

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: Jonah 1: 1-3

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

"Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai, saying, 'Go at once to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before me.' But Jonah set out to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid his fare and went on board, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the Lord."

ENCOUNTERING EACH OTHER:

Say: Sometimes, we get asked to do things we don't want to do — like, when someone asks us to do the dishes, but we'd rather do anything else! In those times, we sometimes give an excuse. We sometimes say we'll do it later, then "forget" about it. Either way, when we don't do it, we essentially saying "no." That's what Jonah did. Jonah not only told God "no," he got on a boat and went the opposite direction!

Discussion Questions:

- Why do you think Jonah didn't want to go to Ninevah?
- Does it every feel scary for you to follow God? (Parents might want to offer an answer to this question first).

Say: God was calling Jonah to go some place he didn't want to go (Ninevah) - to people Jonah considered his enemies (the Ninevites) - to tell them that God was not happy. God was calling Jonah to something scary!

One way we can be prepared to follow God into the scary places is to talk to God and ask God to be with us and give us courage, no matter where we are called to go. To practice that today, we are going to pray a body prayer. Body prayer uses our whole body and reminds us that God is always with us and works through us — body, mind, and soul.

Activity: Have the whole family stand up and either have one person lead, or take turns leading by passing the prayer on the next page around the circle.

BODY PRAYER

Placing both hands on top of the head, pray out loud:

God be in my head and in my understanding.

Placing both hands over the eyes, pray out loud:

God be in my eyes and in my seeing.

Placing both hands over the ears, pray out loud:

God be in my ears and in my hearing.

Placing both hands over the mouth, pray out loud:

God be in my mouth and in my speaking.

Placing both hands over the heart, pray out loud:

God be in my heart and in my feeling.

Placing both hands on top of the thighs, pray out loud:

God be in my legs and in my moving.

Placing open hands one on top of the other in front of the body, pray out loud:

God be in my hands and in my touching.

Placing both arms at the side of the body, hands open and turning outward, offering our life to God, pray out loud:

God be in my life and in my journeying. Amen

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:

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.”