

DAWN TREADER

EQUIPPING FAMILIES FOR EFFECTIVE DISCIPLISHIP

A KEEPING THE FAITH RESOURCE

ISSUE 1.1



As we enter into a new year, this is a good time to take a fresh look with your children at what it means to have a new life as a follower of Jesus Christ. Instead of making and breaking New Year's resolutions, let's allow Christ to fully make our lives anew this year!

Dawn Treader Moments

FOCUS OF THE MONTH: PREPARING THE HEART

Dawn Treader Moments are purpose-driven opportunities to engage children with important topics. We offer one key question per week, the answers to which parents can then explore with their children throughout the week.

For week one, ask the first question over an unhurried meal. Let the children think about it and then offer their own answers. The children should talk more than the parents. Throughout the week, offer the different reasons highlighted and let the children discuss them. (Parents, read through the relevant Bible passages in advance.) Challenge the children to look up other verses addressing the question. Do the same for the following questions each week for the month.

Resource of the Month

Grace-Based Parenting – Tim Kimmel with Foreword by Max Lucado



Parents in our post-modern world tend to be committed to but anxious about their child-rearing responsibilities. Now, there is a grace-based solution from Dr. Tim Kimmel, founder of Family Matters ministries. *Grace-Based Parenting* is a refreshing new book divided into two parts: the needs we are trying to meet in our children and the delivery system for how we meet them. Kimmel recommends creating a grace-based home environment that allows children to meet their full potential, parenting our children in the same way God parents us. He presents a child's true needs—according to Scripture—and provides parents with a realistic, doable way to meet them. The result—spiritually strong children who grow up with a sense of calm and a heart full of purpose and confidence. Parents will welcome *Grace-Based Parenting*.

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FOCUS OF THE MONTH: PREPARING THE HEART

Week One: How does being a Christian change our lives? (2 Corinthians 5:17)

- We have been “born again” as children of God. Our minds and hearts, instead of being in rebellion against God, have been brought into line, through Christ, with what God has always desired for us — our salvation.
- We no longer need fear death or anything bad that can happen to us, because we have eternal life with God in Heaven.
- This changes our entire perspective on life: instead of worrying about the concerns of the world which will not last, we can focus on matters of eternal significance—faith, hope, and love of God and neighbor.

Week Two: Why is it so important to have our lives changed by Jesus? (John 3:3-7)

- Salvation is more than being forgiven for our sins and promised Heaven after we die—the exciting new life of the Kingdom of God begins for us here on earth (if your children are older, this may be a good time introduce the terms justification—being freed from sin—and sanctification—being made holy—to their vocabulary).
- We can only help others come into God’s Kingdom if we show the evidence of how wonderful it is in our own lives.
- Life is no fun lived apart from Jesus—even though we will be forgiven our sins after-wards if we repent, there are always consequences in this life, and it is much nicer to live God’s way every day rather than sinning all week and repenting only on Sundays!

Week Three: How do we live this new life in Christ? (Galatians 4:1-5 and 5:21-25, Ephesians 2:8-10)

- Not by simply following rules—we cannot live the way God wants us to on our own; we need His grace every moment and need to be continually reformed and renewed spiritually by Him.
- However, spiritual disciplines and other specific “rules” or acts of obedience to God’s will are part of instilling and living out this new life in us. Parents can read more about teaching spiritual disciplines to their children in the Aslan Academy Guidebook or online at http://cslewisinstitute.org/Aslan_Academy_Introducing_Spiritual_Disciplines_to_Your_Children.
- Sometimes we don’t really “feel” the new life inside of us. Then, the best thing to do is go and do something practical that is in accordance with our new life in Christ—something that shows His Love. Even little things like drying the dishes without being asked can be seen as the fruits of the new life inside of us.

Week Four: What are the practical ways in which I can develop my new life as a born-again true disciple of Jesus? (Colossians 3:1-4:6, James 2:15-20)

- At home—obeying and helping my parents, sharing with my brothers and sisters, suggesting and participating in family activities and discussions that focus on our new life in Christ together.
- At school—respecting my teachers, being kind to all my fellow students as well as my best friends, setting a good example by not letting my friends influence me to do things Jesus wouldn’t do, checking everything I learn in my schoolbooks against the Bible to make sure I can distinguish between the true and false ideas provided in a secular school environment (and even if your child goes to a Christian school or is home schooled, no human teacher is perfect, and so it is still important to remember that every book and every idea picked up at school must be judged for its truth and helpfulness by the one true standard of God’s Word).
- At church—listening to my pastors and Sunday School teachers, helping with missionary and other church service projects to help other people learn about Jesus, making good friends with all the other people who share my faith in Jesus and the same new life with me—church is like one big family!
- In my community—helping others who don’t have as much as I do, making friends and taking every opportunity to be nice and helpful and give up my own way for others’ sake instead of starting quarrels, taking a firm stand against anything Jesus does not approve of.
- All the time—“pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17), take time every day to spend in devotion to God, ask Him to help with every decision, so that you will know how to behave in accordance with the new life He has given you, and rejoice in knowing how much He loves you!

Theologian Theodore

QUESTION OF THE MONTH: IF GOD IS LOVE, WHY ARE THERE SO MANY RULES?

Theodore: Hello, Ingrid! It's nice to see you. I haven't seen you at church lately.

Ingrid: No, I stopped going about a month ago.

Theo: Anything wrong?

In: No—yes—oh, no, certainly not! I'm glad I've stopped going, because I don't believe in all that they preach there anymore.

Theo: Do you mind if I ask you why?

In: I don't want to become a hypocrite, Theodore. And I think that is what most people in the church are. They talk about love all the time, which is what drew me into checking it out in the first place, but they don't really mean it. The more you get to know about them, the more you realize how judgmental they all are!

Theo: What makes you think love and judgment are completely opposite terms?

In: Theodore! You wouldn't argue that being judgmental is the same as being loving?

Theo: No, I wouldn't. Being judgmental is rooted in what C.S. Lewis called "The Great Sin" of pride¹ it's a desire to prove our own views "better" than those of others, just to make ourselves seem greater and belittle them. But I'm not sure that what you are objecting to in the church is actually a bad kind of judgment.

In: Is there more than one kind, Theodore? How can people who say that one way of living is better than another way be anything other than what you have just defined as judgmental? I don't like people who consider my behavior to be worse than what they think it ought to be, no matter what their reason is. I want genuinely accepting love in my life, thank you, and I intend to find it for myself, now.

Theo: If you can, Ingrid. I would argue that a genuine love always includes judgment, even in human relationships.

In: Well, really! Isn't the whole point of love that we don't care what the other person does, but just love them anyway?

Theo: Quite the contrary. C.S. Lewis' response to that idea was this: "we . . . then first begin to care"². Love, real love, always wants the very best for the other person. It doesn't necessarily want or condone all the things the other person does or desires, if they are not the best. "Love may forgive all infirmities and love still in spite of them: but Love cannot cease to will their removal"³. Parents who love their children always discipline them, because they want them to grow up to be useful, sensible, good people rather than lazy and selfish, since such people end up happier and more successful in the end. We may not know at the time why we will be better off doing things God's way rather than our own way, but we can rest assured that it will be so, for His love and justice are the same. If He says something is right to do, and that there will be serious consequences to doing it differently, it is because He loves us too much to let us do anything less than what will ensure our eternal happiness. "You thought you were going to be made into a decent little cottage: but He is building a palace. He intends to come and live in it Himself . . . The process will be long and in parts very painful, but that is what we are in for. Nothing less"⁴. And He expects His followers to help in this work, which is why we are supposed to let people know when the things they do are hurting them or others, keeping them back from the best God intends for them. The Bible commands us to "admonish one another" (Romans 15:14, Colossians 3:16); not in order to make ourselves look better, but in order to help one another to become closer to God. And what could be a greater act of love than that?



¹ C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 50th Anniversary ed. (London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2002), p. 121

² C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 50th Anniversary ed. (London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2002), p. 121), p. 38

³ C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*, HarperCollins ed. (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, a division of HarperCollinsPublishers, 2001), p. 39

⁴ C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 50th Anniversary ed. (London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2002), pp. 205-206

QUESTION OF THE MONTH: IF GOD IS LOVE, WHY ARE THERE SO MANY RULES?



In: But why should God make our obedience to a certain set of rules a condition of His love for us? Why do you think that only the one way, the way Christians believe, will result in happiness? Why can't God make us happy no matter what we do, if He loves us so much?

Theo: Because the only genuine happiness available is His kind of happiness. Asking God to show us His love without making us into the only kind of people who can really understand and appreciate His love is like asking to be given water while still remaining thirsty—it's asking Him to love us without loving us, which is a contradiction in terms.

In: I guess that makes sense, but what I'm really complaining about here is not about God's Own love, but that shown by His followers. So often the people I meet at church don't seem to be any nicer than those I meet in other places, so it annoys me when they act like they have something better than the rest of the world.

Theo: But we *do* have something better. That doesn't make us better. On the contrary, I would say that the great gift of salvation given to followers of Christ lays us open to stricter judgment when we do *not* try to be nicer than those who do not follow Him. "To whom much was

given, of him much will be required" (Luke 12:48). But that doesn't mean that Christ's followers do not know about the greatest good there is, and are not in duty—and in love!—bound to tell everybody else in the world about the chance they have to find that goodness, even if they don't always live it out themselves as they should.

In: But if it really is true that God's justice, following His rules, is the way to fully enjoy and experience His love, why don't all the people who know about it do it?

Theo: They may be. We can't always know right away whether someone's life has been changed by Christ, from just looking at outward appearances. "Christian Miss Bates may have an unkind tongue than unbelieving Dick Firkin. That, by itself, does not tell us whether Christianity works. The question is what Miss Bates' tongue would be like if she were not a Christian and what Dick's would be like if he became one... before Christ has finished with Miss Bates, she is going to be very 'nice' indeed... in God's eyes Dick Firkin needs 'saving' every bit as much as Miss Bates... That is why Christians are told not to judge. We see only the results which a man's choices make out of his raw material. But God does not judge him on the raw material at all, but on what he has done with it... All sorts of nice things that we thought our own... will fall off some of us: all sorts of nasty things... will fall off others. We shall then, for the first time, see every one as he really was. There will be surprises"⁵. You see, Ingrid, that it really is possible, indeed necessary, to "hate sin and love the sinner" at the same time, to show both justice and love. We can always know and tell people if what they do is something against God's goodness and in danger of judgment; that is a loving thing to do. But we cannot be judgmental and act as though the wrong actions that people do are necessarily a deliberate attempt to go against God's love; all people are sinners and have different temptations to fight against, even after they become His.

In: And maybe some of those people in church that I thought were judgmental are just those who have to fight particularly hard against that temptation!

Ask your children: What do you think about Theo's answers to Ingrid's questions? Do you have any other questions of your own that this dialogue has brought up for you? Challenge them to think up more responses they could give, if someone asked them a question like Ingrid's.

⁵ C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 50th Anniversary ed. (London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2002), pp. 210-211, 91-92

Prayer of the Month

GRACE

The prayer for this month is a grace for before mealtimes, which is one of the best opportunities for praying together as a family. Saying grace also brings us back to the center of prayer: thankfulness to God for what He gives us, even when we don't remember to ask Him! This grace would be especially nice for a family meal together, as it reminds us to think of others and give as well as receive with thanks.

Dear Lord, please bless this food to our use,
And us to Thy service,
And make us ever mindful of the needs of others.
And for what we are about to receive,
May the Lord make us truly thankful.
In Jesus' Name we pray,
Amen.



Activity of the Month

ONE ON ONE

C.S. Lewis once described our new life in Jesus as “dressing up as Christ” (C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 50th Anniversary ed. (London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2002), p 188). The Bible discusses this same concept in the parable of the wedding guests and wedding clothes (Matthew 22:1-14). This is a great way to teach our kids about how the new life in Christ works. Have each of your children dress up in—or design and draw—an outfit that represents our “new creation” life in Christ. Encourage them to be detailed in what each color or decoration on their outfit means—use Ephesians 6:13-17 and Revelation 7:13-14 and 19:8 to get started with ideas. Then use these costumes to discuss how we actually “wear” our new righteousness after being saved into a new life through Christ.



What is *Keeping the Faith*? The *Keeping the Faith* program is a unique study-plus-fellowship experience featuring the Aslan Academy Small Group model centered around the *Keeping the Faith* guidebook. It is designed to equip parents, grandparents and other caring adults for intentional discipleship of their children and teens. *Dawn Treader* is a monthly newsletter filled with activities and ideas geared to help you to disciple the children in your lives from preschool through the teen years. To learn more about the program, go to: www.cslewisinstitute.org/KTFResources