

Introduction

This month, we're going to be looking at four different individuals in the Bible. These are men who knew God, were used by Him, and lived their lives for Him. Despite the thousands of years between us and them, we can learn a lot from the life they lived with God.

If you're a parent, please take time to look over these devotionals in order to pare them down or expand them as is appropriate for your children's age and attention span. Please remember that these devotionals are only a tool for you to use. They should not be what you do, spiritually-speaking, as a family. They should only be a part of a larger picture of family worship.

(For those of you with young children, it might be easier for you to use a Children's Bible, the Message, or the Contemporary English Version when you do your family devotions.)

Week 1: Samuel – Responding to God

Week 2: Joshua – Standing for God

Week 3: Gideon – Fighting for God

Week 4: Enoch – Walking with God

Week 1: Samuel – Responding to God | 1 Samuel 3

The story of Samuel is a Children's Church classic. If you don't know the story, you can read it in 1 Samuel 3—it's really quick—but either way, here's a quick summary:

Samuel's mom was barren, so she prayed to God for a child. God heard her prayer, and she gave birth to Samuel. In thanks to God, she had Samuel dedicated to God, and when he was still a toddler, he was brought to the Temple to serve God. One night, Samuel heard a voice calling out to him. He thought it was his boss, Eli, the high priest. Three times, God called Samuel, and Samuel ran dutifully into Eli's bedroom. Finally, the old priest told Samuel that it was God calling him, and Samuel finally answered the call.

It's crucial that, like Samuel, we all learn to hear and know God's voice. At the same time, it's even more crucial that when we do hear the voice of God we learn to respond like Samuel, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening."

Pull-Out Verses: "Then Samuel said, 'Speak, for your servant is listening.'" 1 Samuel 3:10

Reflection

For the Adults

- 1) God spoke to Samuel in the stillness. Do you take time to hear God, to "be still, and know" that He is God?
- 2) How can you teach your children—or model for those around you—the importance of hearing and responding to God's voice?

For the Kids

- 1) Samuel was a young boy when God came and spoke to him. Do you believe that God could speak to you too?
- 2) If God spoke to you, what would you do?

Challenge

- 1) Take time as husband and wife or as a family to have quiet time so that God can speak.
- 2) Begin praying that God will speak to your family, so that like Samuel, you can respond as a servant.

Week 2: Joshua – Standing for God | Joshua 24:14-27

This week's passage finds us at the end of Joshua's tenure as Israel's leader. He has led Israel in the conquering of the Promised Land, and he has called all of Israel's leaders to meet together to give them a last bit of final advice and such. It's his 'farewell address' to the nation as he prepares to retire.

In this speech, Joshua takes time to renew Israel's covenant with God. As a family—of one or a dozen—you have a covenant with God as well. It's a covenant through Christ death and resurrection. It's an agreement that God will forgive of us our sins, transform us into the likeness of His Son, and we will submit to Him in humility and adoration.

I was listening to a popular worship song this morning that said, "So, remember Your people. Remember Your children. Remember Your promise, O God." I know that line's scriptural, and I don't have a problem with it. I just thought as I listened, "God doesn't need to remember His promise, His covenant. *We* need to remember."

I think it's very easy to forget the covenant we have with God because it's one based on love and adoption into His family. But it's no less important than any other agreement we've made. In fact, our willingness to fulfill and remain faithful to any agreements (marriage vows, word of honor, etc.) stems from our commitment to our covenant with God. We ought to regularly take time to remember and renew our covenant with God, to declare to the world, "As for me and my household, we will serve the LORD."

Pull-Out Verse: "But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD." Joshua 24:15

Reflection

For the Adults

- 1) Have you forgotten your covenant with God? Do you need to take time renew your commitment to Him?
- 2) Are there any other covenants or agreements in your life that you have neglected?

For the Kids

- 1) Your parents have made a covenant with you. They provide for you (food, clothing, shelter) and you respect and obey them. Is that a fair agreement?
- 2) Have you made a covenant with God? It's very easy. Your parents would love to talk with you about it.

Challenge

- 1) Take time—weekly, monthly—to 'renew the covenant' between God and your family on a regular basis.
- 2) Draw a firm line on who your family will serve. Will it be sports, television, 'family time,' etc.? These are all fine things, but they're not God.

Week 3: Gideon – Fighting for God | Judges 6-7

Gideon was not what one would think of when hearing the phrase 'mighty warrior.' Gideon was a nobody from a nobody family. He had nothing to really offering in the way of military experience, and what's more, he was hiding from the bad guys. Neither a warrior nor really all that mighty.

Gideon wasn't living the 'mighty' life, but that didn't matter. God didn't look at who he was. God knew who Gideon could be if he'd simply put his trust in God. In Judges 6, we see Gideon still struggling

with his lack of faith, asking God two different times to prove Himself to Gideon. Finally, Gideon got the point and went to do as God commanded.

Yet again, when men showed up to fight with Gideon, God told Gideon to send certain ones away, so much so that only three hundred remained. God told Gideon that this would be all he needed because, "I will save you and give the Midianites into your hands." God promised that He would be with Gideon, and that He would ensure victory.

God has promised us victory, too. Jesus promised that He was always with us (Matt 28:20) and that, even though He was returning to the Father, He would come back for us (John 14:3). Life can be discouraging, and we might have reason to run and hide like Gideon. But, if we'll put our trust in God, we can fight with confidence, knowing that in the end, God will "will wipe every tear" from our eyes (Revelation 21:4).

Pull-Out Verse: "The angel of the LORD came and sat down under the oak....where....Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress to keep it from the Midianites. When the angel of the LORD appeared to Gideon, he said, 'The LORD is with you, mighty warrior.'" Judges 6:11-12

Reflection

For the Adults

- 1) What is going on in your life that makes you want to run and hide like Gideon?
- 2) How can you better trust in God to fight for you?

For the Kids

- 1) Gideon wasn't very brave, but God was with him. God promises to be with all of his children. Does that help you feel brave?
- 2) Are there times when you feel afraid? Do you ever tell God how you're feeling?

Challenge

- 1) Stop letting fear keep you from doing what God wants you to do. God is with you.
- 2) Find ways to stretch yourself in trusting in God.

Week 4: Enoch – Walking with God | Genesis 5:21-24, Hebrews 11:5-6

Enoch walked with God. It's plain and simple. He walked with God, and then God took him away. And that's about all we know. For all we know, Enoch didn't lead soldiers in battle. He didn't perform some crazy sea-splitting miracles. He didn't even lead anyone in the Sinner's Prayer. Yet Enoch is one of only two men in the Bible accorded the honor of escaping death. Even Jesus Christ, God's own Son, was unable to receive a 'Get Outta Death—Free!' card.

What made Enoch so special? Why take him to Heaven, skipping the 'you must die first' step? I think it's as plain and simple as Enoch's story: Enoch pleased God. He lived life with God daily—that's what 'walked with God' means. I don't think that God and Enoch took daily strolls. That was God's plan for Adam and Eve, but we lost that in The Fall. No, Enoch had a job: crops to raise, animals to herd, food to gather. He couldn't just take off and go walking with God. So, rather than relegate his time with God to the backburner, Enoch made everything he did about God. If he was tending his sheep, Enoch did it with God, talking to Him, listening to Him, spending time with Him. When it was time to weed the garden, there was Enoch, and there was God, too.

That's what pleased God. You see, Enoch wanted to be with God, so he made his life one big 'walk with God,' just as God had planned for Eden to be. That's what pleased God: Enoch wanted to be with Him. Being with God was Enoch's greatest desire, and God fulfilled it by taking him to Heaven.

That's what was so great about Enoch. He desired more than anything, maybe more than anyone else ever has.

More than Enoch, we have the ability to live the entirety of our lives in God's presence. The Holy Spirit lives within every child of God. Acknowledge His presence and make Him the center of all you do, the greatest desire of your life.

Pull-Out Verse: "For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God." Hebrews 11:5

Reflection

For the Adults

- 1) Enoch had a son, Methuselah. What kind of legacy do you think Enoch passed on to his son?
- 2) Sometimes, the things we do *for* God prevent us from walking *with* God. Is this happening in your life? What can you do to stop/prevent it?

For the Kids

- 1) Enoch went right to Heaven because that's where he wanted to be: with God forever. Do you ever think about going to Heaven to be with God?
- 2) Heaven is the perfect paradise that Christians are headed to when the world's over. What makes it perfect? (God's there!) Did you know that you can experience a piece of Heaven now by living your life with God?

Challenge

- 1) Talk as a family/couple/single about how you to make God the center of your life, making Him the greatest desire of your heart.
- 2) Read Colossians 3:1-2 and ask God to help you to put it into practice, setting your heart on things above.