

**Trinity
Christian School
2014-2015**



**Family
Devotional
Resource**

SEPTEMBER: Community-Building

Throughline Overview

We build communities in our classroom, our city and our world that are blessings to ALL.

Students will be active pursuers and builders of communal shalom. Our classrooms and homes will be communities of grace where students and families will walk and work together in a spirit of shalom.

In our hectic, fast-paced, consumer-driven society, it's common to feel overwhelmed, isolated and alone. Many are rediscovering the healing and empowering role that community can bring to our lives. The sense of belonging we feel when we make the time to take an active role in our communities can give us a deeper sense of meaning and purpose -- Robert Alan (American artist, writer and social activist). We can be active pursuers and builders of community in our classrooms, neighbourhoods and in the global village we are part of. In fact, we need to be. Community is how God made us, since doing life without other people is not an option.

Shalom (from Hebrew) – is more than just 'not fighting'. The word we most often use instead of shalom is peace, but that doesn't quite describe the whole concept—it is more like fullness or completeness – how God intended things to be. One of clearest and most well-known Biblical metaphors compares Christian community to a body which is made up of many parts. We need all the parts to work together in order to experience health and wholeness. We all know that maintaining a healthy body isn't something that just happens by itself. Students need to learn and experience that community doesn't just happen either.

We need to pursue shalom. We can't just wait for community and peace to come to us – we must go out and make it happen. We need to build shalom– to be active and eager examples of peaceful/shalom-filled communities.

Verses to Read:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 | <input type="checkbox"/> Psalm 133:1 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 Corinthians 13 | <input type="checkbox"/> Ecclesiastes 4:10 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ephesians 4:4 | <input type="checkbox"/> Philippians 2:1-11 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> John 17:22-23 | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 Peter 4:10-11 |

Questions to talk about as a family:

- How do you feel when others are unkind to you?
- How do you feel when others are kind to you?
- What could you do for others to make them feel loved? At school? At home? In your neighborhood?

Family activities that build community:

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| ● help with homework | ● rake/shovel for a neighbor |
| ● neighborhood bbq | ● write someone a letter or card; or draw them a picture |

Online Family Devotionals:

- ["You Were Made for Community"](#) by Larry Fowler
- ["Working as a Team"](#) by Karen Schmidt

OCTOBER: God-Worshipping

Throughline Overview

We offer thanks, praise and honor to God by the way we live.

We understand that worshipping God is about celebrating who God is, what God has done and is doing, and what God has created. It is literally about standing in awe and wonder of knowledge of him and his promises. We need to see this worship as a way of life.

Glorifying and praising God is a joyful duty of being an image bearer. In fact, Christ says that if we don't praise God, the rocks themselves will cry out. (Luke 19:40) And they do! Upon seeing the Grand Canyon for the first time, Hendrik Vonloon exclaimed: "I came an atheist – I leave a believer!" Praising God is not an option – or an elective or "frill." God loves every part of this world. Our God is a God who loves diversity, complexity, and creativity. When we look at the world around us, the plants, rocks, animals, sea creatures, insects, the skies and beyond, and especially people and their intelligence and capabilities... we can't help but be awestruck. (Psalm 8)

God obviously takes delight in chickadees, giraffes and northern lights, but also wants us to delight in Creation. Albert Einstein once said, "There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as if everything is." God gave us this world to enjoy, to play in, to explore. We worship God when we enjoy the delicate complexity of a butterfly wing and a tiny seedpod, or the immense awe of a sharp edged mountain ridge, and a towering thundercloud. We also realize, when we see this beauty, how much God loves us. Together, in community, we join in worship of our God.

Verses to Read:

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Psalm 34:8; Psalm 68:3; | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 Chronicles 16:8-16 | <input type="checkbox"/> Acts 17:24-28 |
| Psalm 92:41; Psalm 96:4; | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 Samuel 12:24 | <input type="checkbox"/> Romans 12:1 |
| Psalm 98:1; Psalm 100:1-2; | <input type="checkbox"/> John 4:24 | <input type="checkbox"/> Hebrews 12:28 |
| Psalm 113:3; Psalm 150 | | |

Questions to talk about as a family:

- How do you feel when others are unkind to you?
- How do you feel when others are kind to you?
- What could you do for others to make them feel loved? At school? At home? In your neighborhood?

Family activities that worship God:

- participate in your own church
- read the book [Because I Love You](#) by Max Lucado
- dance, sing, paint, play instruments, write
- establish a regular family prayer time
- random acts of kindness for neighbors and friends

Online Family Devotionals:

- ["Our Awesome God"](#) by Nicole Brouwer
- ["Praise God, All the Earth"](#) by Jan May
- ["The Spiritual Discipline of Worship"](#) by Renee Gray-Wilburn

NOVEMBER: Justice-Seeking

Throughline Overview

We notice and respond to situations that are not right or fair.

The world is not as God intended it to be. That much is clear. U2 lead singer and social activist Bono once said, "Every age has its massive moral blind spots. We might not see them, but our children will." We are able to lead our children to see the injustices in this world—the injustices of poverty, racism, gender inequality, war, exploitation in work places, abuse in relationships, poor governance etc. But seeing these things can't be where we stop. If we do, we leave our students discouraged and hopeless. We need to enable students to act as agents of change by BOTH identifying and responding to injustices. Together we must find the moral blind spots and bring the vision of God's kingdom to them.

The Bible is clear that justice is a central part of the shalom of God's kingdom. The Bible leaves no doubt that Christian lives must be lives of justice. It is the first requirement listed in answer to Micah's question, "What does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." (Micah 6:8) God has decided to use his people (us!) to do His work in this world! What a responsibility and privilege! Christian education nurtures and discipulates young people to take on this ongoing responsibility and to rejoice in the glimpses of the kingdom that they get in this task.

Verses to Read:

- Psalm 9:16; Psalm 82:3; Psalm 106:3
- Isaiah 1:17; Isaiah 28:17; Isaiah 61:1
- Micah 6:8
- Proverbs 29:7
- James 1:27

Questions to talk about as a family:

- What does justice look like at school? (ie. not cheating on a test, using the swing for the whole recess...)
- What does justice look like at home? What can we do to make things right?
- How could we help people whose rights are being violated?

Family activities that seek justice:

- write letters to MPs, city council, etc.
- make jars/collect change for various foundations
- deliver care packages
- help out at food banks, Mustard Seed, etc.
- 30 Hour Famine

Online Family Devotionals:

- ["Love One Another"](#) by Ted Cunningham
- ["Repairing Wounds"](#) by Karen Schmidt
- ["God Helps the Poor and Needy"](#) by Christine St. Jacques

DECEMBER: Servant-Working

Throughline Overview

We serve others as Christ served us.

We should learn to serve others by working actively to heal brokenness and bring joy and shalom. “As individuals, we are called to make a difference in the world, not just in private personal behavior. We are also called to the restoration task as communities of believers. As redeemed image bearers we should be making a difference in the culture” (Donovan Graham).

Learning about God and His creation in itself is an act of restoration – as is showing hope, love, joy, peace, healing, overcoming, etc. Students need to see that they are called to look for ways in their learning to affect change, improve situations for people, build community, and meet needs. Being an image bearer means having the ability and responsibility to discover, respond to, develop, use, and improve the world that God has placed us in. This is true for the student just as it is true for the construction worker, the scientist, the truck driver, the accountant, the teacher.

We are to improve the world? Us? God has given us the gifts of ideas, skills, materials, and awareness in order to do just that. That’s what we need to cultivate in our children and ourselves: the desire and ability to offer hope, healing, and restoration to this world and its people. We are to be Christ’s salt and light. We can’t minister to a hurting world by pretending sin doesn’t exist, and hiding in a make believe world of purity and beauty untouched by sin.

Being “salt and light” means our faith needs to be expressed in our work. We all can help to heal brokenness and bring joy. Sometimes this will be a response to an injustice, and sometimes it will be doing good things just for the sake of doing them. Sometimes these things will be easy for us to do and sometimes they will really push us out of our comfort zone – and both are great experiences!

Verses to Read:

- Matthew 20:28; Matthew 25
- Luke 12:35, 48b
- John 13:12-17
- Acts 20:35
- Ephesians 2:10
- James 3:13
- 1 John 3:16

Questions to talk about as a family:

- Who are we supposed to help? Who is our neighbor?
- Who could we serve this Christmas?

Family activities that serve others:

- collect food for food bank
- fill a box for Operation Christmas Child
- Give hats, mittens to the homeless
- shovel for a neighbor

Online Family Devotionals:

- [“The Power of Kindness”](#) by Dr. Joshua Straub
- [“You Can Work as a Family to Serve Others”](#) by Christi Lynn

JANUARY: Beauty-Creating

Throughline Overview

We create beauty as a way of praising God, and enriching our world.

As image bearers of a creative God, we will glorify and praise God by creating that which is beautiful and pleasing to Him. This offering of creativity isn't optional – it's a joyful duty that students offer as a sacrifice of praise.

When we look at the world around us, the plants, rocks, animals, sea creatures, insects, the skies and beyond and especially people and their intelligence and capabilities... it shouts that our God is a God who loves diversity, complexity, and creativity. We must draw attention to God's creation and its wonder and weirdness. We must stop and look and be amazed; we must create the opportunities to see the beauty, delicacy, oddity and miracle in everyday things. We must also explore the majesty and wonder of the beauty in those parts of Creation that we have to work to see – the huge and awesome artistry in space, the bizarre and beautiful creatures hidden in the oceans, and the microscopic miracles of cells.

God created people to be creative beings. We are image bearers of this creative God! Glorifying and praising God by creating is the natural, unstoppable, joyful result of being an image bearer. But how does God mean for us to use this creativity – what's its point? Obviously, beauty creating offers praise to God. God created humans capable of creating beauty and responding to beauty. God gave us this world to enjoy, to play in, to explore. We also realize, when we see this beauty, how much God loves us. But there's more. Being an image bearer means having the ability and responsibility to discover, respond to, develop, use, and improve the world that God has placed us in. Beauty creating enriches our lives. The natural creative desire and ability God gives each child needs to be stimulated, encouraged, and developed in as many different ways as possible.

Verses to Read:

- Genesis 1:31; Genesis 5:1
- Colossians 1:16
- Psalm 27:4; Psalm 139:13-16
- Romans 8:19-21

Questions to talk about as a family:

- Where do you see God's fingerprints?
- How could you create beauty at home? at school? at church?

Family activities that create beauty:

- Make cards for seniors, pastors, etc.
- Buy flowers and give them to a neighbor or friend
- create artwork for your home
- put on a family talent show

Online Family Devotionals:

- ["God's Masterpiece"](#) by Christine St. Jacques

February: Creation-Enjoying

Throughline Overview

When we recognize God's brilliant creation, ordinary things become extraordinary.

What a delight it is to encourage children to be curious about God's world, to celebrate God's incredible creation, and to develop the confidence to look at their environment with the joy of critical awareness. We can celebrate the gift of having eyes to see, ears to hear and hands to touch and create. Our study can give testimony to the presence of God in creation, the world and people around us, all created by God. Exploring and understanding creation also brings us to a better understanding of the human beings God has created.

Creation-Enjoying is looking at, talking about, and studying creation. We must stop, look and be amazed; we must create opportunities to see the beauty, delicacy, oddity and miraculous in everyday things. We must also explore the majesty and wonder of the beauty in those parts of Creation that we have to work to see – the huge and awesome artistry in space, the bizarre and beautiful creatures hidden in the oceans, and the microscopic miracles of cells. Ordinary things become extraordinary when we see them from this perspective. It is all about noticing and drawing attention to what there is to be seen in God's world. Creation-Enjoying is helping to coax the "songs of joy" (Ps. 65:8) from ourselves. This beautiful creation is a gift. We all know how much fun it is when we give someone a gift and they really love it; that is what it's like for God when we get out, experience and rejoice in the gift of creation.

Verses to Read:

- Genesis 1:29-30; Genesis 45:18
- Psalm 19; Psalm 65:8
- Ecclesiastes 2:24-25; Ecclesiastes 3:12
- 1 Timothy 4:4-5

Questions to talk about as a family:

- What do you enjoy most about God's creation? What would you like to learn more about?
- How can we enjoy God's creation?

Family activities that enjoy God's creation:

- Help clean a park/roadside/river valley
- Plant a garden
- Take a day trip to the mountains
- Go on a nature walk

Online Family Devotionals:

- "[God and His Nature](#)" by Vance Fry
- "[God's Handiwork](#)" by Julie Reece-DeMarco

March: Order-Discovering

Throughline Overview

We create beauty as a way of praising God and enriching our world.

Creation is not random – it is full of order and patterns. The creation story itself is a story of God creating order out of chaos. And in the context of this orderly creation, we can better understand the rest of the Biblical story, which is about restoring order to a creation chaotically rocked with sin.

There is purpose in God's creation, and together with our children we get to discover creation's amazing order. If there is any doubt, read those amazing chapters in Job (Job 38:41) where God points out some of the amazing order in His creation to a man who has every reason to doubt. One of the inescapable conclusions for our students must be, "God really had an amazing plan for all things, didn't he?"

Verses to Read:

- Psalm 19:1-3; Psalm 104:1-5; Psalm 119:90
- Isaiah 25:1
- Romans 1:19-20; Romans 12:6-8
- Job 38-41

Questions to talk about as a family:

- What you have recently discovered about something in God's creation? Why is it special? Why do you think He made it that way?
- What are things that disrupt God's intended order?
- How did God make each of us different? How does that make our family stronger?

Family activities that discover God's order:

- visit the Science Centre or zoo
- watch a Planet Earth video
- take a nature walk looking for examples of God's order in creation

Online Family Devotionals:

- "[The Divine in the Daily Grind](#)" by Glenn T. Stanton
- "[Follow Jesus' Patterns](#)" by Naomi Cassata
- "[God's Perfect Design](#)" by Jolene Ceravalo and Kristen Joy Wilks

April: Earth-Keeping

Throughline Overview

We take care of and protect God's creation.

Everyone, in his imagination, can go to the most beautiful places on earth. Perhaps it is a mountaintop with a forever view, or a long, white sand beach. Maybe it is the spray and the thunderous roar of a waterfall or the quiet, gentle sway of a seemingly endless golden field of wheat. These places can help us to have a Garden of Eden experience. The Garden must have been an incredible place, not only because of the tangible presence of God, but because of its beauty. The writer of Genesis says "And God saw everything that he had made, and it was very good" (1:31). It seems almost unbelievable that God calls us to be stewards, caretakers or gardeners of all of creation. (Gen 1:28) God created the world and he gives us the opportunity to 'manage' it on his behalf?

Amazing! Incredible! Daunting! Amazing? Yes! Incredible? Yes! Easy? No! Caretaking can so easily succumb to exploiting. Stewardship can so often turn into self-centred greed. Our sin has made it difficult for us to clearly see the role and tasks gardeners and stewards must play. Loud voices from our culture shout out, "stuff equals happiness" and we see people wearing T-shirts with the mantra, "Whoever dies with the most toys wins!" We need to reclaim the world/universe and relearn how to treat all things contained in it (natural resources, environment, water, trees, farm land) with respect. By doing this we respect the One who gave us this job!

In our global economy, this earthkeeping is not only about stewarding the environment, it is about the challenge of living lives that balance our wants and needs with those of other people, people living in other areas of the world and those still to come. This is a countercultural message that we must grapple with in our Christian schools and homes.

Verses to Read:

- Genesis 1:26-28
- Psalm 24:1
- Isaiah 6:3; Isaiah 11:6; Isaiah 28:23-29
- 1 Corinthians 10:26

Questions to talk about as a family:

- Does our use of water honor God?
- Does the amount of stuff we have honor God? What about the waste that comes when you are done with that stuff?
- Do our actions honor an amazing Creator and a God who loves you?
- What could we do to better care for God's creation?

Family activities that are earth-keeping:

- clean up garbage
- recycle
- clean up a park/river valley
- pack litterless lunches for school

Online Family Devotionals:

- ["Good Stewardship of All Living Things"](#) by Christine St. Jacques

May: Idolatry-Discerning

Throughline Overview

We are wise about what pulls our attention and our hearts away from God's story.

We humans were created to worship God. If we don't worship God, we worship something else. Romans 1:25 describes how the Romans had "exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator." Any area of study is never neutral. It always has values attached to it. Learning about and discerning these values tell us about those who produce them, what they think is important, and what they believe is true. It tells us about the values of cultures, times, and belief systems. We must understand that worldviews affect what people believe, say and do.

Therefore, we need to learn to "read" a worldview. We need to ask questions about what is being portrayed in regard to culture, values, and belief systems. We need to identify and understand the idols of our time (and times past). Modern idolatry is a matter of the heart. Idolatry extends beyond the worship of idols and images and false gods. Our modern idols are many and varied. Even for those who do not bow physically before a statue, idolatry is a matter of the heart—pride, self-centeredness, greed, gluttony, a love for possessions and ultimately rebellion against God. Is it any wonder that God hates it?

Verses to Read:

- Deuteronomy 5:7-8
- 1 Kings 3:9
- Psalm 119:26-32; Psalm 130:1-4
- Proverbs 14:6
- 1 Corinthians 10:14
- Ephesians 4:14
- Hebrews 12:1
- 1 Thessalonians 5:19-24
- 1 John 5:21

Questions to talk about as a family:

- How do you spend your time?
- Are there objects/attitudes that are pulling our attention and hearts away from God's story?
- What changes can we make? How can we remind ourselves to keep our attention fixed on God?

Family activities that are idolatry-discerning:

- give time/talent to someone less fortunate
- fasting from things that distract
- donate clothing to charity
- do a family "audit" to see where priorities are

Online Family Devotionals:

- ["Putting God First"](#) by Kurt Bruner
- ["What Do You Love?"](#) by Rhett H. Wilson, Sr., Ph.D.
- ["Who's Your Master?"](#) by Janine Petry

June: Image-Reflecting

Throughline Overview

We learn to see God's image in others and in ourselves. People reflect God's image!

While we don't always ACT righteously, and while we don't always DO things successfully, what we ARE are image bearers of God (Larry Day, Manhattan Teachers Convention, 1988). Being an image bearer isn't something we DO. It is deeper than that. Image bearer is what we ARE. We reflect God's image! We are all image bearers of Christ! Think about it like a mirror – the image of the 'real person' is reflected in the mirror. You don't see the actual real person, but you see what they are like.

All the characteristics we admire in God are also within us – we are His reflection. And not only us! All humans were created in that image. Sin can often fog the mirror and make the reflection more difficult to see. Seeing ourselves and each other as reflecting God's image is only part of our task. We need to also challenge each other to see the image bearer in the hungry child, the hardened criminal, the school bully and the careless teacher! People around us often form impressions of who God is by looking at God's followers. We need to learn that while we are image bearers, we can distort the image by what they do. The more Christlike our actions are, the more clearly Christ's light shines in a dark world.

Verses to Read:

- Genesis 1:27
- Matthew 25:31-43
- 2 Corinthians 4:10
- Galatians 2:20
- Colossians 3:17

Questions to talk about as a family:

- As God's children, what are we reflecting about our Heavenly Father? Do we reflect God's love?
- Do the choices that we make reflect God? Will others see Him through us?

Family activities that reflect God's image:

- random acts of kindness
- "Pay it Forward"
- write encouraging cards/notes to local businesses, politicians, pastors, etc.

Online Family Devotionals:

- "[Be a Copycat](#)" by Sandra Hendricks
- "[In His Image](#)" by Amy Cobb