

FAMILY MONTH

AT SOUTH HILLS

DEVOTIONAL

THIS OCT AT
SOUTH HILLS

2026



INTRO

Every year at South Hills, we set aside a month to talk honestly about family because family matters, and if we're honest, family can also be complicated.

Some of us grew up in homes we hope to recreate. Others grew up knowing there are things we want to do differently. Most of us probably have a little of both.

The goal of Family Month isn't to make anyone feel guilty about what they got wrong or pretend there's a perfect way to build a family. There isn't. It's to look honestly at the relationships closest to us, listen to what Jesus has to say, and ask a simple question:

Is there a healthier way?

This year, we're talking about **Where Parents Go Wrong & How to Make It Right**. We'll look at four patterns that can quietly find their way into our families: acting like we're never wrong, putting rules ahead of relationships, treating differences like problems, and protecting people so much that we never prepare them for the real world.

And while we're talking a lot about parenting, these conversations are bigger than parents and kids. They affect marriages, friendships, siblings, grandparents, and the kind of people we're becoming.

Thankfully, Jesus never asks us to get everything right. He invites us to follow Him.

So for the next 28 days, we'll spend a little time each day in Scripture. We'll be honest about where we may need to grow, pay attention to the way Jesus treated people, and practice something different.

No perfect families required.

Just people willing to let God keep working on us.

WEEK 1

THEY ACT AS IF THEY'RE INFALLIBLE

October 4–10

Theme: Healthy families make room for humility.

The goal isn't to always be right. It's to become the kind of person who can recognize when we're wrong, own it, and make it right.

Read:

James 3:2 - *"We all stumble in many ways. Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect, able to keep their whole body in check."*

Devotion:

"We all stumble in many ways." That's a pretty freeing place to begin Family Month. Not some of us. All of us.

We're going to get things wrong. We'll lose our patience, misunderstand someone, make a bad call, or say something we wish we could take back. The problem isn't that imperfect people make mistakes. The problem begins when we become too proud to admit them.

Jesus doesn't ask us to pretend we're perfect. He invites us to be honest, humble, and willing to grow. Sometimes one of the healthiest things a family can hear from us is simply, "I was wrong."

Ask:

Why can it be so hard to admit when we're wrong, especially with the people closest to us?

Do:

Pay attention today to your instinct to defend yourself. If you realize you were wrong about something, practice saying it without an excuse attached.

Read:

Proverbs 12:15 - *"The way of fools seems right to them, but the wise listen to advice."*

Devotion:

Being confident and being teachable aren't opposites.

Sometimes we assume that being the parent, the leader, the oldest, or the person with more experience means we should automatically know best. But Scripture reminds us that wise people listen.

The people closest to us may see things we don't. Our kids can teach us. Our spouse can challenge us. A friend can point out something we missed. God can use voices we weren't expecting.

Wisdom doesn't need to have the last word. Wisdom is willing to listen.

Ask:

Who are you most willing to receive feedback from? Who are you most likely to dismiss?

Do:

Ask someone close to you, "Is there anything you've been trying to tell me that I haven't done a very good job hearing?"

Read:

Matthew 7:3–5 - *“Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.”*

Devotion:

Jesus had a way of asking questions that get uncomfortable fast.

It’s easy to notice what someone else needs to work on. Their attitude. Their choices. Their habits. Their tone. Meanwhile, we can completely miss what we’re bringing into the relationship.

Jesus tells us to start with ourselves.

Healthy families aren’t built by people constantly pointing out what everyone else is doing wrong. They’re built by people willing to ask, **“God, what do You want to change in me?”**

That question can change a relationship.

Ask:

Are you quicker to notice other people’s faults or your own?

Do:

Before asking God to change someone else today, ask Him to show you one thing He wants to grow in you.

Read:

Psalm 139:23–24 - *“Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”*

Devotion:

David’s prayer is brave because he gives God permission to point something out.

“Search me.”

Not search them. Not show me why I’m right. Search me.

We all have blind spots. Patterns we’ve lived with so long that they feel normal. Ways of reacting we learned from our own families. Things we may have promised ourselves we’d never do—and somehow find ourselves doing anyway.

God doesn’t reveal those things to shame us. He shows us because He loves us too much to leave us stuck in them.

Ask:

Is there a family pattern you’ve realized you don’t want to keep repeating?

Do:

Pray David’s prayer slowly today: “God, search me. Show me anything in me that needs Your help.”

Read:

1 John 1:8–9 - *“If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”*

Devotion:

Apologizing can feel like losing.

But in healthy relationships, admitting you were wrong doesn't weaken trust. It often builds it.

God doesn't meet confession with humiliation. He meets it with forgiveness. And because we have received that kind of grace from Jesus, we don't have to spend so much energy proving ourselves right.

You can be wrong and still be loved.

That freedom makes it possible to say, **“I'm sorry. I shouldn't have handled it that way.”**

Those might be some of the most important words we ever say at home.

Ask:

What makes a sincere apology feel different from one that's just trying to end the conversation?

Do:

If you owe someone an apology, give them one today. Keep it simple. Own what you did without explaining it away.

Read:

Philippians 2:3–8 - *“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!”*

Devotion:

Jesus had more authority than anyone—and He didn’t use it to make Himself more important than everyone else.

Paul points us to Jesus, who chose humility and took the posture of a servant.

That should shape the way we lead too.

Whether you’re leading a family, a team, or simply influencing the people around you, following Jesus means using whatever authority you have to serve people—not control them.

Ask:

What would change if you thought of leadership at home as service instead of control?

Do:

Do something today that communicates, “You matter to me,” without expecting anything in return.

Read:

Micah 6:8 - *"He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."*

Devotion:

God doesn't ask us to be impressive. He asks us to walk humbly with Him.

Humility doesn't mean thinking less of yourself. It means being secure enough in God to stop needing to prove yourself all the time.

You can listen. You can change your mind. You can apologize. You can learn from someone younger than you. You can admit you don't know. That isn't weakness.

It's what growth looks like.

Ask:

Where has God challenged your pride this week?

Do:

Share one thing you learned this week with someone close to you.

WEEK 2

THEY ELEVATE RULES OVER RELATIONSHIPS

October 11–17

Theme: Rules can provide boundaries. Relationships provide the reason. Jesus never treated people like problems to manage. He consistently chose compassion, truth, and restoration.

Read:

Mark 3:1–5 - *“Another time Jesus went into the synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there. Some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath. Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, “Stand up in front of everyone.” Then Jesus asked them, “Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?” But they remained silent. He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored.”*

Devotion:

Rules and boundaries can be good. But in Mark 3, Jesus confronts people who had become so focused on enforcing their understanding of the rules that they were missing the person standing right in front of them.

Jesus asks a better question: **What does love require here?**

Healthy families need boundaries, but our goal can't simply be getting people to comply. We want the people closest to us to know they are loved, cared for, and being guided toward what is good.

Ask:

When can a good rule stop being helpful?

Do:

Think about one expectation you have at home. Ask yourself: What is this rule actually trying to protect or teach?

Read:

Ephesians 6:4 - *"Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord."*

Devotion:

Sometimes we can technically be right and still handle something in a way that hurts the relationship.

Paul specifically warns parents not to provoke their children. How we correct matters.

Correction motivated by anger, embarrassment, or the need to control feels very different from correction motivated by love.

God cares about who someone is becoming—not simply whether we can make them behave in the moment.

Ask:

When you correct someone, is your first goal usually compliance or growth?

Do:

The next time you need to correct someone, slow down first. Check your tone before addressing their behavior.

Read:

Luke 15:20–24 - *“So he got up and went to his father. “But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. “The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ “But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.”*

Devotion:

Jesus tells this story to show us something about the heart of God.

The son had made a mess of things. But when he finally came home, his father ran toward him.

There would be plenty to work through. Choices still had consequences. But the father made something clear before anything else:

You’re still my son.

That’s the kind of grace God gives us. And it gives us a picture of how love can stay present even when someone has failed.

Ask:

Do the people closest to you know that your love for them isn’t dependent on their performance?

Do:

Find a simple way to communicate love to someone today—with no correction or advice attached.

Read:

John 1:14, 16–17 - *“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”

Devotion:

Jesus never asks us to choose between grace and truth. He is full of both. Truth takes what is wrong seriously. Grace refuses to believe that what is wrong is the end of someone's story.

We tend to drift toward one or the other. Rules without much grace. Or grace that never says anything difficult.

Jesus gives us something better.

He sees us completely, loves us completely, and keeps leading us toward what is true and good. Healthy families need that same combination.

Ask:

Which comes more naturally to you: grace or truth? Where might you need more of the other?

Do:

Think about a difficult relationship. Ask Jesus to help you respond with both grace and truth.

Read:

James 1:19–20 - *“My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.”*

Devotion:

Sometimes the most spiritual thing you can do in a tense moment is stop talking.

Listen first.

Anger makes us want to react. Love makes room to understand.

Listening doesn't mean agreeing with everything someone says. It simply tells them, “You matter enough for me to understand before I respond.” That can change the temperature of an entire home.

Ask:

Do the people closest to you feel heard by you?

Do:

Have one conversation today where your only goal is to understand. Don't interrupt. Don't fix. Ask a question and listen.

Read:

Colossians 3:12–14 - *“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.”*

Devotion:

Compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forgiveness. Imagine what a home filled with those things would feel like.

None of them require a perfect family. In fact, most of them only become necessary because our families aren’t perfect.

Following Jesus doesn’t remove the messiness of relationships. It gives us a different way to move through it.

And over time, those small choices create a healthier culture.

Ask:

Which quality in this passage does your family need most right now?

Do:

Choose one word from the passage and intentionally practice it today.

Read:

Romans 2:4 - *“Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God’s kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?”*

Devotion:

Paul reminds us that God’s kindness is meant to lead us toward repentance.

That doesn’t mean God ignores what is wrong. It means His goal isn’t humiliation—it’s restoration.

If kindness is part of the way God draws us toward change, maybe it should have a bigger place in the way we influence one another too.

Sometimes connection accomplishes what control never could.

Ask:

How has God’s kindness changed you?

Do:

When someone frustrates you today, choose one response that moves the relationship closer instead of simply proving your point.

WEEK 3

THEY SEE DIFFERENCES AS SIN OR REBELLION

October 18–24

Theme: Different doesn't automatically mean wrong.

Healthy families learn to become curious about the person God created instead of trying to force everyone into the same mold.

Read:

1 Corinthians 12:14–18 - *“Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many. Now if the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.”*

Devotion:

Paul is talking about the Church, and his point is simple: **God never intended His people to all be the same.**

Different parts bring different gifts and strengths, and the body needs them. That principle matters in our families too.

Sometimes family would be easier if everyone thought like us, communicated like us, processed like us, and needed what we need. But easier isn't necessarily healthier.

Part of loving people well is learning who God made them to be—not trying to turn them into another version of us.

Ask:

What difference in someone close to you is sometimes difficult for you to understand?

Do:

Instead of judging that difference today, get curious about it. Ask a question.

Read:

John 9:1–3 - *“As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?’ ‘Neither this man nor his parents sinned,’ said Jesus, ‘but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him.’”*

Devotion:

The disciples saw someone whose life looked different and immediately wanted to know whose fault it was.

Jesus rejected the assumption behind their question.

Not every struggle or difference is evidence of someone's sin or rebellion. Sometimes loving people well begins when we stop asking, **“What's wrong with you?”** and start asking, **“What do you need from me?”**

Jesus saw a person where everyone else saw a problem to explain. We can learn to do the same.

Ask:

Have you ever misunderstood someone because you didn't know what they were experiencing?

Do:

Ask someone close to you, “What's something about you that you wish people understood better?”

DAY 17

OCTOBER 20

Read:

Psalms 139:13–14 - *“For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.”*

Devotion:

You weren’t mass-produced.

Neither were your kids. Or your parents. Or your spouse. Or your siblings. Or your friends.

God knows people personally and completely.

That means loving someone well requires paying attention to who they actually are. What encourages one person may overwhelm another. What motivates one may shut another down.

Healthy relationships don’t always treat everyone exactly the same.

They learn to love people personally.

Ask:

What is something unique about the way God made someone in your family?

Do:

Tell that person something specific you appreciate about the way God made them.

Read:

Romans 14:1–4 - *“Accept the one whose faith is weak, without quarreling over disputable matters. One person’s faith allows them to eat anything, but another, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. The one who eats everything must not treat with contempt the one who does not, and the one who does not eat everything must not judge the one who does, for God has accepted them. Who are you to judge someone else’s servant? To their own master, servants stand or fall. And they will stand, for the Lord is able to make them stand.”*

Devotion:

Not every disagreement is a moral crisis.

That can be difficult to remember, especially when we care deeply about something.

People can love Jesus and still have different preferences, convictions, perspectives, and levels of maturity.

Maturity means learning the difference between something Scripture clearly calls wrong and something that is simply **different from us**.

Ask:

How do you usually react when someone close to you sees something differently?

Do:

In one disagreement today, replace “Here’s why you’re wrong” with “Help me understand how you see it.”

Read:

Proverbs 18:13 - *"To answer before listening—that is folly and shame."*

Devotion:

It's hard to understand someone when we've already decided what their story is.

Lazy. Dramatic. Difficult. Rebellious. Too sensitive. Doesn't care. Labels are convenient because they keep us from having to ask harder questions.

Listening takes longer.

Jesus consistently slowed down enough to see the person beneath the behavior. Healthy families learn to do that too.

Ask:

Have you put a label on someone that might be keeping you from understanding them?

Do:

Catch yourself when you use a label today. Replace it with a question about what might actually be happening.

DAY 20

OCTOBER 23

Read:

Proverbs 20:5 - *"The purposes of a person's heart are deep waters, but one who has insight draws them out."*

Devotion:

There's usually more going on inside someone than we can see from the outside.

Behavior can tell us something is happening, but it doesn't always tell us why.

That's why healthy relationships require curiosity. Instead of immediately assuming we know someone's motives, we can slow down, listen, and try to understand.

Jesus treated people like people, not problems to diagnose.
We can do the same.

Ask:

How might understanding what's happening underneath someone's behavior change the way you respond?

Do:

Before reacting to someone today, pause and ask yourself, "What might I not understand yet?"

DAY 21

OCTOBER 24

Read:

Romans 12:10 - *"Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves."*

Devotion:

Honor says, **"You matter even when you're different from me."**

That's powerful in a family.

You don't have to understand everything about someone to respect them. You don't have to share every opinion to stay connected. You don't even have to agree in order to remain curious and kind.

Jesus gives us enough security to stop being threatened by every difference.

We can love people without requiring them to become us first.

Ask:

What would it look like for your family to disagree and still honor one another?

Do:

Encourage something in someone today that is different from you but genuinely good.

WEEK 4

THEY DON'T EQUIP THEIR KIDS FOR THE REAL WORLD

October 25–31

Theme: The goal isn't to keep people dependent on us. It's to help them learn to depend on God and become who He created them to be.

Healthy families don't prepare the road for their kids forever. Eventually, they prepare their kids for the road.

Read:

Deuteronomy 6:5-7 - *“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 on 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.”*

Devotion:

God's picture of passing down faith is surprisingly ordinary.

Talk about it at home. On the road. When you wake up. When you go to bed.

Faith was never meant to live only inside a church building.

The next generation needs more than instructions about Christianity. They need to see what following Jesus looks like when money is tight, plans change, someone hurts you, you make a mistake, or you don't know what to do.

We prepare people for life by letting them see a real faith lived in real life.

Ask:

What are the people closest to you learning about God by watching your everyday life?

Do:

Share one honest example today of how your faith in Jesus is affecting a real decision you're making.

Read:

1 Samuel 3:8–10 - *“A third time the Lord called, “Samuel!” And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, “Here I am; you called me.” Then Eli realized that the Lord was calling the boy. So Eli told Samuel, “Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, ‘Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.’” So Samuel went and lay down in his place. The Lord came and stood there, calling as at the other times, “Samuel! Samuel!” Then Samuel said, “Speak, for your servant is listening.”*

Devotion:

Eli could have made Samuel dependent on him. Instead, he recognized that God was speaking to Samuel and helped him learn how to listen for himself.

That’s a beautiful picture of what it means to prepare the next generation.

Our job isn’t to make every decision for them or turn them into smaller versions of us. It’s to help them know God, recognize His voice through Scripture, grow in wisdom, and eventually make faithful decisions without needing us to stand beside them every step of the way.

Ask:

Are you helping the people you influence depend more on you—or teaching them how to seek God for themselves?

Do:

Ask someone younger than you, “What do you think God might be teaching you right now?” Listen before offering your own answer.

Read:

Luke 10:1–3 - *“After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. He told them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves.”*”

Devotion:

Jesus taught His disciples—and then He sent them out.
He let them participate.

That meant they wouldn't do everything perfectly. But Jesus wasn't trying to create people who could only function when He was giving them step-by-step instructions.

He was preparing them.

Sometimes love means letting someone try, struggle, solve a problem, and even fail while they still have a safe place to come back to.

Ask:

Is there someone you may be helping so much that they aren't getting the opportunity to grow?

Do:

Instead of immediately solving a problem for someone today, ask, “What do you think you should do?”

Read:

James 1:5 - *"If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you."*

Devotion:

We won't always be there to give the answer.

And that's okay.

Our goal isn't to make people dependent on our wisdom. It's to teach them where to find wisdom when we're not around.

God invites us to ask Him.

One of the greatest things we can give the next generation is confidence that they can seek God, read Scripture, ask good questions, find wise people, and make thoughtful decisions themselves.

Ask:

Are you teaching the people you influence what to think—or helping them learn how to seek God and think wisely?

Do:

If someone asks you for advice today, pray about it together before giving them your answer.

DAY 26

OCTOBER 29

Read:

John 16:33 - *"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."*

Devotion:

Jesus never promised His followers an easy world.

He prepared them for a real one.

Protecting people we love is natural. But if we teach them that everything outside our control should be feared, we may unintentionally make the world feel scarier than it is.

Jesus was honest: life will be hard.

Then He said, **take heart.**

We don't prepare people by pretending hard things won't happen. We prepare them by showing them that when hard things happen, Jesus will still be there.

Ask:

What's the difference between protecting someone and preparing them?

Do:

Talk honestly about one difficult part of life and one way your faith helps you face it.

DAY 27

OCTOBER 30

Read:

2 Timothy 1:7 - *"For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline."*

Devotion:

Fear is real, but it doesn't have to be the thing directing our lives.

Paul was reminding Timothy not to shrink back from what God had called him to do.

Following Jesus doesn't mean we never feel afraid. It means fear doesn't get the final say.

God gives us power, love, and self-control.

That means we can move into the world with wisdom, courage, compassion, and truth instead of letting fear make every decision for us.

Ask:

Are you helping the people around you approach the world primarily with fear or with faith?

Do:

Name one fear you've been carrying. Pray about it and ask God for the courage to take one healthy step forward.

Read:

Philippians 1:6 - *"...being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."*

Devotion:

Family Month ends with really good news:

God isn't finished with us.

Maybe this month showed you something you want to change. Maybe you realized you need to apologize. Listen more. Control less. Get curious. Repair a relationship. Give someone more room to grow.

You don't have to fix your entire family overnight.

Healthy families aren't families that never get it wrong. They're families filled with people who keep letting Jesus teach them how to make it right. God is still working in you.

He's still working in the people you love.

And His grace gives all of us room to keep growing.

Ask:

What is one thing God has shown you about yourself or your relationships this month?

Do:

Choose one change you want to carry beyond Family Month. Write it down, tell someone you trust, and ask God to help you keep growing.

A FINAL THOUGHT

Family Month may be over, but God's work in us isn't.

Healthy relationships aren't built in a month, and they don't require us to get everything right. They're built over time as we keep choosing humility, listening well, giving grace, staying curious, and letting Jesus shape the way we love the people around us.

So take what God has shown you this month and keep going. Keep having the conversations. Keep making things right when you get them wrong. Keep giving the people you love room to grow. And most importantly, keep following Jesus and trusting Him to do what only He can do in you and in your family.

There are no perfect families. Just imperfect people learning to love each other more like Jesus.

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CHURCH

The Perfect Place for Imperfect People.

