

## DEVOTIONS

*Think about devotions is as a continuation of our community's worship. The following basic pattern could be one way of forming your household's devotions. Adapt as necessary!*

### GATHERING

✠ Light a candle to help you focus this time as "God time."

#### ✠ Prayer of the Week

God of New Life and Rebuilding—No wreckage nor destruction is too great for you to rebuild. Not even death itself is beyond your power and might. Help us to trust in your love and mercy alone shown to us most clearly in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord, in whose name we pray. Amen.

### CARING CONVERSATION

*Take a moment to check in with each other or to use the questions below.*

- ❓ **Highs & Lows:** Name one thing that happened today that made you glad. Name one thing that happened today that made you sad.
- ❓ **Thinking About This Week's Story:** Ezra's role was to regather the people returning from exile and to rebuild the temple. We return to church each week to learn the building blocks of faith such as prayer, service to our neighbor, singing songs of praise, and showing our love for God. Which building block of faith did you practice today?
- ❓ **Getting Ready for Next Week's Story:** Make a list of your favorite Christmas songs. Plan to sing one song together each day.

### DAILY BIBLE READING

*Read aloud from the DAILY BIBLE READING from the front. What do you want to remember from this reading?*

### PRAY TOGETHER

✠ Have each person finish this prayer: You, dear God, build within us faith and love. Help me to love [name someone who needs your love]. Amen.

### CLOSING

✠ If you used a candle, extinguish it as a sign of the end of the devotion time.

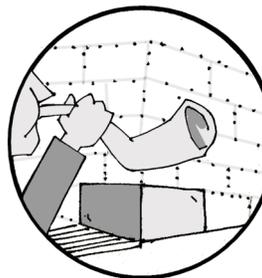
#### ✠ Rituals & Traditions: A Blessing to Share

*Mark one another with the sign of the cross on each other's hands or forehead, and say, "May God build in you a strong faith this day and evermore. Amen."*

The "Four Key Faith Practices"—Caring Conversations, Devotions, Service, and Rituals & Traditions—are a framework developed by the Rev. Dr. David Anderson of Milestones Ministry and used by permission from Vibrant Faith Ministries, Bloomington, MN ([www.vibrantfaith.org](http://www.vibrantfaith.org)). For more information about the Four Keys, go to <http://milestonesministry.org/>.

DECEMBER 15, 2019

Ezra 1:1-4; 3:1-4, 10-13



# Sharing GOD'S STORY @ home

### SCRIPTURE VERSE FOR THE WEEK

And they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the LORD,  
"For [God] is good,  
for [God's] steadfast love endures forever toward Israel."  
- Ezra 3:11

### MEALTIME PRAYER

You, God, provide in all situations. Thank you for the gift of food and water, family and friends, love and joy. As we wait for the coming of Christ, provide us the gift of peace as we dine and share in merriment together. Amen.

### DAILY BIBLE READINGS

*As you read the stories for the week, ask yourself: How does each story impact your life?*

Sunday	Ezra 1:1-4; 3:1-4, 10-13	Returning from Exile
Monday	Ezra 6:1-12	The Decree of Darius
Tuesday	Ezra 6:13-18	The Temple is Rebuilt
Wednesday	Ezra 6:19-22	The Passover is Celebrated
Thursday	Zechariah 8:1-8	A Restored Jerusalem
Friday	Zechariah 8:14-23	Good Times to Come
Saturday	Zechariah 9:9-17	Your King Comes to You
Sunday	Luke 1:5-25	Zechariah and Elizabeth

*If your household includes younger children, use a child-friendly Bible. You might find that the children's Bible you are using may not include the very story assigned for the DAILY BIBLE READINGS. Read to your kids anyway. Just pick a story!*

### SERVICE CHALLENGE

*SERVICE is how we enact God's great love for the entire world.*

Have each person donate one item of theirs to the local Goodwill, Salvation Army, Habitat for Humanity, or another organization that helps rebuild people's lives.