

HOPE for the Heart

Dear SONrise Church Family,

As we begin a new year many people are worried. Worried about their health, worried about the economy, and worried about the country. However, in Christ we have great hope. He is the One who has promised never to leave or forsake us and He has already written the end of the story! This month we will see how Jesus brings hope to those who are humble, desperate, hopeless, and forgiving. Let's walk by faith in 2015 and trust Jesus to make this a year of great hope!

Tom and Janet Walker

Welcome to Family Focus. The purpose of Family Focus is to help train and equip parents to teach their children the Word of God. The Bible teaches through Deuteronomy 6:6-7; Psalm 78:4 and Proverbs 22:6 that parents are to be the primary spiritual leaders and teachers of their children. Therefore, instead of the "traditional" Sunday School model, we, at SONrise Church, have made the intentional shift in the way we minister to children, by equipping parents to be the primary spiritual leaders of their families. Family Focus is a Bible teaching model that helps families learn spiritual truths together. Our desire at SONrise is to see each family unit spend one hour each week in the Bible together. To help you with this adventure, we have provided materials for you. The materials will be available on the website or you can pick up a new packet each month at SONrise.

When you go through the Family Focus material, you are going to REAP - read, explore, apply and pray.

Read - In this section, you will read a short explanation about the passage of scripture we are reading and read the passage.

Explore - In this section you will be digging into the passage and exploring the meaning of the passage. This section includes questions and ideas for discussion.

Apply - This is where you will find activities to help your kids to make the passage real. Every week there is a different activity, there are games, snacks, movies and art activities.

Pray - It can be hard to take the time to pray as a family, but it is worth it and important to take ample time to pray together and for each other.

Our prayer for you is that as you REAP together you will reap a great harvest in your family.

We love you SONrise Church!

HOPE for the Humble Heart

Week 1

Read

Some of the most difficult people Jesus had to deal with while he was on earth were the Pharisees. These were Jewish people who were “rule-keepers.” They were often more concerned about looking good in front of everybody else and being the best than they were about humbling themselves before God. They saw themselves as the most religious group, the ones who God loved the most. Many of them were very proud and looked down on everybody else. In our story today we will meet Simon, a Pharisee.

Another main character in the story is a woman who is not even identified by name. She is simply referred to as “an immoral woman,” or “a sinner.” Notice what Simon thinks of her and how Jesus interacts with her.

There is one more thing you need to know before you read our story. In Jesus’ day there were certain things that you were expected to do when a special guest came to visit at your house. Because people walked through dusty streets with sandals, you gave them a container of water to wash their feet. You would greet them with a kiss on the cheek and you would have a small bottle of oil to “anoint their head.” These were acts of kindness that showed that you were honored to have this person come to your house.

Let’s read together Luke 7:36-50. Take turns reading or have someone read the entire passage.

Explore

(suggested answers are in italics)

1. Why do you think the woman came to Simon’s house? (vs. 37,38)

To demonstrate her love for Jesus and to seek forgiveness for her sins.

2. What did Simon think of Jesus? The woman? (v. 39)

*He thought that Jesus was not very smart, not knowing that this woman was a big sinner. *

He thought the woman was a big sinner with a bad reputation.

3. Jesus tells a story and then asks a question, “Who do you suppose loved him more after that?” (vs. 41,42) What was Jesus trying to get Simon to see?

That he was a sinner too, just like the woman, in need of forgiveness.

4. How did the woman’s actions show that she was sorry for her sin? (vs. 44-47)

She was humble, crying, giving (gave of her expensive perfume), and serving (washed Jesus feet).

5. How did Simon’s actions show that he was not repentant and sorry for his sin? (vs. 39, 44-46)

He was proud, judged the woman, and was rude to Jesus.

6. Jesus said to the woman, “Your sins are forgiven” (v. 48) and “Your faith has saved you; go in peace” (v. 50) Why did Jesus say these things to the woman?

Because her actions showed that she was sorry for her sin and she was coming to Jesus to forgive her sin.

All of us are sinners in need of a Savior. Some people try and be good in their own effort, like Simon. Others recognize their sin and they come to Jesus in repentance and faith. Repentance means to turn from sin and turn to Jesus. Who are you most like, Simon or the woman?

Apply

Drama Time-

Acting out a Bible story is one of the best ways for children to remember it. Children learn from a very young age to imitate and pretend. They feed their dolls and drive their trucks. This physical and visual dramatization is a key to reproduction. Intentional questions give opportunity to see what details your children are remembering and how they can go on to apply it to themselves.

Assign parts: The Woman; Simon; Jesus (even girls should have the opportunity to act out Jesus' part); **Other house guests, etc.** If someone has dirty feet let them be Jesus first. Now, who of you are willing to get down on your knees, and use your hair and tears, to wash them, and make them smell good?

Without reading the story again, simply **tell it again in your own words** and let the children **act** out what you remember. **Next, let one of them tell it again** and let your children have opportunity to say what they remember. (Check the text to see if you have forgotten anything important). This is reproduction in action. **Finally**, talk about how you can apply the story. Let the person playing **Simon the Pharisee** tell one bad thing they can think of that the person playing **The sinful woman** has done. Have they ever asked or demonstrated a desire for forgiveness? With older children talk through the details of Jesus' illustration to Simon (v.41-42). Does anyone in your family owe someone 50 cents? How does it feel to be told "let's just forget about it." What if you had borrowed 50 dollars? How would being forgiven of a big debt make you feel? As a father or mother, God has forgiven you so much more than your children. Now would be a good time to take the opportunity to wash each of their feet and ask if there is anything you need to ask for their forgiveness for. And be sure to extend forgiveness for anything you might be holding against them.

Key Verse to memorize: **Romans 15:13** (NIV)

May the **God of Hope** fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him,
So that you may overflow with **Hope** by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Pray

As a family, start a prayer journal for the New Year. (Or continue the one you have been using if you still have lots of room.) Write down any goals or desires you can set as a family for the New Year: examples- **1.** Do Family Focus every Monday night. **2.** Get an age appropriate Bible Story book to read nightly and pray with each child before bed. **3.** Each morning make time to read a verse from Proverbs. **4.** Pray over your children: "The Five Daily Decisions" before school (see on SONrise webpage). **5.** Don't go to bed angry. **6.** Get breakfast in bed on your birthday. **7.** Camp out in the living room. **8.** Have a water-fight in the horse tank. **9.** Go on a mission trip. **10.** Record prayer requests, answers to prayer, and journal about spiritual decisions.

Before you pray, ask if anyone needs to humble themselves like the sinful woman, and ask Jesus to forgive their sins and be their Savior. Let them express it in their own words or lead your child in a simple prayer and remind them, Jesus says, "Your sins are forgiven."... "Your faith has saved you; go in peace." In the days to come pray that Jesus peace will be evident to your child.

HOPE for the Desperate Heart

Week 2

Read

Have you ever faced a desperate situation as a family? Maybe it was a health issue or an issue with work, money or a child. What did you do? Where did you turn? (Take time to talk about this time as a family). In our story today we will see two people who were desperate. They had nowhere else to turn, no one else to go to, which made them turn to Jesus.

The first is a man named Jairus. He came and fell at Jesus' feet, pleading for Jesus to come to his house because his 12 year old daughter was dying. The second was an unnamed woman who had a health problem that seemed hopeless. We will focus on her story this week.

This woman was desperate. Because of the laws in her country, the country of Israel, a woman who was bleeding could not go to the temple to worship. People did not want to be near her because if they happened to touch her they would be "unclean," unable to go to the temple to worship as well. So her life had become one of desperation, one of loneliness and shame. Not only that but she was very poor because any money she had was spent to go to doctors to try and find a cure for her problem. Imagine how fearful, shameful and hopeless she must have felt.

Read together as a family her story, found in Luke 8:40-48.

Explore

(suggested answers are in italics)

1. Imagine the scene. A large crowd of people pushing against Jesus. What do you think the woman had to do to get to Jesus?

Squeeze between people, keep her head up so she could see him but try and not be noticed.

2. How long had she suffered with this condition and had anyone been able to do anything to help her? (v. 43)

12 years. Some Bibles say that she had spent all her money but no doctor had been able to help her.

3. What happened when the woman got to Jesus? (v. 44)

She touched the edge of his robe. Immediately she was healed.

4. Why do you think Jesus makes the sick woman reveal herself in front of everyone? (v. 46-48)

So she could be free of her fears and shame and so people would see His power to heal as the Messiah. .

5. How does the woman respond to Jesus? (v. 47)

She was afraid, began to tremble, and fell at his feet and explained what she did.

6. How does Jesus end the conversation? Why? (v. 48)

He calls her "daughter,:" acknowledges her faith and tells her to "go in peace." To encourage her, show her faith and freedom in front of everyone and to teach the crowd about faith in Him.

7. How did this "come to Jesus" event change the woman's life?

Completely! No more hiding, fear, shame, sickness. She could return to the Temple and worship!

Apply

Special snack and movie time.-

Think of your families favorite snack. Is it fruit, chocolate, popcorn, ice cream, floats, or chips and salsa? Put all the suggestions in a jar and draw one out each Family Focus night this month to help with the decision.

Almost all of us can think of something we don't like about our selves, especially as we enter those middle school years. If anyone in your family has a visible physical handicap you know the pain that comes from feeling different or alone in that struggle. When we are sick or have a disease God may use doctors, medicine, or even do a miracle to restore us to health. As we pray sometime He answers "yes," sometimes "wait," and sometimes "no." He always has good plans and purposes for what He allows. To put this in perspective of how He can allow physical handicaps for His Glory order and watch the DVD "Life's Greater Purpose" from the website below. It is the story of Nick Vujicic who was born without arms and legs. You can look up his ministry, www.lifewithoutlimbs.org. and read his Bio under NICK. There are several media videos you can watch on his website. On Youtube. you can watch a two minute 30 second clip "A day in the life of Nick." Even though he wanted to end his life at the age of 10, God transformed him through faith in Jesus Christ and his life without limbs became a life without limits. He learned to take care of himself as it shows in the DVD, "Life's Greater Purpose." As a family talk about physical disabilities and all you have to be thankful for.

You can also look up the ministry, "Focus on the Family" and check out "pluggedin.com" to see the reviews on current movies.

Key Verse to memorize: **Romans 15:13 (NIV)**

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Pray

May God give you the opportunity to pray specifically about miracles you would like to see in people's lives. Some may need healing mentally (thinking they are ugly), physically (sick or injured), emotionally (feelings of shame or aloneness), and spiritually (turn from sinful choices and become a Christ-follower or identify with Jesus through baptism). Record your requests and don't forget to thank God for His answers (Philippians 4:6) even if the answer is "no" or "wait". Like the woman in our story Jesus wants us to trust Him by faith, and no matter the outcome, "Go in peace." Pray about someone you can each share this story with this week. People need to hear how Jesus offers **Hope for the Desperate Heart**.

Hope for a Hopeless Heart

Week 3

Read

We were born into a world of sin. Many people try to act like sin is no big deal. That God doesn't really care about our sin or even exist. Others work really hard to not sin by keeping man-made rules so they feel like they are not sinners. Some are just crushed under the weight of their sin.

God hates sin, but He loves people. That is why He sent Jesus to earth as a baby. To live like a human being, tempted by sin, but never giving in to sin. Because Jesus never sinned he would shed His blood to pay the penalty for the sins of the whole world. Jesus did not come to condemn sinners, but to save them.

In this week's Bible story we have three main characters. The first is a group of people, called the Pharisees. They were "rule-keepers." They were proud of how well they kept the law and saw themselves as the most religious group of people around. The second person in the story is an unnamed woman. She had been caught in an act of sexual sin with a man. The Pharisees caught her and brought her to Jesus. They saw this as an opportunity to put pressure on Jesus, as they thought of him as their enemy. The third person in the story is Jesus. He takes the opportunity to teach a very important truth about why he came to earth. This is a story about sin and forgiveness.

Read John 8:1-11 together as a family. One person can read all the verses or you can take turns if you would like to.

Explore

(suggested answers are in italics)

1. Remember a time as a child that you were caught doing something you knew was wrong.
What happened? Take time as family members to remember and talk about this.
2. Why did the Pharisees bring this woman to Jesus? What was their motive? (v. 6)
To trap Jesus. To find something to use against him, because they were jealous of him.
3. Look up Deuteronomy 22:22-24. What did the Old Testament law say should be done with both of the people caught in this sin? Why do you think these men brought only the woman? (v. 3)
They should both be stoned. Often it is the woman that is blamed for this sin, not the man.
4. God hates sexual sin (like adultery), so why did Jesus not immediately condemn the woman for her sin?
Jesus did not say the sin was ok, but he came to forgive sin, not condemn the sinner. See John 3:17.
5. How did Jesus finally handle the situation with the Pharisees? Why do you suppose he bent down and wrote in the dust two times? (v. 6,8)
He confronted the Pharisees with their sin, and then gave them time to think about their guilt before God.
6. How did the Pharisees react? Why? (v. 9)
Starting with the oldest, they left quietly, realizing Jesus knew about their (secret) sins.
7. How did Jesus handle the situation with the woman? Why? (vs. 10,11)
He told her he did not condemn her, but encouraged her to change her sinful lifestyle.

God knows about all of our sin, but He is not a condemning God but a forgiving one. He forgives and frees us from the power of sin so we can "go and sin no more."

Apply

Craft time-

Look back at question #1 in the Explore. If there are any secret and hidden sins you need to talk about as a family now is a good time. Often we prefer to be like the Pharisees and point out the sins of others without admitting our own struggles. Discuss the story and talk about how the woman felt. It's not fun to try to keep secrets about sin in our lives.

It **is** fun to keep secret treasures in a little box. Help each child make a simple treasure box.

If you have left over little boxes from Christmas allow younger children to color or decorate their own box with glue and scraps of paper or cloth. Allow older children to follow these instructions on YouTube, "How to make a Paper Box 2." (Learn and teach with Fun.) Or make a pattern similar to the one below.

Have each one go outside and find a small rock. With a black sharpie write forgiven on each rock. Let them keep their rock in their treasure box as a reminder of God's forgiveness.

Key verse: Romans 15:13 (NIV)

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Pray

Prayer and Communion Time—Time of reflection and confession

When you think your children are old enough to understand one of the best ways to teach your family about communion is to demonstrate it or do it. In I Corinthians 11: 23-26, 28, the Bible says to examine yourself before you partake. First of all, it is important to know if your children have asked Jesus to forgive their sin and be their Savior. It is not always easy to discern but the Spirit will give evidence in their life if they have trusted in Jesus. We need to teach our children that it is not communion (or even Baptism) that saves us. They are great symbols of what Jesus did for us and how we can identify with Him. As a family you can take time to **Remember** what He did for you. Teach your children the importance of this celebration of thanks to God. Spend some time in prayer asking God to show each of you any sin recently committed that you need to confess (I John 1:9). Get out some bread and break off a piece for each one. Talk about Jesus' broken body. Pour a small amount of grape juice for each one to remember Jesus' blood given on the cross (Hebrews 9:22b). Answer questions your children have and pray a prayer thanking God the freedom of forgiveness!

HOPE for the Forgiving Heart

Week 4

Read

Forgiveness is never easy. What is easy is to want to get even with someone who hurts us. If your brother or sister hits you, it is easy to want to hit them back. If someone at school says mean things to you, it is easy to want to say mean things back. The Bible calls this revenge or wanting to get even. It is the desire to make the person “pay” for what they did to us! But in our Bible story this week Jesus answers a question about forgiveness and then tells a story to show the importance of forgiveness.

In Jesus’ day people taught that if someone hurt or wronged you they were to be forgiven three times. But if they kept wronging you, you did not have to keep forgiving them. This is what Peter is asking Jesus about in his question. Jesus teaches a very different way. One of constant forgiveness and mercy for one another, just like God shows to us. Let’s look together at what God wants us to learn this week about forgiveness.

Read together Matthew 18:21-35. Take turns reading the verses or have one person read the passage.

Explore

(suggested answers are in italics)

1. If we forgive someone seven times would we think we were being generous, like Peter? (v. 21)
Probably. It is very hard to keep forgiving someone, isn't it?
2. Was Jesus’ answer that we should forgive 490 (70X7) times? What was Jesus really saying?
No. We should forgive as many times as necessary.
3. How much difference was there between what these two men owed? (vs. 24, 28)
A big difference! Millions of dollars compared to thousands of dollars.
4. What did both men ask for? (vs. 26, 29)
Both asked for mercy, patience, time so they could repay the debt.
5. If you were the King in the story, how would you feel if the man you had just forgiven a huge debt refused to forgive his fellow servant a small debt?
Offended and angry that he would not extend the same mercy which he was shown.
6. If we refuse to forgive others what happens to us? (vs. 31-34)
We are imprisoned by bitterness. We suffer the consequences of not forgiving, almost like being tortured.
7. In this story God is the King who forgave us as his servants. How has God’s forgiveness effected your life?
Take time to talk about this as a family and encourage each other by what you have seen.
8. Are there people that you need to forgive?
Take time to talk about this as a family

Apply

Game time- “Floods and Shreds” or “Floats and Charades” :)

Divide your family in to two teams. (Unless your children are old enough to want to play against one another individually.) Get out a paper and pencil to keep score. With two teams go to separate areas where your team can choose a Bible story to act out and practice how you would do that. Possible ideas are one of the stories of Hope you have learned of in January Family Focus. Gather back in a large room where each team takes a turn acting while the other team guesses. Keep track of who gets the most points and that team can serve the other team root beer or cappuccino ice cream floats. This is a great time to learn and review different aspects of Bible stories depending on the age of your children.

Key Verse to memorize: **Romans 15:13 (NIV)**

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Pray

Prayer Time -

Get out your family prayer journal and look to see how you have done on your family goals and desires this New Year. Review prayer requests and record the answers to prayer anyone has seen. Talk about who you each need to choose to forgive. Take additional prayer requests. Assign a specific prayer request to each family member. Ask God to show you the people you need to forgive. Make a list of people God brings to your minds. Older children can use the following sample prayer as they choose to forgive. Remember the huge debt that God has forgiven you.

“I choose to forgive _____ for _____ causing me to feel _____
(describe your emotional pain). I ask you Lord Jesus to take back any ground I have given to the enemy through my unforgiveness and I yield myself to your control.”