



SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
25	26	27	28	29	30	1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

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Ideas | Supplies | Notes

Jesus said,

“If you hold to  
*my teaching*,  
you are really my  
disciples.  
Then you will know  
*the truth*,  
and the truth  
will set you  
*free.*”

John 8:31-32

# GOD'S WORD WEEK 1

## GOD STATEMENT: JESUS GAVE HIS LIFE

### SCRIPTURE: MATTHEW 16:24-25

*Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it." (Matthew 16:24-25)*

**Here we see Jesus talking about losing one's life to follow Him.** Some translations say *soul* instead of *life*. In the passage above, we can interpret what Jesus is saying in a literal sense because, after all—did He not go to the cross and give up His mortal life for us? Still, there is another, perhaps more difficult, meaning to this passage.

When I was a firefighter, I knew that one day I might be called upon to lose my life for the sake of saving a complete stranger. When we think about giving up our lives for another's—the ultimate sacrifice—we can feel a sense of pride and valor. As if others should be honored, we have internally decided that we are willing to save another should the day come. In some ways, this is the easiest interpretation of this passage.

I believe the more challenging point Jesus is trying to get at is personal surrender! Not the physical sacrifice of life. Rather, the daily aspect of surrendering our lives, wants, and personal worldviews to Jesus. In other words, saying no to those fleshly desires we so often grasp—exchanging personal mindsets for a Christ-minded life.

Jesus invites us to lay down those things that we subtly worship with our time and our thoughts and instead embrace a life of passionately serving Him and others around us. We have to make this choice every day. Is this an easy choice? No! Remember, when you are given the greatest gift of love and salvation, it changes you from the inside out, and the choice becomes easier with each day.

## DISCUSSION

What is one thing that you need to "lay down" that distracts you from your relationship with Jesus?

*by Zachery Alvey, Emergency Department Technician, Hospital Emergency Team Instructor, 9th-10th small group leader*

# GOD'S WORD WEEK 2

## GOD STATEMENT: JESUS IS LOVE

### SCRIPTURE: MARK 12:28-31

*One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?" "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these." (Mark 12:28-31)*

The word *love* has meant many different things through the years. Today, we may say we love our brother or sister, just like we would say we love pizza, and, with minimal description attached to those statements, they sound the same. Here in 1 John, we read "God is love," and this love is *agape* love (Greek), which is the highest form of love possible, a perfect fatherly love God has for us as His children. What an extravagant **LOVE!**

God has lavished His love on us; while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. God's love is neverending,

unfailing—it's perfect. Earlier in 1 John 2:6 we're encouraged to "live as Jesus did," and Jesus lived a life of love. Because we are instructed to be imitators of God, we must love like God, serving others, forgiving generously, showing compassion and kindness. One of my favorite characteristics of God is that He gives to us generously and there is no greater gift than His Son, Jesus.

As Mother Teresa said, "Intense love does not measure, it just gives."

The way Mother Teresa loved was extravagant; she must have known God well because Scripture tells us that "whoever does not love does not know God" (1 John 4:8). God wants you to know Him and walk in love as imitators of God.

## DISCUSSION

Do you feel like you are living out the greatest commandment? How is the Holy Spirit inviting you into loving God and loving people better?

*by Brena Nath, Managing Editor of HousingWire, 11th-12th small group leader*

# GOD'S WORD WEEK 3

## GOD STATEMENT: JESUS RESTORES SCRIPTURE: LUKE 5:27-31

*After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth. "Follow me," Jesus said to him, and Levi got up, left everything and followed him. Then Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who belonged to their sect complained to his disciples, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" Jesus answered them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick." (Luke 5:27-31)*

Throughout the entire Bible, but especially in the Gospels, God offers His people a message of restoration in Christ. Because Levi chose to follow God and trust in Him, he was restored. No matter how broken somebody is or how sinful that person may be, God has the power to transform him or her into a beacon of hope and an example for all Christians to follow.

Not only does Levi's story serve as a reflection of the way Christians should live, but it also reminds us of where we are without God. Jesus tells the Pharisees that

He is on earth to assist those who are sick and broken. Nobody is without fault, and there is not a single person who is sinless, but by following Christ the way Levi did, and by welcoming Him into our hearts, Jesus heals us of our personal sin and brokenness. God is a healer to each and every one of His children and does not value people by their works. "For it is by grace you have been saved" (Ephesians 2:8). Nobody is beyond that grace, and nobody is beyond God's restoration.

Because of God's promise to restore, and because of His love for us, we need not live our lives in worry. Jesus died for our sickness and shortcomings, for He is our healer and Savior. The same way that Levi had faith to follow Jesus, we can have faith in God's plan for restoration in our lives.

## DISCUSSION

Where have you seen God's restoration in your life, and where have you seen His restoration work in the lives of those who do not know Him?

*by Matthew Allen, sophomore at Discovery Canyon High School*

# GOD'S WORD WEEK 4

## GOD STATEMENT: JESUS IS A SERVANT SCRIPTURE: JOHN 13:1-18

*"Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them." (John 13:14-17)*

This passage of Scripture beautifully narrates the story of Jesus washing His disciples' feet, but the story is not just about Jesus cleaning feet. Jesus is giving us a perfect picture of what being a servant looks like. In Jesus' day, washing people's feet was the job that nobody liked or wanted to do. Is there a job like that in your house? Perhaps doing the dishes or cleaning the bathrooms? Imagine cleaning people's feet to be just like that terrible chore. Now imagine the queen of England coming and offering to do those jobs for you. You might be a little confused or even embarrassed, right? Why would someone with so much power and prestige stoop low to perform a menial task? Yet that is exactly what Jesus did.

Jesus had unlimited power and every resource at His fingertips. Yet instead of using that power to control others, He used it to get down on their level, care for them, and serve them in the most humble way possible. And once Jesus had finished this task, He gave His disciples a challenge. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you" (John 13:12-15). In these verses Jesus calls us to serve others just as He served us. While we do not need to physically wash one another's feet, we can look for ways to humble ourselves, prefer others first, and put the needs of others before our own.

## DISCUSSION

In what ways have others served you, and how did it make you feel when they did? What ways can you find to serve someone near you this week?

*by Olivia Baker, senior at The Classical Academy College Pathways*



## FAMILY TIME RECIPES



### “Sweet Mother” CHARCUTERIE BOARD

This chocolatey, sweet, and nutty charcuterie board is a creative way to celebrate with those who made you a mom. Before or after Mother's Day, say thank you to those special children with this yummy treat. It just might inspire some ideas to celebrate Mom on your special day.

#### WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Pepperidge Farm cookies, Classic Collection
- 1 bag pretzel sticks
- 6 ounces almonds
- 1 cup mini marshmallows
- 1 bag Skittles or desired candy
- 1 bag red licorice
- 1 container strawberries
- 1 bag white chocolate chips
- 1 bag milk chocolate chips
- 1 container BelGioioso tiramisu mascarpone dip
- 2 cups vanilla yogurt
- 1 cup marshmallow cream
- 2 ounces cream cheese
- toothpicks or treat sticks

#### WHAT YOU'LL DO

Start with a wooden tray or slab of marble to build your “board.” Add 3-4 small bowls for the dip. To make the white chocolate dip, pour the chips in a microwave-safe bowl. Heat the chips for 30 seconds at a time and stir until melted. Don't overcook. Scrape the dip into 1 of the bowls on the board. Repeat the steps for the milk chocolate dip. Add the tiramisu mascarpone dip in the third bowl. For the last dip, use an electric mixer to beat the yogurt, marshmallow cream, and cream cheese until smooth. Move the dip to the fourth bowl. Strategically place the big items on the board first and then fill in the empty areas with the smaller treats.

### Mother's Day Tea Sandwiches

A Mother's Day tea with friends or family is a charming way to celebrate all the wonderful moms or moms-to-be in your life. Make your tea sandwiches special by cutting them into small triangles or shaping them into flowers or hearts using cookie cutters. Consider serving with scones, clotted cream, or butter cookies, and don't forget the most important part: the tea!



#### WHAT YOU'LL NEED

##### EGG SALAD TEA SANDWICHES

- 8 slices thin bread (white is best)
- 6 hard-boiled eggs
- 3 tablespoons mayonnaise
- 1 1/2 teaspoons mustard
- 1 1/2 teaspoons lemon juice
- 1/4 teaspoon paprika
- salt and pepper to taste
- 24 thin slices of cucumber

#### SMOKED SALMON SANDWICHES

- 8 slices thin bread (wheat is best)
- 6 ounces smoked salmon
- cream cheese
- fresh dill
- 1/3 cup sprouts

##### CUCUMBER CREAM CHEESE SANDWICHES

- 8 slices thin bread
- garden-vegetable cream cheese
- 24 thin slices of cucumber

#### WHAT YOU'LL DO

**For egg sandwiches,** mash or chop hard-boiled eggs in a bowl. Add mayonnaise, mustard, lemon juice, and paprika. Stir and then season with salt and pepper. Spread egg mixture across four slices of bread. Top with cucumbers and remaining bread. Cut into triangles or use a fun cookie cutter. **For smoked salmon sandwiches,** spread a thin layer of cream cheese on four bread slices. Sprinkle dill over cream cheese. Layer smoked salmon and sprouts and then cover each with a remaining slice of bread. Cut crust off if desired. **For cucumber cream cheese sandwiches,** spread four slices of bread with garden-vegetable cream cheese. Add a thin layer of cucumbers and then add a second slice of bread to sandwich. Cut and serve immediately. Arrange sandwiches on a fun plate or on a tiered stand and enjoy!



## FAMILY TIME RECIPES

### Spinach Ricotta Pastry Bake

This flaky, cheesy quiche can be enjoyed for breakfast, lunch, or dinner. All you need is a small workspace, a few ingredients, and about 15 minutes to make a delightful meal your guests will surely enjoy.



#### WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 2 sheets puff pastry, thawed
- 6 eggs, beaten
- 1 cup ricotta cheese
- dash of hot sauce
- 1 cup spinach, chopped
- 6 slices bacon, cooked and chopped
- 1 1/2 cup cheddar cheese, shredded
- 1 medium red bell pepper, chopped

#### WHAT YOU'LL DO

Preheat oven to 400° F. Spray a 9" springform pan with cooking spray. Carefully unfold thawed puff pastry sheets. Roll 1 of them out to an 11" square, then roll the other to a 12" square. Use the 12" sheet to line the bottom of your pan. Lightly beat the eggs and reserve 1 tablespoon. Mix the rest of the eggs with the ricotta, hot sauce, and spinach. Layer half of the ricotta mixture on the puff pastry in the pan, then half of each of the following: bacon, cheese, and red pepper. Repeat with the remaining ingredients. Cover everything with the 11" puff pastry sheet and fold the edges in to secure the filling. Brush the pastry with your reserved tablespoon of egg. Bake for one hour or until pastry is golden brown. Let it cool in the pan for 10 minutes before serving.

### Vanilla Bundt Cake with Berry Glaze

A Memorial Day barbecue is a good time to pull out the red, white, and blue! This buttery, vanilla bundt cake can be dressed with red berry glaze and fresh, plump blueberries and topped off with white whipped cream. The best part is that this cake is quick and easy to make and is sure to become your go-to dessert over the summer.



#### WHAT YOU'LL NEED

##### CAKE INGREDIENTS

- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 cups sugar
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 cup oil
- 1 cup milk
- 4 eggs
- 5 teaspoons vanilla

##### GLAZE INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups strawberries
- 1 cup raspberries
- 1 cup blackberries
- 1 cup powdered sugar
- 2 tablespoons orange juice
- zest of 1 orange
- blueberries for garnish

#### WHAT YOU'LL DO

Preheat the oven to 350° F. Grease and flour a bundt pan. In a large bowl, combine flour, sugar, and baking powder. Whisk together and then add oil, milk, eggs, and vanilla. Stir to combine. Using a mixer, beat the batter on high for 1 to 2 minutes. Pour the batter into the prepared bundt pan. Bake for 50 to 60 minutes. While the cake is baking, place the berries in a blender or food processor and puree. Add powdered sugar, orange juice, and orange zest to the berries. Use a whisk to completely combine the sugar into the mixture. Place the glaze in the refrigerator to chill. The cake is ready when an inserted toothpick comes out clean. Cool the cake completely in the pan. Once cool, invert and top with glaze, blueberries, and whipped cream.



# A COVID TIME CAPSULE

*This past year has been...  
unexpected.*

Our time at home during COVID-19 was hard at times, but as I think back over the past year, I've found many moments to remember that were fun, sweet family memories. Years from now we will be able to look back at 2020 and remember both the easy and the hard moments. God, in His faithfulness, will bring good out of the hard. Sometimes it just takes time to see how He does that.

For our Create section this month, we are making a COVID Time Capsule! To begin, decide as a family where you will hide your time capsule. This can be in your home to protect it from the elements or buried in your backyard. Next, decide what container you will use for your capsule. If you will be burying it outside, you'll want to use a container that will not be affected by the rain and snow. **Here are some ideas of things you can put in your COVID time capsule:**

1. Write a list of things you never thought you would hear, or say, or do. (For example, wear a mask into a store. Or, phrases we never thought we'd say, such as "social distancing," "flatten the curve." Or, I never thought I'd get up at 6:00 a.m. to search the stores for toilet paper!)
2. Write a list of ways you saw God move in your family in the last year.
3. Add memories that you made last year—games you played, movies you watched, pictures, written memories—both easy and hard.
4. Add items that represent 2020—a mask, the pajamas you wore all of quarantine (or is that just me?!?).

As you consider the last year, have fun remembering the good times, but don't be afraid to model lamenting and grieving the areas that were hard as well. **As you model finding God's goodness in both joyful and sad moments, your children will find the ability to do that in their lives as well.**



## WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- box, coffee can, or aluminum or stainless steel tin
- pictures and/or newspaper articles
- paper
- markers
- items that remind you of 2020

## WHAT YOU'LL DO

Gather as a family to consider 2020 and how COVID affected each of you. Take time to allow each person to talk about both the hard and easy times. Write down some of your most significant memories and a list of things you never thought you'd do or say, and gather any items you'd like to add to your time capsule. Then bury or hide your time capsule and decide as a family when you will open it.

*by Jeni Mason, Pastor of Family Care*



# PICTIONARY:

## Mother's Day EDITION

### WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- paper
- pen or pencil
- timer

### BEFORE YOU PLAY

Children are always looking to us for cues in life—from how we handle problems to our attitude while doing chores. Being intentional to model Christlike virtues in daily life gives our children opportunities to learn from us.

This month, to celebrate Mother's Day, families can reflect on good things their moms have modeled for them and have fun playing a game of "Pictionary: Mother's Day Edition."

### TIME TO PLAY!

Give slips of paper to each family member, except Mom. The goal is to have family members write down as many verbs and adjectives to describe Mom as they can—the great things she does (verbs) and the beautiful qualities in her (adjectives). This is a wonderful opportunity to honor Mom and show her love and appreciation.

Fold the slips of paper and place them all in a bowl. Set the timer for one minute. Each family member will get a chance to illustrate the verb or adjective describing Mom using a pen and paper. Mom will try to guess. Have fun!

(You may play this game with Grandma, a spiritual mom, aunts, or anyone who has been a mother figure.)

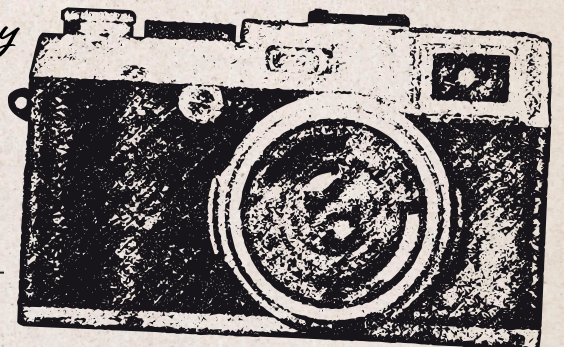


**BE AN EXAMPLE TO ALL  
BELIEVERS IN WHAT YOU  
SAY, IN THE WAY YOU  
LIVE, IN YOUR LOVE, YOUR  
FAITH, AND YOUR PURITY.  
(1 TIMOTHY 4:12 NLT)**



*Example verbs and adjectives:*

*she makes dinner  
she does laundry  
she reads to us  
she is brave  
she is kind*





# Modeling Stillness

## *Finding Peace in Chaos*

Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations,  
I will be exalted in the earth. (Psalm 46:10)

**No one modeled being still better than Jesus. He slept peacefully in the boat while His frightened disciples tried to navigate a stormy sea.** When He finally woke up, Jesus extended His stillness to the water, calming the wind and waves.

Between His triumphal entry and the actions leading to His death and resurrection, Jesus withdrew to the garden of Gethsemane to pray. Knowing that the time of His death was drawing near, Jesus had one priority: solitude with God.

While He fervently prayed, "Take this cup from me," He quickly followed with "not my will, but yours be done" (Luke 22:42). He had the strength to sacrifice Himself willingly because He prioritized withdrawing from the crowds, and even from His disciples, to commune with His heavenly Father. He trusted the God He had experienced in the quiet moments.

Often, as families and especially as parents, it seems impossible to find a sense of calm. But Jesus invites us to find moments of silence, solitude, and *prayer* during the chaos. As you make your own journey toward peace, take your kids along for the ride. Here are a few ideas to create space for meeting with God throughout the day.

### WHAT YOU'LL NEED

1. **A plan.** Schedule time for silent prayer. It won't happen if you are waiting for a "free" minute to magically appear.
2. **Adjusted expectations.** Are you envisioning half an hour of reflective prayer and deep insight with your two year old? Think again. Depending on your children's ages, think in terms of 30 seconds to 2 minutes for quiet prayer.
3. **A timer.** Choose a time limit and stick to it. Beware: silent seconds tend to tick by slowly.
4. **Optional: soothing music.** Music can be a great tool to settle your mind. If you're looking for a quick selection at your fingertips, try the NLD Kids Worship playlist on Spotify.

### WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. **Sit down with your children and create your plan.** How much planning you allow your children to do depends on their ages and maturity, but give them an opportunity to own part of the experience. Explain that you want to provide a few moments of reflective prayer with God. Talk about how long you think the time should be, maybe what you should pray or think about, where this can occur, and if there should be music, journaling, or drawing involved.
2. **Find a cozy spot,** as free from distractions as possible.
3. **Remind your kids** about all the guidelines you discussed together.
4. **Set your timer and go.** Or rather ... stop. Take a few moments to be *still* with God.
5. **Keep trying.** Incorporating silent reflection is challenging but well worth it. At first, you may spend more time planning solitude and prayer than resting in God; that's okay! Habits take time to build.



## SERVE

# A Pattern to Follow


**As you read the beautiful story about Jesus washing His disciples' feet in John 13, can you imagine yourself there in the room watching?** Can you imagine Jesus reaching down to hold and wash your feet with His gentle hands?

As Jesus returns to sit at the table with His disciples, He looks at each of them and asks a question: "Do you understand what I have just done for you?" Then He gives them a challenge: "If I washed your feet, you must now wash each other's feet. I've given you a pattern to follow. What I just did, I want you to do too." Imagine again you are there in the room with Jesus. How do you feel as you consider His challenge to serve others?

Can you picture someone who loves and serves this way today? Perhaps a person who gives a hug at just the right moment, who has a word of wisdom and encouragement, a person who models what it looks like to serve others day in and day out?

**As we near Mother's Day, our minds turn to the amazing women in our lives, the ones we call Mom, Mama, Nana, Mimi, Great-Grandmother, Auntie, Mentor, Sister, Wife, Friend ...** the significant and blessed names go on and on! We set aside a day to honor the ones who have loved us with their lives, who have taken the challenge Jesus spoke of and have made their own lives a pattern to follow.

As you consider how to celebrate the precious women in your life, why not begin with the pattern Jesus modeled for us? Jesus tells His disciples, and all of us, "Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them" (John 13:17).



*Here are some fun suggestions to love and serve the special women in your life!*

### CRATE A LOVE NOTE BOOKLET

Follow these prompts to write a love letter or create a treasured book of encouragement and affirmation for her! Add drawings, art work, etc.

- Mom (Grandma, Aunt, etc.), I love you because \_\_\_\_\_
- Thank you for \_\_\_\_\_
- My favorite thing about you is \_\_\_\_\_
- My favorite thing to do with you is \_\_\_\_\_
- You make me laugh when \_\_\_\_\_
- I know you love me because \_\_\_\_\_

### MAKE A BOUQUET OF AFFIRMATIONS

Pick out her favorite flowers and attach strips of paper with descriptive words that come to mind when you think of her to the stems of the flowers using tape or glue. Include words like:

- Beautiful
- Loved
- Treasured
- Kind
- Joyful
- Wise

### PRINT OR FRAME A VERSE

Print Scriptures of encouragement and love on beautiful stationery or consider framing one with a personal note written on the back.

# BLESSING



## Bless with Your Words

A BLESSING CAN BE A PRAYER OF COMMISSION, A BIBLE PASSAGE, OR WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT. BLESSINGS CAN BE SPOKEN OVER A CHILD FOR THE PURPOSE OF DECLARING GOD'S PROTECTION, JOY, AND WISDOM OVER HIM.

### Week 1

#### SCRIPTURE:

Matthew 16:24-26

(Child's name), may you know that you are a child of the triune God: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. May you learn what it means to take up your cross and follow Jesus. You do not have to fear because the Holy Spirit is with you as you deny yourself to further the gospel.

### Week 2

#### SCRIPTURE:

Mark 12:28-34

(Child's name), may you know that the Lord our God is one! He loves you so much. Because He loves first, may you remember to love Him with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. May you also love your neighbor as yourself.

### Week 3

#### SCRIPTURE:

Luke 5:27-31

(Child's name), may you know that God sent Jesus, His Son, to earth to redeem the world. May you find comfort knowing that He loves you so much that He calls you to repentance. You are His son/daughter, and He takes great delight in you.

### Week 4

#### SCRIPTURE:

John 13:1-17

(Child's name), may you know that Jesus exemplified the value of serving people. As Jesus took time to serve His disciples, so should we humble ourselves in service to others. May you remember that the Holy Spirit will guide you as you care for, help, and assist the people around you.

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by Mary Windebank, Director of Elementary and Family Ministries



# Journal

remember and celebrate

prayer

thankfulness and praise