

Family devotional activities

THE WONDEROUS CROSS

As you go through *The Wondrous Cross* devotional as a family, try these activities with each chapter. We have created them with an eye towards including the youngest members of your family, but they can be tailored for any age. These ideas are based on the Pray out loud, Crossroad, and All Things New actions encouraged at the end of each chapter.

Day 1

My Favorite Stuffies:

Show your favorite stuffed animal to everyone and name one thing you love about your stuffie. Line up the stuffies in a window and look out at the sky. What is one new thing you can do that shows people how much you love Jesus? For grown-ups—apply this to anything you value or collect.

Day 2

I Give Up: Ask your kids to write down three new things—all beginning with the same letter—that they can do at church or school during Lent. For grown-ups, write down three new things you can do for co-workers or people in the neighborhood.

Day 3

Off My Pedestal: You'll need a large space for this game. Choose someone to give directions to the group such as run in place, jump, dance, act like a monkey. Do the action until the leader shouts, "Freeze," and everyone freezes like a statue and doesn't move until the leader says "Unfreeze." It's fun to pretend to be statues, not so fun if we think we deserve a statue because we are the greatest. This is a fun game for young and old.

Day 4

The Twins: Here are some fun animal facts. Read each one and then ask your gang if they believe or don't believe the fact.

There's a frog that can fly. (True. The Wallace flying frog glides uses its huge, webbed feet to fly.) Snails have 14,000 teeth. (True. The teeth are set in a jaw called a radula.) The koala sleeps for 20-22 hours each day (True, it's the sleepiest critter in the animal kingdom. Sounds good to us)

Fun facts, but the fact is when life is hard or unfair, it's hard to trust Jesus and believe his promises, but God wants us to pray, "I believe; help my unbelief." That's a prayer of someone who believes Jesus. What is something you believe about Jesus that's sometimes hard to believe?

Day 5

Being Goliath: Do the action point today: look for God's fingerprints on your day and then draw or write about them. Perhaps you can bring out the fingerpaints or watercolors for this. Display your creative works as a reminder of God's fingerprints. You can also make up a cheer or a rhyme that praises Jesus.

Day 6

Salts of the Earth: Look in your pantry and cupboards to see what different salts you have and put them on the table. Share what kind of salt best describes you. Talk about the Crossroad question: How do you flavor the world with grace (or kindness) and truth?

Day 7

Gawking at the Rich: Vote on things you'd really love to have from these choices: all the candy you could eat for a year, your favorite sports team throwing you a birthday party, the pet of your choice and you didn't have to clean up its business or one million dollars. Narrow the vote to two finalists and choose a clear winner. Talk about how God's generous love can change us into generous people as we really, really, really love him above all things.

Day 8

Glorious Architecture: Build a tower with blocks, Legos or whatever you have on hand. See how high you can build it before it collapses, or you just want to knock it down. Grown-ups, can you think of a building that seemed like it would last forever but now it's gone? It's easy to build our lives on things we think will last forever, but only Jesus provides us with lasting life and new ways of building that bring life to others. What are the building blocks of living in a way that pleases God?

Day 9

Royal Sisterhood: Play a quick round of "Would You Rather . . . ?" For example, would you rather climb a mountain or swim in an ocean, play soccer or do track and field, stay up late or get up early, chocolate or vanilla ice cream, superpower of flying or being invisible? These comparisons are fun, and one isn't better than the other. The trouble comes when we think we are better than others.

Day 10

One Less Virtuous Life: Set a timer, and for five minutes, quietly study God's creation. Do it in the morning and then at night. What does God's creation show you about God? How can you show God's generous love to one person today.

Day 11

A Morning Walk with My Dog: If you were in charge of the country, what rules would you have? (Silly rules are all right.) Jesus is the true king, and the way we live shows others that we are citizens of Jesus' kingdom.

Day 12

Parade of Faith: Ask yourself/members of your group if you can think of people in your circle who have paid a heavy price for following Jesus. If you can reach out to them, think of a way to say thanks. Offer a prayer of thanks for those people and for those who are persecuted for being Christians.

Day 13

Anonymous, Unknown, Forgotten: Think of a way you could help someone else, or do an act of kindness that would go unseen. Surprise someone in this way.

Day 14

Made By Hand: God has made you creative in your own way. Think of what you're good at (it can be anything you do well) and consider how you might share that with another person today.

Day 15

Best in Show: Read Luke 18:9-14, the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector. For one week, encourage your family or group to begin their morning prayers with "God, be merciful to me, a sinner" and be open to where God's grace may take them.

Day 16

The Widow's Mite: Can you think of people you know who "march to a different drummer"? Tell others about them and ask how you might be like the widow and like these people.

Day 17

The Missionary's Joy: Throw a birthday party with a twist: guests bring gifts to give away to a favorite charity. Find out what the charity needs and include the gift list with the party invitations.

Day 18

Fire Dependent: You'll need sandpaper and a small block of wood for this activity geared toward the children. Take turns using the rough side of the sandpaper to smooth and shape the edges of the wood. Talk about how trials, or hard times, are like this—they shape us and help us trust God and his promise of a crown of life.

Day 19

Ashes on Beauty: Have an extended time of quiet confession to God of your good, bad and ugly sins. Receive the beauty of his forgiveness in exchange for the ashes of your sins.

Day 20

Playground Church: Imagine what would it be like to have dinner with Jesus. What questions might you ask him? What food would you especially want to share with him? What do you think he would like or not like about your dinner routine? At the end of your dinner, pray (not just beforehand).

Day 21

Is It I? Before your next meeting, ask someone you don't know well if he or she believes in Jesus or if he or she has ever read the Gospel of Luke. Tell one thing that delights you about believing in Jesus or offer to give him or her a New Testament to read. How would you respond if someone asked you those questions?

Day 22

Engraved Invitation: God made each one of us. No two people are exactly alike. He knows us better than we know ourselves. He loves us more than we love ourselves, even enough to die on the cross. Thank God for making you. Thank God for loving you. Thank God for saving you.

Day 23

Garden Tours: Bring out the drawing paper and pencils or crayons, and create a "garden" in which love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control have been sown.

Day 24

Under The Bus: Take turns reading aloud the story of Jesus and Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1-10. Memorize Luke 19:10, and thank God that he seeks the lost, no matter where they are hiding.

Day 25

Mistaken Identity: Give each person in your group a piece of paper with the name of a real person or fictional character that everyone would recognize. Using yes or no questions, take turns trying to guess the identity of each person. Talk about our true identity in Christ.

Day 26

No Strangers Here: Instead of waiting for the knock on your door, knock on a neighbor's door or the door to a hospital room, and offer your help or a listening ear and a prayer.

Day 27

It's Lonely at the Bottom: Fill in the blank, "I feel lonely when . . ." Then complete this thought: "It's not so lonely at the bottom, when . . .," Share your answers with your group and pray for one another.

Day 28

The In-Between Day: Maybe you're in a sad place right now. If not, think back to when you were. When you pray, God hears you. He's with you in the sad place. Pray with your group words that show how you feel about God's being with you in the sad place.

Day 29

Drowning: Take a slow, deep breath. And then another. It feels good to breathe, doesn't it? How is following Jesus like taking one of those deep breaths? How is faith in Jesus like oxygen?

Day 30

The Forgiveness Project: Think of something you did wrong where someone had to forgive you and did. Try to remember how it felt when the person spoke words of forgiveness. Is there anyone in your life from whom you need to seek forgiveness—or to forgive?

Day 31

Scattered Clothes: Think about the resurrection. For you personally, how does it change your life? Share around the table.

Day 32

Bistro Margosha: Think of three people you don't know that well and invite them over for tea. Sometimes it's easier to give something than it is to receive, especially when we need to ask for help. Go around the table and identify one thing with which you need help and see if anyone might be able to help you.

Day 33

Active Listening: Play the telephone game—a sentence is whispered from person to person, with each player only hearing it once and passing it to their neighbor, until the last person says the message he or she heard. Compare it to the original. Sentence ideas: Goofy gophers gobbled up grapes, or six seals set sail in seventy-seven ships. Jesus hears us and listens to us—he doesn't garble our prayers, and his answers are always for our good.

Day 34

Daydreams: Do your best to physically meet with someone you haven't seen in a long time. Instead of relating to someone on social media, reach out to them in person or, if they are far away, by phone. Share with the family/group how different this encounter was.

Day 35

Like My Dog: Go on a walk with God today. Go by yourself or with your group. If you are walking alone, include how you are thankful for the way God has made you; if you are in a group, include prayers of thanks for the others walking with you. Pray to God. Look around at all he's made. Think of Bible verses that might speak to you along the way.

Day 36

Colors of Eternity: Visit an art store and look at the different colored pencils, crayons, markers of all sorts, paints. Draw or color a picture with at least four of the colors mentioned in the reflection. Share your art with one another.

Day 37

Dots, Lines, Circles: Words can be magical. Make up a new word to describe one aspect of God.

Day 38

Missing Lunch. Invite a stranger to coffee or tea or go to lunch or dinner with people new to you. Learn more about them and tell them what you find of interest.

Day 39

Social-Distancing Death: Celebrate the people in your family/group. Think of one thing you love about each of them. Share with one another.

Day 40

Second Day: Don't let Easter be the end of your faith-sharing story. Think of at least one person for whom you can pray and show care.