



EASTERN STAR CHURCH

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL



FAMILY DEVOTIONALS
July 20-22, 2021

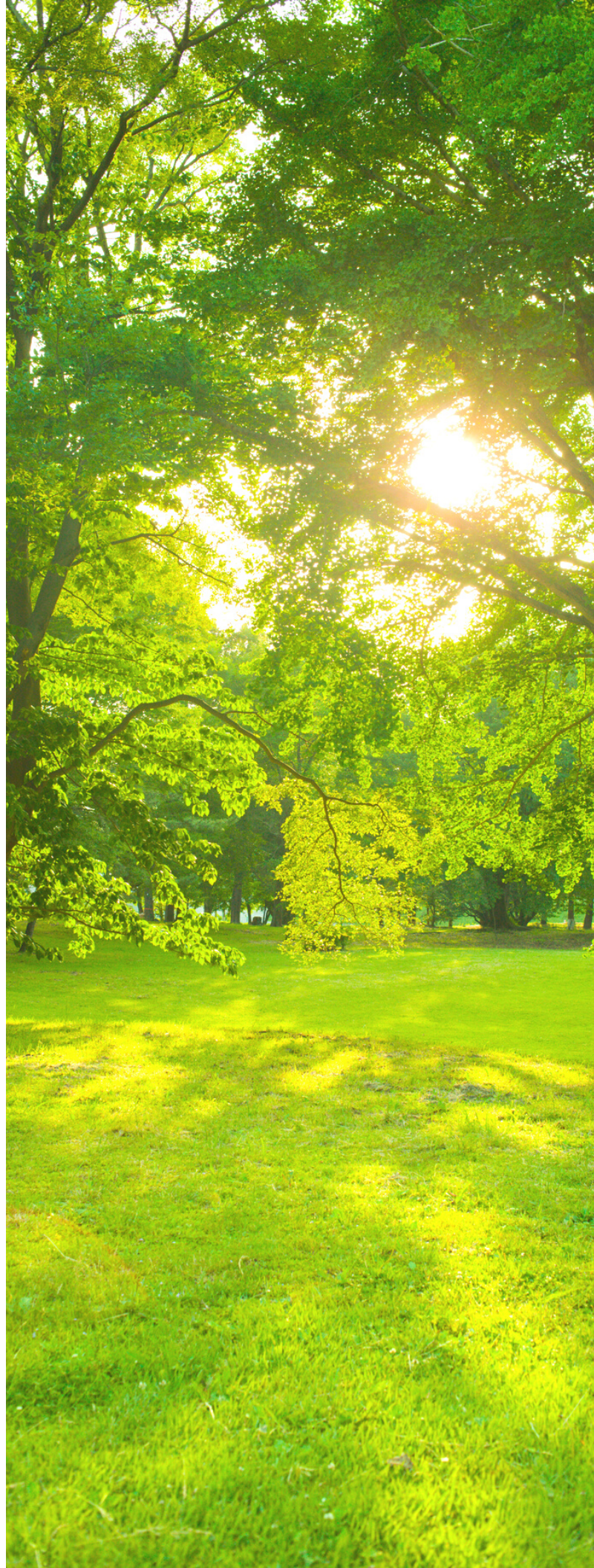
WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL?

Traditionally, Vacation Bible School (VBS) has been a weeklong Bible study experience for children, teens, young adults, and adults during the summer. Everyone would be learning in their own age groups. Due to the pandemic, we have decided to host VBS virtually but in a way that promotes family devotional time.

Although the local church provides many tools for families to grow in their knowledge of God and to practice His principles in the community, the primary responsibility for biblical instruction and example is the home. In Deuteronomy 6:5-9, Moses states that we must constantly think about God's commandments and teach them to our children and talk about them when we are at home or out for a walk; at bedtime and the first thing in the morning. We should tie them on our finger, wear them on our forehead, and write them on the doorposts of our house! A commitment to family devotionals provides a structured time to talk about spiritual truths.

For this VBS Family Devotional, each devotional will include the following:

1. Scripture focus
2. Commentary
3. Discussion questions for children, teens, and adults
4. Craft activities for children





WITH WHOM SHOULD I DO THESE DEVOTIONALS?

Due to the short time frame, we suggest that these devotionals occur within families, with no more than 5-6 people.

Families will look different. Some families will have children. Other families will be comprised of close friends, small groups, grandparents, neighbors, etc.

Your devotional group will be unique to you and your selected community. There is no right or wrong composition of people.

WHEN SHOULD WE DO THESE DEVOTIONALS?

VBS Family Devotionals will take place from Tuesday, July 20 – Thursday, July 22.

Choose whether a morning or evening time would be best for you and your family or group. If you have smaller children, consider talking after dinner or before bedtime.



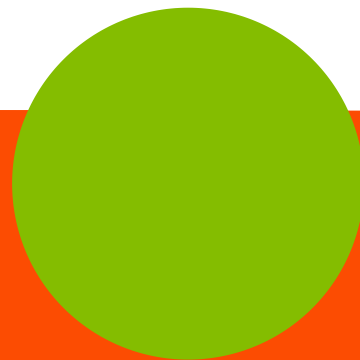


HOW SHOULD WE CONDUCT/PRACTICE DEVOTIONALS?

On average, devotionals should take 30 minutes, but there are activities and discussion questions that could extend the time.

Everybody's devotional time will look different depending on the group's demographics and the amount of time available.

If you have young children, you may even want to reduce the time. You can conduct the time however you wish. Ultimately, we want you and your family to normalize spiritual discussions in your home.



GETTING STARTED!



1) Begin each devotional time with a check-in. Then, ask participants the following questions:

- What was a high point in your day? (*What went well?*)
- What was a low point in your day? (*What did not go well?*)

2) Ask someone to pray for today's discussion time.

3) Read the title, scripture, and explanation. (*Supplemental scriptures will be shared for further study but do not need to be read during the devotional time.*)

4) Select a question from the discussion questions and answer. (*There are questions for adults, teens, and children.*)


5) For children, there is a craft activity. Parents, you may want to complete the devotional time together before leading your child into the craft activity.

6) Close in prayer.

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- Scripture focus
- Commentary
- Discussion questions for children, teens, and adults
- Craft activities for children





SPECIAL NOTES

When conducting your devotional time, please consider the following:

1. Encourage everyone to share in the conversation.
2. Remove distractions, i.e., set your phones aside, turn off the TV.


Post on Social Media

We are asking the entire church to participate in these devotionals, post your experience on your IG page, FB page when you have completed it, add these hashtags!

#ESCVBS, #VBS2021, and #VBSRest

View Examples

We recognize that this may be your first time participating in a group devotional time. Please look at our sample videos to get a general idea of how your time should flow. Again, each family's time will look different; just talk with your family and friends about spiritual truths!





DEVOTIONALS

EXPERIENCING GOD'S ETERNAL REST

Eastern Star Church's theme for 2021 is Come, Let Us Rest Awhile (Mark 6:31 CEV). We are encouraged to rest our bodies from the rigors of daily life and incorporate rest in our weekly routines as God commands us to rest from our labors on the seventh day (Exodus 20:8).

Pastor Jeffrey A. Johnson and Lady Sharon Johnson are enjoying rest during their six-month sabbatical to relax and renew. They will be rejuvenated for the next stages of ministry upon their return in December 2021.

Along with physical rest, God also offers eternal rest for our souls. Because of the sin of Adam and Eve, we are forever working to be pleasing to God. Our sin separates us from God. In the Old Testament, God set up a system of offerings and sacrifices that covered our sins for a moment. In the New Testament, God unveils a new plan to cover our sins for a lifetime. The plan was Jesus. He died on the cross to cover our sins eternally, therefore, securing communion with God upon His return.

Over the next three days, we will explore God's plan for eternal rest. Using Hebrews 3:7 – 4:13 as a backdrop for the discussion, we will have conversations around the following topics:

July 20 – Trusting God for Eternal Rest

July 21 – Jesus is the Way to God's Eternal Rest

July 22 – Encouraging Others to Remain in God's Eternal Rest

TRUSTING GOD'S ETERNAL REST

TUESDAY, JULY 20



Scripture Focus: Numbers 14: 20 – 23 (The Living Bible Translation)

20-21 Then the Lord said, "All right, I will pardon them as you have requested. But I vow by my own name that just as it is true that all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord, 22 so it is true that not one of the men who has seen my glory and the miracles I did both in Egypt and in the wilderness—and ten times refused to trust me and obey me— 23 shall even see the land I promised to this people's ancestors.

The children of Israel refused to trust and obey God. After traveling forty years in the desert, God directed them to enter the Promised Land. Spies visited the land and reported that it was too dangerous to enter the land because the people there were too mighty. Despite the encouragement of Joshua and Caleb to trust God, the Israelites decided to disobey God because of their fear.

In Hebrews 3:10, God says, "I was very angry with them, for their hearts were always looking somewhere else instead of up to me, and they never found the paths I wanted them to follow." So likewise, the Israelites continually looked somewhere else to find security. We can act the same way. We look to our family, friends, and jobs, to name a few. Yet, God wants us to look to Him. We gain confidence in God when we get to know Him. We learn about Him by reading His Word. We know Him by trusting and doing what He says.

To experience God's eternal rest, we must trust God and His plans. It can be uncomfortable to trust God when we do not know what He is doing and cannot see His direction. Yet, that is faith. Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen (Hebrews 11:1). Christians walk by faith and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). We must hear God's word and not harden our hearts. Trust and obey!

Supplemental Reading:

Numbers 13 -14; Proverbs 3: 5-6; Isaiah 26:3; Jeremiah 17:17



TRUSTING GOD'S ETERNAL REST

TUESDAY, JULY 20



Discussion Questions

Adult/Teens

1. Why is it difficult to trust God when you cannot see the outcome immediately?
2. Is there a specific area where you are struggling to trust God? Why?
3. Is it easier to trust people over God? Why or Why not?

Children

1. What does it mean to trust God?
2. What are the things you trust God for?
3. Is it easier to trust your friends over God? Why or why not?

Children's Craft – Shield of Faith

Needs: Download the coloring sheet on the following page and provide colored pencils/crayons.

Activity: Today, we talked about trusting God. Color the picture and be reminded that faith in God is important.



The Armor of God
The Shield of Faith



Ephesians 6:13-17

JESUS IS THE WAY TO GOD'S ETERNAL REST

WEDNESDAY, JULY 21

Scripture Focus: Matthew 11: 28 – 30 (The Living Bible Translation)

28 Come to me and I will give you rest—all of you who work so hard beneath a heavy yoke. Wear my yoke—for it fits perfectly—and let me teach you; for I am gentle and humble, and you shall find rest for your souls; for I give you only light burdens.”

The Jews offered many sacrifices and offerings to be forgiven for their sins. They were preparing these sacrifices, and offerings consumed much of their time and resources. It was difficult. Jesus came to remove this heavy burden. He came to earth to die so that their sins would be forgiven forever. Yet, they would have to come to Him and receive this rest. Many Jews would not accept this gift and continued offering sacrifices and other practices instead of receiving the rest that Jesus offered.

Hebrews 4: 9- 10 says, “So there is a full complete rest still waiting for the people of God. Christ has already entered there. He is resting from his work, just as God did after the creation” (Genesis 2:2 says God rested on the seventh day). A life without the presence of sin is waiting for those who receive the rest offered by Jesus. This life will only be experienced after our death when we will be united with God eternally. When we accept God’s plan for salvation through Jesus Christ, we will have rest today, understanding that our future with God is secure. Like baking a cake, we must follow God’s instructions, or our lives will be a disaster. We can think we know how to experience rest in this life and the next, but we do not. We must trust God’s way. Some people believe their actions will make them right with God, but our good works are like filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6). Some people seek other gods, but there is no other way to God but through Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12; John 14:6). We must trust God's plan for our eternal rest and refuse to entertain the options the world offers us.

Supplemental Reading:

Romans 10: 8-13; John 3: 16 -21; John 3: 35-36

JESUS IS THE WAY TO GOD'S ETERNAL REST

WEDNESDAY, JULY 21

Discussion Questions

Adult/Teens

1. In Matthew 28:11, Jesus says, "let me teach you." In the last month, identify 1-2 things that God has taught you through His Word.
2. How can pride and self-sufficiency keep you from experiencing rest in Jesus?
3. Why are good works alone insufficient to gain eternal rest?

Children

1. Is Jesus the only way to God?
2. What does it mean to rest in Jesus?
3. Do you think being nice to your friends is all you need to get into heaven?

Children's Craft - Bake a Cake

Needs: Box cake (2), icing and its ingredients

In this lesson, we learned the importance of following instructions completely. In this family activity, we will demonstrate what happens when you follow the baking cake instructions. First, you will need to divide into two groups.

Group 1 - Follows the baking instructions completely.

Group 2- Leave out the oil and water because they think the ingredients are not important for baking a cake.

After baking and icing, the cakes let your children discover which cake tastes the best. Then, reflect on the lesson and encourage them to follow God's word completely.



ENCOURAGING OTHERS TO REMAIN IN GOD'S ETERNAL REST

THURSDAY, JULY 22

Scripture Focus: Hebrews 3: 13 – 14 (The Living Bible Translation)

13 Speak to each other about these things every day while there is still time so that none of you will become hardened against God, being blinded by the glamor of sin. 14 For if we are faithful to the end, trusting God just as we did when we first became Christians, we will share in all that belongs to Christ.

The writer of Hebrews encourages believers to support one another. We need support from other believers to remain faithful to God, especially in difficult times. Satan will tempt us with sins that are appealing to us (James 1: 13 – 15), but we can overcome when we have others to help us discern what is right and wrong.

Having relationships with other believers is important. Our friendships will span all walks of life, coworkers, classmates, and those who have the same hobbies and interests. Yet, it is important to remember that bad company corrupts good character (1 Corinthians 15:33). When we are making important decisions about the direction of our lives, we need others who share our beliefs for counsel. Hebrews 10: 24 encourages us to motivate one another to acts of love and good deeds. When we take time to get to know one another, we will grow to understand how to motivate one another. For example, if we learn our friend is discouraged about a relationship, we can send them songs, scriptures, and sermons that will encourage them to be hopeful or to give them wisdom. We can take time to pray with them so they do not feel alone. When they are sad, we can invite them to watch a movie to briefly distract them from what is going on in their life. Make time to develop relationships with others that will encourage growth in your relationship with God.

Supplemental Reading:

Hebrews 10: 19-25; 1 Thessalonians 5: 9-21; Galatians 6: 1-3; Ephesians 4: 25 -32; 1 Peter 4: 7-11; Ecclesiastes 4: 9-12

ENCOURAGING OTHERS TO REMAIN IN GOD'S ETERNAL REST

THURSDAY, JUNE 22

Discussion Questions

Adult/Teens

1. Why is it important to encourage others daily? Who in your circle do you encourage daily? Who do you receive encouragement from? Share resources that have encouraged you.
2. How can relationships with believers keep you from sinning? Conversely, how can they encourage you to sin?
3. James 5:16 says confess your sins to one another and pray for one another so that you may be healed. What barriers prevent you from confessing your sins and concerns to others?

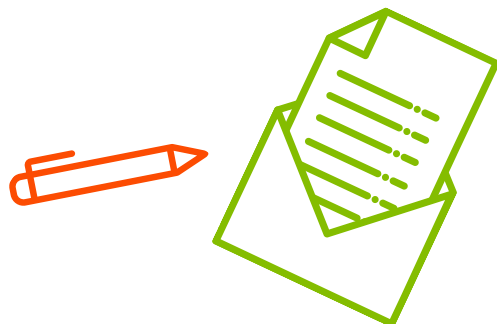
Children

1. Who encourages you? Who do you encourage? Why is encouragement important?
2. How does God feel about sin?
3. Can you go to heaven if you sin?

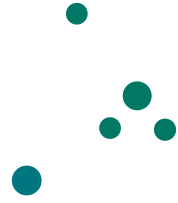
Children's Craft – Write a letter

Needs: Construction paper, stickers, colored pencils/markers, any other supplies that will make your card fantastic 😊.

Today, we talked about encouraging others. Identify two people you want to encourage and send them a homemade card.



NEXT STEPS



We pray you enjoyed talking with your family and friends about spiritual truths. Continue to have these kinds of dialogue in your home so that you will be strengthened in your faith.

Consider *Kingdom Family Devotional: 52 Weeks of Growing Together* by Tony and Johnathon Evans for future family devotional experiences.

God Bless!

