

## Family Worship Guide – Week 31

### READ

This week we begin our study of First Timothy. Timothy was a young pastor in the church at Ephesus. Paul wrote this letter to Timothy to tell him how he should lead the church.

Paul was the missionary who had planted the church at Ephesus and preached there for three years (Acts 20:31). Just before he left Ephesus for the last time, on his way to Jerusalem, Paul called all of the elders of the church at Ephesus together. We read about this last meeting in Acts 20:17-38.

Read Acts 20:17-21.

In these verses, Paul reminds the Ephesian elders about his ministry among them. Paul had lived life in front of these men and had shown them what a life marked by the gospel looks like (20:18). He had endured danger and persecution (20:19), but he did not let anything stop him from preaching the gospel to everyone he could—both Jews and Greeks alike (20:20-21).

Read Acts 20:22-27.

Now Paul knows that the Holy Spirit is leading him to Jerusalem. The word that our English Bibles translate as “constrained” literally means “chained.” Paul saw himself as the slave of Christ. Jesus is Lord and Master, and that means that Paul will do whatever the Holy Spirit tells him to do—even if it means being thrown into prison or worse (20:23).

Verse 24 is one of the most moving verses in the entire Bible and it provides a picture of how all of us should view our lives. Paul says that he does not consider his life of any value or as dear to himself. In other words, he is not concerned with his own safety or even his own survival. Since the time that Paul met Jesus on the road to Damascus, he said, “For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” (Philippians 1:21) Paul’s only concern was to fulfill the ministry that God had given him—to preach the gospel.

In verses 25-27, Paul tells the elders that he will not see them again and declares himself innocent of their blood. Paul was innocent of their blood because he did not shrink back from declaring to them the whole counsel of God. In other words, Paul preached the entire Word of God, not only the parts that people liked to hear. This is what we are called to do individually and this is what our church as a body is called to do. This is especially important for our elders. They must declare the whole counsel of God, even when it is unpopular.

Read Acts 20:28-37.

Paul ends his address to the elders by calling them to carefully guard themselves and the flock that God has entrusted to them. This is not a light matter, for elders are commanded to protect Christ’s sheep. The church is “the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.” (Acts 20:28)

This is all the more important because there will always be wolves who try to kill and eat the sheep (Acts 20:29-30). Sometimes these wolves come from outside the flock and sometimes they come from inside the flock. The job of the elder, or shepherd, or pastor, is to guard the sheep from the wolves. This is one of the reasons why we as members of the local church are commanded to submit to our elders, because God Himself has commanded them to watch over our souls (Hebrews 13:17). This is also why we must faithfully pray for our elders and pastors.

In verses 36-38, we see Paul departing from the elders for the final time. This was a sad time because they knew that they would never see each other again, and that Paul was on his way to prison. At the same time, Paul had confidence that God would be faithful to continue building his church. As we see in the letters to the Ephesians and to Timothy, God continued building the church at Ephesus, even after Paul left. This should give us confidence that the church is not dependent on any mere man, but it is dependent on the power of God and the Word of God. And God is faithful to continue His work.

### Questions:

In this passage, we see two times that Paul was pressured to stop preaching the gospel. In what ways do you feel the pressure to “shrink back” from declaring the gospel? How did Paul respond? How will you respond?

Paul could have just preached the parts of the Bible that people like to hear. Instead, he preached “the whole counsel of God.” What are some things in the Bible that people in our world don’t like to hear? How will you respond to that fact? As we have seen, God has entrusted the elders of the church with the duty of protecting the church. This means that we as church members are called to submit to them. Are there ways that you need to repent of an attitude of rebellion against the leadership that God has put in place?

Spend some time as a family in prayers for our elders as they seek to guard The Church at Brook Hills.

Paul says that nothing will stop him from preaching the gospel. What is stopping you?

**Bottom Line:** Fulfilling the mission to take the gospel to all nations is more important than our safety and our survival.

## PRAY

For the next two weeks children and students will be starting a new school year all over the Greater Birmingham area. The start of school brings a steady rhythm to the lives of families who have been all over the world on mission trips and vacations. As a faith family, we are asking God to use our Next Generation Disciple Making Team to lead our children, students and families to treat the start of the school year like a local mission trip. New relationships for our children and students will present many opportunities advance the gospel and make disciples. The lives of our families and students in home school networks, private schools, public schools, and Christian schools will open the door to for relational influence. Here are a few examples of how to effectively pray for Kingdom expansion in the weeks ahead.

## SING

Reginald Heber penned this week’s worship song, ‘Holy, Holy, Holy’, in 1826. Heber was a bishop in the Church of England, and he originally wrote this hymn for the celebration of Trinity Sunday. This was a day typically scheduled on the first Sunday after Pentecost and set aside to focus on and rejoice in the three persons of God: the Father, the Son and The Holy Spirit.

This is a song of praise that reminds us why we take the gospel to all nations. The “Lord God [is] Almighty”, “merciful and mighty”, “holy; there is none beside Thee”, indeed He is “perfect in power and love and purity”. What a joyful reminder of how magnificent God is and how He shows different aspects of His character through the Trinity. Celebrate as you sing, and let the words of this hymn be a prayer of praise that spurs you on share the greatness of God with others.

## MEMORIZE

Acts 20:24 “But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.”

## SUGGESTIONS

These suggestions were created by the age-group ministry leaders as a way to help parents better communicate the biblical truths discussed in the Family Worship Guide. These suggestions are intended to help parents facilitate God-centered discussions with their children. Parents should prayerfully use these suggestions, and any other means necessary, to help their children discover the truths of God’s word and worship Him together.

### Preschool

- Before you begin: Grab your Bible, a small tub of water and several small stones.
- Read Acts 20:24 with your preschooler.
- After reading the scripture, take your preschooler to the tub of water and let them drop a stone in the water. Watch the rippling of the water. Talk about how our lives can “ripple” - we share Christ with someone, then they share it with someone else, etc.
- Explain to your child that God wants all of us to know Jesus and that He was sent to save us, and he wants us to tell others who live all over the world. God wants all nations to hear about His love, too. When we tell others about Jesus, we are doing what God wants us to do.
- Remind your child that the most important and special thing we can ever pass on to someone else is the good news about Jesus. God wants us to share the good news with everyone.
- Conclude by re-reading this week’s memory verse with your preschooler and praying that God will use you to tell others about Jesus.

## Children

- Materials: Bathrobe or comfy sweater, a pillow, a favorite snack and something you like to read or make or play (ex. magazine, craft, video game).
- Ask the children if they like to give things up. If someone asked them to give away their favorite game or new toy would they say, “Yes! Here – I want to give it right now!!” Explain that none of us like to give things up. We all like things to go our way, to be easy, fun, simple. (*Put on bathrobe, slippers, get pillow and magazine or game. Sit down, relax, eat a few pretzels.*) Say that this is a comfortable way to live.
- Talk about what would happen if the doctor didn’t tell you that you needed a shot because he or she thought you wouldn’t want to hear that. What would happen if your teacher didn’t teach you math because it’s hard and a lot of people don’t like it?
- In Acts 20 Paul reminds us that as individuals and as a church we are called to tell people the truth about Jesus Christ, even when it is uncomfortable or requires us to sacrifice.
- Read Acts 20:24 and Philippians 1:21.
- Pray together asking God to encourage you in your gospel witness and thanking God for our church leaders who teach us the Truth and show us how to live Christ-honoring lives.

## Students

- Read Acts 20:17-21 and the commentary provided on page 1 of this guide.
  - Let’s take a minute to relate. Paul reminds the elders that he has gone through some rather difficult times. Even though they might not be the same as Paul’s, what are some difficult times you have faced?
  - What kind of effect do these difficult times have on your life? Do your actions or attitude change when you are going through difficult times? Do you treat people differently? Your parents differently? Do you approach God differently?
  - How did difficult things affect Paul’s life? Did his mission change? What do you think Paul meant in v. 20 when he said, “I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable”?
- Read Acts 20:22-27 and the commentary from page 1 of this guide.
  - Let’s take a minute and just focus on v. 24. Read it again. We have already talked about how our lives relate to Paul’s in that we go through trials and difficult times just like he did. Even though we are more than likely not facing imprisonment and afflictions like Paul, our lives are affected by the sin of this world.
    - What is Paul’s view of his own life? Do you think about your life this way? What do you think God’s perspective is?
    - Does Paul equate living in a godly manner with one’s current situation or is it a choice to live a godly lifestyle no matter what the situation?
  - Let’s also take a moment to look at Paul’s statement in v. 26, “I am innocent of the blood of all of you.” The commentary above gives great explanation of Paul’s declaration.
    - Can you make this statement to the people God has placed in your life?
- Read Acts 20:28-37 and the commentary from page 1 of this guide.
  - We have already looked at difficult times that we face in our lives. Sometimes these difficult times take place because we encounter sin or temptation. Take a moment and think about your own life. Paul says that “fierce wolves” will come and attack the church of God. Have you experienced that?
  - Take some time to thank God for the elders. Pray for them as they seek to guard their flock from the “fierce wolves.”

**Lives/Church**

This week, we begin our study of First Timothy. The major theme of the letter is that the gospel creates a certain kind of community—the church, the household of God. This new community is God’s family and he gives us specific instructions for how he wants it to be ordered. Spend some time this week praying that God would unite the faith family here at Brook Hills around the gospel. Pray specifically that we would see Paul-Timothy, father-son type disciple-making relationships multiplied throughout this faith family (1 Tim. 1:2). Pray that God would lead you personally into these kinds of relationships with others in this faith family.

**Local**

**Local Church:** Green Valley Baptist - Jeff James

**Focus:** Next Generation Ministry - the preschool, children and student ministries at The Church at Brook Hills.

**Monday:** Pray for small group leaders in Preschool, Children’s and Student Ministry areas to mobilize the students and families of Brook Hills onto the campuses of the Birmingham area.

**Tuesday:** Pray that moms and dads across our faith family would utilize the stable rhythm of the school year to set some good habits of family prayer time and worship.

**Wednesday:** Pray that the 70+% of children and students who are yet to embrace the gospel in our zip code to come into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

**Thursday:** Pray for believing teachers in all varieties of school contexts to have quick connections with students that develop into relationships of spiritual influence.

**Friday:** Pray for believing students to seek out friendships with new students. Also pray that those relationships would become spiritually significant.

**Saturday:** Pray for Young Life staff as they establish a ministry presence in schools all over our area to gather lost students together with believing students, and that those relationships would bridge new students and families to local churches.

**Global**

**Short Term Teams:** Seattle, East Asia and South East Asia

**Partner:** Jeffries serving in Sudan

**Monday:** The country of Sudan has been in upheaval for years and recently Southern Sudan seceded to form their own country. Pray for those who have experienced tragedy and hardship and for God to comfort those who are hurting.

**Tuesday:** Pray for Jeffries and his family as they minister to the people in their community. Pray for God to use Jeffries’ life to make His name known to the Sudanese people.

**Wednesday:** Pray for wisdom as Jeffries teaches and ministers to those in need of the gospel.

**Thursday:** Pray for many people to know Christ as a result of the work God is doing through Jeffries and his family.

**Friday:** Pray for new churches to be planted among those in Sudan who are being saved. Pray for God to guide them to a clear biblical understanding of His church.

**Saturday:** Pray for God to sustain Jeffries and give him strength as he works and shares the gospel in Sudan.

**Holy Holy Holy**

by Reginald Heber, John B. Dykes

Arr. by Steven Curtis Chapman

Holy holy holy Lord God almighty  
 Early in the morning our song shall rise to thee  
 Holy holy holy merciful and mighty  
 God in three persons, blessed trinity

Holy holy holy though the darkness hide thee  
 Though the eye of sinful man thy glory may not see  
 Only thou art holy there is none beside thee  
 Perfect in power and love and purity

You are holy holy holy  
 God of glory God of grace  
 You are holy holy holy  
 And You are worthy of our praise  
 You are holy holy holy  
 And we bow before You now  
 Singing holy holy holy

Holy holy holy Lord God almighty  
 All thy works shall praise thy name  
 In earth and sky and sea  
 Holy holy holy merciful and mighty  
 God in three persons blessed trinity

God in three persons blessed trinity

You are holy  
 You are merciful  
 Full of mercy  
 You are a mighty God  
 You are mighty  
 You are holy God  
 You are holy

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**Scripture Memory**

“But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.” Acts 20:24

