



**10 FAMILY  
DEVOTIONALS TO  
HELP BUILD A  
STRONG FAMILY**

# FAMILY STRONG

GOD'S BLUEPRINT FOR  
THE FAMILY

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JEFFREY DEAN SMITH

Man does not live  
on bread alone  
but on every  
word that comes  
from the mouth  
of the Lord.  
- Deuteronomy 8:3

**FIRST  
SON  
ONE**

# FAMILY DEVOS MATTER TO GOD

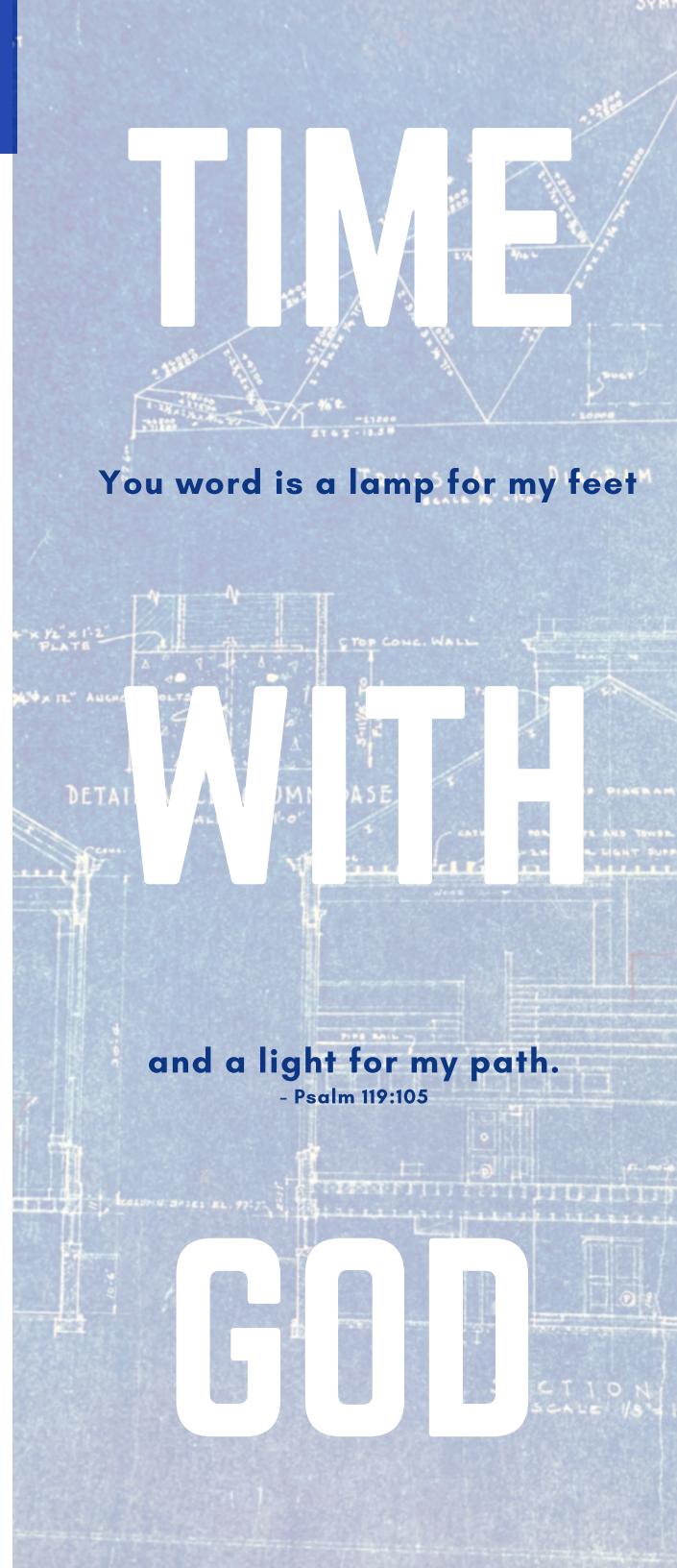
If you could create the perfect family, what would it look like? No more disagreements over who has to do the dishes, take out the trash, or standing in line for your turn in the bathroom would be pretty amazing, wouldn't it?

Such a home life actually doesn't exist because no family is perfect.

**No family is perfect because no one is perfect.** Fortunately, you're not alone when it comes to dealing with family challenges.

**Family is very important to God.** Why do you think He calls Himself, the Father, and Jesus, the Son? Why does He call us His children? Because He knows the bond between family members is one of the greatest and strongest this world can offer. And, problems with your family don't just make your family unhappy - it makes God unhappy too.

Building a strong family takes commitment from everyone in your family. If you are single, this applies to you too. No matter the structure of your family, **God has given you a blueprint for success: the Bible!**



# START WHERE YOU ARE

**Choose** a time, get it on the calendar & stick to it.

**Encourage** open & honest conversations and questions and remember no questions or comments are out-of-bounds!

**Understand** some family members may not initially embrace the conversation. Be patient. Stay the course and don't give up.

**Remind** everyone that this isn't a time to criticize one another. Instead, this is a time for positive, encouraging communication that can build up your family.

**Remember** whether you are single, married, divorced, or widowed, pray that God will speak directly to you with what He desires you hear. Then, do what He desires you do.

## Consider these 4 steps:

**Pray.** Take turns by having a family member begin with prayer.

**Read.** Read the devotional & scripture.

**Discuss.** Ask the **LET'S TALK** questions allowing different family members an opportunity to answer.

**Pray.** Ask for prayer requests & have another family member end in prayer.

**Have you ever wondered why God created families?** He didn't have to do so. He could have made each of us to live on our own. Living on your own might sound pretty good when you get full control of the TV remote or when you don't want to eat those brussel sprouts that somehow ended up on your plate at dinner!

Imagine a world where you eat alone, vacation alone, & never spend holidays surrounded with those you love the most.

**Also, imagine how lonely such a life would be.** No one with whom to talk about your day. No one to enjoy a bowl of popcorn with for movie night. And, no one to listen to you, hug you, and be there for you when the world comes crashing down around you.

**God created family because God knows we need one another.** Life is tough. And, though no family is perfect, God gave you the family you have because He knows this is the family you need. Each member of your family is unique and necessary to help your family be the family God intends. Isn't it so good to know that God loves you so much that He didn't want you to do life alone. Find comfort and joy in knowing that God gave you your family!



1. In Romans 12:5, we read that there are many parts to a body that are necessary to create a complete body. How is this similar to the many parts of our family and why is this important in helping us become a stronger family?
2. How can we as a family work to appreciate each other more?
3. If you could change one thing about our family for the better, what would you change?
4. What is one thing you can do this week to make a family member feel better appreciated?
5. What can our family pray for this week?

## FAMILY FOCUS

**Encourage one another to say something they like and appreciate that is unique about each family member. Allow each family member to share their thoughts.**

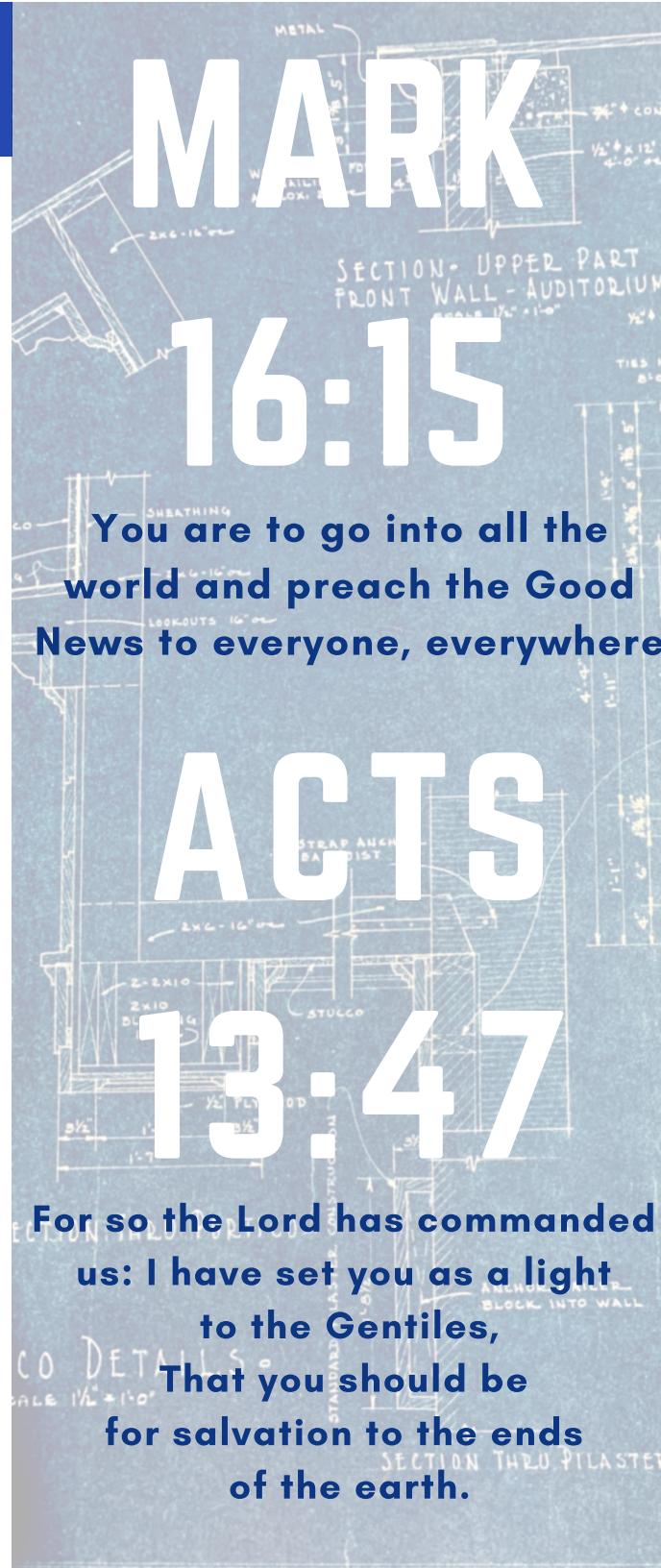
# 2

## DEFINE OUR FAMILY MISSION

You are no accident. You are a person of significance and meaning. When God made you, He was really showing off. Colossians 1:16 says, "Everything, absolutely everything, above and below, visible and invisible...everything got started in him and finds its purpose in him." The key word here is "everything" & each of us is included in the "everything!"

**Just as you have purpose, so too does our family.** God has a unique plan to use our family to do something in a way unlike any other family ever can. God has given us our family, in part, because He knows that when we work together, each using our individual gifts and abilities, we can do things that will honor Him and impact this world for the good.

**Our family has a mission that no other family can ever have because no two families are the same.** Our mission can include a focus on impacting our neighborhood and community, as well as, adopting a project that benefits those in other countries. So, what is the mission of our family? Well, that's a great question for us to talk about right now.



## LET'S TALK

1. If you could change the world for the better, what would you do?
2. What are you best at doing? How might your gifts help our family become more mission-minded?
3. What commonality do the verses in Mark & Acts hold as it relates to the kind of mission our family should embrace?
4. Is there an individual, church, or organization in our community or in another country that needs help? If so, what suggestions do you have for our family to jump in and help?
5. What is the mission of our family?  
**Download a free Family Mission Statement @ [Donelsonfirst.com/family-mission-statement](http://Donelsonfirst.com/family-mission-statement)**
6. What can our family pray for this week?

### FAMILY FOCUS

Give each family member time to consider what a family mission statement should be. Allow one week for each family member to organize their thoughts. During the next family devotional, give each one time to talk about their thoughts for developing your Family Mission Statement.

# 3

# FACING FAMILY FUNK

God's original plan for the family was for the home to be a positive and secure place to belong and find joy.

Unfortunately, our world got messed up when Adam and Eve committed the first act of rebellion against God. Since then, we've all rebelled against God. And, at times, we also rebel against those closest to us - family.

**There is also a villain in the story. His name is Satan, and he wants to destroy our family.** He has been successful at destroying many families. The good news is that the battle can be won even in the midst of this funk. In Joel 2:25, locusts represent the torment of consequences that come into our lives as a result of bad decisions we make. Locusts are ravenous, devouring life as they swarm. Often when family conflicts arise, the first response is to push back, blame others, & fight to win! The end result is often like a path that swarming locusts leave behind - destruction.

**When conflict arises, our goal shouldn't be like that of a locust - to devour everything and everyone.** Instead, it's important to see other family members as someone to love rather than someone to fight.

# LET'S TALK

Working hard to find peace rather than fighting to win isn't easy, but it is necessary to maintain a healthy home-life.

Romans 8 reminds us that God causes all things, even the messy & painful stuff, to bring about good in our lives. God can use our family conflicts to bring us closer as a family if we choose to trust Him while working to find common ground and resolve our challenges in love.

1. What does God promise in Joel 2:25 about our seasons of pain & difficulty as a family? What degree of restoration does He describe?
2. What does Romans 8:28 say that God "causes?" Does He cause all things, or does He have another purpose in mind for the painful events in our lives?
3. When conflicts arise in our family, what should be our goal?
4. What is one thing I can do now to prepare me to respond as God desires the next time I have a disagreement with a family member?
5. What can our family pray for this week?

# JOEL

## 2:25

**So, I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten.**

# ROMANS

## 8:28

**We know God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.**

# 4 DOING MY PART FOR OUR FAMILY

Imagine a family who never gets mad at one another, who always forgives one another, and who is always thinking first about one another? Does this kind of family really exist? What would it be like to have a spouse who always responds with compassion and grace? What would it be like to have a brother who never locks a sibling out of the house for an hour...or two? What would it be like to have a daughter who regularly checks in on you after your spouse has passed? Whether married, divorced, singled, or widowed, every family member has needs. What would it be like if every family member felt loved & secure?

**Have you ever wondered why families have conflict? It's because each of us is human.** There will be times when we each mess up, do the wrong thing, or say the wrong thing. None of us is perfect...except God. And, because we're not perfect, a family member may tick us off, hurt us, & even fail us at times. And, we will do the same to them! What's important is to remember that we all mess up from time to time. And, we all need forgiveness & grace.

God put us together as a family. Our goal is to each do our part and work together to help build a strong family.

# LET'S TALK

# COLOSSIANS

3:13

**Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.**

# ROMANS

12:18

**Do your best to live at peace with everyone.**

1. According to Colossians 3:13, why is it important for us to forgive one another?
2. Romans 12:18 says to do your best to live at peace with others. Give an example of what this might look like in our home when conflict arises.
3. A healthy family isn't a perfect family. Instead, a healthy family is a family who, in spite of their imperfections, keeps working to become a stronger family. What is one thing you can do this week to help our family become a stronger family?
4. How can our Family Mission Statement help us define how we should treat one another in our family? NOTE: **Download a free Family Mission Statement packet at: [donelsonfirst.com/connect/resources](http://donelsonfirst.com/connect/resources)**
5. Is there someone in our family you need to apologize to or forgive?
6. What can our family pray for this week?

## FAMILY FOCUS

**Hand-write a letter of encouragement to a family member this week who doesn't live with you, such as a sibling, grandchild or grandparent. Drop the card in the mail and make their day!**

# 5

# OUR FAMILY IS A TEAM

**Family conflicts will never completely disappear.** You won't always agree with your family members' choices, convictions, or lifestyles. You need to know that's okay. There's no one on this planet exactly like you so there's no one you're going to agree with 100 percent of the time. Remember, God has given us our family. It's the only one we've got so we should take good care of our family.

**It is really important to remember in a moment of conflict that: we are a team!**

**Being a team means that we take care of one another.** This can happen in countless ways. One way we can be there for one another is to be more aware of our uniquenesses. One family member may be more outgoing while another may be super chill. We have to realize that what is different about each other is okay. We might think that we need to change others to make them become more like the person we want them to be. Instead, our goal as a team is to embrace one another's differences and to celebrate what makes each of us unique.

**Another way to take care of each other is to pray for one another.** This is the best way we can grow as a family – to pray with and for our team every day!

# LET'S TALK

# 1 TIMOTHY 5:8

**But those who won't care for their relatives, especially those in their own household, have denied the true faith. Such people are worse than unbelievers.**

# PROVERBS 12:7

**The wicked die and disappear, but the family of the godly stands firm.**

1. What makes you unique? How can we better celebrate the uniqueness of each of our family members?
2. What is one thing that you love doing with our family?
3. What does it mean to care for our family? What does the verse in 1 Timothy say about those who do not care for their family?
4. What is one thing you can do this week to show love to everyone in our family? (NOTE: Don't reveal this answer out loud. Instead, work this week to show love to each family member.)
5. How does a family stand firm (see Proverbs 12:7)?
6. What can our family pray for this week?

## FAMILY FOCUS

**Draw names of family members and write a note to that person this week telling them what makes them unique and why you love them. Surprise them by leaving the note in a special place for them.**

# 6

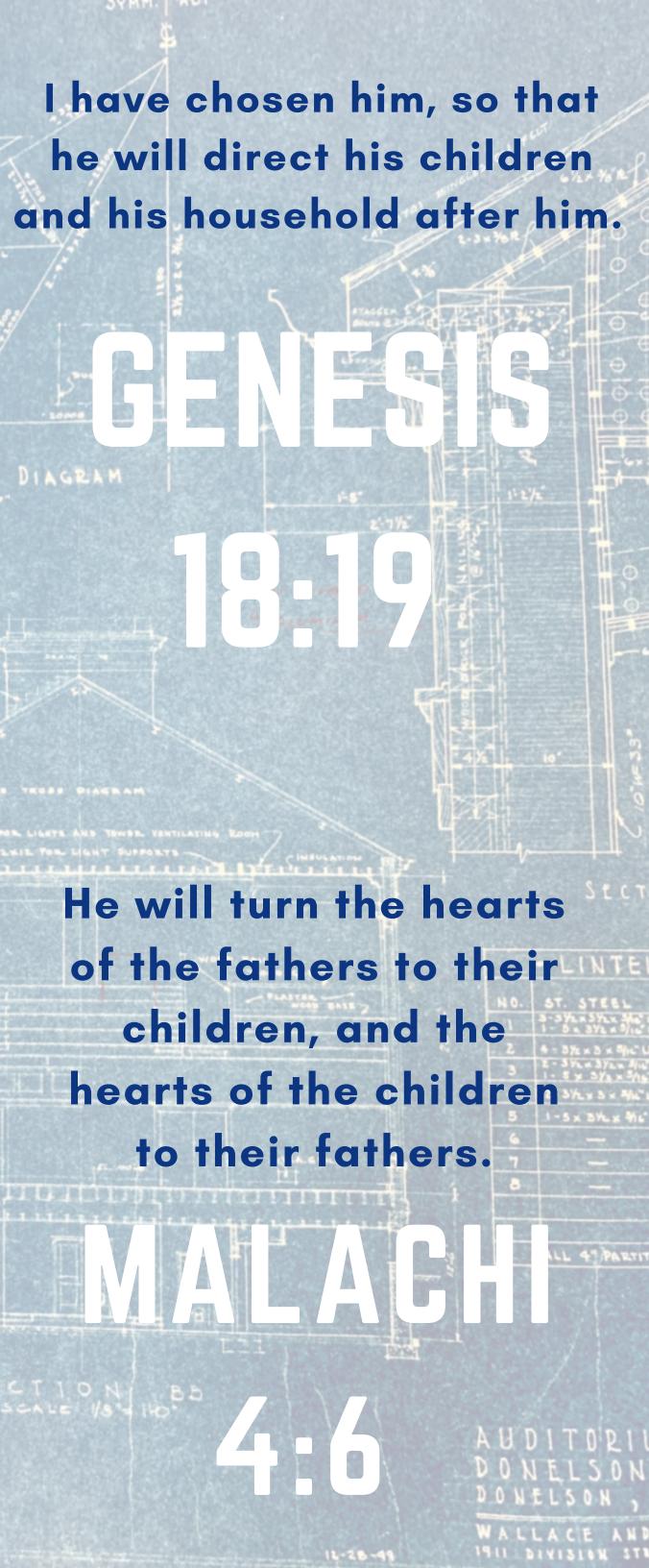
# FATHERS MATTER

Fathers sure do matter to God. They play a critical role in His plan for strong families. And, the relationship we have as children with our heavenly Father is a blueprint for the relationship He desires we have with our earthly family. Even though no father is perfect, every father has a God-given responsibility to lead and love well in the home. **This takes tremendous focus, dedication, and intentionality on the part of fathers.**

You may never be a father, but you are made in His image with a unique purpose & plan. If you are a father, you play the critical role in helping contribute to your child's life in a way that points back to their Heavenly Father.

No matter your age or the age of your child, your interest in the things important to them says, "You matter." Work this week to connect with your kids either over the phone or in the backyard. Go to dinner. Play a board game. Make a phone call to a child or grandchild and send the message, "I love you."

You are never too young or too old to grow as a father. Pray & ask God to reveal to you areas in which you can improve as a dad. Then, begin taking those steps today!



# LET'S TALK

1. What is one thing about your father that makes you smile? (If he is no longer living, use this opportunity to share a memory about your dad this is special to you.)
2. If you have a son/daughter who no longer lives at home, what is one thing you can do this week to let h/him know how much you love them?
3. What are a few things that fathers should do to help spiritually guide their family in the right direction? Is your family doing these things consistently?
4. If your relationship with your father is strained, what steps can you take to make the relationship better?
5. How is your relationship with our Heavenly Father an example of how God desires your relationship be with your father? What steps can you take to strengthen your relationship with your dad?
6. What can our family pray for this week?

## FAMILY FOCUS

Take your family to dinner one night this week and tell each family member how much you love them. Then, order dessert!

# 7

## THE HEART OF A MOTHER

Moms rock! If you are one, thank you! If you are not a mom, you have been impacted in one way or another by a mom. As a mom, chances are good that you take responsibility for much of the hands-on interaction with your child. Of course, you do. **This is what moms do.**

**Whether your child is still living at home or has spread her/his wings to fly, you never stop being a mother.** You've been given a unique responsibility that no one else has - leading, loving, and guiding your child. **This is a life-long assignment that you do not take lightly.**

**When Jesus was hanging on the cross, He was thinking of His mother.** In the gruesome moment, scripture tells us that He made sure she would be taken care of for the rest of her life. Obviously, God thinks a lot of mothers. **And, we should too.**

**If you still have the opportunity to do so, call your mother today and let her know how much you love her.** If your mother is no longer living, take the time today to share a story with other family members of the impact your mom's life had on you. **If you're a mother, know this today: You are loved and appreciated.**

## LET'S TALK

## PROVERBS

### 31:25

**She is clothed with strength and dignity; she can laugh at the days to come.**

## PROVERBS

### 31:28-29

**Her children rise up & call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: Many women have done excellently, but you surpass them all.**

1. What is one thing you appreciate most about your mother? If you can tell your mother this today, take the time to do so.
2. If you are a mother, describe the perfect day to your family. Let them know why you love being a mom.
3. What do you find to be most challenging about being a mother? How can your family better support you and your role in the home?
4. If you don't (or did not) have a healthy relationship with your mother while she was living, what did you learn from that relationship that has helped you when dealing with family challenges & conflict?
5. Share one of your favorite memories with your family about your mother.
6. What can our family pray for this week?

### FAMILY FOCUS

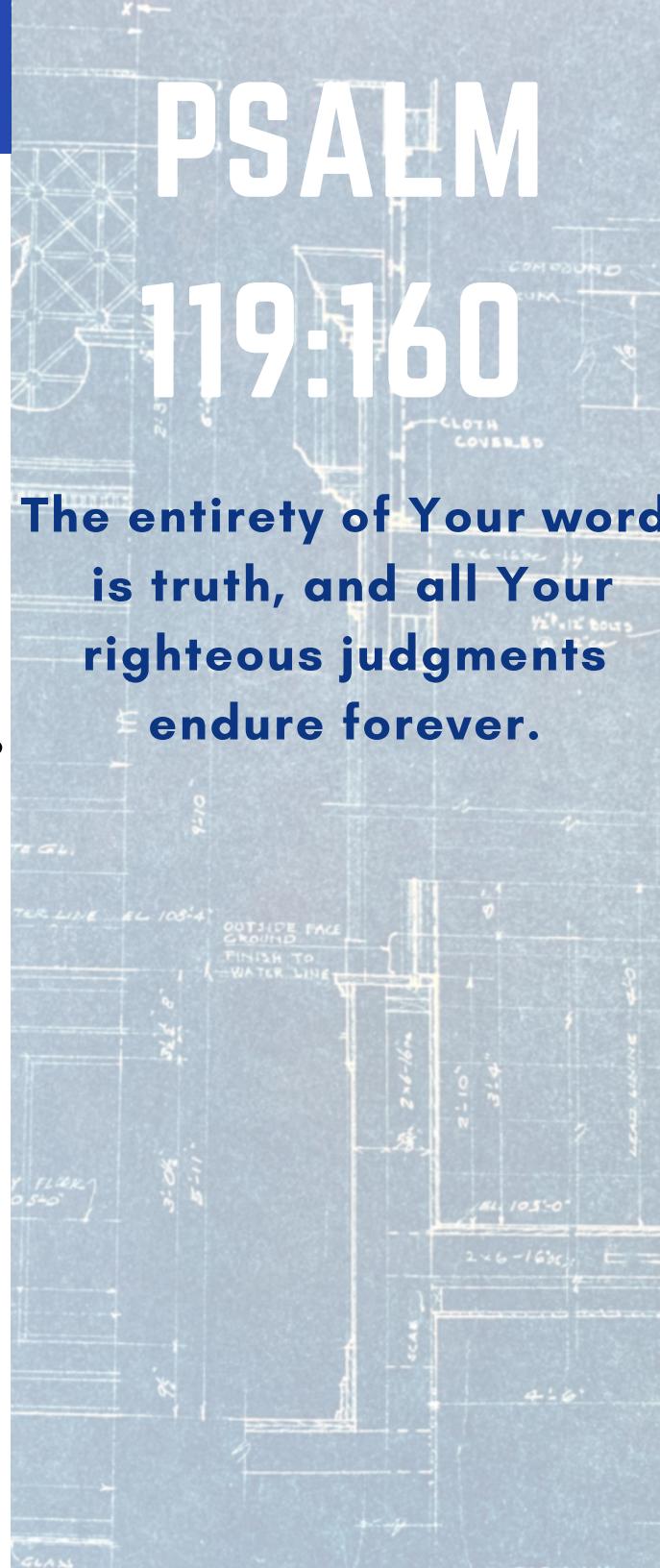
**Have every family member answer this question: What is one thing I love most (or remember most) about my mother. If you can, prepare dinner tonight for your mother...and do the dishes for her!**

# 8 WHAT WE BELIEVE MATTERS

Polling shows that 75% of the U.S. population believe in God, believe that the Bible is the actual/or inspired Word of God, and consider religion to be important to them. Yet only 30 percent attend church on a weekly basis and only 16 percent read the Bible daily. There is a huge disconnect between what people say they believe and how they actually live when it comes to the topic of religion.

**What do we as a family believe about the authenticity of the Bible?** Jesus said in Matthew 7:21: "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." **Saying all the correct religious things isn't what grants us access to God and, eventually, to heaven.**

**What does your life prove that you really believe?** Are you building your life on the solid foundation of Jesus's teachings or on the shifting sands of false beliefs? It is important that we know what we believe and why we believe it. This is why spending time in the Word as a family & discussing these critical issues about faith is important. **It unifies us as a family while also solidifying our beliefs as believers.**



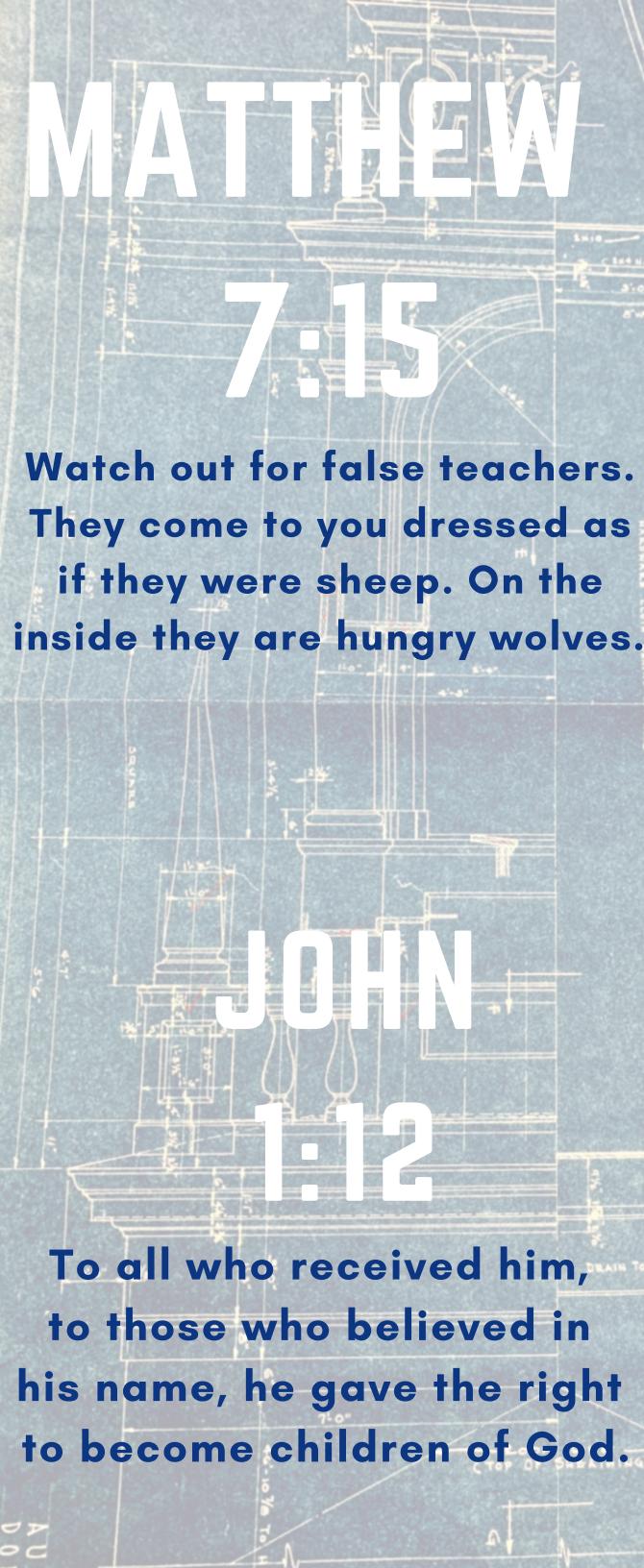
## LET'S TALK

1. Why is it important that we take time as a family to talk, read God's Word & pray? Do you think we should do this together more often? Why or why not?
  2. In Matthew 7:21, Jesus stated that not everyone who mentions His name will spend an eternity in heaven. How can this be true?
  3. What do you find to be most challenging about believing that God is who claims to be? How can we as a family help one another solidify our beliefs about who God is what His Son did for us on the cross?
  4. If we aren't consistently spending time together as a family praying & reading the Bible, what is our plan to get better at this?
  5. Share with each of us one thing for which you are truly thankful to God.
  6. What can our family pray for this week?
- ### FAMILY FOCUS
- If you don't have a regular family devotional time on the weekly calendar, spend time now talking through when, where & how you will begin this commitment.

All religions are not the same. Some religious groups worship false gods. Some believe in God but don't believe that Jesus was His Son. Some believe Jesus was a real person but don't accept the fact that He died for us on the cross and was resurrected from the dead. Some don't believe the Bible is the infallible Word of God. **As Christians, what we believe about God, Jesus & the Bible truly separate us from any other religion or religious group.**

Christianity accepts God as the only God & believes that Jesus is the Son of God, who came to earth, died for humankind, and conquered death by coming back to life & proving that He is the one true Savior of the world. We believe the Bible is God's Word - the ultimate authority for everything we do. **To be a Christian means one is a follower of Christ.**

**By asking Jesus to save you, you are then welcomed into God's family.** God forgave you at the cross. He now offers you a relationship with Him & the privilege of spending eternity with Him in heaven one day. This is the only way to heaven! The Bible says, "To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." -John 1:12



**Watch out for false teachers.  
They come to you dressed as  
if they were sheep. On the  
inside they are hungry wolves.**

**JOHN  
1:12**

**To all who received him,  
to those who believed in  
his name, he gave the right  
to become children of God.**

1. What does it mean to be a Christian? How can I know for sure that I am saved and that I will go to heaven when I die?
2. Ask each family member to answer this question: Do you absolutely know that you will one day go to Heaven? Why or why not?
3. Take time to write your story of salvation. This can be a powerful moment for each family member to think through & write down the moment when they made the greatest decision one can ever make - to receive Jesus Christ as Savior.

### FAMILY FOCUS

**Ask each family member to share about the moment he/she gave their life to Jesus. If a family member has not yet made this decision, encourage them to make this decision today by praying this prayer:**

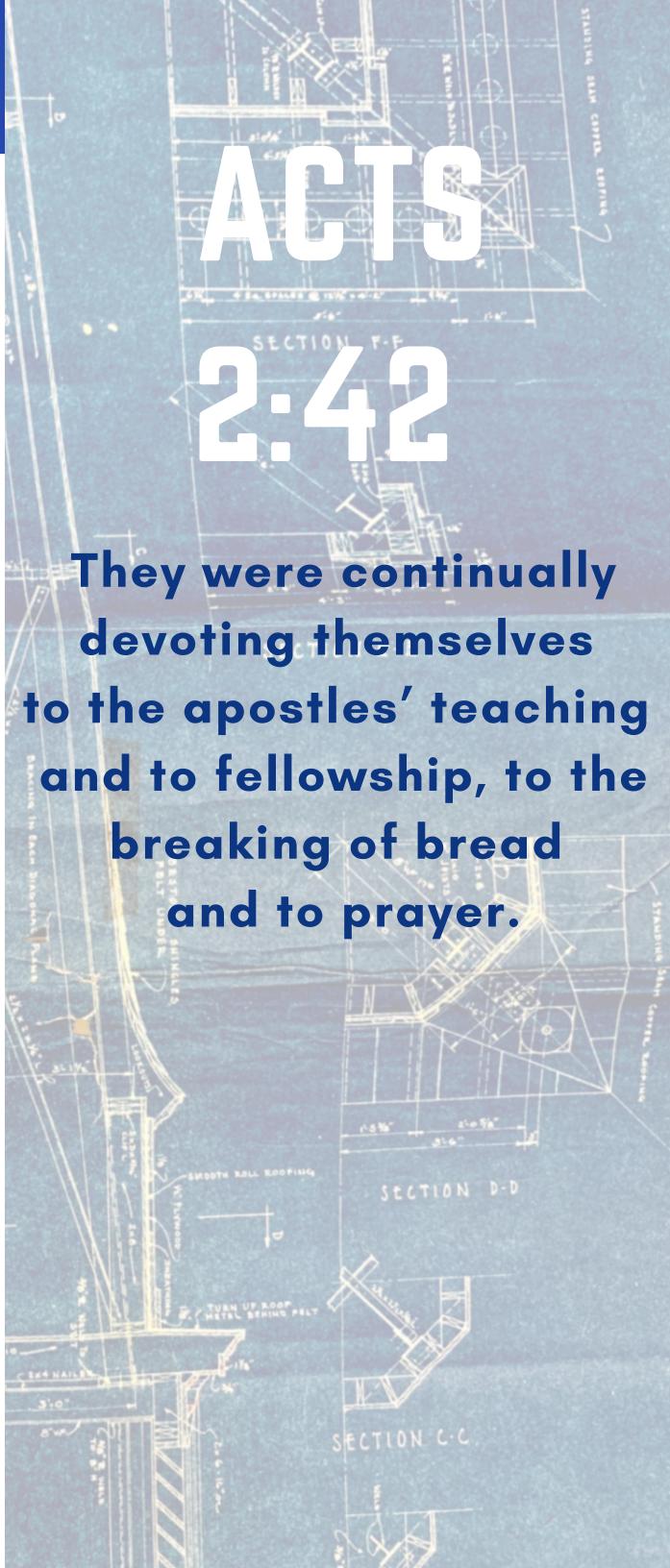
**Dear Jesus,**  
**Thank you for dying for me on the cross and for coming back to life. I believe you are the God's Son, the Savior of the world. Thank you for forgiving all of my sins. Today I give you my life and want to live my life for you. Amen**

# 10 WHY WE ATTEND CHURCH

**Have you ever considered why you attend church?** People go to church for many reasons. Some attend out of a desire to know God better. Others attend church out of a sense of responsibility or guilt. Still others view church as a place to socialize or meet new people.

**There are many reasons why you should go to church.** The greatest of these is that you love God and desire to know Him more fully through worship, serving, growing in knowledge of Him, and fellowship with other believers. **One critical role for each of us in the church is to serve.** A healthy church is one in which each member finds a place to use their gifts and passions to serve.

**Psalm 22:22 (niv) says, "I will declare your name to my brothers; in the congregation I will praise you."** So be careful not to fall into the trap of attending church for what church will do for you. One of the greatest privileges of going to church is to serve God and to bring Him glory! **As you plug in to a church to bring God glory, He will plug you in to places of service where you will impact the lives of others and honor Him.**



## LET'S TALK

1. What do I love most about my church? How can our family become more involved on our church campus?
2. In what area of ministry am I most passionate? If I'm not consistently serving at Donelson First, how can I change this?
3. What is one thing I have enjoyed the most about the Family Strong series? How has our family benefited from this series?
4. What is one thing I am going to begin doing better as a family member?
5. Now that this series is complete, what steps can our family take to continue meeting together weekly to pray, encourage & support one another?

## FAMILY FOCUS

**Get a plan of action together this week for a family devotional time that will work for your calendar. Get the weekly event on everyone's calendar. Commit together to stick to it. End this time praying for one another & for God's protection over your family as you commit to doing your part to remain family strong.**