

Growing Straight and Strong in the Lord

Daily devotions around God's Word make for stronger faith and stronger families.

by Betsy Werner

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Just as forest trees can grow under the proper conditions, so, too, can people thrive spiritually given the right protection and nourishment. Often, these essential commodities—protection and nourishment—are best found in the Christian home, where the faith of family members, planted at Baptism by the Holy Spirit, can thrive and grow.

Yet, even in Christian homes, enemies may abound. So much today vies for the attentions of our families. Indeed, some of these forces may even attack the family and the Christian values it holds dear. But God protects and nourishes those who take refuge in His love.

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A special time set aside for family devotions provides an avenue for such teaching. Through family devotions, faith grows as each person learns more about God in His Word. Family relationships are strengthened as feelings are shared, trust is built and prayers are offered. Priorities and values are taught and future problems averted. Having family

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The key is to find a time that suits the schedules of the *most people*. (Some compromising may be necessary to find a time that's agreeable and workable for all.) Many families find the morning to be the best time. For one reason, the early morning hours may present relatively few scheduling conflicts; for another, families find that morning devotions set a nice tone for the rest of the day. Even those who aren't necessarily early risers may

find that getting up a little earlier isn't as horrible as they thought.

Other families use the time right after supper (prior, even, to dessert), before the evening's activities scatter the group. There's time at this juncture to relax, enjoy each other's company, and develop the devotion's theme through activities and discussion. If company comes, encourage them to join you.

Bedtime is also a natural time for reflecting on the events of the day. But if people—particularly the children—are tired or cranky, another time would obviously be better.

Whatever time you choose, stick with it for a while. Even if one person has to miss on occasion, the rest of the family can continue. Frequent rescheduling brings an inconsistency that may lead to



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Involve everyone in the devotions to keep interest high. Everyone can participate in some way, from reading Bible verses and offering prayer requests to distributing hymnals and singing songs. Toddlers may need to be given something to look at or play with during part of the session, but they still can be present. Sometimes, just cuddling into someone's lap is enough to calm the restless ones. Soon they will learn the significance of this special family time and treasure their part in it.

If there is a wide range of ages among the children, encourage the older ones to devise activities that will include and appeal to their younger siblings. Even if there are no little children, planning the devotion is a good way to involve older children who may view family devotions as a boring obligation. Let them choose the topics, songs and materials and take their turns at leading.

No single format works for every family or for one family all the time. Little children have a shorter attention span and need active involvement. Older ones can grasp deeper concepts, but still want a lively tempo. Variety is the key to successful, invigorating family devotions.

Unless the devotion leader spends a lot of time planning, a simple format is usually easier to maintain on a daily basis. Variety can be achieved by changing individual components, much like the Propers vary weekly in Sunday church services. Perhaps a short Bible reading, a written meditation, a song or two, and a prayer would be a manageable routine.

At other times, use the pattern Martin Luther suggests in the *Small Catechism*: the invocation, the Creed and Lord's Prayer, Morning or Evening Prayer, and a hymn. Try speaking or singing together one of the liturgies from the hymnal. In *Lutheran Worship*, Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer are marked to show simplified versions for family devotions, and Prayer at the Close of the Day was originally designed for evening devotions. *Lutheran Worship* also contains

an order for family devotions (Page 293).

If they are truly to teach, rebuke, correct and train us in righteousness, family devotions ought surely to center on Scripture. Obviously, the most direct way of gaining access to God's Word is through the Bible. But we may find His Word, too, in Bible storybooks, printed devotions, hymn lyrics, and parents' explanations of God's truth.

Although Christian bookstores abound with devotional books for people of all ages, various Concordia Publishing House products—*Little Visits with God* (and companion volumes in this series,

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all of which cater to young children), *My Devotions* (daily devotions, published monthly, for families with children age 8 to 13) and *Portals of Prayer* (brief daily Scripture-based meditations, published quarterly for adults and older children)—are proven resources based on sound Biblical teaching. Puppets, role-playing and visual aids can also be used to impress the message more deeply. One such visual aid is CPH's new "At Home in Our Hymnal" disposable placemats, designed for use at the dinner table. Finally, don't overlook the importance of memorization; it stores God's Word deep in the heart.

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Converse with God in your devotion. Pray the Lord's Prayer. Use prayers printed in your devotion books and the hymnal, but add personal petitions as well. Speak to God from your heart, in your own words. Keep track of prayer requests. Then thank God and celebrate when He answers them.

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LENTEN SCHEDULE

LENTEN SERVICES AND HOLY WEEK SCHEDULE

- March 10...Soup Supper 5:30 followed by worship at 7:00pm.
 March 24...Soup Supper 5:30 followed by worship at 7:00pm.
 April 4....Palm Sunday-Confirmation Service.....9:00am
 April 8 Maundy/Thursday Service.....7:00pm
 April 9....Good Friday Worship.....7:00pm

Generosity

I pray daily that God will put a spirit of generosity in all of our hearts. The "old man" within us is not by nature, generous. The characteristic trait of the "new man", however, is liberal generosity. We must begin to reflect the generous nature of our Lord whose gracious gifts to us are never ending and proceed from the most generous gift of all: His death on our behalf.

The ministry of Concordia depends on your generosity. We need your help to pay our bills and to expand our outreach to others. Thank you - Don Patterson



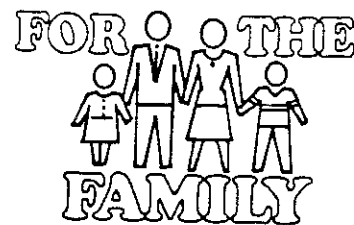
DAD TALK.....DO IT WRITE!

By Paul Lewis (Christian Parenting)

Take a moment to express on paper your love and affections for your wife and children. The simple act of writing them down carries impact for two important reasons:

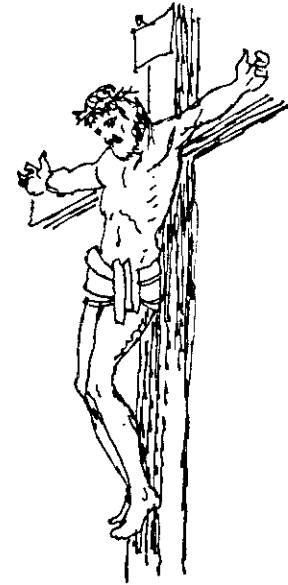
- 1) Writing down your thoughts proves that you're thinking of your family at a time and place when they weren't in your presence. (Wives and children like to know they're in our thoughts even when we're apart.)
- 2) Written expressions of love can be saved or displayed and reread many times. They become a wonderful way of documenting the continuity and depth of a love relationship.

To help get you started, here are some themes that you can easily adapt to your purposes: Praising character strengths, appreciating things done for you especially routine tasks, praising important roles or commitments, admiring consistency, or praising service to others. I urge you to write a note a day for the next five days to build your skills. You get good at what you practice. Ready, aim, WRITE.



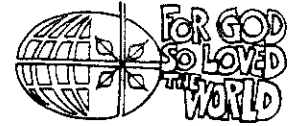
THE HANDS OF CHRIST

The hands of Christ seem very frail.
 For they were broken by a nail.
 But only they reach heaven at last
 Whom these frail, broken hands hold fast.
 -John R. Moreland



CONFIRMATION

Confirmation will take place on April 4th during our Palm Sunday worship service. Please remember the Confirmation students in your prayers and thoughts. Remember, Confirmation is not graduation. Daily each Christian "CONFIRMS" his/her faith in a gracious God.



MISSIONS - 1993

The Concordia Women's Guild has identified the following projects as Missions for the coming year supporting a total of over \$7,000. We are grateful for the Guild's work on behalf of our congregation. We would encourage you to continue to heartily support the rummage sales and the Bazaar in order that we may continue to give generously to Missions. If you as an individual or family would like to give to a specific project you may do so through the guild by contacting Sandy Fornes, treasurer.

MISSIONS: Good Shepherd Lutheran Home of the West, Rev. Darrell E. Matthews, Bethel Deaf TV Ministries, Centro Christiano DeYsleta, Heifer Project International, LAMP, Concordia Tract Mission, Lutheran Bible Translators, LCMS World Mission, American Bible Society, Wheatridge, Discovery Center Scholarship, Lutheran World Relief, St. Paul's Lutheran High School, Yampa Valley Pregnancy Center, Morningstar-Victim Center, Navajo Mission, Lutheran Youth Encounter, Concordia Gospel Outreach, Colorado Christian Home for abused children, Dakota Lutheran Boys Ranch.

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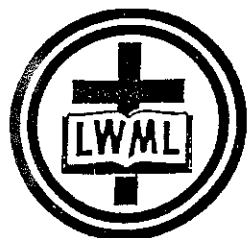
WOMEN'S GUILD

The Feb. meeting was held at the home of Carol Baldwin with 18 in attendance.

Marlys Cartwright presented the program which centered around an item each member brought from home which reminded us how much we are cherished by God and loved ones.

Mission projects were voted on and we will give \$7,500 to 20 projects. The Guild raises this money through 2 yearly rummage sales and the Christmas Bazaar.

The next meeting will be held at the home of Elaine Stroncek on March 17 at 7:30PM. Dr Rachel Callahan will speak to the group on Women's Health...Menopause & Hormones.



CONCORDIA FAMILY TREE

Is your picture hanging on the Concordia Family Tree yet? Have you learned some new names of old faces? We are proud of our Concordia Family. We want everyone to know each other's names. We want visitors to see our family and know our names. If you haven't had a chance to get your picture taken, please do so during the month of March. Bert & Cindy Svendsen are taking pictures in the Cry Room following service.



HIGH SCHOOL YOUTH NEWS

A big thanks to all who have helped make our first two months of Sunday Youth Seminars a success. Thank yous go to Joanne Boomgarden, Danny Schlie, Elaine Stroncek, Don Patterson, Dave and Lori Beverlin, Marlys Cartwright and Sally Marshall.

We've had great biblical discussions on faith under fire, marriage commitment, abusive/demeaning relationships, Tom Roger's presentation on Baptism, Problem Solving, Personal Devotional Life, and others. In March we'll hear a video called "The Open Window", we'll discuss our beliefs about Baptism, Teenagers and Alcohol, and a session on the Lord's Supper.

We had great turnouts for our February youth events and we look forward to some more great times in March, including a youth worship service.



WHY I LIKE BEING MARRIED

In our February 7th bulletin we asked you to respond to the question "Why I like being married"...and promised to print your responses anonymously in March's Newsletter. Your award for this assignment is a "Haagen Daz" Ice Cream treat coupon in your mail box. Thanks to those who entered responses. They are as follows:

1) I like marriage because I'm married to a remarkable man who reflects a remarkable God. Our lives together are rooted in Christ's cross, His amazing Love for us.

We've seen some dark times, and the truth of the matter is

God's Grace is the only place to stand, where even the darkest of dark times won't do us in!!!

Sometimes after a long week we look at each other and laugh at what a tired mess we look. And yet I wouldn't trade our marriage for anything!!! It's been good to share an earthy passion for each other going on 14 years, and when I look at him my heart still races!"

2) "We like being married because Life becomes "we" instead of "I"...It's good to have a permanent partner in life to enjoy God with...It's fun to have someone to snuggle every night in bed..."

It's expansive as a person, I learn how to give more and be more thoughtful as I seek to love my partner."

3) "As long as I can share each day's beginning and end with you...nothing that happens in the middle can faze me!" It is through the miracle of love that we discover the beauty of life.

My husband is the one I kiss and make up with again when there's a little difference of opinion now and then. My husband understands my moods and laughs at things I say. He sees me when I'm at my worst and loves me anyway.

4) Marriage invests each moment and action with significance. Everything I do and say matters to someone else—my wife.

5) When I was a lousy husband she didn't give up on me; she prayed for me. Being married forces me to evaluate myself and inspires me to give a hoot. I know there will be at least one person to attend my funeral someday who will be thankful for my life and truly grieved at my death.

6) I value commitment; commitment to a man I think is the best in the world. Together it has been wonderful to parent 3 gifts from God. Marriage has shown me who I really am, and that is both good and a bit scary. But my husband's love for me has shown me a glimpse of God's unconditional Grace...and that is liberating.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR RESPONSES. WE ENJOYED READING THEM AND HOPE YOU ENJOY YOUR ICE CREAM TREATS TOGETHER. NEXT MONTH WE INVITE YOU TO WRITE A RESPONSE TO "WHAT I LIKE ABOUT BEING A PARENT" OR IF YOU'RE A CHILD "WHAT I LIKE ABOUT MY PARENT OR PARENTS"

March 1993

Concordia Lutheran Church

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1	2 6:00am B STUDY 6:15pm Choir 7:30pm Committies Meet	3 9:30am Women's Bible Study 2:00pm Support Group 7:00pm Long Term Planing	4	5	6 CLEAN: Baldwin W & W & A/ Farrell Pastor's Family Day
7 9:00am COMMUNION 10:30am Adult Class 10:30am SUNDAY SCHOOL 4:30pm CONFIRMATION 6:30pm B STUDY 7:00pm WORSHIP Greeters - Erickson Ushers - Karl Mattlage & Greg Fritz	8	9 6:00am B STUDY 6:15pm Choir 7:30pm VOTERS MEETING	10 9:30am Women's Bible Study 7:00pm LENT WORSHIP	11 2:00pm Support Group	12	13 CLEAN: Nelson/Gibson/Meade Pastor's Family Day
14 9:00am WORSHIP 10:30am Adult Class 10:30am SUNDAY SCHOOL 4:30pm CONFIRMATION 6:30pm B STUDY 7:00pm COMMUNION Greeters - Harris/Volberding Ushers - Don Patterson & Kirk Madsen	15	16 6:00am B STUDY 6:15pm Choir 7:30pm Evangelism	17 9:30am Women's Bible Study 2:00pm Support Group 7:00pm Long Term Planing 7:00pm Adult Intro 7:30pm WOMEN'S GUILD	18	19	20 CLEAN: Riewe/Maze/Schuelke/ Warner Pastor's Family Day
21 9:00am COMMUNION 10:30am Adult Class 10:30am SUNDAY SCHOOL 4:30pm CONFIRMATION 6:30pm B STUDY 7:00pm WORSHIP Greeters - Patterson Ushers - Harold & Carol Baldwin	22	23 6:00am B STUDY 6:15pm Choir	24 9:30am Women's Bible Study 7:00pm LENT WORSHIP	25	26	27 CLEAN: Rostvedt/Duryea/Hallman/ Smith Pastor's Family Day
28 9:00am WORSHIP 10:30am Adult Class 10:30am SUNDAY SCHOOL 12:45pm NURSING HOME 4:30pm CONFIRMATION 7:00pm COMMUNION Ushers - Patterson & Madsen NEWSLETTER DEADLINE Greeters - Frament	29	30 6:00am B STUDY 6:15pm Choir	31 9:30am Women's Bible Study 7:00pm Adult Intro			