

2008 FUGUE

PARENT DEVOTIONS



FUGE 2008 PARENT DEVOTIONS

DEAR PARENT,

This week of devotional material has been designed to allow you to experience a little of what your student is experiencing at camp this week. We know that you will be praying diligently for your teenager, and our desire is to give you an overview of each day so you can pray more specifically. We have been working hard all year to provide a quality program and staff so your student can encounter God in a new way this week, and we want you to be a part of their spiritual journey.

While your teenager is away, take whatever opportunities you can to rest and focus on your own walk with the Lord. You will be using the same daily themes and Scriptures as your student, so this will give you the opportunity to talk with him/her about the things learned at camp. Most of all, we hope you will be encouraged as you spend time with the Lord this week.

Suggestions to help your student get the most out of camp:

- Pray for him in the days leading up to camp and while he is at camp.
- Give her a care package to take with her to camp (favorite snacks, note, verses).
- Encourage him to give sacrificially to the missions offering collected at camp.
- Leave a message on his cell phone and tell him how much you love him.

Check out these parenting resources available through LifeWay Christian Resources.

- *Living with Teenagers* is a monthly magazine that helps parents develop a growing relationship with their teen and offers answers to real-life questions.
- *30 Days: Turning the Hearts of Parents & Teenagers Toward Each Other* is an interactive devotional guide designed for one parent to spend 10 minutes a day with one child in the personal setting of their home.
- *The Five Love Languages of Teenagers* (Parent Study Guide and DVD Pak for Parents) is a six-week study to help parents improve relationships with their teen(s) as they learn their child's love languages.
- *Parenting with Kingdom Purpose* is a book that looks at Bible teaching and the recent National Study of Youth and Religion to shape a fresh approach to raising children that cuts through the chaos of modern life and brings families closest to each other and the Lord.

Visit www.lifeway.com or call 1.800.458.2772 to order or learn more about the above resources.

WRITERS



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TUESDAY

SCRIPTURE: *Matthew 13:1-9,18-23*

Begin this devotion time by praying for your student. If you're at home, go sit in your child's room for this quiet time. As you survey the room, notice the things that reflect his or her personality. Spend some time thanking the Lord for the precious gift of your child. Pray that this week will be significant in his or her spiritual journey. Now take some time to think about your own journey with God. Ask the Lord to reveal Himself to you this week in a fresh and personal way.

GEARING UP...

Think about your greatest adventure. Write down some highlights. What made it adventurous? Would you do it again if you had the chance? Would you change anything about the experience?

What comes to mind when you hear the word *safari*? Safari is the Swahili name for "journey"—it's synonymous with adventure and discovery. An African safari is said to be one of the most incredible adventures you can experience. The path across the plains and up Mount Kilimanjaro is filled with diversity as you experience a variety of landscapes and climates. You will encounter places along the path where the air is hot and the ground is hard. You will see open spaces where beautiful plants and trees grow freely. Finally, you will come across layers of snow and ice as you ascend the mountain. Throughout your journey, the condition of the ground you walk on changes dramatically.

The parable we will focus on today uses the example of different conditions of soil or ground to illustrate the state of our hearts. Before we dig into the Word, walk to a window and take a look outside. Make a mental inventory of your yard and think about these questions. What do you like about your yard? What changes would you make if you had unlimited time and money to invest in landscaping? How important is the condition of your soil to the health of your grass and plants? What happens if you plant something without preparing the soil?

Open your Bible and read Matthew 13:1-9.
What method did the sower use to sow the seed?

What were the results once the seed hit the different types of ground?



Now read Matthew 13:18-23.

What spiritual applications do you think Jesus wanted His followers to gain from this parable?

JOURNEY UPDATE...

A teachable and tender heart is essential to your spiritual health. Consider which type of soil best describes the condition of your heart right now. If the seeds of the gospel have been sowed in your life, think about how firmly they are planted.

What are you doing right now to help the seeds of Truth (God's Word) take root so you can grow spiritually?

What kinds of weeds in your life could be affecting your growth?

What do you need to do to eliminate those distractions so you can stay connected to the Source of life and bear fruit?

In what ways are you sowing the seeds of Truth into your teenager's life?

What are some new ways you can invest in your family's spiritual growth?

Close this devotion time in prayer. Ask the Lord to tender your heart as well as your teenager's heart toward Him this week.

WEDNESDAY

SCRIPTURE: *Matthew 13:44-46, Proverbs 16:16*

Begin your time praying for your teenager. Pray that he or she will discover something new about the Lord. Ask God to give your student understanding into the secrets of the Kingdom through His Word today.

GEARING UP ...

If you were selected to participate in the reality television series “Survivor,” would you do it? What would you take with you if your destination were Mount Kilimanjaro in East Africa? Choose 2 essentials:

- Roll of toilet paper
- Deodorant
- One change of clothes
- Sunscreen
- Brush
- Toothbrush/toothpaste
- Soap
- Gallon of clean water
- Other _____

Choose one nonessential item and explain why you chose it:

- Camera
- Sleeping bag
- Pillow
- Paper/pen
- Novel
- Picture of someone special
- iPod®
- Umbrella
- Jacket
- Matches
- Game
- Other _____

The journey up Mount Kilimanjaro is both exciting and physically demanding. Despite its challenges, those who have made the journey say it is also one of the most exhilarating and rewarding ventures.



Why do you think some people in our culture are willing to invest so much time, money, and effort to experience adventures like this?

On what type of adventures would you be willing to spend time and money (parachuting, parasailing, mountain climbing, snow skiing, etc)?

Open your Bible and read Matthew 13:44.
How did the man feel about finding the treasure?

What did he do after finding it?

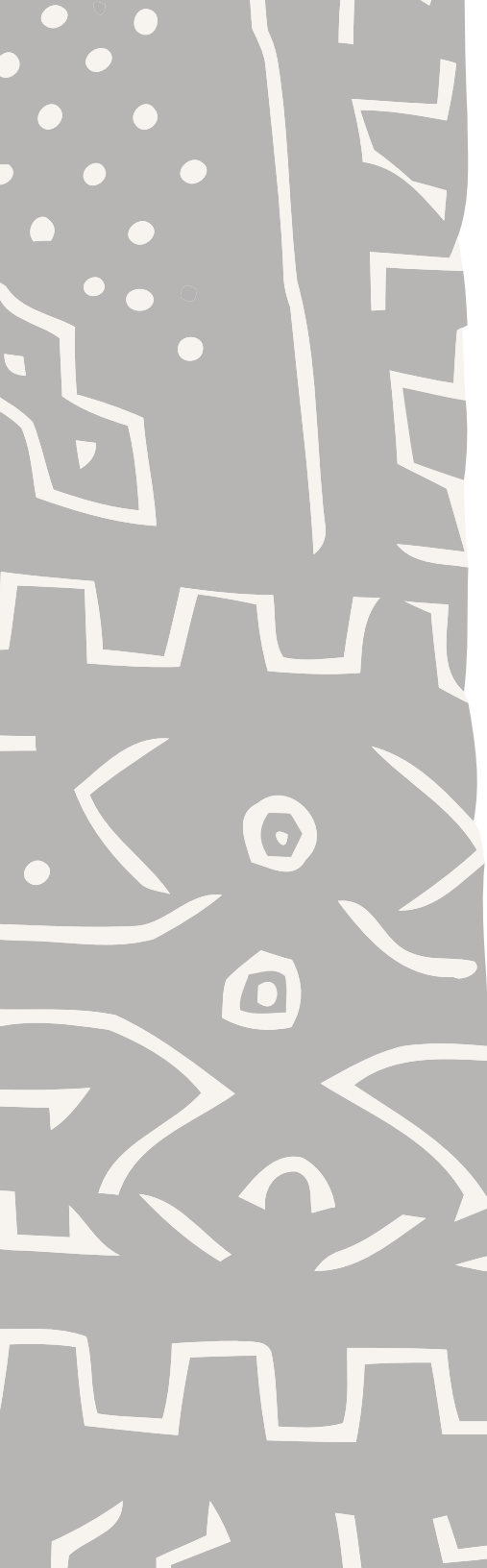
What does the “treasure” represent?

Why do you think the treasure in this parable is buried?

Read Matthew 13:45-46.
How much did it cost the merchant to purchase the pearl?

Why was he willing to pay so high a price?

What does the “pearl” in this parable represent?



What are you willing to give up so that you can invest more into your relationship with Christ?

How does your journey with the Lord compare to a priceless adventure?

Read Proverbs 16:16.

What does this verse say about the value of wisdom and understanding?

How do you go about getting wisdom and understanding and why is it so important on your journey?

Wisdom allows us to see the value of a deep, intimate relationship with God. Understanding helps us to prioritize what's most important in this life.

JOURNEY UPDATE...

If you believe that a relationship with Jesus Christ is the most valuable treasure in the world, think about how the Lord fits into your life at work, in your friendships, in your family life, and in your future dreams and ambitions.

What changes need to be made to give Christ His rightful place in your daily adventures?

Close this devotion time in prayer. Ask the Lord to fill you with wisdom and understanding when it comes to raising your teenager.

THURSDAY

SCRIPTURE: *Matthew 18:21-35*

By now your student is at the halfway point in their camp experience. He or she is probably beginning to feel the effects of an incredibly active week. Pray for your teenager's physical energy and for his or her ability to focus in Bible study and worship.

GEARING UP ...

The key to successfully climbing a mountain like Kilimanjaro is to pack light and give your legs the freedom to move forward unencumbered. Take some time right now to think about some of the things in your life that might be weighing you down, holding you back, or tripping you up. Are you carrying around a weight of bitterness, anger, or frustration? Are you holding onto guilt over past mistakes? Or, are you holding onto a mistake someone else made so you can feel better about yourself?

Write down the burden(s) you need to leave behind.

All of these things will weigh you down and keep you from living in the freedom to which Christ has called you. Spend some time in prayer asking God for the courage to give it all over to Him.

Open your Bible and read Matthew 18:21-22.

Why do you think Peter asked this question?

What was the Lord's response?

Through the parable that follows, Jesus shows us that unless we are willing to forgive, we cannot experience true freedom and peace.

Read Matthew 18:23-35.

What did the king demand from the servant in order to pay the debt?

What changed his mind?

What did the servant do immediately after being pardoned by the king?

What does this tell you about the condition of the servant's heart?

How did the king respond to the report of what his servant had done?

What we see in the parable of the unforgiving slave is a servant who literally became enslaved to his own pride. His unwillingness to forgive forfeited his own freedom. There are several things that can happen in our own lives when we don't forgive. Think about the physical, emotional, and spiritual damage that is done when we harbor anger toward someone and refuse to forgive. **Write about a time when you suffered physically, emotionally, or spiritually because of your unwillingness to forgive someone.**

If you have healed from that experience, then rejoice in forgiveness. If not, take action to forgive that person now and ask Christ to heal you. Because we have been forgiven by the King Himself, we should be willing and ready to extend grace to others. It is not easy, but it is necessary in order to live in the freedom to which we've been called.

JOURNEY UPDATE ...

How would you describe your adventure with Christ right now?

- Frustrated by bumps in the path
- Excited by the surprises of each new day
- Discouraged by how hard the journey can be at times
- Other _____

Spend the next few minutes evaluating your perspective on life. Allow the Lord to teach you over the coming days and months how to trust Him in both the ups and downs of your journey.

Close this devotion time in prayer. Ask God to show you the extraordinary power of His grace today. Pray for the courage to extend grace to your family.

FRIDAY

SCRIPTURE: *Matthew 25:31-46; 1 John 3:16-18*

A life verse is a promise from Scripture that you can claim on behalf of your child or family. If you have one, pray through it now. If not, ask the Lord to direct you to a life verse or promise over the next few days. Spend a few minutes looking through God's Word (a concordance is a great resource, or you can use an Internet search tool such as the one found at <http://bible.lifeway.com/crossmain.asp>).

GEARING UP ...

Think about a time when you or your family helped someone in need.

What were the circumstances and how were you able to minister to him or her?

How did helping someone else make you feel?

What motivated you to reach out to this person?

As followers of Christ, we are called to extend grace and mercy to those around us. We are given the great privilege of helping people see how precious they are to the Lord. When we minister in His name, we are exhibiting the very character of Christ to the world around us.

Open your Bible and read Matthew 25:31-40.

According to this passage, what does real ministry look like?

What physical needs does Jesus mention in this passage?

To what emotional and spiritual needs does He refer?

Who receives a reward from the King?



What is their reward?

Jesus touches on physical, spiritual, and emotional needs in this illustration. Every need we experience falls into one or more of those categories, so the opportunities for ministry are endless.

With a world of hurting people, how do you determine who to help and how to help?

What might cause you to miss those opportunities?

Read Matthew 25:41-46.

What did the king say to those on His left?

Why were they punished?

What was their excuse for not helping people?

To further explore this concept, read 1 John 3:16-18. The reality is that once we experience the love of God through a relationship with Christ, we are filled with the capacity to love and serve others well. We are given the ability, the opportunity, and the mandate to extend the love of Christ to those around us. The desire to help others must be motivated by love if it is to have any lasting impact on those we serve.

JOURNEY UPDATE ...

The greatest need we have as humans is a relationship with God through Christ. **If you know of those who are missing out on this adventure with Christ, write notes encouraging them to begin their journey of faith.** You can use Scripture or your own personal testimony. Whether you give these letters to them or not, you will grow more confident in the Truth with each word you write.

Close this devotion time in prayer. Ask the Lord to keep you sensitive to His Holy Spirit and to notice the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of those around you.

SATURDAY

SCRIPTURE: *Matthew 13:10-16*

Today your teenager will return home from an eventful week at camp! Welcome your child home by doing something special to show him or her how much they were missed. Here are a few ideas: put a funny greeting card on the bed with a note reminding him how much he means to you; have her favorite snack on the kitchen counter when she arrives; take him out to dinner at his favorite restaurant and let him share about his experiences this week; start a scrapbook page that they can finish later.

GEARING UP ...

Think about what you were doing at this time last week. Now think about the events of this time last year. What do you think you'll be doing at this time next week? You will always have the luxury of looking back, but none of us will ever be able to look forward with the same clarity. No one knows what tomorrow holds, but we can rest in the assurance that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. As your student returns home today, he or she may be a little anxious about coming down from the "mountaintop experience" they've had at camp.

Write down some ways that you can encourage your teen to apply what he or she has learned and continue growing in the Lord.

This week we have focused on a few key parables of Jesus. We've taken a spiritual safari of sorts and uncovered some "Kingdom Secrets" along the way. Now let's take a deeper look into the purpose behind these parables.

Open your Bible and read Matthew 13:10-16.

Why do you think these stories/parables are called "secrets of the Kingdom"?

To whom did Jesus say these secrets have been given?

To whom is Jesus referring when He says, "Because looking they do not see, and hearing they do not listen or understand"?



What is keeping them from understanding according to verse 15?

What spiritual applications can be made from these verses?

This week we have illustrated the Kingdom secrets found in Matthew's Gospel by using the imagery of a safari. Only those who dare to journey across the beautiful landscape of Africa will experience all the "breathtaking secrets" along each path. In a similar way to a safari, the "secrets of the Kingdom," the beautiful mysteries of grace, are revealed to those who willingly walk the adventure of the Christian life. Only those who will open their hearts and minds to the King Himself can experience the fullness of His glory.

JOURNEY UPDATE ...

Think about your experiences from your own time with the Lord this week and ask yourself these questions: Have you been open and expectant as you've studied His Word? **Have you looked for evidence of His hand at work throughout each day? How has He stretched you, encouraged you, or challenged you this week?** Challenge yourself to share some of what you've learned with your teenager once they get home from camp.

Close this devotion time in prayer. Ask the Lord to give you opportunities to talk to your teenager about his or her experience at camp. Pray for the wisdom to encourage and challenge your student to follow through with any decisions that were made.