

PARENT
DEVOTIONS

THE
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Hope felt a calling to ministry during her college years. After college, she spent 2 years serving as a US-2 Missionary in Waterbury, CT, working with urban students and children. She then attended seminary and earned her Masters of Church and Community Ministries from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, TX, as well as her Masters of Social Work from the University of Texas in Arlington. Following her time in Texas, she moved to Nashville, TN, to serve at LifeWay Christian Resources as a Student Events Coordinator for FUGE Camps.

Hope then married her husband, Jamie Mackey, and they continued serving students and families together in North Alabama. Hope has also served families through individual and group therapy, church staff and other non-profit ministries. Hope is passionate about mobilizing, educating and sending Christ followers into the world to spread the message of Jesus. She enjoys really good coffee, anything pumpkin, hiking, Fixer Upper, and the beach. On most days, you will likely find her in car-line at school, the Huntsville Aquatic Center (both kids are year-round swimmers), or in front of the television at 6:30pm for Wheel of Fortune.

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Operation Departure Day — The Journey to Camp

Key Verse: Acts 1:8

Scripture: Acts 1:8; 7:54-60; 8:1-4

Congratulations! You have successfully sent your teenager off to camp. You checked off packing lists, washed laundry, saved money, made payments, and arrived safely at the drop-off location. I commend you for your commitment to help your teenager **create space** to grow in his or her relationship with God. **Creating space** is something we all struggle with, especially as adults. All of us seem to be in a perpetual state of movement where there is never enough time in the day or space in our schedules to stop, reflect, relax, fellowship, rest, and grow. When you decided to send your student to camp, you gave them the gift of **space**—carving out a week of time that is fully devoted to their spiritual growth and nothing more. You have **created space** for your teenager to fall more in love with Jesus, or possibly to be introduced to Jesus for the first time. Way to go! You have given a priceless gift to your child!

Now, let me challenge you to **create space** in your schedule to read God’s Word and pray for your teenager specifically every day while he or she is away. I am a fellow parent on the journey. Some days this parenting gig is one to celebrate, and other days I feel weary, wondering how I will ever make it through these days of raising my children to be like Christ. Let’s **create space** to journey together this week while our students are at camp.

The camp theme for this year is “The Mission.” Each day during our devotion time, we will look at different components of carrying out God’s mission through study of His Word, reflection, and prayer. I will also enlighten you about what your student is learning each day in Bible study. This will help you pray more specifically and be able to facilitate conversation and understanding once your student arrives home. The Mission at camp is now in full operation. We need to be prayerful and mindful that the Holy Spirit is at work in the life of our students.

TACTICS: Creating Space for Scripture

Tonight is opening night at camp. The FUGE staff will seek to lay the biblical foundation and context for the week. Your student will be led to the Book of Acts and the spread of the gospel in the earliest days of the Christian church. The Key Verse for Opening Night is Acts 1:8:

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

Students will be learning about the power of the Holy Spirit and how the Spirit will guide them on their mission as they share Christ in their Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria. Just as the First Century believers were called to go to their own city (Jerusalem), the surrounding areas (Judea and Samaria), and to the ends of the world, so are believers today. In order to get a deeper context, open your Bible and read Acts 7:54-60 and 8:1-4. This story of the stoning of Stephen and of the days that followed provides a context for how people began to be scattered throughout Judea and Samara and how the word began to be preached wherever they went.

STRATEGY: Creating Space for Reflection

Are you able to identify personally your Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria? Make notes below.

Spend time reflecting on where God has specifically placed you—not only geographically, but also in your workplace, your neighborhood, your extra-curricular activities or those of your children.

When was the last time you felt that you received the power of the Holy Spirit? What will it take for you to begin to recognize the voice of the Spirit again?

What in your life currently provides a witness to Jesus Christ? Do people see Jesus Christ in your speech? Your marriage? Your career? The way you manage and spend your finances? Reflect on your witness to those around you.

INTELLIGENCE: Creating Space for Prayer

I am a firm believer that different environments help us to focus and pray with more intentionality. Today, if you are able, go into your child's bedroom at home and spend some time praying for them. Being in their room and amidst their surroundings will remind you more about who they are and what they need most from God this week. Don't get distracted with dirty clothes or the mess they left behind—just pray.

- Pray that your student will truly be able to disconnect from their routine at home, their phone, their extra-curricular activities, stressors, and other things, so they can fully embrace what God has to teach them this week at camp.
- Pray for the groups they will be placed in at camp and that God would put them with the people and leaders they need most this week. If these groups are out of their comfort zone and they need to be stretched, pray that is exactly where they will be placed. Pray for God to lead them to the Bible study leader and different service groups and track times they most need to hear His voice.
- Pray for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit to fill the camp right now. God has brought hundreds of teenagers and adults from all over the country to merge together this week. Pray the Holy Spirit will have free reign to move and work and speak into the lives of everyone at camp this week.

Operation Day One — Accepting the Mission

Key Verse: Acts 9:20

Scripture: Acts 9:1-22; 13:1-4

Teaching Aim: Students will study Saul’s conversion and resulting life-change and be challenged to accept

The title of today’s focus sounds so intriguing. Do you remember a time when you accepted something new? Maybe it was when you accepted the proposal of your spouse? That day was probably full of hopes, dreams, and excitement for your future. Maybe it was a time when you accepted a new job? You longed for a challenge and a new beginning and you were ready to rise to the occasion. Maybe it was when you accepted a call to help a friend with a project? You arrived prepared and ready to dig in and get the job done. Many times in our lives, we have the opportunity to accept the mission with excitement, joy, and anticipation. We have the privilege to respond ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to a mission.

As adults, I think we are all aware that at other times the mission comes to us whether we invited it or not. What about the time your parents’ health grew poor and you found yourself accepting the mission of caring for them and attending one doctor’s appointment after another? Or when your child went so far off the path of good choices that you were forced to accept the mission to love them and walk with them through some of their darkest seasons. What about when the mission came to you, instead of you voluntarily accepting the mission?

Sometimes accepting a new mission is full of awe and joy and sometimes a new mission is scary and full of disbelief. At times, a new mission is wanted and other times it is unwanted. If we are honest with ourselves, this mission of following Jesus can stir up feelings of both worlds. As a Christian, we are overjoyed at all God has done for us through His Son Jesus Christ and we long to worship Him with our lives in carrying out His mission. Other times, His mission is difficult and even disruptive to our normal lives . . . making time for others in need when our schedules are tight, allotting our finances in different ways because God has called us to give, re-arranging our weekends to be of service to His church or others when we really just want to stay home and accomplish needed projects. All of these thoughts are part of being human. This is why it is so important to be led by the Holy Spirit. The power of Holy Spirit will help you find contentment, and even joy, when carrying out the mission of Christ. The power of the Holy Spirit will give you the wisdom and guidance you need in accepting the mission God has planned for your life.

TACTICS: Creating Space for Scripture

Today at camp your student will study Saul’s conversion and his acceptance of his new mission. They will contemplate whether they have experienced a changed life from a personal relationship with the Lord. The Key Verse today is Acts 9:20:

“Immediately he began proclaiming Jesus in the synagogues, ‘He is the Son of God.’”

This Scripture is referring to Saul, now Paul, who has experienced a radical transformation. This man who was willing to travel close to 200 miles to bring home Christians and put them in prison is now proclaiming this message of Christ because he has encountered the living God. Take some time to read Acts 9:1-22 and 13:1-4 to recall how Paul's life-change happened.

STRATEGY: Creating Space for Reflection

You likely have accepted 'missions' of many kinds during your life. **Can you recall a time when you accepted God's mission?**

What part of accepting God's mission brings you joy and anticipation? What part of accepting His mission brings you fear and insecurity?

What would have to change in your life for you to be fully on mission for Jesus Christ?

INTELLIGENCE: Creating Space for Prayer

Today as you pray, think about how many times you accept the voice of others in a given day. You accept texts, emails, phone calls, and conversations. Do you accept the voice of God when He speaks to you? Do you accept the promptings of the Holy Spirit? As you accept messages throughout the day, let this be a constant reminder for you to pray that you will accept the mission of God.

- Pray that you will be able to better understand and accept the mission God has for you. Ask Him to give you a willing and obedient heart to follow Him.
- Pray for your student today at camp. Today is the first full day and there is a great deal of excitement and nervousness. They are looking forward to the week ahead and they have also been placed in Bible study groups and tracks that may spark joy or fear, or both. Pray that they will accept where God has placed them and be listening to His voice to accept the mission He has for them.

Operation Day Two – Living the Mission

Key Verse: Acts 20:24

Scripture: Acts 11:19-26; 14:21-23; 16:11-15; 20:17-24

Teaching Aim: Students will learn from Paul’s missionary journeys and discover that living the mission includes sharing the gospel, discipling others, and encouraging one another in the faith.

Today begins one of the most challenging parts of the journey—living out the call God has placed on your life. I recently accepted a new job change. Although much prayer and contemplation went into making that decision, the acceptance was much easier than living it out. Once the job began, it meant major changes for my family. I was no longer at home to run forgotten items to the school, our dinner plans went from meals to cereal and take-out, and my mental energy was zapped by the end of the day—leaving little space to help with math and science projects. It was a huge adjustment when it came to actually LIVING out what I had accepted to accomplish. I sometimes wondered why the acceptance seemed so easy, when living with the decision seemed so difficult. With time, teamwork, and discipline, we adjusted as a family. I am happy to report that due to local grocery pick-up, and the mad cooking skills of my husband, our children no longer live on cereal alone. The change wasn’t easy on any of us, and some days I feel like we are still trying to figure it all out.

Living God’s mission sometimes feels similar to my job change experience. When you completely submit your life to Him, it will mean major adjustments to your routine. Sometimes those changes will be short-lived and other times it will feel like an uphill climb for months and years to come. You focus on the things that matter to God and not only yourself or your family. Life will not be the same when you start LIVING OUT what God has asked you to do.

Living the mission for Paul meant a total commitment to the teachings of Jesus. He had a laser focus. I know many people have a difficult time relating to Paul because he didn’t have to pay the light bill, or taxi students from one activity to the next. Life looked very differently for him than it does for us in the twenty-first century. However, focus on this: Paul experienced life-change—a complete 180 from living against the mission to living FOR the mission. What part of your living needs a complete 180-degree turn? Is it the way you spend your free time? Is it moving from no personal time with Jesus at all to a committed devotion time each day? Is it time to begin discipling a new believer for the first time in your life? If we all took a hard look at our lives, I am sure we could find an area or two that could use a complete turnaround toward the direction of LIVING for Jesus in a new and life-changing way.

TACTICS: Creating Space for Scripture

Today in Bible study at camp, your student will learn from Paul’s missionary journeys. They will look at different components of the journey, such as sharing the gospel, discipling others, and encouraging friends to grow in Christ. They will spend some time reflecting on how the decision to accept this mission will change the course of their lives and their stories. The Key Verse today is Acts 20:24:

“But I consider my life of no value to myself; my purpose is to finish my course and the ministry I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of God’s grace.”

Open God’s Word and read Acts 11:19-26. This passage about the church in Antioch is so rich. Let’s focus on the person of Barnabas. In verse 24, Scripture describes Barnabas as a man who was full of the Holy Spirit and faith. Out of this fullness, he was able to encourage others to remain true to the Lord and teach great numbers of people. If we are going to LIVE OUT the mission of God, we have to become FULL of the Holy Spirit and our faith in Jesus Christ. Perhaps we are so full of other things, there is little room left for the Holy Spirit within us? Scripture didn’t describe Paul and Barnabas as eloquent teachers or theologians. God’s Word highlights these followers of Christ because they were committed to living their mission.

STRATEGY: Creating Space for Reflection

When is the last time in your Christian journey that you have created space to spend time discipling a young believer? If you do not feel equipped for that task, what is preventing you from asking an older believer of Jesus to meet with you for growth and discipleship?

What can you do today to encourage another believer on their faith journey? Make a phone call. Send a text. Write a letter. Ask God to bring someone to your mind.

Think of someone you know who needs to hear the message of the gospel. How are you praying for that person and seeking to share the gospel with him or her?

INTELLIGENCE: Creating Space for Prayer

- Ask God to show you the places in your life where you **are** living the mission. Pray He will continue to strengthen those areas and show you how to use your life for His glory.
- Ask God to show you the places in your life where you **are not** living His mission. Pray He will reveal these areas to you. Ask Him to help you discover how to re-adjust and help you fill in those areas with the things that matter most to Him.
- Pray for your student at camp today. Pray he or she will have the confidence to share the gospel of Jesus Christ and grow in their comfort of the gospel being a natural part of their conversation and daily life.

Operation Day Three – Roadblocks to the Mission

Key Verses: Acts 13:51-52

Scripture: Acts 13:44–14:7; 15:36-41; 19:21–20:1

Teaching Aim: Students will study how Paul faced difficulties as he shared the gospel, yet never gave up on the mission.

Roadblocks, detour, congestion ahead, lane ends, road closed, bridge out, and dead end. We have probably seen these signs while driving our vehicles in a rushed state of getting from here to there. If you told me you rejoiced and threw up your hands in excitement every time you saw one of these signs, I would say you are likely not telling the truth. None of us like roadblocks, yet the older I get, and the more life experience I have behind me, I am learning that roadblocks and detours are a given on this journey. The sooner I learn how to find contentment with the roadblocks and teach my children how to better respond to the roadblocks of life, the better chance I have to stay on mission and in communion with my Savior, Jesus Christ.

As believers, I think roadblocks fall into two categories. First, there are roadblocks that are simply sheer, worldly distractions and sometimes plain sinful. We need to recognize them, name them, and push them to the side. Then, there are roadblocks that I initially see as a detour, but with the right perspective and prayer, I am able to understand that they are opportunities to shape me and refine me to be more like Christ.

A respected pastor and friend of mine once told me that he prayed with his child each morning on the way to school. He became convicted when his daughter was in kindergarten because each morning he prayed for her to have a good day and interact with good friends. He quickly realized that if all of her childhood days were good and free from hardships that she would never have an understanding of how to respond to difficult days of life. He began to pray that no matter what she encountered each day, and how she was treated by others, that she would respond in a way that honored God and made her more like Him. I was reminded of this memory as I reflected on the topic of roadblocks. As parents, wouldn't we rather have our children face roadblocks while they are under our wings and we are able to help them navigate God's way to respond to life's challenges?

Paul definitely faced some roadblocks in his ministry. Opposition to Paul's message of the good news of Jesus twice caused dissension within the people (Acts 13–14). Paul's ministry team fractured apart when Barnabas decided to leave (Acts 15). Townspeople rioted against the change in the culture resulting from Paul's message (Acts 19). Through each of these, Paul continued his mission.

TACTICS: Creating Space for Scripture

Today at camp, your students will learn how Paul faced difficulties and distractions, yet he persevered on the mission God had set before him. They will examine how to remain steady in sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ, even when roadblocks and hardships occur. The Key Verses today are Acts 13:51-52:

“But Paul and Barnabas shook the dust off their feet against them and went to Iconium. And the disciples were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit.”

Take some time to read the Scripture passages speaking to how Paul conquered these roadblocks and stayed focused on his journey. Read Acts 13:44–14:7. Paul and Barnabas faced jealousy and abuse (13:45), persecution (13:50), slander (14:2), and a threat to be stoned (14:5). Shortly after this, they fled to Lystra and Derbe and Scripture tells us in 14:7, ‘They continued preaching the gospel.’ No roadblock would distract them from their mission.

STRATEGY: Creating Space for Reflection

What circumstances or challenges cause the most roadblocks in your spiritual journey? How do you best discern whether you need to walk around this roadblock, or experience what God might want to teach you in the midst of it?

When you are intentionally sharing the gospel with those who do not know Christ, what major roadblocks trip you up?

INTELLIGENCE: Creating Space for Prayer

- Ask God to prepare you for the roadblocks, disappointments, and detours of life. Petition your Savior for wisdom to discern when to walk around them and when you need to allow Him to teach you in the midst of them.
- Ask God to help your student learn how to navigate their challenges. They will experience detours and frustrations to their spiritual growth just as we do. Ask God to give you the wisdom to help your student learn to navigate these rough waters as a teenager. If they are experiencing a current roadblock to their Christian growth, pray specifically for God to work on their heart today and to help them better understand how to remain steadfast in the faith.

Operation Day Four – Continuing the Mission

Key Verse: Philippians 1:27

Scripture: Ephesians 6:10-18; Philippians 1:6-11,27-30; Colossians 2:6-7; 4:2-6

Teaching Aim: Students will learn to be steadfast in their faith and to take this faith home with them to live on mission as part of the body of Christ.

Today is the last full day of camp. Your student is coming home tomorrow! This is your chance to help them know how to continue the mission that God has placed them on this week. You have personally sifted through accepting the mission, living the mission, finding re-direction in the roadblocks to the mission, and now comes the hard part—continuing the mission. As the adult, you know how difficult it can be to remain steadfast in your faith and continue this great work of sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ. As you go about your day today, examine how you will help your student carve out ways to remain faithful to continue in the mission.

Continuing things does not seem to be our problem as Christians because we are very good at continuing the things that we choose to continue. Our country has been swept up into a swirl of chaos with athletics, traveling teams, and club sports. It doesn't matter whether you hit a ball, catch a ball, swim, dance, twirl, tumble, or cheer, there is a club for you. When I think about continuing the mission, I think of these athletic teams. The reality is that you are probably involved in or affected by a team of this kind. You might not like it, you may dread the travel, the equipment, and even the monthly dues, but you likely still support your student along the way. Did you ever dream when you signed them up at age 4, that it would come to this while they were a teenager? You have continued the mission of developing them in their area of discipline. I throw myself right in the middle of it with my two year-round swimmers. These clubs and events are not innately evil or even sinful; I am just trying to make a comparison.

What if we were as relentless about the spiritual journey of our children as we are about their extra-curricular activities? What if we were waking them five mornings a week to go their prayer groups or discipleship groups instead of club sports? Our priorities and our continuation of God's mission gets all mixed up when we re-enter the lives we have created for our families and ourselves. How will you help your child continue this journey of spiritual growth?

Continuing is an art we have mastered—yet continuing in our faith and commitment to Jesus Christ seems to need some growth.

You **created space** for your child to grow in Christ this week. I commend you for making this a priority. Now, how will you **create space** in your family schedule to help them continue the mission that God has set for them, or you, or your entire family. What needs to go? What needs to stay? What needs to change? The mission must continue.

We are all aware that the followers of Jesus of Christ have been carrying His mission for nearly two thousand years. Our work is far from over, as nearly two billion people have never heard the story of Jesus. God created the church to share the gospel and grow His kingdom. How will you help your student carry and continue this mission?

TACTICS: Creating Space for Scripture

On this last day of Bible study, your student will study how to remain focused on their mission, to persevere, and to live out their faith daily. The Key Verse for today is Philippians 1:27:

“Just one thing: As citizens of heaven, live your life worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or am absent, I will hear about you that you are standing firm in one spirit, in one accord, contending together for the faith of the gospel.”

Read Colossians 2:6-7 and 4:2-6. Paul pulls from his relationship with God and missional experiences to write this divinely inspired letter to the Colossians. Chapter 2 tells that one characteristic of continuing the mission is to live life with a thankful heart. It actually says, ‘overflowing with gratitude.’ One strategy for continuing your faith journey is to remain constantly thankful for what Jesus Christ has done for you. In chapter 4, again Scripture reminds us to be prayerful, watchful, and thankful. Verses 5-6 say, ‘Act wisely toward outsiders, making the most of the time. Let your speech always be gracious.’ These may seem like very simple steps for continuing such a great mission, yet what a great place for us to start. Grateful. Prayerful. Mindful of the people we meet and the words we speak.

STRATEGY: Creating Space for Reflection

When you look at your personal life, and the life of your family, how disciplined are you at continuing what you start? If you find that continuing comes easy to you, how can you transfer that to your Christian journey and the mission of sharing the gospel?

This mission is hard and is full of commands and demands. **What does the gospel demand of you as you faithfully fulfill this mission?**

INTELLIGENCE: Creating Space for Prayer

- Pray the Holy Spirit will reveal to you where you struggle in continuing the things you begin, especially spiritual areas of growth. Pray for conviction and guidance as you seek to prioritize what you need to continue in order to stay aligned with God’s mission.
- Pray for your student to know what in his or her life must stay and what must go for them to continue this mission of following Jesus. After Christmas or birthdays, we all have a plethora of gifts that we have to find a place for and many times this means cleaning out things that need to go and making space. Ask the Lord to help your child clean out the areas of his or her life that detain them from continuing their faith journey with Jesus. Ask Him to replace those areas with His fruitful growth.

Operation Day Five – Ready or Not, Here I Come!

Parents, your teenagers are coming home. Ready or not, they are coming. I feel certain you are ready. You have prayed for them, missed them, and wondered what they have been experiencing this week at camp. You have thought about what God might have been teaching them or how they have grown. You have studied the Scriptures yourself and feel more equipped to talk with them and listen to them. I have a few things for you to think about as you prepare for their arrival.

1. **Receive them well.** What can you do to make your teenager feel special when they arrive home from camp? Is it making their favorite meal or snack? Taking them to their favorite restaurant? A hand-written note waiting in their room to tell them how special they are? You know your child. Do something to make them feel valued and cherished.
2. **Clear your calendar.** Depending on when they arrive home, this might mean that day or the following day. If you **create space** to listen, they will talk. Let them know you planned a day or a mealtime just to hear about what they experienced at camp. Enjoy the funny, the pointless, the cafeteria food report, and the spiritual things. Listening to all of this creates meaningful bonds between you as parent and child.
3. **Pray with them.** You may be in the spiritual habit of sharing prayer needs back and forth with your student, or you may not. Let this be a fresh start. Tell them you prayed for them this week and that you would like to continue to pray for them each day. Ask them what specific things they would like you to pray for them about. If they can't think of anything, don't be discouraged; just tell them you will check in with them in a couple of days and see if they have thought of anything specific.
4. **Say thank you.** Plan a time to sit down with your student and write a few thank-you notes together. Send these notes to the leaders, youth minister, church volunteers, or whoever took time to invest in your child spiritually this week at camp. This will mean more than you know to the leaders, while modeling for your child how much you value the time that others gave to invest in them spiritually.
5. **Changes.** Let your student know that you are ready to help them make any changes necessary to assist them in staying connected to Jesus Christ and His mission. Tell them what you learned in your devotion time this week and some changes you have committed to make as well. Most likely they will be on a mountaintop spiritually. This is a very fertile time to examine the areas that they know need some adjustments at home. The most important part of this step is not necessarily setting lofty goals, but rather an acknowledgement that you will stand with them and help them in any way possible to stay connected to growing in their faith and spreading the message of love of Christ. Remind them you are in their corner and on their team.

TACTICS: Creating Space for Scripture

Read Hebrews 12:1-2. This passage challenges us and reminds us of five truths. One, we are not alone in this mission. There is a great cloud of witnesses surrounding us. Two, we need to throw off the sin that trips us up or detours us from the path. Three, we need to realize the mission is

for the long haul. We need endurance and to remain steady through it. Four, our focus is on Jesus. After Paul's conversion, he reset his sights on the ones he previously persecuted. Five, Jesus has already accomplished the mission.

STRATEGY: Creating Space for Reflection

What is one way you have allowed God to change your heart or mind personally this week with regard to your role in this great mission? What can you do to ensure that this new truth takes root in your life?

What is one way that God has changed you with regard to parenting and encouraging your student in their faith journey?

INTELLIGENCE: Creating Space for Prayer

- Spend time thanking God for the child/children He has given you. Whether they seem like it on a daily basis, they are a gift from God to you. Thank God for their unique personalities, talents, and traits. Ask God to remind you of their preciousness, especially on days when they do not act precious.
- Spend some time praying that what they learned this week at camp will take root like a strong, healthy tree. Pray that what they have learned will be well watered and experience exponential growth.
- Thank God for the people who have given their time this week at camp, and will continue to give their time to help your child grow to be more like Jesus. Pray for them and for their renewed energy as they return home.