



Children's Literacy Project
Presents

READ

FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

Utilizing Selections from the book:

READ: How God's People Can Bring Justice Through Literacy

by Tony Kriz and Jeff Martin

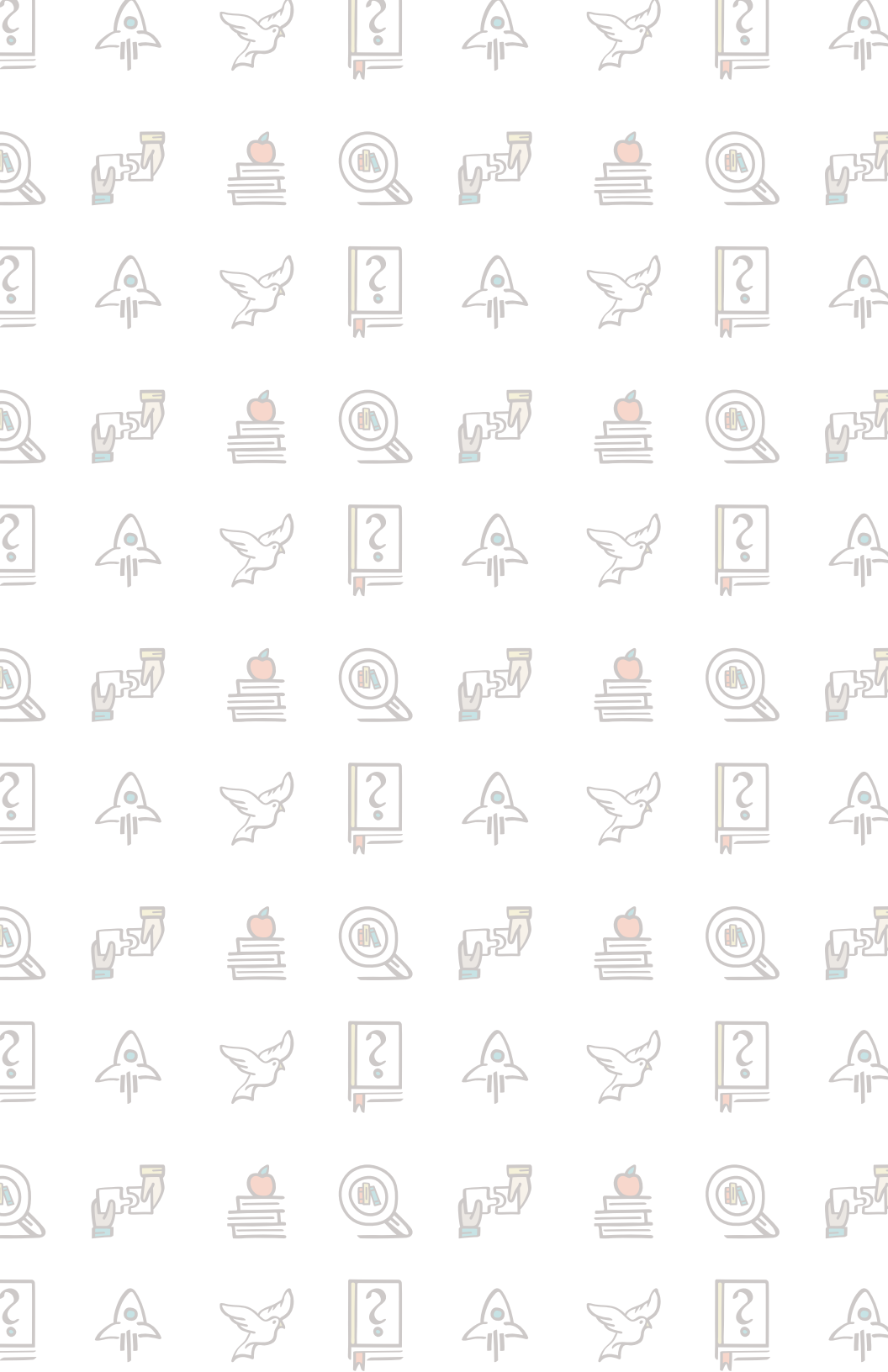


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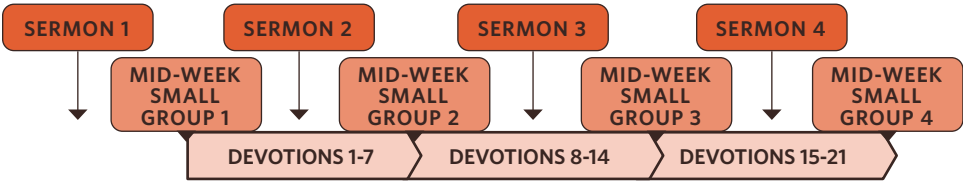
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HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

SET FREE Family Devotional is a three-week exploration of the importance of literacy in the 21st Century and why it is an essential mission for the People of God.

A FEW NOTES BEFORE WE BEGIN:

- This devotional can be enjoyed as a personal daily meditation or as a family devotional around the table.
- It provides two reading options:
 - A no-cost (just download the app) 21-entry version you can access through the YouVersion app: <https://www.youversion.com/bible-app>. Search for “SET FREE Family Devotional.”
 - A full book with 47 entries and additional materials you may purchase through the Amazon book retailer or perhaps through your church. Search for *READ: How God’s People Can Bring Justice Through Literacy*.
- Each daily devotion includes a reading, a focus scripture, a series of discussion questions, age-specific questions, a suggested prayer and an Inspirational Short Film to support the devotional experience.
- A family devotional could take between 15-25 minutes and follow this suggested outline:
 - Read the title of the day and the selected reading (if you have the entire book *READ*, we suggest choosing one chapter for family time.) Be aware that some topics may be too intense for young children.
 - Read the Focus Scripture
 - Process together the Family Discussion questions. (Decide for your family if the primary questions or the age-specific questions best suit your family’s needs, or mix and match questions as you will.)
 - If time allows, watch an Inspirational Short Film
 - Close with prayer
- We designed this devotion to accompany a multi-week churchwide experience alongside sermons and a small group curriculum.



DAY ONE

Disrupting Generational Poverty

READING FROM READ

Chapter 1

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow.

ISAIAH 1:17 NIV

FAMILY DISCUSSION

Question 1

What did you hear in this chapter that stimulated your mind? What was new or touched your heart in a fresh way?

Question 2

Ron Fairchild said that 3rd-grade reading is one of the best predictors of future success. Why do you think reading is such a powerful tool for breaking cycles of poverty?

Question 3

How can we use our time, talents, or resources to make sure kids in our community have the chance to succeed?

ADDITIONAL FAMILY RESOURCES

Discussion - Younger Kids

- What did you like about today's reading? What part was your favorite?
- How are children like their parents? How are parents like grandparents?
- Why do you think it is important to help others?

Discussion - Teens

- What stood out to you about injustice or opportunity in this chapter?
- How is literacy/illiteracy connected to a family's past? How is it connected to a child's future?
- Where do you see God calling young people to act or care?

Reflection - Adults

- How does this chapter challenge your assumptions about literacy and justice?
- Where do you see structural barriers that keep children from learning?
- What role can your family play in God's redemptive work through literacy?

FILM CONNECTION

Watch the Inspirational Short Film

[Literacy Changes Lives](#)



PRAYER

Lord, thank you that you love justice and care for the forgotten and tossed aside. Help us join in your mission to bring compassion and generational impact to our neighbors and beyond. Amen

DAY TWO

For Such a Time as This

READING FROM READ

Chapters 2-3

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

MATTHEW 25:40 NIV

FAMILY DISCUSSION

Question 1

What emotions did this chapter stir in you? What surprised you?

Question 2

Share a time when you were young, and someone spoke up for you or unexpectedly helped you along your path?

Question 3

The book says, "From 1st-3rd grade, children learn to read, and from 4th grade on, children read to learn." Why do you think that transition is so important? What are some dangers of missing the "golden window"?

Question 4

How can we pray for children in our community who may be falling behind?

ADDITIONAL FAMILY RESOURCES

Discussion - Younger Kids

- What was your favorite part of today's reading?
- Why do you think learning to read is important?
- What do you think people could do to help children who struggle?

Discussion - Teens

- What surprised you in this chapter?
- How did this chapter challenge the concept of "equal opportunity"?
- Where do you see young people harming and/or supporting one another?

Reflection - Adults

- What surprised you in this chapter, and how did it challenge your assumptions about the process of growing and learning?
- Where do you see structural barriers that keep children from learning?
- Where could you go to learn more about structural barriers and/or justice implications of literacy?

FILM CONNECTION

Watch the Inspirational Short Film

[Surprising Lesson from Mother Teresa](#)



PRAYER

Father, we pray for the 1.3 million children who each year fall out of the golden window, lose the ability to learn to read, and too often sentenced to a life they do not deserve. Send compassionate people to help the "least of these." Amen

DAY THREE

Understanding Trauma and Human Development

READING FROM READ

Chapters 4-6

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.

JOHN 16:33 NIV

FAMILY DISCUSSION

Question 1

When you hear the word “trauma,” what comes to mind? Why do you think trauma is so damaging to a child’s ability to learn and grow?

Question 2

How might awareness of these struggles change the way we treat classmates, neighbors, and others in our community?

Question 3

The chapter says that even one dependable, encouraging adult can make a huge difference. Who has spoken encouraging words into your life when you needed them most?

Consider

Am I willing to be that “one dependable, encouraging adult” to a child in my community?

ADDITIONAL FAMILY RESOURCES

Discussion - Younger Kids *[If you have a copy of READ, instead of reading "Trauma" we recommend reading "Chapter 6: Yoga Boy" with the youngest children.]*

- What was your favorite part of today's reading?
- Why do you think learning to read is important?
- How can we help others learn and grow?

Discussion - Teens

- What stood out to you about injustice or opportunity in this chapter?
- How does literacy shape a person's future?
- What did you understand about trauma and its impact on young minds?
- Where do you see young people contributing to trauma in others, and where do you see young people contributing to healing?

Reflection - Adults

- How does this chapter challenge your previous assumptions about the process and potential for learning?
- Where do you see circumstantial factors that keep children from learning? How is this related to equal opportunity?
- How does an understanding of trauma impact your desire to be more compassionate or patient? How does it make you want to change?

FILM CONNECTION

Watch the Inspirational Short Film

[How to Build a Brain](#)



PRAYER

Lord, you said "In this world you will have trouble" and yet the trouble so often feels overwhelming. Please bring your healing to the hurting children in our community and beyond. Help us be your instruments of peace. Amen

DAY FOUR

For I Was Hungry

READING FROM READ

Chapters 7-9

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in.

MATTHEW 25:34-36 NIV

FAMILY DISCUSSION

Question 1

Why does hunger make it so hard for children to concentrate and learn?

Question 2

Jesus said, "I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat." How does this verse connect to Kendall's story?

Question 3

What new connections did you make between hunger, poverty, and learning?
Did this open your heart in any new ways?

Question 4

Dr. Beegle says the number one way to overcome poverty is mentoring. How is mentoring different than giving someone food or money?

ADDITIONAL FAMILY RESOURCES

Discussion - Younger Kids

- What part of today's story made you sad?
- Why do you think learning to read is harder for hungry kids?
- How do you wish things were different?

Discussion - Teens

- How did this story make you feel or open your eyes to something new?
- How does being perpetually hungry and without sufficient healthy food shape a child's future?
- How can we give children the tools to escape becoming hungry adults?

Reflection - Adults

- How does this chapter challenge your assumptions about literacy and justice?
- Where do you see structural barriers that keep children from learning?
- How can we give children the tools to escape the cycles of hunger?

FILM CONNECTION

Watch the Inspirational Short Film

[Jesus Call to Compassion and Service](#)



PRAYER

Lord, you taught us to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." Today, change my understanding of the "us" in that prayer. Open the circle of my "us" to include the children in our community and beyond. Help me join your work of restoring hope and futures for our vulnerable neighbors. Amen.

DAY FIVE

For I Was in Prison

READING FROM READ

Chapters 10-11

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

MATTHEW 25:37-40 NIV

FAMILY DISCUSSION

Question 1

What does Frederick Douglass' quote—"It is easier to build strong children than fix broken men"—mean to you? How do you see that truth being important in our world today?

Question 2

The authors keep using the phrase "preventative justice." Why do you think this might be an important spiritual idea?

Question 3

Jesus said, "For as much as you have done it to the least of these, you've done it unto me." How can remembering this verse change the way we look at kids who struggle in school, people in prison, or families in poverty?

ADDITIONAL FAMILY RESOURCES

Discussion - Younger Kids

- How do you think kids become bad adults?
- Why do you think learning to read helps become a good adult?
- How can we help others make good choices and have hope?

Discussion - Teens

- Why do you think Jesus says, “for I was in prison” when he wasn’t talking about himself?
- The reading said, “children are not born criminals.” Why do you think that is an important idea?
- What changes would you like to see in light of this reading?

Reflection - Adults

- How do you feel about Jesus equating himself with prisoners? Why is this connection important?
- Where do you see structural barriers that keep children from a flourishing future?
- What role can you plan in “building strong children” as the reading suggests?

FILM CONNECTION

Watch the Inspirational Short Film

[Building Strong Children](#)



PRAYER

Lord, you said, “As much as you have done it to the least of these you have done it unto me.” I want to know you more deeply, Lord. I want to meet you in my hurting neighbors and participate in your work of setting people free. Change my heart. Increase my compassion for my struggling neighbors—those who struggle now and those who, without intervention, will struggle in the future. Amen.

DAY SIX

The Power of Mentors

READING FROM READ

Chapters 12-13

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

You, Lord, hear the desire of the afflicted; you encourage them, and you listen to their cry, defending the fatherless and the oppressed.

PSALM 10:17-18A NIV

FAMILY DISCUSSION

Question 1

Craig didn't think he had the "right" personality to be a mentor. Why do you think people sometimes believe they aren't qualified to help? How do you doubt your qualifications?

Question 2

How do you imagine Nas felt when his life kept changing—first losing his grandmother, then moving in with his mother, then struggling in school? How might this contribute to him losing hope or even quitting?

Question 3

Psalms 10:17-18 talks about God strengthening the heart of the afflicted and hearing the oppressed. How did Craig live out that verse in his relationship with Nas? How do you think Craig was "strengthened" as well? Why do you think Craig doubted he could be a good reading mentor?

ADDITIONAL FAMILY RESOURCES

Discussion - Younger Kids

- Why do you think Craig doubted he could be a good reading mentor?
- What do you think Nas felt before he met Craig?
- Why do you think this story has a happy ending?
- What do you wish for other children like Nas?

Discussion - Teens

- What stood out to you in this chapter? What part did you think was most important?
- This chapter suggests there is a power in human connection. Why do you think that is true, and how have you seen it to be true?
- Why do you think teenagers often make really effective reading mentors?

Reflection - Adults

- What did you like best about this reading and why?
- In what ways do you doubt yourself, the way Craig doubted himself?
- Where do you see circumstantial barriers that keep children from learning?
- This is a story about human flourishing? What can we learn from the transformation in Nas AND Craig?

FILM CONNECTION

Watch the Inspirational Short Film

[READ NW Takes on Illiteracy](#)



PRAYER

Lord, today's verse says, "You will incline your ear to do justice for the fatherless and the oppressed." Help me love what you love. Incline my ear to hear what you hear and to do what you do. Help me to say "yes" when you are asking me to serve another. Amen.

DAY SEVEN

Building Self-Esteem

READING FROM READ

Chapters 14-16

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

EPHESIANS 2:10 NIV

FAMILY DISCUSSION

Question 1

Can you think of someone in your life who, like Jerry, made you feel seen and valued? What did they say or do that made a difference?

Question 2

Why do you think simple words like "You are significant" or "You have a future" can have such a lasting impact on someone?

Question 3

The Harvard study says children who thrive despite hardship have at least one stable, supportive adult. What does this teach us about our responsibility as people of faith or as a family?

Question 4

Why do you think the "social-emotional" impact of a mentor-mentee relationship can be as impactful, if not more impactful, than the "educational" impact?

ADDITIONAL FAMILY RESOURCES

Discussion - Younger Kids

- Who is your favorite teacher at church, school, or another place? Why are they your favorite?
- What are some ways that adults help you feel good about yourself?
- How do you feel when you learn that some children don't have many caring adults?

Discussion - Teens

- When and how has a teacher, coach, or mentor had a positive impact on you?
- Why do you think a reading mentor program often gets supportive adults to kids who would otherwise not have one?
- The Harvard study says, "one stable and supportive adult" makes a consistent difference in a child. How is this statement too simplistic? Why do you think it is also true?

Reflection - Adults

- How does this chapter challenge your assumptions about the impact of mentoring, even something as simple as an hour a week?
- The Harvard study says "one stable and support adult" can be the most important factor for a child to do well. Why do so many children lack this?
- What role can your family play in God's redemptive work of building self-esteem?

FILM CONNECTION

Watch the Inspirational Short Film

[Fort Worth Churches Answer the Call](#)



PRAYER

Lord, Ephesians says that we are your handiwork, created to do good works. Please help us to see the good works you have prepared for us towards our neighbors. We pray also for the children who don't have enough guidance and compassion from supportive adults. We know they are your handiwork as well. Amen.

DAY EIGHT

Rosie

READING FROM READ

Chapters 17

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

Then he said to them, "Whoever welcomes this little child in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. For it is the one who is least among you all who is the greatest."

LUKE 9:48 NIV

FAMILY DISCUSSION

Question 1

Erica used to think of "mission work" as traveling far away. What did she learn about serving close to home?

Question 2

What difference did it make for Rosie to know that "Ms. Erica believes in me"? When have you felt that way recently? When did you first feel that way?

Question 3

What do you think it means that Erica "was changed most by the relationship"? Why do you think that mentors often feel like they received more than they gave?

ADDITIONAL FAMILY RESOURCES

Discussion - Younger Kids

- What was your favorite part of today's story?
- What do you think Rosie was feeling before she met Erica?
- Who do you think was the luckiest at the end of the story, Rosie or Erica? Why?

Discussion - Teens

- This chapter is a story of two people. How did it make you feel?
- How did this story serve to illustrate other things you have heard in this devotional series?
- What do you think about serving close to home versus on the other side of the world?
- Why do you think mentors believe they were "changed most by the relationship"?

Reflection - Adults

- What thoughts or feelings did this chapter surface in you?
- How does this chapter shape your understanding of God's work in the world and your role in that mission?
- In what ways would your life be benefited by receiving a life-changing experience like Erica experienced? What are you lacking?

FILM CONNECTION

Watch the Inspirational Short Film

[Mary](#)



PRAYER

Lord, You said, "whoever welcomes a little child in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me." I want to know you, Lord. I want to love who you love. I want to welcome those you welcome. I want to welcome You. Amen.

DAY NINE

Loving Your Neighbor

READING FROM READ

Chapters 18-19

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?" He answered, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."

LUKE 10:25-28

FAMILY DISCUSSION

Question 1

The author said "Every Christian wants to live to reflect the Red Letters more and more." Do you think that is true? Is it true in your life?

Question 2

What does the line "Nothing is intimidating about a nine-year-old" mean to you? What do you think the author is trying to say?

Question 3

What are some excuses we sometimes make for not helping others—and how might we overcome them?

Question 4

How might volunteering at a local school or helping a struggling child tangibly show God's love?

ADDITIONAL FAMILY RESOURCES

Discussion - Younger Kids

- What was your favorite part of today's reading?
- Why do you think it is so important to "love your neighbor" as Jesus said?
- What are some ways we can help young children learn and grow?

Discussion - Teens

- How would you sum up the message of this chapter?
- In what ways do you agree and disagree?
- In what ways is it important to you to reflect the "Red Letters" in the Bible in your life? What does that mean to you?

Reflection - Adults

- How do you process the "Red Letters" in the Bible? What is your philosophy of applying them to your life?
- The author believes "every Christian wants to love as Jesus illustrates, but sometimes they don't know where to start." In what ways is that true for you? What would you like to do about that?
- How could becoming a reading mentor be a good place to start?

FILM CONNECTION

Watch the Inspirational Short Film

[Reading Buddy](#)



PRAYER

Lord, you said, "Love your neighbor" and "Do this and you will live." Grow my desire to love as you love. Help me to love my neighbors, even those I haven't met yet. Show me a practical way today to put your commands into action. Amen.

DAY TEN

Rethinking the Good Samaritan

READING FROM READ

Chapters 20-22

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

(The expert of the law) wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him."

LUKE 10:29-33 NIV

FAMILY DISCUSSION

Question 1

What surprised you most about the author's reflection—that maybe it all happened on an "ordinary Tuesday"?

Question 2

Can you think of a time when you simply helped someone—maybe something that didn't seem "big," but mattered a lot to that someone?

Question 3

Jesus said, "The one who is faithful in a very little thing is also faithful in much." What do you think that means for us today?

Question 4

In what ways can you explain that serving in a local school is a practical 21st century application of the Good Samaritan parable?

ADDITIONAL FAMILY RESOURCES

Discussion - Younger Kids

- What was your favorite part of today's story?
- Why do you think that Jesus is so smart? Why do you think his stories inspire people?
- What is a simple talent or ability you have that you could use to help people?

Discussion - Teens

- What do you think about the author's take on the Good Samaritan story? Does he have a point or not so much?
- How do you think helping a tossed-aside child learn to read is a decent application of Jesus' story?
- What do you want to do with today's chapter?

Reflection - Adults

- In what ways have you been taught that the Jesus-way expects us to be extraordinary, unprecedented, and sacrificial? Has that limited you from doing the simple, everyday things?
- This story is in response to the question, "What must I do to inherit eternal life"? Does Jesus' answer still surprise you?
- Do you agree that serving often tossed-aside-children at a local school is a good modern application of the Good Samaritan parable?

FILM CONNECTION

Watch the Inspirational Short Film

[Bono](#)



PRAYER

Lord, help me to notice the stranger that I pass along the road, even if that person is different from me. Give me the strength to give a little time and a little of my talents to someone in need. Help me be a person of mercy. Amen.

DAY ELEVEN

A History Lesson

READING FROM READ

Chapters 23-25

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

Live an exemplary life in your neighborhood so that your actions will refute their prejudices. Then they'll be won over to God's side and be there to join in the celebration when he arrives.

1 PETER 2:12 MSG

FAMILY DISCUSSION

Question 1

What part of this devotional stood out to you or surprised you the most?

Question 2

What did you feel when you heard that, for 50 years, the US has been falling further and further behind, and as a result, so many children cannot read at basic level? How did you feel when you heard the literacy statistics?

Question 3

The Apostle Peter said, "Live an exemplary life so that your actions will refute their prejudices." What kind of "actions" do you think Jesus would want us to take in light of this chapter?

ADDITIONAL FAMILY RESOURCES

Discussion - Younger Kids

- What did you like about this reading? Did you think it was boring?
- How do you feel when you hear that so many people can't read and can't get a job to support their family?
- How can we help improve the lives of all the people in the United States of America?

Discussion - Teens

- What do you think about this telling of US history?
- What surprised you? What made you mad? What made you want to change Society?
- Where do you see God calling young people to act or care?

Reflection - Adults

- How did this reading alter the way you see the US?
- How will this change your heart and attitude as you commute to work, go shopping or read the news?
- This issue is so huge that it can feel overwhelming, but kids who read become adults who read. Where do you want to start?

FILM CONNECTION

Watch the Inspirational Short Film

[A Little about the USA](#)



PRAYER

Lord, we pray today for our neighborhood, our community, and our country. Forgive us for having forgotten so many of our children. Make our community and our nation strong from the youngest up. How do you want us to show up for this generation and future generations? Amen.

DAY TWELVE

Heal Society

READING FROM READ

Chapters 26-27

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

Restore us, O God; make Your face shine on us, that we may be saved.

PSALM 80:3 NIV

FAMILY DISCUSSION

Question 1

Let's review an important idea: What do you think the author means by the "magic window" in a child's life?

Question 2

The devotional describes helping children learn to read as "preventative justice" and "impactful compassion." What do you think those phrases mean?

Question 3

The author explains the many ripple effects that can occur when helping a child to read. Did any surprise you? How did they open your imagination?

ADDITIONAL FAMILY RESOURCES

Discussion - Younger Kids

- What was your favorite part of this reading?
- Why do you think it is so important to learn to read when a person is young?
- Who are some of the people who are blessed when children learn to read?

Discussion - Teens

- What stood out to you about injustice or opportunity in this chapter?
- How does literacy have ripple effects far beyond the person who would have otherwise been illiterate?
- What would you add to this chapter about the impact caring citizens can make?

Reflection - Adults

- How does this reading change your thinking about reading programs?
- Reflect on this phrase: "Teach a child to read, give a child a chance." What does it evoke in you?
- What role can your faith community play in God's redemptive work through literacy?

FILM CONNECTION

Watch the Inspirational Short Film

[Calling a Mentor for Every Struggling Child](#)



PRAYER

Lord, I believe you want to restore us. You want to restore our children and give them hope. You want to restore families. You want to restore our communities. Please shine your light upon us and help us to be your light in our neighborhood. Amen.

DAY THIRTEEN

Poverty Informed Mentoring

READING FROM READ

Chapters 28-29

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.

PROVERBS 31:8-9 NIV

FAMILY DISCUSSION

Question 1

Which of the five “poverty-informed” ideas felt most eye-opening or surprising to you?

Question 2

Why do you think it’s important to be curious instead of making assumptions about people who come from different backgrounds?

Question 3

The Bible talks about unconditional love. How did this chapter inform the practical application of unconditional love?

Question 4

Proverbs 31:8-9 tells us to “speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves.” What might that look like for your family? Who in our community needs someone to speak up for them or stand beside them?

ADDITIONAL FAMILY RESOURCES

Discussion - Younger Kids

- What was your favorite part of this reading?
- This reading talked about “poverty.” What do you think that word means?
- Why do you think it is important to be curious about other people, especially people who are different than you?

Discussion - Teens

- Dr. Beegle is an international expert on poverty. She is also a child of generational poverty. How did you react to the ways she discusses engaging those from a place of economic need?
- How does poverty shape a person’s future?
- This reading says that to many, learning is a luxury. What do you think that means, and what could we do about it?

Reflection - Adults

- What struck you in these encouragements?
- Why do you think people are quick to judge those who come from a different background, particularly an under-resourced background?
- What is one way you want to encounter strangers with a different mindset? How do you want to practice unconditional love in a fresh way?

FILM CONNECTION

Watch the Inspirational Short Film

[Mentoring Helps Break the Cycle of Poverty](#)



PRAYER

Lord, you have always loved the forgotten, the unwanted, and the tossed-aside. You have loved them unconditionally. Search my heart for any judgmental way in me. Transform me to love in a way where others feel seen, and heard, and where they believe I am for them as You are for them. Amen.

DAY FOURTEEN

Why Wouldn't I

READING FROM READ

Chapters 30-31

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

The Lord makes firm the steps of the one who delights in him.

PSALM 37:23 NIV

FAMILY DISCUSSION

Question 1

How did Joshua's question change — and why was that change so important... from "Why would I?" to "Why wouldn't I?"

Question 2

What are some examples of Jesus doing the next practical loving thing as he moved through his world? What are some parallel examples we could do in our world today?

Question 3

Psalms 37:23 says, "The Lord makes firm the steps of the one who delights in him." What do you think that means? How can we trust God to guide our steps, one at a time?

ADDITIONAL FAMILY RESOURCES

Discussion - Younger Kids

- What was your favorite part of today's reading?
- Tell me about a time when you did something nice for someone, and it surprised them.
- If Jesus knew someone needed help just down the road, what do you think he would do? Why?

Discussion - Teens

- What stood out to you about seeing life as full of opportunities to do good?
- The chapter taught about applying "Why wouldn't I" to taking huge leaps, like moving to the other side of the world, versus taking the small, practical next step. Why do you think this application is helpful?
- What larger things could a small step set into motion?
- Was there any way this reading could impact your general philosophy of living each day?

Reflection - Adults

- How does this chapter challenge your assumptions about what it means to say "yes" to God?
- "Why wouldn't I" is a type of life-posture, a mindset... a Jesus-mindset, it doesn't mean you do every little thing, it is more a willingness. How is your ever-present willingness to love the person that God loves?
- Every day, Jesus took the small next step; for instance, he often stopped along the road to greet the forgotten person. What is one small step you could start taking? What about your family?

FILM CONNECTION

Watch the Inspirational Short Film

[Impact of Mentoring Together](#)



PRAYER

Lord, I confess that I am busy. I confess that I often pretend like I do not see the very real needs all around me and just down the road. Help me to live with a heart-posture that asks, "Why wouldn't I?" and give me ears to hear your answer. Amen.

DAY FIFTEEN

A Transformational Change

READING FROM READ

Chapters 32-33

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

1 CORINTHIANS 13:4-7 NIV

FAMILY DISCUSSION

Question 1

How do you think “love without agenda” is different from the kind of love we sometimes see in the world?

Question 2

The churches in this chapter wanted to make a “systemic impact.” What do you think that means?

Question 3

What are some ways your own family could show “love without agenda” right where you live?

ADDITIONAL FAMILY RESOURCES

Discussion - Younger Kids

- What was your favorite part of today's reading?
- What did you like about churches helping schools?
- Why do you think people wanted to stop pulling weeds and scraping gum and start reading with kids?

Discussion - Teens

- What stood out to you from this chapter? What do you think about this growing movement of churches and schools?
- What does "systemic impact" mean to you? Why is it important?
- What role can young people your age play in this growing movement?

Reflection - Adults

- What do you think/feel about the importance of making "systemic change"?
- How could thinking about "systemic change" affect the ways churches think about loving their neighbors?
- What kind of legacy do you want to leave? How do your neighbors (even those you haven't met yet) fit into that legacy?

FILM CONNECTION

Watch the Inspirational Short Film

[Be Undivided](#)



PRAYER

Lord, I confess that I am selfish, and even when I do "good deeds," I am often motivated by how it makes me feel good about myself. Help me to focus on making a lasting impact on others. Show me how to love a stranger today. Show me how to make a lasting impact in my world. Amen.

DAY SIXTEEN

The Church's Literacy History

READING FROM READ

Chapters 34-35

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

ACTS 1:8 NIV

FAMILY DISCUSSION

Question 1

Did this telling of the Church's 2,000-year-old story surprise you? Have you thought about this connection between literacy and the church's mission? How did it impact you this time?

Question 2

The reading says that the Church has always been passionate about reading/literacy. Why do you think reading and faith connect so often?

The devotional ends with the challenge, "Let's lead again." What do you think that means for us today?

ADDITIONAL FAMILY RESOURCES

Discussion - Younger Kids

- What was your favorite part of today's story?
- Why do you think that Christian churches have always loved to teach people to read?
- How can we help others learn and grow?

Discussion - Teens

- What did you think about this telling of Church history?
- How is this chapter an indictment of the US church today?
How is it encouraging?
- What advice do you have and what role could young leaders play in fulfilling your advice?

Reflection - Adults

- What are you thinking about after reading this chapter?
- Where do you think this recurring literacy passion among Christian people comes from?
- What do you think we could do in response to this historical truth today?

FILM CONNECTION

Watch the Inspirational Short Film

[Literacy: A Game Changer](#)



PRAYER

Lord, thank you for the long legacy of your people throughout the centuries. Thank you for the stories of how our fathers and mothers in the faith have changed the world. I want to be inspired like they were, and I want my life to count in the lives of others. Show me how you want me to respond. Amen.

DAY SEVENTEEN

God Loves Justice

READING FROM READ

Chapters 36-37

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

*Evildoers do not understand what is right,
but those who seek the Lord understand it fully.*

PROVERBS 28:5 NIV

FAMILY DISCUSSION

Question 1

What part of the devotional stood out to you the most, and why?

Question 2

Doug said the broken education system is “the quintessential definition of injustice.” What do you think that means and what can be done to reverse that injustice?

Question 3

How might serving or helping others (standing in the gap) open our eyes and soften our hearts to be more like Jesus?

ADDITIONAL FAMILY RESOURCES

Discussion - Younger Kids

- What was your favorite part of today's story?
- What do you think "God loves justice" means?
- Did you learn anything about how God loves schools?

Discussion - Teens

- What stood out to you about injustice or opportunity in this chapter?
- Do you think of justice in the terms that this reading suggested? How would you add to or critique this conversation?
- Why do you think that teenagers are particularly impactful in reversing systems of injustice?

Reflection - Adults

- What did you think about Doug's confession that "there was a prejudice in me that I didn't even know existed"? How can you relate?
- How do you respond/feel regarding Marquise's belief that churches are "going to get fixed"?
- How have you thought about the theme of "justice" in the past? How did this chapter alter your thinking or add to your convictions?

FILM CONNECTION

Watch the Inspirational Short Film

[Detroit Literacy Organization Brings Transformation](#)



PRAYER

Lord, I want to love justice in the same way that you love justice, not as the world says but as you say. Transform me, Lord. Transform the hearts of my family and my church so that we can see and engage injustice as you desire. Root out any prejudice in us and help us lovingly obey you. Amen.

DAY EIGHTEEN

For Our Place and Time

READING FROM READ

Chapters 38-41

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.

JOHN 1:14 NIV

FAMILY DISCUSSION

Question 1

Let's imagine Jesus walking down our street — what would He notice, and who would He stop to talk to?

Question 2

What do you think Lesslie Newbigin meant by describing the church as "God's embassy in a specific place"? How might you apply that to your place and time?

Question 3

The reading says "The Word longs to be made flesh and blood again in you." What does that mean to you personally? What might that mean for your church?

ADDITIONAL FAMILY RESOURCES

Discussion - Younger Kids

- What was your favorite part of today's story?
- Why do you think it is interesting that people could tell what village Jesus was from by the way he talked and dressed?
- What are some ways that churches in your neighborhood could participate in neighborhood events?

Discussion - Teens

- What do you think about the idea that Jesus did not become a "global human" but became a Nazarene? How does that impact the idea that we are supposed to become like Jesus?
- What would you add to the parish mentality that this chapter discusses?
- How are religious people stuck in other-worldly ideas and miss practical faith applications in their 'place and time'?

Reflection - Adults

- What does it mean to follow Jesus in our place and time?
- In what ways did this chapter critique the orientation of today's churches? Do you agree?
- How could your church participate more and more in its place and time? How could you participate your place's healing?

FILM CONNECTION

Watch the Inspirational Short Film

[Better Together](#)



PRAYER

Lord, you placed me here, and you have placed my church here in this specific community and season. This is the place where we live, serve and follow you right now. This is the time you have given us to be your hands and your feet in this neighborhood. Help us to love the uniqueness of this place you've entrusted to us. Help us see the specific needs of our community in this time and respond with wisdom and compassion. Show us how to be the presence of Jesus to the people around us.

DAY NINETEEN

And It Might Change Everything

READING FROM READ

Chapters 42-44

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

EPHESIANS 3:20-21 NIV

FAMILY DISCUSSION

Question 1

What do these stories teach us about how ordinary people can make extraordinary change when they trust God?

Question 2

How do these pastors and churches show what it means to “move into the neighborhood” (as in the previous devotional)?

Question 3

Let's each share one “immeasurably more” hope/prayer—something we dream God might do in our community if we trust Him fully.

ADDITIONAL FAMILY RESOURCES

Discussion - Younger Kids

- What was your favorite part of today's story?
- What is something that starts small but can grow to be big?
- Why do you think people like hearing about programs that help children read?

Discussion - Teens

- What can you learn from the characters in today's stories?
- Literacy programs start small because they have often a low bar of entry. What does that mean?
- Have you been a part of something that started small and took off unexpectedly?

Reflection - Adults

- What lessons did you take away from the characters in these stories?
- Why is a reading-mentor program a good way to start? How does it offer a low bar of entry?
- What is it about simple acts of faith that causes God to show up in unexpected ways?

FILM CONNECTION

Watch the Inspirational Short Film

[Literacy Church](#)



PRAYER

Lord, I want to experience you. I want to join you in your unexpected work in the world. I want to be with you when you surprise my neighbors. Show me small ways that I can begin. Help me trust you with the immeasurably more than I could ever ask or imagine. Amen.

DAY TWENTY

Follow Me

READING FROM READ

Chapters 45-47

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

LUKE 4:17-19 NIV

FAMILY DISCUSSION

Question 1

What are some simple ways we can participate in God's work—as individuals or as a family?

Question 2

What did you think of the four steps in this chapter? How might following these four steps help you grow closer to Jesus?

Question 3

The devotional ends by saying we've already completed Step One—we know about the problem of illiteracy. What could our next step (seeing, participating, or doing it together) look like in real life?

ADDITIONAL FAMILY RESOURCES

Discussion - Younger Kids

- What was your favorite part of today's reading?
- The reading said we should "SEE the person." There is a magical meaning to seeing, What do you think it is?
- Why does God want us to do service together with others?

Discussion - Teens

- What did you think of the four steps in this chapter? How would you add to them or critique them?
- What does it mean to "KNOW the pain" in our world today?
- Why do you think it matters to "DO it together"?

Reflection - Adults

- Which of the four steps are you naturally good at? In which one do you need to grow?
- What do you think of the idea: "PARTICIPATE in God's work"? How does this inspire your faith or theology?
- What is one idea in Luke 4:17-19 that you think God wants you to notice?

FILM CONNECTION

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[Lebanon Church Invitation](#)



PRAYER

Lord, open my heart to know the pain of others. Help me to see people that I have otherwise been blind to see. I want to participate with your work in my world. Show me who to join in that work. Amen.

DAY TWENTY-ONE

Conclusion

READING FROM READ

Conclusion

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

If you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday. The Lord will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail.

ISAIAH 58:10-11 NIV

FAMILY DISCUSSION

Question 1

What part of this devotional inspires you the most — and why?

Question 2

What does it mean to “practice Heaven today”?

Question 3

How do these Scriptures and quotes together describe the kind of world God wants us to build? How is literacy a small way that we could help build that world?

ADDITIONAL FAMILY RESOURCES

Discussion - Younger Kids

- What was your favorite part of today's reading?
- What have you learned about literacy through these readings?
- What do you think we should do?

Discussion - Teens

- What is the most important idea in this conclusion?
- What do you think Bono means by "God is with us if we are with them"?
- After all this, what advice to you have regarding literacy and the church?

Reflection - Adults

- What stood out to you from the words of Mother Teresa and Bono?
- What do you think the author meant when he ended "Let's practice Heaven today"?
- Now that you have completed this 21-day devotional, what do you want to do with what you have learned?

FILM CONNECTION

Watch the Inspirational Short Film

[Unlikely Mentor](#)



PRAYER

Lord, you said that if I spend myself on behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, you will make my light shine. You will guide, satisfy and strengthen me. I want to experience your blessings. What would you have me do next? Amen.

NOTES

Grid of dots for notes.



READ · RISE · RESTORE