

SEPTEMBER 2024

“TILLING THE SOIL OF OUR GARDEN”



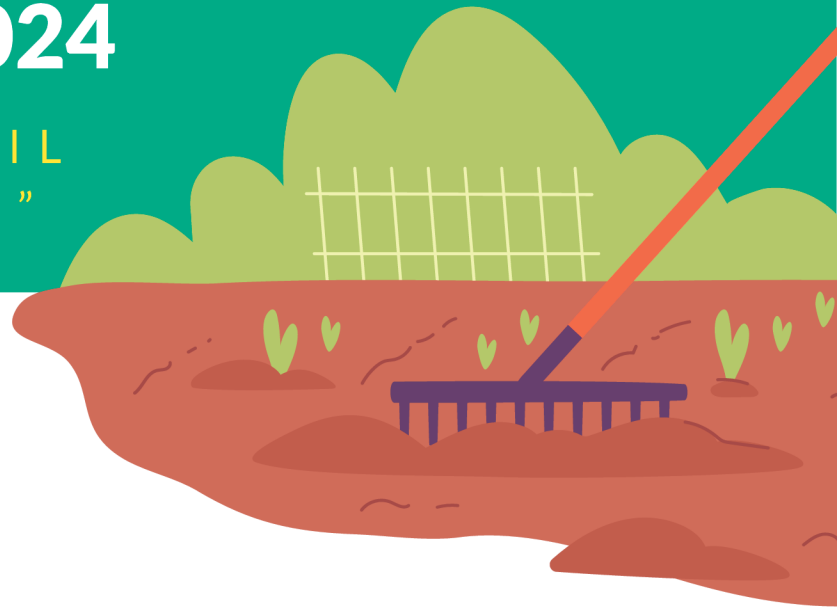
Spiritual Practice:
Bible Reading



Bible Story:
Creation Genesis 1, and the
parable of the sower Luke 8



Memory Verse:
Luke 8:15



“But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop.”

FORMATION ACTIVITY:



PARENTS:

Watch the video: Tilling the soil of our family garden

Family Bible Study

1. Read the parable of the Sower in Luke chapter 8.
2. After reading aloud Luke 8:4-8, think of a creative way to portray the story of the 4 soils. This can be as imaginative as you want through art, drama, or conversation.
3. Now read aloud verses 11- 15. In this story, the seed represents God’s word. Can you act this out to show what happens to the seed when it lands on all four soils?
4. Discuss how each family member could respond to God’s word like the 4th kind of soil.
5. If you send us pictures or a short video (before the end of the month), of your family’s portrayal of this bible study, we will send you a yummy surprise. Above all, be playful. You can “correctly handle the word of truth” and still have fun.

Parents: “This Garden’s Gonna Grow” by Jason Upton is a parent’s song of faith! Listen to the Lyrics as a reminder that you may not see spiritual growth right now in your children but as Hebrews 11:1 reminds us, “Faith means being sure of the things we hope for. And faith means knowing that something is real even if we do not see it”. You can find it in your September resources.

FORMATION ACTIVITY (CONTINUED):

The core Christian beliefs

- As you begin the Growing Families program this month, discuss this topic with your family. With older children and youth—ask them to write in their journals or share, “What does a Christian believe?” Have them create a list. This will give you a window into their understanding at this developmental stage.
- You will find two stacks of cards in your monthly bag. The “We Believe” cards take important concepts of Wesleyan-Armenian doctrine, as found on the ATS website, and define them with a short rhyme to help younger children remember the meaning. The “Apostles Creed” cards give an easy way to learn the early Christian foundational beliefs. The whole family can enjoy the cards so try them with each age.
- Current research notes that only 4% of Americans hold a Christian or Biblical worldview. A person’s worldview is formed by the age of 13. As parents, you have a profound opportunity to help guide your children as they are forming a worldview.

Parents, your vulnerability and honesty will give your children permission to ask questions and admit their uncertainties. Children enjoy co-learning with their parents. If your children are too young to engage in these questions about faith, go right to the cards and begin there. You can come back to this topic of Christian beliefs at any time. Spiritual conversations in a safe family setting are a wonderful fruit-bearing way to disciple children. Be creative, playful, and sensitive to your children and their attention span. You may discuss something at the dinner table and not hear their response until bedtime or another day. Look for those thin places, holy moments, when your child's heart is tender and they are ready to talk.

TELLING GOD’S STORY



FAMILY: Watch the video – Creation

The Bible tells the story of a God who has always existed. He created the world and filled it with people but they didn’t love him like he loved them. Eventually, God chose one family to be his people and he named them Israel. And on and on the story goes until he sends his son, Jesus. Everything in God’s story points toward Jesus or back to Jesus. When he returns to his Father, the church continues to tell the Story of God. This is where we fit into the story! We are the church and we are God’s storytellers.

Growing Families has written a script to connect all of ‘God’s Story’ together in 9 sessions. Each month you will watch a video on our website with one of our team members telling part of God’s story. We hope to engage the whole family in the story and leave you with a sense of curiosity to know what happens next.

TELLING GOD'S STORY (continued)

In your monthly activity bag, look for the wooden block that connects with the story of the month. You will collect 9 of these throughout the year so keep them somewhere safe, perhaps still in view, but reserve their use for your story times. You will also receive some props each month to tell the story. Keep these in your garden bag. Watch the video early in the month so each family member can tell the story during the month. By April you will be able to tell the whole story from Creation to New Creation.

We are excited to use the 'Godly Play' style as a way for your family to tell the biblical narrative. Using this format is slow, reflective, and quiet which stands out in a fast, loud, and stimulating world. You will use wooden figures, a few props, and a basic script. Each story ends with a time of wonder. Children need time to ponder the mystery of God and his story. Answering their questions too quickly interrupts the learning process and what could be a God-inspired revelation. Give them time to wonder and as a parent, learn to say, "I wonder too". We never graduate from wondering.

Dr. George Barna, in his research, states that children form their worldview by age 13 and statistically for most, that worldview never changes. This is why we continue to tell God's Story of redemption throughout the early years. You can find this article on the website under August resources.

PARENTING/MARRIAGE VIDEO:



PARENTS:

Watch the video: Be Learning Parents, Not Perfect Parents

- Dr. Russell Hall is an Associate Professor of Counselor Education at the School of Counseling at ATS. As a licensed psychologist in KY, he has done extensive work with parents and children in various settings. This month's video is Part 1 in a two-part series on parenting. He will discuss power struggles and conflict in families. Listen as he shares important information on parenting and how our relationships with our children matter for family harmony and your children's spiritual growth. Pause the video and use your journal to write down prompts for discussion with your spouse and or with someone at the VanTatenhove Center for Counseling. Sign up for free childcare during your session. Email growing.families@asburyseminary.edu for more information.

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE:



BIBLE READING:

Parents: use this resource to discuss this Spiritual Practice with your children.

What is a spiritual practice?

John Wesley used the phrase “means of grace” to refer to how we actively engage with God. Our actions bear no merit in and of themselves, but by engaging in acts like prayer and Scripture reading, we place ourselves in God’s presence and allow him to bring us into deeper communion with Christ. These actions can also be called “spiritual disciplines” or “spiritual practices.” As we engage with the Lord, He does what only He can do - that is, over time, make us more like Him.

Each month, we will practice different ways to come into God’s presence. The spiritual practice for September is Bible Reading. "The single greatest contribution to raising fully-devoted, Christ-following young adults is regular- not daily or religiously, just regular Bible reading" (Nothing Less, p. 52).

What is the practice of Bible reading?

Bible reading is simply engaging with the Scriptures by any means - reading alone, listening to the Bible app, reading storybook Bibles, watching Bible videos or shows, or participating in group Bible study.

What are some ways a family can read the Bible together?

Parents can model Bible reading by regularly reading and studying the Bible in full view of their children. (If you are using an app on your phone, make sure your kids know you are not just playing games or watching a show!)

Some families sit down and read the Bible together at a time that works for everyone - the morning before school, at the table during meals, or at bedtime.

A family devotional book or Bible reading plan (such as found on YouVersion) can also be helpful.

Use your Growing Families’ Journal to record your responses to any of these journal prompts:

- How does your family currently practice reading the Bible?
- Observe who initiates Bible reading. How often do you read the Bible together? What is your reading plan and what family members participate?
- What would you like Bible reading to look like in your family? Intentionally pray for a richer family Bible reading time as individuals and as a family.
- Try one new way of reading the Bible as a family. Your September lesson plan gives you one.
- Family time idea: In your journal draw a picture of Isaiah 40:8 and share what this passage means to you.

Go Deeper:

For an interesting article about Lifeway’s research on reading the Bible, visit the September resources page on the Growing Families website. Also, check out the Bible Reading resource list on the website. Click on the links for great age-appropriate ideas.



SERVICE PROJECT IDEAS:

One of the primary ways parents can model the Christian faith to their children is through service and sacrifice. Paul in Ephesians 4:11-13, speaks of equipping the saints for the work of ministry. In serving others as a family, each member grows in maturity. Each month your family will decide how you want to serve Christ, his body, and the world. Here are some ideas for the month of September. You may choose one of these or come up with your ideas. Journal about your decision-making process and the experience of serving as a family. Each time your family serves, talk about what you learned, what you liked or didn't like, what surprised you, and where you saw Jesus.

INDIVIDUAL FAMILY IDEA FOR SEPTEMBER

September 28th is National Good Neighbor Day. Walk around the neighborhood, pick up trash, and care for God's creation. Take pictures of whatever your family decides to do and share them on our Growing Families Facebook page. (this is not required)

GROUP IDEAS FOR SEPTEMBER

For some families, it might help accountability and fun if you join other families and serve together. Or find a specific night this month and share a meal with a new family in our seminary community. Wendy's Frostys are \$1.00 through September 15th. After you serve, go celebrate and talk about your experience together.

Local Ministry Options:

FOR FAMILIES WITH YOUNGER CHILDREN

Have you been to the Community Service Center in Wilmore? Check out all that they do for the families in this county. If you participate in this program talk about how to give back or share with others. You can donate things from your home to the center. All of their thrift shop sales are used to help people with utilities and food. Have a conversation with your children about this.

FOR FAMILIES WITH OLDER CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Refuge for Women is a non-profit, faith-based organization providing specialized long-term care for women who have escaped human trafficking or sexual exploitation. Approximately twenty women live in a safe, new complex in Garrard County, while they heal.

-If you want to bless these women, contact peyton.goodwin@refugeforwomen.org to find out what they need.

-The ministry website is <https://refugeforwomen.org/kentucky/>. Show your family this website and start a conversation about how and why they serve these women. Pray for those who work and live together in this ministry.

-Deanna Spangler is the Director of Refuge for Women, an alumna, and a current D.Min. student at Asbury Seminary.