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Whiting's "52 weekly devotions for families called to serve" (book review)

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Book Reviews



Whiting, K. (2019) *52 weekly devotions for families called to serve*. Peabody, MA: Rose Publishing. 224 pp. \$16.99. ISBN 9781628628173

This family devotion book focuses on the call to serve others. This is a flexible teaching tool to inspire parents to incorporate valuable spiritual growth activities into their family's weekly schedule. Since families have unique interests and ages of children vary, this resource incorporates exercises to appeal to a variety of interests. Ages four to twelve are targeted and there is a mixture of simple to more complex games, crafts, team-building challenges, and scrap-booking ideas.

Each devotion includes nine sections:

- Scripture and a focus for the week;
- three or four choices of activities;
- one contemporary story to read and reflect on together,
- a Bible story to read and review,
- choices of chat prompts usually paired with a scripture linked to the theme,
- scrapbook or prayer journal options to create a spiritual keepsake for your family's faith growth,
- one or more frontline tools to address unique challenges to address families who serve,
- prayer for the week you can read once, or repeat every day, and
- a wrap up to the discussion topics and what has been learned.

Topics each week include three focuses: personal spiritual growth, community service and has practical advice themes. Samples of personal spiritual growth topics include: compassion, faith memories, family mission statement, God's guidance, gratitude. Community service includes: disaster response, feeding hungry neighbours, healing actions and words. Managing stress, thoughtfulness, safety rules etc. are illustrations of practical topics.

A dominant theme is serving others in the local or global community. Emergencies, such as forest fires, with the practical advice of writing an evacuation plan, or learning how to use fire extinguishers, are ideas to consider in one devotional lesson, which also highlights Psalm 16:8, James 3:5 and Deuteronomy 4:24 as possible bible verses.

Lesson four helps families articulate a “Family Mission Statement.” This involves choosing a scripture verse for the family, discussing how to ‘live out’ that verse in the week ahead, and finally, creating a family acrostic sign. I love poetry. Therefore, the idea of spelling out the family name, with each letter highlighting a value that the family aspires to, and hanging it on the wall, is both creative and inspirational.

Another suggestion is to encourage younger children to paint rainbows for a scrapbooking activity, as they discuss God’s promises. This illustrates how some of the activities are simple enough to appeal to the youngest child in the family.

In conclusion, parents with a desire to start a weekly family devotions plan would love to discover this book; it presents 52 practical hands-on themes, with nine activities available for multiple age levels. This book is highly recommended for purchase by libraries looking for practical family discipleship teaching tools.

Reviewer

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