



**Week 2**  
**October 8-14, 2017**

**Devotionals challenging you  
to “live & give” generously!**



**HARDY STREET**  
BAPTIST CHURCH

Dear Faith Family,

This devotion guide is designed especially for your use during the H.S.B.C. “Finish Strong” emphasis during the month of October. The emphasis is all about life stewardship ~ managing all that you have: your time, talent, & treasures! In other words, we are learning how to “live and give” generously!

The theme this month’s devotional guide is “*Loving God with all of our Heart, Soul, Mind, and Strength*”! That theme comes from the book of Luke. Our desire is that every member, every family determine to love God fully in every area of their lives!

*...Love the Lord your God  
with all your heart and with all your soul  
and with all your strength and with all your mind...  
Luke 10:27*

I am convinced that this emphasis on stewardship will be a time of incredible spiritual growth for us as individuals and as a church. When we begin to pray and give and sacrifice, we grow. These devotions are an important part of that opportunity for maturity in each of our lives.

Hardy Street Baptist Church has a unique opportunity in this fourth quarter of 2017 to “*Finish Strong*” and fully fund all of our ministries and missions, but that will require obedience and sacrificial giving.

We want God’s word to be at the center of our faith and prayers. We want God’s direction to be the single motivation for our gifts and sacrifices. These devotions will help you, as an individual or as a family, to personally discover God’s direction in His word.

You’ll see that we have included family discussion questions and on some days children’s activities. You’ll find that the discussion questions are designed for older elementary and above. If you’re doing this devotion by yourself you can use these as thought questions. I encourage you to jot down your thoughts in a notebook. The activities are for younger elementary down to preschool age. The best way to be consistent in these devotions is to find the same time every day to do them. You’ll find some other suggestions for reading through this guide on the next page.

In His Grip,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Scott", written in dark ink.

Bro. Scott

# SUGGESTIONS FOR FAMILY DEVOTIONS

Family devotions can often seem more like chaos than church. Remember: your goal is not perfection. You might think of your goal as something more like “holy confusion.” You just want to add a sense of God’s holiness to your busy household. Here are a few simple suggestions.

1. Choose a consistent time and place. Whether it’s at breakfast around the table or in your children’s rooms just before bedtime, having devotions at the **same** time and **same** place is the best way to be consistent. Choose the best time for your family and then don’t worry if you miss a day here or there.
2. Have different family members read the Scripture and devotion each day. This will give everyone a feeling that they’re a part of **deciding** to have family devotions.
3. After reading the devotions, take a minute to pray together. Talk to God about the needs in your family... the church...the world... your friends... those who need to find Christ... your work... your school...etc.
4. Be yourselves! It’s O.K. to laugh. Noise is not only allowable during devotions... it is probable. If you allow your children to be themselves during times of devotion it’s amazing how much more they learn. What you think is bouncing off of them is actually sinking deeply into their souls.

*“You must love the Lord with all your heart, soul, and might. And you must think constantly about these commandments I am giving you today. You must teach them to your children and talk about them when you are at home or out for a walk; at bedtime and the first thing in the morning.”*

*Deuteronomy 6:5-7 (TLB)*

# *Loving God with All of my Heart*

Let a man set his heart only on doing the will of God and he is instantly free. If we understand our first and sole duty to consist of loving God supremely and loving everyone, even our enemies, for God's dear sake, then we can enjoy spiritual tranquility under every circumstance.

~A.W. Tozer

Loving God with all my heart means becoming a person of faith...  
trusting Him enough to surrender all to Him!

## **Sunday, October 8 - Faith**

# **FAITH IS LIVING BEYOND THE ROUTINE**

*“What is faith? It is the confident assurance that something we want is going to happen. It is the certainty that what we hope for is waiting for us, even though we cannot see it up ahead.” Heb 11:1 (TLB)*

Faith is the secret to “rut free living.”

We all know what it’s like to live in a rut. Too often what starts with great promise settles into a lifelong habit of routine.

A couple gets married - yet somehow a promise of life long love turns into habit and routine.

A business gets started - but before long the dream turns into drudgery.

A fresh and real commitment to Christ is made - yet you find yourself settling for the average life rather than the abundant life. Faith makes the difference! Faith helps us to handle the two main things that might push us into the rut of routine...

### **Life’s disappointments...**

Disappointment can make us feel, “I guess that’s all there is... I’ll have to learn to settle for less.” Faith energizes us to look past our disappointments and to see God’s promises.

### **Life’s successes...**

Disappointment can make us bitter... success can make us self-satisfied. A little success can be a dangerous thing! Faith has the power not only to help us with our struggles, but also our successes. Faith puts success in perspective. It reminds me that I’m not the source of the success - it is God who has given these gifts to me. It also helps me to see that I’m not the reason for the success. Of course, God is pleased with my happiness. But the ultimate reason for all He does in our lives is to show the world what He is like... to bring glory to Himself.

*Family Discussion Question: Is disappointment or is success the greater challenge in your life right now?*

*Children’s activity: Show your children how “ingrained” a routine can become by having an “unroutine” day: Have everyone sit at different places when you eat or watch T.V... or sleep with your head at the foot of your bed. You come up with ideas.... have fun with this!*

## Monday, October 9 - Faith

# THE CHANGE EXCHANGE

*“By faith Abraham, even though he was past age--and Sarah herself was barren--was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise.” Heb 11:11 (NIV)*

Have you made faith's great change exchange? Have you learned to exchange life's pressures for God's promises? We all live in one of two ways, under life's pressure or within God's promises. The secret to promise living is faith... believing what God has told me about Himself and His world in His word.

When you believe God's promise you belittle life's pressure. When you trust God's promise you trample life's pressure. When you count on God's promise you count out life's pressure. When you depend on God's promise you defeat life's pressure. When you receive God's promise you reject life's pressure. Is that clear!

Promise and pressure are mutually exclusive... they can't exist together.

There are two common attitudes that push the promises of God out of our lives as believers. Watch out for these!(You can see them in the life of Abraham as he struggled with believing God's promise about sending He and Sarah a son)

I'll have to settle for less ~~~~~I'll have to get it myself

Although Abraham struggled with these attitudes, he ended up putting his faith in God. Just because **you** struggle does not mean that you cannot end up making the great “change exchange.” You can be a person of genuine faith.

*Family discussion question: Where do you feel pressured right now? As a family, pray for each other. Pray that God's promises will ease your pressures.*

*Children's activity: Show how promises “push out” pressure by filling a cardboard tube (paper towel or toilet tissue) with crumpled paper. Once the tube is filled show them how the new paper you put in always pushes out the old.*

## Tuesday, October 10 - Faith

# FAITH'S FINAL EXAM

*“Now Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, did great wonders and miraculous signs among the people.” Acts 6:8 (NIV)*

Know how to recognize a priceless person? Just look at their price tag! You can see what a person is worth by looking at what it takes to buy them off. I wonder how you and I would do if we had to face “faith’s final exam.” It is an exam that only a few Christians down through the ages have had to face. It is a test that has only one soul searching question.

Stephen faced this test when he was being judged for his faith in Acts 6. Faith’s final exam is “Would I be willing to give up my life for what I believe?” We sing about giving our all to Jesus and tell Him that we’d offer our very life for him. But what if the threats were real? It’s an important test, for your attitude towards dying for your faith has much to say about how you’ll live your faith!

Take a look at Stephen, for example. He showed himself to be a priceless person, a person who would not back down in his faith no matter what the threat. Stephen became the first Christian to actually die for his faith. What was the secret to such a great faith? Acts 6 tells us that Stephen lived as a man “full of faith and the Holy Spirit.” **He had answered faith’s final exam long before he faced the court that would condemn him.**

We’re all like tubes of toothpaste. When the squeeze is put on us what comes out is whatever we’re full of! This means that we don’t have to “cram” for the tests of faith. Let Christ **fill** your heart and mind, your decisions and actions... today!

*Family Discussion Question: Where do you need to be “full of faith” today?*

*For younger children: Make up some “price tags” to show the real value of some of the things in your home. Have your kids tell you how much things like furniture and appliances are worth...make up a tag and put it on those things. Then, ask them to put a price tag on a Bible.... then on themselves. Remind them of the incalculable value of the Bible, of the tremendous value God place on them.*

## Wednesday, October 11 - Faith

# TRUE DEDICATION

*“So the king and all the Israelites dedicated the temple of the LORD.” 1 Ki 8:63 (NIV)*

What do we mean when we say dedication? To one person it may mean giving up a part of a football game to come to church on Sunday mornings, to another it may point to a decision to begin giving some of their money to the Lord's work, while to another it may add up to leaving all that they know to serve the Lord as a missionary in a foreign country. What does it mean to dedicate a temple, a church, a child, a life - to dedicate them to the Lord. In I Kings 8 Solomon dedicates the great Jerusalem Temple to the Lord. In so doing he teaches us some important lessons about the character of dedication.

### **Dedication means Open Declaration**

Dedication is a *public announcement* of your intentions and commitments. Many see dedication as some inner commitment that no one can really see or understand. Not true... it is expressed in public commitments and public actions. You know when dedication begins to happen?

When you begin to place your faith on the line in terms of public commitments. It's that willingness to declare to others that adds up to dedication. (Ex. I WILL BE with my church family for corporate worship OR I WILL find a place to serve within the church)

When our forefathers penned the Declaration of Independence they turned a philosophy into a dedication to freedom.

When John Kennedy said, “We will put a man on the moon before the end of the decade.” He transformed a scientists dream into a countries dedication.

God asks us to make “open commitments” of our faith.

- Baptism is an open statement that you’ve dedicated your life to Christ.
- Prayer is a way that we bring out into the open our dependence on God.
- Worship is one way that we say openly and publicly that God is important to me.

*Family Discussion Question: When others look at your life, what do you think they would say you are “dedicated” to?*



## Thursday, October 12 - Faith

# TRUE DEDICATION, PART 2

*“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship.”*  
*Rom 12:1 (NIV)*

There are two more lessons about dedication that we learn from the study of Solomon that we began yesterday, besides **open declaration...**

### **Dedication means Sacrifice**

They sacrificed an unbelievable amount that day! 22,000 cattle and 120,000 sheep and goats. That's a lot of T-bone steak and leg of lamb! Why? What could be the purpose of such sacrifices? What did sacrifices do for men that was so important to the Lord. Sacrifices are “A gift of trust to the Lord.” As they sacrificed they declared that they trusted God to take care of their needs. They were saying, “Instead of hoarding and declaring my trust in myself, I'll give to You, Lord, to declare my trust in you.”

Dedication will inevitably involve some sacrifices. Sacrifice is ultimately an expression of trust in the Lord. You're willing to give something up because you trust Him more than that something.

### **Dedication means Praise**

A significant part of dedication is praise to God. Solomon's praise as he dedicated the temple centered on the fact that God has kept His promise. There is a **specific** praise that not only expresses, but actually increases our dedication to the Lord. That specific praise that grows our dedication is “Thank You Lord for your Faithfulness.” It is a praise that recognizes that all that we have comes as a result of God's promises to us... as a result of His faithfulness in our lives.

That type of praise recognizes that I can be dedicated to God because God is dedicated to me! He is dedicated to my joy, my peace, my growth. God has dedicated Himself to my personal happiness and fulfillment. How dedicated is He? “He who did not spare His own Son, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things.” (Romans 8:32)

*Family Discussion Question: What sacrifice would REALLLLY stretch your dedication? Begin praying together as a family as to what your family will give for the Thanksgiving Love Offering on Sunday, November 26th. More info at [hardysbc.net/finishstrong](http://hardysbc.net/finishstrong)*

## Friday, October 13 - Faith

# TRUE DEDICATION, PART 3

*“Then Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in front of the whole assembly of Israel, spread out his hands toward heaven and said: “O LORD, God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven above or on earth below--you who keep your covenant of love with your servants who continue wholeheartedly in your way.”*  
1 Ki 8:22-23 (NIV)

Dedication means praise and sacrifice and open declaration. Today we learn one final truth about dedication from King Solomon

### **Dedication means Ministry**

We cannot be dedicated to God without being dedicated to meeting the needs of the people He has made. Solomon dedicated the temple to the needs of the disappointed and the defeated, those besieged by sin and by loneliness, those involved in the battles and the prisons of life.

Too many, too often make dedication the most impractical of things. It could never be lived, only talked about. There is a dedication made up of myths and fables and pipe dreams.

If you're striving to become more dedicated to the Lord it doesn't take you long to discover that there is a whole Christian subculture in which dedication is made up of spiritual sounding words and big name conferences and fancy looking materials.

You cannot practice dedication in a conference or with mere words or on the pages of a notebook. It's built out of trusting God with the practical needs of your everyday life. You might be able to learn about it at a conference and be inspired toward it with a notebook, but don't ever fall into the trap of believing that the conference is where real dedication is expressed.

**Dedication is expressed in ministry.** It is expressed in what you choose to **DO** with your life: a decision to serve the Lord and the to serve the people He has made.

*Family Discussion Question: Can you think of one simple ministry your family could do this week?*

*Children's activity: Do a simple ministry project with your children this week.*

## Saturday, October 14 - Faith

### AN ABEL FAITH

*“By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as a righteous man, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead.” Heb 11:4 (NIV)*

The best way to learn faith is from people. Why? Because faith is not so much a matter of what you know as of who you are, it's built not just out of knowledge but out of relationships. Take a look at Abel, the first faithful man. 3 things happened to him because he had faith. They each point out how faith will affect our lives.

#### **He offered a better sacrifice.**

*Faith affected his **generosity**.* What was better about Abel's sacrifice? Cain offered but Abel offered his best. Faith adds up to a willingness to give your best to the Lord. You can trust Him with it!

#### **He was commended as righteous by God.**

*Faith affected his **relationships**.* Righteous is a word about relationships, it points to being in right relationship with God. Preschoolers define it as being God's friend. Faith gave Abel a commendation for his relationship with God.

#### **He still speaks**

*Faith affected his **influence**.* The most powerful tool you have for influencing this world is your faith. Why so powerful? Because actions and decisions based upon faith simply last longer. Cain may have cut Abel's life short, but Abel's faith still speaks! Want to make an impact? Seminars can hone your skills and organization can improve your opportunities and principles can enhance your planning... but it's all a drop in the bucket without faith.

If you're mathematically minded: Impact = (Skills + Organization + Planning + “Whatever”) **times** Faith. Great skills times no faith equals zero impact. A few skills multiplied by a great faith adds up to incredible impact.

*Family discussion question: Where could you “offer your best” to the Lord right now in one specific way?*

*Children's activity: Have your children take an offering to church tomorrow. Put it in an envelope, on which they write (or write with them) “My best for the Lord”.*