



Dear Congregational Leaders,

Thank you for ordering our *Living the Word: Sharing God's Story @ Home (Year 4)* devotional resource (bulletin inserts). Our prayer is that this material becomes an important tool for your congregation in encouraging a partnership between church and home. As the creator of the Four Key Faith Practices (the basis for our insert format), David Anderson, likes to say, "The two most important factors in passing on faith are: #1, what Dad says and does, and #2, what Mom says and does." These materials offer parents and any other adult within the household* words and practices that echo what is spoken and what happens "at church." Our target is that the language and practice of faith formation does not remain a once-a-week endeavor but instead moves toward being a daily journey.

This resource was designed to be printed double-sided on a half sheet of paper as a bulletin insert. **It is recommended that your congregation print them in a non-white color, as that will help the insert "pop out" more when it is brought home.** Alternatively, each week's resource is a single PDF file, which can be sent electronically to households.** Or you can do both!

The front side includes some general devotional resources for the week: a Scripture Verse, Mealtime Prayer, Daily Bible Readings, and a Service Challenge. The back side is organized as a basic "liturgy" or pattern for a daily household devotional time, beginning with a Gathering Ritual and Prayer of the Week, moving into a time of Caring Conversation with several options, a place for the Daily Bible Reading from the front side, a Pray Together suggestion, and a Closing Ritual with a Blessing to Share.

It is important to build in a flexible, general way of inviting faith language and faith practice in all the different households of the people in your congregation. A suggestion for congregational leaders—pastors, council members, youth workers, small group leaders, and others—is this: **anytime you have the opportunity, model how this material might be used both in congregational settings and in the home.** Places and moments that have been helpful in doing that have included:

- Children's sermons: *"Now when you go home later today, you and your family can try this..."*
- Council meetings: *"This past Sunday's text invited us to...and so I thought maybe we could try this here so that you could try this at home..."*
- Anytime you are asked, "Would you lead us in devotion?": *"As you know, we are seeking to make connections between what happens here at the church and how that affects daily faith practice in our households. Here is one way we can do that here today, so that you can try this at home."*
- Youth trips: *"This week's suggestion for Service on our Sharing God's Story @ Home sheet is...So what would that look like for us here this week as we travel to...?"*
- And any other time it fits!

Another important point is that each household is different, and—even within a household—each person may be in a different place spiritually or developmentally. This means that the way households talk about the “Caring Conversation” topics with a high school student is not the way they would talk about them with an elementary school student, or a retired adult. Even individuals living alone can participate in “Caring Conversations” with a friend or group in person, over the phone, or online. The version of the Bible may be different, and even the portions of the insert used can be different. Depending on the household members’ schedules, a devotion could be in the evening, in the morning, or at any other time of day. It can even change with the schedules and the seasons! Therefore, each household needs to determine what works for them, and be flexible once they make a plan.

Often, people will miss two or three days in a row, sometimes for specific reasons, and other times, because they are simply overwhelmed by the changes and chances of the day. In establishing any habit, it is important to strive for consistency, but it is equally important for everyone to give themselves and each other grace. After all, that is what God does for us! **Your gentle encouragement and modeling as a faith formation leader goes a long, LONG way in helping and not hindering that daily practice.** Even admitting your failures and vulnerabilities in using this material can be encouraging to those for whom this is a new concept.

In preparing the people of Israel for their entry into the Promised Land, Moses instructs them:

Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates (Deuteronomy 6:6-9, NRSV).

May this resource serve as a way of binding God’s Living Word on the hands, the foreheads, the doorposts, and gates of your congregation’s households.

In Christ,

Gregory Rawn
Publisher

** A brief note on language. We use the word “household” instead of “family” in this resource to be welcoming of both individuals and groups, families of all sizes and configurations, as well as communities of people of whatever ages that live or gather together. Please make a point to encourage all congregation members to participate, no matter what their circumstances are.*

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