

The Gift of Values



A Resource for Family Devotions

By

Rosie Boom



Great Oaks from Little Acorns

The Shema



ear O Israel; the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your house and on your gates.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

The Gift of Values



Contents

| | |
|-------------------------------------|----|
| Preface | 1 |
| How to use this book | 3 |
| Value One HONESTY | 9 |
| George and the Cherry Tree | 11 |
| Blackball Stains | 18 |
| The Emperor and the Seed | 24 |
| Value Two A POSITIVE ATTITUDE | 31 |
| Don't Cry Over Spilt Milk | 33 |
| The Unfortunate Man | 38 |
| Who Am I? | 46 |
| Value Three COURAGE | 53 |
| Riot in the Prison | 55 |
| Orange in a Sea of Grey | 60 |
| A Foolish Dare | 65 |
| Flynn of Thrim | 70 |

The Gift of Values

| | |
|---------------------------------------|-----|
| Value Four DILIGENCE..... | 77 |
| The Elephant’s Trunk | 79 |
| A Pocket of Beans | 84 |
| The Ants and the Grasshopper | 88 |
| Value Five PERSEVERANCE | 88 |
| “I Can Plod” | 95 |
| “You’re Just Not Suited!” | 96 |
| Wheelbarrow Jack..... | 103 |
| Value Six OBEDIENCE | 113 |
| “Who, me?!” | 119 |
| The Widow’s Birthday..... | 125 |
| The Knights of the Silver Shield..... | 130 |
| How to do a Bible study..... | 138 |
| Epilogue..... | 140 |
| Acknowledgements..... | 142 |
| More from the Boom family album..... | 143 |
| About the Author | 148 |

Preface

I couldn't wait to write this book. For many years I've dreamed about having time to write down some of the things that have worked in our family, and share them with others.

With six busy, noisy children, free time is not something I have a lot of. I teach the children at home, and although it is one of the greatest joys of my life, home-schooling is both demanding and time consuming. However, Jacob, my youngest will be six next week, and I have just finished applying for my last home-schooling exemption today! That makes me very aware that nothing lasts forever. Josiah, our firstborn, will be seventeen this year. I am very conscious of how little time we have left with him in our home, and I'm so grateful I have been able to home-school him all these years. Yes, I still feel sad when I think about him leaving home, but I'm not consumed with regrets over all the things I wish I'd done with him, and the time I should have spent with him. That is the greatest gift home-schooling has given me - TIME. Time with my children, time to disciple them in the ways of the Lord, time to enjoy them.

For the past twelve years, the children and I have cuddled up on the sofa each morning and enjoyed devotions together. This is the heart of our home-schooling. We take as long as we like and don't skimp on this all important part of our day. Over the years we've studied the Bible, read hundreds of stories, worked our way through many inspiring devotionals, and devoured countless biographies. Every six months, I have used a portion of my home-schooling money to purchase devotional books, and have amassed quite a collection. While being very aware of all the wonderful books available on this topic, I have had a persistent urge to write yet another one, relating our own journey and the things that have 'worked' in our family.

The Gift of Values

My aim in writing this book is to give you, the parent, a resource you can use in your own family devotions - something that is simple and usable. I don't want you to have to wade through pages of writing just to glean a few things that you can integrate into your own family experience. I have laid it out in such a way that you can pick it up and follow it through step by step. Alternatively, you can use one small portion at a time. I have deliberately *not* made this an exhaustive study of each topic, despite the very real temptation! I have tried to keep it fairly streamlined and un-daunting.

For those of you who have children in school, the thought of having family devotions may seem like the straw that would break the camel's back. I'm aware of the hectic rush it can be in the morning to get your children off to school on time. I hope this book will be so easy to read and use, that you will feel inspired to snatch even just a few moments of your busy day and enjoy some special time with your child. Remember, every moment counts. We can feel discouraged if we don't achieve all our goals, but rather, we should be celebrating every small step along the way. If you feel daunted at the idea of family devotions, start small. But try to make it a habit. Remember, great oaks grow from little acorns!

For those of you who have struggled with family devotions, and found them more a curse than a blessing, my hope is that this book will make you think, "I can do this!"

And for those of you who have yet to embark on the wonderful journey of family devotions, my prayer is that this book will be just what you need to get you started.

This is my gift to you.

How to use this book

The fact that you are reading this book indicates you have a desire to instill in your children a love for God, a thirst for truth, and a solid foundation of true values.

We all long to see our children develop a strong character - a character which will help them navigate their way through this ungodly world, not just by the skin of their teeth, but as shining examples to others.

We have the awesome responsibility of planting the seed of God's word in the hearts of our children. Within the seed of strong, clear moral values lies the fruit of joy and personal fulfillment. Our children will lead happier and more fulfilling lives if they have a strong foundation of Christian values.

It is never too early (or too late) to start. Some of you reading this may be thinking, "How can I possibly teach my children the values of honesty and forgiveness when my own life has been such a mess? Aren't I being hypocritical trying to teach my children something that I am still struggling with myself?"

Absolutely not! You can teach your children not only from the things you've done well, but also from the things that you wished you'd done differently. Richard Eyre writes in his book *Teaching Your Children Values*, "We all want to teach better than we ourselves have learned. We all want our children to surpass us." Amen to that!

I have written this book with my own family in mind, aware that many of you also have families with a fairly big spread of ages. Ideally, we want to make devotions a time which all the children enjoy. This can be a challenge, but I believe it can be done. I have included stories that will appeal to the younger ones, and that the older ones can listen in to as well. Always be thinking of age-appropriate questions that you can ask each of the children. I have included thought provoking quotes for the older children. In our own

family, I have generally stayed with one value for at least a fortnight. That way, the children become aware of it in their own lives, and begin to look for examples of it in the books they read and in everyday life. My suggestion would be to read the first story, and ask questions on the first day. Over the next few days, you could look at the Bible references and discuss some of the quotes. Enjoy plenty of discussion times. Choose further readings from the suggested reading list. There are plenty of ideas for further developments if you so choose. I hope it's all here for you - a small bite if that's all you have time for, or a three course meal if you're hungry!

Each chapter includes the following...

Stories

The words 'Once upon a time' never fail to thrill me. A story can move you; challenge you; open your eyes. There is nothing like a good story to get a truth across. Jesus knew that. He was a master storyteller.

In each chapter I have included stories that you can share with your children, and suggestions for further reading as well. But don't forget - your own life is a book full of wonderful stories you can share with your children. You may never become a children's writer, but you can learn to tell your own stories. Your children will love to hear you share about your own life. As you read a new chapter, ask God to remind you of any thing in your life that will help apply the truth. It may be just a small incident that happened when you were a child, but as you share it, it will have real impact. And once you start looking for these 'stories', you'll find them everywhere.

Encourage your children to tell their own stories as well. You'll be amazed how even the youngest can tell something so pertinent to the value that you're talking about. It only takes one of them to say, "I remember when..." and the others will be bursting to have their say.

Think about it

Jesus asked a lot of questions. He wanted people to search out truth for themselves. Get into the habit of asking lots of questions in your devotional time. Get your children thinking. Once you develop the habit, you'll find it becomes very easy to think of thought provoking questions, even while you're reading a story. I have included some prompts to get the ball rolling.

Something to do

Over the years, I've tried to think of practical, creative ways I can illustrate a truth that we've been learning about in our devotional times. I'll share some of these in each chapter, and they'll probably be the only prompt you need to think of plenty of your own. Van Dyke once said, "*Opportunities swarm around us, thicker than gnats at sundown. Every day we walk through a swarm of them.*" Creative ideas are like that. Once you train your eyes to see them, they come thick and fast. But you have to be looking for them.

And if you feel you haven't got a creative bone in your body - don't worry! Creative ideas are given by God to be shared. Borrow the ideas of others and make them your own. There are plenty enough ideas to go around!

So said...

A few carefully crafted words can hold so much truth and meaning. They offer great starting points for lively discussion. The quotes I list in each chapter are just the tip of a huge iceberg. Go hunting yourself and pin them up in different places around your house. A notice board in the 'little room' is a great place for displaying your finds!

Words to live by

There are countless scriptures that apply to each topic, but I have listed just a few as a starting point. If you have older children, encourage them to use these as a springboard for their own Bible studies. I've written a short explanation at the back of the book of how to do a simple, but very effective Bible study. This is the way I used to study the Bible when I first became a Christian as a sixteen year old. Simple, yes, but it has been a huge source of blessing to me. I still have all the studies I did as a teenager - over thirty years ago! Go through it with your older children and encourage them to begin. Once they do, they'll never stop.

Boom clip

In this book, I have shared with you many personal experiences and anecdotes that have happened in the Boom household. We are a very normal family, and have had plenty of 'learning' moments - squabbles, fights, disagreements, dramas etc. But we have also had a rich, endless supply of joy and laughter!

Dig deeper

As much as possible, get your children to do some research on the topic. A simple idea is to get one of them to look up the particular word in the dictionary. Just discussing some of the listed meanings will offer a goldmine.

Another thing the older children can do is search the internet for more quotes. A caution here. The internet is a mine field, and quotes can be a storehouse for offensive material. I always type in 'Inspirational quotes on...' in the search engine, and have not read an offensive one yet. However, the one time I left the word 'inspirational' out, I was bombarded with some really dubious quotes.

There are many different ways you can develop the basic ideas in this book. There are countless movies that illustrate the different truths and an endless supply of books and biographies you can enjoy. At the end of each chapter I have listed books or videos which we as a family have enjoyed, that have helped reinforce the appropriate truth.

A great resource we have used is Focus on the Family's entertainment review site, *www.pluggedinonline.com*. Here you can get a detailed review of a big selection of movies and videos from a Christian perspective. It lists each occurrence of bad language, violence or sexual content, and gives a good overview of the movie's plot. If you want to enjoy a relaxed movie evening with the family, without feeling on edge and wondering what's going to come on the screen next, check it out on this site first.



The Gift of Values

One last word. Recently I read a great pithy saying: “Think it, ink it.” In other words, write things down! We forget so easily - even things we’re sure we’ll never forget! Get into the habit of writing things down. Aside from helping you to remember, it serves to solidify and clarify what you’ve learnt. It also ensures that later you can go back and “Do it, review it!” (As the second half of the saying goes.)

I hope that as you work through this book, you will encourage your children to do lots of ‘inking!’ When each of my children turned four years old, I gave them a big, blank book. It is *the* place to write down scriptures that they’re memorizing, great quotes, poems - anything that is inspiring and worthy of remembering. The children do art work in there as well. It was one of the best things I ever did. I encourage you to do the same. Make sure you get a well bound book with good quality art paper - you want it to last. This will be a book each child treasures as they grow older. They aren’t expensive, but even if they were, they’d be worth every cent!

As your children learn about the values covered by this book and try to put them into practice, watch them carefully - not so much for what they do wrong, but for what they do right. Look for every opportunity you can to praise them. Reinforce and acknowledge their attempts to be kind or honest. For example, Samuel has just this minute run in to tell me that Jacob has fallen off the tramp and hurt himself. I praise him for being kind and caring, and his face glows.

Praise your children for every little step they take in the right direction, and give plenty of encouragement along the way. The Duke of Wellington was asked near the end of his life what one thing he would change if he could live his life over again. “I would give more praise,” he replied.

May God bless you as you embark on this wonderful journey.

Riot in the Prison

Adapted from *The Man with the Axe* by Dave and Neta Jackson

Gladys Aylward! You must come quickly!” Loud pounding shook the gate of the Inn of the Eight Happinesses. Gladys dressed quickly and followed the man, her heart thumping. She could hear the terrible screams and cries coming from inside the local prison. It sounded like a riot. Why had she been summoned by the Mandarin? She saw him standing with the governor of the prison outside the huge gates. She approached them and bowed respectfully.

“Thank goodness you have come!” said the governor. “You must go in and stop the riot!”

Gladys’s eyes grew wide. “Me? Me go in there? Why don’t you send in your soldiers?”

“Impossible!” cried the governor. “My soldiers would surely be killed by these murderers and thieves!”

Gladys listened in unbelief. “But if I go in there, I too will be killed.”

“Oh no,” replied the governor. “You tell our people that there is a God who lives inside you. If that be true, he will protect you.”

Gladys’s mouth went dry. He was serious! He wasn’t making fun of her. The two men stared at her, waiting for her answer. In an instant she knew. If she doubted God’s protection now, she may as well return to England. China was no place for her.

She took a deep breath to try and calm her pounding heart. “Alright,” she said. “I will go in. Open the gate.”

As the great doors swung open, Gladys saw a terrible sight. Wounded prisoners lay all over the compound, moaning and crying. The bodies of the dead lay everywhere. Men were chasing each other with machetes and screaming like madmen. Gladys felt the blood drain from her face. A large man ran straight towards her, his bloodied axe high above his head.



The Gift of Values

Gladys was so terrified she couldn't move. Then suddenly the prisoner stopped a metre in front of her and stared in amazement. What was a tiny woman doing here? He stood there speechless, his axe hanging at his side. One by one, the other prisoners caught sight of her and stared in astonishment.

Then Gladys found her tongue. "Give me that axe!" she snapped, holding out her hand.

Without a word, the man handed her the axe. Gladys looked at the prisoners. They were filthy and dressed in rags. Their ribs stuck out in emaciated bodies, and they shivered with cold. Suddenly all her fear evaporated. In its place was a deep compassion. "I have been sent in here to find out why you are rioting." Her voice was clear and strong.

No one spoke. Then a young man stepped forward. "My name is Feng," he said. "We are hungry and cold and have nothing to do day after day. That is why we fight."

Gladys looked around them. They were like caged animals, with little food and no work to pass the hours. "If you will promise to stop fighting, and will care for the wounded and bury the dead, I will speak to the governor for you," she said.

The prisoners agreed. As the little woman stepped out from the prison, both the Mandarin and the governor bowed to her with respect.

"These men must be allowed to work, so they can earn money and buy food," she said. "They must regain their self-respect."

The governor nodded.

"And I shall be here every day to ensure you carry this out!" Gladys added, her eyes flashing.

True to her word, Gladys began visiting the prisoners every day. She read them stories from the Bible and taught them basic hygiene. Two old looms were donated to the prison and Gladys begged yarn from the local merchants. She also managed to get an old miller's wheel so that the prisoners could grind their own grain. Gladys even taught the men how to breed rabbits to sell. Within a few months of the riot, the prisoners were all warmly dressed and

eating well. From that time on, she was called Ai-weh-deh - 'virtuous one'. Everyone in the district knew her as the 'riot-stopper', a brave and virtuous woman.

Think about it

- ❖ Was Gladys courageous? Was she also afraid?
- ❖ Where does courage come from? (A 'knowing' that God is with us and that He is greater than all our adversaries.)
- ❖ Why did Gladys decide she must go in? (It would be a clear demonstration to all watching, that the God she spoke of was true.)

Something to do

- ❖ Act out the story of Daniel in the lion's den (*Daniel 6*). Like Gladys, he also had a choice of whether or not to 'go in' to a dangerous place. If he had obeyed the law, he wouldn't have had to face the punishment. But like Gladys, he found the courage to 'go in.' And God was glorified through his courage.

So said...

- ❖ "Courage is a special kind of knowledge; the knowledge of how to fear what ought to be feared and how not to fear what ought not to be feared." *David Ben-Gurion*
- ❖ "Courage is fear that has said its prayers." *Karle Wilson Baker*
- ❖ "Never take counsel of your fears." *Andrew Jackson*



The Gift of Values

- ❖ “Heroism is the brilliant triumph of the soul over the flesh - that is to say over fear: fear of poverty, of suffering, of sickness, of isolation, and of death. There is no serious piety without heroism. Heroism is the dazzling and glorious concentration of courage.” *Amiel’s Journal*
- ❖ “Without Christ, not one step; but with Him - anywhere!”
David Livingstone

Words to live by

- ❖ “For God has not given to us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.” *2 Timothy 1:7 NKJV*
- ❖ “When I am afraid, I will trust in Thee. In God whose word I praise, in God I have put my trust; I shall not be afraid.” *Psalms 56:3, 4 NASB*
- ❖ “Be strong and courageous, do not fear or be dismayed because of the king of Assyria, nor because of all the multitude which is with him; for the one with us is greater than the one with him. For with him is only an arm of flesh, but with us is the Lord our God to help us and fight our battles.” *2 Chronicles 32:7, 8 NASB*
- ❖ “For we are powerless before this great multitude who are coming against us; nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are on Thee.” *2 Chronicles 20:12 NIV* Read the chapter to get the whole story of fear and courage and trust in God.

Dig deeper

- ❖ Watch the video *Shackleton* with your older children.
- ❖ Watch the video *The Inn of the Six Happinesses*, starring Ingrid Bergman as Gladys. It is a wonderful portrayal of her life in China. Probably suitable for 10 years and up.

- ❖ Read the book and/or watch the movie *The Hiding Place*, which tells the story of Corrie Ten Boom, a Dutch woman who was imprisoned in Ravensbrück concentration camp for hiding Jews during World War II.
- ❖ Read *The Courage of Sarah Noble* with your younger children. It tells the story of a young girl who goes with her father to the frontier to prepare a new home for their family.
- ❖ Read *The Matchlock Gun* by Walter D. Edmonds with your younger children. It's the true story of a boy who protects his mother and sister from Indians in the Hudson valley.
- ❖ Read *Owl Moon* by Jane Yolen with your young children. The shadows in the woods are very black. When you go owling, you have to be brave, even when you go with your father.
- ❖ Read about Harriet Tubman, a black woman who helped slaves escape to the northern state on the Underground Railroad.
- ❖ Read *The Door in the Wall* by Marguerite de Angeli. It is the story of a boy left crippled by an illness, who learns the purpose of life in medieval London. There are some great quotes and truths in this book. Also available is a study guide by Andrew Clausen, prepared for Grades 4 - 6 - a great way to dig deeper into this wonderful story.
- ❖ Watch *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* with the family. At one point Susan tells Peter, "Just because someone in a red coat gives you a sword, it doesn't make you a hero!"
- ❖ Watch the movie *Apollo 13* with your teens. It showcases courage and determination in the face of adversity. (Caution: it does contain a number of profanities. Check it out on www.pluggedinonline.com.)
- ❖ Watch the movie *Iron Will* with your children. (Probably suitable for 10 years and up.) It tells the story of a seventeen-year-old who enters a 522-mile-long dog sled race, in the hopes of winning the \$10,000 prize so he can help his mother pay off the family's debts.

