

PEEPS

FAMILY DEVOTIONALS

2024



QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR CHILDREN:

Asking the right questions is crucial! Get a sense of your child's Peeps experiences by asking questions that elicit more than a one-word response.

- Tell me about the best part of Peeps.
- What does **RISE** stand for?
Reach All - Include All - Stand Up For All - Embrace All
- What is your Memory Verse Challenge?
Each week you will have a take home page that discusses what Verse we are being challenged to memorize.
- Who did you play with today?
- What was the Story about?
Each week you will have a take home page that will help keep you up to date with the story and what devotional your family should be doing.
- What was your **BIG** Answer?
Each week you will have a take home page that discusses what BIG Answer we are being challenged to live out.

January 7, 2024

PURSUE JESUS: SHOW UP

The BIG Answer:

I can know Jesus.

Memory Verse Challenge:

“If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me.”

- Jeremiah 29:13 (NLT) -

DAY 1:

Question of the Day: How can you get close to Jesus?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Luke 19:1–5

Stories of Jesus' healings and miracles spread quickly. So, it's not surprising that crowds gathered when Jesus came to a town. Everyone was curious about Jesus. But all the people around Him made it challenging to get close to Him. When Zacchaeus heard Jesus was coming to town, he wanted to see Him. We know Zacchaeus was a Jewish tax collector, which meant many people considered him to be a traitor to his own people. He was also pretty short. That made it difficult for Zacchaeus to even get a glimpse of Jesus, but he didn't give up! He was determined to see Jesus. There were probably other people who didn't get close to Jesus that day, let alone spend time with Him. The story of Zacchaeus reminds us that if we desire to draw close to Jesus, we must look for ways to interact with Him every day. When we read our Bible and talk to Jesus in prayer, it's like climbing a tree to get closer to Jesus.

TALK ABOUT IT:

Question 1. What did Zacchaeus do so he could see Jesus?

Answer 1. He climbed a tree. (Luke 19:4)

Question 2. If you heard that Jesus was coming to your town, would you go and see Him? Why or why not?

Answer 2. Answers will vary.

Question 3. Do you think Zacchaeus was excited to have Jesus come to his house? Why or why not?

Answer 3. Answers will vary.

Question 4. How would you feel if Jesus chose you out of a crowd and said He was coming to your house?

Answer 4. Answers will vary.

Question 5. How can you get close to Jesus?

Answer 5. Answers will vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, thank You for wanting a relationship with me. Help me to see how I can get close to You. Amen.

DAY 2:

Question of the Day: How can you show other people that you love Jesus?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Luke 19:6–10

This meeting with Jesus changed Zacchaeus's life. The changes spilled over on others around him. Even the people who didn't like Zacchaeus because he was a tax collector could see that he was different after spending time with Jesus. In fact, Zacchaeus promised to give back four times extra if he had cheated anyone in the past.

Every day when we spend time with Jesus, He will change us too. It might not happen all at once. But each time we're with Jesus, we will slowly change to live and love others more like Him. When we love Jesus, we become more like Him, and that becomes obvious to others. Maybe they will see you caring for someone who's lonely or sharing your things with someone in need. Those are just a few ways to show others that you care.

TALK ABOUT IT:

Question 1. What did Zacchaeus say he would do after Jesus was at his house?

Answer 1. Give half of his wealth to the poor and pay back four times as much if he had cheated anyone on their taxes. (Luke 19:8)

Question 2. How do you think Zacchaeus felt about Jesus after spending time with Him?

Answer 2. Answers will vary.

Question 3. Our Faith Verse, Jeremiah 29:13, says we should look for God wholeheartedly. Do you think Zacchaeus did that with Jesus? Why or why not?

Answer 3. Answers may vary.

Question 4. Do you ever struggle to believe that Jesus wants to spend time with you? Why?

Answer 4. Answers will vary.

Question 5. How can you show other people that you love Jesus?

Answer 5. Answers will vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, please help me to live in a way that shows others how You have changed my life. I want them to know that You love them very much. Amen.

DAY 3:

Question of the Day: Who does Jesus look for?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Luke 15:1–7

Some people around Jesus couldn't understand why He would want to be with sinners. That's one reason Jesus told this story. In Jesus' day, sheep were very valuable. The more sheep you had, the richer you were. So when Jesus told a story about someone leaving ninety-nine sheep behind, it would have got people's attention. And then to say that someone would do it to go after one lost sheep was teaching something important. It showed how important saving someone who is a sinner is to Jesus.

That's why Jesus spent time with Zacchaeus. Some people thought Zacchaeus was a terrible person. They didn't understand that Jesus wanted to reach everyone. Jesus came to look for and save those who need Him (Luke 19:10). That means He pursues everyone, including the worst sinners who have made a lot of mistakes.

Do you have a friend or family member who doesn't know Jesus? Ask Jesus if there is anything you need to do so this person will come to Him.

TALK ABOUT IT:

Question 1. What did the shepherd look for in the story?

Answer 1. The lost sheep (Luke 15:4)

Question 2. What did the shepherd do when he arrived back home with the lost sheep?

Answer 2. He called together his friends and neighbors to rejoice with him. (Luke 15:6)

Question 3. Who does Jesus look for?

Answer 3. Everyone who needs Him because they need forgiveness for their sins, the mistakes they've made (Luke 15:7)

Question 4. Was there ever a time when you felt like Jesus was looking for you? Tell about it.

Answer 4. Answers will vary.

Question 5. How does it make you feel to know that Jesus wants to be your friend, regardless of the mistakes you've made?

Answer 5. Answers may vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, thank You for looking for me when I didn't know You. I pray for those who need to know You. I'm glad You came to look for them and save them. I pray that everyone I know will see You, pursue You, and surrender to You. Amen.

DAY 4:

Question of the Day: What good gift does God want to give you?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Ephesians 2:8–10

Before Zacchaeus met Jesus, he probably didn't feel like he was a masterpiece of God. People called him a sinner. But Jesus said salvation came to his house. Because of that moment with Jesus, Zacchaeus became something new. He was a masterpiece who God made new through His love and mercy. Zacchaeus showed others that Jesus had changed him.

New life comes when we're saved. It's the gift that these verses in Ephesians talk about. We can't earn it. It isn't a reward for things we do for God. Salvation is free, and it's a gift from God. Because Jesus came to earth and died for our sins, we can be saved.

THINK ABOUT IT:

Question 1. What did people call Zacchaeus?

Answer 1. A sinner

Question 2. Do you think Zacchaeus believed he was valuable to God? Why or why not?

Answer 2. Answers will vary.

Question 3. Do you feel like you're very valuable to God? Why?

Answer 3. Answers will vary.

Question 4. What good gift does God want to give you?

Answer 4. Salvation, forgiveness of sins (verse 8)

Question 5. Why can we receive the gift of salvation?

Answer 5. Because Jesus came to earth and died for our sins (Ephesians 2:10)

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, thank You for preparing good things for me. This tells me that You were thinking about me long before I knew about You. Help me to believe that I am valuable to You. Thank You for Your gift of salvation most of all. Amen.

January 14, 2024

PURSUE JESUS: LISTEN CAREFULLY

The BIG Answer:

I can always listen to Jesus.

Memory Verse Challenge:

“If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me.”

- Jeremiah 29:13 (NLT) -

DAY 1:

Question of the Day: How can we know who Jesus is?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: John 3:1–10

Nicodemus was a Jewish religious leader. They studied the Scriptures a lot. Many of them were waiting for the promised Messiah to come. But Jesus came to earth in a way that wasn't expected. So many people didn't understand who Jesus was. They didn't know that Jesus was the promised Messiah. He was offering a way for us to be closer to God.

When Nicodemus came to Jesus at night, he asked questions. He called Jesus rabbi, which means teacher, because he wanted to learn from Jesus. He wanted to know the truth and understand who Jesus was. Jesus was patient with Nicodemus and took the time to explain many things and help him understand. Jesus does the same with us. When we take the time to talk to Jesus and study the Bible for ourselves, Jesus comes close to us. He helps us understand who He is and how to live a godly life.

TALK ABOUT IT:

Question 1. What did Nicodemus do for people?

Answer 1. He was a Jewish religious leader so he studied and taught the Scriptures. (John 3:1)

Question 2. What did Nicodemus call Jesus?

Answer 2. Rabbi which means teacher (John 3:2)

Question 3. Why do you think Nicodemus went to see Jesus at night?

Answer 3. Answers will vary.

Question 4. How is Jesus patient with us when we are trying to obey Him?

Answer 4. When we make mistakes, we can always come to Jesus. He will forgive us when we ask. He helps us understand more about who He is and how to live for Him.

Question 5. How can we know who Jesus is?

Answer 5. We can spend time with Him by reading the Bible, praying, and worshipping with others. We can learn from our church leaders and teachers and our family.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Jesus, thank You that I have the chance to know You. Help me to listen to You and better understand Your truths. Amen.

DAY 2:

Question of the Day: What happens when you keep on seeking God?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Jeremiah 29:12–13; Matthew 7:7–11

Have you ever been in a room with the door shut because you wanted to be alone, and then someone knocked on the door wanting to come in? They may have knocked and knocked and wouldn't give up until you finally opened the door. This is what today's Bible verses say it's like to seek God seriously! He isn't hiding and can always be found. But we must keep on seeking Him sometimes in order to receive from Him. The Bible says when we knock, the door will be opened to us. That means when we seek God, we will find Him!

When Nicodemus talked with Jesus, he listened carefully so he could understand what Jesus was saying (John 3:4–10, 16). He continued to ask questions, and he didn't give up! There is so much to know about Jesus that we will never fully understand while we are here on the earth. But when we seek Jesus—when we keep knocking on that door—we can know Jesus a little more each day!

TALK ABOUT IT:

Question 1. How does our Faith Verse, Jeremiah 29:13, describe how we should look for God?

Answer 1. Wholeheartedly, or with all our heart (Jeremiah 29:13)

Question 2. How do we know Nicodemus was really listening to Jesus?

Answer 2. He asked questions and he waited on Jesus to answer.

Question 3. How can we keep seeking God?

Answer 3. Spend time with Him by praying, reading and studying the Bible, and asking questions.

Question 4. If we believe the Bible that says God can be found when we seek Him, why don't we seek Him and listen to Him?

Answer 4. Answers will vary.

Question 5. What happens when we keep on seeking God?

Answer 5. We will find Him. (Jeremiah 29:13)

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Jesus, I want to know You. Help me not to let anything get in the way of learning more about who You are. I want to grow in my relationship with You. Amen.

DAY 3:

Question of the Day: How can we listen to Jesus in our everyday life?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: John 3:16–21

Many times, when Jesus taught He talked about everyday things to help people understand. He did that when Nicodemus came to Him with questions.

Have you ever been afraid of the dark? When talking with Nicodemus, Jesus used dark and light to describe people. Darkness described people living in sin. Light described when people were willing to let the truth of Jesus change them. Then others could see Jesus in them.

When we listen to Jesus, He will show us the truth. He will give us a new spiritual life and change us. Then, when others look at us, they can see Jesus shine through us. When we search for Jesus, we can find things like light that can point us to the truths of Jesus too. These things can help us understand who He is!

TALK ABOUT IT:

Question 1. What everyday things did Jesus use to teach Nicodemus?

Answer 1. Light and darkness (John 3:19); light (John 3:21)

Question 2. How does knowing God's truth like coming into a room with the light on?

Answer 2. God sent Jesus into the world to bring His light to all people. When we know Jesus, we are in God's light. (John 3:19, 21)

Question 3. What does John 3:16–17 tell us about God and Jesus?

Answer 3. God showed love to everyone by sending Jesus to save everyone who believes in Him.

Question 4. How can people see the light of Jesus in us?

Answer 4. If we know and follow Jesus, He will shine through our life by what we say and do. Answers will vary.

Question 5. How can we listen to Jesus in our everyday life?

Answer 5. Answers will vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Jesus, I want to live in Your truth and Your light. Help me to always listen carefully and pay attention to the ways You are trying to teach me. Amen.

DAY 4:

Question of the Day: How can you hear from Jesus?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Proverbs 2:1–6

If you knew that there was buried treasure nearby, what would you do? Would you ignore it and pretend that it wasn't there? Would you say, "Maybe I'll search for it tomorrow?" Of course not! You would go and dig for it right away. You would search for that treasure until you found it. Our Bible verses today talk about searching for understanding and wisdom like you would search for silver or hidden treasure.

Nicodemus had a heart to search for Jesus and to know truth. He did what he had to do to get to Jesus. He took the time to really listen to what Jesus was saying. It's easy sometimes to get so caught up in the things that we have to do, that we miss what Jesus is trying to say to us. We don't really listen carefully to Him. We hurry through our Bible reading time or just forget to do it all. But when we take time to get to know Jesus and listen to Him, we begin to hear His voice, the voice of truth, instead of all the other noises that fight for our attention.

TALK ABOUT IT:

Question 1. Our Bible verses compare seeking godly wisdom and understanding to what special things?

Answer 1. Silver and hidden treasures (Proverbs 2:4)

Question 2. What are things we can do to look for God's wisdom?

Answer 2. Listen to Him and treasure what He says (verse 1); tune your ears to wisdom and concentrate on understanding (verse 2); cry out for insight and ask for understanding (verse 3); search for Him (verse 4)

Question 3. Why do you think Nicodemus asked Jesus so many questions?

Answer 3. He was searching for truth. Answers will vary.

Question 4. How can you listen to Jesus?

Answer 4. Look for Him with all your heart by reading the Bible, talking to Him, listening to Bible teachers/pastors. Answers will vary.

Question 5. What are some things you may need to listen to less or not at all so you can better listen to Jesus?

Answer 5. Answers will vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Jesus, I want to always listen carefully to what You're saying to me. Help me to look for You more than anything else. Amen.

January 21, 2024

PURSUE JESUS: RECEIVE GRACE

The BIG Answer:

I can be forgiven.

Memory Verse Challenge:

“If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me.”

- Jeremiah 29:13 (NLT) -

DAY 1:

Question of the Day: What are you willing to do to pursue Jesus?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Luke 7:36–39

The woman in this Bible story was known for being a sinner. It was a big deal for her to go uninvited to the Pharisee's home. But she had heard Jesus would be having dinner there. So in spite of what other people thought of her, she made her way to Jesus as He sat at the table. She began to cry on His feet, drying them with her hair. Then she kissed His feet! The perfume she used to pour on Jesus' feet was very expensive. It may have been worth as much as a year's payment for work!

Can you imagine sitting at the table and watching this? The Pharisee was definitely surprised, and maybe even angry that she was there. What he didn't understand was that this woman was pouring out all that she had at Jesus's feet. She understood what Jesus could do. She was willing to take the risk to get to Jesus, so she could be forgiven.

Jesus wants us to come to Him just as we are. He wants us to pursue Him, to want to know and follow Him, no matter what the cost may be. Through Him, we can be forgiven!

TALK ABOUT IT:

Question 1. What did the Pharisee call this woman?

Answer 1. A sinner (Luke 7:39)

Question 2. How do you think the woman felt about what others were thinking and saying about her?

Answer 2. Answers will vary.

Question 3. How did the woman show honor to Jesus?

Answer 3. She knelt at His feet, wiped them with her hair, kissed them, and poured her bottle of perfume on them. (Luke 7:37–38)

Question 4. If you had been there, what would you have thought or said?

Answer 4. Answers will vary.

Question 5. What are you willing to do to pursue Jesus?

Answer 5. Answers will vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Jesus, thank You that I can come to You just as I am. Help me to never allow anything to keep me from pursuing You. Thank You for forgiving me. Amen.

DAY 2:

Question of the Day: How willing is Jesus to forgive your sins?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Luke 7:40–50

With people staring at her, this woman humbly knelt behind Jesus' feet. She didn't let her pride or past get in the way. All she wanted was forgiveness from Jesus. He knew exactly what she had done. He could have turned her away, but He didn't! In fact, Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven ... Your faith has saved you; go in peace." Jesus changed this woman's life. The people who saw this began to question who Jesus was, too!

One encounter with Jesus can change our life forever! Yes, Jesus is that good. Because of His death on the Cross, our sins can be forgiven. Our past mistakes can be completely wiped away. He can give us a fresh start no matter how much we've messed up. He just wants us to come to Him, sit at His feet, and give our life to Him. He freely gives forgiveness and grace. He is willing to change our life if we ask Him to!

TALK ABOUT IT:

Question 1. How many sins did this woman need Jesus to forgive?

Answer 1. Many (Luke 7:47)

Question 2. What did the men at the table say about Jesus after He talked to the woman?

Answer 2. "Who is this man, that he goes around forgiving sins?" (Luke 7:49)

Question 3. How do you think the woman felt after Jesus forgave her sins?

Answer 3. Answers will vary.

Question 4. What do you think the woman did after she left?

Answer 4. Answers will vary.

Question 5. How willing is Jesus to forgive your sins?

Answer 5. He is very willing to forgive your sins when you ask Him.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Jesus, thank You that You can forgive my sins when I ask You to. Today, I give myself to You and ask You to wash me clean. I receive Your grace. Help me to live for You! Amen.

DAY 3:

Question of the Day: How can we receive God's forgiveness?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Romans 3:22–24

Think about a good thing you did for someone in order to earn something you wanted. Maybe you cleaned and washed the car to earn extra allowance. Or perhaps you cleared the table and did the dishes to earn extra screen time. Many times, this is how our brains are wired to think. In order to earn a reward, we have to do something good first.

But when it comes to salvation and being forgiven of our sins, this isn't how it works at all! Everyone has sinned and needs forgiveness. But the Bible says that forgiveness isn't something we can earn or work extra hard for. Instead, we receive it because of God's loving grace. Grace is when you are given something you haven't earned.

The woman who came to Jesus for forgiveness didn't do anything special before she came to Him. She was known as a sinner. Yet, because of Jesus, she received forgiveness because of His grace. When we realize that we've made a mistake, we can go to God immediately! When we go to Him with a heart that is truly sorry for the things we've done, He is more than willing to give us the gift forgiveness because of grace.

TALK ABOUT IT:

Question 1. Who has sinned?

Answer 1. Everyone (Romans 3:23)

Question 2. What work can we do to make up for our sin?

Answer 2. Nothing. God freely makes us right after we place our faith in Jesus. (Romans 3:22, 24)

Question 3. How does it make you feel knowing that you don't have to earn God's forgiveness?

Answer 3. Answers will vary.

Question 4. What should we do when we sin?

Answer 4. We should go to God right away and ask for forgiveness.

Question 5. How can we receive God's forgiveness?

Answer 5. By placing our faith in Jesus

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, thank You that because of Your grace I don't have to try to earn forgiveness. Thank You for Your grace. I want to live for You. When I mess up, help me to be quick to run to You. Amen.

DAY 4:

Question of the Day: How generous is God's grace?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Ephesians 1:4–8

Even before He made the world, God loved us. He wants to make us His children and part of His family. God gives His grace to those who belong to Him. He shows them His kindness and love.

The words poured and showered in the Bible reading don't mean just a little drop here and there. Think about when a rain shower comes down. There is water coming down all around. This is how God offers us His grace and kindness: generously!

Like the woman in our Bible story, we shouldn't let our past sin and shame keep us from Jesus. He willingly gave His life for us on the Cross, so our sins could be forgiven! God chooses to forgive us when we ask, not because He has to, but because He wants to. It makes Him really happy to forgive us!

TALK ABOUT IT:

Question 1. How has God felt about us since before He made the world?

Answer 1. He has loved us. (Ephesians 1:4)

Question 2. How does it make you feel knowing that God wants to make you part of His family?

Answer 2. Answers will vary.

Question 3. What words do these verses use to describe how God offers us grace and kindness?

Answer 3. He has poured out His grace on those who belong to Jesus. (Ephesians 1:6) He has showered His kindness on us. (Ephesians 1:8)

Question 4. Do you think the woman in our Bible story knew how Jesus felt about her before He forgave her? Why or why not?

Answer 4. Answers will vary.

Question 5. How generous is God's grace?

Answer 5. Answers will vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, thank You for Your grace and kindness that You generously pour out on me. Help me to receive Your grace and understand how much You truly love me. Amen.

February 4, 2024

PURSUE JESUS: TRUST HIM

The BIG Answer:

I can trust Jesus if I'm afraid.

Memory Verse Challenge:

"If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me."

- Jeremiah 29:13 (NLT) -

DAY 1:

Question of the Day: How can you face the storms of life?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Matthew 14:22–27

Imagine you were with the disciples in the boat. A giant storm came up while they were out on the lake. They had been with Jesus and seen the miracles He could do. But they were still afraid. Then when they saw Jesus coming toward them walking on the water, they didn't even know it was Jesus. They were terrified! They thought He was a ghost.

Like the disciples, we're going to face difficult times in our life that feel like scary storms. Jesus will be with us just like He was with the disciples. We don't have to be afraid. Jesus told the disciples not to be afraid because He was there. We can trust that Jesus will be with us, too!

TALK ABOUT IT:

Question 1. How does the Bible describe the storm that night?

Answer 1. There was a strong wind and heavy, or big, waves (Matthew 14:24)

Question 2. What did Jesus do after the storm started?

Answer 2. Jesus came to the disciples walking on the water. (Matthew 14:25)

Question 3. How would you have felt if you were in the boat with the disciples during the storm?

Answer 3. Answers will vary.

Question 4. How are difficult times in our life like the storm the disciples faced?

Answer 4. Answers will vary.

Question 5. How can you face the storms of life?

Answer 5. We can face them knowing that Jesus is with us.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, thank You that I am not alone when I face difficult times in my life. Help me to remember that You are with me all the time. Amen.

DAY 2:

Question of the Day: How can we trust Jesus even when we're afraid?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Matthew 14:28–33

Some people think of Peter as the disciple who took risks. He sometimes charged boldly into things. So it's not surprising that he said to Jesus, "If it's really you, tell me to come to you." He started out strong and brave. But when he took his eyes off Jesus and saw the wind and waves around him, Peter became scared and began to sink. Jesus didn't let him drown though. In fact, Jesus immediately reached out to help him get out of the water.

Peter was willing to call to Jesus because he knew that Jesus was worth trusting. We can trust Jesus too. He has proven His faithfulness over and over again. But sometimes we have a hard time trusting Him completely. It's easy for us to take our eyes off Jesus just like Peter did. But if we will call out to Jesus, He will help us walk confidently and courageously through any storm that comes our way.

TALK ABOUT IT:

Question 1. What did Peter do when Jesus said to come to Him?

Answer 1. Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water toward Jesus. (Matthew 14:29)

Question 2. What did the disciples do after seeing what Jesus had done?

Answer 2. They worshipped Him and said, "You really are the Son of God." (Matthew 14:33)

Question 3. Do you think you would have gotten out of the boat like Peter did? Why or why not?

Answer 3. Answers will vary.

Question 4. How do you think Peter's friendship with Jesus changed after that night?

Answer 4. Answers will vary.

Question 5. How can we trust Jesus even when we're afraid?

Answer 5. Answers will vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Jesus, I know that I can trust You in everything. Help me to have the courage to face my fears, even when it's hard. Thank You for always being with me. Amen.

DAY 3:

Question of the Day: Who can we trust in when we're afraid?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Psalm 27:1–8

When David wrote this psalm, he called God, “the Lord.” The Lord is all powerful. He is greater than anything or anyone else. He has all authority, and He has the final say about everything. These verses talk about how we can trust God and don't have to be afraid. When danger comes, He can protect us. When enemies attack, we can be confident of His help.

When the storms of life come and the waves seem high like they did to Peter, we can remain confident in God. We don't have to be afraid! Because of this, we should desire more than anything else to be close to Him. When we pursue God, we can find peace from our fears. God wants us to come to Him. He is constantly saying to us, “Come and talk with me.” (Psalm 27:8). But it's up to us if we will choose to respond to Him.

TALK ABOUT IT:

Question 1. Who can we trust in when we're afraid?

Answer 1. The Lord (God) (Psalm 27:1)

Question 2. What are some ways verse 1 describes the Lord?

Answer 2. He is our light, salvation, and fortress. (Psalm 27:1)

Question 3. According to these verses, what should we seek most?

Answer 3. To live in the house of the Lord all the days of our life, which means to live in His presence (Psalm 27:4)

Question 4. If Peter had remembered these verses when he was walking on the water toward Jesus, do you think he would have sunk? Why or why not?

Answer 4. Answers will vary.

Question 5. Why do people allow their fears to keep them from trusting Jesus?

Answer 5. Answers will vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, You hold the world and all the universe in Your hands. I know You love me and desire the best for me. Help me to live in Your presence all the days of my life and trust You to help me overcome my fears. Amen.

DAY 4:

Question of the Day: How can I use God's Word to help others?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Psalm 34:4–7

Have you ever woke up in the middle of the night because you heard a loud noise? Or maybe you've been in a car when the person driving had to slam on the breaks to avoid being in an accident. Our bodies are designed with something called a "fight or flight" response to fear. In those times, it can feel like our heart stops for a split second. Our hands might get sweaty, and our body feel like we can't move. Our immediate reaction is sometimes to flee or run away.

Fear can be paralyzing like when Peter noticed the waves around him and he started to sink. But Jesus can free us from our fears when we go to Him. He can give us the courage to face our difficulties head-on. When we feel desperate and helpless, we can call out to Him just like Peter did. The Bible promises us that He will listen. Go ahead and try it. Trust the Lord to face your fears with you and He will not fail you!

TALK ABOUT IT:

Question 1. Who did the writer of today's Bible verses turn to for help when he was afraid?

Answer 1. The Lord, God (Psalm 34:4)

Question 2. What kinds of feelings do you have in scary situations?

Answer 2. Answers will vary.

Question 3. How can we feel after we go to God for help?

Answer 3. Answers will vary. Could include radiant with joy, have no shame. (Psalm 34:5)

Question 4. How can we be close to God even when we are afraid?

Answer 4. Answers will vary.

Question 5. What can God do when we give our fears to Him?

Answer 5. Free us from our fears (Psalm 34:4)

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, help my heart to trust You in every situation. I believe You can free me from all my fears. Help me to live every day in that freedom! Amen.

February 11, 2024

BE DIFFERENT: HUMBLE YOURSELF

The BIG Answer:

I will put othes first.

Memory Verse Challenge:

“Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think.”

- Romans 12:2 (NLT)

DAY 1:

Question of the Day: Why should we put others first?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Luke 14:7–11

Have you ever fought with your brother or sister about who would sit in the front seat? There is so much more room in the front compared to the back seats. But when you're one of the youngest ones in the car, you usually don't get your own way.

Jesus was speaking to people who were fighting over the best seats at the dinner table. He was helping them understand that by putting themselves first, they were just setting themselves up for disappointment. He knew that it was far better to put others first because God blesses those who are humble. When we have choices to make, we should set aside what is best for ourselves. Instead, put others first like Jesus did.

TALK ABOUT IT:

Question 1. What were the guests competing for?

Answer 1. To sit in the seats of honor near the head of the table (Luke 14:7)

Question 2. Why do you think the guests wanted to sit in the seats of honor?

Answer 2. Answers will vary.

Question 3. How did Jesus say the guests would feel if the host asked them to move to a less important seat?

Answer 3. They would be embarrassed. (Luke 14:9)

Question 4. Why should we put others first?

Answer 4. Answers will vary.

Question 5. What are some ways that we could put others first?

Answer 5. Answers will vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, help me to remember to put others first. Thank You that I can trust You to take care of me. Amen.

DAY 2:

Question of the Day: To whom should we show kindness?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Luke 14:12–15

What's the best party you have ever been to? Were you surrounded by your family and friends at that party? Then it might seem strange what Jesus said about inviting friends or family to a dinner or party.

Jesus wasn't telling the host that it's bad to invite his family to dinner. He was just telling the host that there would be no reward from God for this. Jesus' words remind us that it's easy to do good things for those who can return the favor. But as Christians, we are also supposed to do good things for those who can't help us in return. When we treat others with kindness, especially those we know will never repay us, we can trust God will reward us in heaven when Jesus' followers go to be with Him.

TALK ABOUT IT:

Question 1. What kinds of people did Jesus tell the host to invite?

Answer 1. People who were poor, blind, or couldn't walk (Luke 14:13)

Question 2. When did Jesus say the host would be rewarded by God?

Answer 2. In heaven (Luke 14:14)

Question 3. Why do you think Jesus told the host to invite those specific people?

Answer 3. So he would receive a heavenly reward instead of something here on earth. God will reward those who do good to people who can't repay them. (Luke 14:14)

Question 4. Who are some people you can show kindness to?

Answer 4. Answers will vary.

Question 5. How can we follow what Jesus said in our life?

Answer 5. Answers will vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, help me to see the people You want me to show kindness to. Amen.

DAY 3:

Question of the Day: How do we work together as a team?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Philippians 2:1–4

Have you ever seen really little kids play with their toys? Sometimes they don't share very well or get along. Sometimes grownups have the same problem. Paul wrote a letter to the church in Philippi to encourage them to get along with each other and love one another. He knew that this was something people could agree to do together. It starts with each person having the right attitude.

Paul's message is like what Jesus told the guests at the party. We should choose to put others first, rather than just think about ourself. Doing this will help us work together as a team with one mind and purpose. We should choose to correct our attitude and put others first because of all that God has done for us.

TALK ABOUT IT:

Question 1. What are some things that Paul tells us not to do in these verses?

Answer 1. Don't be selfish, don't try to impress others. Don't look out only for your own interests. (Philippians 2:3–4)

Question 2. What things did Paul say would make him happy?

Answer 2. For the people to agree, love, and work with others with one mind and purpose (Philippians 2:2)

Question 3. How should Philippians 2:4 affect how we treat others?

Answer 3. Answers will vary.

Question 4. What do you think working as a team with one mind and purpose looks like?

Answer 4. Answers will vary.

Question 5. How can selfishness destroy a team?

Answer 5. Answers will vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, thank You for everything You have done for us. Help us to make Your Church stronger by having the right attitude. Amen.

DAY 4:

Question of the Day: What does love mean?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: 1 Corinthians 13:4–7

Have you ever tried to describe something to someone who has never seen it? It's pretty hard and means you have to explain what it is like and what it is not like. That's what Paul is doing in these verses. The church in Corinth seemed to need some teaching about showing love to others. So Paul reminded them what God's love is and what it's not. It's a little like how Jesus reminded the host at the banquet to show kindness to others.

It can be easy to think that we are good at loving others. But sometimes we lose our way, and we end up just loving ourself. It's important that we know what God says love is and what it isn't. Then we can stay on track and reflect God's perfect love to others.

TALK ABOUT IT:

Question 1. How would you describe love?

Answer 1. Answers will vary.

Question 2. How do these verses describe love?

Answer 2. Love is patient and kind. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and lasts in every situation. (1 Corinthians 13:4, 7)

Question 3. Why do you think Paul needed to tell people what love is and isn't?

Answer 3. Answers will vary.

Question 4. Can you remember a time when you were unloving to someone else? What could you have done differently?

Answer 4. Answers will vary.

Question 5. What are some ways we can show God's kind of love to others?

Answer 5. Answers will vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, thank You for showing us what love should look like. Help us to show God's love to everyone. Amen.

February 18, 2024

BE DIFFERENT: DISCERN TRUTH

The BIG Answer:

I can know the truth.

Memory Verse Challenge:

“Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think.”

- Romans 12:2 (NLT)

DAY 1:

Question of the Day: Who is Jesus?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Matthew 16:13-20

Have you ever heard a rumor about someone? Maybe it was rumor about a new kid or a teacher. People love to make guesses about other people's lives. It was the same with Jesus. He healed the sick, did miracles, and taught in ways that were different. Many people had lots of guesses about who Jesus was, but the guesses in today's verses were all wrong.

When Jesus asked the disciples who they thought He was, Simon Peter didn't need to make guesses. He knew the truth about who Jesus was because God had shown or revealed it to him. He knew that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God. Just like Simon Peter knew the truth about Jesus, we can also know the truth. When we ask God to help us, He will reveal His truth to us.

TALK ABOUT IT:

Question 1. In the Bible verses we read, who did some people believe Jesus was?

Answer 1. They thought He was John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, or another prophet. (Matthew 16:14)

Question 2. How do you think the disciples felt when Jesus asked them who they thought He was?

Answer 2. Answers will vary.

Question 3. How did Simon Peter know the truth about Jesus?

Answer 3. Jesus told Peter, "My Father in heaven has revealed this to you." (Matthew 16:17)

Question 4. Why do you think Jesus wanted the disciples not to tell anyone?

Answer 4. Answers will vary.

Question 5. Who is Jesus?

Answer 5. The Messiah, the Son of God (Matthew 16:16)

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, help us know the truth of who You are and how we should live because of that. Amen.

DAY 2

Question of the Day: What does it look like to follow Jesus?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Matthew 16:21–24

Have you ever been tempted to play instead of work? It can be hard to choose to obey your parent's instructions to clean your room instead of watching TV or playing video games. In today's Bible verses, Jesus was frustrated with Peter. The enemy was using Peter against Jesus. But Jesus knew what He must do and that it would be hard.

We all face temptations to live a relaxing and comfortable life. But Jesus never promised us that life with Him would be easy. Jesus suffered for us on the Cross. His followers must also take up their cross and endure whatever challenges come their way. Following Jesus means we give up our own plans to follow Him. No matter how difficult it gets, we can trust Jesus and remember how much He has done for us.

TALK ABOUT IT:

Question 1. What did Jesus tell the disciples that the elders, priests, and religious teachers would do to Him?

Answer 1. "He would be killed, but on the third day he would be raised from the dead." (Matthew 16:21)

Question 2. Who did Jesus say was using Peter's words to tempt Him?

Answer 2. Satan, the devil (Matthew 16:23)

Question 3. Why do you think Peter rejected what Jesus was saying about His death?

Answer 3. What Jesus said didn't fit what Peter thought would happen. Answers will vary.

Question 4. How do you think Peter felt after Jesus' rebuke?

Answer 4. Answers will vary.

Question 5. What does it look like to follow Jesus?

Answer 5. Answers will vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, help us to give up our own plans, pick up our cross, and follow You. Amen.

DAY 3

Question of the Day: How can we know the truth about ourself?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Hebrews 4:12–13

Have you ever tried to mix oil with water? No matter how much you stir, they don't completely mix! When it comes to mixing the truth with lies, it's almost the opposite. It can be hard to tell them apart. The writer of Hebrews reminds us that it's the word of God that helps us separate truth about ourself from lies.

God's Word is true. That's why it is important that we read our Bible. When we have thoughts or desires, we should always compare them to God's Word. God's Word will always help show the lies we are believing about ourself or our situation. When we listen to God's Word, it leads us to truth.

TALK ABOUT IT:

Question 1. How does Hebrews 4:12 describe the word of God?

Answer 1. It is "alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword." (Hebrews 4:12)

Question 2. When we do something wrong, can we hide it from God?

Answer 2. No. "Nothing in all creation is hidden from God." (Hebrews 4:13)

Question 3. Why should we trust God's Word?

Answer 3. Answers will vary.

Question 4. How do you think God's Word exposes our thoughts and desires?

Answer 4. When we read the Bible, the words will speak to our heart and mind to help us know what is right and what is wrong. Answers will vary.

Question 5. How can we know the truth?

Answer 5. Answers will vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, please help expose any lies that we have believed and help us to see the truth in God's Word. Amen.

DAY 4

Question of the Day: Why don't some people believe the truth?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: 1 Corinthians 2:10–14

Have you ever listened to someone speaking a foreign language? When you don't know the language, it can sound strange. Paul tells us that this is how unbelievers can feel when they hear Christians talking about the truth of God's Word. Some people think differently from God, but we know that God knows best. As Christians, God's Spirit lives in us and He shows us the truth.

Other people might not understand the truth of God's Word. They might even think we are wrong to believe it. But we can be confident in the truth because we know the Holy Spirit has revealed or shown it to us.

TALK ABOUT IT:

Question 1. Who does verse 10 say revealed God's truth to Paul?

Answer 1. God's Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:10)

Question 2. What is the difference between human wisdom and God's truth?

Answer 2. Answers will vary.

Question 3. How can we know God's truth?

Answer 3. "No one can know God's thoughts except God's own Spirit. And we have received God's Spirit." (1 Corinthians 2:11–12)

Question 4. How should we treat people who don't understand God's truth?

Answer 4. Answers will vary.

Question 5. Why do some people not believe the truth?

Answer 5. It sounds foolish or silly to them. (1 Corinthians 2:14)

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, thank You for giving us Your Spirit. Help us not to rely on human wisdom but to follow Your truth. Amen.

March 3, 2024

BE DIFFERENT: SPEAK TRUTH

The BIG Answer:

I will speak the truth.

Memory Verse Challenge:

“Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think.”

- Romans 12:2 (NLT)

DAY 1

Question of the Day: Where does faith come from?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Acts 14:8–10

Have you ever seen someone's face light up with excitement? Maybe that is what this man looked like listening to Paul preach. Life would have been so hard for this man who had been crippled since birth. He would have had to depend on others for everything. Doctors didn't have any hope of him being able to walk. But when he heard Paul preach, he was full of faith.

Faith comes from hearing the Word of God. Paul preached the truth of God's Word, and the crippled man had the faith he needed to be healed. When we listen to and speak the truth of God's Word, we will be full of faith to believe for the impossible.

TALK ABOUT IT:

Question 1. How long had the man been unable to walk?

Answer 1. Since birth (Acts 14:8)

Question 2. What was Paul doing before the man was healed?

Answer 2. He was preaching. (Acts 14:9)

Question 3. How do you think the crippled man felt when he was listening to Paul preach?

Answer 3. He had faith in God. Answers will vary.

Question 4. What do you imagine the man might have done when he was healed?

Answer 4. Answers will vary.

Question 5. Where does faith come from?

Answer 5. Faith comes from hearing the Word of God.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, help us to listen to and speak the truth of God's Word, the Bible. Amen.

DAY 2

Question of the Day: Whose power heals the sick?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Acts 14:11–15

The crowd saw something spectacular. They couldn't understand how the man who had always been crippled had been healed. They decided that there must be something extra special about Paul and Barnabas. The man with crippled feet listened to Paul preach and God healed him. But the crowd saw the healing and seemed to completely miss the truth about the true God.

If the crowd had listened to Paul and Barnabas, their lives could have been forever changed. God is all powerful and it is by His power that the man was healed. If we want everything that God has for us, then we should turn from worthless things, listen to and turn to the living God. He alone has the power to heal sick people and do miracles!

TALK ABOUT IT:

Question 1. Who did the crowd think Paul and Barnabas were?

Answer 1. "These men are gods in human form." (Acts 14:11–12)

Question 2. What did the people try to do for Paul and Barnabas?

Answer 2. They were going to offer sacrifices to them. (Acts 14:13)

Question 3. How do you think Paul and Barnabas felt when the crowd started to do this?

Answer 3. Paul and Barnabas were upset and told the people to stop the sacrifices. Paul and Barnabas explained that they were there to tell the people about the living God. (Acts 14:14–15)

Question 4. Why do you think the crowd didn't listen to Paul and Barnabas?

Answer 4. Answers will vary.

Question 5. Whose power heals the sick?

Answer 5. Our living God

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, help us not to get distracted by worthless things. Help us focus on the living God and what He wants. Amen.

DAY 3

Question of the Day: Why should we speak the truth?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Romans 16:17–20

Have you ever been taught the wrong way to do something? It can be frustrating and time consuming to have to relearn to do things the right way. Paul told the church in Rome to watch out for people who didn't speak the truth. He knew that these false teachers could teach the people the wrong way to follow God.

We must also be careful that what we are being taught is the truth found in God's Word. This means that we must know God's Word and we must also speak the truth to others. We don't want others to lead us away from God, and we don't want to lead others away from God.

TALK ABOUT IT:

Question 1. What kinds of people does Paul tell us to watch out for?

Answer 1. "People who cause divisions and upset people's faith by teaching things contrary to what you have been taught" (Romans 16:17)

Question 2. Who does Paul say these false teachers are serving?

Answer 2. Their own personal interests (Romans 16:18)

Question 3. What could happen if people follow false teaching?

Answer 3. Answers will vary.

Question 4. What are some ways we can tell people aren't teaching the truth?

Answer 4. See if it matches what the Bible says and what we have been taught. (Romans 16:17)

Question 5. Why should we speak the truth?

Answer 5. Answers will vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, protect us from people who don't speak the truth. Help us to know Your Word and to speak Your truth. Amen.

DAY 4

Question of the Day: What should we do with the truth?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: 2 Timothy 4:1–5

Imagine if you had the cure to one of the worst diseases. Do you think you would keep the medicine a secret? No, we would do everything we could to spread the cure so that more people could be saved from the disease.

In these verses, Paul was writing to encourage his friend Timothy to be ready to preach the truth of God at any time. Whether people receive the message or not, Timothy needed to share the truth and good news of Jesus.

Today, there are many people who aren't interested in hearing the truth. But does that mean we should stop sharing the truth? No, the truth of God is the only way for people to be saved. So even when it's hard, we must keep speaking the truth to everyone we meet.

TALK ABOUT IT:

Question 1. What are some things Paul encouraged Timothy to keep doing?

Answer 1. Preach God's Word, be ready all of the time, teach people. (2 Timothy 4:2)

Question 2. What did Paul warn Timothy about the future?

Answer 2. "For a time is coming when people will no longer listen to sound and wholesome teaching. They will follow their own desires and will look for teachers who will tell them whatever their itching ears want to hear. They will reject the truth and chase after myths." (2 Timothy 4:3–4) People won't want to listen to God's truth and will find teachers who will teach them whatever they want to hear.

Question 3. Why do you think Paul was telling Timothy this?

Answer 3. To help him prepare for what was coming. Answers will vary.

Question 4. Have you ever found it difficult to listen to the truth? Why or why not?

Answer 4. Answers will vary.

Question 5. What should we do with the truth?

Answer 5. Answers will vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, help us to not get discouraged when others don't listen to the truth. Help us to keep sharing Your good news. Please use us so that more people will come to believe in You and follow You. Amen.

March 10, 2024

BE DIFFERENT: SERVE OTHERS

The BIG Answer:

I will help others.

Memory Verse Challenge:

“Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think.”

- Romans 12:2 (NLT)

DAY 1

Question of the Day: What are you asking Jesus for?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Matthew 20:20–23

Have you ever used your parents to pass on a message for you? Maybe you were too nervous to ask a question yourself, so you had them ask. James and John may have used their mother in a similar way. She asked for something from Jesus for them. They wanted to receive a high honor in His kingdom. But did they even know what following Jesus would require of them?

It's funny to think that James and John thought they could handle this suffering when they didn't seem to even have the courage to ask Jesus the question on their own. Jesus didn't correct them for their question, but He did make it clear that following Him would involve great suffering for those two.

It's possible that we might go through hard times for following Jesus, too. And like James and John later did, our trust in Jesus can help us make it through whatever problems come our way. Rather than asking for fancy titles or positions, let's ask Him to help us follow Him no matter the cost.

THINK ABOUT IT:

Question 1. Who made the request to Jesus for James and John to sit beside Him in heaven?

Answer 1. Their mother (Matthew 20:20)

Question 2. Why do you think James and John's mother asked the question?

Answer 2. Answers will vary.

Question 3. Why do you think Jesus asked if they were ready to suffer like He would?

Answer 3. Answers will vary.

Question 4. Who did Jesus say would decide which people would sit in those seats of honor?

Answer 4. God the Father (Matthew 20:23)

Question 5. Think about the things you have prayed for recently. Were your requests more like or unlike James and John's request?

Answer 5. Answers will vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, help us not to desire applause or praise, but to focus on serving You. Amen.

DAY 2

Question of the Day: Is it wrong to want to be a leader?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Matthew 20:24–28

Do you know what you want to be when you get older? Some people have smaller ambitions, but others want to be a big leader. Is it wrong to want a position of leadership? Jesus didn't say it was wrong to want those things, but He made it clear that if we want to lead then we must serve people.

When we ask to lead in God's kingdom, we are really asking to be a servant. Many people in the world want to lead so they can rule over people, but God wants us to help people. That means we can all be leaders if we choose to help others. So is it wrong to want to be a leader? Only if you don't want to be a servant.

TALK ABOUT IT:

Question 1. What did Jesus say would be different among the disciples?

Answer 1. "Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant." (Matthew 20:26)

Question 2. What two things did Jesus say He came to do in verse 28?

Answer 2. "To serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28)

Question 3. What are some things that bad leaders do?

Answer 3. Answers will vary.

Question 4. What are some ways we can be leaders in God's kingdom?

Answer 4. Answers will vary.

Question 5. Is it wrong to want to be a leader?

Answer 5. Answers will vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, help us to be focused on following Your example by serving others. Amen.

DAY 3

Question of the Day: How should we help others?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Isaiah 58:6–10

Have you ever given away something that was important to you? It can be hard to make sacrifices to help others. Isaiah was writing these verses about seven hundred years before Jesus' birth. Isaiah encouraged the people living in Israel to show their love and devotion to God by helping those in need. Everything he was telling them to do would involve some kind of sacrifice for them, but Isaiah was telling them to do it for God.

Following Jesus means we put the needs of others before ourself. It can be difficult to make sacrifices to help others, but we know that God will always take care of us. Isaiah listed ways we can help others, but that is just the beginning. There are so many ways that God can use us to help others in need.

TALK ABOUT IT:

Question 1. What are some of the things Isaiah said for the people to do?

Answer 1. Free those who were in prison for the wrong reason, make the work easier for those who worked for them, share their food with the hungry, etc. (Isaiah 58:6–7)

Question 2. How did Isaiah say God would answer when those who helped others called on Him?

Answer 2. "Then when you call, the Lord will answer. 'Yes, I am here,' he will quickly reply." (Isaiah 58:9)

Question 3. Have you ever given up something to help others?

Answer 3. Answers will vary.

Question 4. Why do you think we should help others?

Answer 4. Answers will vary.

Question 5. How can you help someone this week?

Answer 5. Answers will vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, help us to put the needs of others above our own needs and wants. Amen.

DAY 4

Question of the Day: How should we use our time?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Galatians 5:13–15

Imagine what you would do if you had a whole day free to do whatever you wanted. We could all think of some fun ways to spend that time. You might think of some ways to treat yourself. Paul wrote to the church in Galatia to remind them that the freedom they have in Jesus should not be used to do things that are wrong. He knew that we should use our freedom in Jesus to serve and show love to others.

It's not bad to treat ourselves on occasion. But God wants us to use our time in a way that we are blessing and serving others. When we are tempted to use our time on the wrong things, we should think about these verses. Then we should ask ourselves if there is anything we could do to love and serve others instead.

TALK ABOUT IT:

Question 1. What does Paul tell us not to do?

Answer 1. "Don't use your freedom to satisfy your sinful nature." (Galatians 5:13)

Question 2. How does Paul say the law can be summed up?

Answer 2. "Love your neighbor as yourself." (Galatians 5:14)

Question 3. Why do you think Paul called the Christians "my brothers and sisters"?

Answer 3. Answers will vary.

Question 4. What are some ways that you have seen people waste their time?

Answer 4. Answers will vary.

Question 5. How should we use our time?

Answer 5. Answers will vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, thank You for the freedom we have that You have provided. Help us to use our time to serve others. Amen.

March 17, 2024

GET GOING: LET GO

The BIG Answer:

I can make a difference.

Memory Verse Challenge:

[Jesus] said, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me,
so I am sending you."

- John 20:21 (NLT)

DAY 1

Question of the Day: How can you make yourself available for Jesus?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Luke 5:1–3

Simon Peter was doing his job as a fisherman. Scrubbing and cleaning nets was hard work! But then, he had an encounter that changed everything. Jesus told Simon Peter to push his boat into the water so that others could hear His teaching. Simon Peter could have said no because he was too busy. There were many other important things that this hard-working fisherman had to do. Instead, he made his boat and his heart available for Jesus.

There are always many things we can be doing. Homework, chores, and practices fill our daily routine. Most of these things we need to do are necessary and good! When Jesus speaks to our heart, we must be willing to put down our nets like Simon Peter did and make our life available for what Jesus wants from us. Making a difference starts with being available. Like Simon Peter, we let Jesus use what we have to do great things.

TALK ABOUT IT:

Question 1. What was Simon Peter's job?

Answer 1. A fisherman

Question 2. What did Jesus ask Simon Peter to do?

Answer 2. Push his boat out in the water (Luke 5:3)

Question 3. Why do you think Simon Peter stopped everything to do what Jesus asked?

Answer 3. Answers will vary.

Question 4. What are some things in your life that make you busy?

Answer 4. Answers will vary.

Question 5. How can you make yourself available for Jesus?

Answer 5. Answers will vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, thank You for the good things that You have given me. I want to use them to bring glory to Your name. I am available to do what You are calling me to do. Help me to hear Your call so I can follow You with my whole heart. I love You, Jesus! Amen.

DAY 2

Question of the Day: When I say yes to Jesus, how does that make a difference?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Luke 5:4–6

Simon Peter had already made himself available to Jesus. But, Jesus had even more in store for Simon Peter. The night before, Simon Peter, his brother Andrew, and his friends James and John did not catch one fish. (We know that Peter's brother Andrew was there from other places in the Gospels like Mark 2:16.) Not a single one! This meant that they would not get any money for their families from selling fish. After a long night with no fish, the last thing they wanted to do was to go back and try again. Yet Simon Peter did what Jesus asked. This encounter with Jesus made Simon Peter want to try one more time. Because Simon Peter chose to say yes to Jesus, he got the biggest catch of fish in his life!

Sometimes what Jesus wants us to do doesn't make sense to us or is a challenge. You may feel a nudge to talk about Jesus to someone you don't know. You may have a thought to pray for someone who has hurt you. You may have an idea to raise money for missionaries or may even feel a call to be a missionary to a country far away. Jesus wants us to say yes. When we do, we know that God will use our yes to reach more people for Jesus than we can imagine. Our yes to Jesus' call in things great and small makes the biggest difference of all.

TALK ABOUT IT:

Question 1. How many fish did Simon Peter catch the night before he met Jesus?

Answer 1. Zero (Luke 5:5)

Question 2. What do you think Simon Peter was thinking when Jesus told him to go back and fish some more?

Answer 2. Answers will vary.

Question 3. What happened when Simon Peter let his nets down in the water?

Answer 3. The nets were so full that they began to tear. (Luke 5:6)

Question 4. When it doesn't make sense, why should we still follow Jesus?

Answer 4. Answers will vary.

Question 5. When I say yes to Jesus, how does that make a difference?

Answer 5. Answers will vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, Wow! You are so good to us. Thank You for using our yes to make a huge difference in the world. Even when following You doesn't make sense, it gives me joy to follow You so that many more can know You too. Amen.

DAY 3

Question of the Day: Why is following Jesus the greatest life of all?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Luke 5:7–10

A miracle happened! Simon Peter did what Jesus asked. Then, the huge catch of fish weighed his boat down so much that it almost sank. This was a huge reason to rejoice. Simon Peter fell on his knees before Jesus. Simon called himself a sinful man. He also realized how amazing Jesus was. Simon Peter's life had changed in an instant because of Jesus.

There are lots of blessings, or good things, we will receive in this life. However, none of them will ever compare to following Jesus. What the world has to offer us may seem great. It could make us very happy for a short time. But, if we follow Jesus like Simon Peter did, we will see God's miracles at work in our life. Following Jesus is the greatest life because He is always with us and He is always there to help us.

TALK ABOUT IT:

Question 1. How did Simon Peter respond when he saw the miracle?

Answer 1. He fell to his knees before Jesus. (Luke 5:8)

Question 2. How would you feel looking at that miraculous catch of fish?

Answer 2. Answers will vary.

Question 3. Why do you think Peter said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man"?

Answer 3. Answers will vary.

Question 4. Why is Jesus greater than any blessing that we can receive from Him?

Answer 4. Answers will vary.

Question 5. Why is following Jesus the greatest life of all?

Answer 5. He is always with us; He helps us when we need it; He forgives our sins when we ask. Answers may vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, thank You for all of the amazing blessings that You have given me. Not one of them is greater than You! Let my heart always remember that You are the Great Provider and will supply all my needs as I follow You. You are so good! I love You. Amen.

DAY 4

Question of the Day: How can you share the good news of Jesus with others?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Luke 5:10–11

Simon Peter and his friends knew about catching fish. They had boats and nets. They knew how to sail on the sea. Then Jesus came and gave their lives new meaning and purpose. Jesus knew that Simon Peter, Andrew, James, and John could be fishers of men. What does that mean? Because Jesus changed their life, their new job was to “catch” people and tell them how wonderful Jesus is! For Simon Peter, Andrew, James, and John, this miracle moment was just the beginning of their mission. They left everything to follow Jesus! In the same way their lives had been changed, they now could tell others who needed to hear about Jesus.

Jesus can give your life a new, different meaning. Jesus helps us to start thinking differently. We get to see how good He is. We can start to understand how much He loves us. Our life becomes a journey with Jesus! This good news is for us, our friends, our family, and our neighbors. Now is the time to share this good news to make a difference in others. Let’s leave the old behind and get on a new mission for Jesus!

TALK ABOUT IT:

Question 1. What did Jesus say Simon Peter was now going to do?

Answer 1. Fish for people (Luke 5:10)

Question 2. How did Jesus change the lives of Simon Peter, Andrew, James, and John?

Answer 2. They became followers of Jesus. (Luke 5:11)

Question 3. How has Jesus helped you to live differently?

Answer 3. Answers will vary.

Question 4. What do you think “fish for people” means?

Answer 4. Answers will vary.

Question 5. How can you share the good news of Jesus with others?

Answer 5. Answers will vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, thank You for helping me to live differently. Thank You for giving me a new life in You. I am so excited about our journey together. Help me to share this good news with others. You are amazing, Jesus! Amen.

March 24, 2024

GET GOING: EMBRACE YOUR ROLE

The BIG Answer:

I have a purpose.

Memory Verse Challenge:

[Jesus] said, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me,
so I am sending you."

- John 20:21 (NLT)

DAY 1

Question of the Day: How can I know my purpose in Jesus' mission?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: John 1:19–24

The word purpose means the reason something exists. God has a purpose for each one of us. John the Baptist was confident in his purpose in God's kingdom. He knew exactly what he was born to do. He baptized people in the Jordan River and surrounding areas. He told people to get their hearts ready for God's kingdom.

In the same way, John knew who he was not. The priests and temple assistants asked him. John boldly and clearly told them he was not the Messiah, Elijah, or the prophet they were looking for. Instead, he let them know his purpose. John's purpose was to prepare the way for Jesus.

We all have a purpose too. Each of us must do our job so that Jesus' mission can be completed. God is the one who lets us know our purpose when we seek after Him. When we know who God is, we know who we are. Each of us has a unique purpose. But God also calls each of us to one purpose that's like John's—to point people to Jesus.

TALK ABOUT IT:

Question 1. Was John the Messiah?

Answer 1. No (John 1:20)

Question 2. What was John's purpose?

Answer 2. To be a voice who told people to clear the way for the Lord (Jesus), to prepare for His coming (John 1:23)

Question 3. How do you know that John was confident in his purpose?

Answer 3. Answers will vary.

Question 4. Why was John's purpose important?

Answer 4. Answers will vary.

Question 5. How can I know my purpose in life?

Answer 5. Answers will vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, I know that You have a plan for my life. You have a purpose for my life! Help me to know You more. As I grow in You, help me to know the purpose for my life. Jesus, please shine through me so the hearts of others are prepared to meet You. Amen.

DAY 2

Question of the Day: What is God's highest purpose for us?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: John 1:24–28

Pharisees came to the Jordan River to question John. "What right do you have to baptize?" they asked. However, John was confident in his purpose. He did not argue or try to prove his authority. He simply told them his job and immediately pointed them to Someone greater than him. That was Jesus. John took the attention away from himself. Instead, he put the attention on Jesus!

God has a purpose for each of us in His work. But, our highest purpose is this—we need to point people to Jesus. Whether it is singing on a stage, preaching a message of hope, creating a work of art, running a race, being a good friend, or doing chores, all these things have one purpose. We do them for God's glory! We do them to bring attention to how good He is! When people have questions, we can answer confidently as John did. We can turn people's eyes from us to the Savior of the world!

TALK ABOUT IT:

Question 1. What was John doing at Bethany?

Answer 1. Baptizing people in water (John 1:28)

Question 2. What are some purposes that God has for you right now?

Answer 2. Answers will vary.

Question 3. How can you bring attention to Jesus in your life?

Answer 3. Answers will vary.

Question 4. How did John compare himself to Jesus?

Answer 4. "I'm not even worthy to be his slave and untie the straps of his sandal." (John 1:27)

Question 5. What is God's highest purpose for us?

Answer 5. Answers will vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, the purpose You have for me is so good! Whatever I do Jesus, I want to bring glory and honor to You. In things people see, let me point to You. In things people don't see, let me glorify You. It's all about you Jesus! I love you! Amen.

DAY 3

Question of the Day: How can you prepare the way for Jesus?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: John 1:29–31

John the Baptist knew his purpose. He worked for years to prepare the way for the coming Messiah. Yet, for most of that time, he did not see who he was preparing for. John had preached and baptized people in water. People were repenting of their sin. John had prepared the people and himself so well. Because of this, everyone was ready for the great reveal of Jesus! John's preparation led people to Jesus.

Think of preparing a cake. You need to have all the right ingredients in the right amounts. You must have the right tools. You have to bake the cake for the perfect amount of time. Sometimes, putting in all that work is a long process, but it is worth it in the end when we have a delicious piece of a sugary, sweet dessert! God's purpose for our life can work in the same way. We prepare, we work hard, and we plan. We listen to God's voice. We read the Bible. We serve, give, and tell others about Jesus. We creatively use our talents and gifts for Him. All this preparation can lead to one sweet result—Jesus can be revealed to the world!

TALK ABOUT IT:

Question 1. What did John call Jesus in verse 29?

Answer 1. The Lamb of God (John 1:29)

Question 2. What was John doing to prepare the people for the Messiah?

Answer 2. Telling them about the coming Messiah and baptizing them with water (John 1:31)

Question 3. John described Jesus as greater than him. What does that tell us about John?

Answer 3. John knew his purpose was to prepare the way for Jesus. Answers will vary.

Question 4. How do you think John felt when the Messiah was finally revealed?

Answer 4. Answers will vary.

Question 5. How can you prepare the way for Jesus?

Answer 5. Answers may vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, with all my life and all my heart, I honor You. I worship You. I want my life's purpose to be to serve You and prepare the way so others can know You. It's all about You, the Lamb of God! Thank You for saving me and taking away my sin so that I can be with You eternally. You are so good! Amen.

DAY 4

Question of the Day: How can you tell others the truth of who Jesus is?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: John 1:32–34

Before Jesus was named as Messiah at the Jordan River, God had been speaking to John. He had spent years getting to know God. John knew what God loved and hated. He knew the good and faithful God that He is. God had told John about the coming Messiah. Because of this, John could boldly tell others, or testify, about Jesus' identity before the people. John made this moment simple for those people there to understand. John also confirmed the truth from his heart. In case the people didn't get it before, he told them directly. Jesus was the Messiah, the Chosen One!

The longer and more seriously we follow Jesus, the better we'll know Him and His truth. When you spend time with a friend, you know more about who they are. You know what they like and dislike, their great qualities, and their true heart. If someone were to ask you about your friend, you could tell them directly and truthfully who they are. The same is true with Jesus. When we spend time with Him in prayer, reading the Bible, and being with others who are following Him, we can give testimony to who He is. Our testimony is part of our purpose to bring others to Jesus!

TALK ABOUT IT:

Question 1. Who did John testify that Jesus was in verse 34?

Answer 1. The Chosen One of God (John 1:34)

Question 2. What sign did John see that Jesus was the Chosen One of God?

Answer 2. The Holy Spirit resting on Him. (John 1:32)

Question 3. How do we get to know God?

Answer 3. Answers will vary.

Question 4. Why is it important to tell others about who Jesus is?

Answer 4. Answers will vary.

Question 5. How can you testify to the truth of who Jesus is?

Answer 5. Answers will vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, thank You for all of the things that You have done in my life. Each one is a testimony to who You are—good, faithful, merciful, and kind. I can't wait to share with others about who You are. Thank You for giving me purpose and joy in You. Amen.

April 7, 2024

GET GOING: GO FORTH

The BIG Answer:

I have a role to play.

Memory Verse Challenge:

[Jesus] said, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me,
so I am sending you."

- John 20:21 (NLT)

DAY 1

Question of the Day: Who can help you as you learn to follow Jesus and do what He wants you to do?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Luke 10:1–4

The seventy-two disciples had their mission from Jesus. Two by two, they were sent out ahead of Jesus to prepare for His arrival. So many people needed to hear about Jesus! How were the disciples going to reach all these people? The work ahead was going to be hard. They needed to trust God for their protection and needs. Many things could distract them from their mission. But they obeyed Jesus anyway. These disciples chose to go!

Imagine that you are on a life-or-death mission. The road ahead is long, and you have to get there quickly. You don't have time to stop because the task is too important. This mission sounds tough! But, this is a lot like how Jesus tells us to be on our mission to share the good news about Him. The message of Jesus changes lives! When He tells us to go and tell others, we must choose to move forward in faith. When we join with others who love Jesus and work on the mission together, we become unstoppable!

TALK ABOUT IT:

Question 1. Even though the harvest is great, what are there few of?

Answer 1. Workers (Luke 10:2)

Question 2. Why do you think Jesus told the seventy-two disciples not to take any money, a bag, or extra sandals?

Answer 2. Answers will vary

Question 3. How would you describe the mission Jesus gives us to tell others about Him?

Answer 3. Answers will vary.

Question 4. Why did Jesus have the disciples travel in pairs?

Answer 4. Answers will vary.

Question 5. Who can help you as you learn how to follow Jesus and do what He wants you to do?

Answer 5. Answers will vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, thank You for choosing me to help carry out Your mission! I can't wait to tell others all about You. I want them to know You too. Surround me with other followers of Jesus so we can work together and encourage each other. Let us share Your love boldly with others. Amen.

DAY 2

Question of the Day: How can you share Jesus' love with others when their answer is no?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Luke 10:10–16; Acts 13:48–52

Jesus wisely prepared His disciples about how to handle being rejected. Sometimes, people did not want to hear about the love of Jesus. Sometimes they did not just refuse Jesus, but they refused His disciples too. For the disciples, that could be a moment that hurt their feelings. When people said no to the disciples, they also said no to Jesus. Because of this, Jesus told the disciples to wipe the dust from their feet and keep going! In the world, not everyone is going to say yes to Jesus. Our purpose is to tell others the good news. Our role is how we do it—by writing a story, playing a sport, being a missionary, working in a store, whatever we choose to do. It is up to them to accept Jesus for themselves.

Being told no can hurt. We love Jesus so much that we want others to love Him too! Jesus gives us this reminder so that we will not give up. When others say no when we tell them about Jesus, they are not rejecting us. They are saying no to Him. Is it still worth it to tell others about Jesus? Absolutely! Even though someone may say no now, God is always working on that person's heart. In time, we can have faith that their no will turn into a yes for Jesus as we continue to show them God's love.

TALK ABOUT IT:

Question 1. If you share Jesus' love with someone and they say no, who are they saying no to?

Answer 1. Jesus (Luke 10:16)

Question 2. How do you feel when you share Jesus' love with others?

Answer 2. Answers will vary.

Question 3. What should we do when those we tell about Jesus say no?

Answer 3. Answers will vary.

Question 4. What has it been like for you when you have told others about Jesus?

Answer 4. Answers will vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, I pray that everyone I tell about Your love will learn to love You too. Help me to remember that my role is to share Your kindness with others. Help me think of creative and unique ways to share Your love. Help me to be a good friend to others so that they will want to be Your friend too! Amen.

DAY 3

Question of the Day: What does it mean when Jesus gave the disciples “authority over all the power of the enemy”?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Luke 10:17–20

The disciples came back from their mission, and they were excited! They had likely seen some amazing things when they spoke the name of Jesus. The disciples now had confidence. They had been faithful in this role. Jesus had given the disciples authority over the power of the enemy, the devil, and they had acted on that. They could walk into danger and be safe. More people could hear about Jesus because the disciples were walking in authority!

What does having authority mean? Think of a talent you have—something you are good at doing. You can confidently join in when you walk into a room and someone talks about that. Why? Because you have the authority to do so. A doctor has authority in a hospital. A pastor has authority in a church. A teacher has authority in a classroom. They know what they are doing. They have experience. They are an authority!

Followers of Jesus can walk in authority as well. Our authority as Christians comes from Jesus. We know Him and have experienced His love and power. We know that Jesus saves, heals, and sets people free from sin. So, we can tell others about Jesus with authority because we know who He is.

TALK ABOUT IT:

Question 1. How did the disciples feel when they came back?

Answer 1. Joyful (Luke 10:17)

Question 2. Why did the disciples go on their mission with authority?

Answer 2. Because Jesus had given them authority (Luke 10:19)

Question 3. Where does our authority come from?

Answer 3. Jesus

Question 4. What are things that the disciples could do when they walked in authority?

Answer 4. The demons obeyed them, evil spirits obeyed them. (Luke 10:17, 19) Answers will vary.

Question 5. What does it mean when Jesus gave the disciples “authority over all the power of the enemy”?

Answer 5. Answers will vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, because of You I can have authority in You. Wow! This means I can confidently do what You say. I can boldly tell others about You. Help me to remember this in every opportunity I have to share the good news. Help me to grow in authority as I see You working through me. You are so good to me. My role will always be to serve You! Amen.

DAY 4

Question of the Day: How is God calling you to go and share the good news?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Acts 22:17–21

Paul, the person God is speaking to in these verses, was a hero of faith. He chose to go and tell others about Jesus. Paul was different from some Early Church leaders. He didn't preach just to people like him. God told him to go to people in other places, too! Paul was a Jew, and God sent him to people who weren't Jewish—the Gentiles. Paul's call meant the good news was for everyone! Paul became a missionary. A missionary is someone who is sent to a different place or people group to share the good news about Jesus. Jesus sent Paul on a mission. Paul had a role to play. Paul chose to say yes. Because of this, people all over the world now know Jesus!

Over two thousand years later, millions of people now know Jesus because Paul chose to go. In the same way, God is calling you to the missions field He has for you. It could be your neighbor next door. It could be your friends at school. It could be people in your city or another country! The good news of Jesus is not just for you. The good news is for you to share with others. Always remember that you have a role to play. People's lives can be transformed when you choose to obey Jesus and go!

TALK ABOUT IT:

Question 1. To whom did Jesus send Paul?

Answer 1. To the Gentiles (Acts 22:21)

Question 2. What does it mean to be a missionary?

Answer 2. A missionary is someone who is sent to a different place or people group to share the good news about Jesus.

Question 3. Why was it so important that Paul went to the Gentiles?

Answer 3. Answers will vary.

Question 4. Who needs to hear the good news about Jesus?

Answer 4. Everyone

Question 5. How is God calling you to go and share the good news?

Answer 5. Answers will vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, I am so thankful that Paul chose to go and share the gospel. Help me open my eyes and heart to the missions field around me. I choose to go wherever You send me. As I journey with You and love You more each day, help me know the role I need to play. I love You, Jesus! Thank You for calling me to go. Amen.

April 14, 2024

GET GOING: SHARE THE NEWS

The BIG Answer:

I can share God's love.

Memory Verse Challenge:

[Jesus] said, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me,
so I am sending you."

- John 20:21 (NLT)

DAY 1

Question of the Day: Who is someone you can tell about the love of Jesus?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Matthew 9:9–11

Jesus was assembling His team of closest disciples. Some of the men He called were from different places. Jesus called fishermen from their boats. In this Scripture, He called a tax collector from his booth. These men had something in common. When they had an encounter with Jesus, each man's life turned upside down!

Matthew was a tax collector, a person many people did not like. They thought that tax collectors were bad people. When Jesus called him, Matthew had a choice to make: Would he go with Jesus? The Bible says that Matthew immediately left his booth and followed Jesus. Something about Jesus made Matthew go without hesitation. His life would be forever different!

What was Jesus like that made people decide to change their life in an instant? While we don't have Jesus with us in the flesh today, we know from the Bible who He is. Jesus is the King of kings. He is the Lord of lords. Jesus is good, kind, and merciful. He is the Best Friend we could ever ask for. We don't even have enough words to describe how great Jesus is!

Have you experienced how great He is? There are millions of people in the world, just like Matthew, whom Jesus is calling to come to follow Him. He uses us to share the good news with them. They may be people that others don't like. Some may be people others think badly of. Even so, Jesus loves them! He has an amazing plan for each person's life. One encounter with Jesus can change everything. Let's share the good news with others so they can leave everything and follow Him.

TALK ABOUT IT:

Question 1. What was Matthew's job?

Answer 1. A tax collector (Matthew 9:9)

Question 2. What did Matthew do when Jesus said to follow Him?

Answer 2. Matthew got up and followed Him. (Matthew 9:9)

Question 3. Why do you think Matthew left his tax booth so quickly to follow Jesus?

Answer 3. Answers will vary.

Question 4. How does Jesus feel about a person that other people may not like?

Answer 4. He loves that person.

Question 5. Who is someone you can tell about the love of Jesus?

Answer 5. Answers will vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, I am so thankful that I can follow You. Lord, You have changed my life! Give me boldness and wisdom so that I can share this good news with others. Everyone needs to hear how much You love them. Amen.

DAY 2

Question of the Day: Who did Jesus come to help?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Matthew 9:11–12

Matthew made a quick decision to follow Jesus, which forever changed his life. So, what was the first thing he did to celebrate his new life? He had a dinner at his house! Matthew invited other tax collectors and sinners to come to sit at the table with Jesus and His disciples. Matthew knew that the One who called him loved these other sinners too. The Pharisees, however, seemed unhappy about it. What kind of man was Jesus who hung out with sinners? Why did Jesus sit down and eat with these types of people? Jesus replied, “Healthy people don’t need a doctor—sick people do.” Jesus knew that He came to heal the sick and broken. Matthew was one of those people. Because Jesus saved him, Matthew could not help but tell others who needed to hear!

Jesus wasn’t talking about people who had a cough, fever, or even needed to go to the hospital. He was talking about people living in a way that wasn’t honoring Him. There may be many people in your school, your neighborhood, and even your church who aren’t living for Jesus. Some people may have forgotten about them. Others may have labeled them as cheaters, liars, or bad kids. Jesus hasn’t forgotten them. He offers them new labels like friend, worthy, and good. We can be like Matthew and “set the table.” What does that mean? We can invite others and allow them to meet Jesus!

TALK ABOUT IT:

Question 1. Who were Matthew’s dinner guests?

Answer 1. Jesus, His disciples, tax collectors, and sinners (Matthew 9:10)

Question 2. What was the reaction of others when they saw who Jesus was eating with?

Answer 2. “Why does your teacher eat with such scum?” (Matthew 9:11)

Question 3. What did Jesus mean when He said, “Healthy people don’t need a doctor”?

Answer 3. Answers will vary.

Question 4. What keeps some Christians from reaching out to people like those at Matthew’s party?

Answer 4. Answers will vary.

Question 5. Who did Jesus come to help?

Answer 5. Answers will vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, thank You for coming to save both the sick and the healthy. You are kind and gracious. Open my eyes to see others as You see them. Give me the words to share the good news about You with others. I know You love me so much. Help me to tell others about Your love. Amen.

DAY 3

Question of the Day: How can you show mercy?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Hosea 6:6; Matthew 9:13

Jesus reminded the Pharisees about an instructive Bible verse from Hosea. As religious leaders, they told others how to act and what to do to be close to God. The Pharisees offered sacrifices and taught the Law. They did certain good things for God. But their hearts were far from God, and it was clear because they weren't ready to offer mercy. Mercy means to show forgiveness to someone who deserves to be punished.

When these leaders saw Jesus eating with sinners and tax collectors, they couldn't believe it! Why would Jesus spend time with bad people? Jesus knew that sacrifices and following the Law were good. But Jesus also knew that loving others was even more important. The sinners and tax collectors needed mercy. They needed Jesus more than any sacrifice or good deed. This was a time to put mercy before rules.

Imagine you are playing soccer with your friends. The score is tied, and you are about to score the winning point. But as you are about to kick the ball, you notice someone from the other team has tripped. The kid is hurt. The rules say you should score the goal. But what would mercy tell you to do? Jesus always looks at people first. He loves them. He shows them mercy. Sharing God's love means sometimes we have to look beyond the man-made rules. We have to look at the person and show love and mercy the way Jesus did.

THINK ABOUT IT:

Question 1. What did Jesus say the Scriptures tell us to show more than sacrifices?

Answer 1. Mercy (Matthew 9:13)

Question 2. Is it more important to follow man-made rules or show Jesus' love? Explain.

Answer 2. Jesus made it clear that God wants us to show His love and mercy to others. (Hosea 6:6; Matthew 9:13)

Question 3. Talk about a situation when you were shown mercy.

Answer 3. Answers will vary.

Question 4. How does it feel to receive mercy?

Answer 4. Answers will vary.

Question 5. How can you show mercy to someone else?

Answer 5. Answers may vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, thank You for the mercy that You have shown me. I know I don't deserve it. I know I haven't earned it. Jesus, You are so good! Help me to show others the same mercy that You have given me. Help me to love them as You have loved me. Amen.

DAY 4

Question of the Day: How has the Holy Spirit called you to go?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Acts 16:6–10

Paul, the missionary, traveled far and wide, telling others about the love of Jesus. He started churches, trained leaders, and encouraged new Christians. The Holy Spirit led Paul. He knew that he needed to follow the Holy Spirit's leading so the Church could grow. He kept traveling and preaching, but the Holy Spirit stopped him from going to a certain place. What was he to do? Then, in a dream, Paul saw a man from Macedonia begging for help. Paul didn't think twice. He immediately left for Macedonia to spread the good news about Jesus there.

Who do you know that needs to hear? Everyone needs to hear about Jesus! But, just one person can't tell the entire world. Paul, the first missionary, who started many churches and saw many come to Jesus, couldn't reach the whole world alone.

Like Paul, we need to be obedient to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will lead us and guide us. He will show us where to go and who to talk to. Like Paul, we can obey when the Holy Spirit calls. Listen carefully for times you think the Holy Spirit is leading you. It could be in prayer time, or it could be during your day. He can help you know who to tell about Jesus. He helps you know where to go. Keep working for Jesus and sharing His love. When the Holy Spirit speaks to you, then obey!

TALK ABOUT IT:

Question 1. How did Paul know to go to Macedonia?

Answer 1. Through a vision (Acts 16:9)

Question 2. Has the Holy Spirit ever prompted you to share the good news about Jesus? Explain.

Answer 2. Answers will vary.

Question 3. Why should we depend on the Holy Spirit when we are spreading the good news about Jesus?

Answer 3. Answers will vary.

Question 4. What are a few ways the Holy Spirit can help lead you?

Answer 4. Answers will vary.

Question 5. How has the Holy Spirit called you to go?

Answer 5. Answers will vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, thank You for sending the Holy Spirit to guide me! You have called me to obey and go. I am listening, and I am getting ready for what You need me to do. Help me to be bold. Help me to share the good news. Most of all, help me to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. Prepare the hearts of others to hear the good news and begin their journey with You. Jesus, please use me to share Your love with the world. Amen.

April 21, 2024

EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED: WELCOME INTERRUPTIONS

The BIG Answer:

I can take time for others.

Memory Verse Challenge:

Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take.

- PROVERBS 3:5-6 (NLT)

DAY 1

Question of the Day: How can you take time for others?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Acts 3:1-6

Peter and John went to the temple one afternoon to pray, and it was probably much like any other afternoon. The man who was lame was carried in, just like he was each day. But, Peter and John were full of the Holy Spirit. Instead of rushing past the man to make it on time to the prayer service, they stopped when the man asked for money. We don't know if they had seen this man before or not, but we do know that on this day, they were willing to stop and speak with him. They were willing to allow their schedule to be interrupted to do something that Jesus would have done.

Although they didn't have money, they offered him what they did have: a miracle in the name of Jesus! You see, God isn't always looking for the richest people or the most talented people to do His work. He wants to use people who are willing to be used by Him; people who are willing to interrupt their normal schedule to stop and care for someone who may be hurting.

TALK ABOUT IT:

What did Peter and John do when the man who was lame asked for money?

They stopped and noticed him. (Acts 3:4)

Why do you think Peter talked to the man?

To offer him healing (Acts 3:6)

Why didn't it matter that Peter and John didn't have money to give the man?

They had something greater than money to offer. (Acts 3:6)

Is God more interested in how you care for others or how much money or time you have?

Why do you think that?

Answers will vary.

How can you take time for others?

Answers may vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, help me see the people around me who need Your love. I want to have the kind of heart that's willing to have my schedule interrupted so I can take time for others. Amen.

DAY 2

Question of the Day: How can taking time for others affect more than just one person?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Acts 3:7–11

Have you ever skipped stones at a lake or a pond? One flick of the wrist can send a stone skipping several steps across the water. The stone creates lots of ripples that flow out from where it touched the water. That one stone can affect all the water around it, even without touching that part of the water. This is exactly what happened with Peter and John when they took the time to stop and speak with the man who was lame at the gate. The man was healed and the people around him witnessed the results of the miracle.

God wants to use us to change the world around us with His love. When we take the time to listen to His voice and follow His commands, we will not only affect the people we talk to, but also others as well. We will be part of the ripple effect of them sharing Jesus with people we may never actually talk to ourselves.

TALK ABOUT IT:

What happened to the man at the temple gate when Peter took his hand?

His legs were healed. (Acts 3:7)

What did the man do after he was healed?

“He jumped up, stood on his feet, and began to walk! Then, walking, leaping and praising God, he went into the Temple with them.” (Acts 3:8)

How did the people around the man feel when they saw that he had been healed?

“They were absolutely astounded!” (Acts 3:10)

What might have happened if Peter and John hadn’t taken the time to stop and speak to the man?

Answers will vary.

How can taking time for others affect more than just one person?

Answers will vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, thank You for wanting to use me. Help me to share Your love with as many people around me as possible. Amen.

DAY 3

Question of the Day: How does God use interruptions in our day to bring people to Him?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Isaiah 55:8–9

Imagine this. You're home on a school night, and your homework and chores are finally done. Dinner is all cleaned up, and you're getting ready to sit down and play your favorite game. In the other room, you hear your parent answer the phone and after a quick conversation they say, "Sure, we'll be right there." Your parent comes in to tell you that your neighbor's dog has run off, and your neighbor needs help finding it. What do you do?

God is not surprised like we are when things like this happen. His plans for our day might be totally different from ours because His thoughts are higher than our thoughts. Sometimes an interruption in our day may be God's way of lining up a perfect opportunity for us to reach out to others and show them that we care. Peter and John could have been frustrated when the man asked for help, because it was an interruption in their day, but they weren't. That man needed someone to show him that they cared. When unexpected opportunities come up during our day, we can ask God to help us not get irritated and to help us see others the way that He does.

TALK ABOUT IT:

Are God's thoughts anything like our thoughts?

No, His thoughts are nothing like our thoughts. (Isaiah 55:8)

If you were in the story above, what may have happened if you had helped your neighbor find their dog?

What may have happened if you didn't take the time to help?

Answers may vary.

How could doing something small, like unexpectedly helping a neighbor, help lead someone to know about Jesus?

Answers may vary.

Why should we trust God's plans and the way He works?

His ways are far beyond anything we can imagine. (Isaiah 55:8)

How does God use interruptions in our day to bring people to Him?

Answers may vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, help me to have the right attitude when it comes to taking time for others. Help me to see people the way You see them. Amen.

DAY 4

Question of the Day: Why should you be ready to take time for others?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Psalm 139:16–18

There are 60 minutes in an hour, 1,440 minutes in a day, 10,080 minutes in a week, and 525,600 minutes in a year. If you had to write down everything you're going to do in the next year from minute to minute, what kinds of things would be on that list? The Bible says that every day of our life is recorded, and God knows what every moment of our life will look like. The things that may seem like interruptions to us are actually things that God knew were going to happen to us long ago.

When He places people in our path, He already knew, before we were even born, that our paths would cross with them because He knows them too. Following God means trusting that He knows best. Many of the people we come into contact with are there for a reason. Following God also means trusting Him with our time and being ready to jump into whatever God may bring our way. Just as with Peter, John, and the man who was lame, maybe that interruption will be the very thing that would help someone learn about Jesus.

TALK ABOUT IT:

How long has God known us?

Since before we were even born (Psalm 139:16)

How much of your future life does God already know about?

Every day and every moment (Psalm 139:16)

How does it make you feel knowing that God knows what's going to happen even before it happens?

Answers may vary

When are times in your life that God may be trying to interrupt your plans to take time for others?

Answers may vary.

Why should you be ready to take time for others?

Answers may vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, I trust You with every minute of my day. Help me to always be ready and willing to take time for others. Amen.

May 5, 2024

EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED: RESPOND WITH COMPASSION

The BIG Answer:

I can show compassion.

Memory Verse Challenge:

Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take.

- PROVERBS 3:5-6 (NLT)

DAY 1

Question of the Day: What is compassion?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Luke 7:11–13

Imagine being part of the crowd following Jesus this day. Seeing a funeral procession would have been sad. This funeral was life-changing for the mother. Not only was she a widow, which means that her husband had died, but now her only son had died. During Bible times, it was the men who provided for their family. For this widow, it would have been very hard for her to pay for food and other needs on top of the pain of losing her son. This is where Jesus stepped in. The Bible says that His heart overflowed with compassion for her!

Compassion means to have care or concern for someone. Compassion can feel like a tug on your heart when you see someone who is sad or hurting. Compassion makes you want to help them. When Jesus saw this woman who was hurting, He had compassion for her and wanted to comfort her. There are times when we may find people who are hurting and need help. Jesus wants our heart to be filled with compassion for others and for us to reach out to people in need just like He did with the widow.

TALK ABOUT IT:

What was happening when Jesus went to the village?

A funeral (Luke 7:12)

When Jesus saw the woman, how did He feel?

“His heart overflowed with compassion.” (Luke 7:13)

How would you have felt that day if you saw the funeral procession?

Answers may vary.

What would you have wanted to do for the widow who had lost her son?

Answers may vary.

What is compassion?

Compassion is having care or concern for someone who is hurting and wanting to help them.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, thank You for the way that You love people. Help my heart to overflow with compassion like Yours does when I find others around me who are hurting and need help. Amen.

DAY 2

Question of the Day: Why should you show compassion for others' needs?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Luke 7:13–17

What are some of your favorite ways to celebrate when you hear good news or something special happens? Maybe you put on your favorite music. Perhaps you jump up and down and shout and squeal because you're so excited. How do you think the mother in today's story acted after what Jesus did? One minute she was hurting and heartbroken because her son had died. Then, Jesus reached out and showed compassion by bringing her son back to life. Her entire world changed!

Jesus gives us opportunities to reach out and show compassion to others. It may not mean life or death for someone, but simply caring or helping them will affect them. What may seem small to us could mean a world of difference to someone else. By showing compassion to those who are hurting, we help others know that they are loved by God, that they are valued, and that God has a plan and purpose for their life even when they have hard times.

TALK ABOUT IT:

What did Jesus do to the young man who had died?

Jesus brought him back to life! (Luke 7:14–15)

What did the crowd do then?

They praised God and spread the news about Jesus. (Luke 7:16–17)

What are some small things you can do to show compassion to others?

Answers may vary.

How can the small things we do be a big deal for someone else?

Answers may vary.

Why should you show compassion for others' needs?

Answers may vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, thank You for wanting to use me in big and small ways to show compassion to those around me. Help me to always be ready for every opportunity! Amen.

DAY 3

Question of the Day: Why should we put action to our compassion?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: 1 John 3:16–19

Imagine that you're walking through the grocery store. When you turn the corner to the next aisle, there's a huge display that you didn't see. You trip, fall flat on the floor, and knock down the entire display. Everything goes flying. How would you feel? Maybe you feel sad because you hurt your ankle, or maybe you feel embarrassed because you made a huge mess. Would you feel worse if people laughed at you, or would it be better if those around you had compassion and stopped to help you pick up all the things that had fallen?

Probably all of us would want someone to stop and help us. That's the kind of compassion we're supposed to show and receive when we're part of the Church. Jesus has shown us so much compassion and love! As the verses we read explained, His love should make us want to love other Christians the same way. One way we can show that love is by putting it into action when we see other Christians hurting or in need.

TALK ABOUT IT:

How do these verses say that Jesus showed us love and compassion?

Jesus gave up His life for us. (1 John 3:16)

When was a time someone showed you compassion?

Answers may vary.

Who is someone in your church that you could show some compassion?

Answers may vary.

How may God be wanting to use you to help care for other Christians' needs?

Answers will vary.

Why should we put action to our compassion?

It shows our love and that we belong to God. (1 John 3:18–19)

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, thank You for showing how much You love me by giving Your life to pay for the wrong things I've done. Help me to always consider how others feel and show them Your love and compassion by the things I do. Amen.

DAY 4

Question of the Day: How can I show compassion to others even when it's hard?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Psalm 103:8–13

Everyone's done things that they knew were wrong. Maybe they borrowed something they shouldn't have without permission. Or maybe they broke something and never told anyone. Those things are bad, but there's something even worse. When we do things that God says are wrong, that's sin. Every single sin deserves God's punishment. But He shows us compassion and offers us forgiveness. When we ask for His forgiveness, instead of getting what we deserve, we get His love and mercy.

God's compassion for us is an example for us. Has anyone ever been mean or hurtful to you? If so, maybe you wanted to get back at them. They may have deserved whatever you wanted to do. It can be very hard to feel compassion for someone who's done you wrong. Remembering God's compassion when we sin can help us show compassion to those who do wrong to us.

TALK ABOUT IT:

According to the verses we read, what are some ways God shows us compassion?

He's slow to get angry, filled with unfailing love, He doesn't punish us for all our sins, He doesn't deal harshly with us, and He's like a father to His children. (Psalm 103:8–13)

How far did the verses say God can take our sin from us?

"As far from us as the east is from the west" (Psalm 103:12)

Why is it sometimes difficult for us to show compassion to those who have been mean to us?

Answers may vary.

Who in your life right now is difficult for you to show compassion to?

Answers may vary.

How can I show compassion to others even when it's hard?

Answers may vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, thank You for the compassion You have shown to me and for loving me even when I mess up. Help me to show compassion to those around me even when it's hard. Amen.

May 12, 2024

EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED: ALLOW FOR REDIRECTION

The BIG Answer:

I will let Jesus write my story.

Memory Verse Challenge:

Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take.

- PROVERBS 3:5-6 (NLT)

DAY 1

Question of the Day: What should we do when Jesus wants to do something unexpected in our life?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: John 4:5–14

Have you ever seen a friend at the store or the playground that you didn't expect to see there? When you see someone like that, you have two choices: ignore them or talk to them. If you ignore them, you could hurt your friendship if they saw you and know that you ignored them. If you choose to stop and talk with them, you could leave that conversation feeling really encouraged, maybe even with plans to get together for some fun!

Jesus caught this woman off guard. She hadn't expected Him to be at the well, or to speak to her and ask her for a drink of water. Jewish people in Jesus' day typically didn't want anything to do with Samaritan people. She had no idea when she started out for the well that day that her life was about to be changed. She could have ignored Jesus, or she could have run away. But because she was open to talking with Jesus, she gave Him space to change her life. There are times that Jesus wants to do something new and different in our life. We can choose to ignore or run from Him, or we can allow Him the space to write our story, which will be better than we could ever dream possible!

TALK ABOUT IT:

Where did Jesus meet the Samaritan woman?

At a well outside her village (John 4:6–7)

How did the woman respond to Jesus when He started talking to her?

She was surprised and responded with questions. (John 4:9–12)

Do you think Jesus went to that well on purpose because He knew the Samaritan woman would be there?

Why or why not?

Answers will vary.

How has Jesus surprised you with something unexpected in your life?

Answers will vary.

What should we do when Jesus wants to do something unexpected in our life?

We should trust Him and let Him write our story.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, I want to be open to whatever You want to do in my life, even if those things are unexpected. Help me to trust You and give You room to work in my life and write my story. Amen.

DAY 2

Question of the Day: How does trusting Jesus with your life change the way you live?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: John 4:15–30

Have you ever been to a party or somewhere and someone talks to you and seems to know everything about you? Maybe you haven't met them before, or maybe they're a friend of your parents. They might begin to talk about how cute you were as a baby, or they might know other things that you haven't told them. It may feel a little weird, but this is kind of like what happened to the woman at the well.

Jesus began to tell this woman things about herself that a stranger shouldn't have known. When she realized who Jesus was, she left her jar at the well and ran to her village. The reason she had come out in the heat of the day was to draw water from the well. But after she talked with Jesus, she changed directions and went the other way, leaving the water jar behind her. She couldn't wait to tell everyone about Jesus. This is what Jesus wants to do in our life too! We need to be open to allowing Him to change our direction and our plans anytime He wants to.

TALK ABOUT IT:

What did the woman do after she finished talking to Jesus?

She left her water jar and ran back to the village, telling everyone about Jesus. (John 4:28–29)

What did the people of the village do after hearing the woman talk about Jesus?

The people hurried from the village to see Him. (John 4:30).

How do you think it made the woman feel when Jesus told her everything about her life?

Answers will vary.

How does it make you feel knowing that Jesus knows everything about your life?

Answers will vary.

How should trusting Jesus with your life change the way you live?

Answers will vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, thank You for knowing everything about my life. I choose to trust You and the direction You want me to go. Amen.

DAY 3

Question of the Day: How do we know we can trust Jesus to write our story?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Isaiah 46:9–10

Have you ever written a story for school or maybe just for fun? As a writer, you have to think about how the events in the story will happen from the beginning to the end. You have to think through every detail of every character and know exactly what's going to happen. No one wants to read a boring story either, so you should be sure to include lots of adventure. Sometimes it's fun and exciting, and other times, you get to see a character work through challenges and come out stronger in the end.

Jesus wants to be the Author of our story by directing our life. He knows the whole story of the world from the beginning to the end. He knows every choice we will make and every detail of our life. Sometimes Jesus wants us to act in faith and do something new and exciting that we hadn't planned on. Other times, He allows unexpected things to happen that are challenging. But, we can trust Jesus as the Author of our life knowing that He wants what's best for us. He's the best one to be writing our story.

TALK ABOUT IT:

Who is the only one who knows what will happen in the future?

God (Isaiah 46:10)

What are some things an author must think about when writing a story?

Answers may vary.

How is Jesus like the author of a book?

Answers will vary.

How can you allow Jesus to write your story?

Answers will vary.

How do we know we can trust Jesus to write our story?

Answers will vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, I want You to be the Author of my life and write my story. Help me to trust Your plans and that You know best! Amen.

DAY 4

Question of the Day: Why is it sometimes hard for us to trust God when our life goes a different direction?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Romans 8:27–30

Have you ever seen a little kid with a jack-in-the-box toy? A jack-in-the-box is a square toy with a small handle that turns. As you turn the handle, the box plays a song. At different times, the box will pop open and a toy will jump out. One kid may turn the handle with excitement, enjoying the fun and waiting to be surprised. But another kid may turn the handle nervously, not sure what will happen when the toy jumps out. It's the same toy for both kids. The only difference is the attitude of the kid when they turn the handle and have something unexpected happen. Will they jump with excitement and laugh, or will they be scared and cry?

Sometimes there are unexpected twists and turns in our life. It's easy to not want those things simply because we don't know how it will turn out. It can be like waiting for the jack-in-the-box to pop out. But, if we know that God is good and that He wants what is best for us, then we can trust Him in every situation: good or bad, expected or unexpected. Even when we don't know every path God will choose, we know He's leading us to the good goal of becoming more like Jesus.

TALK ABOUT IT:

Who is the One who causes everything to work together for our good?

God (Romans 8:28)

How can life feel like a jack-in-the-box sometimes?

Answers may vary.

How do you feel when unexpected things happen?

Answers will vary.

Who has God chosen for us to become like?

The Son, Jesus (Romans 8:29)

Why is it sometimes hard for us to trust God when our life takes a different direction?

Answers will vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, whatever path You have for my life, I want it. I know that You are working for my good because I love You and have been called by You. I trust Jesus to write the story of my life. Amen.

May 19, 2024

EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED: KEEP THE FAITH

The BIG Answer:

I will trust Jesus even if it's hard.

Memory Verse Challenge:

Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take.

- PROVERBS 3:5-6 (NLT)

DAY 1

Question of the Day: Why should we trust Jesus?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Mark 5:21–24; Proverbs 3:5–6

Math can be a really hard subject for some people. Imagine trying to solve a math problem that you don't understand. You may go to a friend, but your friend is just as confused as you are. You may go to a parent or brother or sister. Maybe it's been too long since they've done that kind of math, and they can't help you. Your parent may use the Internet to find out how to do the problem. But, your best source for help with your math question is probably your math teacher!

Jairus came to Jesus because he was so concerned about his very sick daughter, and he knew Jesus could perform miracles. Jairus could have gone to doctors or his neighbors or friends. Instead, he went to Jesus. He knew that Jesus could heal his daughter. When we work to know Jesus more, or seek Him, He can show us what to do and help us through every situation. No one else has the power to work in our life like Jesus does.

TALK ABOUT IT:

Who did the man with the sick daughter go to for a miracle?

Jairus went to Jesus. (Mark 5:22–23)

What did Jairus want Jesus to do?

He asked for Jesus to come and lay His hands on her and heal her so she could live. (Mark 5:23)

What are ways you can seek Jesus in your life?

Answers may vary.

Why should we seek God's will?

He will show us what path to take. (Proverbs 3:6)

Why should we trust Jesus?

Answers will vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, help me to seek You first in everything I do. I trust You with all my heart. Amen.

DAY 2

Question of the Day: Why shouldn't we trust our own understanding in hard times?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Mark 5:35–43

Jairus was facing an impossible situation and needed a miracle. The thing he was most concerned about actually happened. His daughter died from being so sick. Yet, Jesus wasn't shocked, and He wasn't in a hurry. On the way to Jairus's house, Jesus even took time to stop and talk with a sick woman who had reached out to touch His robe and was healed! Jairus was probably wondering what was going on. But Jesus said to him, "Don't be afraid. Just have faith." Imagine how happy Jairus must have been that he didn't give up trusting when he saw Jesus raise his daughter from the dead!

Sometimes our impossible situations feel like they're going to last forever, or we think our prayers will take a long time to be answered. In hard times, it can be easy to wonder if our prayers will be answered at all. It's important for us to remember that Jesus hears us, knows us, and loves us. He works in His timing and in His own perfect way. We should never doubt His plans or power to work in our life. We must hold tightly to what we know is true: that we can trust Jesus no matter what we're facing.

TALK ABOUT IT:

What message did Jairus receive while he was waiting for Jesus?

That his daughter had died (Mark 5:35)

What did Jesus say to Jairus after he heard about his daughter's death?

"Don't be afraid. Just have faith." (Mark 5:36)

How do you think Jairus felt waiting on Jesus while He talked with the woman who was healed by touching Jesus' robe?

Answers will vary.

Is it hard for you to trust Jesus when it feels like your prayers are taking a long time to be answered? Why or why not?

Answers will vary.

Why shouldn't we trust our own understanding in hard times?

Answers will vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, thank You for the plan You have for my life. Help me to not trust my own understanding when I face hard times. I choose to trust You. Amen.

DAY 3

Question of the Day: Why should we not worry?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Matthew 6:25–33

Have you ever been to a corn maze in the fall? In fields with corn that can be eight to ten feet high, you run back and forth through the twists and turns trying to find your way out. Sometimes, it can feel impossible when you hit dead ends, or you feel like you're running in circles. You might start to wonder if you'll ever find your way out.

Many times when we're going through hard times in life, it can feel a lot like those tricky corn mazes. It can be easy to feel like getting through those times is impossible. The Bible says that we have no reason to worry about things in our everyday life. Jesus' words in the verses we read are pretty clear. We can trust God to take care of us, provide for our needs, and help us through hard times. Our part is to live in a way that makes His will first in our life.

TALK ABOUT IT:

What kinds of things should we worry about?

Nothing. We should trust God. (Matthew 6:25)

According to these verses, what kinds of thoughts fill the mind of people who don't believe in God?

Worries about what they will eat, drink, and wear (Matthew 6:31–32)

How do you feel knowing that you can trust God to provide for your needs?

Answers may vary.

What is something you can do to remind yourself to trust God when you feel like worrying?

Answers may vary.

Why should we not worry?

Because Jesus said not to, and God can provide for our everyday needs. (Matthew 6:25, 33)

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, thank You for always taking care of me. Help me to stand strong in my faith even when it's difficult and feels impossible. I trust You for everything I need. Amen.

DAY 4

Question of the Day: What should I do when it gets hard to follow Jesus?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: 1 Peter 4:12–16

When have you been surprised by something really amazing? Now, think about a time you were surprised by something that maybe wasn't so good, like stubbing your toe, a surprise test, or having a special trip canceled unexpectedly. Sometimes, it can be really fun to be surprised, and at other times, being surprised can be pretty bad. In today's verses, Peter told Christians not to be surprised when they go through challenges, or trials.

Peter knew this very well! As one of Jesus' closest followers during His time on earth, some people were very mean to Peter. So, he wanted other Christians to be ready if that happened to them. Some people think that being a follower of Jesus is always easy. It's not! But even when we have trials, we can be glad. Those times of suffering bring us closer to Jesus, the One who suffered on the Cross for us. So, if people are mean to you for believing in Jesus, don't be surprised. Instead, be prepared and praise God anyway.

TALK ABOUT IT:

What do today's verses say should you do when you go through trials for being a Christian?

"Be very glad." (1 Peter 4:13)

Why do you think some Christians are surprised by challenges in life?

Answers will vary.

What do the verses say will happen if someone insults you for being a Christian?

"You will be blessed, for the glorious Spirit of God rests upon you." (1 Peter 4:14)

How can remembering that Jesus suffered on the Cross for us help when we suffer?

Answers may vary.

How will you respond if someone is mean to you because you believe in Jesus?

Answers will vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, thank You for suffering on the Cross because You love me. I choose to keep following You even if I have to suffer, too. When challenges and trials happen, help me to trust You! Amen.

June 2, 2024

BELIEVE BOLDY: ASK GOD

The BIG Answer:
I will pray boldly.

Memory Verse Challenge:

Be on guard. Stand firm in the faith. Be courageous. Be strong. And do everything with love.

- 1 CORINTHIANS 16:13-14 (NLT)

DAY 1

Question of the Day: How can we pray and ask boldly?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Mark 10:46–48

Bartimaeus was desperate. He was blind and wanted to be able to see. When he heard that Jesus was near, he began to cry out to Jesus. Others told him to be silent; but, Bartimaeus was persistent. He kept asking and asking. He was loud! Bartimaeus had likely been begging others for money and food for a long time. Now, he had a chance to beg for his healing. Jesus was there! Bartimaeus knew that Jesus could help him, so he would not stop until he got Jesus' attention.

Have you ever wanted something so much that you didn't stop asking for it? For example, have you ever asked your parents over and over for candy or a new toy? You might want it so much that you can't stop asking. Sometimes, your parents might give it to you, and other times, they don't because they know what is best for you.

You can continue to ask God for what you need, too. Do you need healing? Do you need a miracle? Do you need an answer that only God can give? Then keep boldly asking! Keep praying bold prayers! When you don't give up, you can be sure that God will provide exactly what you need. God knows what is best for you, and you can trust that He hears your prayers, and an answer is on its way.

TALK ABOUT IT:

What did Bartimaeus say when he called out to Jesus?

"Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" (Mark 10:47)

What did the other people who heard the cries of Bartimaeus do?

They told him to be quiet. (Mark 10:48)

Why do you think that Bartimaeus didn't stop asking?

Answers will vary.

Why did Jesus call Bartimaeus to Him?

To ask what Bartimaeus wanted Him to do (Mark 10:51)

How can we pray and ask boldly?

Answers will vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, thank You that You are the God who answers prayer. Thank You for keeping Your promises. I know that whatever I ask in Your name and by Your will, You will answer. Help me to never lose hope. Help me to ask boldly! I'm so excited to see what You will do and the miracles that will happen in my life. I love You, Jesus! Amen.

DAY 2

Question of the Day: Why can you boldly ask Jesus for what you need?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Mark 10:48–52 (Want to read the entire Bible story? It's in Mark 10:46–52.)

Because Bartimaeus kept calling out and asking Jesus to answer him, the moment came that he got to talk with Jesus. Jesus was ready to hear what Bartimaeus needed, and He is also listening for when we ask for what we need. Bartimaeus didn't waste this opportunity. He threw off his coat and asked Jesus for what he wanted. He wanted to see! Instantly, Jesus healed him, Jesus told him, "Your faith has healed you." Bartimaeus was healed and began to follow Jesus right away.

Your persistent, bold prayers capture Jesus' attention. Let's say you visit the principal of your school. You know that she has the power to do a lot of things. What if you got there and didn't say anything? You wouldn't get what you wanted. The principal has the power to answer many requests, but the principal only answers when someone asks. This is a lot like Jesus. He has all the power in the universe and can do all things. But He wants us to ask Him when we have needs. When you keep asking, this shows your trust in Him to do what He has promised. It's not just that Jesus has the power to answer your prayer; it's also the faith in asking that helps to bring the miracle!

TALK ABOUT IT:

What did Bartimaeus do after he was healed?

He followed Jesus. (Mark 10:52)

Why do you think Jesus answered Bartimaeus's request?

Answers will vary.

Why is asking important?

Asking is a sign of trust in Jesus, and our faith can help to bring miracles.

What are some things you are asking Jesus for right now?

Answers will vary.

Why can you boldly ask Jesus for what you need?

Answers may vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, You have all the power in the universe. You love and care for me, so I know that whenever I ask, You will answer! Lord, I believe You will answer my prayers. It may be in an instant, or it may take a long time. It may not even be the answer I want. But, I know that You can be trusted to heal, to restore, to give, and to help however You know is best. You are good and faithful. I trust You with all my heart! I love You, Jesus. Amen.

DAY 3

Question of the Day: Why can we trust God to give good gifts?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Matthew 7:7–11

God has many wonderful characteristics. He can be your Best Friend. He is the Healer. He is the Comforter. He is also the best Father. What does a good father do? Good fathers do many things, and one thing that brings them joy is giving their children what they ask for. Good fathers delight in giving good gifts! They love to see the joy on their children's faces when they receive a good gift. Good fathers love providing wonderful things for their children. Since God the Father is the very best Father of all, it brings Him great joy to give generously to His children when they ask.

God is the very definition of a good Father! He never lies, He never tricks, and He is always able to provide when you ask. No matter how much your earthly father has given to you, your Heavenly Father generously gives abundantly more! God is faithful to provide what we need. All we have to do is ask boldly. Don't stop asking! The nature of God is to love you and give you what you need. You may not get what you ask for right away. Since God is our good Father, He knows the right time and what is best. The important thing is to never stop asking. Trust in Him and trust that He will do what is best for you.

TALK ABOUT IT:

If you keep asking, what will happen?

"You will receive what you ask for." (Matthew 7:7)

Why is God the best Father?

Answers will vary.

Does God always give us what we want right away? Explain.

No, God is all-knowing and knows the best time to answer. Sometimes we ask for things that aren't the best for us. Answers will vary.

Describe a time when God answered your prayer.

Answers will vary.

Why can we trust God to give good gifts?

Answers may vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Father God, I know I can trust You to answer my prayers. You are good, kind, and faithful. You are watching over me and providing everything I need. That is so amazing! Thank You for being the very best Father of all. Thank You that You are listening to me when I call. I know You are faithful to answer my requests. I will keep asking in faith and never give up. Amen.

DAY 4

Question of the Day: What are some bold prayers that you can pray?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Romans 8:34; Hebrews 4:16 (Want to read the entire Bible story? It's in Mark 10:46–52.)

Have you ever noticed that it's easier to talk to some people than others? Often, we find it easier to ask for big things from our family. But many of us would never even consider making the same request of a stranger. We can pray to God with boldness and confidence. We can ask Him to do big things because we know Him. The Bible says that God is close to those who follow Him. In our Bible story, Bartimaeus could ask boldly for healing because he knew that Jesus was near.

Bartimaeus was blind and he had never seen Jesus, but he had heard stories about Him. You also haven't seen Jesus, but you may have heard stories about His miracles. You know that Jesus can heal. Jesus can always be reached when we pray. He is always listening and waiting for you to pray bold prayers. The Bible says that He is at the right hand of the Father—pleading for you! You can pray boldly with faith by praying confidently. Jesus is ready for you. You don't have to be afraid to ask. Jesus loves for us to pray bold prayers!

TALK ABOUT IT:

How should we approach God's throne?

Boldy (Hebrews 4:16)

What is a story you have heard about Jesus answering prayer?

Answers will vary.

What does Romans 8:34 say Jesus is doing for us now?

He is pleading, or asking God, for us. (Romans 8:34)

Why can we boldly approach God's throne?

Answers will vary.

What are some bold prayers you can pray?

Answers will vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, thank You that You have made a way for us to ask for what we need. Thank You for Your mercy and grace. I'm so glad that I can always come to God's throne with boldness. I know that You listen to my needs—both great and small. Jesus, I'm so grateful that I can bring everything to You. You love for me to ask. Thank You so much, Jesus! Amen.

June 9, 2024

BELIEVE BOLDY: REMEMBER HIS POWER

The BIG Answer:

I can believe for the impossible

Memory Verse Challenge:

Be on guard. Stand firm in the faith. Be courageous. Be strong. And do everything with love.

- 1 CORINTHIANS 16:13-14 (NLT)

DAY 1

Question of the Day: What is something impossible that you are believing for?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Matthew 8:5–9

The Roman officer had incredible faith that impressed Jesus. He didn't just believe Jesus could heal his young servant; he knew that Jesus could heal him with just a word! Why did the Roman officer have this impressive faith? He understood authority, and seemed to know Jesus had it. Authority is having the ability or influence to make things happen. As a Roman officer, he knew that all he had to do was say a word, and the men under him had to obey what he said. One word meant that it was as good as done. The Roman officer recognized the power and authority that Jesus had. That authority far surpassed his own. Because of this faith, Jesus healed his servant in an instant.

If you have something that breaks, you can often go to someone who can fix it. You go to a teacher or parent when you need help with a math problem. If you are in a difficult situation, you go to someone you can trust. All these people you turn to have a measure of authority. They can fix things. They know more than you, and they are trusted. Even more than these people, Jesus is more powerful, more trustworthy, and has more knowledge. He has all authority in heaven and on earth. Even the wind and waves obey Him! So, there is incredible power when you pray in His name because He has authority. When we ask anything in His name, even when it seems impossible, we ask confidently. Why? Because like the Roman officer, we know Jesus has the authority to heal, restore, and save.

TALK ABOUT IT:

Why did the Roman officer come to Jesus?

His servant was paralyzed and in terrible pain. (Matthew 8:6)

What does authority mean?

Having the ability or influence to make things happen

What was incredible about the Roman officer's faith?

Answers will vary.

How do you know Jesus has all authority?

Answers will vary.

What is something impossible that you are believing for?

Answers may vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, You have all authority in heaven and on earth. Thank You that You hear my prayers. I am so grateful that You have all authority and power to answer them. I believe You can do the impossible! Help me to believe more boldly. I rejoice in You now because of who You are. I will rejoice when I see the miracles that I know that You can do. Amen.

DAY 2

Question of the Day: What happens when we have faith in Jesus?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Matthew 8:10–13

When Jesus came to live on earth, many believed He was the Messiah for the people of Israel. Some of them thought that meant He came to set them free from Roman rule. So, when the Roman officer approached Jesus in faith, that was a big deal. Some people may have thought that Romans and those working for them couldn't experience Jesus' love and power. Yet, Jesus made it very clear that even people like the Roman officer would also believe in Jesus' authority and miracles. The Roman officer had great faith! The faith of the Roman officer brought God's power into his household—his servant was healed! When Jesus did the impossible, it was not just for the Jewish people. Jesus came to save anyone who believes He has the power to do so. This promise includes anyone who believes!

People in your family and church have needs. They all may know Jesus can provide for them. But what about people outside of your church? Will God answer their prayers too? The Roman officer wasn't Jewish like the other people in the story. For some, he was even considered to be an enemy. However, he showed faith. Jesus said the officer's faith was not like any He had seen in all of Israel. The Roman officer's belief impressed Jesus.

So, what can you do to be more like that? First, you should live in a way that shows you have faith in the power and authority of God. Second, you need to share that faith with others so they can believe too. When we do this, God transforms hearts and brings them into His family. Others see these miracles, and more people believe in Jesus!

TALK ABOUT IT:

Jesus said that many Gentiles would do what?

They would sit down at the feast of the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 8:11)

How might some people have viewed the non-Jewish Roman officer?

They might have seen him as an enemy.

What does this story teach about who can have faith in Jesus?

Private prayer (Matthew 6:6) Anyone can believe in and follow Jesus.

How can you live in a way that shows you have faith in Jesus?

Answers may vary.

What happens when we have faith in Jesus?

Answers may vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, faith in You brings miracles! I am so thankful that anyone can have this kind of faith. Give me wisdom about how to share this faith with others. I thank You already for the miracles and transformation You will do as I believe in You! All power and authority is Yours. I know that You have the power to answer any prayer from a heart of faith. Thank You, Jesus! Amen.

DAY 3

Question of the Day: What kinds of things are possible with God?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Matthew 19:16–26

A wealthy young man came to Jesus. He followed every law and every rule. He did everything that he could to live a perfect life. But Jesus saw what was really important to him. When Jesus told the young man to sell what he owned, give the money to the poor, and follow Him, the young man didn't. He just couldn't let go of his stuff. Following Jesus seemed impossible for him. He didn't know that what seems impossible to us is possible for God.

Do you have a situation that you think is impossible? Take a minute and think about how you are trying to solve the impossible problem. Are you trying to fix it yourself, or are you going to Jesus? We often forget to go to Jesus when we need a miracle. We feel hopeless. We see no way that something can happen. But having faith sometimes means letting go of what you can see only with your eyes. Miracles can happen when we fully turn over our impossible situations to Jesus who can do the impossible. When we believe in the control and power of Jesus, the impossible happens!

TALK ABOUT IT:

What did the young man do when Jesus told him to sell his possessions, give the money to the poor, and follow Him?

He went away sad. (Matthew 19:22)

What are some commandments Jesus told the young man to follow?

Not to commit murder, adultery, not steal, or testify falsely (Matthew 19:18)

Why did Jesus say it is hard for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven?

Answers will vary.

What is an impossible situation you are praying about right now?

Answers may vary.

What kinds of things are possible with God?

Everything is possible with God. (Matthew 19:26)

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, nothing is impossible with You. I know that I can't save myself or answer my own prayers. All authority and power comes from You! I trust You to do the impossible. Everything is possible in You. Increase my faith so that I can see miracles, healings, and change in my home, church, and school. I love You, and I can't wait to see what You will do as I believe in You! Amen.

DAY 4

Question of the Day: How can you stand firm in faith for the impossible?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: John 11:21–44

Death seems like an impossible situation. Jesus can change things, though. Martha knew that God would give Jesus whatever He asked for. She also said that Jesus was the Messiah. Martha knew He had the authority. Some people questioned why Jesus didn't heal Lazarus. But Jesus had told Martha that Lazarus would rise again. Was there a limit to Jesus' authority? Absolutely not. His friends' pain moved Jesus' heart. He felt their sorrow deeply. He knew they had faith in Him, so Jesus showed up in power. With all power and authority, He called Lazarus to come out of the grave. On that day, the impossible became possible.

You may think something in your life can't be fixed, like it's dead. This feeling doesn't have to be a death, but it could be the feeling you have when a bad situation seems like it will never get better. Maybe someone in your family is sick. You may have lost a friend. The person you are praying for to know Jesus still hasn't chosen to follow Jesus. You may have given up on a dream. Coming back to life seems like the most impossible thing of all. In the Bible, you see that nothing is impossible with God. He has all power and authority to bring the dead back to life! When you keep trusting in Jesus and asking and praying, He hears you, understands your feelings, and will comfort you. Trust that He loves you—that is the greatest miracle of all! And keep believing that He can do the impossible!

TALK ABOUT IT:

What did Jesus tell Martha was going to happen?

"Your brother will rise again." (John 11:23)

What were other people thinking about Jesus in verse 37?

He healed the blind man. They wondered why He didn't keep His friend Lazarus from dying. (John 11:37)

How did this story show Jesus' authority and power?

Answers will vary.

What did you notice about Jesus' emotions? What does that mean for you?

Answers will vary.

How can you stand firm in faith for the impossible?

Answers will vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, I know that You are the Messiah. Whatever I ask in faith, You can do. You are the God of the impossible, and I believe in You. For all the things I am praying for right now, I am trusting in You to answer them. I will keep asking and keep believing! Thank You that You are the God of miracles. I can't wait to see all the miracles You will do in my life. Let them bring glory to Your name so other people will know and trust in You. Amen.

June 16, 2024

BELIEVE BOLDY: DECLARE HIS PROMISE

The BIG Answer:

I will hold tight to Jesus.

Memory Verse Challenge:

Be on guard. Stand firm in the faith. Be courageous. Be strong. And do everything with love.

- 1 CORINTHIANS 16:13-14 (NLT)

DAY 1

Question of the Day: What are God's promises that we can declare in our storms?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Acts 27:1, 7–11

Like most heroes of faith in the Bible, Paul knew that following Jesus sometimes led straight into a storm. Paul was already in a rough spot. He was a prisoner on his way to stand trial in Rome before Caesar, the emperor. Paul knew this was where God was leading him. On his way to trial, Paul saw that continuing the journey meant serious danger. It was the wrong time of the year to be sailing. Paul warned the ship's officers that there was trouble ahead. Shipwreck, loss of cargo, and danger to their lives was ahead if they kept going. The officer in charge of the ship did not listen, so off they went. Sure enough, a storm hit, and everyone was afraid. But Paul stood before them and proclaimed that trust and courage in the Lord would protect them. He declared that God had promised safety for them even though they would be shipwrecked.

Sometimes we see trials and danger ahead, and sometimes we don't. We don't expect someone to get sick, hurt, or die. Problems and challenges come. Friendships are broken. A pet dies. We may lose things important to us. These are all storms of life that we don't want to go through. But, we can declare God's promises instead of giving in to fear or despair! We may not always know exactly what will happen, but we do know that God is good. He is faithful and has promised He would never leave us. When Paul saw the storm around him, He trusted in God more than what he knew the storm could do. Storms will happen in our life, and that is for sure. But what gets us through the challenge is holding tight to God's promises. We can always trust Jesus to lead us through the storm!

TALK ABOUT IT:

Why was Paul on the ship?

He was a prisoner on the way to Rome to appear before Caesar. (Acts 27:1)

Why do you think the officer in charge of the prisoners listened to the ship's captain instead of Paul?

Answers will vary.

How do you know Paul trusted God in the storm?

Answers will vary.

What are some storm sin your life in which you can trust God?

Answers will vary.

What are God's promises that we can declare in our storms?

Answers will vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, thank You for being with me during the storms of life. I know that these storms only make my faith stronger because I can test Your promises and find that they are true. Remind me of Your promises and words daily. Help me to hold tight to You. Increase my faith—especially when things are uncertain and hard. I love You, Jesus! Amen.

DAY 2

Question of the Day: Why should you hold tight to Jesus in a storm?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Acts 27:20–26, 30–44

The storm continued to rage all around the prisoners and crew. They all were afraid as the storm continued. Some sailors decided to try to escape in lifeboats, but Paul told the commanding officer and the soldiers not to. People would die if those sailors left. God's protection was for all of them on that boat.

Then Paul told everyone to eat. For two weeks, as the rain fell and the waves crashed, the crew had been so worried that they hadn't eaten. They needed to eat, even in the face of this danger. After having a meal, they threw cargo overboard to make the ship lighter. What then? The following day, just as Paul had said, the shipwreck occurred. This was their chance to get out of the stormy waters. The ship ran into a shoal, which is a ridge of land underneath the water. The prisoners and crew held onto planks of wood and made it to shore—all 276 people. God kept His promise! Everyone on that boat survived, even with a shipwreck!

How could Paul encourage the people on the boat through the storm? First, he knew that everyone had to stay on the ship. When facing trials, we often try to figure it out on our own. Like the crew, we try to float away in lifeboats and solve our problems. But God says to stay in the middle of His promises and let Him protect you. Second, Paul knew everyone needed to stay healthy and nourished. At first no one ate, which made things worse for them. Taking care of our physical needs—good food, exercise, rest, and fun—can help us stay strong during a challenge. Finally, Paul knew they had to trust that God would provide a way to shore. The storm didn't stop, but God made a way to escape it. He will always provide a way for you when you trust in Him!

TALK ABOUT IT:

What did Paul tell the commanding officer and the soldiers to do?

Cut the ropes to the lifeboats and eat. (Acts 27:31–33)

What do you think the crew thought about Paul's advice?

Answers will vary.

How can we stay strong in a storm?

Trust that God will protect us and take care of our physical needs.

How did God keep His promises in this story?

Answers may vary.

Why should you hold tight to Jesus in a storm?

Answers may vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, I will hold tight to You in my storms. When things seem to fall apart, or I don't see an answer, I will trust You. Jesus, You are faithful to provide for me, and I can trust You with my life. You have said it, and I believe it! This is a promise I will stand on no matter what comes my way. Thank you for being so faithful! Amen.

DAY 3

Question of the Day: How can we actively trust God in our home?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Psalm 91 (Want to read the story about Paul? Acts 27:1, 7–11, 20–26, 30–44)

Psalm 91 makes it clear that when we trust and love the Lord, He will keep us safe and protected. Does this mean we will never have trouble? No. We can see in Paul's life that we can have difficult and uncertain circumstances sometimes. We often want to solve the problem and get out of the storm. Remember, the sailors tried to escape and figure it out without God! However, instead of looking for a way out, we need to look to God. Psalm 91 tells us to trust in Him and love Him, and He will keep us safe. That's a promise for all of us!

How can we then actively live in God's promises? Reading aloud promises, like those found in Psalm 91, can reinforce our trust in the Lord. Every day, whether in a storm or not, we can turn to God first. We can spend time in His Word and pray for His daily strength, protection, and guidance. When other people go through difficult times, we can remember God's promises and pray for them! Most of all, we need to hold tight to what God says. The enemy comes to try to take away our faith in God, so we must keep on believing, declaring, and taking in the Word of God. Remember, the way to see that God's promises are true is to see them tested through storms. Let every trial be an opportunity to trust God more!

TALK ABOUT IT:

What did the author of this psalm declare about God in verses 2 and 3?

He provides safety, rescue, and protection. (Psalm 91:2–3)

Which of these promises in Psalm 91 speaks to you? Why?

Answers will vary.

Who can you encourage with these promises today?

Answers will vary.

What makes all of these promises ours?

Loving God and trusting in His name (Psalm 91:14)

How can we actively trust God in our home?

Answers will vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, I declare Your promises to be true! Just like the author of Psalm 91, I say, "You alone are my refuge, my place of safety; You are my God, and I trust You!" I know You will rescue me, cover me, shelter me, and protect me. I will not fear any evil or any storm. You are always with me! Thank You, God, that I can rest and trust in this promise all the days of my life! Amen.

DAY 4

Question of the Day: What are some areas that you need God's help to be strong and courageous?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Deuteronomy 31:1–8

The Israelites had wandered in the wilderness for forty years. Now, the time had come to step into what God had promised. The land that God had promised to give especially to them was now within their reach. Walking into this fantastic new adventure was what they had dreamed about for years, but taking this promise would not be easy. There were still battles to fight. There were still storms on the way. But the Israelites had the promises that God had given them. God told them several times to be strong and courageous. He reminded them repeatedly that He would not fail or abandon them. They knew that victory was theirs with promises like these on their side! All they had to do was to trust God to do what He said He would do.

Sometimes, we need to hear things many times for them to stick. Maybe a parent has told you to do something several times before you do it—like taking out the trash or cleaning your room. Sometimes, a teacher needs to explain something more than once before you feel confident with it. Guess what? Taking a while to catch on to something is normal and natural. Often, we won't be confident the first time, but with repetition, we'll begin to be strong and courageous in completing our instructions.

The Israelites had to hear certain messages from God repeatedly to reinforce them. You can know that God will always remind You that He is faithful to do what He promises. Let's keep declaring and speaking His promises so we can walk into the amazing plans God has for us!

TALK ABOUT IT:

Where were the Israelite people about to go?

Across the Jordan River into the Promised Land (Deuteronomy 31:3)

What did God promise to do ahead of the Israelites?

God would cross over ahead, and He would destroy the nations in their way. (Deuteronomy 31:3–4)

What were God's promises to His people in these verses?

He would go ahead of them, and He would never fail or abandon them. (Deuteronomy 31:6)

Why do we need to keep declaring God's promises continually?

Answers will vary.

What are some areas that you need God's help so you can be strong and courageous?

Answers will vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, as I live out all of the amazing plans You have for me, thank You that I can be strong and courageous. Lord, I declare that I walk in Your promises. You are with me wherever I go. You go before me! God, I trust You wherever You lead. I will follow You with my whole heart and hold tight to You. God, thank You that You have created me to do great things for You. Give me the boldness to step out in faith and watch You do what You promised. Wow! You are so good! Amen.

June 23, 2024

BELIEVE BOLDY: ENCOURAGE OTHERS

The BIG Answer:

I can have faith for others.

Memory Verse Challenge:

Be on guard. Stand firm in the faith. Be courageous. Be strong. And do everything with love.

- 1 CORINTHIANS 16:13-14 (NLT)

DAY 1

Question of the Day: How can we act in faith for others?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Matthew 18:20; Mark 2:1–12

Four friends were not going to stop until they got their friend to Jesus. They had enormous compassion for their paralyzed friend. But they also knew where they could get answers. Yet, they couldn't get into the house when they arrived where Jesus was. Did that stop them? No! Searching for a way to get to Jesus, they dug a hole in the roof to lower their friend down to Him. Not only did they have to fight through the crowd and dig a hole, but they also had to do it while carrying around an adult man! Holding up their friend while trying to get to Jesus wasn't easy. Still, these friends didn't let anything stop them. Because of this, the man who was paralyzed was healed on that day!

These four friends showed so much love for their friend. They might have had many other things to do that day. Maybe they were tired from carrying him around. Of all the feelings that they had on that day, faith and love were the ones that won!

Do you have a friend who needs healing? Is there someone you know who needs an answer from Jesus? If there is, be the friend who steps up and joins your faith with theirs. Encourage and strengthen them. Like these four friends, don't give up and keep going until Jesus answers. The Bible says in Matthew 18:20 that when two or three are gathered, God is there among them. Powerful things can happen when we have faith for our friends!

TALK ABOUT IT:

How did the friends get the man who was paralyzed to Jesus?

By digging a hole in the roof of the house (Mark 2:4)

What did Jesus see in the men who brought their friend to Him?

Their faith (Mark 2:5)

Why do you think the friends didn't stop until their friend was healed?

Answers will vary.

How can it be helpful to pray with other Christians?

Answers will vary.

How can we act in faith for others?

Answers will vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, right now, I pray for my friends. I love You, and I love them too. I know that You can heal, help, and answer their prayers. Give me eyes to see the needs of my friends. Help me to pray for them. Thank You in advance for all the miracles that You will do when I pray in faith for others. Amen.

DAY 2

Question of the Day: Why is it important to rejoice when Jesus works in the lives of others?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Mark 2:1–12

The enormous faith of his friends made a huge difference in the paralyzed man's life. But there were a group of people who weren't happy about what Jesus did. Some religious teachers were angry because Jesus forgave the man's sins. Rather than seeing the miracle taking place, they could only see what they thought was Jesus breaking the rules. They thought it was blasphemy that Jesus was doing what only God can do! These men didn't realize Jesus was God, even when the man who was paralyzed got up and walked. While the faith of the friends led them to be amazed and praise God, the hard hearts of the religious teachers just caused them anger.

God is greater than we can imagine. He does miracles and wonders. He also goes beyond what we hope for and doesn't go by our rules. The religious teachers spent a lot of time studying who they thought God was, but they never recognized Jesus when He was right before them. Having faith means that we trust God to do what only He can do. When we see miracles and God answering prayer, let's celebrate as the first thing we do! Let's rejoice in what God is doing in our friends, family, and us. This way, our faith in God grows and builds confidence in others!

TALK ABOUT IT:

How did the Pharisees react to Jesus forgiving the man's sins?

"This is blasphemy!" (Mark 2:7)

How did Jesus show His authority in this passage?

He forgave the man's sins and healed him.

How do you think the four friends reacted when Jesus healed their friend?

Answers will vary.

How can you rejoice with others when their prayers are answered?

Answers may vary.

Why is it important to rejoice when Jesus works in the lives of others?

Answers may vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, in Your Word, it says to rejoice in You always. God, I am excited about what You are doing. I am expecting miracles and healing in my life and in the lives of my friends. I am ready to see You move in a mighty way. May I always rejoice in You—Your faithfulness, Your goodness, and Your mercy. God, Your power is so great. Thank You for loving me and working in me daily! Amen.

DAY 3

Question of the Day: What does it look like to pray earnestly?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: James 5:13–16

How do people know that we are followers of Jesus? One way could be how we pray for other Christians. Together, we seek the Lord as friends, family, and fellow disciples on a mission to do His great work. These verses tell us that we should have the church's elders pray for us when we are sick. We also see that we are to be open and honest, sharing our sins and struggles, and praying for one another. There is great power when a righteous person, someone who is following Jesus with all their heart, prays earnestly, praying sincerely and intensely. This kind of prayer happens when we live for Jesus and seek the Lord. These prayers can make big things happen! Earnest prayer changes our life and the lives of those we pray for.

Do you have a space where you can share your needs with others? Do you make time to hear the prayer needs of your friends and take time to pray for them? If you want to see God move, start to share your needs with others. Ask your friends to join you in prayer. In the same way, actively ask your friends how you can pray for them. Pray together with all your heart. Remember what your friends need in prayer, whether it is a grandparent who is sick, a test that is coming up, or a family that is hurting. Pray to God on their behalf and watch God move. Most importantly, don't stop praying! Pray for the needs of others every time God brings them to mind. Then, rejoice and celebrate with your friend when their prayers are answered!

TALK ABOUT IT:

What should we do when we are sick?

We should ask the elders of the church to pray. (James 5:14)

How do you feel about sharing your needs with others? Why?

Answers will vary.

What are some of the needs that your friends have right now?

Answers will vary.

How can you remind yourself to pray for your friends?

Answers will vary.

What does it look like to pray earnestly?

Answers will vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, I bring to You the needs of others. You know every need before I ask it. I also know that You love when we ask and keep asking You to answer our prayers. I trust in You. I believe that You will keep Your promises. I know You will provide healing, comfort, and strength to those You know need it. Help me to grow in my prayer time with You and to bring the needs of others to You always. Amen.

DAY 4

Question of the Day: Why should you have faith for others?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Acts 9:10–19

Ananias had a decision to make. God had spoken to him. Would he have faith for Saul? More importantly, would he obey God's instruction to go to Saul? Before that day, Saul had been persecuting Christians. He had done terrible things. Now, God wanted Ananias to go to this man. Ananias had to have incredible faith to go to where Saul was and trust God to help Saul regain his sight. After Ananias laid his hands on Saul and spoke to him, Saul was healed. Saul was then baptized. Later he became one of the first Christian missionaries and wrote many books in the New Testament. But this all began because one man, Ananias, obeyed God in faith and decided to be part of what God was doing in Saul.

Through faith, we get the honor of being part of God's work in others. God does powerful things when we pray together in faith. Having faith that God can do great things in the lives of others can be a challenge. But, it is amazing when we see God working in others. It's an even more immense privilege when we're actively part of their story and how God moves in them. How awesome would it be to see someone you are praying for come to Jesus! People of faith get to be part of the faith journey of others. Like Saul, those people may go on to make huge changes in the world!

TALK ABOUT IT:

Who did God send to Saul?

Ananias (Acts 9:10)

How did Ananias have faith in this situation?

He had to believe God would heal Saul, and also that Saul was a changed man.

Has God ever used you to be part of His work in others? Explain.

Answers will vary.

What are some testimonies you've seen of God answering prayer for others?

Answers will vary.

Why should you have faith for others?

Answers will vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, open my eyes to see and pray for others. God, let me not only have faith for what they are praying for, but also have faith that You are doing a good work in their life. Let my faith grow as I see You move and work in others. Thank You that You allow me be part of the faith stories for other people. Thank You for allowing me to join my faith with them and see miracles happen! Thank You for moving inside me. Help me to grow in my faith. Amen.

July 7, 2024

NAVIGATE HARDSHIP: KNOW HIS PRESENCE

The BIG Answer:

I can trust God is with me.

Memory Verse Challenge:

The righteous person faces many troubles, but the Lord
comes to the rescue each time.

- PSALM 34:19 (NLT)

DAY 1

Question of the Day: Why is it sometimes hard to trust God?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Mark 4:35–38

Try to remember the scariest storm you've ever been in. The rain is coming down so fast you can barely see in front of you, and the raindrops are hitting so hard that they actually hurt. The wind whipping around you is picking up branches, flowers, and other small items that may be close. The sky is dark, but you can see the lightning crackling through the sky. The loud sound of thunder is booming all around you. This would be pretty scary! Imagine how scary this storm would be if you were out on a boat in the middle of a lake!

This is a lot like what happened to Jesus' disciples. They thought they were going to drown for sure, and they were terrified. Many times, the difficult times we face in life can feel like these storms. They can be scary, and we can feel like the disciples did, asking if God even cares. Yet, even in the middle of the storm on the lake, Jesus was there, and He was in control. In the middle of our storms, we can trust God because He is always close to us, and He is always able to help.

TALK ABOUT IT:

What happened to the disciples when they went out on the boat?

A fierce storm came up. The boat began to fill with water. (Mark 4:37)

What was Jesus doing while it was storming?

Jesus was asleep. (Mark 4:38)

How do the difficult things we face in life sometimes feel like a storm?

Answers will vary.

Why do you think Jesus was able to sleep through the storm?

Answers will vary.

Why is it sometimes hard to trust God?

Answers will vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, even when I face the storms of life that seem hard, help me to remember that You always hear me and help me. Help me to trust You. Amen.

DAY 2

Question of the Day: Why should trusting God give you peace?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Mark 4:38–41

When a baby is first learning to walk, they're not very steady on their feet. They have many falls as they're learning to take those first steps on their own. Sometimes when they fall, they may bump their head or their knees and begin to cry. They cry because they may have gotten hurt, or maybe because the fall scared them. But when someone who loves them comes and picks them up, the baby settles down and stops crying. They are comforted and at peace because they know they're not alone.

When Jesus calmed the storm on the lake, the disciples were shocked that He could do that. They were also at peace because the storm settled at Jesus' command. When we go through hard times in our life, we can look to God. He is more powerful than anything we face, and we can be sure that we are not alone. We can be comforted and at peace because we know that God is with us.

TALK ABOUT IT:

What did Jesus say to the wind and the waves?

"Silence! Be still!" (Mark 4:39)

What happened after Jesus spoke to the wind and waves?

"The wind stopped, and there was a great calm." (Mark 4:39)

Why do you think the disciples were scared after Jesus calmed the storm?

They didn't know that anyone could do what Jesus had done. Even the wind and the waves obeyed His command.

How does it make you feel knowing that you are not alone in hard times?

Answers may vary.

Why should trusting God give you peace?

Answers may vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, thank You that You have power over everything, and that You can bring peace to any situation. Help me to trust that You are always with me. Amen.

DAY 3

Question of the Day: How can we remember that God is close to us?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Psalm 23:1–6

Have you ever been in a rush to leave the house because you were late, and you couldn't find one of your shoes? You run all over the place—looking in your closet, under your bed, and even in the garage. You start to feel so upset that you almost can't think straight. You begin to get really frustrated until you realize that your shoe has been right in front of you the whole time.

Just as the disciples were probably running around the boat, scooping out the water that was flooding in and trying not to drown, sometimes we become upset in our hard times. We forget that God is with us. It can be easy to allow our focus to move to the hard things we're going through instead of remembering He is with us through His Holy Spirit. We must learn to remember God's presence. Like a shepherd, He is always close enough to help when we need, and He always has our well-being in mind.

TALK ABOUT IT:

According to the Scripture we read, why do we not need to be afraid?

God is close to us. (Psalm 23:4)

How do you imagine God cares for you like a shepherd cares for his sheep?

Answers may vary.

When was a time that it was hard to remember that God was with you?

Answers may vary.

Why do we get so upset in difficult situations?

Answers may vary.

How can we remember that God is close to us?

Answers may vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, I know that You are always close to me no matter what problem I face. Help me always to look to You to guide me every day. Amen.

DAY 4

Question of the Day: What can we do in troubles to know that God is close to us?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Psalm 91:1–6

Have you ever seen how a mother bird protects her babies? She takes her wings and wraps her babies up underneath her wings to cover them. This helps to keep them away from bad weather or animals that want to eat them. As the baby birds hide themselves under their mother's wings, they are sheltered and protected.

The Bible says that when we go to God for protection, He will cover and shelter us with His "wings." When we're going through hard times, it feels like we are being attacked. When the problems won't stop, we can run to God who is always with us. We can trust Him to be faithful. He is as close to us as the air we breathe. In the times that are hard, we can call on Him and know He will always be there.

TALK ABOUT IT:

How does a mother bird protect her baby birds?

By covering them with her wings

How is this like what today's Bible verses say that God does?

He will cover you with his feathers. He will shelter you with his wings." (Psalm 91:4)

How can trusting God to be close help us get through problems?

Answers will vary.

What does hearing these verses make you feel about God?

Answers will vary.

What can we do in troubles to know that God is close to us?

Go to Him for protection. Answers will vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, thank You for being close enough to rescue me in times of trouble. Help me to run to You in difficult times. When I'm afraid, help me to remember that You are there to help. Amen.

July 14, 2024

NAVIGATE HARDSHIP: ACKNOWLEDGE DEPENDENCE

The BIG Answer:

I can trust God to answer.

Memory Verse Challenge:

The righteous person faces many troubles, but the Lord
comes to the rescue each time.

- PSALM 34:19 (NLT)

DAY 1

Question of the Day: Why should you trust the way God answers your prayers?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Luke 1:6–25

Have you ever had to wait a long time for something you really wanted? While we wait, we can often think that what we're waiting for will never arrive. In that time of waiting for something to happen, it's easy to feel hopeless, anxious, or even angry.

For many years, Zechariah and Elizabeth weren't able to have a baby. And at the time of this story, they were both very old—too old to have a baby. They had hoped for a long time to have a baby. During that time, they remained faithful to God. Then the day came that God answered their prayer. Sometimes, God's timing and the way He works is different from what we think it should be. But when we trust God and remain faithful to Him, He will always answer us in the way that He knows is best.

TALK ABOUT IT:

What did Zechariah and Elizabeth want that they were unable to have?

A baby (Luke 1:7)

Who told Zechariah that Elizabeth was going to have a baby?

The angel Gabriel (Luke 1:19)

Have you ever felt hopeless while waiting for God to answer your prayers? Why or why not?

Answers will vary.

What can you do to depend on God—even when it seems like God is taking a long time to answer?

Answers may vary.

Why should you trust the way God answers your prayers?

Answers may vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, I know You want the best for me, and Your timing and plans are perfect. Help me to trust Your wisdom and the way You answer my prayers. Amen.

DAY 2

Question of the Day: Why can we trust God to answer us?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Luke 1:57–66

Can you imagine how Zechariah and Elizabeth must have felt after John was born? They had served God faithfully in the time when they had prayed to God for a baby and didn't get the answer they were hoping for. They continued to obey God, and at just the right time God changed their situation. God knew what He was doing. Not only did He have a plan for Zechariah and Elizabeth, but He had a plan for the baby, John, as well. God's plan was bigger than what Zechariah and Elizabeth could have ever imagined.

The Lord answered their prayers exactly as He had said He would. Everything that God had told them would happen actually happened. God is true to what He tells us, and when He says He will do something, He will. We can depend on Him. When His Word, the Bible, says something, we can trust that it will happen. God's plan for us is more than we could imagine. Even when it's hard, we can trust that God knows what He's doing. He answered and kept His word for Zechariah and Elizabeth, and He will for you too.

TALK ABOUT IT:

What did Zechariah and Elizabeth name their son?

John (Luke 1:60)

What happened after Zechariah wrote on the tablet that the baby's name should be, "John"?

Zechariah was able to speak again, and he began praising God. (Luke 1:64)

How does it make you feel knowing that God does what He says He will do?

Answers may vary.

How has God kept His promises to you?

Answers may vary.

Why can we trust God to answer us?

God always keeps His word.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, thank You that I can depend on You to keep Your word. I trust that You will always answer me when I call. Help me to trust Your plans for my life. Amen.

DAY 3

Question of the Day: When can you call on God?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Psalm 91:14–16

Phones didn't always let you put someone on hold so you could answer another phone call. Phones could only handle one call at a time. If you tried to call someone and they were already talking to someone else, you would hear a beeping sound called a busy signal. You had to hang up the phone and try to call back later. This could be a problem, especially if there was an emergency. Now, phones have call waiting and we can quickly switch from one call to another. This is better, but we still depend on the other person to answer.

Thankfully, God doesn't work like this. At any time, we can call on God. When we call on Him, He will answer and He will be with us. He's never too busy for us, and our problems are never too small or too big for Him. We can trust that He will always answer our call for help. It may not be in the way we think He should answer, but He will always answer. We can depend on Him.

TALK ABOUT IT:

What does the Lord promise to do when we call on Him?

He promises to answer. (Psalm 91:15)

Who does the Bible say the Lord will rescue and protect?

Those who love Him and those who trust in His name (Psalm 91:14)

Have you ever tried to call someone, and they didn't answer? How did it make you feel?

Answers will vary.

How do you think God feels when we call on Him during hard times?

Answers will vary.

When can you call on God?

Answers will vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, thank You that I can call on You at any time. I know You are always there when I need You. Help me to trust You to answer. Amen.

DAY 4

Question of the Day: What should you do if you feel like God isn't answering?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Jeremiah 29:10–13

Have you ever been in your room and tried to get your mom or dad's attention? Instead of just getting up and going to them, you start yelling for them. You yell louder and louder, and begin to get frustrated that they're not answering. So, you finally get up and go to them, and that's when they answer you. They were there the whole time, and they heard you calling out to them. But, they wanted you to come closer so they could talk to you.

It can feel a little like this with God. When we're in the middle of something hard, it can seem like we're calling out to Him over and over, and He's not listening. But God is always there and is always willing to answer us. Sometimes, He wants us to come closer to Him so we can hear from Him. He wants us to spend time in His Word and in prayer. He wants us to take time in our day to be quiet and talk to Him. Sometimes, it's in those moments that He speaks to us and answers what we've been asking Him for.

TALK ABOUT IT:

What kind of plans of God do these verses describe?

They are plans for good and not disaster—plans to give us a future and a hope. (Jeremiah 29:11)

How do these verses describe those who want to find God?

Those who look for Him with their whole heart (wholeheartedly) (Jeremiah 29:13)

How would you describe putting your whole heart into getting closer to God?

Answers will vary.

When have you prayed a long time for something?

Answers may vary.

What should you do if you feel like God isn't answering?

Spend time in His Word, pray, and take time to listen to what He might be saying. Answers may vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, thank You for always hearing me. Help me to draw closer to You in difficult times so I can hear Your voice speaking to me. Amen.

July 21, 2024

NAVIGATE HARDSHIP: WAIT PATIENTLY

The BIG Answer:

I can trust God while I'm waiting.

Memory Verse Challenge:

**The righteous person faces many troubles, but the Lord
comes to the rescue each time.**

- PSALM 34:19 (NLT)

DAY 1

Question of the Day: Why should you trust God while you're waiting?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: John 11:1–7, 20–27

When we read this story, it would be easy for us to ask why Jesus waited to go and see Lazarus when he was sick. But Jesus knew what He was doing. Even though Jesus loved Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, He made them wait. He finally went to be with them after Lazarus had died. Jesus asked Martha if she believed He was who He said He was. Jesus was basically asking Martha if she trusted Him.

It's easy to sometimes doubt God's timing when we don't understand what He's doing. Sometimes, we have ideas in our head as to how we think our story should play out. Then when God does something different, we can be tempted to become impatient, angry, and even bitter toward God. It's important for us to wait well. It's normal to have questions for God because we don't understand why something is happening, But it's important to remember that He knows what is best and can be trusted. If He's telling us to wait, He has a reason for it.

TALK ABOUT IT:

Why did Mary and Martha want Jesus to come to their home?

They wanted Jesus to come and heal Lazarus. (John 11:3)

What happened to Lazarus while Jesus was waiting to go their house?

He died. (John 11:21)

Why do you think Jesus waited for several days to go to their house?

Answers will vary.

When we have questions for God about things we don't understand, what should we also remember?

He knows what is best and can be trusted.

How do you think Martha felt when her brother died before Jesus arrived?

Answers will vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, sometimes it's hard when my prayer isn't answered the way I thought it would be, but I choose to trust You. I know that You are in control, and I choose to wait on You. Amen.

DAY 2

Question of the Day: How does God help us stay strong?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Isaiah 40:28–31

Have you ever used an electronic device and noticed that the batteries were slowly dying? Some, like electric toothbrushes or remote control cars, get slower as the batteries get weaker. If you use the device until the batteries are dead, you may be really surprised how powerful it is when you put in new, strong batteries. Stronger batteries make a big difference.

The Bible promises us that those who trust in the Lord will find new strength. It's not always easy for us to trust God, but trusting Him means that He will give us the strength we need exactly when we need it. The Creator of all the universe knows every detail of our life. He knows the difficult times we go through, and He sees our heart. When we go to Him, even in the middle of our frustration, He will help us.

TALK ABOUT IT:

How do these Bible verses describe God?

The everlasting God, Creator of all the earth. He never grows weak or weary, and no one can measure the depths of His understanding. (Isaiah 40:28)

According to these verses, what are some things God can give us?

He gives power and new strength. (Isaiah 40:29, 31)

How can life sometimes make us tired?

Answers will vary.

How does it feel to know that God has strength to give us when we're weak? Why?

Answers will vary.

In what area of life do you need more strength from God?

Answers may vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, when I feel weak and powerless, it's good to know that You never get weak. You have more power than I could ever need or imagine. Thank You for the power and strength You have already given to me. Please provide the strength I need for every new challenge I'll face. I trust You. Amen.

DAY 3

Question of the Day: How can enduring troubles help me in the future?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: James 1:2-4

Good things can come from enduring tough times. Sports team members have to endure intense practices to get in and stay in shape. Through running, lifting weights, and other exercises, they prepare for upcoming seasons. Sometimes, some athletes quit. But those who endure through the exercises get into the physical shape needed to compete in their sport. Keeping up the challenging workouts means that they come out better in the end.

Sometimes, God allows us to endure challenges and troubles in life, too. In those times, we learn to trust Him more. Our faith in God can grow through those problems. We don't always know God's reasons for letting us go through rough times. But we can trust that when we follow Him, we will grow in our relationship with God and be better for it in the end.

TALK ABOUT IT:

When we face troubles, what do these verses say we can feel?

Joy (James 1:2)

According to the verses we read, when our faith is tested, what has a chance to grow?

Our endurance (James 1:3)

Why do some people give up trusting God in challenging times instead of enduring?

Answers may vary.

Why is it important that we trust God even in tough times?

Answers may vary.

How can enduring troubles help me in the future?

Our faith in God can grow. Answers will vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, I know that even when I'm going through hard times, You are still with me. Help me to endure so that I can grow into the person You want me to be. Amen.

DAY 4

Question of the Day: Why should we not doubt God's timing?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: John 11:28–45

Can you imagine what it might have been like to be there on the day that Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead? Mary and Martha were sad because of their brother's death. They had been waiting on Jesus to get there. Some people there said things like, "Well, Jesus healed a blind man. If He had been here, couldn't he have kept Lazarus from dying?" The place was filled with sadness and doubt. Even though Jesus didn't come when people thought He should, He had a plan. He wanted people to see the glory of God. Imagine the reaction people must have had when they saw Lazarus walk out of the tomb alive!

When we remember, there are times that God has done things for us that only He can do. There are times when we've had pain and sadness, and God has shown up to help us. Even though He may work in a different way this time, we can trust His timing and His ability to solve our problems. He has always been faithful to us, and He won't stop.

TALK ABOUT IT:

What did Jesus tell the people to do at Lazarus's tomb?

He told them to move the stone out of the way. (John 11:39)

What happened when Jesus shouted for Lazarus to come out?

Lazarus came out of the tomb alive. (John 11:44)

When has God helped you in the past?

Answers will vary.

How can remembering what God has done in our past help us to trust His timing for a problem we are having now?

Answers will vary.

Why should we not doubt God's timing?

Answers will vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, thank You for always being faithful. I know that You have never failed me. Help me to trust Your timing and however You decide to work in my life. Amen.

August 4, 2024

NAVIGATE HARDSHIP: LOOK FORWARD

The BIG Answer:

I can trust God to lead me.

Memory Verse Challenge:

The righteous person faces many troubles, but the Lord
comes to the rescue each time.

- PSALM 34:19 (NLT)

DAY 1

Question of the Day: How should we respond when God tells us something?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: John 4:43–50

This government official in our Bible reading had probably heard about Jesus' power to work in impossible situations. The man was so worried that his son would die that he had traveled to a nearby town to ask Jesus to come. He believed that Jesus could heal his son. After the man begged Jesus to come home with him and heal his son, Jesus told him to go home because his son would live! When Jesus spoke to him about his son, everything changed. The official didn't question Jesus or hesitate. Verse 50 says, "The man believed what Jesus said and started home."

We know that Jesus has power to do the impossible. That means, even in our hardest problems, He has all power. God wants us to have the kind of faith this man did. When God says something, we believe Him, and we do what He says. We don't have to question Him or wait to obey. We can trust what God tells us and trust in His power.

TALK ABOUT IT:

What did the government official ask Jesus to do?

He begged Jesus to come to his home and heal his son. (John 4:47)

What did Jesus say to the man about his son?

Jesus said that the man's son would live. (John 4:50)

What did the man do after Jesus told him this?

The man believed what Jesus said and left for home. (John 4:50)

Why do you think it's sometimes hard for us to obey the directions God gives us?

Answers will vary.

How should we respond when God tells us something?

We should respond in faith and obey like the government official did.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, thank You that You have power over every situation. Help me trust Your words to me and walk confidently in what You tell me to do. Amen.

DAY 2

Question of the Day: What happens when you trust God to lead you?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: John 4:51–54

Imagine that you want to cook something, so you look in a cookbook to find the recipe you want to make. You know that if you don't follow the directions, the food may not come out quite right, and it could taste pretty bad. But because you trusted the recipe and followed the directions, the food comes out of the oven looking fantastic and tasting amazing. You get to eat it, and the rest of your family gets to enjoy it too!

As you follow God's directions and trust Him to lead you, even in difficult times, not only your life can be changed. The lives of those around you may also be changed. Because the father in this Bible story believed what Jesus said and followed His directions, his son was healed. Even more, his entire household chose to believe in Jesus. God's directions are for you, but He sees the big picture. When you trust and follow Him, your life will be changed, and you will influence the people around you too!

TALK ABOUT IT:

From these Bible verses, what news did the man receive on his way home?

That his son was alive and well (John 4:51)

Who else was changed by the man's decision to trust Jesus?

His son was healed, and the father and his entire household believed in Jesus. (John 4:53)

Are you going through something difficult right now? If so, can we talk about it?

Answers will vary.

How could others be affected by your decision to trust God's leading?

Answers will vary.

What happens when you trust God to lead you?

Your life is changed, and you can influence those around you.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, I want to trust every direction You give me. I know that You are with me. Help me to be able to talk about Your power with my family and friends as I trust You. Amen.

DAY 3

Question of the Day: How well does God know us?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Psalm 139:1–10

Who in your life knows you really, really well? Maybe you have a best friend who knows you well enough to finish your sentences. Or maybe your parents or guardians understand how you think so well that they've stopped you from doing something before you even started. It's amazing how well other people can know us.

That idea becomes even more powerful when we realize that God is always with us. The author of this psalm, King David, understood how God is always with us. Even though you may not be able to see Him, we can trust God's presence is always there through the Holy Spirit. God knows us far better than anyone else could. God is not only always with us and knows everything about us, but He's always there to help exactly how we need.

TALK ABOUT IT:

According to this psalm, where can we go to escape from God's presence?

Nowhere (Psalm 139:7)

How does knowing that God's presence is always with us make you feel about your difficult problems?

Answers will vary.

What two things do these verses say God's hand has provided?

Blessing and guidance (Psalm 139:5, 10)

Why is it sometimes hard for us to trust that God is with us?

Answers will vary.

How well does God know us?

He knows everything we do and even think. (Psalm 139:3–4)

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, I know that You are with me and leading me. You know me better than anyone else does. Help me to trust You in everything I do. Amen.

DAY 4

Question of the Day: How is being a Christian like a race?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: 1 Corinthians 9:24–27

When planning a race like a marathon, people go out before the race to mark out the path all the runners will travel. These people make sure that the path is carefully marked out for the runners. The runners receive a map of the course, but they may not know exactly what will be on each part of the trail. Athletes must trust the path that was created for them and follow it. If they decide to turn a different way or go off the path, they could hurt themselves or even be disqualified from the race.

Our life as a Christian is a lot like a race. The path is already marked out for us because God has decided the right and wrong way for people to live. He knows every twist and turn that will come, and He knows how to lead us so we can complete the race. If we don't trust Him and decide to go our own way, we could harm ourself and be separated from God. But if we run with purpose, we trust God's leading and take steps that lead to His finish line. If we finish the race, we will receive the final prize of eternal life with Him.

THINK ABOUT IT:

According to these Bible verses, why should we run to win?

We run in order to receive the eternal prize. (1 Corinthians 9:25)

First Corinthians 9:26 talks about running “with purpose in every step.” What do you think that means for our life?

It means that we trust God's leading and take the steps that lead us to His finish line.

What are some ways to ask for God's help to lead you?

Answers may vary.

How do you feel knowing that God has good plans and an eternal prize for your life?

Answers may vary.

How is living a Christian life like a race?

Answers will vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, thank You that You have a plan for every twist and turn in life that I'll face. Help me to trust Your leading and keep looking forward to what You have for me. Amen.

August 11, 2024

STAND FIRM: BE COMMITTED

The BIG Answer:

I will serve God no matter what.

Memory Verse Challenge:

Put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm.

- EPHESIANS 6:13 (NLT)

DAY 1

Question of the Day: How can we be faithful when things are hard?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Acts 6:2–15

The apostles needed to concentrate on teaching the Word of God. Because of this, they needed to choose people to help with the ministry. One man they chose was Stephen. The Bible says that he was “full of faith and the Holy Spirit.” Not only did he help run the food program, but he also helped to spread the message of Jesus. He was committed to the work and to sharing the gospel.

Stephen did miracles and signs among the people by the power of God. He was also full of wisdom. When people tried to argue with Stephen about Jesus, nobody could stand against the Holy Spirit working through him. Stephen was faithful in all things, even when he was falsely accused of saying untrue things about God and arrested. Why was he able to stand firm? Because he was committed to Jesus. It didn’t matter what duty he was assigned to or where he was. He did it all for Jesus.

What are the assignments that God has created for you? Your tasks could be helping a friend in need or raising money for a missionary. Maybe you have been called to hand out snacks for the little kids at church or give an answer for what Jesus has done for you. God gives us opportunities every single day.

Stephen ran a food program, gave a powerful witness for Jesus, performed miracles and signs, and pointed others to Jesus. Stephen’s commitment wasn’t because he wanted to impress others. His commitment came from his heart for God. When commitment comes from the heart, you can hold on when other things make you want to quit—when you get made fun of, when someone falsely accuses you, or when people don’t understand your love for Jesus. We can be faithful during hard times through praying, reading God’s Word, and worshipping. The Holy Spirit will help us to stand firm.

TALK ABOUT IT:

What was Stephen’s special task?

Helping to give food to needy widows, women whose husband had died (Acts 6:1–3)

Why do you think Stephen was chosen for this task?

Stephen was “well respected and ... full of the Spirit and wisdom.” (Acts 6:3)

How else did Stephen show that he was faithful to God’s call?

Answers may vary.

What happened to Stephen when he was arrested and brought before the council?

His face was “as bright as an angel’s.” (Acts 6:15)

How can we be faithful when things are hard?

Answers may vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, thank You for the honor of doing the tasks that You created for me. Help me to do what You have called me to do, even during hard times. Through Your power, I will be able to stand firm and faithfully do every task that You have given me. Amen.

DAY 2

Question of the Day: Why should we stand firm and finish well?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Acts 7:51–60

Stephen was falsely accused and punished. Most people would cry out for help, be scared, or even fight back. What happened to Stephen wasn't fair. The Jewish leaders were angry about the truth Stephen said, and it cost him his life. As the leaders shook their fists in rage, Stephen looked into heaven and saw Jesus. Stephen kept his eyes on God's glory as they dragged him away. The Jewish leaders threw stones at him, but Stephen stood firm in Jesus. He didn't lose faith. Stephen had given his heart to God. Because of that, he finished well. His life ended as he stood firm in the Lord. His commitment was more powerful than any stone that the religious leaders threw at him.

What does it mean to finish well? Why is it important? One of the most important parts of our faith journey is how it ends. Anyone can begin, but only the committed stand firm to the end. As Christians, we can finish well because we know there is a better, eternal world to come. We know that the end on earth isn't really the end because this world isn't our home. Stephen knew this truth. He faced death powerfully and left a lasting witness for us. If Stephen could stand firm to the end of his life, we can too.

TALK ABOUT IT:

What vision did Stephen see?

He saw Jesus standing in the place of honor at God's right hand. (Acts 7:55)

How did the religious leaders feel about what Stephen said?

They were furious. (Acts 7:54)

How did Stephen react in the face of trials?

He stood firm and loved those who hurt him.

Why do you think that the religious leaders were so angry?

Answers may vary.

Why should we stand firm and finish well?

Answers may vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, I pray that I will finish well. Like Stephen, who was able to stand firm and face trials, let me have faith and hope in You that won't be shaken. Help me to stand strong. Remind me of Your promises and give me hope for what is to come. I keep my eyes and my heart on You. Amen.

DAY 3

Question of the Day: Why do trials help us to stay committed?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Hebrews 11:1–12

Hebrews 11 tells us about many people who kept the faith. While they all had faith, one other thing united them all. Each of them went through significant trials. Noah built an ark and then rebuilt communities after the Flood. Abraham left his homeland, waited for God's promises, and lived as a foreigner in a strange land. Sarah was unable to have children until she was ninety years old. More are listed in the rest of this chapter. These trials were the test of their faith—a test they all passed. All of these people, and many more, stayed committed to God in their trials. Their commitment and trust is why we honor them today.

Nobody likes going through hard times. But, our trials show how committed we are to God. When we can walk through a trial and keep our faith in God, our faith will be stronger for the next test that comes. Our strength isn't in how we fix a problem or get through a hard time. Our strength is in keeping the faith and staying committed to Jesus. Tests and trials make us stronger when we rely on God. They don't take our strength away. Whatever we go through, we can know that God has something better waiting for us.

TALK ABOUT IT:

Who is someone listed in Hebrews 11?

Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Sarah are all specifically mentioned and talked about in this passage.

Which situation stuck out to you from the passage? Why?

Answers will vary.

What are some of the things people have done by faith?

Answers will vary.

Describe a trial that God has brought you through.

Answers may vary.

Why do trials help us stay committed?

Answers may vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, please help me to look at tests and trials through Your eyes. I know that hard things are there to make me stronger in You. Jesus, thank You for giving me strength and wisdom to stand firm and be committed to You always. I love You, Jesus, and am thankful that I get to serve You. Amen.

DAY 4

Question of the Day: Why is it important to stand firm and share the gospel?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Philippians 1:27–30 **Read: Matthew 5:10; 2 Timothy 4:1–8**

Many people in the Bible endured trials, or were even killed, for their faith. The apostle Paul, who was beaten, stoned, imprisoned, mocked, and shipwrecked, faced death and remained faithful. He wrote to his spiritual son Timothy to continue to preach the Word of God. Timothy needed to keep a clear mind and not be afraid of suffering. Why did Paul give these instructions? Paul had years of experience and knew that preaching the gospel wasn't easy. But, it is the good news that everyone needs to hear. The world needs Jesus. Paul reminded Timothy to fight the good fight and remain faithful.

The words that Paul wrote to Timothy still are true today. We need to know the truth in Jesus and be prepared to share it with others. Some may accept it; others won't. Some people may get angry with us for talking about Jesus. They might make fun of us. We must stand firm in our heart and hold on to the truth of Jesus. We need to serve God no matter what, even if people are mean to us. In Matthew 5:10, Jesus gave us this verse, "God blesses those who are persecuted for doing right, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs." Let's be committed and stand firm in the faith because Jesus is worthy of it all.

TALK ABOUT IT:

What did Paul tell Timothy to do?

"Preach the word of God." (2 Timothy 4:2)

What kinds of trials did Paul endure?

He was beaten, stoned, imprisoned, mocked, shipwrecked, and faced death.

Why do you think that Paul was able to remain faithful?

Answers may vary.

Have you ever suffered because you believe in Jesus? Explain.

Answers may vary.

Why is it important to stand firm and share the gospel?

Answers may vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, You are worthy of it all. Thank You for the privilege of sharing the gospel and teaching others to live for You. Prepare me for the road ahead. Help me to be ready to share about You with others in good times and bad times. Give me strength to help others to know You. It is my joy and honor to serve You, Jesus. I love You. Amen.

August 18, 2024

STAND FIRM: GROW DEEPER

The BIG Answer:

I will keep growing closer to God.

Memory Verse Challenge:

Put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm.

- EPHESIANS 6:13 (NLT)

DAY 1

Question of the Day: How can you be deeply rooted in your faith?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Mark 4:1–9, 14

What does it mean to be “deeply rooted”? Jesus told the parable of a farmer scattering seeds. The seed in the story was the powerful Word of God. But, good seed can’t grow if there isn’t good soil.

A deeply rooted person allows God to work in their life. They stay tender and teachable to what God wants to teach them. When this happens, God’s Word gets rooted into their life and helps them grow. When soil is shallow, roots can’t grow deep. So, how do we prepare the “soil” of our heart to allow the roots to grow deeper? One way is by spending time with God and worshipping Him. Time spent in prayer, worship, trust, and obedience keeps our heart tender to God. When we listen to and read the Word of God, we learn its message. This gives God’s message an opportunity to take root in our life. The Word of God changes us. Let’s have ears to hear and a heart to love God so we can allow His work to be done in our life.

TALK ABOUT IT:

What did the seed represent in the parable?

The Word of God (Mark 4:14)

Have you ever tried to grow a plant? Talk about it.

Answers will vary.

In the parable, was the problem with the seed or the soil? Explain.

The soil, then answers will vary.

What is the difference between shallow soil and deep soil?

Answers will vary.

How can you be deeply rooted in your faith?

Answers will vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, let my heart always stay tender to You. Thank You for Your Living Word that changes us from the inside out. I want Your Word to be deeply rooted in my life so I can easily share it with others. I will worship and pray. I won’t just sit back and watch others. I want to know You deeply. I love You, Jesus. Amen.

DAY 2

Question of the Day: How will my life produce fruit?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Mark 4:13–20

In the Parable of the Farmer Scattering Seed, Jesus talked about the seed on the path and the seed on rocky soil. He also spoke about another type of soil. But, two different things happened with the plants that grew. The soil allowed growth, and the roots could go deep. But when the first set of plants grew, the thorns choked them out. The second set grew an abundant harvest. Remember, the soil represents people, and the seed represents the Word of God. The thorns are the worries of life, the lure of wealth, and the desire for other things. The seed grew, but the plants didn't last. The Word of God growing in the life of a Christian will cause lasting change in the person and in the world around them. So, how do we produce fruit?

In every Christian's life, there are temptations to let worldly things choke out what God is doing in us. But, if we allow God to work in these things, an abundant harvest can happen. Thorns can grow anywhere in our life. What do we do when they come? We pull them up. Sometimes, we get worried about our life and our future. When this happens, we should remind ourselves of God's promises. The thorn of worry gets pulled up. Sometimes, we think too much about making money or storing our treasures on earth. We have to remind ourselves that this world isn't our home when this happens. Then the thorn of wealth gets plucked out. Other times, we want what the world wants instead of what God wants for our life. When this happens, we need to come to Jesus. When we do, we don't let the thorns choke out God's work, and our life will produce great fruit for God.

TALK ABOUT IT:

What crowded out some of the plants that were growing?

The thorns (Mark 4:18–19)

What are some thorns that crowd out what God is growing in your life?

Answers will vary.

How can you get rid of the thorns?

Answers may vary.

How can we recognize the thorns in our life?

Answers may vary.

How will my life produce fruit?

Answers may vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, I want my life to always produce good fruit for You. When the worries of life come, I will stand on Your promises. When I am tempted to store up treasures in the world, I will keep my heart on eternal things. I fix my heart and desires on You. Lord, let my life produce a harvest for You. Amen.

DAY 3

Question of the Day: What does remaining in the vine look like?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: John 15:1–10

Jesus told His disciples how to be fruitful in the world. The answer was simple—remain in Him. Jesus gave the example of a vine and branches. The vine is the source of water, nutrition, and support for the branches. A branch quickly dies when it is cut and not connected to the vine. We will be fruitful when we remain in God and Jesus remains in us.

Jesus also said that those who remain in Him could ask for whatever they wanted, and He would give it to them. When we stay in Jesus, His desires become ours. Our desires will be for the Kingdom and the spiritual harvest. Jesus will provide everything we need when we grow deep and remain connected to Him. Fruit will become a natural part of our life because that is what branches connected to the vine create.

You grow deeper in God when you remain in Him. How do you know when you are abiding in God? You will see fruit. People will come to Jesus. You will get to share the gospel, and your testimony will help others grow in their faith. You know that you remain in Jesus when you desire more of Him and to do His will. Your heart will love God more and more. You will want to go to church and read God's Word. Take a look at your life. Do you see that you are remaining in the "vine"? Even if you only see a little bit, remember that God will continue to grow deeper in you when you take steps to remain in Him.

TALK ABOUT IT:

Who is the True Grapevine according to the verses you read today?

Jesus (John 15:1)

What happens to branches that are cut off?

They are thrown away. (John 15:6)

What does God the Father do to care for the branches?

He is the Gardener who gets rid of branches that don't produce and helps others produce more. (John 15:1–2)

How do you grow deeper in God?

Remain in Him. (John 15:4)

What does remaining in the vine look like?

Answers may vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, help me to understand how to remain in You. Thank You for being the source of everything I need. Please take away what keeps me from remaining in You. Help me to remain fruitful for Your glory and Kingdom. Help me to desire what You desire and ask boldly for Your will. Amen.

DAY 4

Question of the Day: Why can we have hope regardless of life's problems?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: John 12:23–28

The way a seed grows into what it can become is by going into the ground and dying. Any seed that sits in a packet or on the pavement will never fully grow. Jesus gave this example to His followers to describe what He was about to do. His death was about to be the ultimate sacrifice that would bring life to everyone who trusts in Him. How was He able to do this? Jesus was willing to let go of His own life for the sake of others. Jesus was committed to the will of God the Father, so it didn't matter what came His way. Jesus was willing to make whatever sacrifice He needed to. He did it because He loves all people and wants everyone to have a relationship with God.

Some followers of Jesus will make the ultimate sacrifice and lose their life for Jesus. Even if we don't do that, we will face problems and hard times that will test our faith. We can stand firm and grow through these trials when we are deeply rooted in Jesus. Challenges in life can help us to grow closer to God. In every problem we have, we can help others come to know Jesus. Next time you have a problem, let this be your prayer—God, let this problem help me grow closer to You and help others know You too.

TALK ABOUT IT:

Who will the Father honor?

Anyone who serves Jesus (John 12:26)

How did Jesus' death bring an abundant harvest?

We can have a relationship with God because of what Jesus did.

Why did Jesus give His life on the Cross?

Answers will vary.

How can we be positive when we go through problems?

Answers may vary.

Why can we have hope regardless of life's challenges?

Answers will vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, I am so grateful for the sacrifice that You made on the Cross, giving Your life to die in my place. Because of this sacrifice, all of us can choose to follow You. What an honor! Help me to root my faith deeply in You so I can stay standing in all circumstances. I give my life to You. May You receive all the glory. Amen.

September 1, 2024

STAND FIRM: REMAIN STRONG

The BIG Answer:

I will be strong and follow God.

Memory Verse Challenge:

Put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm.

- EPHESIANS 6:13 (NLT)

DAY 1

Question of the Day: How can you stand strong against pressure from the crowd?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Luke 23:13–25

Pilate had a hard choice to make. Should he send Jesus to die or should he let Him live? Several times, Pilate told the religious leaders that he thought Jesus was innocent. The priests and the crowd kept fighting back. Rather than being strong and following through on what he knew to be true, Pilate at first refused to make a decision. He sent Jesus to Herod Antipas, who mocked and ridiculed Jesus. When Herod sent Jesus back to Pilate, he listened to the Jewish leaders and the crowd. He finally gave in and sent Jesus to be crucified. Pilate knew the truth, but he was more concerned about what the crowd wanted.

Who is the “crowd” in your life? Many people will try to pressure you into believing the way they do. They may seem nice or even right. But is what they’re saying the truth? God’s Word can help us stand firm against the crowd. We can’t just use our feelings to make our stand. Our heart and mind must know and love the truth in God’s Word and then stand on our faith. When the crowd is loud, let God’s voice be louder so we can stand strong and follow Him.

TALK ABOUT IT:

Did Pilate believe Jesus was guilty or innocent?

Innocent (Luke 23:14)

Why do you think Pilate listened to the crowd instead of the truth?

Answers will vary.

Who or what is a “crowd” in your life?

Answers will vary.

Why do we sometimes listen to other people instead of God?

Answers may vary.

How can you stand strong against pressure from the crowd?

Answers may vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, in You, I can stand strong against the crowd. I ask for strength to follow You and know Your truth. Help me to hold tight to Your Word. Thank You that You are the Way, the Truth, and the Life. When the crowd is loud, I want Your voice to be louder. I pray for courage to stand strong and follow You. Amen.

DAY 2

Question of the Day: Why is it important to stay strong and always follow God?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Luke 23:44–48

Jesus' final moments show us His strength to follow God's plan. The sky was dark. He was in terrible pain. He could have chosen to get angry at God because of His suffering. He could have refused to be sacrificed. Instead, Jesus shouted, "Father, I entrust my spirit into your hands!" In the face of pain and suffering, Jesus was strong and obeyed God until the end. Through this key moment in Jesus' life, His mission on earth was complete, and our salvation was paid for.

When we follow God, there will be times when voices may tell us to give up. But our finishing moment completes the work that we have done for the Lord. Ending well is the most crucial part of our faith journey. The crowd may tell us to quit, or that living for Jesus isn't worth it. We may even be tempted to live for ourselves and our desires only. But we must stay strong and obey God as Jesus did.

So don't stop praying for a friend who needs Jesus. Don't give up when you are witnessing to a friend. Keep doing the good work even when it is hard. When we follow God until the end, people will truly see Jesus in our life.

TALK ABOUT IT:

What did the Roman officer do after Jesus died?

"He worshiped God and said, 'Surely this man was innocent.'" (Luke 23:47)

What did Jesus do in His final moments?

He shouted, "Father, I entrust my spirit into your hands." (Luke 23:46)

Have you ever wanted to quit? Explain.

Answers may vary.

What can we do to stay strong in the faith?

Answers may vary.

Why is it important to stay strong and always follow God?

Answers may vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, You are worthy of all of my praise. Jesus, help me to stay strong and follow You. Thank You that I am never alone and can always depend on Your strength to lead me everywhere I go. Let my life be a testimony to Your goodness and grace. I will follow You all my life. Amen.

DAY 3

Question of the Day: What daily choices can you make to stand strong for God?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: 1 Kings 3:3–14; 11:9–13

Solomon was King David's son and a great king of Israel. At the beginning of his reign, he didn't ask God for wealth or possessions. Instead, he asked for wisdom to rule God's people. Because of this, God blessed him abundantly. He had wealth and riches. He built the temple of the Lord and a beautiful, majestic palace. People came from far and wide to hear his wisdom. He sacrificed to the Lord and dedicated the temple to God. Solomon had absolutely everything, and it all came from God. While Solomon started strong, he did not finish well. He sacrificed to the gods of his wives. God had warned him against this, but Solomon disobeyed. The entire kingdom felt the effects of this leader's disobedience.

Why did Solomon let his heart turn away from God? Solomon turned away from God because of the daily choices that he made. One little bad choice probably didn't seem like a big deal, especially when he had done so many great things. But one little choice can lead to another and another. And eventually, they can lead away from God. While bad decisions can lead us away, good decisions made each day help us to stand firm. Reading our Bible, praying, worshipping, giving, and serving are all excellent choices. Also, standing on God's promises, telling Jesus how much we love Him, and making space for Him to work in our life keeps us strong in faith. The daily choices we make to follow Jesus will keep us strong all of our life.

THINK ABOUT IT:

What did Solomon ask for?

Wisdom (1 Kings 3:10)

How did Solomon describe himself that showed his need for God's help?

He said that he was "like a little child who doesn't know his way around." (1 Kings 3:7)

Why was most of the kingdom taken away from Solomon's family?

He did not keep God's covenant or obey God's decrees. (1 Kings 11:11)

Is it okay to do some things God says are wrong as long as we've done lots of good things? Why?

No, any time we disobey God it is wrong.

What daily choices can you make to stand strong for God?

Answers may vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, I want to obey You and do mighty things for You. Please help me to love You more than doing great things for You. I want to obey and worship You always. In this way, I can forever stand strong for You. I love You, Jesus. Amen.

DAY 4

Question of the Day: How can our family be strong and serve the Lord?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Joshua 24:14–18

The Jewish people had made it to the Promised Land. God had provided for them and helped them to win battles time and again. Now it was time to live in the land that God had promised. So, Joshua called together the people to remember their promise to the Lord. God had brought them from slavery, through the wilderness, and into the Promised Land. Would they continue to serve Him? Joshua boldly declared, “As for me and my family, we will serve the LORD.” The people shouted back that they would too. This moment was a commitment for each family and their future children. They chose to follow God alone. Their words were a promise that they would be strong and follow God.

What about you and your family? You may go to church, pray, and read your Bible together. You may even talk about what God is doing for you or how to serve Him best. But, have you declared your trust in God as a family? Our words have power. When we decide to declare that we will serve the Lord as a family, this shows where we stand. We won't turn this way or that, but we will serve God no matter what. It is our reminder of what we will do when serving God—going to church, praying as a family, or reading the Bible—gets difficult. Let's declare our decision today, that we will serve the Lord.

THINK ABOUT IT:

Who did Joshua declare would serve the Lord?

He and his family (Joshua 24:15)

Why did the people say they would never abandon or leave God?

He rescued them from slavery, performed miracles, preserved them, and drove out other nations from the land. (Joshua 24:16–18)

What are some of the ways that you or you and your family serve the Lord?

Answers may vary.

When we say that “we will serve the Lord,” what does that mean?

Answers may vary.

How can our family be strong and serve the Lord?

Answers may vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, You have done great things for our family. You have blessed us, kept us, healed us, and protected us. Thank You for all of the ways that You have shown us Your goodness and faithfulness. It is our honor to serve You. As for me and my family, we will serve the Lord. Amen.

September 8, 2024

STAND FIRM: BEAR WITNESS

The BIG Answer:

I will stand up for Jesus

Memory Verse Challenge:

Put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm.

- EPHESIANS 6:13 (NLT)

DAY 1

Question of the Day: How does the good news about Jesus, the gospel, keep spreading?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Acts 4:1–4

Being full of the Holy Spirit made Peter and John bold to share about Jesus. They had already seen signs, wonders, and miracles. Many people had already come to faith and believed in Jesus because of the disciples sharing about Him. Because Peter and John had been with Jesus, they wanted to tell everybody about Jesus rising from the dead. But talk about Jesus being raised from the dead made the priests, Sadducees, and captain of the temple guard angry. They didn't believe that Jesus was alive again. So, they arrested Peter and John.

But did this stop the message of Jesus from spreading? No! The number of people who believed because of the disciples' preaching grew by thousands. The Jewish leaders couldn't stop the good news from spreading. Because Peter and John took a stand and preached the gospel, their words went further than they could imagine.

The gospel message has spread for about two thousand years because people have taken a stand and told others about Jesus. Many have tried to stop the message from spreading. But, the number of people who believe in and follow Jesus just keeps on growing. When we take a stand and declare that we believe in Jesus, others get to hear about Jesus and accept Him as their Savior. Remember, it isn't about us or the words we say. When we take a stand, the Holy Spirit works in those who hear the good news. God draws people near to Him. All we need to do is share the good news and live obediently to Jesus.

TALK ABOUT IT:

How many men in total believed the message of Jesus in the verses we read?

About five thousand (Acts 4:4)

Why do you think people try to stop the gospel from being shared?

Answers will vary.

What happens when we tell others the good news about Jesus?

Answers may vary.

What caused the Jewish leaders to arrest Peter and John?

It bothered the leaders that Peter and John were teaching that Jesus made a way for us to be resurrected from the dead. (Acts 4:2–3)

How does the good news about Jesus, the gospel, keep spreading?

Answers may vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, thank You for Your Holy Spirit that works in the minds and hearts of everyone who hears the gospel. I know that when I stand up for You, God can do miraculous things. Help me to be obedient and faithful to stand for You. Amen.

DAY 2

Question of the Day: How can others tell you are committed to Jesus?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Acts 4:12–21

Standing before the council, Peter and John spoke boldly about who Jesus was. The leaders had asked what happened (Acts 3:1–8), but they were amazed by the boldness of Peter and John. They knew that Peter and John were ordinary men with no special training in the Scriptures. They recognized that Peter and John had spent time as Jesus' disciples.

Even more amazing, the healed man was standing right in front of them. Since they couldn't argue with the evidence, they let Peter and John go and told them never to speak or teach in the name of Jesus. This was a moment of decision for Peter and John. They chose to stand up for Jesus. They refused to stop telling people about Jesus. Everyone praised God for what He had done through these two committed disciples who took a stand for Jesus.

The Jewish leaders could tell that Peter and John were committed to Jesus. They stood boldly and spoke powerfully about Jesus. We can too! Our testimony about what Jesus has done for us declares that Jesus is our Savior. We show our love for Him when we are faithful in going to church and reading our Bible. Like Peter and John, when we boldly tell others about Jesus, our life draws others to Jesus and the good news He brings.

TALK ABOUT IT:

What did Peter and John do when they were told to keep quiet about Jesus?

They refused. (Acts 4:19–20)

Why were the members of the council amazed?

Because of Peter and John's boldness since they had no special training in the Scriptures (Acts 4:13)

How did Peter and John show their commitment to Jesus?

They refused to obey the council and continued to tell others about Jesus. (Acts 4:20)

Why did the council let the disciples go?

They couldn't punish them without starting a riot. (Acts 4:21)

How can others tell you are committed to Jesus?

Answers may vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, let the words of my mouth and my actions show others that I am following You. I am committed to You. I pray for opportunities to take a stand for You. Let me speak boldly and tell others about You. I love You, Jesus! Amen.

DAY 3

Question of the Day: How can we encourage others to stand up for Jesus?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: 1 Corinthians 15:58; 16:13–14

In Paul's letters that he wrote to churches, he sometimes wrote about people's work for the Lord. He thanked believers in different cities and praised them for their faith and standing firm in Jesus. Paul took a stand for Jesus and never gave up on his commitment to Him. Paul spent his life spreading the gospel and helping new believers wherever they were. He encouraged the believers to keep obeying Jesus even when they had opposition. Paul knew that there would be trials and problems. He knew that believers needed to hear the message of these verses. Paul's words encourage us too as we read his words and receive strength.

Like Paul, we can encourage others to follow Jesus. Everyone needs to hear the good news of Jesus. Every believer in Jesus has people to share the gospel with that God has placed in their life. We can pray for our friends to be courageous and strong. We can talk to others and share Jesus' love with them. We can also encourage others to stand up for Jesus. In all these ways, we strengthen believers. We remind them that we are to win as many people as possible for Jesus. Let's keep working for God. It's always worth it.

THINK ABOUT IT:

What did Paul encourage the believers to do enthusiastically?

Work for the Lord. (1 Corinthians 15:58)

Why do you think Paul told the believers to stay strong?

Answers will vary.

How have you stood strong in faith and shared the gospel?

Answers will vary.

How do Paul's words still encourage us today?

Answers may vary.

How can we encourage others to stand up for Jesus?

Answers will vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, thank You that we can stand strong in You. Thank You for giving us the courage we need to share the gospel and show people that You love them. Help us to encourage others to do the same. Through the help of Your Holy Spirit, we can help the world hear about You. Thank You for using us to do Your amazing work. Amen.

DAY 4

Question of the Day: How does the Holy Spirit lead us to take a stand?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Acts 10:44–48; 11:1–3, 15–18

Peter had an experience that turned his thinking upside down. All of his life, his teachers probably taught him that people who weren't Jewish were unclean. Being Jewish, his leaders may have told him to stay away from these people, Gentiles. He probably didn't eat with them or enter their house. So, when God gave Peter a vision that led to Cornelius, a Gentile, and his family being saved and filled with the Holy Spirit, Peter was amazed. The people he thought were unclean had now been made clean by Jesus. The Holy Spirit filled them with His power, and God transformed their lives.

When Peter returned to tell the other believers, they criticized him. But, the Holy Spirit changed their hearts when Peter took a stand and explained what God was doing. The Holy Spirit was giving them a new way of thinking. Because Peter took a stand for God's leading, more people came to know Jesus.

As we witness and share the gospel with others, let's always follow the Holy Spirit as He leads us. The Holy Spirit led Peter to the Gentiles, and he saw a mighty work of God. The Holy Spirit also guided him to share what had happened and strengthen the believers in Judea. Peter followed the Holy Spirit's lead and kept his heart and mind open to what God wanted to do. As we rely on help from the Holy Spirit, our heart will be open to what God is doing. When we rely on Him, it means that we depend on the Holy Spirit to lead us. When the Holy Spirit guides us to share, we should share. God will be with us and teach us the way to go when we pay attention to the amazing things He is doing.

TALK ABOUT IT:

Who was filled with the Holy Spirit in these verses?

The people who heard Peter's message (Acts 10:44–45)

How did the Jewish believers with Peter know that the other people had received the gift of the Holy Spirit?

"They heard them speaking in other tongues." (Acts 10:45–46)

What does it mean to rely on the Holy Spirit?

We depend on the Holy Spirit to lead us.

Why did Peter take a stand for what he believed?

Answers may vary.

How has the Holy Spirit led you or someone you know to take a stand?

Answers may vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, help me to always be humble and allow You to do what You want to do. Thank You for changing my heart and mind to know You more and how You love the world. You are always moving and working. I depend on You and will follow You. I will rely on the Holy Spirit and take a stand for You. Amen.

September 15, 2024

HONOR GOD: EXPRESS GRATITUDE

The BIG Answer:

I will give thanks to God.

Memory Verse Challenge:

**With all my heart I will praise you, O Lord my God. I will give
glory to your name forever.**

- PSALM 86:12 (NLT)

DAY 1

Question of the Day: How has God been good to you?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Luke 17:11–14

When someone in Bible times had leprosy, they were separated from the rest of the people and forced to live outside of their village. People were afraid that their disease was contagious and deadly. If the sick person came close to someone else, they had to yell from a distance, “Unclean.” This disease destroyed lives. When Jesus healed all ten of these men suffering from leprosy, He not only healed them physically, but He also changed their entire lives. They could return to their families and friends and live normal lives again.

When we think about all that God has done for us, we are reminded that without Him, we would have nothing. His goodness can be seen in every part of our life. Because of what He has done for us, our life is changed forever. He is so good to us and deserves every bit of worship, honor, and gratitude that we can give Him.

TALK ABOUT IT:

What disease did the men in today’s story have?

They had leprosy. (Luke 17:11)

How many men had leprosy in the story?

There were ten men who had leprosy. (Luke 17:12)

How many of the men with leprosy were healed?

All of them were healed. (Luke 17:14)

How do you think you would have acted if you were one of the ten men with leprosy and Jesus healed you?

Answers will vary.

How has God been good to you?

Answers may vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, thank You for who You are and for everything You’ve done for me. Because of You and what You have done, my life has been changed forever. Thank You! Amen.

DAY 2

Question of the Day: How can we respond with gratitude when God does something for us?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Luke 17:15–19

Imagine for a moment that you are wanting to give the most perfect gift to someone special. You spend time searching for just the right thing that you think they'll love. You do some extra jobs to make some enough money to pay for it. When you buy it, you make sure to wrap it carefully, so it looks perfect. Then you give it to them, and they look at it before walking off without ever saying thank you or telling you if they like it. That would be hurtful, wouldn't it?

Jesus could have demanded that the other nine men come back and thank Him, but He didn't. He wants us to worship Him and thank Him because we want to and because we love Him. For the one leper who came back, it was an immediate response. As soon as he saw that he was healed, he came back to Jesus and started praising and thanking Him. This should be our attitude, too.

TALK ABOUT IT:

How many people with leprosy did Jesus heal in this story?

He healed ten men. (Luke 17:17)

How many of the men came back to thank Him?

Only one came back to thank Him. (Luke 17:15)

When was a time that you gave a gift to someone, and they didn't show gratefulness?

How did this make you feel?

Answers may vary.

Why do you think Jesus doesn't demand that we show gratitude to Him?

Answers may vary.

How can we respond with gratitude when God does something for us?

Answers may vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, help me to never take for granted all the things You've done for me. I always want to have a heart of gratitude and worship toward You. You are so good to me, and I thank You for it. Amen.

DAY 3

Question of the Day: How can we thank God with our life?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Psalm 103:1–5

Can you imagine how boring it would be if you were watching a sports game, and all the players were just walking around instead of really trying to play the game? If you were playing in this game, you would probably get benched by your coach for being lazy and not taking it seriously. Sports require all of your effort from the beginning to the end of the game.

This is the way that God wants us to live our life in worship to Him. Everything we do can be an act of worship if we do it to honor to Him. Even becoming the kind of person He wants us to be is worship. Who we are and what we do should show that we're thankful to Him. We shouldn't be lazy in our worship to Him or careless in how we live our life. We should let all that we are, with our whole heart and our whole life, express our gratitude and praise to Him.

TALK ABOUT IT:

According to our Bible reading today, how much of your heart should you praise and thank the Lord with?

With your whole heart (Psalm 103:1)

Based on the Bible verses you read, what are some good things God does for us?

He forgives all our sins, heals all our diseases, redeems us from death, shows us love and mercy, fills our life with good things, and strengthens us. (Psalm 103:3–5)

How can we sometimes get lazy and careless in worshipping and thanking God?

Answers may vary.

How do you think God feels when we are lazy and careless about living our life in thanks to Him?

Answers will vary.

How can we thank God with our life?

We can thank Him by showing our gratitude and living a life of worship for Him.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, I want everything I do to be an act of worship to You. Help me to live my life with thankfulness in all that I do. Amen.

DAY 4

Question of the Day: How can we live a life of thankfulness in every situation—good or bad?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Philippians 4:11–13; 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18

Imagine there's a new pair of shoes you want, but you don't have enough money to buy them. When you can't have something, it can be easy to forget about all the things you do have. Sometimes, you start to grumble and complain. When you really have your heart set on doing something, you can become frustrated and ungrateful if things don't happen the way you planned. But, it's important for us to recognize that God is good. He shows His goodness to us, even when we may not be able to see it right away.

When we learn to be content no matter what we're going through, we can have a heart of worship and gratitude in every situation. Even when God doesn't answer our prayers the way we think He should, or He allows us to go through difficult times, He is still good. He is still worthy of all our thanks and praise. We must choose to be thankful whether we feel like it or not.

TALK ABOUT IT:

In which circumstances and situations should we be thankful?

We should be thankful in all circumstances. (1 Thessalonians 5:18)

According to our Bible reading, why should we be thankful in all circumstances?

It is God's will for everyone who belongs to Christ Jesus. (1 Thessalonians 5:18)

Why is it sometimes difficult for us to be grateful in hard situations?

Answers may vary.

Why is it important for us to learn to be content and thankful in every situation?

We can have a heart of worship and gratitude no matter what comes.

How can we live a life of thankfulness in every situation—good or bad?

Answers may vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, even when life is hard and doesn't make sense, help me to be content and grateful in every situation. You are always good and always worthy of my praise. Amen.

September 22, 2024

HONOR GOD: CHOOSE YOUR PRIORITY

The BIG Answer:

I will put God first.

Memory Verse Challenge:

With all my heart I will praise you, O Lord my God. I will give
glory to your name forever.

- PSALM 86:12 (NLT)

DAY 1

Question of the Day: How can we make sure the busyness of life doesn't get in the way of our relationship with God?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Luke 10:38–42

Because Martha was so distracted with the busyness of life, she missed sitting and listening to Jesus and spending time with Him. The Savior of the world was sitting in her house. But she was more concerned about all the preparations. She had her priorities out of order. Martha was putting doing things for Jesus in front of having a close relationship with Jesus.

God doesn't need us to be perfect to come to Him. He simply wants to be with us. Sometimes, we think that we need to be in the right place to be with God. We don't have to have the perfect music playing or be sitting in the perfect seat in church to talk with God. We can talk with Him when we're in bed or getting ready for the day. We can share with Him how we feel when something happens at school that we didn't expect. We can feel His presence with us on the soccer field or as we're sitting around the dinner table. Putting God first means making sure that there is always space for Him in our life. It means not crowding Him out because we think we're too busy with other things.

TALK ABOUT IT:

When Jesus visited the house, what was Mary doing?

"Mary, sat at the Lord's feet, listening to what he taught." (Luke 10:39))

What was Martha doing after Jesus arrived at the house?

"Martha was distracted by the big dinner she was preparing." (Luke 10:40)

Why did Jesus say that what Mary was doing was better than what Martha was doing?

Because the most important "thing worth being concerned about" was spending time with Jesus

What are some things that distract you from spending time with God?

Answers will vary.

How can we make sure the busyness of life doesn't get in the way of our relationship with God?

Answers will vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, I want to always be sure that I'm never too busy for You. Help me to make sure that I spend time with You. Amen.

DAY 2

Question of the Day: What does it mean to have a relationship every day with God?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Psalm 27:4–8

Have you ever met someone that you really wanted to be friends with? What did you have to do to be friends with them? When you have a relationship with someone, you want to spend time with them. You want to get to know them more. You share your thoughts and feelings with them, and you care about theirs. You want to spend time doing things together and creating memories. And, when you're not with them, you miss them. That's what a real relationship is.

God wants to have a relationship every day with us. He doesn't want an occasional visit from us every now and then. He wants us to spend consistent time with Him, to talk with Him, and to share our thoughts and feelings with Him. He wants to be involved in every part of our life. But we must choose to put Him first and make Him a priority.

TALK ABOUT IT:

According to the Bible verses we read, what is one thing the author wanted most?

"To live in the house of the Lord," which means to be close to God (Psalm 27:4)

To have a friendship with someone, what are some things we must do?

We must spend time with them, get to know them more, and share our thoughts and feelings with them.

How are some of these things the same when it comes to having a relationship with God?

We spend time with God when we read the Bible, pray, and worship Him. We share our thoughts and feelings with Him when we pray and think about His Word.

How does spending time with God help us grow closer to Him?

We get to know Him better.

What does it mean to have a relationship every day with God?

It means that we live our life with Him every day, not just some days.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, I want to spend every part of my life with You. Help me to choose You first and make You a priority in my life. Amen.

DAY 3

Question of the Day: Why should we make obeying Jesus most important?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Luke 6:46–49

When building a house, the very first thing that is built is the foundation. Do you know why? It's because a strong foundation makes the rest of the house strong and stable, so it will last for years to come. It would be worthless to have builders start working on building walls and a roof without a foundation being built first. If the house is built without a strong foundation, the house will be unstable and will collapse, or it will fall apart over time.

Our life as a follower of Jesus works in a similar way. Our life is strong and stable when we obey Jesus and His Word. Doing this must be the most important part of our life. When we obey Him in every situation, we show that we want His plans for our life. It shows that we're willing to be sure that what He wants is also what we want. As we continue to put Him first, we can trust Him to help us take care of everything else going on in our life.

TALK ABOUT IT:

If we want our life on a good foundation, what should we do after we hear the teachings of Jesus?

Follow them by obeying Him. (Luke 6:47)

What does the Bible say will happen to someone who doesn't obey Jesus?

The house of their life "will collapse into a heap of ruins." (Luke 6:49)

How is obeying Jesus like building the foundation of a house first?

Like the house, our life will only be strong and stable if we base it on a good foundation—the teachings of Jesus found in the Bible.

What could happen in our life if we don't obey Jesus?

Answers may vary.

Why should we make obeying Jesus most important?

When we obey Jesus and His Word, our life will be strong and stable.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, I want my life to be built on You. Help me to seek You first every day. Amen.

DAY 4

Question of the Day: How can the choices we make show God that He's first in our life?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Exodus 20:3–6

In many places, people choose to worship idols—an image or statue that represents a fake god. They believe that the fake gods that the idols represent will answer them and give them the things they need. But, these idols can never give them what the one true God can.

Even when a person knows there's only one real God, it can be tempting to make something else be an idol in their life. This happens when we choose to put other things in the place where God should be. We do this by putting other things over God. We get so busy, and we treat those things like they'll give us what we need. But, it's only our relationship with God that can meet any need we have. God wants to be number one in our life. When we choose to put Him first, we are saying, "God, I love You more than anything else."

TALK ABOUT IT:

What commands are in the verses we read?

We must not have other gods, make idols, or worship idols. (Exodus 20:3–4)

What is an idol?

An image or statue that represents a fake god

What are some things in your life that could be like an idol because they are more important to you than God?

Answers may vary.

When we choose to put other things over our relationship with God, how can others around us be affected?

Answers may vary.

What kind of person does verse 6 say will receive God's unfailing love?

People who love Him and obey His commands (Exodus 20:6)

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, I'm sorry for the times that I've placed other things ahead of You. I want to choose You above all else and worship You with my entire life. Amen.

October 6, 2024

HONOR GOD: PURIFY YOUR HEART

The BIG Answer:

I will do what God says is right.

Memory Verse Challenge:

With all my heart I will praise you, O Lord my God. I will give
glory to your name forever.

- PSALM 86:12 (NLT)

DAY 1

Question of the Day: Why should we be careful that our actions and our heart are honoring God?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Mark 7:1–13

The religious leaders in these verses were very concerned about making sure that their religious laws were followed. In fact, they were more concerned about following their man-made traditions perfectly than they were about the condition of their hearts. The way they were living showed that they didn't have a heart close to God.

Sometimes in our life, it's easy to get caught up in the actions of worshipping God. This can look like going to church regularly out of habit and not because we want to. It could also be saying memorized prayers before a meal rather than having a heartfelt conversation with God and thanking Him for what He's done. The thing is though, God can see right through all that. We may be able to fool others, but God knows the condition of our true heart.

TALK ABOUT IT:

What were the religious leaders concerned about in the verses we read?

They were upset that Jesus' disciples didn't follow the Jewish ritual of hand washing before eating. (Mark 7:2–5)

What Old Testament prophet did Jesus quote in His reply to the religious leaders?

Isaiah

What is an example of putting something you think is important over what God says is important?

Answers will vary.

Why do you think God cares about both your heart and your actions?

Answers will vary.

Why should we be careful that our actions and our heart are honoring God?

Answers will vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, help me not to do things for You simply out of habit or tradition. I want to have a heart that truly wants to worship You and honor You in all I do. Amen.

DAY 2

Question of the Day: How can we fill our heart with good things?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Mark 7:14–23

Would you wash the outside of a bowl and leave the inside dirty? If you looked from the outside, the bowl would look clean. But it wouldn't actually be clean. Would you want to eat ice cream out of a bowl full of dried-up chili leftovers? Probably not.

Sometimes, we do all the right things to look like a good person on the outside, but our inside is different. That's not at all what God wants. He wants our heart to be right. Why? Because what's in our heart eventually spills out. If our heart wants to lie about things, eventually we'll start telling lies. If our heart is full of meanness, we'll start being mean to people. But if Jesus is in our heart, our life will look more and more like Him all the time.

TALK ABOUT IT:

According to the verses we read, does what you eat defile you (make you unclean before God)?

"The food you put into your body cannot defile you." (Mark 7:18)

Where does the Bible say the sin that defiles us comes from?

"It is what comes from inside that defiles you. For from within, out of a person's heart come evil thoughts." (Mark 7:20–21)

If you've sinned, what does that tell you about your heart?

Answers may vary.

What are some ways to guard our heart to keep out evil?

Answers may vary.

How can we fill our heart with good things?

Answers may vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, I don't want to live by my own rules and traditions. I don't want to serve You by giving You only part of me. I want all my heart to be clean and pure before You. Amen.

DAY 3

Question of the Day: How do God's instructions help us live?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Psalm 19:7–14

Have you ever been in a car with a driver who was lost? There are several ways to fix that problem. You could use a cell phone to look up an address or directions. You could also stop and ask someone for help. One thing that usually doesn't work is just to keep driving and hope that you end up at the right spot. Good instructions are the best way to get to the right place.

When it comes to our life, God has given us instructions that lead the direction He wants us to go. Those instructions usually come from the Bible and our prayer conversations with God. They also come in different forms. Sometimes God's instructions are clear commands and laws, and other times they are general truths and wisdom. So, if you're confused about where to go in life, listen for His instructions. They're the best. Making the choices that follow His directions shows that we love Him and want to live for Him.

TALK ABOUT IT:

What are some ways these verses describe God's instructions and commands?

Perfect, trustworthy, right, pure, true (Psalm 19:7–9)

Who should the words of our mouth and the meditations of our hearts be pleasing to?

God (Psalm 19:14)

What do these verses say the laws of the Lord are like?

His laws are true and fair, more desirable than gold, and sweeter than honey. (Psalm 19:9–10)

What can we do if we have sins "lurking" in our heart?

If we ask God, He will forgive us of any sin we have in our heart. He will also help us stay away from making the wrong decisions. (Psalm 19:12–13)

How do God's instructions help us live?

Answers may vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, I don't want just to act like a Christian. I want to worship You and honor You with all my heart. Help my heart to stay pure before You. Amen.

DAY 4

Question of the Day: How can we have a purified heart that honors God?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Psalm 139:23–24

When you first get up in the morning and look in the mirror, you might be kind of surprised by what you see. Your hair might be all over the place, you may have smudges of drool on your chin, and maybe you still have a piece of broccoli in your teeth from dinner the night before. How crazy would it be to look in the mirror, see all of that, and then just walk out the door to start your day? Normally, you look in the mirror to check yourself and see what needs to be changed so that you can start your day clean and ready to go.

In the same way, we can honor God by allowing Him to look at our heart to do a spiritual mirror check every day. We can go to God and ask Him to examine our heart. He can let us know if there's anything in our heart that doesn't line up with His commands. And when our heart isn't right with Him, we should go to Him and ask for help. He can get us on the right track. As He shows us things to work on, we shouldn't just walk away and ignore them. Instead, we should obey His instructions, ask Him to purify our heart, and keep Him as the Leader of our life.

THINK ABOUT IT:

What did the writer of today's Bible verses ask God to know?

His heart and thoughts (Psalm 139:23)

According to these verses, what kind of path should we want to be on?

We should be on the path that leads to everlasting life. (Psalm 139:24)

When we know our heart isn't right with God, what should we do?

Go to Him and ask for help.

How does having a clean and purified heart before God show Him honor and worship?

Answers may vary.

How can we have a purified heart that honors God?

Answers may vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, I know there are times that I make mistakes. Please search my heart and show me anything in my life that doesn't honor You. I want to be clean and pure before You. Amen.

October 13, 2024

HONOR GOD: LIVE GENEROUSLY

The BIG Answer:

I will use my gifts for God.

Memory Verse Challenge:

With all my heart I will praise you, O Lord my God. I will give
glory to your name forever.

- PSALM 86:12 (NLT)

DAY 1

Question of the Day: How should we use the things God has given us to honor Him?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Matthew 25:14–18

Jesus used stories called parables to help people understand spiritual ideas. Think about this story with God as the master and His followers as the servants. The master trusted His servants to handle some of His money. It was up to the servants to decide exactly what they did with what they were given. Were they going to use what they were given to make more, or would they do nothing with it? Two of the servants chose to make good use of what they had been given and tried to grow it for their master. One servant chose to do nothing with it.

Although this parable describes what the master gave as money, we can think about it in terms of everything that God gives us. God gives us money, time, talents, and skills. All of these things can be used to further the kingdom of God. When we use these things the way God wants us to, we not only show Him honor and worship, but we also point others to Him.

TALK ABOUT IT:

How many servants were talked about in this story?

Three (Matthew 25:15)

What was the difference between how two servants handled what was given to them and how the third one handled what was given to him?

Two of them invested what was given to them to grow it, and one hid it. (Matthew 25:16–18)

What has God given you that He wants you to use for Him?

Answers will vary.

When you think about what God has given to you, which of the servants are you most like?

Answers will vary.

How should we use the things God has given us to honor Him?

We shouldn't hide the things God has given us like the third servant did. We should put them to use, like the first and second servants did.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, thank You for all the things You've given me: my talents, money, and time. Help me to worship You by living generously with everything You've trusted me with. Amen.

DAY 2

Question of the Day: What happens when we do a good job of using what God has given to us?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Matthew 25:19–30

Maybe you've learned how to ride a bike with training wheels. When you've learned to ride that well, someone takes off the training wheels. Then, you learn how to balance the bike on two wheels. After riding a bicycle for a long time, you may get to drive something bigger, like a scooter or a golf cart. Then, when you turn the right age and you take some classes and have lots of practice, you're trusted to drive a car. Most people usually don't jump straight to driving a car. By the time you do, you've usually proven yourself to be trustworthy to handle a vehicle.

This is similar to how it works with the gifts God gives us. In Jesus' parable, the master represents God and we're the servants. God gives us gifts—time, skills, and money—that we can use for Him. And as Jesus' parable explains, if you do a good job with what God gives you, He will give you more. We can show God that we can be trusted to handle bigger things. When He knows that He can trust us to use what He gives us for His honor, He will trust us with even more.

TALK ABOUT IT:

Who does the master and the servants represent in today's Bible verses?

The master represents God, and the servants represent those who follow God.

What did the master do for the two servants who honored him with what they had been given?

He gave them even more. (Matthew 25:19–23)

What did the master do for the servant who didn't honor him with what he had been given?

The master took what the servant had and gave it to one of the other servants. Then the servant was punished. (Matthew 25:28, 30)

Why do you think the master was so upset with the servant who hid what he had been given?

Answers may vary.

What happens when we do a good job of using what God has given to us?

We will be given even more. (Matthew 25:29)

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, thank You for showing me what it means to live generously. I want to use everything I have to worship You. Amen.

DAY 3

Question of the Day: Does God care about my attitude when I give?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: 2 Corinthians 9:6–7

Imagine that your parents just bought a cool device that you've wanted for a while. Imagine they just threw it on the couch next to you and said, "I didn't really want to get this for you, but I did." How would you feel? Maybe you would feel awkward or hurt. Even if the device they gave you was cool, it wouldn't mean much if it wasn't given to you with the right attitude. Now imagine the same situation just a little different. Instead of them throwing it on the couch and saying they had to give it to you, they took the time to wrap it nicely. Imagine they planned the perfect time to give it to you and they said, "We knew you would love this, and we really want to give it to you." That would make a big difference, right?

The attitude in which we give our time, money, and talents to God is just as important as what we give. Giving with a bad attitude is a sign of a bad relationship with God. Our giving should come out of our love for Him. God wants us to give as part of our worship to Him. He also wants us to give with a cheerful attitude because we want to, not because we have to.

TALK ABOUT IT:

When has someone given something to you with a bad attitude? How did it make you feel?

He is there among us. (Matthew 18:20)

How are we like the farmer in these Bible verses?

The size of the farmer's harvest depended on whether he planted a small or large number of seeds. In the same way, what we receive as a result of our giving depends on if we give a lot or little, too.

What kind of attitude should we not have when using our gifts for God?

Don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. (2 Corinthians 9:7)

What kind of attitude should we have when using our gifts for God?

God loves a person who gives cheerfully. (2 Corinthians 9:7)

Does God care about my attitude when I give?

Answers may vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, I'm sorry for the times I've used the gifts You've given me with the wrong attitude. Help me to always have a heart of worship as I live generously to make You known to everyone. Amen.

DAY 4

Question of the Day: How are others affected when you use your gifts for God?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: 2 Corinthians 9:10–13

The things God has given to you aren't meant for you alone. When you give of your money, your local church can grow, and the kingdom of God can grow around the world. When you give of your time, people will know that you care. You will be sharing the love of Jesus with them. When you give of your talents, you're using the skills and gifts God has given you to help other people see Him. When we give back the things God has given to us, God is glorified and made known.

The Bible helps us to understand that when we live generously, not only will people's needs be met, but also they will thank God and come to know who He is. Living generously with your gifts isn't about you. It's about making Jesus known to others. It's about helping others understand the generous love of God because they've seen His generosity in you.

TALK ABOUT IT:

Who does this passage explain can increase our resources?

"God is the one . . . he will provide and increase your resources." (2 Corinthians 9:10)

What do these verses say is a reason we are given these resources?

"Yes, you will be enriched in every way so that you can always be generous." (2 Corinthians 9:11)

What are some of the things God has gifted you with?

Answers may vary.

What are some ways you think God may want you to be generous with those gifts?

Answers may vary.

How are others affected when you use your gifts for God?

"As a result of your ministry, they will give glory to God." (2 Corinthians 9:13)

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, thank You for all the things You've gifted me with. I want to be obedient to use them in the ways You want me to. I want others can come to know You and worship You with me. Amen.

October 20, 2024

RECOGNIZE SIN: LIVE HOLY

The BIG Answer:

I will leave my sin behind.

Memory Verse Challenge:

Anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person.

The old life is gone: a new life has begun!

- 2 CORINTHIANS 5:17(NLT)

DAY 1

Question of the Day: Why does Jesus want us to be rid of sin in our life?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Mark 11:15–17

In the Bible, the temple was the sacred and holy place where God would be close to His people. The temple was built of the finest materials because God deserved that. In the temple, God wanted everything to remain sacred and treated with honor. Why? God is holy, pure, and without sin, and He wanted His people to know that where they came to worship Him should be pure and clean as well.

We can understand Jesus' anger when He saw that people were using His Father's house as a place to buy and sell. His Father's house was meant to be sacred and honored. Like the temple in the Bible, our heart is a place where God lives. Just like greedy people buying and selling brought "dirt" into God's house, sin is what makes our heart dirty. But when our heart is clean and pure, we can have the kind of home that God deserves. Our heart will be clean and pure when we ask God to forgive us for the wrong things we've done.

TALK ABOUT IT:

What did Jesus say the temple was supposed to be?

A house of prayer for all nations (Mark 11:17)

What does it mean that God is holy?

He is pure, clean, and without sin.

Why was Jesus angry at the people selling doves?

They were using the temple as a marketplace. (Mark 11:16)

How can we make our heart a more clean place for God to live?

By asking God to forgive us for the wrong things we've done. Answers will vary.

Why does Jesus want us to be rid of sin in our life?

Answers will vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, You are holy and righteous. I repent of any sin in my life that is keeping me away from You. I want to be clean and pure in Your sight. Forgive me for the things I've done wrong against You. Thank You for Your forgiveness and help me to live for You. Amen.

DAY 2

Question of the Day: How can we react appropriately to correction?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Mark 11:18–19

The religious leaders had heard about Jesus turning over tables and clearing out the temple. Instead of realizing that Jesus' actions were good, they plotted to kill Jesus. When Jesus ran those selling animals for sacrifices out of the temple, most likely it cut into the money the religious leaders were getting as the ones in charge of the temple. Instead of learning, they responded with anger.

How do you react when the adults in your life correct you? Do you argue and try to explain away what you did? Or do you recognize their authority and humbly accept the loving correction they give you? When we are corrected, we have to ask forgiveness with our words, and we have to mean it in our heart. God's correction makes us clean.

TALK ABOUT IT:

How did the priests and religious teachers react after Jesus cleared the temple?

They plotted to kill Him. (Mark 11:18)

Why do you think they reacted this way?

Answers will vary.

When you are being corrected, how do you respond?

Answers will vary.

Why should we humbly accept correction?

We should be humble so that God can make us clean.

How can we react appropriately to correction?

Answers may vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, search my heart and help me to know when I have sinned against You. I'm sorry for when I've fallen short. Thank You for Your forgiveness. With a humble heart, I accept Your correction and guidance so I can be made clean. Amen.

DAY 3

Question of the Day: What does our new nature look like?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Ephesians 4:21–24

You have probably seen a caterpillar crawling on a leaf. When the time is right, that caterpillar will spin a cocoon around itself. Later, it will transform into a butterfly and emerge as its new self. It won't do the things it used to do anymore. Butterflies don't crawl along the ground, but instead, they have wings to fly. Even its diet changes from leaves to sweet nectar. A new life calls for a new way of living for the butterfly.

The same should be true of us when Jesus enters our life. We stop some of the things that we used to do. We must let the Holy Spirit living in us work in and through us to change the way we do everything—even down to the words we say and the thoughts we think. Sin is left behind, so like a butterfly, we can soar to the new plans and purposes God has for us.

TALK ABOUT IT:

What does a butterfly do differently from a caterpillar?

A butterfly flies and eats different food.

What are some things that are part of a person's life before they have a relationship with Jesus?

Answers will vary.

What causes our life to be completely changed?

Our life is changed when we accept salvation through Jesus and then the Holy Spirit lives in us.

How do you know that the Holy Spirit is renewing your mind and attitude?

Answers may vary.

What does our new nature look like?

Answers may vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, thank You for the change that You have brought to my life. I don't have to live the way that I used to live. Now, I can live joyfully through the help of the Holy Spirit. I ask for the Holy Spirit to renew my mind and heart daily so that I can live faithfully for You. Amen.

DAY 4

Question of the Day: Why should we remove sin to enter God's presence?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Psalm 15

How can we enter the presence of God? He is holy, clean, and pure, so we can't enter into His presence unless we have been washed clean on the inside. The good news is that Jesus has made the way for us to do that. When we repent and ask for forgiveness for the wrong things we've done, He washes us clean. Jesus washes away our sins so we can be with Him.

But that doesn't mean we're perfect going forward. Every day is a challenge to stay away from the sin that keeps us from Jesus. We avoid gossip and other things that don't show love to our neighbors. We stay away from people who encourage us to sin and surround ourselves with people who try to live faithfully and committed to God. When we remove sin from our life and humbly ask God to keep us clean, we can enter His presence. God's presence is the best place to be because it is full of everything He is: love, joy, peace, faith, healing, and hope.

TALK ABOUT IT:

Who may worship in God's sanctuary according to Psalm 15?

Answers will vary. Several answers are listed in the psalm.

How did Jesus make a way for us to be in God's presence?

He died on the Cross, taking our place. He forgives our sins and cleanses us.

What is found in God's presence?

Love, joy, peace, faith, healing, and hope

What are some things you need to remove from your life to get closer to Jesus?

Answers may vary.

Why should we remove sin to enter God's presence?

Answers may vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, thank You for Your forgiveness. Search my heart and help me to live without sin before You. Your presence is where I want to be. Thank You for giving me joy, peace, love, and hope. Help me know what I need to do to be closer to You. Amen.

November 3, 2024

RECOGNIZE SIN: ACCEPT FORGIVENESS

The BIG Answer:

I can accept God's forgiveness.

Memory Verse Challenge:

Anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person.

The old life is gone: a new life has begun!

- 2 CORINTHIANS 5:17(NLT)

DAY 1

Question of the Day: Why should we show mercy to others?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: John 8:1–9

Some religious leaders brought a woman caught sinning to Jesus. The Law said her life could be ended because of what she had done. The leaders came before Jesus to test Him and see what He would say should happen. Instead of responding to the Pharisees' anger and accusation, Jesus stayed mostly silent and wrote in the dirt. After Jesus told the religious leaders that the person who had never sinned should be the first one to throw a stone at her, they all left.

Jesus' way of handling this reminded the Pharisees that they needed to show mercy. What is mercy? Mercy is showing another person forgiveness or compassion when they have done something wrong. Maybe you've seen someone break a rule, and you want them to be punished. But like Jesus, Christians need to see people as more than rule breakers; we need to see them as people who deserve the kind of mercy we have received. Jesus loves others just like He loves us. If His forgiveness has changed us for the better, we should offer that same mercy to others.

TALK ABOUT IT:

What was the punishment for the woman caught in sin?

Her life could be taken by stoning. (John 8:5)

What is the definition of mercy in your own words?

Answers will vary.

Has someone ever shown mercy to you? Explain.

Answers will vary.

Why did all the Pharisees put down their stones and leave?

They couldn't respond to Jesus' challenge. (John 8:7, 9)

Why should we show mercy to others?

We should show mercy to others because God has shown mercy to us.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, I am so thankful for the mercy that You have shown to me. I know I didn't earn it or deserve it. Help me to see others through Your eyes and show them mercy when they do wrong. Help me to see others as children of God created in His image. They are special and important to You, so they should be special and important to me, too. I love You, Jesus. Amen.

DAY 2

Question of the Day: How has God shown us mercy?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: John 8:9–11; Romans 6:23

After her accusers were gone, the woman caught in sin was still there with Jesus. We can imagine that she felt shocked, confused, and probably relieved. But Jesus didn't stop at driving her accusers away. He offered the woman His life-changing mercy. He didn't condemn her either, and He told her to "go and sin no more." Jesus offered her the gift of a new life, one that she now could begin because of His mercy.

Jesus offers this same gift of mercy to us. The Bible says that we all deserve death because of our sin, but God has shown us mercy through Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross. This gift is better than anything we could ever imagine. None of us can earn it by good deeds or our own wisdom. The good news about Jesus is a gift of hope for our salvation and a new life in Him. We get to receive this undeserved forgiveness just by accepting His gift.

TALK ABOUT IT:

What did Jesus tell the woman about her sin?

"Neither do I [condemn you]. Go and sin no more." (John 8:11)

How was the woman shown mercy?

Jesus didn't condemn her.

Have you accepted the gift of salvation? Talk about the mercy God has shown to you.

Answers may vary.

How is mercy like a gift?

None of us can earn it by good deeds or our own wisdom.

How has God shown us mercy?

God sent Jesus to die so we could receive salvation.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, what a wonderful gift I have through Jesus, Your Son. Thank You for the sacrifice He made on the Cross. Thank You for Your mercy and grace. Help me to live in the mercy that You have given me and to also give that mercy to others. Amen.

DAY 3

Question of the Day: What can you do to remind yourself of Jesus' mercy every day?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Lamentations 3:22–24

What are your thoughts when you start a new day? When we imagine the morning, we probably think of birds chirping, the sun creeping up, and throwing back warm covers. In those moments, we should remind ourselves of this important truth: God has given us mercy, and we can live in thankfulness. The Bible says that God's mercies are new every morning. This means that we can begin our day with hope and gratitude.

As we begin each day, let's remind ourselves that God has been merciful to us. Some days, this can be difficult if we are late for school, forget a homework assignment, or if there is a thunderstorm on our big game day. The kind of day we are having doesn't matter. When we wake up and say, "God, thank You for Your mercy on my life," we remember the gift Jesus gave us. Starting the day with gratitude makes it harder for unkind thoughts, bad attitudes, and sin to creep into our day.

TALK ABOUT IT:

When are God's mercies new?

Every morning (Lamentations 3:23)

How do you normally begin your day?

Answers may vary.

Why is it important to remember God's mercy at the beginning of the day?

Starting the day with gratitude makes it harder for unkind thoughts, bad attitudes, and sin to creep into our day.

In what ways has God shown you mercy?

Answers may vary.

What can you do to remind yourself of Jesus' mercy every day?

Answers may vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, thank You for Your mercy that begins new every morning. Help me to start each day by praising You. Please help my heart be filled with the hope of Your Word, and let that guide me through everything I say and do throughout the day. You are the God who gives the best gifts. May I always be grateful for the mercy that You have given me! Amen.

DAY 4

Question of the Day: Why does the Father give us such undeserved mercy?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Luke 15:11–32

In the Book of Luke, we read one of Jesus' most famous stories, or parables. The Parable of the Lost Son is the story of a son who asked for his inheritance from his father early and wasted it. The son lived such a wild life that when he ran out of money, he even considered eating pig's food when he was hungry. He decided to go back home, but he didn't think his father would accept him. But when his father saw him coming, he ran to his son, hugged him tightly, and threw him a banquet.

This story is a picture of God's mercy to us. When we ask Jesus to be the Lord of our life, we will receive His mercy. Even when we make bad choices, God is waiting for us to turn back to Him. When we turn away from our sin and toward God, He rejoices and celebrates. Why does He do this? Because God loves us so much!

THINK ABOUT IT:

What did the father do when the son returned home?

He ran to him, hugged him, kissed him, and threw him a banquet. (Luke 15:20, 23)

Why do you think the son went his own way?

Answers will vary.

How do we "go back home" to God?

We turn away from what we have done that is wrong and go to God for forgiveness.

Have you ever felt that God wouldn't forgive you for something? Explain.

Answers may vary.

Why does the Father give us such undeserved mercy?

God gives us mercy because He loves us.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Father, Your mercy is so amazing and great. I don't deserve it, and I will never earn it. I never want to waste the mercy that You have given me. Help me to always return home if I wander away. Forgive me when I have sinned and run away from You. I accept Your gift of forgiveness and mercy. I love You. Amen.

November 10, 2024

RECOGNIZE SIN: SHOW FORGIVENESS

The BIG Answer:

I can forgive others.

Memory Verse Challenge:

Anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person.

The old life is gone: a new life has begun!

- 2 CORINTHIANS 5:17(NLT)

DAY 1

Question of the Day: How much should we forgive others?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Matthew 18:21–22

Peter asked Jesus to give him the limit on how many times he had to forgive someone. Peter thought seven times was a good number. But Jesus made the point that we should keep on forgiving when He said we should forgive seventy times more than Peter said. It doesn't matter how many times someone needs forgiveness from us. When we are forgiven by God, He expects us to do the same and keep on forgiving others.

There should be no limit on our forgiveness because Jesus has no limit of forgiveness with us. He generously forgives our sins, and we should show that same generosity to others. When others sin against us, let's follow these steps. We should think about how God has forgiven us, ask God for help, and then forgive. Forgiving others frees both us and them.

TALK ABOUT IT:

How many times did Peter think we should forgive the sins of others?

Seven times (Matthew 18:21)

What was Jesus' point in saying to forgive seventy times seven?

We should keep on forgiving.

Do you think that you should forgive someone without them saying sorry first? Explain.

Answers may vary.

What are steps we can take when others sin against us?

We should think about how God has forgiven us, ask God for help, and then forgive.

How many times should we forgive others?

There is no set amount. We must keep on forgiving.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, I am so grateful that You have generously forgiven me for everything that I have done wrong. When others wrong me, help me to pause and remember all the times You have forgiven me. Let me to remember how much You love the person who sinned against me. I pray that I can always walk in the freedom of forgiveness. Amen.

DAY 2

Question of the Day: Why should we forgive others?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Matthew 18:23–35

In this story, a servant owed the king millions of dollars. The man begged for forgiveness for the debt he couldn't pay back, and the king showed him mercy by forgiving his debt. The servant must have felt so relieved as he left the king. But then, he remembered that another servant owed him a much smaller amount of money. He should have forgiven that debt, but he didn't, and he tried to make that servant pay him. The king heard about the terrible actions of the ungrateful servant and had him thrown in prison until he repaid his debt.

This parable shows us what happens when a person refuses to forgive others. Sadly, people hurt other people. You can probably think of a time when you were hurt by someone else, whether on purpose or by accident. It can be hard to forgive, and sometimes we may think we don't have to. Jesus died on the Cross so our debt could be paid. Because of His gift of forgiveness to us, we should forgive others.

TALK ABOUT IT:

How much money did the servant owe the king?

Millions of dollars (Matthew 18:24)

How much did the other servant owe the man?

A few thousand dollars (Matthew 18:28)

How would you feel if you were forgiven of such a huge debt?

Answers will vary.

Why do you think the man didn't forgive his fellow servant?

Answers may vary.

Why should we forgive others?

Because of Jesus' gift of forgiveness to us, we should forgive others.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, thank You for forgiving me for all my sins. I don't deserve it or earn it, but still, You give this gift to me. You are such a good God. Help me to remember this so that I can freely and joyfully forgive others. Amen.

DAY 3

Question of the Day: How should we react when someone wrongs us?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Genesis 50:14–21

Joseph had experienced many wrongs against him. His jealous brothers sold him into slavery, he was wrongly accused, and he was thrown in prison. He could have been angry and bitter, even after God made him second-in-command over all of Egypt. Instead, Joseph generously provided for his brothers and their families, even after their father, Jacob, died. Joseph knew that God used those terrible times to save his family, so he could forgive the terrible things his brothers had done.

The way Joseph's brothers treated him was terrible, but Joseph was able to forgive them. How was he able to do that? Joseph continued to love God and others even when he was a slave, in prison, and in a place of power. He knew that God's plan and purpose worked through his brothers—even when they sinned against him. Maybe our forgiveness to others when they hurt us will be the very thing that helps them see Jesus.

TALK ABOUT IT:

What did Joseph say to his brothers who were afraid of what he might do to them?

"Don't be afraid. I will continue to take care of you and your children." (Genesis 50:21)

How would you feel if you had to go through what Joseph went through?

Answers will vary.

Why do you think Joseph was able to forgive his brothers?

Answers may vary.

How can our forgiveness be a witness to others?

Answers may vary.

How should we react when someone wrongs us?

We should forgive them.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, thank You for carrying us through every hard time. I pray that I can be like Joseph and offer forgiveness to others. Help me to see You working in every situation—good or bad. Thank You that we can offer forgiveness and mercy to others, just like You have done with us. I love You, Jesus. Amen.

DAY 4

Question of the Day: What does being one of God's "holy people" look like?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Colossians 3:12–15

How should we live as people God has made holy? These verses from the Book of Colossians answer that question. Because God has made us holy, we need to live differently from those who don't live for God. We also need to forgive others and be understanding and kind when they mess up. When Christians act this way, people want to know why they act like this and be part of it. What a great way to show Jesus' love to the world!

We live in a world where it seems like people are constantly angry at each other. It's easy to see the sin in other people. But, when we are one of God's "holy people," as it says in Colossians, we live differently from the world. Instead of getting mad at others, we are patient and gentle, and our words are kind. Christians should be humble, remembering that God's mercy has saved us. Forgiveness is what sets us apart as believers and helps the world see the incredible love of Jesus.

TALK ABOUT IT:

What do the verses we read say we should "clothe" ourself with?

Tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, and love (Colossians 3:12, 14)

How do you know someone is a follower of Jesus?

Answers will vary.

Why do you think people like to point out each other's faults?

Answers will vary.

What does it mean to "make allowance for each other's faults"?

Answers may vary.

What does being one of God's "holy people" look like?

It looks like living differently from those who don't live for God.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, You have chosen us to live set apart for You. Help us to show Your love to others by living differently from the rest of the world. Help us to be forgiving and loving to others. The world needs to know You. Thank You for teaching us to live for You in kindness, mercy, and forgiveness. Amen.

November 17, 2024

RECOGNIZE SIN: ACKNOWLEDGE BROKENNESS

The BIG Answer:

I can trust God's plan.

Memory Verse Challenge:

Anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person.

The old life is gone: a new life has begun!

- 2 CORINTHIANS 5:17(NLT)

DAY 1

Question of the Day: Why should we show mercy to the sick and broken?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: John 9:1–12

A man who had been blind his entire life survived by begging people for help. Jesus' disciples wanted to understand the reason something like that might happen. They assumed it was his parent's sin or his sin. Jesus quickly moved the conversation to the truth. The man would bring glory to God because Jesus would heal him. Mercy was what the man needed, and Jesus gave it to him.

Jesus showed him mercy by healing him. Mercy and healing were the things that changed this man's life forever. When you see someone sick or hurting, pray at that moment instead of passing them by or wondering what is wrong with them. Maybe God will lead you to be part of meeting their need. Showing mercy can change their life and help them see Jesus.

TALK ABOUT IT:

What did the man have that needed to be healed?

Blindness (John 9:1)

What did the disciples first ask Jesus when they saw the man?

"Why was this man born blind?" (John 9:2)

What did the man do after Jesus gave him instructions?

He obeyed Jesus. (John 9:7)

How can we show mercy to those who are sick and broken?

Answers will vary.

Why should we show mercy to the sick and broken?

Showing them mercy will change their life and help them see Jesus.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, thank You for showing us Your amazing mercy. When I see those who are sick and broken, help me to be reminded to pray for them. Help me to show them mercy just as You have shown me mercy. I pray Your love will transform their lives, and they will show Your glory to everyone. Amen.

DAY 2

Question of the Day: Why should we show mercy when it doesn't make sense?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: John 9:13–23

Sometimes, it's not easy to understand God's plan. We often think He should heal in a certain way or restore broken lives in a way that makes sense to us. The Pharisees certainly felt this way. According to them and what they understood from the law of Moses, Jesus shouldn't have healed this man on the Sabbath. They couldn't figure out this simple act of mercy that Jesus had shown the man, so they couldn't rejoice in the man's healing.

God's offer to people is mercy. But, mercy is sometimes difficult for us to understand because we look at everything through our understanding. We look to see if someone deserves mercy before we give it, or we blame someone's brokenness on their choices. God gives mercy as a gift when we ask. Our world is full of people who need compassion. Even when it doesn't make sense to others, we should show mercy just like Jesus did.

TALK ABOUT IT:

To what young pastor did Paul write two letters which are books of the Bible?

Timothy

Why did the Pharisees think Jesus wasn't from God?

He healed on the Sabbath. (John 9:16)

Why do you think that the Pharisees were so confused?

Answers will vary.

Why do you think God has mercy for our brokenness?

Answers will vary.

What are some ways we can show compassion to others?

Answers will vary.

Why should we show mercy when it doesn't make sense?

We should see others like Jesus sees them and give the gift of mercy.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Father, You are a kind and merciful God who heals and loves us. I don't deserve all that You give me. Thank You for Your mercy toward me. Help me always to show mercy and compassion to others. Even when it doesn't make sense to others, help me show the same grace and mercy You have shown to me. Amen.

DAY 3

Question of the Day: What can Jesus healing our brokenness lead to?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: John 9:24–34

The man declared, “I was blind, and now I can see!” His healing was the reason for his rejoicing and powerful testimony. Jesus specializes in fixing broken lives. The man confirmed his condition of blindness to the Pharisees. Now that Jesus had healed him, he could celebrate. He was blind, but now he could see. That was still his story, even the second time the Pharisees questioned him.

We can have a similar testimony to the world as Jesus brings healing to our life. When things get hurt in our life, it's an opportunity for Jesus to heal and for us to tell others about it. We know that when we ask for Jesus' mercy, He always hears us and knows what is best. Jesus' healing of our brokenness can lead others to Him as people see our fixed life and heart. His work in us is our testimony of what Jesus can do.

TALK ABOUT IT:

Because of Jesus, what could the man now do?

See (John 9:25)

What does brokenness look like in people's lives?

Answers will vary.

Where did the man who was blind believe Jesus was from?

He was sent from God. (John 9:33)

What did the Pharisees do to the man who was blind after he told them the truth about Jesus?

They threw him out of their synagogue. (John 9:34)

What can Jesus healing of our brokenness lead to?

Other people believing in Jesus

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, I thank You even for the broken things in my life. I pray that You can use them to create an amazing testimony. I know that everything in my life can help others come to You when I let You fix my brokenness. I celebrate already because of what You are going to do to heal and restore me and those I love. Thank You, Jesus. Amen.

DAY 4

Question of the Day: How can we see Jesus' work in our life?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: John 9:35–41

The man born blind was once again face-to-face with Jesus. Before this, he had already given a powerful witness of the Jesus he knew to the Pharisees. It seems as though God had given him spiritual eyes to recognize who Jesus was and the impact of what He had done. The man had faith in Jesus as his Healer, and that gave him the boldness to stand up for Jesus.

Faith can give us spiritual eyes to see Jesus as well. When we trust what God has done for us, we can boldly proclaim it wherever we go. Even though we haven't been able to be face-to-face with Jesus like the man, we can see His work in our life. Through faith, we tell others about His mercy so they can see Jesus too. By trusting Jesus like the man born blind, we can also see His work and great plan unfolding in our life and lead others to Him.

TALK ABOUT IT:

What did Jesus do when He heard about the way the Pharisees questioned the man and threw him out of the synagogue?

He went to the man and talked with him. (John 9:35).

What did the man do when Jesus told him who He was?

He worshipped and believed in Jesus. (John 9:38)

How have you seen Jesus work in your life?

Answers will vary.

How have you helped others to see Jesus?

Answers will vary.

How does God use Scripture? How can we see Jesus' work in our life?

By trusting Him

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Jesus, I believe in You. Even though I haven't seen You with my own eyes, I have seen all You have done in me through faith. Help me to always share the great works You have done with others so that they can see You too. I can't wait for the day that I get to see You face-to-face and worship You. Amen.

December 1, 2024

BETTER TOGETHER: PRAY TOGETHER

The BIG Answer:

Our prayers are powerful.

Memory Verse Challenge:

Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit,
binding yourselves together with peace.

- EPHESIANS 4:3 (NLT)

DAY 1

Question of the Day: Why is it important for us to pray together for other people?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Acts 12:1–5

King Herod was finding and hurting Christians. He had Jesus' disciple James killed. Then he had Peter arrested and several guards to watch him in prison. Herod was determined to keep Peter from escaping from prison. Peter was in prison even though he had done nothing wrong. But Peter served a great God, and he had a group of believers praying for him.

When the people of God, the Church, join together and pray, God can do miracles. Our prayers can make a difference for our friends, families, or even people we don't know who may be going through hard times. Even though there were soldiers guarding Peter, they were no match for the power of God. When we pray to God and pray with others together in unity with faith, amazing things can happen.

TALK ABOUT IT:

How many soldiers did King Herod assign to guard Peter?

Four squads of four soldiers each, which adds to sixteen soldiers were assigned to guard Peter. (Acts 12:4)

Where was Peter while the other believers were praying for him?

He was in prison. (Acts 12:5)

How was the church praying for Peter?

They "prayed very earnestly for him." (Acts 12:5)

Why did the church pray for Peter while he was in prison?

Answers will vary.

Why is it important for us to pray together for other people?

When we ask God and pray with other believers together in unity with faith, amazing things can happen.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, thank You that we can come to You with anything we need. Help us not to forget to pray for those who are going through difficult times. We ask that You would help them and do miracles in their lives. Amen.

DAY 2

Question of the Day: Should Christians pray together and trust God even in the worst situations?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Acts 12:6–16

Can you imagine what Peter must have been thinking when he realized he was free from prison? People were praying for him, and God chose to help Peter in a way that he probably never imagined. He had been chained to guards and the chains fell off his wrists. The angel even reminded Peter to put on his coat as he was walking out of the prison cell, past the guards, and past the iron gate that opened by itself.

Other followers of Jesus had been praying and believing that God would help Peter. But even they were surprised when God answered in a way that they may not have imagined. God is greater than we will ever be able to understand, and He helps us in ways that are far beyond what we could even dream about. When we pray together, we can trust that the God of the universe will move in supernatural ways because that's what He does. He is the God who hears our prayers and answers us.

TALK ABOUT IT:

What are some things that happened to Peter in this story that only God could have done?"

God sent an angel to him in prison. (Acts 12:7) The chains fell off Peter's wrists. (Acts 12:7) Peter was able to pass by both sets of guards, and the iron gate leading to the city opened by itself. (Acts 12:10)

Where was the first place Peter went after the miracle happened?

He went to Mary's house where people had been praying for him. (Acts 12:12)

When was a time that someone prayed with you for God to help you and He did?

Answers will vary.

Why is it sometimes hard to believe God for big things when we pray?

Answers will vary.

Should Christians pray together and trust God even in the worst situations?

Yes. God can hear and answer our prayers for help like He helped Peter.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, thank You that You work in amazing ways. Help us to grow together as the Church, trust You for big things, and believe that You will answer. Amen.

DAY 3

Question of the Day: How can praying together help us?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Matthew 18:19–20

A dogsled team is a group of dogs that pulls a sled across the snow. Their harnesses help them stay unified and running in the same direction as a team. Imagine how difficult it would be to pull a heavy sled if the dogs were running in different directions. But when they run together as a team, they are better than if they tried to do it alone.

That's kind of like when we pray together with other Christians. Praying together shows that we are unified and part of the same team. We believe together for God to answer our prayers. Praying together can benefit us in many ways. It can encourage us and build our faith. When we share our needs with other believers and we listen to the needs of others, we can grow closer because we are praying in unity.

TALK ABOUT IT:

What does verse 19 say we should do when we pray to God with others?

Agree (Matthew 18:19)

What happens when two or three people gather together as Jesus' followers and pray?

The Bible says that Jesus is "there among them." (Matthew 18:20)

Who are some people that you can pray with?

Answers will vary.

How can you make praying together with other believers a regular part of your life?

Answers will vary.

How can praying together help us?

It can encourage us, build our faith, give us opportunities to share our needs, and help us grow closer to other Christians.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, thank You for placing other believers in my life who can encourage me and help my faith grow. Help us to make a regular habit of praying with each other so that we can be unified. Amen.

DAY 4

Question of the Day: Is praying with other believers important?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Acts 2:42–44

The Early Church understood the power of praying together. Several times in the New Testament, we read about the believers who gathered in one place to share meals, fellowship, and pray together. They devoted themselves to these things. That means that they were committed to doing it because it was important to them. They were also like a family, and they cared for each other like a family. Praying together was a normal part of their life. As they spent time with God in prayer, they saw Him answer their prayers in amazing ways. They were able to celebrate those answers together.

When we pray with other believers, we should pray for them with concern in our heart—like they are our own family. We can help each other believe God for big and amazing things. Our prayers are powerful when we agree together to pray for what we believe God wants for us. Just like these Christians almost two thousand years ago, we should pray together.

TALK ABOUT IT:

According to today's Scripture, what did the believers devote themselves to?

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, fellowship, sharing meals including Communion, and prayer.
(Acts 2:42)

What does it mean that they were devoted to praying?

It means that they were committed to praying because it was important to them.

Why do you think it was good for them to pray in one place together?

Answers will vary.

What do you think happens in a Christian's life when they don't spend time praying together with other believers?

Answers will vary.

Is praying with other believers important?

Yes. Like the Early Church, we should be devoted to praying with other Christians.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, help me to make it a priority to be together and pray with other believers. I believe that You can and will do miracles when we devote ourselves to praying together. Amen.

December 8, 2024

BETTER TOGETHER: STUDY TOGETHER

The BIG Answer:

We can learn and grow together.

Memory Verse Challenge:

Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit,
binding yourselves together with peace.

- EPHESIANS 4:3 (NLT)

DAY 1

Question of the Day: What happens when we study the Scriptures together?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Acts 17:10–15

Have you ever played a game of Telephone? The game begins when someone whispers a sentence to someone else. That person passes on what they heard to the next person and so on. Usually by the end of the game, no one knows what the first sentence was because it was repeated so many times.

To know the truth, you would need to ask the source of the message, the first person. The people of Berea in today's Scripture heard the message that Paul passed to them. Rather than just accepting it, they went to the Source—God's Word—to see if what Paul told them was right.

The Bereans read the Scriptures to find the truth and test what they heard. If Christians today want to grow in their faith, like the Bereans, they should study the Scriptures together so that they can also know the truth. If we study the Scriptures together, we can become a community of friends who learns and grows together in the things of God.

TALK ABOUT IT:

Why were the five bridesmaids foolish? How did the Bereans respond to Paul's message?

They listened eagerly to what he was saying. (Acts 17:11)

How often did the Bereans study the Scriptures to test Paul's message?

They searched the Scriptures day after day. (Acts 17:11)

What would happen if you simply believed everything you heard and never studied God's Word for yourself to see if what you had heard was true?

Answers may vary.

How can studying God's Word together help our faith grow stronger?

We can become a community of friends who grows together in the things of God.

What happens when we study the Scriptures together?

We learn and grow together in the things of God.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, help us to want to study Your Word every day. As we spend time together growing in our relationship with You, help us to grow in our friendship with each other too. Amen.

DAY 2

Question of the Day: Does having other Christians in our life help?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Ecclesiastes 4:9–12

Have you ever had a hard fall? If you have, you know it can be painful. Having someone to help you makes it easier to get back up. Have you ever sat close to a friend after playing outside in the snow? You know that being in the cold by yourself isn't very warm. Being in a pair, a group of two people, makes life so much easier.

When we surround ourselves with other believers who are serving Jesus, praying, and spending time studying God's Word, it's harder to fall away from following Jesus. Studying God's Word with other people will make our relationship with God stronger. We can help each other understand parts of God's Word that He's explained to us. And we can stand together against Satan, our enemy.

TALK ABOUT IT:

Why does today's Bible reading say that two people are better off than one?

Because they can help each other succeed (Ecclesiastes 4:9)

What do the verses you read say can happen to someone who is trying to stand alone?

A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated. (Ecclesiastes 4:12)

When was a time that you tried to face something alone when you should have asked for help?

Answers will vary.

What are some things you can do to encourage other Christians in their relationship with God?

Answers may vary.

Does having other Christians in our life help? How?

Yes. Answers will vary to the second question.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, help me to surround myself with other people who are following You. Help us to grow in our faith as we seek You together. Amen.

DAY 3

Question of the Day: Why is it important for us to study God's Word with other believers?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Hebrews 10:23–25

Have you ever noticed sports players on the sidelines responding to a big play in a game? They don't just sit back and ignore what's going on. Normally, they're excited and yelling at their teammates to encourage them. Why? Because they're a team. They practice together, sweat together, work out together, study the plays together, and cheer each other on. They do it all for that "big play" moment on the field.

God wants this for His children. We, the Church, are a team. When we study God's Word together with other believers, we help to motivate each other and encourage each other in our relationship with God. We can help each other be strong in both the good times and the bad times. We can help push each other not to give up, especially when we may feel discouraged.

TALK ABOUT IT:

What does today's Scripture say is something we should think of?

We should think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. (Hebrews 10:24)

How does meeting together with other believers help us grow?

It helps us encourage one another in our relationship with God. (Hebrews 10:25)

How is meeting together and studying God's Word together like a team getting ready for a big game?

Answers may vary.

What are some ways you could be together with other Christians and help encourage them in God's Word?

Answers will vary.

Why is it important for us to study God's Word with other believers?

When we study God's Word together with other believers, we can help to motivate each other and encourage each other in our relationship with God.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, thank You for Your promises that can be trusted. Help me to be the kind of person who can motivate and encourage others in following You. Amen.

DAY 4

Question of the Day: How does studying and applying Scripture with others help me?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Romans 15:1–6

In a brick wall, there is a type of cement that is used, kind of like a glue, that helps to hold the bricks together. The bricks may be very strong, but the whole wall can only be strong if that cement holds the bricks together. This is a little like the way Scripture can work in our life. As we study Scripture together, it can hold us together. It helps us to be strong in the Lord, and it also helps us to have a strong relationship with those we study with.

The Scripture verses today talk about how important it is to encourage each other and build each other up in learning God's ways. The Scriptures give us hope and encouragement as we wait for God's promises to happen. When we study God's Word together and apply it in our everyday life, we can be stronger together and bring glory to God in the way that we live.

TALK ABOUT IT:

According to today's Scripture reading, what are the Scriptures meant to do in our life?

The Scriptures are meant to teach us and give us hope and encouragement. (Romans 15:4)

What do these verses say we should help other believers do?

We should help them do what is right. (Romans 15:2)

Who are some people in your life that can build you up in the Lord?

Answers will vary.

Why do you think it's important for believers to be unified and strong in the Lord together?

Answers will vary.

How does studying and applying Scripture with others help?

It allows us to grow stronger together and bring glory to God through how we live. There may be additional answers.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, thank You for the people You have placed in my life who help to build me up in Your Word. Help us to be strong together and serve You with all we do. Amen.

December 15, 2024

BETTER TOGETHER: OVERCOME DIFFERENCES

The BIG Answer:

We can solve disagreements with God's help.

Memory Verse Challenge:

**Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit,
binding yourselves together with peace.**

- EPHESIANS 4:3 (NLT)

DAY 1

Question of the Day: If Jesus asked if you believe in Him, what would you say?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Acts 15:1–11

Did you know that people don't always agree with each other all the time? It's true. Think of the last time your family was trying to decide what movie to watch or game to play. Your family members probably had different ideas. You probably had to talk it out, give reasons for why you thought what you did, and then, make a final choice. Sometimes a grown-up helps to decide how things should be.

This is like what happened in today's Scripture reading, but it was about something much more serious than what game to play. There was a disagreement about what needed to happen for a person to be saved and become part of God's family. So, after some long conversations, the church saw that they needed to talk about it with the leaders—the apostles and elders. God used those leaders to speak wisdom about a tough disagreement. When we don't know how to solve a problem with another believer, we can do the same thing. We can ask for God's wisdom, and we can trust godly leaders to help us.

TALK ABOUT IT:

What happened between the men from Judea and Paul and Barnabas?

They had a disagreement and started arguing. (Acts 15:1–2)

When they couldn't come to an agreement, what did the church in Antioch do?

They sent Paul and Barnabas to talk to the apostles and elders in Jerusalem about the question. (Acts 15:2)

When have you had a disagreement with someone, and how did you handle it?

Answers will vary.

Why is it sometimes hard to solve a disagreement?

Answers will vary.

Who can we go to for help when we have a disagreement?

We can ask for God's wisdom, and we can trust godly leaders to help us.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, thank You that You generously give wisdom to those who ask. Help us to look to You when we disagree with other people who also love You. Amen.

DAY 2

Question of the Day: What are some things to remember when we have disagreements with other believers?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Acts 15:12–20

Maybe you know this from your own life, but imagine how hard it would be to make a family decision if everyone was talking at the same time. Nothing would actually be decided, right? In today's Scripture, the Jerusalem council of leaders listened quietly as Paul and Barnabas explained all the things they had seen God do and why they believed what they believed. Then others took their turn to talk. Everyone wanted the same thing—to do things the way God wanted them to and find the truth. That's a good guide for us to remember when we disagree with other Christians.

All of us are growing in our relationship with God. As followers of Jesus, we should all want to see God's plans happen. If we give others the opportunity to talk when we disagree, it will help us understand their point of view and allow us to come to a solution that honors God together. After all, no one is perfect, and we are trying to live for God.

TALK ABOUT IT:

What was everyone doing while Barnabas and Paul shared about what God was doing?

Everyone listened quietly. (Acts 15:12)

How did the Early Church come to a solution?

They listened to James, a godly leader, whom God used to help them come to a decision on what should be done. (Acts 15:13–20)

Why should we give others the opportunity to talk when we have differences that lead to disagreements?

It will help us understand their point of view and allow us to come up with a solution together that honors God.

How do you think God wants us to treat other believers when we don't agree on something? Why?

Answers may vary.

What are some things to remember when we have disagreements with other believers?

We can remember to do things the way God wants us to and to find the truth. Other answers may vary.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, even when there are disagreements in the church, help us to treat each other with grace and respect. We ask for Your help and wisdom in helping us know what You want us to do. Amen.

DAY 3

Question of the Day: How should we respond to spiritual leaders?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Hebrews 13:17–21

In our world, there are all kinds of authority figures. In your home, there are parents and guardians who are there to help you grow and do the right thing. In school, there is a teacher who makes sure you are taught the things you need to know while you are in their classroom. A judge is an authority figure whose job is to help settle legal disputes.

God has given authority to pastors and leaders to help your church grow in His way and function the way that He wants. These leaders are responsible to God for leading the church in peace and making difficult decisions when there are big disagreements. When there is something difficult happening in the church, we can look to God for wisdom. We can trust our leaders to help us come to a solution.

TALK ABOUT IT:

What do today's Bible verses say is the work of spiritual leaders?

To watch over us (Hebrews 13:17)

Who are some of the people in your life that are authority figures?

Answers will vary.

Why do you think God has placed authority figures in your life?

Answers will vary.

Why has God given leaders to each church?

God has given authority to pastors and leaders to help your church grow in His way and function the way that He wants.

How should we respond to spiritual leaders?

We should follow their leading and make leading a joy for them. (Hebrews 13:17)

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, thank You for the godly leaders in our church. We ask You to give them wisdom to lead us the way that You want. Amen.

DAY 4

Question of the Day: How should we react when another Christian is at fault or offends us?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Colossians 3:5–15

When we face problems, it can be easy to become frustrated and angry when we can't find the answer we're looking for. Maybe you've tried to build something, and the pieces didn't fit right, so you threw it down and it broke. Or maybe you said unkind words in an argument. In these times, our sinful nature likes to creep up. Sometimes, we do things that don't show the love of God. Because we are human, these things can happen in the church when there are big disagreements.

Our Scripture today can help us keep our thinking right when we face those tough challenges, especially in the church. Because we know that God's plan matters most, we should want to treat each other the way He wants us to. We need to be sure that we are patient with each other, forgiving each other, and making allowances for each other's faults. Even when we have big disagreements, we can trust God to help us, and we can make every effort to work together for a solution in peace.

TALK ABOUT IT:

What do today's Scriptures say matters more than our ethnicity and background?

Jesus Christ (Colossians 3:11)

What are some things today's Scripture says we should clothe ourselves in?

Tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience (Colossians 3:12)

Why is it sometimes easy for us to lose our patience in the middle of a disagreement?

Answers will vary.

What does it look like to treat others with kindness and respect in the middle of disagreements?

Answers will vary.

How should we react when another Christian is at fault or offends us?

We should make allowances and forgive. (Colossians 3:13)

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, thank You that even in the middle of difficult disagreements, You are here to help us. Help us to love each other and treat each other the way You want us to as we work to find a solution that honors You. Amen.

December 29, 2024

BETTER TOGETHER: WELCOME OTHERS

The BIG Answer:

We can help new Christians.

Memory Verse Challenge:

**Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit,
binding yourselves together with peace.**

- EPHESIANS 4:3 (NLT)

DAY 1

Question of the Day: How should we respond to the salvation of new Christians?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Acts 9:19–25

Imagine that it's your birthday. When you wake up, you're excited for the fun day ahead. You're ready to celebrate and let everyone know how pumped you are that it's your birthday. But imagine that your friends don't want to celebrate with you, and they don't come to your birthday party. That would make you feel really upset, and you might feel like a popped balloon.

Saul had felt the incredible power of Jesus to save and rescue. His entire life had been changed. He was a new man, and it was something that should have been celebrated. Some people were amazed, but others wanted to kill him. Saul knew how God had changed him, and he was going to share it with everyone he could. A new life in Christ is something that should be celebrated, just like a birthday. That's why it's so important for Christians to come around new believers and celebrate what God has done in their life.

TALK ABOUT IT:

How did people respond to hearing Saul preach that Jesus was the Son of God?

They were amazed. (Acts 9:21)

Before Saul chose to follow Christ, what had he planned to do in Damascus?

He had gone to arrest Christians and take them in chains to the leading priests. (Acts 9:21)

How do you think God feels about new believers coming to believe in Him? Why?

Answers will vary.

How should we feel about new believers when we think about God's feelings for them?

Answers will vary.

How should we respond to the salvation of new Christians?

We should celebrate it.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, thank You for moving in hearts and drawing people to You. Help me to welcome new Christians into the family of God and celebrate with them because of the things You've done in their life. Amen.

DAY 2

Question of the Day: How can we be like Barnabas?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Acts 9:26–31zz

Have you ever heard the phrase, “Don’t judge a book by its cover”? These words mean that you can’t always tell what’s on the inside based on what you can see on the outside. This is a little like what some Christians in Jerusalem were doing to Saul. They were judging him because of his actions that they had seen in the past rather than the inside change that Jesus had made. But Saul was a changed man, and he needed the support of other believers so he could stay alive and tell others about Jesus.

Sometimes, Christians have trouble looking past how someone used to live before they came to Jesus. Instead of bringing the new believers close to encourage them in their new faith, they are pushed away by other Christians. Saul needed Barnabas to stand up for him, to celebrate what God had done in his life and be a friend who helped Saul become part of the community of faith. God wants us to be like Barnabas in this way and make sure that every new believer feels welcome in the family of God.

TALK ABOUT IT:

How did the believers in Jerusalem treat Saul when he first arrived there?

They were afraid of him and wouldn’t meet with him. (Acts 9:26)

How did Barnabas help Saul in this story?

Barnabas brought Saul to the apostles, told them what God had done in Saul’s life, and helped him get connected with other Christians. (Acts 9:27)

Have you ever judged someone before you knew their whole story? Why or why not?

Answers will vary.

Why do you think God wants us to help new believers?

Answers will vary.

How can we be like Barnabas?

We can make sure that every new believer feels welcome in the family of God.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, thank You for the way that You can completely change someone’s life. Help me to be like Barnabas and help new believers feel welcome in Your family. Amen.

DAY 3

Question of the Day: Why should we help new Christians grow in their faith?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Matthew 28:19–20

A person can't choose to be a firefighter and be ready right away to start fighting large house fires. And someone doesn't decide to be a surgeon and start working in the operating room right away. These people start out with the basics. They grow in their training by studying and learning from others who know more than they do. As they learn and grow, they develop their skills and learn more about how to do their jobs.

When Jesus commanded the disciples to go into all the world, He said to go and make disciples. Disciples are followers of Jesus. Jesus wants His followers to spend time with new believers, showing them the ropes and helping them when they have questions. He wants His followers to teach God's Word and show others what it means to live for Jesus. This command that He gave to His disciples long ago continues today. Jesus wants us to help new believers grow in following God.

TALK ABOUT IT:

What command did Jesus give His disciples in today's Scripture?

He said, "Go and make disciples of all the nations." (Matthew 28:19)

What did Jesus want new disciples to be taught?

All the commands that Jesus had given His disciples (Matthew 28:20)

What are some ways we can show new Christians what it means to follow Jesus?

Answers will vary.

What could happen to a new Christian who has to figure out following Jesus on their own?

Answers will vary.

Why should we help new Christians grow in their faith?

We should do this because Jesus wants us to.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, help us to be active in helping new people not only come to You, but also learn how to follow You. Amen.

DAY 4

Question of the Day: How should Jesus' example affect how we treat new Christians?

READ ABOUT IT:

Read: Philippians 2:1–5

If you walked into most schools at lunch, you would probably see kids sitting together in different groups. There might be groups who like to study, play a sport, play video games, or play musical instruments. But sometimes, there might be kids who feel like they don't fit in, and they sit alone. Imagine being the new kid in school at lunch. Sounds pretty lonely, right?

When people choose to follow Jesus for the first time, their whole life changes. Jesus may show them things that they need to change—including the people they hang out with. This can make these new Christians feel very lonely. As followers of Jesus, God wants us to make sure that we are looking out for people who are new to serving Jesus. We can get so busy doing what interests us that we don't make time to help others. Instead, He wants us to invite them to our activities and be friends with them. This will help them feel safe in the family of God and grow in their relationship with Him. Jesus welcomed us into His family, and we should follow His lead by accepting new believers as well.

TALK ABOUT IT:

How did our Scripture today describe how our hearts should be?

Tender and compassionate (Philippians 2:1)

What kind of attitude does today's Scripture say we should have?

We should have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. (Philippians 2:5)

When was a time that you felt excluded from a group, and how did it make you feel?

Answers will vary.

Why is it important for us to make sure we include new Christians?

This will help them feel safe in the family of God and grow in their relationship with Him.

How should Jesus' example affect how we treat new Christians?

Jesus welcomed us into His family and we should follow His example by accepting new believers as well.

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear God, thank You for the way that You have accepted us and for giving us a place to belong. Help us to have open eyes to see people who need to be included and to do what we can to help them grow in their faith in You. Amen.

