



title: 101 Devotionals With Children
author: Krehbiel, June Galle.
publisher: Herald Press
isbn10 | asin: 083619117X
print isbn13: 9780836191172
ebook isbn13: 9780585183916
language: English
subject Children--Prayer-books and devotions--English.
publication date: 1999
lcc: BV4870.K685 1999eb
ddc: 249
subject: Children--Prayer-books and devotions--English.

101 Devotionals with Children



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Herald
Press



Scottdale, Pennsylvania
Waterloo, Ontario

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Krehbiel, June Galle, 1949-

101 devotionals with children / June Galle Krehbiel.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-8361-9117-X (alk. paper)

1. Children Prayerbooks and devotions—English. I. Title.

II. Title: One hundred and one devotionals with children.

III. Title: One hundred and one devotionals with children.

BV4870.K685 1999

249dc21

99-30151



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101 DEVOTIONALS WITH CHILDREN

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Waterloo, Ont. N2L 6H7. All rights reserved

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 99-30151

International Standard Book Number: 0-8361-9117-X

Printed in the United States of America

Book design by Jim Butti

08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

To order or request information, please call 1-800-759-4447 (individuals); 1-800-245-7894 (trade). Website: www.mph.org

*To Joel, Melanie, and Perry
who gave me thumbs up on all 101 devotionals.*

*To Lauren, Preston, Adriane, Morgan, Laura, David,
Ben, Steve, Tony, Cheri, Kyle, Jessica, Austin, Jason,
Megan, Ingrid, and others who heard them.*

*To my friends who said, "You can do it," and to God,
for answering my prayers when I needed ideas.*

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Words from the Author

The Swing

*How do you like to go up in a swing,
Up in the air so blue?
Oh, I do think it the pleasantest thing
Ever a child can do!*

*Up in the air and over the wall,
Till I can see so wide,
Rivers and trees and cattle and all
Over the countryside*

*Till I look down on the garden green,
Down on the roof so brown
Up in the air I go flying again,
Up in the air and down!*
Robert Louis Stevenson

I may have written my first devotional when my mother pushed me on the swing in our backyard. She came from the garden on the other side of the sweet-smelling Russian olive trees, wiped her hands on her apron, pulled the swing way back, so that I thought I might fall, and then let me fly.

With each push, she said a line from Robert Louis Stevenson's poem. Its rhythm swayed back and forth. The poem matched everything I was feeling, except I could see that our roof was green, not brown. I wanted to rewrite the poem, but "green" didn't rhyme with "down."

Swinging in the backyard, riding my stick horse,

walking out to fetch the cows, and picking strawberries were all devotional times for me as a child. They meant I was with my family. Whether we were laughing or crying, working or playing, eating or sleeping, we were being family together.

Mom taught me to see creation as God's handiwork. Dad taught me what it meant to live in community. Nelson carried me around like a sack of flour and held me when my cousin Janie died. Dorothy and I chased pigs together when they all got out. Edie listened to my questions about how God can hear everyone's prayers at once. My family was like a mini-world where I discovered a loving God who cared about me and about all people.

I invite you to take time to absorb the meaning of these devotionals. Spend time in prayer together, and share your stories. The devotionals are arranged in biblical order, but you can read them in any order. Change the names of the characters, if you like, so they have special meaning to your family and culture. Add your favorite songs to the devotional time. Allow yourself the freedom to come to God as you are and to take away from the time a new sense of God's presence with you.

JUNE GALLE KREHBIEL

1

Read Genesis 1:15*

*And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light
(Genesis 1:3).*

Pancake Creations

Joel was making pancakes. Flour, sugar, baking powder, a cup of milk, two tablespoons of oil, a dash of salt. "You do the dash of salt," Joel told Mom. "I don't know how."

"Hold out your hand," Mom said. She sprinkled a few grains of salt into his palm.

"What good does that do?" Joel asked.

"A little salt helps food taste better," Mom said. Joel cupped his hand to sprinkle the salt into the mixing bowl.

Later he set a plate of hot pancakes onto the table. Joel said, "Let there be pancakes," and there were pancakes.

God made the world. But God didn't need a recipe. God didn't use any utensils or ingredients we think we need to make things. With a power we can't understand, God created the world and everything in it. God made the sun and other stars, all the planets and their moons. God, the one we call friend, is also God the Creator *our* Creator.

Just as Joel combined all the ingredients to make tasty pancakes, God made each of us a perfect and wonderful human being.

What ingredients do you think God could have stirred together to create you?

**Scripture passages with asterisks are suitable for young readers.*

Prayer: Thank you, God, for all of your creation, and thank you, God, for making me. Amen.

Clincher:

(Clap hands seven times in rhythm.)

Clap your hands and stomp your feet;

God's creation is a treat.

(Clap seven times.)

Clap your hands and touch the ground;

God's creation is around.

(Clap seven times.)

(Add your own lines of seven beats.)

2

Read Genesis 1:24-25

In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which, when translated, is Dorcas), who was always doing good and helping the poor (Acts 9:36).

Gazelles

Next to the nearly dry riverbed, Sulemani spotted tracks. Gazelles had come, seeking water and leaving their tracks in the soft mud. Sulemani wished he had been there to see his favorite animals. He liked their soft eyes, their curvy horns, and, most of all, their speed. They had come at daybreak, and he had missed them.

Early the next morning, Sulemani returned to the riverbed to wait for the gazelles. He saw them approach, ears and eyes alert. They drank from the river and then bounded away.

Antelopes, including gazelles, roam many parts of our earth, chewing their cud and running gracefully at top speed. Their hollow horns come in different shapes some are straight, others twist and curve into corkscrews. God made them all "according to their kinds" (Genesis 1:25).

In Acts 9 we read about a disciple named Dorcas, whose name meant "gazelle." The Bible compares other persons to gazelles because they were fast runners. If God had not created animals, our world would be a much different place. We need to live along *with* the animals, as God meant for us to do, instead of competing against them.

If you could choose to be named after an animal, what would be your name?

Prayer: Great God, help us to remember that all life comes from you. Thank you for the living creatures of all kinds and for their place in the world.
Amen.

Clincher:

Oh, give me a home where the buffalo roam,
Where the deer and the antelope play,
Where seldom is heard a discouraging word
And the skies are not cloudy all day.
Cowboy song, possibly written by Brewster Higley

3

Read Genesis 2:13

By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work
(Genesis 2:2).

Rests

Think of your favorite hymn or chorus. Now try singing it all the way through, without stopping for a breath. Can you do it? Probably not.

A few instruments, like violin or guitar, can play without stopping for a long time. But when they do, we expect a break of some kinda pause or a rest. The best music pauses sometimes before going on.

God knows that rests are important. After creating the heavens and earth, God rested. God might have paused a bit after each day's labor, but on the seventh day God *rested*.

Some of us have a hard time resting. We want to keep on working or playing, but rest is important. Our bodies need rest, and our minds need rest. When we get the right amount of sleep, we feel refreshed and ready to go again.

Sing your song again, but this time break at the end of each thought or musical phrase. Think about God as you sing, and make this devotional time a time of rest.

Prayer: God, we ask that you will bless our rest and make it holy. Amen.

Clincher:

The best eraser in the world is a good night's sleep.
O. A. Battista

4

Read Genesis 9:8-16

Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth

(Genesis 9:16).

Promises

The two girls huddle together, sharing secrets. They whisper and look around for others who might be eavesdropping. Then one of the voices gets louder.

"Please, tell me. Please, *please*. I won't tell. I promise. Cross my heart."

On New Year's Day, many people make resolutions for the New Year. They promise that for the entire year they will behave differently. What kinds of promises or New Year's resolutions have you made?

God made a promise. In a way it was like a New Year's resolution. After sending the great flood, which destroyed all the people on the earth except Noah and his family, God promised to never again destroy the earth. This kind of promise is called a *covenant*.

What promise can you make to God today? Light a candle to remind you of your promise.

Prayer: In my heart, Lord Jesus, I promise to share your love with everyone. Amen.

Clincher:

As long as earth endures,
As long as years are new,
A friend I'll be to Jesus.
I promise this so true.

5

Read Genesis 12:15

The Lord had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you"
(Genesis 12:1).

Shoelaces

Karley rushed to tie her shoes. It seemed like whenever she wanted to hurry, the laces knotted up. Karley was so excited she couldn't think of anything except Dad's new job. She figured she was even more excited than he was. *Dad's* shoelaces hadn't caused him any trouble. Finally, she ran to the door and called, "I got myself all knotted up! But I'm ready to go."

Think about changes that have happened to you or someone in your family. How did you feel because of these changes? How was your life different?

God told Abram and Sarai to leave the place where they had lived for many years. They trusted God to guide them, and God promised to give them many children and grandchildren. Because of God's promise and because Abram and Sarai obeyed God, they became the people God wanted them to be. But they had to change.

When you put on your shoes the next time, think about God talking to you. What might God want you to change?

Prayer: Dear God, each day I take steps to follow you. Guide me as I try to be like you. Amen.

Clincher:

Everything changes but change.
Thomas Hardy