

Daily, guided journaling to help your tween or teen develop discernment and sound Bible Study practices.



Erin Elizabeth Cox

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Questions + Comments: erin@lifeabundantlyblog.com Dear Parents,

I'm thankful and excited that you have found this resource from Life, Abundantly. Since the vast majority of visitors to my blog are looking for preschool resources, many don't realize that I also have older children as well. I have two daughters who are in their teen and tween years (13 and 15 at the writing of this guide).

Like many homeschooling mothers, my primary goal for all of my children is that they would grow to love our Lord, Jesus Christ, and rely on him as their Savior. I deeply hope and pray that they would have a relationship with him that becomes a basis for all that they do in life. One important aspect of our relationship with God is daily time in His Word and the development of a reliance on the Holy Spirit as our counselor and comforter (John 14:26).

In researching Bible study tools and devotionals for my girls, I ran into the issue of studies that spend more time sharing the author's interpretation and application of God's Word than guiding the reader into a deeper understanding of how to work through scripture systematically for themselves. Furthermore, most don't encourage a reliance on our teacher, the Holy Spirit, in understanding God's word (John 16:12-14).

It's my desire that my children stand firmly on God's Word and develop the skill-set to read and understand it, especially in relationship to the context in which it was written. Furthermore, I want them to understand how to seek God's work from a perspective of what His Word says about HIS character and nature, before they begin to apply it to their own lives.

We desperately need God's Word and Spirit to walk us toward righteousness. While we are saved through faith alone in the complete removal of our sin through the sinless life, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we are also called to be holy as God is holy (1 Peter 1:16). However, in order to do

this, we must first understand that God's Word is written about GOD- not about us. His word teaches us who HE is and thusly who we are called to be, through the power and strength of Christ. Only once we understand his purpose and character through scripture can we accurately apply it to our own lives. Unfortunately, many modern Bible studies focus more on how God's word can serve us or what it says about our own lives, all the while skipping over the fundamental point of WHO Holy Scripture is written about- God alone.

The beauty in this type of study is that it is inherently so simple. We don't need volumes and volumes of books or videos to learn how to study God's Word or to teach our children to do the same. We simply need the Bible and a few guided steps, that repeated over and again, will help our children develop habits that will reap a harvest for their lifetime.

Included in this study is a daily reading plan of the book of James. James is a wonderful "launching pad" for any student of God's Word. It speaks profoundly of God's amazing, inherent nature of love and thusly who we are called to be in light of that. Your teen/tween will be guided in reading a small section of scripture each day, with a convenient checklist. Before they begin, they will be walked through a process of seeking out who wrote this book, when it was written, who it was written to, and why it was written.

Once they have an understanding of context of this portion of scripture, they will begin daily readings and journaling. A single journaling page will guide them through several steps in understanding God's word.

- **» Pray**<sup>-</sup> They will first be encouraged to read and ask for discernment and the help of the Holy Spirit in understanding God's Word.
- **» Print** Your student can choose one small portion of scripture from that day's reading, to record. We remember better what we write.
- » Reveal- They will be prompted to ponder what this section of scripture says about God. They will be challenged to write how this scripture has expanded or clarified their understanding of God's character.

- **»** Repent- Our students will then be prompted to confess, ask for forgiveness, and turn from any sin in their own lives that has been revealed through their reading.
- » Reflect- They will be prompted here to record several words that they felt held significance in these verses as well as synonyms for those words to help them better understand the scripture itself.
- » Rephrase- This is a process of summarizing or rephrasing the scripture to aid in remembrance and understanding.
- » Record- In this section (FOUND SEPARATELY AT THE END OF THE WORKBOOK), they have a space to list their prayers for their own lives, their family and friends, with a space to add dates if they would like to keep track of answered prayers

In the end, I hope this process will leave our children with a better understanding of how to properly approach scripture, relying on the Holy Spirit to equip and convict when needed, all the while focusing on drawing nearer to our precious, caring, and dear Savior.

For your own reading, I'm a passionate advocate of the Bible study approach outlined by Jen Wilkin in <u>Women of the Word</u>. You'll find a "cheat sheet" based on her process from this book in my <u>Member Resource Library</u>. Feel free to print that out and use it for yourself and make a copy for your child. I am also an enthusiastic user of Jen's Bible studies as well.

I pray an abundance of fruit in your own life and in the lives of the young men and women you are guiding, educating, loving, and encouraging in your home and ministry.

In Christ, Frin

#### Preparing to Read the Word

God's Word can be daunting... or boring, depending upon your experience. You may have enjoyed reading scripture in the past, you may have only had it read to you, or this may be a totally new thing all together. It may be that in the past it seemed like the Bible had nothing to offer you, or you just didn't "get it." You may be scared to get it wrong. You may have really not even cared about it before or gave it a second thought. Maybe it's something that seemed like your Mom or Dad was "all about it," but you just.... aren't. Or maybe no one in your family has ever done much with it at all.

It doesn't matter where you started or what you've experienced in the past- today is a new day! No matter what your experiences have been, let me reassure you of this: God's Word is FOR YOU. It's real for YOUR LIFE. It doesn't have to be boring, hard, scary, or irrelevant.



You see, when Christ died on the cross, he died for you. And you may have heard that before... a bunch. But I want you to understand this: He died JUST FOR YOU.

If you were the only human on the earth who had ever told a lie, said an ugly word, got really angry, acted super selfishly, talked back to your parents, hid something you should have confessed, took something that wasn't yours, or hit your brother or sister... if you were THE ONLY ONE WHO EVER did a bad thing, then He still would have chosen to leave the comforts of Heaven, be born in a muddy, stinky, barn and grow up working in the hot sun.

He still would have chosen to have bumps and bruises, get picked on, and be hated. He still would have left his family and his home and walked around doing crazy miracles and recruiting people that would deny and betray him. He still would have accepted the torture of the cross.

He still would have died-just to save you. YOU. Only you. His life and death and resurrection saves us ALL, but even if it had only been for just YOU, he would have done it anyway.

How is that for relevant?

God. Actual God. Real God. Legit- THE ONE TRUE God, leaving all the joy and comforts of heaven to be tortured and die. Just for your lies, your theft, your laziness, your selfishness, your anger, and your impatience. The big ones and the little ones and every bit of it in between. (We all have that stuff, by the way. You aren't meaner, angrier, more selfish or more messed up than anyone else. We are all so short of deserving heaven and NO ONE'S sin is unique.)

That amazing God who loved you enough to do that AMAZING thing is still alive, eternally in heaven. And when he left the earth (after his resurrection), he sent a HELPER just for you. That helper is the Holy Spirit.

Honestly, the Holy Spirit can weird some people out. I mean... a Spirit. Is it a ghost? But honestly, the Spirit of God is the love and goodness of God available to us right now, every moment, as our helper. He's our friend, our encourager, our counselor. He is available to us at any time of day, in any situation—we ONLY HAVE TO ASK. And his FAVORITE thing is guiding us in making wise choices by helping us to study, remember, and understand God's Word, He's like your own personal teacher.

Once we have given our life to Christ, confessing that he is the only way to eternal life and that he died for our sins that are otherwise unforgiveable to our perfect God, then we have the gift of our Holy Friend to help us understand God's Word.

When God's Word confuses us, it often means that we have not asked the Holy Spirit to help us understand. The Holy Spirit is that small, persistent voice in our hearts that ALWAYS tells us what is True, Good, and Beautiful. (Tip: That voice in your head that might say bad things, give you bad ideas, or says ugly things about you or someone else... THAT ain't the Holy Spirit. That my friend, is the enemy of our soul. That can sound super creepy too, but the truth is, he's easy to beat! Actually, through Christ, he's already beaten. And when you study God's Word, hide it in your heart, and ask the Holy Spirit to help you, that guy will SCRAM anytime you tell him to. Through the power of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, we can replace all his ugliness with God's goodness.)

So what do you do now? Well, if you haven't decided that Jesus is your Savior, make sure to talk to your parents or pastor about that. If you have decided just recently that you do need Him as your Savior, tell your parents or pastor that, too! They will rejoice and celebrate with you!

If you have already done all of that, just pray. Try this:

"Dear Father, I'm excited, scared, maybe even feeling a little bored at the idea of reading the Bible. In the past, none of it made sense to me or seemed like it didn't matter to me. I need your help! Please send your Spirit, as my friend, helper, and teacher to help me understand your word as I read. I pray that I would know more about YOU as I read your word. I pray knowing more about who YOU are would help me to become more and more like my Savior. I pray to be changed by your word, day by day. Thank you for your help! In the name of Jesus I pray, amen."

That's it! Easy peasy! And as you read God's Word each day, remember to say a small version of that prayer each day, asking for God's help.



It's also important that as you enter into God's word, if you're feeling guilty about something you've done or said that you know doesn't please God, that you would confess that sin to God and then repent to the person you hurt. That can feel like a really HARD thing to do, but I promise your parents would be insanely proud of you. It goes something like this (but be sure to change it to match your own mistake):

"Dear Father, I chose to do the wrong thing, and I know it doesn't please you. Yesterday, I told a lie to my parents. Please forgive me and help me to have the courage to confess my sin to them. Thank you that I am already forgiven in Christ! In Jesus' name, amen."

Then go to the person you hurt or betrayed (when you can) and confess what you've done. That's a very hard thing to do sometimes, but God will be so proud of you! Then you can enter into studying God's word with a happy, joyful heart!



#### BEFORE YOU BEGIN

It's important to remember when we are reading the Bible that it's a book about God. The Bible tells us God's Story. Every story- short or long- is ultimately about showing us how good, powerful, kind, merciful, gracious, just, loving, and faithful God is. The Bible shows us that we can trust God to always be... well, God.

People sometimes get confused and treat God's Word like a self-improvement book or a "Magic 8 Ball." It's important to remember that as we read God's

Word, we are learning about HIM. This helps us to know the things God loves so that we can love what he loves. Loving what God loves brings joy and blessing into our lives.

Because we are made in His Image, we can also learn more about our own selves, receive encouragement and peace, as well as have help in making hard choices by reading His Word. But always remember, the Bible is a book that tells us about God so we can love him and follow him better.

It's also meant to be read in an orderly way--- not by opening to a random page and just reading it. God is a God of order and His Word has order as well. When we understand and honor that, we can have an even better relationship with Him and His Word.

Since the Bible was written many years ago, we can sometimes be confused about what certain things mean or why they were written. When we understand that it was written 2000+ years ago to people in cultures soooooo different than ours, we can better understand some of the confusing parts. Before you begin your daily study, be sure to have your parents or a pastor help you understand the "context" of the book first. (Context means who wrote it, when they wrote it, why they wrote it, and who they wrote it to.)

It's also important to know WHO wrote each book of the Bible and who it was written to. Understanding the author (aside from God) and the context of each book is very important. Many Bibles will tell you this information up front (at the beginning of each book), but some do not. Ask your parents or pastor for help in understanding who wrote each book that you're studying, who they wrote it to, and any information you might need to know in order to really understand why that book was written. On page 12, you will find a place to record everything you learned about the context of the book you're studying.

After that, begin reading! Read 4-5 verses each day (following the suggested

schedule for he book of James or as your parent/pastor instructs you), and fill out the one-page worksheet as you go. Save these! One day you'll be amazed at all you've learned, how much you've grown, and the many prayers God has answered on your behalf.

I pray God's abounding blessings upon your time in His Word and throughout your entire life!

In Christ, Erin



# Book of James Schedule

1:1-3	3:9-12
1:4-8	3:13-16
1:9-11	3:17-18
1:12-15	4:1-3
1:16-18	4:4-5
1:19-21	4:6-8
1:22-25	4:9-10
1:26-27	4:11-12
2:1-4	4:13-14
2:5-7	4:15-17
2:8-11	5:1-3
2:12-13	5:4-6
2:14-17	5:7-8
2:18-20	5:9-10
2:21-23	5:11-12
2:24-26	5:13-14
3:1-3	5:15-16
3:4-5	5:17-18
3:6-8	5:19-20

#### Context Information

Who wrote the book of James?
When was it written?
Who was it written to?
What was the author's intention?
What else did you learn that you believe is important to remember?

In case you need help with context: <a href="https://www.gotquestions.org/Book-of-James.html">https://www.gotquestions.org/Book-of-James.html</a>

If you'd like to watch a video overview of the Book of James before you dive in (and this is SUPER helpful to do), here's a good one!

https://youtu.be/qn-hLHWwRYY

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