

Read: Exodus 32:15-29

God Blesses Those Who Put him First

Exodus 32:29

Then Moses said, "You have been set apart to the LORD today, for you were against your own sons and brothers, and he has blessed you this day."

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

None of her teammates could understand it. Some of them were even a little angry. "Julia is going to miss *another* game?" The volleyball team had games on Sunday mornings every now and then. After a couple years together as a team, they found that Julia never came to Sunday games. It's not that Julia didn't love her teammates or volleyball. She loved them and volleyball a lot! Julia just loved God more.

For Julia and her family, this was never a hard choice. Where they lived, they didn't have any other options for church—their church only had one service on Sunday morning. Julia's family determined that they would never let anything stop them from worshiping the Lord regularly.

Julia did miss out on some fun with friends and volleyball now and then. She even missed a few big games over the years. But what her team didn't understand was how greatly Julia was blessed in other ways. Every week her faith was strengthened as God came to her in church with the good news of his forgiveness. Every week she was assured in worship how much Jesus loves her. Julia grew in faith, in her knowledge of the Bible, and she grew to be a strong Christian along with her fellow church members. God blessed Julia in many ways because she put him first.

The Israelites did not always do a very good job of putting God first in their hearts. In fact, even after all the miracles that God performed when he led them out of Egypt, they still decided to build a golden calf and worship that idol instead. God was *very* angry. However, in the story for today we hear about a few Israelites who did put God first in their hearts—yes, even before their own sons and brothers. It was a very difficult choice, but Moses told these people that God was going to bless them so much because of it.

What things do you love? Football, volleyball, or another sport? Video games? School? (Yes, some people actually like school!) Do you love your toys? Your phone? Your family or best friend? God gives many blessings that he allows us to enjoy. It's good to love these kinds of things—just not more than God.

Think of ways that you can put God first in your heart. Make church a priority for your family. Read your Bible before playing video games or looking at a phone or iPad. Pray before meals and before bed. When you do these things, you are putting God first. And amazingly, God is so good and gracious that he promises he will bless you when you do it!

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for Younger Children

- What are things that you love to do or to play with?
- Why should we love God more than these things?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- What is the First Commandment?
- How can loving things like money or video games or family turn into breaking the First Commandment?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- Agree or Disagree: It is sinful to miss church on a weekend because of a sports game. Explain your answer.
- Evaluate this situation: A family is *really* busy *all* the time. They have school, practices, games, and every now and then fun family things. They barely have any free time ever. In order to keep their sanity, the family sleeps in on Sundays about once a month to get some rest.

Closing Prayer:

Dear Lord, help me find ways to love you and your Word more than anything else. Thank you for blessing me when I do. Amen.

Hymn: CW 391:1,3 – God Loved the World So that He Gave

God loved the world so that he gave His only Son the lost to save
That all who would in him believe Should everlasting life receive.

God would not have the sinner die—His Son with saving grace is nigh.
His Spirit in the Word does teach How we the blessed goal may reach.