



WEEK FIVE

SPF: Say Prayers Frequently--and Read the Bible too!

Welcome back, families! We will focus the next two weeks on *love* and *sacrifice* and the role they play in our "going forth." Add the following portion from Psalm 136 to your family prayers this week:

*Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.
Oh, give thanks to the God of gods! For His mercy endures forever.
Oh, give thanks to the Lord of lords! For His mercy endures forever:
To Him who alone does great wonders, For His mercy endures forever;
To Him who by wisdom made the heavens, For His mercy endures forever;
To Him who laid out the earth above the waters, For His mercy endures forever;
To Him who made great lights, For His mercy endures forever—
The sun to rule by day, For His mercy endures forever;
The moon and stars to rule by night, For His mercy endures forever.*

—Psalm 136:1-9

As a family, go over the following scriptural passage and discuss the questions that follow (if you have younger children, please paraphrase for their understanding):

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing. Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.

And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

--1 Corinthians 13:1-13

- *Why do you think love is the greatest virtue someone can have? Why would it exceed the importance of other useful traits like wisdom or knowledge?*
- *How can we exhibit love in everything we do?*
- *God gave the command to "love your neighbor as yourself." How can we truly love ourselves without being selfish?*

LIFE GUARD: St. Maria of Paris (July 20)

Mother Maria Skobtsova was an unconventional nun who aided persecuted Jews in occupied France during World War II. Confronting the horror of Nazi brutality, Mother Maria devised an ingenious plan to save Jewish children destined for extermination camps. Paris garbage collectors, upon her urging, hid the children in trash cans and whisked them to safe havens outside the city. Mother Maria, for her selfless rescue activities, perished in a gas chamber in the Ravensbrück concentration camp in Germany in 1945. Today, she is among the "righteous gentiles" honored in Israel and a canonized saint in the Orthodox Church.

Read the book *Silent as a Stone* by Jim Forrest which is a testament to the life of St. Maria. The book is published by St. Vladimir's Seminary Press: www.svspress.com. You can also listen to the book being read on the Under the Grapevine podcast on Ancient Faith Radio: http://www.ancientfaith.com/podcasts/grapevine/readings_from_under_the_grapevine_program_19.

DIVE IN: Apostles Log

This week we want you to use a Bible concordance—preferably in hard-copy form but biblegateway.com is also a great resource. Look up the word love in the concordance to find biblical "love" references that speak to your heart—perhaps one each from the Old and New Testaments. Write the passage in your journal and draw something to go along with it. Assist younger children with finding their passages.

Don't forget to share your pictures with us!

#soakuptheSON

VITAMIN D: From St. Maria of Paris

No amount of thought will ever result in any greater formulation than the three words, 'Love one another,' so long as it is love to the end and without exceptions.

The way to God lies through love of people. At the Last Judgment I shall not be asked whether I was successful in my ascetic exercises, nor how many bows and prostrations I made. Instead I shall be asked did I feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick and the prisoners. That is all I shall be asked. About every poor, hungry and imprisoned person the Savior says 'I': 'I was hungry and thirsty, I was sick and in prison.' To think that he puts an equal sign between himself and anyone in need... I always knew it, but now it has somehow penetrated to my sinews. It fills me with awe.

If someone turns with his spiritual world to the spiritual world of another person, he encounters an awesome and inspiring mystery... He comes into contact with the true image of God in man with the very icon of God incarnate in the world, with a reflection of the mystery of God's incarnation and divine manhood. And he needs to accept this awesome revelation of God unconditionally, to venerate the image of God in his brother.

