



At times like these

Families Together





Introduction



Welcome to this series of five devotions that have been specifically written for families confined to their homes during the COVID-19 pandemic. The sessions are designed for all ages and are simple to use - they don't require lots of set up or materials, just you and your family.

The devotional can be used as your church service on a Sunday or divided up over a few weeknights - you choose what works best for your family. Alternatively, you could join together with other households via an online platform.

The series is structured around the choices we can make during this time. It's a good time to talk together as families about how we respond to this global crisis. Each devotional will focus on one of these choices:

- Anxiety v peace: Matthew 6:28-31 - do not worry
- Boredom v purpose: Matthew 5 - how are we to live?
- Looking after #1 v caring for others: Matthew 5:13-16 - being salt and light
- Loneliness v community: Matthew 14 - reaching out to others
- Fear v faith: Matthew 8:22-27 - Jesus calms the storm

Practical suggestions for families

Find what works best for you, recognising that each family is different. Don't set high expectations of what the session will look like but celebrate the small wins.

Choose a place to have your time together. Have the same place each time to create a routine. This could be around a table or on the couch together.

Have at least one adult in the family read through the material beforehand and familiarise themselves with it. Share this

responsibility around. One day it could be Dad, the next day it could be Gran.

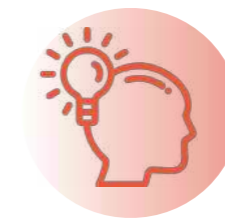
Divide the tasks up. Different members of the family can read the Bible passage or ask the questions or lead a song. A family member might like to play an item as part of the response time.

Sharing times can be difficult. To avoid one family member dominating the conversation, encourage active listening: each person shares while the others listen in affirming silence. Then, when everyone has shared, there can be discussion. This allows each person to share without interruptions.

Each session includes...



To do
a simple fun activity
(no materials required)



To think
about something for
the family to ponder



To talk
about a question
to get the conversation started



To respond
choose from a few
options (prayer ideas,
a song to sing, an
action)



To explore
a short Bible passage to
read and an optional video
clip to view



To pray
finish by praying a simple
blessing together



Anxiety v Peace

To Do

Collect one piece of nature each to place on the table or in the middle of where you are gathering.

This could be a leaf or a blade of grass or a flower. If you are in an apartment building or don't have access to the outside, you could instead google amazing places in nature and look at it together. Click [here](#) for one option.



To talk about

Read this out loud: "The world is a bit of a strange place at the moment. The spread of the Covid-19 virus is making people stressed and upset. We can make choices about how we respond to what is going on and God wants to help us with this. Today we will think about two choices we can make: to respond with anxiety or to be filled with God's peace."



Discuss together:

What makes us feel anxious?

Is it okay to feel anxious?

Talk together about the difference between normal worries and anxiety. It is okay to be concerned about getting sick or our friends and family getting sick. But, it's not good for us if that worry takes over and turns over into anxiety.

Misinformation causes anxiety. Make sure to correct any myths your family may have heard about the virus.

Reassure them.

To explore

What does God have to say about this? Choose one person in your family to read Matthew 6:25-34. Choose a version that is easy to understand. You



can find one online [here](#). You might like to take turns reading it or read one verse each.

When you have read the passage, watch this together [Do not worry](#) (YouTube clip by Quiz Worx)

To think about

Look at the collection of nature in front of you. Ask this question and think about it silently for a moment before you discuss it:



Why do you think Jesus made them look at grass and flowers and birds?

Make sure that each member has the opportunity to share their thoughts.

Discuss how God loves the world God made, right down to a blade of grass or a single bird. How much more God loves us!

God cares for them, and God will care for us.

Have someone in the family read this out loud:

"The opposite of anxiety is peace.

Peace is not the absence of a crisis. It doesn't mean that the whole pandemic is going to go away. But it means that we can stop letting anxiety control our lives. We can be sure that God loves and cares for us. We are important to God. When we are tempted to worry, we can stop, take a deep breath and remember this. We can talk to God about the things that upset us, and we can know that God hears us and God cares. When we do this, we experience God's peace."

To respond

Choose one or more of these options:

Have each family member pick up the nature object they chose. Invite them to hold it in their hands silently and talk with God about how it makes them feel to know that God cares about them more than lilies or birds. Listen to this song (or sing a song of your



family's choosing) [Your wings](#) by Lauren Daigle Go outside as a family and collect a bunch of flowers and foliage. Place it in a jar on your table. Talk together about how this will be a reminder during the week that God loves flowers, leaves and God loves us! When anyone in the family is feeling anxious, they can come and look at this bunch and remind themselves again of God's gift of peace. Print off one of the Prayers for the Anxious from [illustratedministry.com](#) Print off one copy per person, or one between two. Read the prayer together first, and then encourage the family to think about these words as they colour them in. Display this somewhere where it can be seen.

To pray

Finish by praying this prayer as a blessing. Say it all together (Numbers 6:24-26 CEV version)

"I pray that the Lord will bless and protect you, and that he will show you mercy and kindness. May the Lord be good to you and give you peace."





Boredom v Purpose

To Do



B.O.R.E.D.O.M: Can each member of the family come up with something boring that starts with each letter of the word 'boredom'? Some ideas might be: M-Making my bed, D-Doing my schoolwork. (Accept all suggestions unless they are disrespectful).

To talk about

It's very easy to feel bored when we have to stay at home all the time. Everybody feels bored. But we have a choice to make. Can we turn this around and think about what God's purpose is for us? Maybe you find it boring to make your bed, but can you make the choice to see this as a way to show love to your parents by obeying them? Let's think about what your family could do to find purpose in this time.

Discuss together:

Can anyone think of one boring thing you all have to do each day that you could make more interesting? (e.g. learning a memory verse while brushing your teeth).

To explore

What does God have to say about this?



Jesus taught his friends how to live with purpose. He gave them some wise words, in the form of sentences that all start with 'Blessed is...' This is another way of saying 'Happy is...' Today we

will read some of what he said. As a family read Matthew 5:1-10 together. You can find it online [here](#).

When you have read the passage, you could watch this together [God's Story: Sermon on the Mount](#)

To think about



What sentence from this reading is important to you? It might be a sentence that encourages you (God comforts those who grieve), or a sentence that challenges you (those who are humble are happy).

Have someone in the family read this out loud:
"The opposite of boredom is purpose. We might be feeling bored, but when we follow God's ways our lives have purpose, even the boring bits. Our whole lives are important to God. While we are living in our houses to stop the spread of the virus, we can make good choices. God wants to help us too. The Holy Spirit gives us wisdom and helps us. We don't have to do it alone!"

To respond



Choose one or more of these options:
Can you remember all the boring things you listed for B.O.R.E.D.O.M?
Choose one or more of these things and come up with a simple family plan to give this purpose. Try it out for a day or two. See if you can stick to your plan for a whole week! (One example might be putting on worship music while everyone cleans their rooms).



Choose one sentence from the Bible passage and turn it into a prayer. You might like to write it, create actions for it, or draw it.

Listen to this song (or sing a song of your family's choosing): [The Beatitudes](#) (with simple actions) Spend 10 minutes outside in your garden/backyard working on a project. This might be weeding a garden or cleaning the path. Do it together as a family, praising God for the opportunity to be together and to work together. At the end of the task look at what you have achieved.

To pray

Finish by praying this prayer as a blessing. (Numbers 6:24-26 CEV version)

"I pray that the Lord will bless and protect you, and that he will show you mercy and kindness. May the Lord be good to you and give you peace."





Looking after #1 v Caring for others

To Do

Spotlight: Pull all the curtains in your house and turn off the lights. This game works best at night but can still be fun during the day. Choose one family member to sit in one spot and count to 20. Give them a torch (or cell phone with a torch). The rest of the family goes and hides. At the count of 20 the 'spotter' turns on their torch and begins to search out their family members.



To talk about

In some places around the world people rushed out and bought all the toilet paper! What happened to all the people who couldn't buy any? That doesn't seem like a very caring thing to do. We have a choice to make. Do we look after ourselves first, or do we care about other people as well? Let's make the choice to care for others as God asks us to do.



Discuss together:

Where have you seen people caring for others at the moment? (This might be in your household, or online)



To explore

What does God have to say about this?

As a family read Matthew 5:13-16 together. You can find it online [here](#).

(Optional extra: read it in the dark by the light of a torch).

To think about

What does salt do when you add it to food?
What does light do when you turn on a torch?



Have someone in the family read this out loud:

"The opposite of looking after number one is caring for others.

Salt makes things taste better. Light helps us to see. Salt and light make things better. We can make things better for others. We can do this through the words we say and the things we do. We can show God's love to others. Jesus reminds us that as his friends, he asks us to care about others, not just ourselves. In v16 he says that when we do this, others will see the good we do and give glory to God."

To respond

Choose one or more of these options:

*Please check your countries quarantine requirements first: Choose 5 neighbours. Write an encouraging note to each one, letting them know that you are praying for them. Put these



notes in your neighbours' letterboxes or on their doorstep. (Alternatively send them an email or message).

Take a prayer walk through your neighbourhood (if you are permitted to). Stop at 5 letterboxes and have a different family member pray for that household. You could use the blessing from Numbers 6 as an example. Move on to the next letterbox and have another family member pray. (Alternatively, look up google maps and



zoom into street view. Pray as you focus on 5 households near you).

Record a short video of your family praying a simple prayer together for your community. You could pray Numbers 6:24-26. Post this on a community Facebook page so that others can watch it and join in the prayer. Listen to: [This little light of mine](#) - by Listener Kids

To pray

Finish by praying this prayer as a blessing. (Numbers 6:24-26 CEV version)

"I pray that the Lord will bless and protect you, and that he will show you mercy and kindness.

May the Lord be good to you and give you peace."





Loneliness v Community

To Do

A family stack: Have your family/household stand close together. Family member 1 places their right hand, palm down, in the middle. Family member 2 places their right hand on top. Family member 3 places their right hand on top, and so on until all the right hands are stacked on top of each other. Do the same with your left hands. The challenge is to move the hand on the bottom of the stack up onto the top. Then the next hand moves onto the top. See how fast you can keep moving all your hands!



To talk about

Because of Covid-19 it is not safe for us to hold hands with other people outside our house. That means we can feel very lonely, as we can't spend time with other family members and friends. While we can see them on a screen, we can't give them a hug! Loneliness is a real concern for many people in our families, communities and around the world. Let's think about how we can make the choice to be a community even though we are apart.



Discuss together:

Do you have a friend or family member who you know is feeling lonely? Share their names (there will be a time to pray for them later).



To explore

What does God have to say about this?
As a family read Matthew 14:22-34. You can find it online [here](#).

Peter wanted to put his faith into action, so he stepped out of the boat. At first things were going well. He kept his eyes on Jesus. But then he looked down. Peter noticed the waves and the wind, and he started to panic. That's when he began to sink. No matter how difficult things seem, we are not alone. Jesus is with us.

Download and watch the '[Storm on the Lake](#)' section of this video (from 56 seconds in)

To think about

Jesus reached out his hand and saved Peter. Who is lonely that we could reach out and help today? (We might not be able to hold their hand, but we could phone them or send them a message).



Have someone in the family read this out loud:
"The opposite of loneliness is community.
God asks us to reach out to others.

God gave us families and friends to share life with. And God has given us the Church as the family of God. Even though we cannot meet with other people, we can still care for one another. God is always with us, even though we might feel lonely and locked up in our houses. Remember, keep your eyes on Jesus. You are never alone!"

To respond



Choose one or more of these options:
Download and print off a 'Bubble map' sheet, one per person. Click [here](#) to download. Fill this sheet with the names of your family, friends and neighbours. Put these sheets up around



the house where you see them often. You could:
Choose one name on the sheet a day to pray for.
Choose one name a day to send an email or message to.
Listen to this song (or sing a song of your family's choosing):
[He's got the whole world in his hands](#). Tyler Perry has created a whole world challenge. He asked his friends to sing a verse of the song and upload it. It's a long clip so watch parts of it. You could record your own verse!
Find a footpath or concrete step. Get a bowl of water. Dip a finger in the water and use it to write on the ground the name of one person each who is feeling lonely. Spend some time as a family praying for these people.

To pray

Finish by praying this prayer as a blessing. (Numbers 6:24-26 CEV version)

"I pray that the Lord will bless and protect you, and that he will show you mercy and kindness.
May the Lord be good to you and give you peace."





Fear v Faith

To Do



Give the family 2 minutes to go and collect something that can be a boat. It might be a leaf from outside, or a quickly made Lego boat. Find a container to fill with enough water to float the boats. One at a time place your boat in the container. The rest of the family have the task of creating wind to blow on the boat and try and sink it. They can use anything nearby to do so. Set a minute timer per boat.

To talk about

Today we are talking about fear. It is natural to be worried, but fear stops us from living the way God meant us to. Just like anxiety, fear can take over our lives. Should we hide in a corner, afraid to do anything? Should we lie awake at night scared of what might happen? Do we let fear be the boss or do we have faith that God is with us?



Discuss together:
What can fear stop us from doing?

To explore

What does God have to say about this? Beforehand, set up YouTube with this [clip of a stormy sea](#). As a family read Matthew 8:23-27 together, while the clip plays. Have one family member ready to stop the video on v26 when Jesus tells the waves to be calm. You can read it online [here](#).



To think about

What do you think you might have been feeling if you were in that boat?



Have someone in the family read this out loud:
“The opposite of fear is faith. Jesus’ friends were afraid. They thought they were going to die. But they forgot that they had Jesus in their boat. Jesus was in control of the storm. He didn’t want his friends to be afraid, instead he wanted them to have faith in him. Even though it might be difficult at times, we can trust Jesus with anything!”

To respond

Choose one or more of these options:
Imagine yourself in the story: Make sure everyone in the family has somewhere comfortable to sit. This could be outside under a tree or curled up on the couch. Ask each person to close their eyes and imagine themselves in that boat. What do they want to say to Jesus? What do they think Jesus might want to say to them? Set a timer for two minutes, so everyone can sit in silence and use their imagination to enter the story. Listen to this song (or sing a song of your family’s choosing) [Oceans](#) (Bri Babineaux)
Pray for each other about something you are fearful of. You could do this by standing in a circle and praying for the person on your right. Create a boat together, using things from around your house. You might like to make a sailboat from Lego



with a cloth sail and a stick for a mast. Place your family boat somewhere to remind you that Jesus is in the boat with your family, even though you feel like you are in a storm.

To pray

Finish by praying this prayer as a blessing. (Numbers 6:24-26 CEV version)

“I pray that the Lord will bless and protect you, and that he will show you mercy and kindness. May the Lord be good to you and give you peace.”





For more resources and information, go to
www.scriptureunion.org