



## The Success Mess: Family Success OPENING PRAYER

Invite a member of the group to lead prayer.

### **Read 1 Timothy 5:8.**

“And whoever does not provide for relatives, and especially for family members, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.”

## WEEK TWO: FAMILY SUCCESS

1 Timothy 5:1-16 deals primarily with the treatment of widows in the body of believers. There was a significant number of widows in the ancient world because men often married much younger women and these men died before their wives. Secondly, the high mortality rate of men from military service left many women widowed. Due to their patriarchal laws, women could not directly inherit wealth. Women needed a male guardian to care for them. Unfortunately, this sometimes led to abuse because the funds were not always used to provide proper care for the widows. Instead, the male guardians used the funds to further enrich themselves. In the both the Old and New Testaments, the religious community secured funds as a means of providing for the welfare of the widows. Our text reminds the community, that the relatives of the widows, male heads of household, have the primary responsibility to make provision for the widows. The funds that the believers collect for the needy widows should only go to those who do not have any relatives or any relatives capable of providing care for them. The text goes a step further in 1 Timothy 5:8 and makes it clear that men have a responsibility to provide for their immediate households and other relatives. The letter to the community reminds them that charity begins at home. The practice of our faith should be evident in religious, familial, and social interactions.

So, what does this mean for us today? Today, both men and women can work and earn a living. In many cases, both husbands and wives are both contributing financially to the household. Today, there are programs for the needy. So, this takes us completely off the hook, right? No, we still have a responsibility to provide for our relatives and immediate family members. First, let's deal with the elephant in the room. Almost all families have people who take advantage of the kindness of others. They prey on those whom they can manipulate. So, what are we to do and still remain true to Scripture? Provision is not limited to money. If they are hungry, we can buy them food; provide words of wisdom; point them in the direction of a job opportunity; pray for them; or point them toward a program or resource that could help them get back on their feet mentally, financially, and spiritually. There are also family members and members of our community who are not looking to take advantage of anyone. Some of these individuals need short-term assistance until they get back on their feet. Others no longer have the capacity or never had the capacity to care for themselves.

What about the myth that a man's primary responsibility to his household is to provide financially? The implication is that it is acceptable for men to be deficient in all of the other areas - as long as he brings home the bacon. A man's primary responsibility to his household is to love God, to love his wife

the way Jesus Christ loves the Church, and to love his children, and along with his wife raise them to love God. Therefore, everything that we do as men and women should flow from love. In this way, provision is not an obligation, it is an act of sacrificial love. Giving time, wisdom, instruction, correction, encouragement, and forgiveness are all ways of making provision. All these things lead to family success, so let's work just as hard, or even harder on these things, as we do at achieving financial success.

## GROUP REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Share where you've seen God at work in your life this week.

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How does God provide? What does God provide?

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How does an awareness of God's presence and provision change us? Does it create humility? Gratitude? What else?

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What gets in the way of our generous and joyful provision for others? Especially when it comes to our families?

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Who are our families?

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# PRAISE AND PRAYER REQUESTS

Please go around the group and have each person share a praise for this week and a prayer request/concern.

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## CLOSING PRAYER

Have a volunteer lead closing prayer: asking for prayer concerns and lifting up the needs of the group.

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## WEEK TWO

Supplies:

- Bible
- Sacred Candle & Matches/Lighter
- Printed Puzzle (provided on last page)

### 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:

Say: "This week in church, we talked about provision. Try to remember what we heard last Sunday as we read today's Bible verses..."

- Take turns reading the Scripture or have a different family member read the Scripture each week.
- Read 1 Timothy 5:8.
  - "And whoever does not provide for relatives, and especially for family members, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever."

## ENCOUNTERING EACH OTHER:

Say: "One way we 'provide' for each other as a family is showing and being present with one another. This means more than being physically present; it also means being ourselves - all of who we are - with each other."

Activity: Have one family member draw a picture on the puzzle. Just like a puzzle you buy at the store, it should be one big picture. When that is finished, have another family member cut out all the pieces and distribute them to each family member. Then, work together as a family to put the puzzle together.

### Discussion Questions

- What happens when we put the puzzle together?
- How is working together to successfully complete this puzzle similar to working together in our daily lives?
- What would happen if someone in our family chose not to share in putting the puzzle back together - but kept their pieces?
- What happens if a piece of our puzzle is lost?
- What is something about you that might surprise your family? (A hidden talent, favorite book?)
- How can we practice being ourselves - and letting other people in the family be themselves - over the next week?

Finish this activity with a quick prayer, in which you tell God something about each family member present that you are thankful for.

\*For an alternative, or additional, activity this week, download the #WCBacktoSchool Prayer & Planning Guide to complete as a family before school starts!

## 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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\*You can also record these requests in a family prayer journal if you are using one.

# 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."

# DAILY REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Please answer these during your personal devotional time at the end of the day or do it as a couple or family.

Where have you seen God today? For the children, we say, "what made you happy today?"

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What broke your heart or made you sad today?

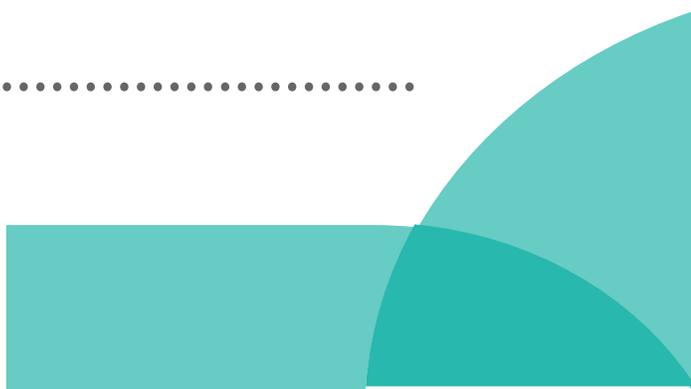
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What good thing did you do for someone else today?

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What are you thankful for today?

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# PUZZLE FOR FAMILY ACTIVITY

