



Seeds of Faith

An initiative of Raphoe Diocese— supporting families

December 2013

Family Life

What would family life be like if we had no rules, no boundaries? As parents we know that rules are important and that in fact when children know what is expected of them, what is right and wrong, they feel more secure. Psychologists talk about teenagers “pushing the boundaries” to test out whether we, as parents, really love them and are interested in them.

Problems arise when we focus on the rules rather than on the reason behind the rules. If a child feels that rules are forced on them to show that a parent is more powerful than the child then there is a problem. Remember the dad in the film Matilda “I’m smart, you’re dumb; I’m big, you’re little; I’m right, you’re wrong, and there’s nothing you can do about it.” That is not meant to be the way we deal with our children! In the same way The Ten Commandments are not there to show that God is big and we are small and have to do what we are told or else. The reason behind the Commandments is simply love. God wants to have a loving relationship with us and wants us to have a loving relationship with others. The Commandments are there to help us live lovingly—the Gospel expands that and shows us what love really means.

The Ten Commandments—first lessons in love

1. I am the Lord your God: you shall not have strange gods before me.
2. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain
3. Remember to keep holy the Lord’s day
4. Honour your father and your mother
5. You shall not kill
6. You shall not commit adultery
7. You shall not steal
8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour
9. You shall not covet your neighbour’s wife
10. You shall not covet your neighbour’s goods

We would love to hear your comments. What’s useful for your family? Would you like to receive this newsletter each month by email? Please email address bairbre.seedsoffait@gmail.com

Praying as a family

In this wonderful time of Advent, Christmas and Epiphany we are surrounded by messages of love. God sent his Son into the world because God loves us. God’s love for us is not just a wishy washy cute kind of love. It is a powerful and amazing love that takes a huge risk. In Jesus God becomes poor and weak and small.

Mary said “Yes” to the challenge of being Jesus’ mother because of her loving relationship with God Joseph supported Mary because he loved her.

- Over these weeks take some time as a family to think about all the people you love and who love you.
- What difference does their love make in your lives?
- Does loving and being loved make a difference to how you behave?
- Thank God for all the love in your life!



Gospels for December

Happy New Year! It may seem a bit soon, but the new year for our worship and prayer begins four Sundays before Christmas. To prepare for the feast of Jesus’ birth, we read and pray about his coming to our world. Most Sundays this year our Gospel writer is Matthew. Matthew wrote his gospel for Christians who had grown up as Jews, like Jesus himself did. Like Jesus, they were familiar with the holy books of the Jewish or Hebrew bible – what we usually call ‘The Old Testament’. Very often, as Matthew tells the story of Jesus, he likes to make links with these earlier writings because, like Jesus, we believe that God speaks to us through the whole Bible, and not only through the Gospels. As you read these Gospels, maybe you could also follow up some of the links Matthew makes. You might learn that you already know a lot of the Old Testament!



	Gospel	Link with
01/12/13	Matt 24:37-44	Noah Genesis 6:5-22
08/12/13	Matt 3:1-12	Abraham Genesis 12:1-5
15/12/13	Matt 11:2-11	Isaiah Isaiah 35:1-6
22/12/13	Matt 1:18-24	Isaiah Isaiah 7:10-14
29/12/13	Matt 2:13-15, 19-23	Joseph Genesis 41:14-32
05/01/14	John 1:1-5, 9-14	Creation Genesis 1:1-5

Sacred Space



Make sure you have an Advent wreath in your home. Three purple candles and one pink—remember the candles go purple, purple, pink, purple. This issue is all about the importance of living in love—that is what being Christian is about. Put up your crib at home—or make one if you don't have one. Don't put the baby Jesus in it yet! Make some straw from yellow paper—little strands. Every day ask each person to think about what they have done that shows love. For every act of love that each person has done put a piece of straw in the crib. By the time you get to Christmas have all your acts of love made a cosier home for baby Jesus?



Stepping Stones on the Journey of Faith

Being a Christian is about more than living a correct life and keeping the commandments. To be a Christian is to have a living relationship with Jesus. If I live in relationship with Jesus then that will set me out on the right path—the path that leads to eternal life. The Ten Commandments are a starting point not a final destination. Jesus in the Gospel builds upon and develops the Commandments. He takes us further and asks even more of us than the Commandments ask. Knowing the Ten Commandments is a good place to begin. They remind us that we live



in relationship with God (numbers 1-3) and with each other (numbers 4-10). Jesus sums up the first three Commandments with the words "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind." If we take that seriously then we can see that faith cannot simply we take out and dust off for Sunday or special occasions. If we love someone with all our heart and soul and mind then that is serious stuff! Our thoughts are full of the one we love, that love shapes our day and guides our actions—we live in love. Think about what it feels like to be in love. That is the type of relationship Jesus is inviting us to with God. Jesus also says we should love God with all our minds. That is important. Jesus is telling us that we don't just follow along without thinking. God wants us to engage our brains, to think about faith, to explore what it means to believe in God and then allow that to influence and shape our lives.

Jesus sums up Commandments 4-10 with the words "You shall love your neighbour as yourself" and tells us that these two sayings sum up everything that the Law and the Prophets in the Old Testament have to say. Faith is not a private thing. We are fooling ourselves but nobody else if we think we can say we love God but treat the people around us in a shabby, rough or unjust way. Loving God and loving the people around us—near or far away, nice or difficult—go hand in hand. The Commandments spell out what this means in very understandable practical ways—that we should respect other people, relationships, property. Again Jesus challenges us to go further, not simply to respect others but to love them. The love that Jesus is talking about is challenging. It isn't just the sweet and slightly soppy love that is all over valentine cards. Loving someone means wanting the best for them, supporting them to be the best they can be, speaking honestly and openly when challenge is needed, being prepared to offer and accept forgiveness and healing. Loving people means understanding what the cross is about. Loving God and loving each other—vertical and horizontal love—it is the shape of the cross and the sign of love.



Dear God

You gave us Jesus
—the best sign of your love

Help me to love

On good days and grumpy days

When I feel like loving

And even when I don't

Help me to know

That when I love

I bring a little spark

Of you into the world.

Amen



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FAMILY RULES

SAY PLEASE AND THANK YOU
BE RESPECTFUL BE RESPONSIBLE

BE KIND LAUGH A LOT

SAY YOUR PRAYERS

KEEP YOUR PROMISES LOVE

FORGIVE ONE ANOTHER

BE THANKFUL FOR GODS GRACE

FOLLOW YOUR DREAMS

ALWAYS BE GRATEFUL

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Why not have
a chat about
your family
rules.

What are
they?

Why do you
have them?

Any you would
change?

How do they
help you live
with love as a
family?