and Women's Ministry Director for the Trans-European Division. She has a professional background in occupational therapy and master's degrees in psychology, Family Therapy and Christian Leadership. She is married to Pastor Bernie Holford, and they live in England. They have three adult children and three grandchildren. She loves to write, walk in English forests, and share God's love.**



Adventist®  
Family Ministries

**Willie and Elaine Oliver**, Directors  
Seventh-day Adventist  
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# Keys to FAMILY WORSHIP

*What? Why? How?*

## WHY FAMILY WORSHIP?

- It teaches our children and families to worship God
- Places God at the center of our homes
- Bonds our families together
- Protects our children and families
- Establishes spiritual values



## FAMILY WORSHIP IS:

- Interactive
- Shared leadership
- Brief and engaging



## FAMILY WORSHIP IS NOT:

- A lecture, sermon, or coercive activity
- Time for discipline or punishment
- Entertainment



Worship is a time when we give adoration and praise to God. With reverence, humility, and gratitude, we make our requests to him. In the Old Testament, animals were sacrificed on the altars. Today, we need only a sacrifice of time and self. When we add the word family to worship, we come together to worship God as a family. Parents especially get an opportunity to disciple their children and teach them how to worship God. Together, we take the time to express honor and respect to God and acknowledge Him as Lord and Savior of our lives and our home. This experience bonds us to one another and draws us closer to God.

Every family can decide how their family worship time looks and what tools they will include. It may consist of reading the bible, singing a song, and praying together as a family. But there are many ways to have family worship as many as there are families. Every family is unique, so you can custom build your family altar just for your family. The only thing that remains the same is that we should turn our focus toward God, the Creator and Sustainer of humankind.

“ In every family there should be a fixed time for morning and evening worship. How appropriate it is for parents to gather their children about them before the fast is broken, to thank the heavenly Father for His protection during the night, and...when evening comes, to gather once more before Him and thank Him for the blessings of the day past.”

Ellen G. White, *Child Guidance*, p. 520

“ There is no reason why [family worship] should not be the most interesting and enjoyable exercise of the home life, and God is dishonored when it is made dry and irksome. Let the seasons of family worship be short and spirited.”

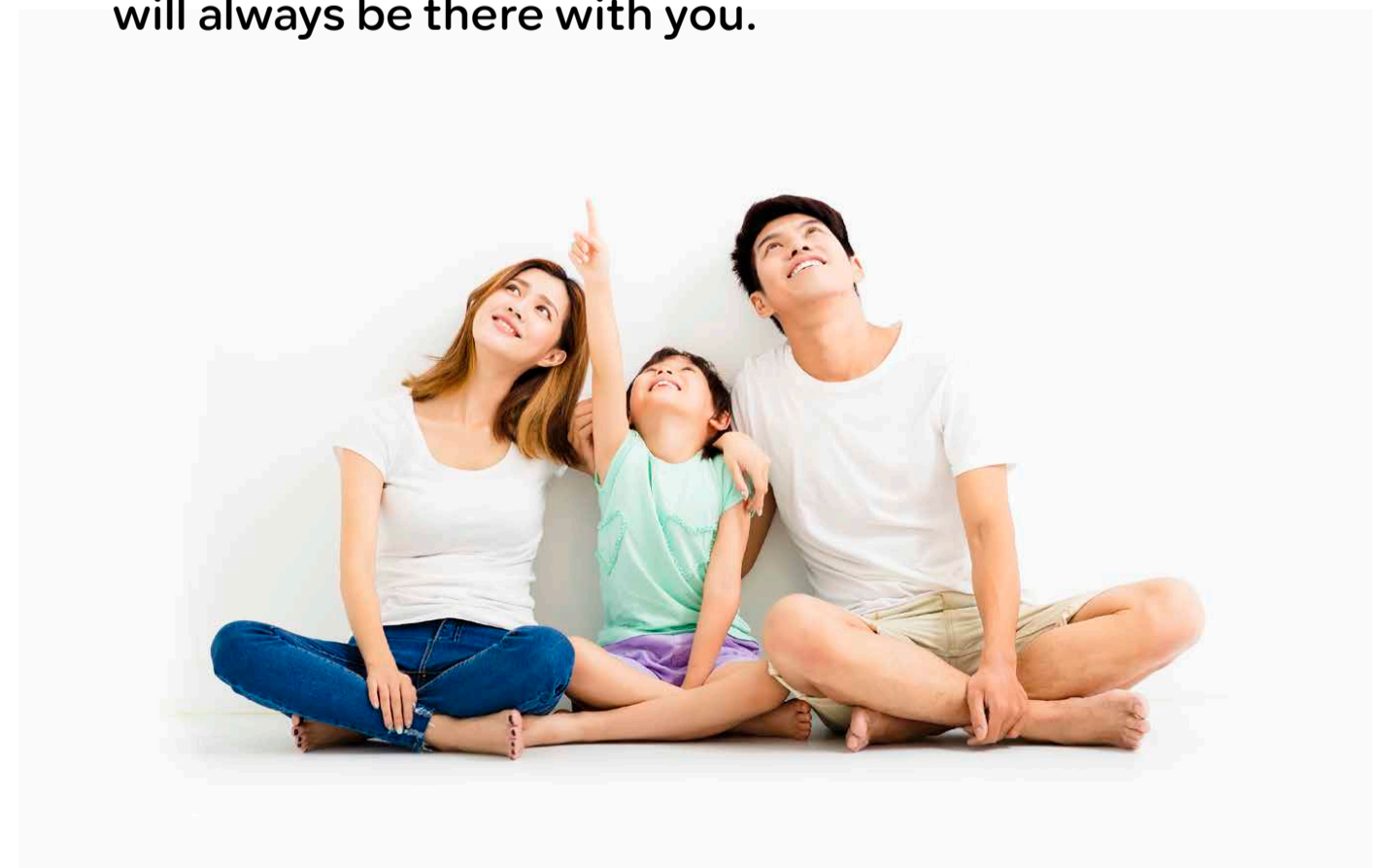
Ellen G. White, *Child Guidance*, p. 521

With God's help  
**CHOOSE**  
for your family

God created us in His own image (Genesis 1:27). This means that the variety of emotions and feelings we were given are also a part of His creation.

This week you and your family are called to **CHOOSE** your own positive mental health. You are invited to revisit several Bible experiences where you can learn with God's guidance to **CHOOSE** to live with healthy minds.

The body we were given is a big responsibility for each of us (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). Our minds are a key part of our lives. **CHOOSE** to take steps to live to the fullest, even when times are difficult. Jesus will always be there with you.



# How to Use this Resource

## PARTS OF A DAILY KEY

### 01 | BIBLE VERSE

A Bible verse with a simple, creative activity to help you memorize it and experience it in a practical way

### 03 | DEVOTIONAL

A short devotional story designed for the whole family

### 05 | ACTIVITIES

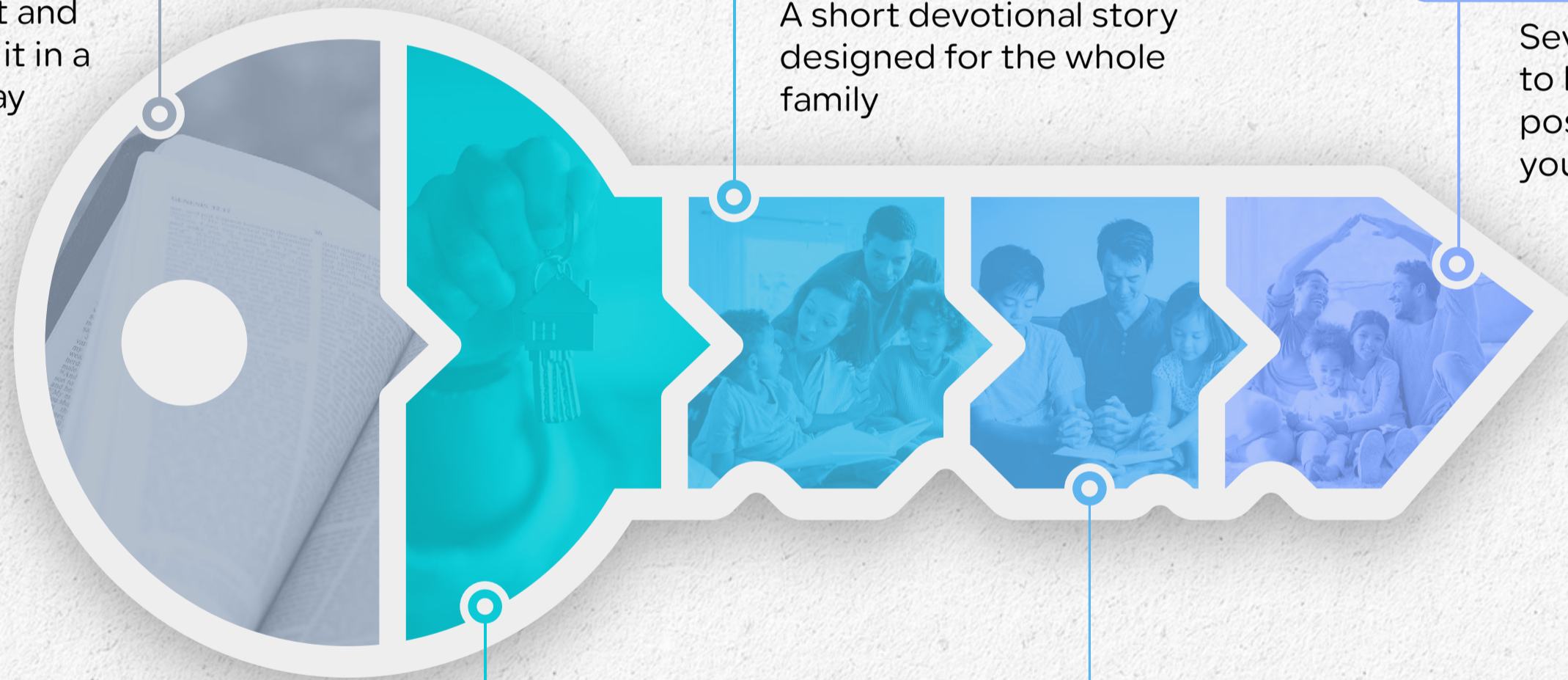
Several simple activities to help you practice the positive emotions in your family life.

### 02 | INTRODUCTION

An introduction to the theme of the day and why it is good for us

### 04 | PRAYER

Pray together—where everyone can share their heart's desire.



The original name of this material is Flourish! conceived by the Trans-European Division. If you enjoy the Flourish! activities shared during this week, you can find posters with more ideas and journaling pages. There is also a tree poster for children. They can stick green leaves on the tree whenever they choose to do a flourishing activity to make the tree flourish! Visit: <https://ted.adventist.org/family/flourish/>

SUNDAY

# THINKING WELL



*Key Verse*

Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, ...noble, ...just, ...pure, ...lovely, (or) ...of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy, think on these things.

Phil 4:8 NKJV

Write the verse in a thought bubble to remind you to focus on positive thoughts.

## EXPLORING THINKING WELL

Our thoughts are important. What we think shapes our emotions, actions, our relationships, and our spiritual lives. When we focus on our worries, on the chaotic and tragic things happening in the news, and on our mistakes and struggles, we can become overwhelmed with anxieties and fears. Those powerful feelings will influence our behavior, and may cause us to prioritize our own needs, rather than the needs of those around us.

When Paul wrote his letter to the Philippians he was in a very challenging place. He was in prison and awaiting execution. For a human being, that must be one of the most stressful and distressing life situations. But Paul's letter is full of joy and hope. In the closing paragraphs he lists some of his 'secrets' for staying emotionally positive in the face of great challenges. At the heart of the passage is his famous text (Phil 4:8) that encourages us to focus our minds on things that are beautiful, lovely, virtuous, excellent, pure, and uplifting. Today we will explore how Paul did that, with God's help, and how we can learn to think in similar, healthy ways.





## POSITIVE PAUL (PHILIPPIANS 4)

Paul lived in a prison. He didn't live there because he had done something wrong. He lived there because he told people about Jesus, and some people didn't like that. Paul couldn't go where he wanted to go. He couldn't do what he wanted to do. He couldn't even eat what he wanted to eat or go and see his friends.

Living in a prison wasn't very pleasant. It wasn't cozy and comfortable like your house. Paul had to wear chains, eat stale bread, and sleep on a hard bed. I wonder how you would feel if you were Paul? Sad, lonely, angry, frustrated, afraid? He probably felt some of these things occasionally. But Paul knew that he had a choice, and even though his life was hard, he chose to be positive and happy. After all, he knew that Jesus loved him, and that Jesus was taking care of him and what could be better than that? Paul had been through some hard times before...shipwrecks, beatings, and even snakebites! He learned that the best thing to do in difficult situations was to think about things that were good and lovely and pure, because Jesus would make everything turn out for the best in the end.

Sometimes we think that feelings just land on us, and that we can't do anything about how we feel. But, even when we are in a tough place, we can choose to think about the things that make us happy! It might sound strange, but it works!

Paul decided to be thankful for God's blessings in his life. He chose to think about lovely things like the wonderful flowers and animals that God had created. Even on the days that were difficult, he thought about his happy and funny memories...He chose to be kind to the guards and other prisoners so that everyone could see God's love shining in his life. And whenever he was worried about anything he prayed and gave it to God to look after.

Paul found ways to be amazingly happy in a very hard situation. He wrote down all his special secrets for being happy in a letter to his friends in Philippi, and ever since then other people have used his special secrets to keep their thoughts happy, too.

The next time you feel sad and worried, remember how much Jesus loves you. Imagine Jesus giving you a big hug and saying encouraging things to you. And then choose one of Paul's special secrets to help put some more happy thoughts back into your head.

Do you have things that you are worried about? Do you have troubling thoughts that buzz around in your head like a wasp? Catch them like this (mime catching a bug in your hands) and then close your hands in prayer and give them all to God, like this... (Pray the following prayer).

## OPEN HANDS PRAYER

- Start with everyone's hands cupped, as if they are holding their worries in their hands.
- Praise God for His love.
- Thank Him that we can give our worries to Him because He loves us.
- Turn your hands down and 'drop' your cares into God's hands.
- Thank God for looking after your worries.
- Turn your hands up and out in a position to receive.
- Pray for God's peace in place of your worries.
- Thank God for His gift of peace.
- Amen





# THINKING WELL ACTIVITIES

FLOURISH! - CHOOSE WELL - THINK WELL - LIVE WELL - GROW WELL!



## What's bugging you?

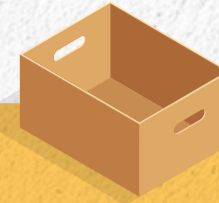
- Cut out some large paper 'bug' shapes.
- On one side of the paper write one of your worries.
- Find a Bible verse that can help you with your challenge.
- Turn the paper over and write the Bible verse.
- Whenever something new is worrying you, make a new bug and find a new verse.



## Positive Poster

Make a large poster of happy thoughts. Write each happy thought in a thought bubble. You can cut the bubbles from different colors of paper to make the poster bright and cheerful.

- I am surrounded by God's love.
- I am special to God.
- I am forgiven by God.
- I can do good things because the Holy Spirit has given me gifts to help others.
- I can make a positive difference in the world by being a blessing to others.
- Whatever is happening, Jesus is always with me.
- Add other positive thoughts when you think of them.



## Promise Box

Make a promise box together.

- Find an attractive gift box or bag.
- Write your favorite promises on small cards.
- Keep them in the box/bag and add more as you discover them in God's Word.



## 'Reset' Button

When a machine or a computer is overloaded and stops working properly, there is often a 'reset' button to press. When you press this button, things might stop working for a while, or go to 'sleep'. But then the machine will start working properly again.

- Find something to be your family 'reset button'. It may be a large button from an old garment. Or it could be a colorful plastic lid from a bottle, or a flat toy squeaker.
- When someone is feeling overwhelmed by difficult thoughts, they can press the button and sit quietly for a while, praying that God will help them untangle their messy thoughts.

M O N D A Y

# CHOOSE GRATITUDE



*Key Verse*

In everything give thanks.  
1 Thess 5:18 NKJV

Write the verse on a sheet of white paper.  
Decorate the page with words or pictures to  
show what you are thankful for this week.

## EXPLORING GRATITUDE

Did you know that saying 'Thank you!' is good for you? It helps you to flourish and feel happy! Your brain can't be anxious and thankful at the same time, so gratitude gives your brain a rest from being worried.

Did you know that when you thank someone else, it makes you feel happy, as well as the person you thank? When you appreciate other people, and thank them for helping you, you are much less likely to argue with them.

God doesn't need us to say thank you to Him, but He loves it when we do. Every day He does thousands of wonderful things for each one of us. Most of the time we don't even notice them, and we don't always say thank you for all the good gifts He gives us. But when we do, God knows that it will bless us, and it will help us to think in happy and healthy ways.

The more we pay attention to what God is doing, and the more we thank Him for those things, the more we will experience His incredible love for us and the joy He wants us to experience.





# EXTRAVAGANT GRATITUDE!

(JOHN 12 / PHILIPPIANS 4)

Mary was excited! Jesus had been so kind to her, and she loved him more than anyone else in the whole world! He had forgiven her for all the mistakes she had made in her life! He loved her more than anyone else had loved her. He had even let her sit at His feet and listen to His teaching, at a time when girls weren't encouraged to learn. He had laughed with her, and cried with her, and even raised her brother Lazarus from the dead!

Mary was full of joy for all the ways that Jesus had loved her and blessed her. She had heard Jesus saying He was going to die soon, and that He was going away. She was sad to hear these things, and she wanted to thank Jesus in a very special way before He died. But she didn't know what to do. Then she had an amazing idea! She found a bottle of very special perfume and poured it all over His head and His feet when He was sitting at a banquet. It was a very unusual way to say 'thank you', but Jesus knew what Mary was trying to say, and her gratitude made him very happy. Even though she didn't know exactly what was going to happen to Jesus, she wanted to show Him that she appreciated His love, and the sacrifice He was going to make.

Paul was in prison. He knew that he would be there the rest of his life, and he also knew that he would die soon. He could have felt very sad and worried and afraid. But he knew that his good, good Father God loved him, and that He was always with him. So, instead of worrying, Paul chose to think about the good gifts from God that made him feel happy. He wrote a letter to his friends in Philippi and told them his 'secrets' of being happy and peaceful when he was in a tough place.

Even though Paul was in a horrible prison, he thanked God every day because He knew that God was always good, and that He was always doing special things to show His love for him.

You can read some of Paul's 'secrets' of happiness in Phil 4:4-8. He praised God for all kinds of things. He was kind to others. He gave his worries to God and thanked him. And he chose to think about good and lovely things.

If Jesus came to your house today, how would you thank Him for all that He has done for you? Would you pour perfume on His feet, or would you say 'thank you' to Him in another wonderful way?

## GRATITUDE PRAYER

- Choose a person to call out each letter of the alphabet in turn.
- Then work together to call out at least one thing you are thankful for beginning with each letter.
- See how many things you can thank God for in 10 minutes of alphabet gratitude!
- Perhaps you could buy a little address book with alphabet tabs and write your grateful ideas in the different sections.



# EXPERIENCING GRATITUDE ACTIVITIES

FLOURISH! - CHOOSE WELL - THINK WELL - LIVE WELL - GROW WELL!



## 'Thank you' Cards for God

- Find your best craft materials and make 'thank you' cards for God.
- Even though you can't mail them to Him, He will see them, and He will be happy for what you have made and written because you are His precious children.



## Colorful Gratitude

- Make a booklet with colored paper.
- Arrange the pages in the colors of a rainbow, and then add brown, black and white pages.
- Find pictures of the different things you want to thank God for in colorful magazines or draw them yourself.
- Cut out the pictures and stick them onto the pages to make a colorful book of gratitude.
- This could make a lovely gift for someone who is feeling sad or alone.



## Gratitude Activities

- When you are feeling tired and grumbly, stop and think of at least 10 things you are thankful for.
- Sit in each room of your home and say thank you to God for at least 10 things you haven't thanked Him for before.
- Whenever you are walking, driving, or traveling by bus or train, continually thank God for one thing after another that you can see around you.
- Suddenly call out 'Gratitude Moment!' and have everyone say 3 things they are grateful for right now.
- Make a gratitude note-board and post 'thank you' messages to each other, answers to prayer, pictures of things you are thankful for, and decorated Bible verses about thankfulness.

T U E S D A Y

# CHOOSE WONDER



*Key Verse*

There is none like You, O Lord...For  
You are great, and do wondrous  
things. Psalm 86: 8, 10 NKJV

Find a photograph of a nature scene with a  
clear space in the sky. Write the Bible verse  
on the sky to make a wonder poster.

## EXPLORING WONDER

Wonder is the amazing feeling we experience when we see a rainbow, look at the stars, explore the design details of a flower or a tree, or sit quietly and watch a wild animal. Whenever we look at nature with wonder, it fills us with a warm and joyful glow of delight, and it brings us closer to God. Wonder is a special gift from God that is packed with good things for us! It lowers our stress levels and our heart rate; it interrupts the patterns of worry in our brains; and it can help us to become more resilient in the face of life's challenges. Wonder inspires us to be creative, to strive for excellence, and even to be compassionate, empathic, and generous towards others.

God has filled this world with many wonders to show His love for us. He hopes that we will slow down enough to notice His awesome creations and to explore their tiny details. He knows that when we do so, it will inspire our heartfelt praise, lower our anxieties, and help us to be kinder and more compassionate, as we grow to be more like Him.





## DON'T WORRY! TRY WONDER! (MATTHEW 6)

Jesus looked out over the crowd of people. They were tired, worried, stressed, sad and overwhelmed by life. His heart was filled with compassion for them. They were so concerned about the everyday struggles of life that they barely had time to think about God and how much He loved them and cared for them. If only they knew how much they were loved, He thought, and how hard God was working to take care of them...

Jesus had so much to tell them about God and about life. He wanted to give the people something that would always remind them of God's loving care. He looked up and heard the birds twittering in the skies. Delicate wildflowers were growing around His feet...

'See these little birds,' said Jesus. 'Look at them. See how God gives them food and takes care of them. You are much more precious to Him than the little birds.' A sparrow flew down to the ground and pecked at some grain. 'And look at these flowers!' Jesus pointed to the fragile daisies and poppies. 'Their petals are so delicate and beautiful! And your Father, who clothes them in their gorgeous dresses, will make sure that you always have clothes too. So please don't worry about these things. God loves you very much! You are very precious to Him and He notices all the things you need, every single day!'

Many years earlier, David noticed that the night sky was spectacular. As he sat on the hillside and watched over his sheep, he saw the silvery moon and it made his heart sing. He was filled with wonder at all the stars sparkling overhead, and he remembered how wonderful the sun was during the day. Eventually he wrote a song about his wonder, and you can read it in Psalm 8. He was amazed that the God who created such huge and marvelous things also cared about tiny human beings.

God made all the beautiful things in the world to show us how much He loves and cares for us. Every one of His amazing creations, light, water, flowers, trees, fruit, vegetables, grains, stars, moon, sun, planets, fish, birds, and animals, was made to bring us joy. Each one of them is a gift for you. Whenever you find one of God's wonders, stop and take time to explore it very carefully. Notice the small details you haven't seen before, and how carefully God made the petals on a flower, the leaves on a tree, the butterflies, the birds, and even the vegetables on your plate. Each little detail reminds us that our Father cares about the details of our lives too.

Whenever you are worried about something, imagine you are putting your worry in God's hands, the hands that created all these wonders as love gifts for you. Spend time looking at one of His creations, noticing how wonderfully He cares about it. Then notice how your worries melt into wonder.

## WONDER PRAYER ACTIVITY

- Gather beautiful examples of nature and arrange them on a table. Or go to a park with your family and gather wonderfully created things that have fallen to the ground, so that no plants are damaged.
- Invite each person to choose an item and to find something about their object that fills them with wonder. Praise God together in sentence prayers of wonder, to celebrate His creation.



# EXPERIENCING WONDER ACTIVITIES

FLOURISH! - CHOOSE WELL - THINK WELL - LIVE WELL - GROW WELL!



## Wonder Tray/Basket

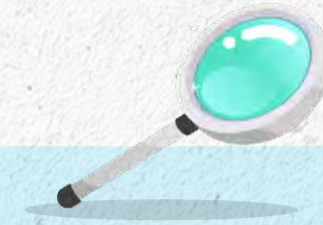
- Gather safe and wonderful objects and make a beautiful arrangement of shells, stones, natural wood, non-poisonous seed pods, feathers, etc. in a basket or tray.
- Explore each of the items carefully. List all their wonders – texture, appearance, design, colors.
- Use the collection to remind you of God's wonderful creation. Add new things when you find them.



## Awesome Hands!

I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are Your works. Psalm 139:14 NKJV.

- Your body is amazing and wonderfully made.
- Look at your hand and explore how it moves.
- Think of thirty amazing things your hands can do!
- Praise God for your hands and thank Him for the things you enjoy doing with your hands to bless others.



## Wonder Activities

- Every day look for something wonderful that God has made and take a photo or mental picture of it, draw it, or write a sentence about it in your family wonder journal. Look at all the intricate details of its creation and marvel at God's amazing artistry.
- Talk about your moments of wonder when you eat together. You can even look for wonder in the design of the delicious fruits and vegetables that you're eating. Smell them, feel them, taste them, and notice how they are made.
- The sky is continually changing, like a massive watercolor canvas. Notice how beautiful it is. Or go outside and look at the night sky together. Be filled with awe at the magnitude of the universe.
- Look at each person you meet with a sense of wonder. Everyone is made in the image of God and that makes every person special!

W E D N E S D A Y

# CHOOSE JOY



*Key Verse*

Rejoice in the Lord always.  
Again I will say, rejoice!  
Phil 4:4 NKJV

Sing this verse using the familiar song or  
try singing it to another joyful tune!



## EXPLORING JOY

Joy is the happy delight we feel that comes with a sense of peace and contentment. When we experience joy, we feel good from our head to our toes. Laughter is another kind of happiness. We might laugh when something is funny or amusing, or because we are surprised. Sometimes we laugh just because we feel happy!

Joy is good for us! Solomon said: 'A merry heart does good, like a medicine' (Prov 17:22 NKJV). Joy protects us from being overwhelmed by the challenges in our lives. Sometimes we can be so sad that we forget to enjoy the things that make us happy. When we choose to have some happy experiences during our sad times, it gives our heavy hearts a much-needed break.

God loves to see His children enjoying the world that He created for them. Jesus enjoyed bringing joy to the children He blessed, and to those He fed and healed. Paul reminds us to 'rejoice with those who rejoice' (Rom 12:15). Whenever we share joy with others, our joy is doubled by theirs, and we can all thank God for the joy we experience in our lives.





## JESUS SHARES JOY! (JOHN 2)

Mary, the mother of Jesus, was very busy. She was grinding barley to make flour for bread, and she was making cakes from honey, raisins, figs, and almonds. Everything looked very special. She was making all these delicious things to serve at a local wedding. She wanted everything to be just perfect for the bride and groom.

At long last it was time for the wedding to start. Everything was ready. The groom's house was finally finished and decorated with flowers. The food was laid out on the tables and the cups were waiting for the grape juice, which was stored in a cool place. Mary wore her best dress and Jesus put on a clean robe. His disciples were invited too! Everybody in the whole village was going to be there because a wedding was such a wonderful celebration!

It was a very special time! All the family's friends were there to celebrate with the bride and groom. There would be several days of feasting, music, joyfulness and laughter!

But, in the middle of all the festivities, Mary came to find Jesus. She looked sad. And Jesus noticed that it wasn't only Mary who looked sad. Other people were sad too, especially the bridegroom and the bridegroom's father. Mary took Jesus into a quiet corner, 'They've run out of grape juice for the guests,' she whispered. 'The family are really embarrassed, but they don't have enough money to buy any more.' Jesus took a deep breath. He knew what she was thinking. She wanted him to find a special way to solve the problem. She told the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you!'

Jesus prayed and asked His Father what to do. Then He told the servants to fill up some massive water jars that were standing nearby. When they were all full, Jesus told them to dip a ladle into the water jar, and to pour the grape juice into a cup for the host of the feast.

When the host tasted the grape juice, he said to the bridegroom, 'Wow, this is delicious! Where did you find such amazing grape juice? And why didn't you serve this first?' The bridegroom just smiled and smiled! He was so happy! He hugged his beloved bride and she smiled! She was glad to see her husband wasn't sad anymore. And Jesus smiled too. He was happy that He and His Father could change water into a celebration grape juice and change sad people into happy people. Jesus watched everybody laughing and celebrating, and His heart was filled with joy.

Mary came and hugged Jesus. There were tears in her eyes. 'Thank you for making everybody happy!' she said.

Jesus smiled again. 'I am especially happy because my friend, the bridegroom, is almost the happiest man on earth today!'

'So, who can be happier than the groom?' Mary asked with a puzzled smile.

'My Father and I!' Jesus laughed! 'Making people happy makes us both very happy. My Father and I are filled to overflowing with joy, just like the waterpots, whenever people celebrate with joy!'

## JOYFUL PRAYER

Pray joyfully! Go through the alphabet together and say, 'We praise You, God, because You are A (adorable, admirable, Alpha, almighty).'  
'We praise You, God, because You are B (beautiful, blessing, bountiful, brave, brilliant).'

Notice how joyful this kind of prayer makes you feel!

Count how many aspects of God you can list together! (Could be added to the gratitude journal from Monday)



# EXPERIENCING JOY ACTIVITIES

FLOURISH! - CHOOSE WELL - THINK WELL - LIVE WELL - GROW WELL!



## The Joy List

- Make a list of 100 simple and small things that bring joy to your family. It's not as hard as it sounds when you think of 10 things you like to eat, smell, hear, see, do, etc.
- Write each one on a separate index card. Choose one idea every day.
- Write on the back of the card when you did it together and what you enjoyed most about doing it.



## Joy Through Sharing

- Write an e-mail/mail to your grandmother, aunt, or a friend from church and share joyful messages or pictures with them.
- Choose 10 of your favorite Bible verses about joy. Write out the verses and find ways to share them with neighbors and friends.



## Joy Activities

- Share the happiest things that happened to each of you today and rejoice with each other about all those good things (Rom 12:15).
- Make a joy bulletin board, where you gather happy or funny pictures, memories, Bible verses, and answers to prayer.
- Sing a joyful praise song together and celebrate God together.
- Make someone happy today and measure how much joy that gives you out of 10, where 0 is no joy and 10 is lots of joy! How much joy did you give to the other person?

T H U R S D A Y

# CHOOSE KINDNESS



*Key Verse*

Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you. Eph 4:32 NKJV

Cut out paper hearts. Write each word on a separate heart. Shuffle them and then arrange them in the right order.

## EXPLORING KINDNESS

Did you know that kindness is good for you? Whenever we do kind things for others, or even think about doing them, a lovely feel-good hormone called oxytocin washes over our brain. This makes us more thoughtful, considerate, caring, and wise. Kindness lowers our stress and releases anti-ageing hormones into our body. It helps us to have better relationships with others and reduces the number of conflicts we have. When someone is kind to us, we can feel happy for several hours. And when we are kind to others, we feel happy too. Doing kind things for others can sometimes be the most effective way to experience a sparkle of joy when we are feeling sad and down.

God wants His children to be kind because it blesses them as well as those they are helping. Jesus was filled with compassion for everyone He met. He told us that the two most important commandments are loving God and loving others. When we are kind, we are like big funnels, catching as much of God's love as possible, and pouring it into the lives of others. And that's exactly what Jesus did too.





## KINDNESS – SHARING GOD'S LOVE (JOHN 13)

Jesus loved being kind. His heart was so full of God's love that kindness flowed through everything He did. Each person was very precious to Him, and He wanted to let them know how special they were to God by being kind to them, too.

When people were hungry, He fed them. When they were lonely, He stopped to speak kind and encouraging words to them. When they were sick, He healed them. When they were sad, He made them laugh and smile again. When they felt ashamed, He lifted them up, forgave them, and gave them a brand-new life. He hugged and blessed little children and their parents. When Jesus saw how much people were hurting in their hearts, He wanted to mend their pain with the very special 'medicine' of kindness, that we can all share.

Jesus told many stories about the importance of kindness. He told the story of a stranger who happily took care of an injured enemy because it was the compassionate thing to do. He told the story of the sheep and the goats, to show us that the best thing we can do is to fill our hearts with God's loving kindness towards us, so that we can share it with others. We can help by feeding the hungry, giving clothes to the poor, visiting those who are sick and in prison and making sure they are fed and cared for. He told people to be as kind as possible, even to their enemies, because kindness can melt hearts and make them more open to God's loving care. He also said that whenever anyone does the smallest kind thing, they are doing it for Him.

Jesus knew that His time on earth with His disciples had almost ended. They had gathered for the Feast of the Passover, and they were all looking forward to a delicious meal together. They had rented a room and prepared all the delicious food...but there were no servants to wash their feet. The bowl was there, and the towels, and even the water, but no servant. The disciples looked at each other awkwardly. No one wanted to take the place of the servant by washing everyone else's dirty feet. Jesus felt sad. They had been together for three years. Every day Jesus had shown them what it means to be kind, and still they didn't understand that kindness does whatever it takes to bless and care for others.

So, Jesus quietly took off his robe, tied the towel around his waist, and poured the water into a bowl. Now the disciples felt ashamed of their pride. But Jesus wasn't embarrassed at all! He was happy to be the servant because it would give Him another way to show them how much He loved them. And perhaps they might learn that if He was willing to do such a humble job to care for them, they could also be willing to do whatever is needed to bless others.

## WONDER PRAYER ACTIVITY

- Draw around an adult's hand.
- Write something kind that you could do for others on each of the fingers.
- Write a short prayer on the palm of the hand asking God to help you be kind.
- Cut out your hands and arrange them on a poster.



# EXPERIENCING KINDNESS ACTIVITIES

FLOURISH! - CHOOSE WELL - THINK WELL - LIVE WELL - GROW WELL!



## Kindness Tags

- Draw heart shapes on a piece of white cardstock.
- Make them about as big as your closed fist.
- Decorate the hearts and write on each one 'You've been kindness tagged! Now it's your turn to be kind!'
- Cut out the hearts.
- Whenever you do something kind for someone in your family, leave a tag behind to show where you have been kind. Then it's the finder's turn to do something kind.



## Kindness birthdays

Celebrate birthdays, by planning one act of kindness for each year of your life, or for every five years if you are adults.

- Make food parcels to give away.
- Make a batch of cakes or cookies for the police station, fire team, or ambulance service.
- Wrap small gifts that anyone might like. Hide them in safe public places with a message that if anyone finds it, they can keep it or pass it on.
- Take a bag of good quality clothes that you don't need to a charity or thrift store.



## Everyday Kindness Activities

- Whenever you go to the grocery store buy one extra packet of good quality food. Donate it to a food bank or collect a box of food to give to a hungry family, a women's refuge/shelter, or a homeless shelter.
- Collect coins in a jar. Open it once a year and buy something for a person in need.
- Write short, encouraging and kind messages on sticky notes. Stick them in different places - inside a magazine, in a library book, on a package in a grocery store, on a mirror, etc.
- Do something kind for each person in your family every day. It will make everyone feel happier, and it can even help you to argue less! (Gal 5:22-23)
- Try this: In every situation think about how you can be kind. Then think how you can be even kinder and choose to do the second thing.

Find hundreds of simple kindness activities on this website:  
<https://ted.adventist.org/live-kind>

F R I D A Y

# CHOOSE PEACEFULNESS

## EXPLORING PEACE

In a busy world, moments of quietness are very important. We need to slow down, and press 'pause', so that we have time to reflect on our lives. Our over-stimulated bodies and minds need to take a break so that they can rest and be refreshed. It is good for us to breathe deeply and slowly, to help calm our bodies. We can imagine that we are



### *Key Verse*

**My peace I give to you. John 14:27 NKJV**

**Cover a small box with 'peaceful' or blue paper and write 'Peace' on it. Pass it from person to person, saying the memory verse as you pass it on. Stress the words 'my peace' for the first time around the circle, then 'I give' on the second time, and 'to you' on the third time.**

breathing in God's peace, and breathing out all the things that disturb our peace. Moments of peace are good for our children. They need time in their busy lives to pause and reflect and rest, not so that they can take a nap, but so that they can learn how to calm themselves down whenever they feel stressed or frightened.

When we experience a deep sense of peace with God, it helps us to face our challenges with the calm reassurance that He is in control of the situation. When we experience His peace, we are less likely to say and do things that hurt others, or cause arguments, and we are more likely to be kind and wise.

Today we will learn about the peace that Jesus brings into our lives, that helps us to stay calm in the storms of life.



## PEACE IN THE STORM (MATTHEW 8)

Jesus wanted to leave a very special gift for His friends. It was to be something that everyone could enjoy, wherever they were. It was the gift of a peaceful heart. As soon as Jesus was born the angels came to tell the shepherds that God was sending a message of peace to the whole world through this little baby.

When Jesus started to preach, He saw how worried and troubled the crowds were. They were worried about their food, and their clothes, and their money and their jobs, and the tax collectors and the Roman soldiers...With all these worries filling their minds, it was difficult for them to be still and peaceful. It was hard for them to listen to Jesus, and to think about what He was saying.

One day Jesus and His disciples climbed into a boat to cross the lake of Galilee. It was a large lake with hills around it, and strong storms could blow up very quickly. Jesus was tired from a long day of preaching, teaching, and talking to people. He lay down in the bottom of the boat and fell fast asleep. Soon a wild storm crashed around the little crew. The waves splashed over the side of the boat and water started to fill the wooden hull. The boat rose and fell on the large waves. It swirled and dipped, and everyone was holding on tightly to the boat and the ropes.

The disciples were scared, even the fishermen that were used to storms. They used all their strength to keep the boat upright and afloat. They were so busy and frightened that they forgot that Jesus was in the boat, until someone remembered, and woke Him up to help them bail out the water. Jesus sat up and saw His frantic and frightened friends. They thought they were going to drown!

Jesus asked them 'Why are you so scared? I am here with you!' Then He stood up in the boat and told the winds and waves to calm down. Suddenly the lake was smooth and still as a mirror. The bright moon reflected in the water. The wind rested, and the waves barely shivered. The disciples breathed a huge sigh of relief. They sat down in the boat and all their stresses and fears were soothed by Jesus' loving care and peacefulness.

Just before Jesus left His disciples to go back to heaven, He told them not to be afraid or troubled because He was going to make a place so that everyone who loves God can live together in peace forever. We can choose to be peaceful in the storms of our lives because Jesus is always with us. His perfect love takes away all our fears, because, no matter what happens, we are always safe in His loving care.

## UNFOLDING PEACE PRAYER

- Cut cloud shapes from thin paper.
- Write the word 'Peace' on one side with a ball-point pen.
- Fill a wide bowl with water.
- Use pencils to write worries on the blank side of the clouds.
- Fold the edges of the cloud over the word 'Peace'.
- Float the clouds on water with the folded edges uppermost.
- Pray for God to calm the storms in your mind and give you peace.
- Watch as the 'clouds' open and you can see 'Peace'.



# EXPERIENCING PEACE ACTIVITIES

FLOURISH! - CHOOSE WELL - THINK WELL - LIVE WELL - GROW WELL!



## Calm-down Kit

Make a family calm-down kit in a basket. Fill it with things that help you to feel peaceful:

- Containers of bubbles (if available).
- Lavender oil, or other soothing fragrances.
- Chamomile tea bags.
- Hand cream.
- Safe candles.
- Book of peace Bible messages, or print or write Bible texts on small pieces of paper.
- Coloring books of Bible stories with crayons or coloring pencils.



## Peace Candle

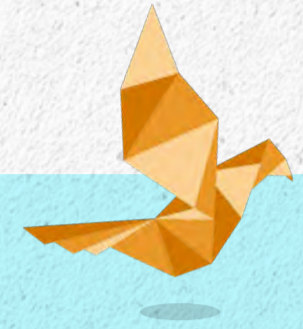
- Find a clean jar with straight sides.
- Print the word 'PEACE' on a strip of paper that will wrap around the jar.
- Tape the strip around the jar.
- Place a small candle or battery-operated candle in the jar and light it.
- The word 'PEACE' will illuminate.
- When we have the light and love of Jesus in our hearts, peace will shine out of our lives to others.



## Storm Bottle

Make a storm bottle by gathering the following things:

- A small plastic, lidded bottle with clear sides.
- Water.
- Blue coloring – a drop of paint, food-coloring or ink
- Clear oil.
- Boat-shaped pieces of foam, cork, or twigs.
- Pour equal amounts of oil and water into the bottle, plus the blue coloring. Add the floating shapes. Screw lid on firmly. Tell the story of Jesus calming the storm. Start with the bottle horizontal and still. When the storm comes, keep the bottle horizontal and shake it to make the storm. Then hold it still again when Jesus calms the storm.



## Dove Mobile

- Make some paper doves. See [www.craftow.com](http://www.craftow.com) for more paper dove ideas.
- Write a Bible verse about peace on each side of the doves.
- Hang the doves using a thin thread, and check that the birds are well-balanced. Add more doves if you wish, to make a flock of peace!



S A B B A T H

# CHOOSE HOPE



*Key Verse*

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace. Rom 15:13 NKJV

Make up some actions to this verse, with your family, and practice it until you can teach it to someone else.  
With whom will you share this hopeful blessing?

## EXPLORING HOPE

From the very beginning of earth's history, God shared the good news of a hopeful future where sin would be eradicated forever. God gave hope to all His children – Sarah and Abraham hoped for a son, Moses hoped to lead the Children of Israel to the promised land, every generation hoped for a Messiah, and now we all look forward to the second coming of Jesus Christ. These are big hopes to remind us that God is in control, and He is making everything new. We also have smaller hopes in our lives, things we want to do, and special times we are looking forward to. God knew that we always need something to look forward to, so He gave us a weekly celebration in the form of Sabbath, and He gave the Children of Israel lots of festivals and feasts to enjoy.

When we lose hope, we soon become sad and discouraged, and we lose our sense of wonder, peace, and gratitude. When we have hope, it gives our lives purpose, and when we have a purpose for our life, it fills us with hope. Make sure your family always has something to look forward to with hope, and a special ministry that gives them purpose.





## ZACK FINDS HOPE (LUKE 19)

Zacchaeus was hungry for something, but it wasn't food. He was hungry for friends, for love, and for something else...but he couldn't describe it. It was like a big hole in his heart.

Zacchaeus was a tax collector. It was a good job if you wanted money, but not if you wanted friends. Nobody liked Zacchaeus. He knew there must be a better way to live, but he didn't know how to find it.

One day there was a buzz of excitement in the town. Jesus was coming! Zacchaeus had heard about Jesus from the people who passed through the town. People retold His amazing stories, described His astonishing miracles, and shared how kind and loving He was, even to Samaritans, lepers, women, and, best of all, tax-collectors...

Hope sparkled in Zacchaeus' heart! Maybe he could see Jesus, or even speak to Him! He imagined what Jesus would say to him if they met, and how Jesus would be kind to him too...Life would be so much better!

Zacchaeus made his way to the main street. The crowd was already thick, and he was too short to see over their heads. Then he noticed a tree with strong branches shading the dusty road. He tucked up his robes and climbed onto a sturdy branch.

The noise and commotion grew louder as Jesus came near. There were cheers and shouts of praise when Jesus stopped to heal a crumpled old person, or a child with an injured leg. Then Zacchaeus held his breath. Jesus was walking right under his tree! He could see him, He could even touch him, but he didn't dare...He just wanted to see His face...Suddenly Jesus stopped, right underneath his branch. He looked up and saw Zacchaeus and smiled! 'Hey Zack! There you are! I've been looking for you! I'm coming to your house for dinner! Come on down and get ready!' Jesus reached up to help Zacchaeus jump out of the tree. Then Jesus gave him a big hug and said, 'We'll be there for dinner, and I'll be bringing 12 friends!'

Zacchaeus laughed and sang as he ran home to prepare dinner! This was the happiest day of his life! He knew Jesus loved him and that filled the empty, aching hole in his heart! Because of Jesus' love for him he knew he could turn his life around! He could start by being kind to people and to give money to help others rather than grabbing it for himself! He could look for all the people who felt lonely and rejected, like him, and invite them over for dinner. Together they could find ways to help the poorer people in the city...

Zacchaeus realized what had been missing in his empty life – it was kindness, and peace, and joy, and wonder, and gratitude, and helping others. And now Jesus had given him a loving purpose for his life, he also had hope.

## HOPE PRAYER

- Praise God for the important gift of hope that He gives us.
- Thank Him for the hope of Jesus' soon return that inspires our faith.
- Take turns sharing one of your hopes and pray for them.
- Pray for a person who is struggling to be hopeful and ask God to show you how you can strengthen their hope.



# EXPERIENCING HOPE ACTIVITIES

FLOURISH! - CHOOSE WELL - THINK WELL - LIVE WELL - GROW WELL!



## Seeds of Hope

- Find an attractive pot and write a message of hope on it, or a Bible verse about hope.
- Fill the pot with soil or compost. Plant some fast growing flower seeds or bulbs.
- Gift it to someone who needs some encouragement.
- If it is difficult to write a message on the pot, make a sign with a hopeful message, attach it to a plant stick, and place in the pot.
- Then it's the finder's turn to do something kind.



## Hopeful Sabbaths

Sabbaths are special days that we look forward to with hope.

- God gave us weekly Sabbaths to give us hope and joy, and times of wonder, kindness, peace, and gratitude.
- Make a list together of some of the things you would like to do on Sabbath, to help you look forward to them even more than you do already.
- What could you do as a family to bless other families on Sabbath, and give them hope? (Help make special food, plan special worships together, go on wonder walks, start a mission project that helps people in your community, etc.)



## Hopes and Dreams

- Cut out large stars from white or yellow paper. Stars in the sky guide people in the right direction.
- Give each person several stars and ask them to write one of their hopes on each of the stars.
- Look at your hopeful stars and think about different ways in which you can encourage and help each other towards your different dreams.
- Gather your stars together and pray for your hopes.
- Thank God for the gift of hope.



## Flourish Activity Calendar

- Create a calendar for the month ahead.
- Choose some of the activities that were listed on the different days of this prayer guide and choose when you will do them in the future.
- Add other activities that fill you with love, joy, peace, hope, wonder, and gratitude.
- Now you have something to look forward to and give you hope!

# KEYS TO HEALTHY MINDS

## WEEK OF PRAYER ON-THE-GO



### SUNDAY: THINKING WELL

Our thoughts are important. What we think shapes our emotions, actions, our relationships, and our spiritual lives. When we focus on our worries, or on our mistakes and struggles, we can become overwhelmed with anxieties and fears.

Read **Philippians 4:6** together.

#### PAUL POSITIVE (PHILIPPIANS 4)

Paul decided to be thankful for God's blessings in his life. He chose to think about lovely things like the wonderful flowers and animals that God had created. The next time you feel sad and worried, remember how much Jesus loves you.

#### OPEN HANDS PRAYER

Praise God for His love. Thank Him that we can give our worries to Him because He loves us. Thank God for looking after your worries.



### MONDAY: CHOOSE GRATITUDE

God doesn't need us to say thank you to Him, but He loves it when we do. Every day He does thousands of wonderful things for each one of us. The more we pay attention to what God is doing, and the more we thank Him for those things the more we will experience His incredible love.

Read **1 Thessalonians 5:17** together.

#### EXTRAVAGANT GRATITUDE! (JOHN 12 / PHILIPPIANS 4)

Mary was full of joy for all the ways that Jesus had loved her and blessed her. Even though Paul was in a horrible prison, he thanked God every day because He knew that God was always good. If Jesus came to your house today, how would you thank Him for all that He has done for you?

#### GRATITUDE PRAYER

Choose a person to call out each letter of the alphabet in turn. Then work together to call out at least one thing you are thankful for beginning with each letter.



### TUESDAY: CHOOSE WONDER

Wonder is a special gift from God that is packed with good things for us! Wonder inspires us to be creative, to strive for excellence, and even to be compassionate, empathic, and generous towards others. God has filled this world with many wonders to show His love for us.

Read **Psalm 86:8, 10** together.

#### DON'T WORRY! TRY WONDER! (MATTHEW 6)

Jesus had so much to tell them about God and about life. He wanted to give the people something that would always remind them of God's loving care. Whenever you are worried about something, imagine you are putting your worry in God's hands, the hands that created all these wonders as love gifts for you.

#### GRATITUDE PRAYER

Gather beautiful examples of nature. Invite each person to choose an item and to find something about their object that fills them with wonder.



### WEDNESDAY: CHOOSE JOY

Joy is the happy delight we feel that comes with a sense of peace and contentment. When we experience joy, we feel good from our head to our toes. Joy protects us from being overwhelmed by the challenges in our lives.

Read **Philippians 4:4** together.

#### JESUS SHARES JOY! (JOHN 2)

'So, who can be happier than the groom?' Mary asked with a puzzled smile. 'My Father and I!' Jesus laughed! 'Making people happy makes us both very happy. My Father and I are filled to overflowing with joy, just like the waterpots, whenever people celebrate with joy!'

#### OPEN HANDS PRAYER

Pray joyfully! Go through the alphabet and say, 'We praise You, God, because You are A (adorable, admirable...).' 'We praise You, God, because You are B (beautiful, blessing, ...).'



### THURSDAY: CHOOSE KINDNESS

Did you know that kindness is good for you? Whenever we do kind things for others, or even think about doing them, a lovely feel-good hormone called oxytocin washes over our brain. God wants His children to be kind because it blesses them as well as those they are helping.

Read **Ephesians 4:32** together.

#### KINDNESS – SHARING GOD'S LOVE (JOHN 13)

Jesus loved being kind. His heart was so full of God's love that kindness flowed through everything He did. He was happy to be the servant because it would give Him another way to show them how much He loved them.

#### WONDER PRAYER ACTIVITY

Draw around an adult's hand. Write something kind that you could do for others on each of the fingers. Write a short prayer on the palm of the hand asking God to help you be kind.



### FRIDAY: CHOOSE PEACEFULNESS

In a busy world, moments of quietness are very important. We need to slow down, and press 'pause', so that we have time to reflect on our lives. Today we will learn about the peace that Jesus brings into our lives, that helps us to stay calm in the storms of life.

Read **John 14:27** together.

#### PEACE IN THE STORM (MATTHEW 8)

Jesus asked them 'Why are you so scared? I am here with you!' Then He stood up in the boat and told the winds and waves to calm down. We can choose to be peaceful in the storms of our lives because Jesus is always with us.

#### UNFOLDING PEACE PRAYER

Cut cloud shapes from thin paper. Use pencils to write worries on the blank side of the clouds. Pray for God to calm the storms in your mind and give you peace.



### SABBATH: CHOOSE HOPE

From the very beginning of earth's history, God shared the good news of a hopeful future where sin would be eradicated forever. When we have hope, it gives our lives purpose, and when we have a purpose for our life, it fills us with hope.

Read **Romans 15:13** together.

#### ZACK FINDS HOPE (LUKE 19)

Zacchaeus realized what had been missing in his empty life – it was kindness, and peace, and joy, and wonder, and gratitude, and helping others. And now Jesus had given him a loving purpose for his life, he also had hope.

#### HOPE PRAYER

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FAMILY TOGETHERNESS WEEK OF PRAYER | SEPTEMBER 3 - 9, 2023

- SUNDAY  
**THINKING WELL**
- MONDAY  
**CHOOSE GRATITUDE**
- TUESDAY  
**CHOOSE WONDER**
- WEDNESDAY  
**CHOOSE JOY**
- THURSDAY  
**CHOOSE KINDNESS**
- FRIDAY  
**CHOOSE PEACEFULNESS**
- SABBATH  
**CHOOSE HOPE**



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