

# MAHAFFEY CAMP

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*7 Days of Family Devotionals*



**MAHAFFEY CAMP  
& CONFERENCE CENTER**

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## *Greetings from Mahaffey Camp!*

In this document, you'll find a short collection of family devotionals - each one inspired by a well-known place from our campground. If you've been to Mahaffey Camp, you'll recognize and appreciate these locational references - but even if you've never been to Mahaffey Camp, these devotions will still be relevant to you.

Our prayer is that these devotionals will be a source of refreshment to your family, as you gather to discuss, laugh, and learn together. The truths provided in each lesson are very simple - meant to be understood by even the youngest of your family members. And yet, even these simple truths can be taken to a deeper level.

We hope you enjoy these devotionals, and that they are a blessing to your family!

### **Tips for using the Devotionals:**

#### **You Know Your Family Best!**

Feel free to shorten, lengthen, or modify the day's activities as needed, to make the lesson appropriate for the age and level of understanding of your family members.

#### **Use What You've Got!**

We've made an effort to make each activity simple and easy to do with household materials. But if you don't have a certain needed material - improvise! Use whatever you've got laying around to make it work.

#### **Make the Timeframe Work for You!**

Each of these lessons can potentially take 30-45 minutes to complete (or longer, if you get into really deep discussion!). If this time frame is too long for you, break it up! Split up activities throughout the day, or even over multiple days. Additionally, the devotions do not need to be done daily - they can be done every few days, once a week, etc. - whatever works best for your family.

## **The Devotional Structure**

Each of the devotionals in this packet are structured the same way. Here is a basic run-down of what each section entails:

### **INTRODUCTION**

Each devotional starts with the day's image, theme, and materials needed.

### **GET THINKING**

This section is a "warm-up" - something that will get your family thinking about the day's topic. Often, it's a hands-on activity that will make you smile!

### **DEVOTIONAL READ-ALoud**

This section is the main devotional for the day. One person should read it aloud for the rest of the group.

### **STUDY THE SCRIPTURE**

This part lists the scripture for the day, along with some application questions to help your family break down the meaning.

### **DIG DEEP**

This section includes some further discussion questions on the day's topic, to help your family dig even deeper into the themes.

### **MAKE A CONNECTION**

This section includes an application activity, to help your family reflect on the day's topic. Different activities are sometimes offered for different age groups. After finishing this section, close in prayer together as a family.

\*Some days also include an "Extension Activity": an idea for how you can continue exploring the theme over an extended period of time.

# Day One: Dining Hall



## INTRODUCTION

Today's Theme: Thankfulness

Materials Needed for Today: Computer Paper, Crayons / Markers, Large piece of paper or whiteboard

## GET THINKING

Activity: Favorite Meals Game

- Each person in your group will get a piece of paper and something to draw with (crayons / markers / etc.)
- Each person will draw a picture of their favorite meal, keeping the drawings hidden from each other.
- Give everybody a turn to share. But before they reveal their favorite meal, let the rest of the group take a guess at what it is!

## DEVOTIONAL READ-ALLOUD

At Mahaffey Camp, the Dining Hall serves a wide variety of purposes. It is a meeting place for seminars, conferences, and other activities. But most importantly, it's a place to eat!

The meals we serve and the way we serve them has changed over the years. If you have an older person in your family who attended Family Camp many years ago, just ask them what it was like when they were kids! But regardless of how we serve the food or what type of food we eat, the Dining Hall symbolizes something that should be very important to ALL Christians - thankfulness.

Take a moment to think of all the reasons you have to be thankful to God. When you really start to "count your blessings one by one," you'll find that you can't count that high! God has blessed us immeasurably, beyond anything we deserve. Not only has He given us material blessings (like a place to live, food to eat, or friendships to enjoy), but He has given us something MUCH more important - the opportunity to have eternal life in Heaven with Him. We don't deserve this amazing gift, but He has chosen to give it to us anyway, because He loves us so much.

So why do we still struggle with complaining, defiance, and self-pity? It may be because in the moments when we feel these negative emotions, we are forgetting to be thankful to God.

How often do you say "thank-you" to God? We should be thanking God constantly - not just at mealtimes, or when we have received a large blessing. By remembering to be thankful always - even in the bad times - we change our own perspective.

A thankful heart is always focused on God, not on yourself. It may be tempting to get angry when things don't go our way, or to feel sorry for ourselves when we don't get what we want. But in those times, we should pause and place our focus on God instead. When we stop to think about it, there is always something to be grateful for - even in difficult times!

# Day One: Dining Hall, cont.

## STUDY THE SCRIPTURE

*Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18*

- This passage tells us that we should be thankful in ALL circumstances. How can we actively choose to be thankful, even when we are in a difficult situation? What steps can we take to focus on God, instead of our troubles?

*Read Psalm 9:1*

- How does a thankful heart spur us to tell others about God?

*Read Philippians 4:6-7*

- How does a thankful heart help us to be less anxious?

## DIG DEEP

- Do you think that we live in a culture that shows much thankfulness? Why or why not?
- God does not expect us to simply ignore the big problems we face. How can we show thankfulness while also working to resolve issues in our lives?
- How does your attitude change when you are thankful, rather than when you're complaining? How does it affect others around you?

## MAKE A CONNECTION

*For Younger Kids*

- Create a thankfulness acrostic together.
- Write the letters of the alphabet vertically on a paper or whiteboard.
- Together, try to come up with a word or phrase starting with each letter – something that your family can be thankful for. Write these words/phrases on the paper/board.

*For example: A - Aunt Lucy, B - Birds, C - Cats, D - Dad, E - Education, etc.*

*For Older Kids*

- Together, come up with a list of five complaints that you hear often (around your house, at school, among your friends, etc.). Write these complaints in a list on a paper or whiteboard on the left side.
- Go through each complaint. Cross it out as you talk about it. Then, beside it (on the right side of the paper/board), come up with an expression of thankfulness to replace it with, and write it down.

*For example: Complaint - I'm bored. Expression of Thankfulness - I'm blessed that God has given me moments of quietness.*

## EXTENSION IDEA: MAKE A GRATITUDE JAR

Use a jar (or other durable container) to collect moments of thankfulness over the next month. Decorate the jar as a family, then leave slips of paper and pencils beside it and put it in a high-traffic place in your house. Whenever someone in your family has something to be thankful for, they can write it down on paper and place it into the jar. Then, at the end of the month, you can go back through the memories of your thankfulness as a family and reflect on your blessings!

# Day Two: Playground / Rec Courts



## INTRODUCTION

Today's Theme: Fellowship

Materials Needed for Today: Ball of yarn/twine, paper and marker

## GET THINKING

Activity: Web of Unity

- One person in your group will hold the ball of yarn/twine.
- While firmly holding onto the end of the string, they will toss the ball to someone else in the group.
- The first person will state something that they admire about the second person's character (ex. "I appreciate how compassionate you are for others.")
- The second person will then grab hold of the string tightly, toss the ball to someone else, state something they admire about that person, and so on.
- Continue for at least a couple rounds (so that everyone has had multiple turns to catch and toss).
- At the end of the illustration, you should have a web of string connecting the members of your group.
- *Discuss afterward: how does this web show the unity between us? Why is it important that we uplift each other? What would happen to this entire web if the string between two people was cut?*

## DEVOTIONAL READ-ALLOUD

When you ask a Mahaffey Camper what they love most about Mahaffey Camp, a lot of times the answer is "the fellowship." What do you think the word fellowship means?

The general definition is "friendly association, especially with people who share one's interests." This means that general fellowship could be a very wide range of things - playing a game of basketball with friends, working together on a craft, going on a hike with others, or even just getting together for a meal. But Christian fellowship is just a little bit different.

If we're talking about Christian fellowship, we're talking about fellowship that is rooted in God. Whatever the event is, the focus is on God. Christians taking part in true fellowship should be encouraging one another, strengthening each other spiritually, and praising God together.

Fellowship not only gives us joy, but it gives us unity. No matter who we are, where we come from, or what our personality is like, when we are fellowshiping together, we are connecting with one another through God - which means our differences no longer matter. Camp is a great place to experience this type of unity, because we all come from different backgrounds. But when we are together at camp, we are worshipping God together as one body. Even in our family, we each have differences - but when we are fellowshiping together, rooted in God, we are united in His love.

# Day Two: *Playground / Rec Courts, cont.*

## DEVOTIONAL READ-ALoud, CONT.

At Mahaffey Camp, the playground and recreation courts are great places to make new friends and have a fun time. If you've been to camp before, you've probably got some fun stories you could share about your experiences there! But these places should remind us that true fellowship goes beyond just spending time together – true fellowship is when Christians gather together to grow and encourage one another, connected in their worship of God. True fellowship is a blessing, because it strengthens us in our own walk with God.

## STUDY THE SCRIPTURE

*Read Hebrews 10:24-25*

- What does this scripture tell us about fellowship?
- How are fellowship and encouragement related?
- Why is it important to make sure we meet regularly for fellowship with other Christians?

## DIG DEEP

- Some people are outgoing – they love to meet new friends and socialize with others. Other people are more introverted – they prefer to be alone or in small groups, and they may make friends more slowly. Which one are you? How can both of these types of people engage in true fellowship? Is it possible for both of these types of people to fellowship together?
- What are some ways that your church family already fellowships with one another? Do you have any ideas for new fellowship opportunities that you could share with your church leaders?
- What would happen to us as Christians, if we completely stopped getting together for fellowship?

## MAKE A CONNECTION

- Together as a family, come up with a list of three ways that you are going to commit to fellowship together over the next month.
- Write these ideas down and post them somewhere that your whole family will be reminded of them – like on the fridge, on the calendar, by the front door, etc.
- Some potential ideas: go for a hike together, pray together daily, cook a meal together, take a picnic together, have a game night, etc.
- For each of the three ideas you choose, discuss how you will actively make sure that each one is true fellowship – how will you ensure that your focus is on God, and not just on the “fun”?

# Day Three: *Bridge*



## INTRODUCTION

Today's Theme: Transitions

Materials Needed for Today: "Bridge building supplies" (like popsicle sticks, q-tips, toothpicks, paper towel / toilet paper rolls, etc.) Paper, Glue, Writing Utensils

## GET THINKING

Activity: Build a Bridge

- Together, you're going to build a bridge using some supplies you have laying around the house!
- You can use popsicle sticks, q-tips, toothpicks, paper, empty paper towel/toilet paper rolls, etc. – whatever you have on hand.
- This will be a "permanent" structure – so don't use any materials that you want for future use.
- Spend some time brainstorming and/or drawing out your design – encourage creative architecture from your builders!
- After coming up with your plan, build and glue your structure together and let it dry while you continue on to the devotional.

## DEVOTIONAL READ-ALLOUD

The Bridge is a well-known symbol of Mahaffey Camp. Over the years, generations of campers have come to know and love the camp bridge that connects the Belltower to the Dining Hall. Many Mahaffey Campers have fond memories of meeting up with friends on the bridge, heading to dinner across the bridge, or just strolling along the bridge for a view of camp below.

Bridges are symbolic because they signify a transition – a time when we are leaving one place and going to another. It is inevitable that we will all face times of transition at some point in our lives.

Think about the transitions you're facing right now, or will be facing in the near future. Maybe you've lost a job and you're looking for a new one. Maybe you are heading off to college soon, or moving away from home. Maybe you're moving up a grade, or maybe your family is moving to a new house soon. Whatever the transition is, think for a moment about what emotions you feel when you think about this change. Do you feel scared? Worried? Angry? Regretful? Hopeful? Peaceful?

Although all people will face times of transition, one thing remains true for those who have put their faith in God: you are not alone in these times. Isn't that wonderful to know? God is faithful, and will remain by your side as you navigate tough decisions in life. It's natural to feel a bit scared when we face a transition, but we can find peace when we remember that God is with us. He has provided powerful tools for us to use when we are faced with a tough transition. We can pray, sharing our anxieties and joys with God. We can seek the advice of the mentors He has placed in our lives. And we can read God's word, to remind ourselves of God's promises and His love for us.

Transitions aren't always easy – but we can be sure that God is with us when we face changes in life, and that He has a great plan ahead. When we encounter tough times knowing that God is by our side, we gain a new perspective, and find the strength to follow wherever He leads us.

# Day Three: *Bridge, cont.*

## STUDY THE SCRIPTURE

*Read Deuteronomy 31:8 and Jeremiah 29:11*

- How do these two verses provide comfort for us in times of change?
- How should the message of these two verses change our perspective when we are facing difficult times?
- How can we choose to trust God, even when we can't see the outcome of a situation?

## DIG DEEP

- What is one of the biggest transitions you've ever had to make in life?
- Looking back, what positive outcomes have you seen in your life because you made this transition? What blessings have you received because of it?
- What advice could you offer to someone who is facing the same type of transition that you faced in the past?

## MAKE A CONNECTION

- Have each person in your group write down a specific transition that they are facing in their life right now or in the near future on a piece of paper. For younger kids, you may need to help them come up with an idea and write it down for them.
- Pray individually (or together), asking God for wisdom, clarity, and strength to face the transition with confidence in God's plan.
- Place the papers on the bridge that you built together, symbolizing your dedication of these transitions to the Lord's care.

## EXTENSION IDEA: PAPER CHAIN JOURNAL

Save this activity for a time that your family is going through a notable transition.  
If you're in the midst of a transition, start it now!

Find a space in your house to hang up a "paper chain journal." During your time of transition, get together as a family sometime each day to discuss how everyone is feeling, what events happened that day, or any other memories / emotions from the day. Write your reflections down on a strip of paper and staple or tape into a circle. Each day, add a new paper link to the growing chain. At the end of your transition time, you'll be able to look back as a family and remember how you were feeling during this time and what experiences / difficulties you faced together - and you'll be able to see God's plan clearly from the other side.



# Day Four: *Tabernacle*



## INTRODUCTION

Today's Theme: Worship

Materials Needed for Today: Recording of a worship song (Youtube, CD, Spotify, etc.), Large piece of paper or whiteboard, markers, computer paper, writing utensils

## GET THINKING

Activity: Worship Opener

- Choose a worship song that your family enjoys. Together, listen to the song to open up today's discussion.
- *Optional: have everyone write down some of their favorite phrases from the song as you are listening, and then share afterward.*
- After listening, discuss. How does the singer praise God through this music? What phrases stand out to you? What do the lyrics say about God? What emotions does this music make you feel? Why do you think music is one of the most common methods we use to worship God?

## DEVOTIONAL READ-ALLOUD

When you think of the word "worship," what comes to mind? Singing songs? A style of music? A part of the morning church service?

Worship goes far beyond music. The word is defined as "the feeling or expression of reverence and adoration for God." Simply put, *to worship* means to tell God how amazing He is and how much you love Him!

Many of us have had incredible experiences during the worship services at camp, church, or another event. The powerful music helps us connect with God, show Him our thankful hearts, and hear what He has to say to us. But there are many other ways to worship God as well. It might be journaling, prayer, writing music, studying the Bible, fasting, serving others, or even just taking a walk outside and exploring the beauty of God's creation. Plus, certain things we do on Sunday at church - like giving our offerings or taking communion - are acts of worship as well.

The bottom line is that an act of worship is a way for us to praise God. When we worship God, our hearts should be full of gratitude for all that He has given us, and full of adoration for how wonderful and amazing God is. Worship should be something we do not just on Sunday or at camp - but every single day. When we spend time praising God, we connect deeper with Him - and this is something we should long for constantly!

# Day Four: Tabernacle, cont.

## STUDY THE SCRIPTURE

*Read 1 Chronicles 16:23-31*

- Based on this scripture, what should our worship accomplish? What sorts of things should we be doing by worshipping?
- WHY should we worship, according to this scripture?

*Read Romans 12:1-2*

- How does this scripture give a different perspective on worship, compared to the previous one?
- How do these two passages on worship compare – what are their similarities and/or differences?

## DIG DEEP

- We know that God has created each of us to be unique. How does this affect the ways we can worship God?
- Why does it matter that our heart is “in the right place” when we are worshipping God?
- Where is a place that you personally love to worship God? Why?

## MAKE A CONNECTION

*For Younger Kids*

- Draw a picture of a body / person on a large sheet of paper (or whiteboard). Don't worry about your artistic skills being perfect - your kids won't mind!
- Together, come up with some ways that we can worship God with different parts of our body (ex. hands - use to create art that honors God, mouth - use to sing praises to God, ears - use to listen to God speaking to us, etc.)
- Write these ideas down on the poster / whiteboard, making a connection line from each idea to the part of the body it refers to.

*For Older Kids*

- Write out your own poem of worship (similar to a Psalm), starting with the phrase “I will worship the Lord by...”
- Poems can be shared aloud or kept private.

## EXTENSION IDEA: STORIES BEHIND THE SONGS

Have each member of your family choose a hymn or contemporary worship song that is special to them. Over the next week or so, give everyone time to do some research on the background behind their chosen song. Did the writer / singer base the song on a personal struggle they faced? Was the song written in response to a historical event? Were the lyrics inspired by a certain piece of scripture? After everyone's had some time to do their investigation, come back together and share your findings - giving each other a new appreciation for the song and its history.

# Day Five: River



## INTRODUCTION

Today's Theme: Peace

Materials Needed for Today: Timer, Youtube video of the song "Peace Like a River", Balloons

## GET THINKING

Activity: Symbols of Peace Scavenger Hunt

- Instruct everyone in your group: they will have exactly two minutes to go find something in the house that represents "peace" in some way.
- Bring back the items that you found. Give everyone a chance to share what their item is, and why it represents "peace" to them.

## DEVOTIONAL READ-ALOUD

The West Branch of the Susquehanna River provides some of the most beautiful scenery to be found at Mahaffey Camp. The river changes its beauty with the seasons. In springtime, it glimmers in the sunlight, the cool air rising in mist from its surface. In summer, it's surrounded by a lush green forest that contrasts the wide blue sky. In fall, the trees burst into vibrant, fiery colors all along the river. And in winter, crisp blocks of ice float and gather amidst the boulders in the water.

Although there are times when the river is wild – it has been known to flood sometimes after big summer storms – generally, the river is calm and peaceful. The water eases by at a leisurely pace, splashing gently onto the boulders speckling its surface. Just sitting along the riverbank and listening to the birds sing is a powerful method of restoration for many of our campers.

Do you have a place like this in your life – a place that offers you peace? A place where you can go to be quiet and enjoy the calmness in your soul?

Sometimes it seems like there's not much peace to be found in our world today, doesn't it? Just watching the evening news will remind you of all the trouble that's constantly rampaging in our culture – violence, tragedy, catastrophes. It's hard to focus on peace in a world that is so filled with pain and worry.

But in Philippians 4:7, we see a very important aspect of God's peace – it "transcends all understanding." This means that the peace that comes from God is beyond anything we can even understand. The world can't offer us this type of peace – only God can.

Jesus told His disciples that they didn't need to worry about the trouble they would face in the world – because He had already overcome the world. Even when we hear about trouble (or face it firsthand), we can be assured that God is in control – and He offers us incredible peace when we give our worries over to Him.

# Day Five: *River, cont.*

## STUDY THE SCRIPTURE

*Read Philippians 4:6-7*

- According to this scripture, what should we do when we feel anxious?
- What does it mean that the peace of God will “guard” our hearts and minds?

*Read John 16:33*

- Notice that Jesus does not try to hide the truth from His disciples. He tells them that they will face trouble in the world. But they don't need to worry – why?
- How exactly did Jesus “overcome the world?”
- How can this verse provide encouragement for us, even though we live in a different time period than the disciples did when they heard this message?

## DIG DEEP

- Do you have a place that is peaceful to you? Or a hobby that brings you peace? Share!
- If you have a peaceful spirit, how does that affect others around you?
- How can we bring love and peace to places where there is hatred and turmoil?

## MAKE A CONNECTION

*For Younger Kids*

- Teach your children the song “Peace Like a River.” There are plenty of YouTube videos that teach fun motions to the song - learn them together as a family!

*For Older Kids*

- Give each person a balloon.
- Tell them to think of some stresses they face in life that threaten to “steal their peace” (example: schoolwork, drama, jobs, etc.)
- Say each thing out loud, then blow a breath of air into the balloon (this can be done as a group, or individually). Repeat for a bunch of stresses.
- Once the balloons are full, observe how the “stresses” make the balloons stretched out and inflexible – maybe even ready to pop!
- Talk about how we can use prayer as a way to give these stresses over to God. Slowly let the air out of the balloons, symbolizing releasing your stress to God – allowing Him to give you peace.

## EXTENSION IDEA: DECLUTTER YOUR HOME

Over the next few weeks, make it a point to “declutter” as a family. It's no secret that mess leads to stress - and too much “stuff” can distract us from what really matters. As a family, make a list of a few places in your house that you want to clean out - closets, playrooms, etc. - and clean them out one by one. Together, decide which possessions you truly need, and which are just taking up space. Then, make use of the items you discard - take them to a local shelter, library, charity, or other community organization to help out someone else in need!

# Day Six: *Belltower*



## INTRODUCTION

Today's Theme: God's Calling

Materials Needed for Today: Timer

## GET THINKING

Activity: "Who's Calling?" Game

- Choose one person from your group to leave the room. They should stand just outside the door, so that they can't see inside, but can still hear.
- Quietly choose one person from the group remaining to be the "caller." They will then make a loud "call." (This can be something simple, like "hello!", or it can be something crazy and silly, like an animal sound).
- The person who was standing outside the room comes back into the room and tries to guess which person made the call.
- Take as many turns as you want!

## DEVOTIONAL READ-ALLOUD

The Belltower is another historical symbol of Mahaffey Camp. It's so special to us that it appears on our logo! Think you're a Mahaffey Camp expert? See if you can answer these Belltower trivia questions:

1. What type of metal is the bell inside the Belltower made of? (Bronze)
2. How much does the bell weigh? (over half a ton)
3. How many CMA camps have a Belltower on their grounds? (3 - Mahaffey Camp, Beulah Beach Camp, and Delta Lake Camp)
4. The camp bell's ring is used to signal three different things on the daily schedule at Family Camp. What are they? (mealtimes, service times, and curfew times).

A bell is often used to symbolize a "calling" of some sort. It is a signal of an announcement, or a call to action. The ringing sound gathers our attention and prepares us for something important. At camp, we recognize the sound of the bell immediately, and we know it means something.

When we talk about prayer, we often talk about "listening for God's voice." But what does this really mean? How do we know that the voice we hear is God's? How can we be sure that we understand what God is calling us to do?

First, know that the closer you are to God, the easier it will be to recognize His calling. Just like you know the voices of your closest friends and family very well, you'll start to know God's voice better as you become closer to Him.

# Day Six: Belltower, cont.

## DEVOTIONAL READ-ALoud, CONT.

Second, think about the motives behind your prayers. In order to hear clearly from God, we must have an open heart to what He has to say – we can't be selfish or prideful, trying to "force" God to tell us what we want to hear. If you're approaching Him with this attitude, stop and confess your wrongs FIRST, then ask Him to speak.

Third, be sure that your mind is clear and pure. In 1 Kings 19:11-13, we read about how God spoke to Elijah not through a strong wind or earthquake or fire, but in a "still, small voice." God can speak to us in a variety of ways, but most often it will be through a "still, small voice" that we hear in our mind. If our mind is full of impure things, it will be harder to discern which thoughts come from God, and which come from the world.

When we open our minds up to hear God's voice, we are taking a step of faith – because God sometimes calls us to do things that are out of our comfort zones! But when we focus our mind on God, lining up our desires with His will, we will find that we have the boldness to follow God wherever He calls us.

## STUDY THE SCRIPTURE

*Read Genesis 12:1-3*

- In this passage, we see God's call to Abram. How does God call him out of his comfort zone?
- What promises does God make to Abram, in return for Abram following His calling?
- How can this passage encourage us to follow God's calling today?

## DIG DEEP

- Have you ever heard God's voice clearly calling you to do something specific? What was it? Did you follow through with His calling, and what was the result?
- What are some ways that we "feed" our minds on a daily basis? (ex. television, music, discussions with others, reading, etc.). Why is it so important that we "feed" our minds with good influences?
- Why is it so important to know the Bible well, when we are trying to hear God's voice in our times of prayer?

## MAKE A CONNECTION

- Discuss together: what are some of the "loudest" distractions in your life that take your focus away from hearing God's voice?
- Spend a moment in complete quietness together. Set a timer for one minute, and as a group, be completely silent for that whole minute. Individually, you can use that time to pray, listen, or just be still. The point is that it should be completely silent in the room.
- Afterward, discuss. Did that minute feel like forever? Why is it so hard for us to just be still and be quiet? Is there anything we can do to actively get rid of the "loud" distractions in our life? How will quietness allow us to hear God's voice better?

# Day Seven: Gate



## INTRODUCTION

Today's Theme: Beginnings and Endings

Materials Needed for Today: Large piece of paper or whiteboard, markers, magazines / newspapers, computer paper, scissors, glue, art supplies (like paint or colored pencils)

## GET THINKING

Activity: Make a Family Timeline

- On a large piece of paper or a whiteboard, draw a timeline.
- Together, come up with some major events that have taken place in your family over the years and map them on the timeline with dates (ex. births, deaths, moving, jobs, schools, pets, big changes, etc.)
- Discuss together: which of these events symbolize the beginning of something? Which symbolize the ending of something? Do any symbolize both? What emotions do you connect with some of the events on our timeline?

## DEVOTIONAL READ-ALoud

Generally, when you think about beginnings and endings, which one do you associate with "happiness," and which one do you associate with "sadness?" Chances are, you think of beginnings as "happy" and endings as "sad."

The same is very true for camp. If you've been to a youth camp, Family Camp, or retreat at Mahaffey Camp, you know the big difference between entering the welcome gate at the beginning of camp and leaving through the exit gate at the end. We come through the entrance with excitement and eagerness, and leave through the exit feeling sad that camp is over.

In life, we often feel the same way. We are excited when God brings about something new, but sad when He brings something else to an end. But we should realize that every beginning and ending is all part of God's plan – and it all works together beautifully in His perfect design for our lives.

True, we may not understand why God has closed a door in our life. We may feel angry or hurt when we suffer a loss. But we can always trust that God has good plans for us, whether we understand them now or not.

Have you ever heard someone say that things were better "back in the old days?" While this phrase is used pretty harmlessly, we have to be careful not to let this mindset affect our view on God's plan. We must be careful never to "live in the past," wishing that we could go back in time to the way things used to be. It's okay to miss people we've lost, to remember good memories, and to reflect on our past, but it's not okay to think that God has made a mistake in the way He has carried out His plans – that the time He has brought us to is not meaningful to us in some way.

When God closes a door in our life, we have to trust that He has a reason for doing so. We may not find out the purpose until a long time from now, but it will all be clear one day (even if that day is not until we reach Heaven).

# Day Seven: Gate, cont.

## DEVOTIONAL READ-ALLOUD, CONT.

When we leave Mahaffey Camp at the end of a camp or retreat, we may feel sad, but we can be joyful in what lies ahead – an opportunity to share with other people what we have learned at camp, and an opportunity to start a renewed life closer to God. The same is true in our lives - we can choose to be joyful in the endings we face, knowing that God has something great planned for our future. We have to learn to rejoice not only in the moments of beginning, but the moments of ending as well.

As this set of devotionals comes to a close, we hope that you, as a family, will see this ending in the same way – as a starting point for something new. By completing these devotions, you've grown stronger and more unified as a family, and you'll be able to face new trials and joys with a fresh perspective. Now go forth and do the Lord's work!

## STUDY THE SCRIPTURE

*Read Philippians 3:13-14*

- What do you think Paul is referring to when he talks about the “prize” in this passage?
- What does Paul mean when he says “forgetting what is behind?” Does this mean that God does not want us to remember our past?
- How does a focus on our heavenly reward change our perspective on situations we face currently?

*Read 2 Corinthians 5:17*

- How does this verse provide comfort to us when thinking about beginnings and endings? How does it show us that God has greater things planned for us?

## DIG DEEP

- Although we often think of beginnings as “happier” than endings, are there times when beginnings can be scary, too? Do you have any examples from your own life? How did you overcome the feelings of worry in this situation?
- Some people seem to really like change, while others prefer tradition and routine. Which type of person are you? How can we balance an honor of tradition with an acceptance of change in our own lives and in our culture?
- Has God ever closed a door in your life? How did you feel at that time? Looking back now, can you understand the purpose for the ending?

## MAKE A CONNECTION

*For Younger Kids*

- Gather some old magazines or newspapers.
- Encourage kids to find pictures of things that symbolize “new beginnings” (ex. babies, butterflies, baby animals, flowers, etc.)
- Cut these images out and glue them together in a collage.
- Hang the collage up somewhere as a reminder of God's faithfulness to provide new life for all those who believe in Him.

*For Older Kids*

- Give everyone some time to create a piece of artwork (drawing, painting – use whatever supplies you have) that symbolizes new beginnings.
- For example, they could draw/paint a flower, an open door, a pathway, etc.
- This piece of art should be symbolic and meaningful to them personally.
- *If your kids do not enjoy artistic activities, they could write a poem or story about new beginnings instead.*



*We hope you enjoyed  
these devotionals!*

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We pray that these devotional activities were a source of renewal and restoration for your entire family, and that they were able to strengthen the bond you share.

We also hope to see you soon at camp! Whether you've never been to camp, or you've been coming since before you can remember, you're welcome at Mahaffey Camp! Here are some of the year-round programs we offer:

**Summer Youth Camps for grades 1-12**

**Family Camp (annually - end of July)**

**Applefest (annually - October)**

**Ladies' Spring Tea (annually - May)**

**Retreats (Quilter's, Papercrafting, Mother/Daughter Getaway,**

**Men's Link, Writers' Prayer Gathering)**

**Facility Use (for banquets, conferences, retreats, and events)**

Contact the Camp Office for details and information!

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