

## WEEK ONE

Supplies:

- Bible
- Sacred Candle & Matches/Lighter

### WELCOMING GOD:

Gather together, and welcome God into this time and space through the lighting of a candle. Take this moment to pause briefly and sit quietly in this light for a few moments allowing time for everyone to relax their body, mind, and spirit for this time. In these moments, the invitation is to become aware of God's presence with and amongst you as a family.

### SHARING WITH GOD AND ONE ANOTHER:

Say: "If anything is on our minds that makes it difficult for us to focus, let's share it now and then let it go."

- Whoever leads this portion might share what is on his or her mind to model this. Give time for each person to respond. When everyone has responded that would like to, invite everyone to place their hands out and lift them up as we give these distractions to God.

OR you can invite the family to pray together as one person leads, saying the following:

"Dear Loving God, The One who knows our hearts, celebrates our victories, grieves with us during our losses, and gives us the strength to overcome our challenges. Please help us to let go of the distractions we name now, so that we can openly share with our family and may encounter you in a special way today. Our distractions are... (let there be silence here, so everyone has an opportunity to name aloud what is distracting them).

In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen."

### ENCOUNTERING GOD:

Read aloud: Matthew 9:10-13

- Take turns reading the Scripture or have a different family member read the Scripture each week.

Matthew 9:10-13

“And as he sat at dinner in the house, many tax-collectors and sinners came and were sitting with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, ‘Why does your teacher eat with tax-collectors and sinners?’ But when he heard this, he said, ‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means, “I desire mercy, not sacrifice.” For I have come to call not the righteous but sinners.’”

## ENCOUNTERING EACH OTHER:

Say: In sports, like t-ball or kids' soccer, we have a mercy rule. The mercy rule states that if one team is winning so much that the other team won't be able to catch up, then the game ends. This rule is meant to spare the team that is losing from extra shame.

### Discussion Questions:

- How does it feel, or how do you think it feels, to be on the losing team in a game?
- How should you treat other players if you are on the winning team? How would you want the winning team to treat you?
- What would the game be like if there was no mercy rule and the winning team just kept scoring?

Say: When Jesus sits with tax-collectors and sinners, He follows the mercy rule in life. Tax-collectors and sinners were like the opposing team for the Pharisees and religious leaders- and they had fallen behind because of their sin and greed. Pharisees did not think Jesus needed to eat with those who had fallen behind. But, Jesus said that's exactly who He came to eat with—people in need. Jesus knows the tax-collectors and sinners need the mercy rule in life. They need the love, compassion and kindness that Jesus offers.

### Discussion Questions:

- Who are the people who “fall behind” in the game of life today?
- Who could use the mercy rule?
- How can we show mercy to others in our daily life?

## ENCOUNTERING GOD TOGETHER:

Say: “May we pray together as a family...

Let us share our prayers for the world: for our country and leaders, for other countries and their leaders...

Let us share our prayers for the church, ministers, and spiritual leaders...

Let us share our prayers for our teachers, first responders, friends, and others in the community...

Let us share our prayers for our family and our own specific needs...”

If you would like to record the people for whom you pray, use the next few lines to do so:

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## ENCOUNTERING TRANSFORMATION TOGETHER:

Pray aloud together:

God, we welcomed you here and read Your Word,  
we prayed and we spent time with you,  
we rested in your love for us,  
and we did this all together.

Now, we promise to love one another and others as you love us.  
In the name of Christ. Amen.

## BLESSING ONE ANOTHER FOR OUR ENCOUNTERS WITH THE WORLD:

Invite family members to bless one another using any of the examples below or their own blessings.

Examples:

- “I love you. God loves you. I pray God blesses you.”
- “God loves you exactly like you are—and so do I.”
- “I love the gifts God has given you and how you bless the world with them.”