

God's word

Blessed to be a blessing

It's easy to focus on the blessings we want for our family. We often appreciate the fact that God has blessed us in many ways without stopping to ask the question why. When we look deep into God's word we see that, most often, God blesses His people so that they, in turn, might be a blessing to others. His greater purpose in our blessing is for all the nations of the earth to be blessed.



Psalm 67:1–2 (NIV)

"May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine on us – so that your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations."

Study it

Share the account of Abraham in Genesis 12–13. As you read together, focus on Genesis 12:1–3. Identify specific ways that God blessed Abraham. Did God bless Abraham because he deserved it? For what greater purpose did God bless Abraham?

Experience it

- ▶ Look for ways that your family can actively bless others this week. Here are a few ideas, but be creative and think outside the box:
 - Donate clothing or blankets to a homeless shelter.
 - Make cookies and deliver them to your neighbors.
 - Volunteer to babysit for a single mom.
- ▶ As parents, begin the habit of speaking a blessing (like Numbers 6:22–27) over each of your children.

Discuss it

- 1 How has God blessed our family? How can we use these blessings to bless others?
- 2 Is it difficult to let go of things we have and enjoy? Why?
- 3 How does knowing God's purpose begin to change the way we view our lives?

Map it

Get a world map and hang it in a prominent area of your home. Stand in front of the map. Invite the children to point out specific countries and regions that they recognize. Pray that God would use your family to bless the families of the earth.

God's word

Created to worship

Although the Bible is made up of lots of "books" and stories, we want our family to understand that it is really one BIG story starring God as the main character. God wants to be loved by all. Worship is our way to show God our love. We worship not just with songs or words, but by loving God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength.



Psalm 29:2 (NIV)

*"Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name;
worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness."*

Study it

David was a young boy who was not okay with God's name being insulted among the nations. Read the account of David and Goliath in 1 Samuel 17:1–57. Focus on verses 45–47 together. Look for the purpose David had in taking on Goliath. Do you think you would have been as brave as David?

Experience it

- ▶ Discover the power and meaning that is in a name. Look up the meaning of each family member's name in a baby book or online resource. Which names are accurate descriptions? Which are not?
- ▶ Start a family journal. Make a nightly habit of writing in the journal this week as a way to love and worship God. Keep it open for family members to write in it whenever they have reason to thank God. Spend time as a family thinking of good things God does all the time and thank Him on behalf of those that don't know how.

Discuss it

- 1 How do we treat God's name in our home and in our conversations?
- 2 How do we feel when we hear others dishonoring God's name?
- 3 What things do we do as a family to love God? Do others see us living a life of worship?

Map it

Gather and pray over your world map. Pray that people around the world will know the truth of God – that He is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

God's word

Designed for the Kingdom

There is something powerful in the story of a great king. What a joy to teach our family that we serve the living King – His name is Jesus! We can fight to defend His kingdom, waging war against the forces of darkness. One way we do battle is through prayer. In prayer, we help deliver souls out of the kingdom of darkness and into the kingdom of His marvelous light (Colossians 1:13–14).



Revelation 17:14 (NKJV)

"... for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful."

Study it

Elijah's encounter with the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel displays light triumphing over darkness. As a family, read 1 Kings 18:16–39. How did God respond to Elijah's prayer? What was God displaying to the prophets of Baal? To the people of Israel?

Experience it

► At mealtime, begin the tradition of making this toast: "To our King ... and to His kingdom!" This will be an ongoing reminder of God's rule in your family and of your desire to serve Him. Make the toast wholeheartedly and with gusto!

► Think of some people you know that may not be following Jesus. Write their names on slips of paper and place them in a jar. Each day, take a name from the jar and pray earnestly that they would follow and serve Jesus as King.

Discuss it

- 1 How did Jesus come to earth the first time? (Luke 2:7) How will He return? (Revelation 19:11–16)
- 2 Is God's kingdom a physical place, like a castle? What is His kingdom?
- 3 How can we fight battles "on our knees"? (Colossians 1:13–14)

Map it

Create a timeline to hang under your map. Mark on the timeline when Jesus was on earth, today's date and, at the end of the timeline, when Jesus will come again as King. Show that we are living in a time that Jesus is waiting for as many people as possible to follow Him as King (2 Peter 3:9). Pray for people who do not yet know Jesus as King.

God's word

Challenged to go

The Great Commission (Matthew 28:18–20) and the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:36–39) are our family's marching orders, given by our King Jesus. Together, they form one mandate. Embracing this mandate as a family goes beyond obedience and duty. It is a privileged opportunity to press towards the goal of Jesus Christ being loved and obeyed in every people group.



John 20:21 (NIV)

"Again Jesus said, 'Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.'"

Study it

After His death and resurrection, Jesus gave one last set of instructions to His disciples before ascending to heaven. Read Matthew 28:18–20 and Acts 1:1–8. Was Jesus adding a new rule He had forgotten to mention? How was the Great Commission a summary of all Jesus had been teaching His disciples?

Experience it

- ▶ As a family, brainstorm ways you prepare to go on vacation. How would you similarly prepare to go and make disciples (for example, learning to communicate the gospel message clearly)? Discuss why it's important to be ready to "go" and make disciples. What does discipleship look like in your family?
- ▶ Play a game of Follow the Leader. Explain that being Jesus' disciple means following Him. Jesus showed us what a disciple looks like by obeying the commands of His Father and following Him (John 5:19). Discuss practical ways that your family can live out The Great Commandment (Matthew 22:36–39).

Discuss it

- 1 What is a disciple? (John 8:31)
- 2 How do the Great Commission and the Great Commandment work together?
- 3 Why is it a privilege to be a part of the Great Commission?

Map it

On a globe or world map, use one end of a string to mark Jerusalem and the other end to measure the distance to where you live. Praise God for the people that embraced His mandate and brought the gospel to your country. Ask God to challenge and equip people to go and make disciples of all nations.

God's word

Called to witness

Jesus commissioned His early followers, and those who would come after them, with power and clear purpose. They were to be His witness of the truth. As parents, we need to demonstrate by example that being a witness is more about who we are than what we do. As witnesses, we are intentional ... purposeful in how we act, in what we say, and in how we live our daily lives. Living with direction enables us to streamline our lives as our family seeks to live out our witness for all to see.



Acts 1:8 (NIV)

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Study it

Following Jesus often costs something. The apostles' witness in Jerusalem, even in the face of persecution and opposition, established the profound value of following Jesus. Read Acts 5:17–41 together. How did the apostles bear witness? What price did the apostles pay for their faithfulness to God's purpose for their lives?

Experience it

- ▶ Write a family creed, declaring who you are, what you live for, and what your life is about. Read it together. Have all the members of your family sign and date it. As you live each day, use your family creed to filter life decisions and daily activities.
- ▶ Trace around your feet. On the footprints, list places you go during the week where you could be a witness for Jesus through your words and actions. Compare lists.

Discuss it

- 1 In what ways could it cost our family if we fully embraced God's global purposes?
- 2 How does living intentionally for God affect our family witness?
- 3 What is the value of letting some things go in pursuit of greater things?

Map it

Hang your family creed near your world map. Pray for your family to be committed to God's global purposes and the role He has for each of you in His Story.

God's work

The story

God has always been at work. History is His story from beginning to end. He is establishing an enormous family – a dazzling array of households of faith that display His kingdom and glory. As we study history, we can see God moving His people, whether voluntarily or involuntarily. Through both means, He positions His people to play their unique part in His story of gathering families from every nation to Himself. God has given our family a unique role to play in His story.



Esther 4:14 (NKJV)

"... Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

Study it

Share the account of Esther with your family, focusing on Esther 4:7–16. How was Esther placed in her position as queen involuntarily? How did this God-given position allow Esther to stand voluntarily on behalf of the Jews? What did Esther risk for her actions?

Experience it

- ▶ On your timeline draw or write down events that reflect your family's history, going back as far as you like. Highlight moves your family made and events in your children's lives. Discuss the impact of the events you record. Talk about your family's legacy.
- ▶ Every believer has a unique and valuable part to play in God's story. Make a favorite family snack, leaving out a key ingredient. Describe how the snack tastes. Discuss why each ingredient in a recipe is important and how they all work together. Make the connection that each of us has a unique part to play in God's story, not only as a family, but also as individuals.

Discuss it

- 1 Look back. Where is God evident in our family history?
- 2 How does our current piece of the timeline fit into God's bigger story?
- 3 Look ahead. How will we prepare for the blessing of future generations in our family? (Deuteronomy 7:9)

Map it

Using stickers or tacks, mark on your world map where Esther was when God used her to save the Jews. Mark the place where your family lives and places you have gone. Pray for God to begin to reveal your family's unique role at this time in history and in the place where you are now.

God's work

The finish line

The gospel has spread steadily since Jesus' death and resurrection, but never as rapidly as in our day. More people have followed Christ in the last 100 years than in all of the previous centuries combined. As barriers fall, more people groups are having the chance to hear about and respond to Jesus. What an exciting time in history for our family! We are approaching history's finish line, the time when peoples from every culture will know Jesus and He will claim His final victory over evil.



Revelation 7:9 (NIV)

"After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands."

Study it

Share the account of Peter and Cornelius from Acts 10. Peter's cultural Jewish upbringing became a barrier that kept him from seeing the Gentiles' need for salvation through Jesus. How did God prepare Peter to meet Cornelius? What barriers did God eliminate (10:27, 34–35)? How did the removal of these barriers result in people being saved?

Experience it

- ▶ Make waffles to introduce your family to the concept of barriers. Pour syrup on a waffle. Observe how the syrup fills some squares, but passes over others. Imagine that the syrup is the gospel message and our world is a waffle. Think about how barriers act like "waffle walls," preventing the gospel message from reaching some people groups.
- ▶ Go barrier bowling! Set up six bottles like pins. Label each bottle with a barrier that prevents people from responding to the gospel. Using a small ball, take turns bowling down the barriers. Explain how the ball represents prayer. When we pray, God begins to knock down and remove barriers to the gospel. It takes ongoing prayer to remove them all.

Discuss it

- 1 Why is it important to get the gospel to unreached people groups?
- 2 How do barriers like geography, language, tradition, or religious beliefs keep the gospel from spreading?
- 3 What is it going to take to finish the task?

Map it

On sticky notes, write down several barriers that prevent the gospel from spreading. Stick these notes on your world map. Pray for people groups who remain unreached because of these barriers. Remove your notes from the map, praising God that He is able to remove these barriers.

God's work

The faithful

Studying missionary pioneers who ran the Christian race can motivate our family to see ourselves as the runners in the next leg of the race. Through their stories, we see how God uses ordinary people, with all their weaknesses and struggles, to do extraordinary things through His power and grace. As followers of Christ, we need to not only run the race, but also pass the baton on to the next generation of believers, like Paul did with Timothy.



Hebrews 12:1 (NIV)

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us."

Study it

As a family, read through the "Hall of Faith" in Hebrews 11. Talk about the lives of those listed. Many were men and women with great flaws, yet God used them in mighty ways. What character quality did they have in common? What does it mean to live by faith?

Experience it

► Read a story about a missionary. Write a skit/monologue that reflects the story of his or her life. Act out the play. Consider creating a stage, using props, and even inviting family and friends to come watch your creation.

► William Carey's famous quote, "Attempt great things for God. Expect great things from God," has motivated Christians for centuries. Write this quote on your world map. Discuss what great things your family is attempting for God. Are you expecting great things from God, too?

Discuss it

- 1 Is there anything that God is asking our family to do by faith right now?
- 2 What are the qualifications that God is looking for? Consider Isaiah's response in Isaiah 6:8.
- 3 How do we cultivate an attitude of willingness like Isaiah's?

Map it

Do you know missionaries personally that are serving in another country? Does your church support missionary families? If so, mark their location on your world map and pray that God would bless the work of their hands as they faithfully serve Him.

God's work

The strategy

God created a vast array of people groups, each designed to reflect His image and glory. God's heart is for all peoples to know and worship Him, yet many are still waiting to hear the Good News of Jesus for the first time. Introducing our family to God's plan for all peoples, and exploring the current reality of the unreached, allows the Holy Spirit to begin molding our hearts to live strategically. We want to pursue things that matter most to God.



Matthew 24:14 (NIV)

"And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come."

Study it

Share the account of Jesus' encounter with the woman at the well from John 4:1–42. Jews refused to associate with Samaritans, but Jesus intentionally sought one out (v. 7). What message was He bringing to the woman and how did she respond? How did her belief affect the entire village (v. 42)? What does this teach us about God's strategy in reaching the nations?

Experience it

► Play a strategic game (board game, cards, checkers) and discuss your moves. Why is strategy important?

► Prayer is strategic in God's global work. Use the THUMB acronym to pray for major religious blocs – Tribal (animist), Hindu, Unreligious, Muslim, and Buddhist. Cut pictures from magazines to make a collage of people of varying ethnicities and ages. Trace and make a paper cutout of your hand. Label each finger T, H, U, M, or B. Place the paper hand on the collage. Spend time praying for THUMB peoples to find hope and truth in Jesus.

Discuss it

- 1 Millions of people have never heard of Jesus or met a Christian. How does that make you feel?
- 2 Why do we believe in the Good News of Jesus? Why do we want all people to know and believe this Good News of Jesus?
- 3 Is our family being strategic in sharing about Jesus? If so, in what ways? If not, how can we move toward being strategic in sharing with others?

Map it

Place your thumb on a country or region of your choice. Take turns praying for THUMB people who live in that area. Pray they will be reached with the Good News of Jesus.

God's world

How will they hear?

We want our families to become lifelong learners in every area. This includes learning from people of other cultures. God created a vast array of cultures and desires to see all people love and worship Him, but He cannot be loved if He is not known! Learning about cultural differences will equip us to become better communicators of the gospel.



Romans 10:14 (NIV)

"How can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?"

Study it

Read Acts 17:16–32, the account of Paul among the Greeks in Athens. What did the people think of Paul's God at first? How did Paul use what he learned about Greek culture to tell them about Jesus? Note Paul's words in verses 26–27. Did God purposefully put us in the cultures and countries where we live? Why?

Experience it

- ▶ Play the telephone game to experience how easily a message can be changed as it gets passed on. Practice telling and retelling a Bible story. Try to remain accurate each time.
- ▶ Introduce your family to other cultures. Visit an international market. Cook ethnic recipes. Attend a cultural event in your community. Read stories set in different cultures. Learn a worship song in a different language. Talk about what is unique and interesting about the cultures you experienced.

Discuss it

- 1 How would you know if someone is from another culture? (food, language, customs, etc.)
- 2 Why do you think God created different cultures?
- 3 How does understanding what people think and how they live help us clearly tell people about Jesus?

Map it

In some cultures, believers in Jesus Christ pray aloud, all at the same time! To experience what this is like, have each family member choose a country on the map. Pray – out loud, at the same time, with boldness – that the gospel message would be heard clearly.

God's world

How will they receive?

The salvation message is changeless and true, yet the way in which the message is delivered plays a huge role in how it is received by the hearer. God has chosen our family to be His messengers and we desire to be wise and share the salvation message well. To be trusted and accepted by those from another culture, we must become a family of love and humility, with a willingness to serve.



1 Thessalonians. 2:8 (NIV)

"We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become dear to us."

Study it

Read the account of Philip, God's messenger to the Ethiopian in Acts 8:26–40. Was Philip willing to share with someone different from him? How did Philip's questions create an opportunity to share? How did the Ethiopian receive the message? An exciting result was that the word of God spread to Ethiopia!

Experience it

► Wise messengers take time to learn about those to whom they are delivering God's message. One way to show interest in a person's culture is by asking questions. As a family, role play how you would interact with a person from another country or culture. What questions would you ask? Find an opportunity to invite an international person into your home.

► Another way to show interest in a person's culture is to enter into it. Eat a meal from another culture that would stretch your family's taste buds. Your goal is to eat it all with smiles and thankfulness, enjoying conversation, without complaining or being rude so you will be well received.

Discuss it

- 1 How would you feel if someone visited your home, complained about what you ate, and only spoke their own language?
- 2 What are some character qualities that help a messenger be well received? (1 Timothy 4:12)
- 3 How do the actions and attitudes of our family impact the way the gospel message is received?

Map it

Have each family member pick a country on the map. Brainstorm specific character qualities that would help a messenger's words be well received there. Pray for messengers in that country, asking God to give them the qualities you named.

God's world

How will they have hope?

God is at work bringing forth His coming kingdom in the poorest communities on earth. Do we really believe this? Our attitudes toward the poor and their circumstances greatly affect the deeper issues of poverty. Rather than succumbing to the crippling despair, we can have hope knowing God loves all people and cares about their needs. God's living hope for the poor will result in true transformation once they start following Christ.



Luke 4:18–19 (NIV)

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

Study it

Read the account of Elisha and the widow (2 Kings 4:1–7). Why was the widow in despair? What was Elisha's response? How did Elisha bring hope to the widow? Did he address only her immediate needs or change her situation permanently?

Experience it

► For one day, experience life as most of the world lives. Turn off all the electronics in your home. Take a bucket bath. At meals, eat only rice and beans. Drink only water. Walk or take the bus instead of driving. What was most difficult? How did this experience make you feel?

► Take a family drive or walk through one of the poorest areas in your community. Pray specifically for the things you see (e.g. a homeless man, a dilapidated house). Begin asking God to show your family ways to get involved that will start to transform lives and bring living hope to people in this neighborhood.

Discuss it

- 1 What is the most valuable way to "help" those in need? What is the most strategic way?
- 2 Why is it important for people in poverty to have hope? Who is the true source of hope?
- 3 What does this proverb teach us? "Give a man a fish, he will eat for a day. Teach a man to fish and he will eat for a lifetime." Is it better to give food and provisions to the poor or to help them learn the skills they need to get out of poverty?

Map it

Research and identify countries in the world that have the highest poverty levels. Locate these countries on the map and pray that God would bring transformation to those in poverty.

God's world

How will they grow?

What do you see when you look at an apple – a piece of fruit? Think big! Envision its seeds growing and multiplying into an entire orchard, transforming a barren field. Our family needs to think big when we consider church-planting movements. The church is a life-giving organism that has the potential to evangelize and transform not only individuals, but entire cultures and people groups. This kind of large-scale growth comes from multiplying – reproducing into more churches, that in turn, reach more people.



Romans 15:20-21 (NIV)

"It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation. Rather as it is written: 'Those who were not told about him will see, and those who have not heard will understand.'"

Study it

The book of Acts describes how the first church multiplied. These first churches were small and met in homes, not church buildings. Read these examples: Acts: 2:42-47, Acts 4:4, and Acts 11:21. What were the first "actions" of these new believers? How did this result in multiplication?

Experience it

► **Which is greater? Ask family members to choose how they would rather be paid:**

- 1) \$1,000 a day for one month or
- 2) a penny that doubles every day (\$.01, \$.02, \$.04, \$.08, etc.) for one month.

Grab a calculator and do the math:

- 1) \$1,000/a day/1 month = \$31,000 and
- 2) a penny doubled/1 month = \$10,737,418.24.

This example demonstrates how churches that multiply reach more people and communities than churches who add members.

► Cut open an apple and count the seeds. If each seed were planted, how many new apple trees would there be? Each new tree you plant could produce about 6,750 apples a year, for 100 years. Now that's multiplication!

Discuss it

- 1 What's the difference between adding and multiplying in math? Why is multiplying better than adding when talking about churches?
- 2 How do multiplying churches reach more people?
- 3 Unreached people groups do not have churches that are multiplying. What's missing?

Map it

Look at your map and pray for areas in the world with no churches. Using 2 Thessalonians 3:1, pray that the gospel would spread and multiply.

God's world

How will they worship?

Breakthrough in church planting occurs when gospel seeds, planted in the soil of a new culture, bear fruit. If believers try to transplant their own church traditions into a new culture, they could create barriers that make breakthrough in church planting difficult. Our family needs to understand that God loves being worshiped in diverse ways. Worship that looks different from what we are used to is not necessarily wrong. The core issue is, "Are believers growing in obedience to the commands of Jesus?"



Matthew 28:19-20 (NIV)

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, until the very end of the age."

Study it

Ask God to give you insight into what a disciple is through this story of the rich young ruler in Mark 10:17-22. Press on beyond the obvious for deeper insights into our own lives. The young man was following all the rules, but he lacked one thing...following Jesus! With Matthew 28:18-20 in mind, what are the characteristics of a disciple? What makes someone want to go and make other disciples and establish new churches where there are none?

Experience it

- ▶ Challenge your family to memorize the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20), creating hand motions to help.
- ▶ Build a simple obstacle course. Take turns going through it, carrying a large suitcase. Repeat the course, carrying only a Bible. Which trip was easier? Carrying the suitcase represents bringing our own "church stuff" into a new culture. What ideas and traditions might the church try to bring along when planting new churches in unreached people groups?

Discuss it

- 1 Why do you think it's important that a church grows in its own culture?
- 2 How might churches in other cultures be different from your home church? What should be true of every church? Discuss what is essential and what is non-essential.
- 3 What would church look like if your family lived in a place without a church building or community of believers?

Map it

Pray for the global body of Christ to be true to the Great Commission, however they worship. As you gather around your map, sing your family's favorite worship songs. Pray that churches around the world will sing from their heart, worshiping in their own languages and unique styles.

God's world

Join the team

Our family's perspective has been changed. We have been immersed in God's passion and plan to redeem all people and draw them to Himself. We have been challenged, both by those who have run the Christian race before us and by the task remaining. Each of us has one life to live. How will we live it to become a family on mission with God?



1 Peter 4:10 (NLT)

"God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another."

Study it

Read the account of Jesus' calling the first disciples in Luke 5:1–11. How did Peter's encounter with Jesus change his life? What did Jesus ask the disciples to do?

Experience it

► Be a World Christian family! Discuss the four practices of a World Christian: going, welcoming, sending, and mobilizing. Make a chart with these four practices written across the top. Have each person write down or draw a way to be involved as a World Christian family in each of these areas. Be creative! Be specific. Read the ideas together and pick a few to start with.

► Review your family creed. Do any of the World Christian practices need to be added? Recommit to a life of intentional involvement in God's global Kingdom.

Discuss it

- 1 What does it mean to be a World Christian?
- 2 What is God asking your family to do with the gifts and resources with which He has blessed you? Will you be faithful to follow His request?
- 3 Is there anything standing in the way of your family's being faithful to His request?

Map it

Look at the map and point to places where missionaries are coming from and the places they are going. Wherever you point on the map—you are right! People are coming and going to more places than ever before. Every family has a great opportunity to be a small but important piece of what God is doing in the world. Pray for your family's journey to be on mission with God.