

NOVENA 2016 FOR FAMILIES

from an original idea by Nathan Wilson

Some guiding thoughts.

Please use/ignore these suggestions as best fits your family, and let us know if you find a good way for you- then we can share it.

Each day: These plans could be used wherever and whenever you have the chance to gather as a family. There are no rules and probably no right way to do it. The best way to figure out how to do it is to simply try it... around the table after dinner/breakfast/lunch, in the car on the way to school, waiting at the station or even when you mute the adverts during your favourite programme...

If you need a basic structure to try first, then this might help, but please leave out anything you don't immediately take to.

- The family gathers (e.g. around a table).
- Use something to mark the beginning of your time together (e.g. light a candle, sing a song, each place something personal on the table)
- Share a moment (or as long as you can bear) of silence to remember God's presence (e.g. looking at a lit candle, holding hands, sitting with eyes closed)
- Daily opening prayer; *you could write your own family prayer, and use that daily, or here is one that we've provided...*

As we are gathered together

Lord God, be with us.

As we think together

Lord Jesus be with us.

As we pray together

Holy Spirit be with us.

May the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit

be with us today and always, Amen.

- *Read in a way that suits you- a child could read each alternate line, with the whole family joining together for the even lines, according to reading ability; you could all read it all, or the adults could take it in turns if the children don't read.*
- Spend a few moments **looking at the image for the day** (*all images are available at www.canterburydiocese.org/novena*), feel free to talk about anything that stands out or catches your eye.
- Take time to work through the wondering questions (below) together,
- You might finish by reading the bible passage, then the thought and the prayer (sharing the reading and prayer however you want). *There are two closely linked sets of thoughts and prayers, according to the time of day that you use this material: every day has morning and evening material. There is no expectation that you use this twice a day, although you could if you had the time.*

'Wondering'

The premise of wondering questions is that you don't try and guide towards the 'right' answer, but accept the wondering, and let it go where it will. All wondering is valid, and you might want to just hold together the wisdom that comes out. Once children get used to the idea, they let their imaginations go, and the route you take with the conversation may be wide and inclusive.

DAY 1 - FRIDAY 6TH MAY

Together, ponder the following questions:

I wonder what is happening in this picture?

I wonder who the two people are?

I wonder how they feel?

But during the night he got up and took his two wives, his two maidservants, and his eleven children and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. He got them safely across the brook along with all his possessions. But Jacob stayed behind by himself, and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. When the man saw that he couldn't get the best of Jacob as they wrestled, he deliberately threw Jacob's hip out of joint. The man said, "Let me go; it's daybreak." Jacob said, "I'm not letting you go 'til you bless me." The man said, "What's your name?" He answered, "Jacob." The man said, "But no longer. Your name is no longer Jacob. From now on it's Israel (God-Wrestler); you've wrestled with God and you've come through." Jacob asked, "And what's your name?" The man said, "Why do you want to know my name?" And then, right then and there, he blessed him. Jacob named the place Peniel (God's Face) because, he said, "I saw God face-to-face and lived to tell the story!" The sun came up as he left Peniel, limping because of his hip. Genesis 32 v 22-31 (The Message)



Morning:

Think of all the people that you will meet today.
How could we bring God's love to them? Now pray for them - by name if you want:

Lord God

*Help us today to meet everyone with love
Especially those who we might find get in our way,
and to pass on something of your love for them. Amen.*

Evening:



Think of all the people that you met today- you might want to talk about one or two of them. Now pray for them - by name if you want:

Lord God

*We think of all the people we met today..
May they know your love
and may we all be held tight in your arms tonight.
Amen*

DAY 2 - SATURDAY 7TH MAY

Together, ponder the following questions;

*I wonder
what is happening in
this picture? I wonder who
the two people are? I
wonder how they feel? I
wonder where this might
really be?*

One day Ruth, the Moabite foreigner, said to Naomi, "I'm going to work; I'm going out to glean among the sheaves, following after some harvester who will treat me kindly." Naomi said, "Go ahead, dear daughter." And so she set out. She went and started gleaning in a field, following in the wake of the harvesters. Eventually she ended up in the part of the field owned by Boaz, her father-in-law Elimelech's relative. A little later Boaz came out from Bethlehem, greeting his harvesters, "God be with you!" They replied, "And God bless you!" Boaz asked his young servant who was foreman over the farm hands, "Who is this young woman? Where did she come from?" The foreman said, "Why, that's the Moabite girl, the one who came with Naomi from the country of Moab. She asked permission. 'Let me glean,' she said, 'and gather among the sheaves following after your harvesters.' She's been at it steady ever since, from early morning until now, without so much as a break." Then Boaz spoke to Ruth: "Listen, my daughter. From now on don't go to any other field to glean—stay right here in this one. And stay close to my young women. Watch where they are harvesting and follow them. And don't worry about a thing; I've given orders to my servants not to harass you. When you get thirsty, feel free to go and drink from the water buckets that the servants have filled." She dropped to her knees, then bowed her face to the ground. "How does this happen that you should pick me out and treat me so kindly—me, a foreigner?" Ruth 2 v 2-10, (The Message)

Sometimes, we are a long way away from other people.

Sometimes that's good, sometimes we don't like it.



Morning:

I wonder how we could bring God's love to people who feel far away from us today? (whether literally or not)

Lord God,

Sometimes we find it hard to be close to people and we want to be alone.

Sometimes we want to be closer to other people, but we don't know how to make friends. Help us today to be friends with the people that we might find hard and so include them in your love. Amen

Evening:



Did we meet anyone today who acted as if they wanted to be on their own? How did we respond to that? And did we have time today when we wanted to be away from others? Or when other people shut us out and made us feel hurt?

Lord God, Sometimes we found it hard to be close to people today and we wanted to be alone. Sometimes we wanted to be closer to other people but we didn't know how to make friends. So we pray for the people that we found hard to like today and ask that you would include them in your love. Amen

DAY 3 - SUNDAY 8TH MAY

Together, ponder the following questions:

I wonder what is happening in this picture? I wonder how you would feel if you were one of the people we can see? I wonder how this picture makes you feel? I wonder where this might really be?

We often see pictures like this in the media - refugees, running from war, starvation, from bad situations. How can we help people who seem to be so different from ourselves, and who appear to be in such a great need?

This is the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to what was left of the elders among the exiles, to the priests and prophets and all the exiles whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken to Babylon from Jerusalem, This is the Message from God-of-the-Angel-Armies, Israel's God, to all the exiles I've taken from Jerusalem to Babylon: "Build houses and make yourselves at home. Put in gardens and eat what grows in that country. "Marry and have children. Encourage your children to marry and have children so that you'll thrive in that country and not waste away. "Make yourselves at home there and work for the country's welfare." "Pray for Babylon's well-being. If things go well for Babylon, things will go well for you." I know what I'm doing. I have it all planned out—plans to take care of you, not abandon you, plans to give you the future you hope for. Jeremiah 29 v 1, 4-7, 11, (The Message)



Morning:

I wonder if we will have new people to meet today, who may be coming from a long way away? It may be new friends at school, or a new teacher, or a new colleague. How can we welcome them and help them to feel 'at home'?

Lord God

*Help us today to be welcoming and helpful,
Kind and friendly to everyone we meet.
We remember all those who are looking for
a new home, A place of safety, where they
can be happy. Help us all to work for a time
when refugees are safe, and secure. Amen*



Evening:

I wonder if we met any new people today—either children, young people or adults? How did we welcome them? How did they make us feel about the place where we met them, be it school, work, or in between?

Lord God

*Thank you for all the new people who we
met today, wherever that was.
Please be with everyone tonight who is in a
new home, or a new place. Help them to
know that you care and that you are with
them. Amen*

DAY 4 - MONDAY 9TH MAY

Together, ponder the following questions:

*I wonder what is happening in this picture?
I wonder where you think this might be? I wonder how it would feel to stand at the entrance to the canyon, and see what is there? I wonder what you think has happened here?*

GOD grabbed me. GOD's Spirit took me up and set me down in the middle of an open plain strewn with bones. He led me around and among them—a lot of bones! There were bones all over the plain—dry bones, bleached by the sun. He said to me, “Son of man, can these bones live?” I said, “Master GOD, only you know that.” He said to me, “Prophesy over these bones: ‘Dry bones, listen to the Message of GOD!’” GOD, the Master, told the dry bones, “Watch this: I’m bringing the breath of life to you and you’ll come to life. I’ll attach sinews to you, put meat on your bones, cover you with skin, and breathe life into you. You’ll come alive and you’ll realize that I am GOD!” So I prophesied, just as he commanded me. The breath entered them and they came alive! They stood up on their feet, a huge army. Ezekiel 37 v 1-6, 10 (The Message)



Morning:

Sometimes we feel as if we are facing a narrow place, with lots of difficult things to walk through before we arrive where we want to be. Think about the difficult things you may have to do today...how could we ask God to be with us as we do these things?

Father God,

As we think about the hard things we may need to do today, We ask that you would give us your loving eyes to see as you see, And your love in our hearts to deal with those situations. Help us to think about you before we react and to know that you are with us, no matter where we are. Amen

Evening:



Some days can feel as if we've been walking in a narrow, sheltered valley- a gulley, and we don't feel God with us at all. Have you been someplace like that today? You might like to talk about it... Will you have to go through a hard place tomorrow? Are any of your friends or family in a hard place at the moment? You could pray for them now:

Loving God,

we pray for everyone who feels as if they are in a dark, hard place at the moment. Please be with them, helping them to feel loved and cared for. Help us to be aware of people who feel alone and sad, To befriend them, and walk with them through this stage of their life. Amen

DAY 5 - TUESDAY 10TH MAY

Together, ponder the following questions:

I wonder what is happening in this picture? I wonder who the person dressed in blue might be—and who is the figure above her? I wonder where they are? I wonder if you like to sit, on your own, and wonder?

Upon entering, Gabriel greeted her:

Good morning! You're beautiful with God's beauty, Beautiful inside and out! God be with you. She was thoroughly shaken, wondering what was behind a greeting like that. But the angel assured her, "Mary, you have nothing to fear. God has a surprise for you: You will become pregnant and give birth to a son and call his name Jesus.

Mary said to the angel, "But how? I've never slept with a man."

The angel answered, The Holy Spirit will come upon you, the power of the Highest hover over you; Therefore, the child you bring to birth will be called Holy, Son of God.

And Mary said, Yes, I see it all now: I'm the Lord's maid, ready to serve. Let it be with me just as you say.

Then the angel left her.

Luke 1 v 28-31, 34-35, 37-38, (The Message)



Morning:

I wonder how you would respond to a greeting like this?! You might like to think about that together. Do you believe in angels? How might we experience God's messengers in our lives today? How might we respond?

Lord, help us to recognise your messengers, your angels, in the people we meet today.

May we also act as angels for you
Telling others the good news of how much you love each one of us, And the plans that you have for us.. Amen

Evening:



Did you meet an angel today? If you did, what did they look like? Looking back- did a friend or neighbour act like an angel for you today- telling you good news, or being helpful to you? Or, maybe, it was you who God used to be an angel. Telling someone something good, and kind, and being loving?

Lord, thank you for all the good people that we met today, The people who gave us help, or were kind to us, Or helped us to feel loved and cherished. Be with us when we don't feel you near, Help us to recognise the angels that we have amongst us. Amen.

DAY 6 - WEDNESDAY 11TH MAY

Together, ponder the following questions:

I wonder what is happening in this picture? I wonder where you think it might be? What might be behind the wall? I wonder what we might like to put behind a great big wall?

Every year Jesus' parents travelled to Jerusalem for the Feast of Passover. When he was twelve years old, they went up as they always did for the Feast. When it was over and they left for home, the child Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents didn't know it. Thinking he was somewhere in the company of pilgrims, they journeyed for a whole day and then began looking for him among relatives and neighbours. When they didn't find him, they went back to Jerusalem looking for him.

The next day they found him in the Temple seated among the teachers, listening to them and asking questions. The teachers were all quite taken with him, impressed with the sharpness of his answers. But his parents were not impressed; they were upset and hurt.

His mother said, "Young man, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been half out of our minds looking for you." He said, "Why were you looking for me? Didn't you know that I had to be here, dealing with the things of my Father?" But they had no idea what he was talking about. So he went back to Nazareth with them, and lived obediently with them. His mother held these things dearly, deep within herself. And Jesus matured, growing up in both body and spirit, blessed by both God and people. Luke 2 v 41-52 (The Message)



Morning:

You might like to think together about a time when someone was 'lost'- how did they feel (did they even know that there were lost?) and how did the people who had lost that other one feel? What did they do- how did you get found? Or consider when you have lost something precious- how did you go about finding it? Were you successful or is it still lost? How do you feel about that outcome?

As we begin today, we think of all children and adults who might be lost, whether that is because they are away from their family, or away from where they would like to be. Please be with them, especially those who have lost friends and family, may we bring love to such people if we meet them today. Amen.

Evening:



Did you lose someone or something today? Was it/were they easy to find, or did they stay lost? How did that make you feel? Were there images on the news today of families that have been broken up, Through war, or hunger, or accident? How might they be feeling now?

Lord, at the ending of the day, we bring to you all those who have lost someone dear to them recently. We think of those who have had a death in the family, Or where family has moved away. Especially we think of people who feel as if they have lost you and we ask that they would be able to see you Lord, sitting right beside them. Amen

DAY 7– THURSDAY 12TH MAY

Together, ponder the following questions:

I wonder what is happening in this picture? I wonder who the two people might be? I wonder what has been going on—why are all those people in the background? I wonder what is on the plate?

When Jesus looked out and saw that a large crowd had arrived, he said to Philip, “Where can we buy bread to feed these people?” He said this to stretch Philip’s faith. He already knew what he was going to do. Philip answered, “Two hundred silver pieces wouldn’t be enough to buy bread for each person to get a piece.” One of the disciples—it was Andrew, brother to Simon Peter—said, “There’s a little boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But that’s a drop in the bucket for a crowd like this.” Jesus said, “Make the people sit down.” There was a nice carpet of green grass in this place. They sat down, about five thousand of them. Then Jesus took the bread and, having given thanks, gave it to those who were seated. He did the same with the fish. All ate as much as they wanted. When the people had eaten their fill, he said to his disciples, “Gather the leftovers so nothing is wasted.” They went to work and filled twelve large baskets with leftovers from the five barley loaves. John 6 v 5-13 (The Message)



Morning:

In our world, adults are often in charge, and think they need to sort everything out for children and young people. But, sometimes, children and young people bring exactly what a situation needs, and can lead everyone. I wonder in which situations today, the children and young people will be bringing just what is needed? How can we help the adults to see this?

*In all our doings today, may we not judge people and what they bring by how old they are, what they look like, and whether they are what we would have expected. May we see everyone with your eyes, love them with your heart and accept the gifts that they bring us.
Amen.*

Evening:



As you think back over the day, how often did someone unexpectedly help you? Maybe it was someone younger than you, who suddenly understood what needed to be done, or said. Maybe it was someone that you might not have noticed normally. How did you respond to that gift?

*Lord, as we look back over today
Bring to mind those unexpected gifts that we
shared together. Time when children and
young people showed the adults the way,
Or how to do something. Thank you for
those times. Make us mindful in the future to
thank people, whoever they are who bring us
an insight into your love, your way. Amen.*

DAY 8– FRIDAY 13TH MAY

Together, ponder the following questions:

I wonder what is happening in this picture? I wonder where the person has travelled from? And where is she or he going? What do you think the person is thinking about?

Later God's angel spoke to Philip: "At noon today I want you to walk over to that desolate road that goes from Jerusalem down to Gaza." He got up and went. He met an Ethiopian eunuch coming down the road. The eunuch had been on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and was returning to Ethiopia. He was riding in a chariot and reading the prophet Isaiah. The Spirit told Philip, "Climb into the chariot." Running up alongside, Philip heard the eunuch reading Isaiah and asked, "Do you understand what you're reading?" He answered, "How can I without some help?" and invited Philip into the chariot with him. The passage he was reading was this:

As a sheep led to slaughter, and quiet as a lamb being sheared, He was silent, saying nothing. He was mocked and put down, never got a fair trial.

The eunuch said, "Tell me, who is the prophet talking about: himself or some other?" Philip grabbed his chance. Using this passage as his text, he preached Jesus to him. As they continued down the road, they came to a stream of water. The eunuch said, "Here's water. Why can't I be baptized?" He ordered the chariot to stop. They both went down to the water, and Philip baptized him on the spot. Acts 8 v 26-38 abridged (The Message)



Morning:

Most days, we meet lots of people, and have little or no conversation with them. Maybe today, we could be on the lookout for people who are asking questions about God and life, and be with them as they ask their questions, sharing our own experience when that is the right thing to do. Perhaps this might be especially relevant at our schools or places of work, with people who we see regularly but have never talked to that much...

Thank you for those people who have shared their love of you with us through the years.

For the people who helped us to be Christians. Today, may we be there for those who want to know you, But don't know where, or how, to find you. Amen.

Evening:



Did we meet anyone today who was wondering about who God is, and how God could become part of their life? Do we know anyone who is on that journey, looking for a life that includes God as well as everything and everyone else? I wonder if we could think about how we have helped, or could help, those people as we live alongside them?

Thank you for those people who have shared their love of you with us through the years.

For the people who helped us to be Christians. As we think of them now, and the part they have played in our families' life

We say thank you. And help us to help others as they look for you in the future.

Amen.

DAY 9– SATURDAY 14TH MAY

Together, ponder the following questions:

I wonder what is happening in this picture? I wonder where the two people are going on such a dark night? I wonder what you think has led to this point in their lives? I wonder where this might really be?

There was a disciple in Damascus by the name of Ananias. The Master spoke to him in a vision: “Ananias.” “Yes, Master?” he answered. “Get up and go over to Straight Avenue. Ask at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus. His name is Saul. He’s there praying. He has just had a dream in which he saw a man named Ananias enter the house and lay hands on him so he could see again.” Ananias protested, “Master, you can’t be serious. Everybody’s talking about this man and the terrible things he’s been doing, his reign of terror against your people in Jerusalem! And now he’s shown up here with papers from the Chief Priest that give him license to do the same to us.” But the Master said, “Don’t argue. Go! I have picked him as my personal representative to non-Jews and kings and Jews. And now I’m about to show him what he’s in for—the hard suffering that goes with this job.” So Ananias went and found the house, placed his hands on blind Saul, and said, “Brother Saul, the Master sent me, the same Jesus you saw on your way here. He sent me so you could see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” No sooner were the words out of his mouth than something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes—he could see again! He got to his feet, was baptized, and sat down with them to a hearty meal. Acts 9 v 10-19 (The Message)



Morning:

Sometimes we have experiences that make us think life is changing very quickly, and we aren’t quite in control anymore! Maybe today something might happen, that we aren’t expecting- but maybe it will change our lives for the better, for always...

Lord God

Help us to welcome new experiences, new friends today. May we welcome what the new days brings, and expect to see your hand in action, no matter how unusual, or how usual, those new things may be. And help us to recognise your Holy Spirit at work, and work with you to bring about new life.. Amen

Evening:



Did anything usual happen today? If it did, were we able to see where God was at work in that experience? Were we able to see God in the ordinary, as our lives gently move forward? Did we have to do something new today? Was it a bit scary? Was God there too?

Thank you Lord Jesus

For being there by our sides

No matter how usual or unusual our days have been. Help us to recognise you in the various ways we meet you. The faces, the experiences, the feelings. Thank you, for being there, leading us on. Amen