# CHRIST & THE CORNERSTONE

FLIPSIDE LENT JOURNAL 2026

**THIS JOURNAL BELONGS TO:**

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# 2026 FLIPSIDE LENT JOURNAL

*A MASSIVE thank you to the incredible folks who volunteered their time to sit with Jesus and write the following pages for us to utilize during Lenten this year!*
*Daily Devotions written by Heather Armstrong, Sherman Chau, Jaymee Horn, Lisa Keesler, & Allison Schrader*
*Family Devotions written by Rhonda Depew*
*Student Devotionals written by Declynn Guerrero & Abby Mazzagatte*
*Group Guides written by Bret Welshymer*
*Seder Introduction Written by Rhonda Depew & Frank Durocher*
*Journal Edited & Prepared by Frank Durocher, Rebecca Guerrero & Ted Guerrero*
*Lent Graphics by Hannah Currier*

# INTRODUCTION

In ancient masonry construction, cornerstones were the critical first brick laid. Cornerstones had to be carefully set as they established the alignment of the remainder of the building, wall, or bridge. As a result, they are sometimes called the foundation or setting stone.

Several times in Scripture, the coming Messiah is alluded to, or Jesus Himself is specifically referenced as a Cornerstone in our faith. Isaiah 28:16, Psalm 118:22, and 1 Peter 2:4-7, are some of the passages where Jesus is described as such. Perhaps the best known passage that expresses this idea and how it relates to the church is found in Ephesians 2. Here Paul shares in verse 11 and following that the new community of believers known as the church—or as Christians—are joined together as "fellow citizens" of "God's household" built upon the faith of those who have come before us with "Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone." With Jesus as our cornerstone we are being "built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit." Take a moment and read Ephesians 2:11-22 now.

As we continue to explore the book of Mark in this Lenten season, our focus will be the example and impact of Jesus as our Cornerstone.

## HOW THIS JOURNAL WORKS

This journal is designed to be a guide for you as Flipside marks Lent together. As you use this book, you will notice weekly devotionals for families, teens, and small group discussion guides. Then there are daily readings and reflections for Monday - Saturday and a place to write notes as we gather together on Sundays. All of this is designed so that we, as a church body, can be growing both in community and alongside one another in the faith as we dive into the same Scriptures. As this journal has been put together by a team of writers, you may also notice that each week or section has a slightly different tone. We hope that each voice resonates, challenges, and speaks to you in a different way.

In addition to the devotionals and group discussion guides for various age ranges, there will be a prayer experience, an

opportunity to serve, and scripture memorization. For those of you who have experienced Rooted or participated last year, these will seem familiar to you. If not, we encourage you to give them a try and see how God uses them!

During Lent this year, there will also be an opportunity to participate in a Seder, a key aspect of the Passover celebration. This gathering will reflect the "Last Supper" Jesus shared with His disciples, however, the tradition and components of the Seder dinner are traced back to the Exodus. The Seder symbolizes many of the key aspects of the Israelites' escape from the hands of Pharaoh, and remarkably also points to the coming Messiah in the person of Jesus. Instead of gathering with your small group, we hope you can gather with our church family to experience the power of a Seder dinner together.

No matter how you are led to commemorate Lent and what aspects of this journal you use, we pray that it is a time of growth and preparation for you. May Jesus become an even more secure foundation in all aspects of your life.

## LENT GROUPS

Each week, groups will meet to talk through the message and daily devotionals, share life, and laugh—all with the purpose of forming a community for you to grow in your faith with.

We recommend you join a group because reading the Bible is so much richer when you have others to share it with! Our group discussions will be largely based on the daily devotionals and the small group guides you find in this book. You will have the chance to ask questions, share what you're learning, and hear how God is working in the lives of others.

We have groups that meet all throughout the week, and we'd love for you to try one! Scan this QR code to see the groups we have available.

JOIN A LENT GROUP

If none of those are the right fit for you, ask some friends to join you in the journey and use this as your guide!

# **ASH WEDNESDAY** | February 18

What station resonated with you tonight?

What truth did you hear?

How will you make room for God to move?

# DAILY DEVOTIONAL | February 19

*For those who have never built the habit or have fallen out of it, making this space of one-on-one time with the Lord can be a challenge. Here are a few tips for you to consider:*

- *Try to find a consistent time and place for you to do this each day.*
- *Put your phone on silent and in a place that is out of easy reach so you won't be distracted by it.*
- *If you need to use your phone as your Bible, turn off all notifications so you can focus.*

## SYNOPSIS

There is not a full record of the history of Lent. However, the practice of marking the time before Easter with 40 days of prayer, fasting, and reflection was formally established at the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD. The number 40 is significant throughout Scripture: Moses was on Mt. Sinai for 40 days, the Israelites wandered in the desert for 40 years, rain fell for 40 days and nights while Noah and his family took refuge in the ark, and most significantly Jesus was in the desert fasting and praying for 40 days leading into His ministry (Matthew 4:1-11). Lent therefore has emerged as a way to emulate the example of our Savior.

Fasting is not just about what we give up, it is also about making space for more of Jesus in our lives. Our lives and our world place a great deal of demands on our time. As a result, it is easy for our time with God to become just another thing on our to-do list instead of an opportunity to build a relationship with our Lord and Savior. However, Scripture makes it clear that missing Jesus is not just a modern problem, but a human problem. And missing Jesus is a BIG problem if our goal as Christians—literally meaning "little Christs"—is to build our lives on Him. And yet, we are all prone to miss Jesus in some way, shape, or form in some aspect of our lives. And therein lies the purpose of Lent—to pause and focus and develop rhythms to set Him in the proper position of our hearts and lives as the Cornerstone.

## READ

Matthew 21: 33-46

*Each day in this journal you will be given one or two passages to read. As you do so, consider the following:*

- *Read any notes your Bible might have, if you have a version with notes.*
- *Read the passage in a few different translations to compare and get a wider picture of what the text says. And read the verses before or after the identified passage to provide context as well.*
- *In the YouVersion App or your Bible you can find translation notes or comments in the footnotes. Read these to provide perspective. For example, the NET version has included notes to explain how they arrived at the translation choices for key words or passages.*

## REFLECT

Parables are designed to teach us about the Kingdom of God. The message often is in contrast to how Jesus' audience would have assumed the Kingdom of God (or Kingdom of Heaven) would work. In this parable, what is Jesus explaining about how the Kingdom of God works, and how does it go against the assumptions of the audience?

## RESPOND

How does this parable challenge your assumptions about how the Kingdom of God works or the role Jesus is to play in your life?

Verse 43 speaks of “bearing fruit” - how is Holy Sprit challenging you to cultivate your heart during Lent so that you may bear more fruit in your life? In other words, how is God calling you to prepare for Him to grow your faith and how you live out your faith in this season?

## PRAY

Pray that the Holy Spirit will reveal to you opportunities for Jesus to be established as the cornerstone of your faith in this Lenten season and in doing so will bring your life into better alignment with the way He has called you to live.

# DAILY DEVOTIONAL | February 20

## SYNOPSIS

We often think of faith as something we have, not something we develop. But several times in the Bible living out our faith is described as training. One such passage is found in the first recorded letter to the Corinthians. Corinth was at a crossroads in the ancient world. Its location on the Isthmus of Corinth made it a perfectly situated geographically to host an athletic competition similar to the Olympic Games. As a result, the members of the church in Corinth would have been well aware of the discipline required to participate in such endeavors. Paul uses this knowledge to encourage the Corinthians as they develop their faith. Those participating in any kind of training are often encouraged to "keep their eye on the prize." For those of us training in our faith, that prize is the Cornerstone, the author and perfecter of our faith, Jesus.

The beautiful thing about our faith being something we can train is that no matter where we "feel" we are in our faith journey, there is opportunity for growth and development. Even if life has led us to a place where we are "out of shape" spiritually, there is opportunity for us to partner with Holy Spirit through discipline and "training" and continue to run the race set before us.

## READ

I Corinthians 9:23-27, Hebrews 12:1-2

## REFLECT

What role does "training" and "self-control" play in the growth of our faith according to these passages? And according to these passages, what's the "prize" or focus of our training?

## RESPOND

Hebrews 12:1-2 echoes the idea of running a race and the importance of "fixing our eyes on Jesus." What is the biggest roadblock or challenge in keeping your eyes fixed on Jesus? How might you use this season of Lent to minimize or even eliminate that distraction?

How does the idea of running or training as part of our faith journey resonate with you? Is it daunting and discouraging? Exciting or invigorating? Why does it feel that way and why might that be significant as you approach Lent?

## PRAY

Sometimes physical training feels good, and other times it feels like hard work. Share with Holy Spirit how you feel about training spiritually as you enter this season of Lent. (Don't be afraid to be honest, He already knows anyhow!) Ask Holy Spirit to bring those around you to encourage you in your training and as you persevere and for the opportunity to also encourage others in their faith journey.

# **DAILY DEVOTIONAL** | February 21

## SYNOPSIS

On Sundays at Flipside for most of 2026, we have been studying the ministry of Jesus as told in the book of Mark. We will continue to read Mark during Lent as well. The next event we come to in Mark is the account of Jesus' transfiguration. This episode of Jesus' ministry is also recorded in two other Gospels. As we will do most Saturdays throughout this Lent journal, let's take some time today to prepare for tomorrow's sermon by becoming familiar—or reacquainting ourselves—with the details of the account. Whether this is your 300th time reading these passages or your first, try to put yourself in the shoes (or perhaps sandals) of Peter, James, and John and imagine how you might perceive and process these events if you were there. If you are particularly familiar with these passages, ask Holy Spirit to give you a heart to learn something new before you read the Scripture listed below.

## READ

Matthew 17:1-9, Luke 9: 28-36

## REFLECT

As you read these passages, which words or phrases stand out? Why do you think those descriptions, details, or words are significant?

What is different about the two accounts?

## RESPOND

Peter's desire to build shelters for Jesus, Elijah, and Moses was reminiscent of the feast of the Tabernacles—a commemoration designed to celebrate God's provision in the wilderness as the Israelites wandered for 40 years. (If you want to read more, check out Leviticus 23:33-44.) Peter's intent was likely to honor Jesus by putting Him on the same level as these great prophets. However, the voice of God the Father, declaring Jesus as His Son, made it clear that Jesus was on a whole different level than these pillars of the Jewish faith. It is easy for us to inadvertently or intentionally relegate Jesus to a smaller role in our lives than that of LORD. Where now or in the past has that been a struggle for you?

## PRAY

Pray that through your life and your study of Scripture this week Holy Spirit will make clear where you need to elevate or make Jesus central in your life.

# WEEK ONE

## MEMORY VERSE

*Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."*

*-Psalm 91:1-2 (NIV)*

# **SUNDAY SERVICE |** February 22

# FAMILY DEVOTIONAL
## SUPPLY LIST

*Just in case you would like to plan ahead a bit, the following are the supplies that will be needed for the suggested activities each week. Any templates that you can print ahead of time can be found by scanning this QR code.*

FAMILY DEVO SUPPLIES

Week One
- Small Dixie Paper cups (3)
- Fun size M&Ms (or other treat)
- Flashlight

Week Two
- Mason jar (or Tupperware container)
- Strips of paper
- Markers, crayons, or colored pencils
- Label that says “Prayer Requests”

Week Three
- 2 Paper plates
- Strips of paper
- Markers, crayons, or colored pencils
- Glue or tape

Week Four
- Shape Template Page (printed on cardstock, if possible)
- Twine, string, or yarn cut to a 3-4 foot piece
- Tape
- Marker, pen, or pencil
- Thumbtack

Week Five
- Glasses Template (printed on cardstock, if possible)
- Markers, crayons, or colored pencils
- Scissors
- Glue or tape
- 5x5 inch (about) square of colored cellophane

# FAMILY DEVOTIONAL
## WEEK ONE

### READ

Mark 9:2-13 - Our family likes to use the Explorer Bible for Kids. Any Bible will work though!

### WATCH

Here is a video that gives a short, visual summary of the story as well.

WEEK 1 FAMILY VIDEO

### REVIEW

Do you ever hope that there is a big screen movie theater in Heaven? I mean, one where we can go and watch the amazing stories of the Bible come to life? This is something I think about a lot. There are many stories in the Bible that I would LOVE to see on a big screen. (Also, if there is yummy popcorn, even better!)

One of the stories that I am most interested in is this one we just read. The transfiguration of Jesus is something that is so hard for my mind to understand. What did Jesus look like? What did Elijah and Moses look like? Could the disciples hear the conversation? What did they say? We don't know the answers to these questions, but we do know some very important things about this story.

First, Jesus went up on the mountain to pray with a few of His disciples. There are many times in the New Testament that we see Jesus leaving the crowds to go and pray. This is important for our own lives as well. In this account, Jesus took a few of His disciples with Him to pray (Peter, James, and John). While there are times that it is important for us to have alone time with God the Father, there are also times that we need a community of friends who also believe in Jesus to come along and pray with us. We need to have constant communication with God the Father and prayer alone or with others is a great way to do that.

Second, Jesus is showing a glimpse (a small view) of His glory, which is the glory of God. For a while now in Jesus' ministry, the disciples had been thinking that Jesus could be the person they had been waiting for, the Messiah. He has been healing people, preaching amazing messages, and showing people the Kingdom of God. This was one of only a few times His disciples got to see a glimpse of Him in His true glory. Because Jesus was fully God and fully human, He had the glory of God inside of Him.

Third, the disciples did not know how to respond or even fully understand what was happening. Have you ever not understood something in the Bible? Maybe you aren't sure which way God is calling you to go. Well, you are in good company! When we look at this passage, we see that the disciples did not know what to do. Peter tries to offer a solution of building tents for Jesus, Elijah, and Moses. At the end of the passage, we see the disciples still not understanding what Jesus meant by "rising again." In all of this, Jesus did not abandon them. He did not decide to get new disciples because these ones just "didn't understand." Instead, He loved them. He showed them who He is. He led them. He taught them. He gave them the ultimate example of how to love God the Father.

## REFLECT

Has there been a time when you have seen a glimpse of God's goodness or glory? What was that like?

In this Bible story, God the Father tells the disciples that Jesus is His Son, and they should listen to Him. How do you (or can you) listen to God in your life?

## PRAY

As a family, pray that you will take time this week to stop and listen to what God may be telling you. Pray that you will be open to listening and hearing what He may have for you today. Your prayer might sound like this:

“Father, thank you for showing us a glimpse of your glory through Jesus today. Please help us to remember to honor and follow you this week. Give us ears to hear what you have for us this week, so we can follow your will for our lives. Amen."

## REMEMBER

It can be fun to do an activity to help us remember the things that we are learning from the Bible. Today’s activity helps us remember that when Jesus was transfigured, the disciples got a glimpse of who He really was. They knew this was the person they had been waiting for.

Materials:

- 3 Paper Dixie cups, a small amount (fun pack size) of M&Ms (or another treat), and a flashlight

Steps:

- With your kiddos not looking, hide the M&Ms (or other treat) under 1 Dixie Cup
- Ask them to make a guess (without looking or touching the cups) about which one has the treat.
- Shine the flashlight on top of the cups to reveal which cup had the treat
- Discuss how when Jesus was transfigured, He showed just a glimpse of the glory of God. He showed a few of His disciples who He truly is.
- Enjoy the treat!

# FEBRUARY MEMORY VERSE FOR FLIPT

*Jesus is “the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone…”*

*- Acts 4:11 (NIV)*

# FSM DEVOTIONAL
## WEEK ONE

Welcome to our FSM exclusive weekly Lent devotional, especially written for students in 6-12th grade. Some of these devotionals were written by adults, and some were written by teens just like you! Each week, you will be guided through a time of reading and reflecting on Scripture. You will begin with a passage or two to **read.** It will be followed by a synopsis or summary to provide context and get you thinking. Then you will have some questions to **reflect and respond** to as you consider what the passage is saying and how it applies to your life. Finally, you will be encouraged to spend some time in **prayer.** The daily devotionals in this journal follow a similar pattern and you are of course encouraged to participate in those as well! Regardless of how you use this Lent Journal, we recommend that you to do these devotionals in a dedicated time of quiet; opening up your heart and mind to the Lord in a Spirit of unhurried, un-rushed stillness. Or you can invite your small group and friends to go through these with you! Our hope is that you will draw nearer to God in this Lenten season and that through these devotionals you will learn more about making Jesus the Cornerstone of not only your faith journey, but every aspect of your life.

### READ

Mark 9:2-13

### SYNOPSIS

When you think of Jesus, what comes to mind? A king? A teacher? A simple man? God? What we believe about Jesus shapes the kind of faith we carry and live out. Mark 9:2-13 can feel confusing at first. It is rich with symbolism, vivid imagery, and a moment that feels almost incomprehensible. Yet it is here in the Transfiguration that we witness the full glory of Jesus revealed in breathtaking clarity.

In this moment the disciples are reminded that their Rabbi, friend, and teacher is not merely a great man, but the living Son of God

in human form. God in a bod, if you will. The veil is pulled back, and Jesus is revealed as He truly is.

How often do we forget how powerful, vast, and beautiful Jesus is? When we hear about Him week after week on Sundays and Wednesdays, it can become easy to grow numb to the greatness of God. We forget that the One who breathed stars into the sky, carved out the seas, and spoke every good and perfect thing into existence also intentionally created you. And not only did He create you, He loves you. The ruler of heaven and earth has His eyes on you. God looks at you and He smiles.

When we forget how great God is, we also tend to forget the power of the gospel. Yet the gospel is the very thing that transforms our lives, frees us from ourselves, and fills us with an incomprehensible peace and joy. May we never forget the power, love, and nearness of God revealed through Jesus, and may we never grow numb to how truly life-changing His love for us is.

## REFLECT & RESPOND

When you think about Jesus, what qualities come to mind? Do those qualities differ from how you view God?

Do you think the disciples' view of Jesus changed after the Transfiguration? Why or why not?

How does the fact that Jesus loves you change how you live your life?

What can you do this week to remind yourself of the greatness of God?

## PRAY

Take a few deep breaths. Invite God to reveal His power and love to you, that you may remember how valuable you are and how great He is.

# GROUP DISCUSSION
## WEEK ONE

*Each week you will find two sets of questions as part of the group discussion guide. One will be questions that will repeat each week to generate discussion about what you are learning from that week's sermon and daily devotionals. Then there will be a few questions specific to select Scriptures for you to consider as a group. Everything listed below is completely optional - but we would encourage you to create a routine of discussing what you are learning, sharing a part of your faith story, and praying together. We believe that the group guides will help you build a faith community to support you as you grow in your walk with Jesus!*

### INTRO

Go around the room and share names, who you live with, and your favorite way to spend a day.

### WEEKLY REVIEW

*These questions are designed for you to complete on your own before group (if time permits). You can use some or all of these to catch up, talk through the devotionals you did this week, and focus on what the Lord is doing in and through you and your group.*

How have you seen God working in and/or through your life this week—personally, with your family and friends, at work, school, or church?

How has God's Spirit and His Word spoken into your life through this week's sermon and daily devotionals? What did you notice as you were completing them? What questions/thoughts arose?

What will you do differently because of what you have learned or experienced in your time in God's Word, prayer, and worship this week?

How can this group help you apply or follow through on what you are learning or experiencing this week?

## STORY SHARING

*An important part of being in community is knowing important parts of each others' lives. In church circles this is sometimes referred to as sharing a "testimony." In some church traditions sharing a testimony refers to telling how you came to know Jesus, but in other traditions its simply telling how God has been at work in your life. Each week we encourage you to set aside 4-5 minutes for one person to share a story based on the prompt below. For your first meeting, your leader(s) will go first to share their story. You'll have the chance to sign up for a date for you to share your own at the end of this meeting. We also encourage you to share snacks in your time together, because food makes any gathering better!*

***Story to share:*** Share about a time when Jesus' role as the Cornerstone of your faith grew, had an impact in how you approached a challenge, or framed how you viewed an opportunity in your life.

My story sharing date: _____ / _____ / _____

I bring a snack on: _____ / _____ / _____

## Group Reading and Discussion

*These questions are designed for you to discuss as a group, and do not necessarily need to be completed beforehand.*

**Read:** Mark 9:2-8

1. When have you had an unexpected encounter with God that significantly impacted your relationship with Him?

2. What was God's purpose for the encounter Peter, James, and John had with Jesus, Elijah, and Moses?

**Read:** Mark 9:9-13

3. How was Jesus helping the disciples begin to understand the purpose of His presence on earth (v. 9-10, 12)?

4. Where do you struggle to understand and accept God's intentions when the circumstances around you don't make sense or are unexpected and challenging (Romans 8:28-30)?

5. How does Christ's life, death, and resurrection help you trust God during times of uncertainty and hardship?

## PRAY

Either using the Prayer Cards provided by your leader or using a format your group has decided upon, share anything you would like prayer for this week. If you have time, briefly share them with the group. If using the cards, exchange them. And regardless of how you share, commit to praying for at least one other person this week.

# **DAILY DEVOTIONAL** | February 23

## SYNOPSIS

In this week's passage, we are introduced to the story of Jesus' transfiguration. In Mark 9:2-13, Jesus takes Peter, James, and John up a mountain, where His appearance is suddenly transformed and His divine glory revealed. In this breathtaking moment, Moses and Elijah appear alongside Him, representing the Law and the Prophets respectively, and we see the authority of Christ alone. In this moment, God speaks from the cloud, declaring, "This is my beloved Son; listen to Him" and the authority of Jesus Christ is revealed. This divine affirmation confirms that Jesus is the fulfillment of God's redemptive plan and the firm foundation upon which everything else stands. God's voice confirms who Jesus is, giving us the assurance to build our lives on Him, the true and lasting Cornerstone.

## READ

Mark 9:2-13

## REFLECT

What parts of this story stood out to you?

What does God's declaration reveal about who Jesus is?

How does this passage shape your understanding of Christ as the Cornerstone?

## RESPOND

Take time today to intentionally build your life around Christ as the Cornerstone. Identify one area in your work, relationships, decisions, or worries where you may be leaning on something other than Him. Surrender that area to Christ and realign it with His truth. Write down that area you are called to build your life on below, and why you feel God is calling you to more intentionally rely on Him in that area of your life.

## PRAY

“Lord, I thank You for the revelation of Your Son. Thank You for declaring who Jesus is and inviting me to trust in Him. May the light and truth of Christ continue to shape my life as I build everything on Him. Amen.”

# DAILY DEVOTIONAL | February 24

## SYNOPSIS

In yesterday's reading, we witnessed God declare Jesus as His Son on the mountain during the Transfiguration. Today, Hebrews reminds us that the God who made that declaration is completely trustworthy. In Hebrews 6:13-20, Scripture shows us that God is perfect. In this passage, we see that there is no one greater, so He swears by Himself as the ultimate source of truth and accountability. God cannot lie, fail, or change His mind; therefore, when He names Jesus as the Messiah, we can rest completely in that truth. This foundational reality shows us that faith doesn't depend on our understanding or feelings, it rests on the unchanging character of God. As a result, we can trust that Jesus, as revealed in the transfiguration, is the firm foundation of our faith.

## READ

Hebrews 6:13-20

## REFLECT

What stands out to you about God's character in this passage?

How does knowing that God cannot lie affect the way you view His promises?

How does this strengthen your trust in Christ?

## RESPOND

Consider areas where you may struggle to trust God fully—in the waiting, uncertainty, or unanswered prayers. Take some time to bring those areas honestly before God and place your confidence in His trustworthy character. Jot down what Holy Spirit is revealing to you below.

## PRAY

“Faithful God, thank You for your constant goodness. Because You are trustworthy, I can trust who You say Jesus is and rest securely in Christ as my Cornerstone. Help me surrender to you daily and find comfort in your Son. Amen.”

# DAILY DEVOTIONAL | February 25

## SYNOPSIS

In today's passage, we return to Mount Sinai, where Moses (who appears at the Transfiguration) encounters the glory of God face to face and receives God's law to the people of Israel. After spending time in God's presence, Moses comes down the mountain with his face shining, reflecting the external glory of the Lord. This powerful moment reveals both the holiness of God and the limits of the Law, for Moses' radiance was real, but only a temporary reflection of God's glory. In Mark 9:2–13, when Moses appears at Jesus' Transfiguration, we see God's radiance again, but this time shining from Jesus Himself, whose glory is not a fleeting reflection but an eternal radiance from within the Son. The remarkable parallels of the two events confirm the Lord's declaration of Jesus as His Son and show that the Law received by Moses on Mount Sinai pointed forward to Christ, who alone is the true Cornerstone.

## READ

Exodus 34:29-35

## REFLECT

What does the presence of Moses at Jesus' transfiguration reveal to you?

How does this passage help you understand the difference between reflected glory and Christ's inherent glory?

## RESPOND

Take time today to examine where you could reflect the radiance of Jesus in your own life. Who could be blessed by the presence of God in your life? Write down 2-3 people who you could minister to this week.

## PRAY

“Holy God, thank You for revealing Your glory throughout Scripture. Thank You for the Law that pointed us toward You, and for Jesus, who fully reveals Your glory. Help me to build my life on Christ alone, my Cornerstone, knowing that He is worthy of my trust. Amen.”

# DAILY DEVOTIONAL | February 26

## SYNOPSIS

Earlier this week, we discovered how in the Transfiguration, Moses represents the Law found in Scripture and Elijah represents the prophets who prepared the way for Jesus. In today's passage, we see Elijah encounter God on a mountainside, learning to recognize His voice—not in spectacle, but in stillness. Through this interaction, we see that Elijah is familiar with God's voice and able to discern His authority. Therefore, when Elijah appears in the Transfiguration scene, we can trust both his presence and his recognition of Jesus as the Son. In Malachi 4:4-6, the prophet promised that Elijah would return before the day of the Lord, calling God's people back to faithfulness, and Matthew 11:11-15 identifies John the Baptist as this promised Elijah, preparing hearts for Jesus' arrival. As a result, Elijah's presence confirms the prophetic hope in Jesus and prepares the way for Christ, in whom every hope and promise is fulfilled.

## READ

1 Kings 19:11-13; Matthew 11:11-15; Acts 3:19-23

## REFLECT

What does the presence of Elijah at Jesus' transfiguration reveal to you?

How does this passage help you understand the significance of John the Baptist and the prophecy of the coming Messiah?

## RESPOND

Slow your pace today and create space to listen for God's voice like Elijah did. Ask God to reveal one area where repentance, trust, or obedience is needed as you realign your life with Christ, our Cornerstone. Jot down what Holy Spirit reveals below.

## PRAY

"God of restoration, thank You for the prophets who prepared the way for Your Son. Help me to listen for Your voice and place my hope fully in Christ, the Cornerstone who restores all things. Amen."

# DAILY DEVOTIONAL | February 27

## SYNOPSIS

Throughout this week, we have traced the revelation of Jesus as the Cornerstone of our faith through the Transfiguration scene in Mark 9:2-13. In this passage, we see the ultimate declaration of faith with the Father declaring Jesus as His Son, God's unchanging promises confirming His trustworthiness, and the Law and the Prophets (Moses and Elijah) pointing to Jesus' fulfillment of the Word. As a result, today's passage brings everything into focus as the risen Jesus fulfills the final prophecy and explains that all Scripture is fulfilled in Him. The Transfiguration was a glimpse of God's greater promise, prophecy, and hope, showing us that we can confidently rely on Jesus as the Cornerstone of our faith.

## READ

Luke 24:36-48

## REFLECT

Why do you think Jesus took time to explain the Scriptures after His resurrection?

How does seeing Scripture unified in Christ strengthen your faith?

## RESPOND

Reflect on this week and identify one truth about Jesus that has deepened your faith. Write it down and commit to living in light of it, intentionally building your life on Christ as your foundation.

## PRAY

“Risen Lord, thank You for fulfilling every promise. Open my heart to understand Your truth and help me live with confidence in You as my Cornerstone. Amen.”

# **DAILY DEVOTIONAL** | February 28

## SYNOPSIS

As we close this week, prepare your heart for next week's core passage found in Mark 9:14-29. Take time to read ahead and ask God to guide your reflection, noticing what He wants to reveal about His power, faithfulness, and authority.

## READ

Mark 9:14-29

## REFLECT

What stands out to you in the passage for this upcoming week?

What questions or expectations are you bringing into next week?

## RESPOND

Journal how this passage points to Jesus as the Cornerstone and reflect on how that truth shapes your trust in Him today.

## PRAY

“Jesus, thank You for Your authority and compassion. Prepare my heart to trust You more deeply as the foundation of my faith. Amen.”

# WEEK TWO

## MEMORY VERSE

*"'If you can'?" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for one who believes."*

*-Mark 9:23 (NIV)*

# **SUNDAY SERVICE** | MARCH 1

# FAMILY DEVOTIONAL
## WEEK TWO

### READ

Mark 9:14-29 - Our family likes to use the Explorer Bible for Kids. Any Bible will work, though.

*Note: Due to today's topic of Jesus healing a boy with an unclean spirit, we have not included a video. If your family would like to view a version of this story, you can check out the show* Superbook*, with the episode, "Teach us to Pray."*

### REVIEW

Have you ever had a hard time believing in something? Maybe you had a hard time believing that something you wanted to do was going to happen. Maybe you had a hard time believing that something bad could turn out okay or good. Maybe you even had a hard time believing in Jesus or His power to do something. That happened to the people in our story today.

As Jesus was coming down the mountain from His transfiguration, He was met by a great crowd. When He asked what was going on, the crowd led Him to a boy who had an unclean spirit. This spirit would cause the boy to be in pain and danger. The disciples had tried to heal the boy while Jesus was gone, but they were not able to do so.

Jesus talked to the father of the boy. He asked the father how long the boy had been dealing with these challenges. The father let Jesus know that it had been happening for a very long time. Then, the father makes a request. He tells Jesus, "If you can do anything, please have compassion and heal him." Did you catch the important part there? The father said, "IF you can do anything." Jesus did not miss that phrase. He tells the father, "'If I can?' All things are possible if you believe." Wait just a minute. Did Jesus really say all things are possible? Go back and check… YES! He did. What great news! All the father had to do was what? Right, he had to believe.

Uh oh. That's just what we were talking about. Sometimes, it is so hard to believe. This father had been seeing his son hurting for a

very long time. It was probably very difficult for him to believe that his son would be made well. But take a minute and go check out verse 24 in Mark 9 again. The father's response is important and beautiful. He tells Jesus, "I believe. Help my unbelief." This man had faith that Jesus could heal his son. He also had doubts. Instead of holding on to those doubts, he gave them to Jesus.

Guess what? We get to do the exact same thing. When we have those things in our lives that are hard to believe in, we can give those doubts over to Jesus. He will work in our lives and situations. There is something very important to remember here, though. Jesus WILL work. It may not always look HOW we think it will or should, but He is working all things out according to His plan. He is not surprised by anything that comes up in our lives. I, for one, am so grateful that I can turn to Jesus with my faith, with my doubts, and with my entire self.

## REFLECT

What is something you have a hard time believing can or will happen?

Have you ever had a time where God worked in a way you did not expect? What happened?

## PRAY

As a family, take some time to pray together, thanking God for working and His compassion. Also, spend some time praying over the things that are harder to believe. Your prayer might sound like this:

"Father, thank you for working in our world, even when it is in ways we do not expect. Please help us to remember that, no matter what, we can have faith that you are working. Give us the belief in those times when it is hard for us to believe. We love you. Amen."

## REMEMBER

It can be fun to do an activity to help us remember the things that we are learning from the Bible. Today's activity helps us remember that no matter our feelings about something, we can bring any worry, doubt, request, or praise to Jesus.

Materials:

- A mason jar (or Tupperware container)
- A label that says "Prayer Requests"
- Slips of paper or index cards
- Something to write with

Steps:

- Label you jar or container with the "Prayer Request" label.
- Talk as a family about things you want to pray about: worries, prayers, doubts, praises, etc. Nothing is too big or small for Jesus.
- Have everyone write or draw their item.
- As a family, pray about them and add them to the jar or container.
- Encourage everyone to add items any time they want to.
- Periodically, as a family, check in with the items. How have you seen God work? What do we need to keep praying for?

# MARCH MEMORY VERSE FOR FLIPT

*"…Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved."*

*- Acts 4:12 (NIV)*

# FSM DEVOTIONAL
## WEEK TWO

### READ

Mark 9:14-29

### SYNOPSIS

In these verses we see the natural human instinct to doubt the unknown and unimaginable. However, we are also shown the full power of God that accompanies having true faith in God. Though we will still have our doubts, and moments of struggling with having trust, it is important to abide in God and in His faithfulness. This passage shows God's power over the world and what amazing things can happen when we partner with Him. When we doubt God, it is important to step back and remember that God can. He has complete power of this world and we can trust in Him. We can use the gift of God's Word and passages like this to remind us of God's faithfulness.

Not only does God have this divine power, but He can also help us in our doubts to have faith. In this passage we see the father of the possessed boy call out to Jesus and ask Him to help his unbelief. God shows us that He is there to fill the gaps in our trust. He has given us the ability to ask Him and the Holy Spirit to fill us and carry us through the unknown. So, bring your doubts to God. Be honest with Him and lay them at his feet. He is not scared of your questions and doubts. On the contrary, He wants to know and help you through them. This week, rest and meditate in this truth: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your understanding; in all your ways submit to him and he will make your paths straight." (Proverbs 3:5-6)

## REFLECT & RESPOND

What are some areas of your life that you doubt God in and need to submit to Him?

Where have you seen God show you His faithfulness?

How does the reminder of God's faithfulness bring you peace in your doubts?

## PRAY

Take some time to pray and submit your doubts to God. Ask Him to help your unbelief and rest in the ways that He has shown you His faithful presence and power.

# GROUP DISCUSSION
## WEEK TWO

### INTRO

If anyone is new, go around the room to share names, and something you are looking forward to in the next week or two.

### WEEKLY REVIEW

How have you seen God working in and/or through your life this week—personally, with your family and friends, at work, school, or church?

How has God's Spirit and His Word spoken into your life through this week's sermon and daily devotionals? What did you notice as you were completing them? What questions/thoughts arose?

What will you do differently because of what you have learned or experienced in your time in God's Word, prayer, and worship this week?

How can this group help you apply or follow through on what you are learning or experiencing this week?

## STORY SHARING

Have the person scheduled for this week share. Share about a time when Jesus' role as the Cornerstone of your faith grew, had an impact in how you approached a challenge, or framed how you viewed an opportunity in your life.

## GROUP READING AND DISCUSSION

**Read:** Mark 9:14-29

1. When have you invited God to help you overcome your unbelief when facing a situation that seemed impossible (v. 23-24)?

2. Similarly to the boy appearing to be dead, when have you prayed and the initial result did not look like you expected? How did the situation resolve in a way that you could see God's good purposes (v. 26-27)?

3. What promises or events from Scripture help you trust God when a situation looks impossible or hopeless?

4. How can you use your personal experiences with unbelief and disappointment to share God's love and care with others (2 Corinthians 1:3-4)?

## PRAY

Either using the Prayer Cards provided by your leader or using a format your group has decided upon, share anything you would like prayer for this week. If you have time, briefly share them with the group. If using the cards, exchange them. And regardless of how you share, commit to praying for at least one other person this week.

# DAILY DEVOTIONAL | MARCH 2

## SYNOPSIS

**The Heart of the Desperate -** Sunday's teaching highlighted the human condition—we are a desperate bunch. We are desperate for provision, desperate for companionship, desperate for healing, we are desperate for hope… and the list goes on.

The Gospels highlight this condition of humanity over and over. It is the desperate heart that encounters Jesus. Desperate hearts assume desperate positions. Sometimes it is when we are at our weakest, most vulnerable place, that we assume the posture of surrender.

This is the story of the father we find in Mark 9. His story is told in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke as well. Today, we will highlight some key differences in each account that will give us a fuller picture of the moment Jesus changed everything for this man, his son, and certainly more than we could ever count.

## READ

Mark 9:14-18; Luke 9:37-40; Matthew 17:14-16

## REFLECT

Fill in the blanks from the NIV version of each passage of scripture:

**Mark 9:17** A man from the crowd _____, "Teacher, I _____ you my son…"

**Luke 9:38** A man in the crowd _____, "Teacher, I _____ you to look at my son…

**Matthew 17:14-15** When they came to the crowd, a man approached Jesus and _____ before him. "Lord, have _____ on my son…"

As you look at the different depictions of this moment of a desperate father, what do you notice in each of these accounts as they are layered onto one another?

## RESPOND

When have you brought a loved one to Jesus? When have you cried out for healing for someone else? When have you knelt on the ground and pleaded with God to have mercy?

On this side of heaven, where things are still broken and bruised, waiting for all things to be made new, we will find ourselves in this posture. When hope feels lost, and we have tried everything, we find ourselves on our knees asking Jesus for His mercy.

And this is where miracles happen.

Sometimes it doesn't work out the way we think it should, or hoped it would, but Jesus does not ignore a face on the floor.

In Scripture, we find different postures of worship—hands raised or clapping—and also knees on the ground, faces down.

No matter what season we find ourselves in today, we can find a reason to kneel before Jesus and cry out on behalf of ourselves or others. Perhaps, like many other saints who have gone before us, the Lord is calling you to bring the posture of kneeling before him into your everyday life.

A posture change can precede life-change.

## PRAY

The chorus of a popular worship song[1] by Elevation Worship rings with these lyrics,

*Where the tears of the desperate*

*Reach the feet of the Savior*

*Nothing I wouldn't offer*

*There's no waste at the altar*

*Where the heart of surrender*

*Meets the hands of the Maker*

*Nothing I wouldn't offer*

*There's no waste at the altar*

*May Your resurrection power living inside me,*

*Bring light and life to all those around me.*

Find a place to kneel, turn on this song, and bring all you are carrying to the feet of Jesus.

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[1] Elevation Worship. (2020). At the Altar [Song]. On Graves Into Gardens (Live). Elevation Worship Records.

# DAILY DEVOTIONAL | MARCH 3

## SYNOPSIS

**No Neutral Ground -** C.S. Lewis wrote, “There is no neutral ground in the universe; every square inch, every split second, is claimed by God and counter-claimed by Satan.”

There is a war raging. The battle is real. Whether we want to believe it or not, the words of Paul to the Ephesians speak to this reality. “Our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” (Ephesians 6:12)

Paul is speaking out of experience. He also encountered the demonic forces while he was in Ephesus. Today’s reading highlights his experience with the dark forces of this world.

## READ

Mark 9:17-18; Acts 19:11-20

## REFLECT

In both of these passages the unseen world suddenly becomes visible. In our 21st century living and Western culture, we can easily blame situations that have a spiritual implication as simply social, emotional or mental health issues. For some, the idea of the spiritual realm is a new concept, for others it’s a misunderstood concept, and still for others there is knowledge and understanding.

It’s true that the Church at large, with different denominations, in different regions in the world, have different views on the role of spiritual warfare in the believer’s life, but ultimately we cannot walk in the fullness of the Christian experience if we don’t recognize that Jesus came in authority over both the physical earth and the spiritual realm.

What do the above passages tell us about the spiritual realm?

## RESPOND

What understanding do you have when it comes to the spiritual realm? Were you raised with any teaching about it? If so, how do you relate to that teaching now? Do you still agree? Have you grown in your understanding of it?

What questions do you have about the spiritual realm? Who is someone you could reach out to and ask these questions to seek further understanding?

## PRAY

In Ephesians 1, Paul prays for the the believers of Ephesus to have the spirit of wisdom and revelation. Take a moment and ask the Lord to give you wisdom as you seek to understand more deeply the spiritual realm, and ask for revelation of things you have questions about.

‘‘Lord, there are so many things about this world and the heavens that I do not understand, but today, I am asking for deeper wisdom and revelation when it comes to spiritual things. Help me to learn to discern things that are rooted in evil and under demonic influence. If any of these things have influence in my own life, reveal where and how to remove it from my life.”

# DAILY DEVOTIONAL | MARCH 4

## SYNOPSIS

**An Unbelieving Generation -** "Unbelievable." It's a word that flies so easily out of the mouth. Whether we have experienced the unexpected or been frustrated by the unforeseeable, we have likely uttered the word before.

Sometimes this world is filled with things that are hard to believe. From news reels to real life circumstances, we find ourselves dealing with the unbelievable—things we wish were not true. What can feel more "unbelievable,"is that not only is there a God who cares about such things, but there is a God who can and desires to do something about it.

In our key passage this week, Jesus encounters and confronts unbelief on two fronts. Today, we will look at the first confrontation: an unbelieving generation.

## READ

Mark 9:19; Matthew 13:10-17

## REFLECT

Isaiah prophesied hundreds of years before about the hearts of a generation. In the account in Mark, we see Jesus' frustration with the people around him, including his disciples. His description of this generation points to the reality that they are faithless, even after witnessing his power displayed in other places.

It can be hard to imagine Jesus frustrated. Doesn't that sound sinful? Isn't it wrong to feel frustration? Absolutely not. It's what we do in our frustration that can produce sin. Jesus, in His perfection, and His desire for His people to walk in freedom and wholeness, expresses His dismay with the faithlessness He sees around Him.

The Greek word used here for unbelieving is "apistos" meaning faithless, or without trust in God. It would be easy to just pinpoint the people standing there around Jesus at that moment, as the

only ones who struggled to believe Jesus was who He said He was, and can do what he says He can do, but is it possible that our own generation has fallen into this same rut? What do these passages say about the faithlessness Jesus was calling out?

## RESPOND

Take a moment and reflect on your generation and the the faith it has walked in collectively. When you think about it, do you see a generation of people who have believed for the impossible? The answer may be layered and complicated. Write down the thoughts that come to your head.

## PRAY

In every generation there is a mixture of belief and unbelief. With different cultures and denominations there are so many opinions and teachings on the ideas of faith and unbelief. As humans, we will struggle both corporately and individually believing God for impossible things. Jesus may even feel frustrated toward us, but that doesn't change who He is, how He feels about us and what He will do in and through our lives.

As you spend some time in prayer today, you are invited to "repent," which simply means to ask for forgiveness, on behalf of a generation who has a hard time believing God. There is power in this kind of intercession. Take a few minutes and ask God to direct you on how to pray for your generation and what He wants to do through it to bring Heaven to Earth.

# DAILY DEVOTIONAL | MARCH 5

## SYNOPSIS

**Help Me in my Unbelief -** "The quality of mercy is not strained; It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven upon the place beneath. It is twice blest: It blesseth him that gives and him that takes."[2]

In William Shakespeare's comedy, *The Merchant of Venice*, one of the main characters, Portia, disguises herself as a lawyer and delivers a profound soliloquy about mercy. Ultimately, she argues that mercy is greater than the power of kings, as it is an attribute of God.

Humans have been asking for mercy for a long time. Some of us need it like we need oxygen to breathe. The need for mercy for the human condition has been talked about, written about, and discussed for centuries.

Yesterday, we addressed Jesus' confrontation of corporate unbelief. Today, we will look at what Jesus says to the *individual* who is struggling with doubt and unbelief.

Yesterday, we glimpsed the holy frustration of Jesus.

Today, we see the immeasurable power in the mercy of Jesus.

## READ

Mark 9:21-24; Matthew 14:29-31; Jude 1:22

## REFLECT

In the Mark account and the Matthew account, we read two different stories of Jesus dealing with individuals who are struggling with doubt and unbelief. Do you notice how Jesus doesn't sugarcoat anything? He names their doubt. He names the unbelief, and then He still saves. He still rescues. He still delivers. Jesus knows our frailty. He knows our shortcomings. In Romans

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[2] Merchant of Venice by William Shakespeare Act 4 Scene 1

we read, “But God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

At the heart of the story of scripture is the theme of our God, our Savior, our Rescuer, stepping in to save us who are imperfect, who doubt, who have a hard time believing some days.

Even in all His glory and righteousness, our God still draws near the sinner and offers mercy.

How do these passages point to God’s mercy when we as humans struggle with unbelief?

## RESPOND

Take a moment to reflect on your definition of mercy. If you had to write a definition in your own words, what would you write?

Mercy is often stated in Christian circles as “not receiving the punishment you deserve.”

Take a moment and imagine yourself in a courtroom. There is someone standing there and accusing you of every wrong thought, feeling or action in your life. Go ahead and assess the shortcomings of your life for just a minute. It will only take a breath to be reminded that all of us fall short of the glory of God.

Instead of taking on the sentence for your wrongdoing, Jesus steps into that courtroom and says you can walk away in freedom. His death and resurrection made a way for mercy to be available to everyone. As it says in Hebrews 12:24, “his blood speaks a better word…”

## PRAY

Close out your time today in a posture of repentance. Ask the Lord to examine your heart and bring to mind anything that you need to confess, anyone you need to forgive, any lie you are believing about yourself or about God.

Then head back to that courtroom in your imagination. Confess it before God and imagine Jesus covering it all and setting you free.

Finish your prayer time by thanking Him for His mercy.

# DAILY DEVOTIONAL | MARCH 6

## SYNOPSIS

**The Power of Prayer and Fasting -** Early Church theologian Tertullian is credited with saying, “feed prayers on fasting.”

Fasting and prayer are ancient practices, but we actually have documentation from as early as AD 80, closely linking fasting to following Christ as a disciple. Candidates for baptism were to fast, as were those baptizing them and anyone else in the community of believers who was able to join in on the fasting fun.[3]

Truth be told, if you have ever attempted to fast and pray, you might not describe it as fun, at least not right away, but if you press into learning and understanding the power and encounter that comes with these practices, especially coupled together, you will see the way God’s power infiltrates our human circumstances in unimaginable ways.

## READ

Mark 9:25-29 (Read in 2 translations, 1 being the King James Version)

## REFLECT

It is important to note that when the New Testament was compiled, there were multiple manuscripts used in the process. It’s a fascinating deep dive to learn about how the Bible became the Bible, but for our purposes today, we must note that the English translation of verse 29 looks different in different translations because of the different manuscripts used in the translating process.

If you read both the NIV and the King James Version you will see the former says, “This kind can come out only by prayer,” and the latter says, “by prayer and fasting.” Regardless of which version you read, Jesus is making the point that there are some battles

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[3] Skoog, R., Greer, P., & Doolittle, C. (2025). *Lead with Prayer*.

we face, some types of evil we come up against, and some circumstances we find ourselves in that will drive us to learn to pray with authority.

For some of us, praying “normally” feels like a stretch. Depending on our experience, prayer can feel foreign, uncomfortable, or tiresome. Maybe we are dealing with prayers that are unanswered and therefore we don’t want to try and pray anymore. Disappointment has deferred our hope.

What does this account tell us about prayer and fasting as a spiritual practice?

## RESPOND

On a scale of 1-10, 10 being you LOVE to pray, 1 being it’s the last thing you think about, where do you rate your relationship to prayer? Why do you think that is the case?

What are some of the challenges you face when it comes to learning more about and practicing prayer more diligently?

Have you ever fasted before? Are you fasting during the season of Lent? Write down one or two questions or observations you have about fasting.

## PRAY

As you close out this time today, ask the Lord to teach you how to grow in these practices. Maybe he wants you to do some research. Ask the Lord to give you a desire and a strategy to dig deeper into these disciplines.

A book that may help teach and ignite your heart in this area is Lead With Prayer: The Spiritual Habits of World-Changing Leaders by Ryan Skoog, Peter Greer, and Cameron Doolittle.

# DAILY DEVOTIONAL | MARCH 7

## SYNOPSIS

**When Last Place is the Best Place -** It's time to move our eyes and ears to the next passage of Scripture as we prepare our hearts for tomorrow's teaching.

Have you ever had a conversation, or sat in a classroom, and the words coming at you from the other person, the teacher, or professor, simply don't make sense to you? It almost feels like they are speaking another language.

This is how the disciples surely felt as Jesus spoke the words we find in this passage.

## READ

Mark 9:30-50

## REFLECT

There are a number of things next week's devotion will dig into and dissect, but for today, let's zero in on verse 35 (NIV).

Fill in the blanks:

Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, "Anyone who

wants to be _____ must be the very _____,

and the _____ of all."

## RESPOND

Is this a hard saying for most people? Most likely, it is. We live in a world that teaches us to do everything we can to get first place. We want to be the best and be told we are the best. We seek validation. We want to be known.

Then Jesus comes on the scene and flips the script. He invites his disciples into the opposite kind of race. A race to determine who can get the lowest, who is willingly taking last place.

As you read those words today, reflect on the state of your heart. Are you chasing notoriety? Are you running a race to prove your worth?

Be still and close your eyes. Sit in the truth that Jesus is inviting you into full and abundant life everyday and the way to it is through serving others.

Jot down three ways you can step out of the proverbial rat race today, and instead serve the people around you.

## PRAY

Pray these words today:

"Jesus, I confess my tendency to want to be first. I confess my seeking to win at the cost of others sometimes. I confess my measuring of myself to the people around me.

Give me the desire to be last today. Remind me in little things, like opening doors, or allowing someone to go before me in the checkout line, that these simple actions posture my heart to servanthood.

Thank you, Jesus, for being the Servant of all, who suffered, died, was buried and then rose again. I surrender again to you, King Jesus. Make me last today. Amen"

# WEEK THREE

## MEMORY VERSE

*No, O people, the Lord has told you what is good,*
*and this is what he requires of you:*
*to do what is right, to love mercy,*
*and to walk humbly with your God.*

*- Micah 6:8 (NLT)*

# **SUNDAY SERVICE** | MARCH 8

# FAMILY DEVOTIONAL
## WEEK THREE

### READ

Mark 9:30-37; 10:13-17 - Our family likes to use the Explorer Bible for Kids. Any Bible will work though.

### WATCH

WEEK 3 FAMILY VIDEO

### REVIEW

Have you ever wanted to be picked first for something? Maybe it was a team for a sport. Maybe it was wanting to answer a question at school or church. Maybe you wanted to go first in a game with your family. It is really easy for us to think of ourselves first and want to be the greatest. This is exactly what happened with Jesus' disciples in today's story.

Jesus spent time with His disciples. They travelled all over. During this time, Jesus was healing people, teaching people, and telling everyone about the Kingdom of God. A problem started to happen though; the disciples started thinking about themselves instead of what Jesus was teaching. They began to bicker (or fight) among themselves to decide who was the greatest disciple. Maybe you have a brother or sister that you have had a similar conversation like this with. It usually goes something like this: "I am the best at doing this thing." Then the other person says, "No, I am better at that because I am so good at _____." This is kind of what the disciples were doing. They were fighting over who was most important to Jesus.

Jesus knew what they were doing, and He became angry. At this moment, however, He decides to teach the disciples a very important lesson. He tells them that the person who thinks he or she is the best will actually be last in the Kingdom of God. The

person who puts others first and focuses on serving God will be put in a place of honor. The cornerstone may be the first stone laid, but it must support the rest of the wall.

Jesus also tells His disciples that they should be more like children and have a child-like faith. A little while later, some parents were bringing their children to Jesus to have Jesus bless them. The disciples told the parents to leave, thinking Jesus had more important things to do than spend time with children. I LOVE what Jesus does here. Instead of agreeing with the disciples, Jesus tells the children to come to Him. He teaches the crowds that the Kingdom of God belongs to those who have a child-like faith. What does it mean to have a child-like faith? It means that you can listen to Jesus and believe what He says. It also means loving God with all that we are and being so excited about following Him. By showing the disciples these important lessons, Jesus was teaching them that it is more important to love and follow Him than it is to worry about being in first place. I pray that we can all have this type of faith each and every day.

## REFLECT

Has there been a time that you fought to be in first place? What happened? Was it more important to be a part of the experience or to be in first place?

What things can you do to help you remember to put Jesus and others before yourself?

What are some ways that you feel excited to follow Jesus and love Him each and every day?

## PRAY

As a family, take some time to pray and ask God to show you who He wants you to reach out and serve or help in some way this week. Your prayer might sound like this:

“Father, thank you for the reminder that it is not about us. So many times we get caught up in the things we want or need. Please help us remember to put others first. Show us ways we can love others better each and every day. We love you. Amen.”

## REMEMBER

It can be fun to do an activity to help us remember the things that we are learning from the Bible. Today's activities help us remember that being first or greatest is not the most important thing. Our second activity helps us to remember that we need to think of others and how we can serve them more than we think of our own wants.

Materials:

- 2 paper plates
- Markers
- Slips of paper
- Stapler or tape or glue

Steps for the game: This is a version of Red Light/Green Light.

- For the first round, do not tell anyone that you are changing up the game. Have one of the adults be the caller. Have everyone else line up at the starting line.
- When the caller yells, "Green Light," have everyone run. When the caller yells "Red Light" everyone has to freeze. If someone moves, they go back to start.
- Play until everyone crosses the finish line. Once everyone has crossed, the person who has been "The Caller" celebrates the person who came in last instead of first.
- Now, play a round to see who can be the slowest across. (You have to move in some way though when "Green Light" is called). It's more challenging than you think. Try and see who can come in last place.

Steps for the Craft:

- As a family, decorate the two paper plates with the markers. You can draw pictures, write encouraging phrases or verses, or just design it however you would like.

- Fold the two paper plates together and overlap them, making a heart shape. Using a stapler (or tape or glue) fasten the bottom of the heart together, making an "envelope of sorts." See an example here:

WEEK 3 CRAFT SAMPLE

- On the slips of paper, write or draw ideas of how you can spend time serving others and thinking of them. Place those ideas inside the heart. As you complete them, remove the slip of paper.

- Talk as a family how this can help us remember to put Jesus first, have child-like faith, and remember that we are not called to be first but to serve others.

## MARCH MEMORY VERSE FOR FLIPT

*"…Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved."*

*- Acts 4:12 (NIV)*

# FSM DEVOTIONAL
## WEEK THREE

### READ

Mark 9:30-50

### SYNOPSIS

How do you define success? We live in a world that measures success by popularity, fame, achievements, wealth, and status. The more views you get, the more friends you have, the more money you earn, or the more invitations you receive are the metrics our culture uses to determine worth and success. But then Jesus enters the scene and turns every one of those measurements upside down.

In Mark 9:33-37, we catch the disciples arguing among themselves about who is the greatest. They are chasing the same kind of status we often find ourselves chasing—wanting to be the best in the room, the most talented, or the most admired. Yet these are not the things Jesus values. In Matthew's account of this moment, Jesus makes His definition of greatness clear: "Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 18:4)

So often, we pursue what the world calls successful, impressive, or acceptable. But we do not live to please the world. We are children of God, and that means we are called to live according to God's way, not the world's. If you are a follower of Christ, you are released from the pressure to constantly prove yourself or impress others. Instead, you are invited to walk in step with Jesus, discovering a way of life that may look strange or unimpressive to the world, but is beautiful in the eyes of God.

Following Jesus redefines success. It is no longer about how many likes you get, how much money you make, or what status you achieve. The way of Jesus points us toward humility, service, and genuine care for others as the truest and greatest way to live.

## REFLECT & RESPOND

How does the world around you define success, and where do you feel the most pressure to measure up to those standards?

In what ways might Jesus be inviting you to redefine success in your own life right now?

Read Galatians 1:10. How can you seek the approval of God before the approval of people this week?

## PRAY

Take a moment to center yourself in God's presence. Ask Him to reveal places in your life where your standards of success are in need of shifting.

# PRAYER EXPERIENCE
## SOMETHING YOU SHOULD TRY

### WHAT IS THIS?

The Bible is clear that praying is our main form of communicating with God (Psalm 145:18, 1 Thessalonians 5:17, Romans 8:26, James 5:13, etc). And yet, sometimes it can seem intimidating, daunting, or even something that "other people are better at" than us. But prayer is meant to be a meaningful time with our incredible God. So let's spend some time connecting with the Lord on a personal level.

If you are going through this study with a group, we recommend you find a time (2-3 hours total) with your group to share a meal before or after, or you may choose to use the following as a guide for time on your own and then debrief as a group.

If you are going through this on your own, find an hour or two in your schedule and utilize the following to spend time praying and connecting with the Lord.

Either way, our God has incredible things in store, and setting aside this time will be a tremendous blessing. We are praying for the Lord to meet you in a personal way!

## LECTIO DIVINA

Prayer can take on many different forms. One form is an ancient practice combining Scripture reading and prayer called, *Lectio Divina*. This practice focuses on reading Scripture, through the lens of Jesus, to focus on its significance and meaning through reflection and meditation. There are different takes on this practice but the steps typically look like the four outlined below.

1. **Read:** Avoid the temptation to simply glance over these passages, some of which may be very familiar to you. Take time to read them and in turn, allow them to speak to you. You may find it helpful to read each passage a few times, pause between each reading, and ask God to speak the truth of each word to your heart.

2. **Reflect:** After reading, allow time and space to reflect or ponder in your heart what you have just read. Allow God's Word to become His words to you and illuminate the deep truth of the text by the Holy Spirit. Consider how the passage points to Jesus.

3. **Pray:** After you've read and reflected on the passage, move on to prayer. Through your spoken and written word, dedicate the truth of His word to Him in your heart.

4. **Contemplate:** Contemplate on the truth of what has been revealed through His word. God speaks: take time, listen, wait and rest in the reality of His presence and the fullness of His love.

Pick 1-3 of the passages below and engage in the practice of *Lectio Divina*.

- Deuteronomy 32:1-4
- Isaiah 28:14-19a
- Psalm 18:1-19
- Psalm 27
- Psalm 62
- Psalm 118
- Zechariah 10
- Matthew 7:24-27

# GROUP DISCUSSION
## WEEK THREE

### PRAYER EXPERIENCE

*This week or next, plan time as a group to complete the Prayer Experience found on the previous pages. Here's an example of what that time could look like:*

- *Share a meal.*
- *Share any things/situations you would like the group to pray for.*
- *Spread out and complete the prayer experience guide separately. Allow at least 45 - 60 minutes for this.*
- *Come back together and debrief how your time went.*
- *Finish by praying together.*

### WEEKLY REVIEW

How have you seen God working in and/or through your life this week—personally, with your family and friends, at work, school, or church?

How has God's Spirit and His Word spoken into your life through this week's sermon and daily devotionals? What did you notice as you were completing them? What questions/thoughts arose?

What will you do differently because of what you have learned or experienced in your time in God's Word, prayer, and worship this week?

How can this group help you apply or follow through on what you are learning or experiencing this week?

## STORY SHARING

Have the person scheduled for this week share. Share about a time when Jesus' role as the Cornerstone of your faith grew, had an impact in how you approached a challenge, or framed how you viewed an opportunity in your life.

## GROUP READING AND DISCUSSION

**Read:** Mark 9:30-37

1. What does it look like in <u>your</u> life to be "the servant of all" at home, work, school, or in your community (v. 35)?

2. What is the significance of how Jesus describes the relationship between Himself and His Father (v. 37)? Consider these verses from John 5:19, 5:21-23, 10:30, 14:9-10.

**Read:** Mark 9:38-41

3. What does this tell us about the attitude we should have toward other Christ-followers who walk out their faith in Christ differently than you do (John 17:20–23)?

**Read:** Mark 9:42-50

4. How does the gift of eternal life with Christ impact the choices you make in your daily life?

5. What does it look like to be "salty" in your relationships with other believers (v. 50)?

## PRAY

Either using the Prayer Cards provided by your leader or using a format your group has decided upon, share anything you would like prayer for this week. If you have time, briefly share them with the group. If using the cards, exchange them. And regardless of how you share, commit to praying for at least one other person this week.

# DAILY DEVOTIONAL | MARCH 9

## SYNOPSIS

**When the Cross Doesn't Fit Our Expectations -**

*Life through death.*
*Victory through surrender.*
*Glory through suffering.*

The above mantra is referred to in some circles as "heaven's paradox." And the deep spiritual truths found in these brief words are echoed in today's Scripture passages.

As we read Mark 9:30-32, we must remember what came before. In Mark 8, Peter boldly confesses Jesus as the Messiah. Almost immediately after this confession, Jesus predicts His suffering and death for the first time. Peter, confident yet uncomprehending, rebukes Him. Jesus responds by calling him Satan and explaining: "You are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."

This moment reveals a sobering truth: it is possible to confess Christ correctly and still misunderstand His mission deeply. Peter believed in Jesus, but he resisted a Messiah who would suffer. When God's purposes collide with our expectations, we often push back—even against divine truth. Yet the cross was not a tragic end to God's plan; it was the plan.

Perhaps this is why, when Jesus speaks again of His coming death in Mark 9, He does so privately. There are no crowds or public debates, only the disciples. God often speaks His deepest truths in quiet spaces, away from distraction, when we are seated ready to hear. This time, Jesus does not teach in parables, instead He bluntly says that He will be betrayed, He will die, AND, He will rise.

Still, the disciples do not understand and they are afraid to ask. A suffering Messiah contradicted everything they hoped for. Maybe they feared looking foolish by asking questions. Maybe they feared hearing more painful truths. Maybe they feared the possibility of betrayal from within their own circle.

How often are we the same? How often does silence feel safer than understanding when truth threatens our assumptions or expectations? This passage exposes a timeless human response: fear of the unknown, discomfort with hard truth, avoidance of questions that reveal confusion. We wrestle internally rather than bringing our doubts into the light. We want the crown without the cross.

Jesus does not wait for our full comprehension before asking for our trust. Faith often comes before clarity. Today, may we have the courage to ask, to listen, and to trust, even when understanding lags behind obedience.

## READ

Mark 8:27-33; Mark 9:30-32

## REFLECT

Jesus chooses a quiet, private setting to speak about His suffering. What distractions might be preventing you from hearing God's deeper truths right now?

What fears keep you from bringing your doubts, confusion, or hard questions to Jesus?

## RESPOND

When God's purposes clash with your plans, how do you usually respond; with trust, resistance, silence, or control?

## PRAY

"Jesus, forgive us for leaning on our own understanding. Teach us to trust You when Your purposes collide with our expectations. Quiet the noise around us and within us so we can hear Your voice in unexpected spaces. Grant us confidence to boldly go before your throne to ask any questions. Help us follow You not only in miracles, but in the mystery. We trust You, Jesus. Lead us. We will follow. Amen."

# DAILY DEVOTIONAL | MARCH 10

## SYNOPSIS

**True Greatness in God's Kingdom -** Right after Jesus tells the disciples of his death, the disciples decide to have an argument about who among them is the greatest. Nothing says "Thank you for dying for us," quite like this self-centered discussion. Perhaps they were wondering who would take His place as teacher or leader. Whatever the motive, their focus was on themselves, not the cross.

Jesus responds with gentle yet firm correction: "Whoever wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all." Then He takes a child, who represents not only literal children, but all who are humble, marginalized, or lacking status, into His arms. Jesus shows that true greatness is not found in influence or recognition, but in welcoming and serving those with the least status.

Leadership in God's kingdom is not about titles, self-promotion, authority or recognition, but about humility and service. This theme reaches its fullest expression in Matthew 25:35-40, where Jesus identifies Himself with "the least of these." Feeding the hungry, welcoming the stranger, clothing the poor, and visiting the sick or imprisoned are presented not merely as good deeds, but as direct service to Christ. Our faith is not proven by what we claim to believe, but by how we love. Even small, unseen acts done with a selfless heart matter deeply to God. In His kingdom, greatness looks like humility, faith looks like action, love looks like service, and leadership looks like putting others first.

## READ

Mark 9: 33-37; Matthew 25:35-40

## REFLECT

How does Jesus welcome the “least of these” not only in these passages but throughout Scripture?

## RESPOND

Who are the “least” or most overlooked people God is placing in your path right now?

In what ways is God inviting you to be His hands and feet to someone in need?

## PRAY

“Jesus, forgive us for the moments we seek recognition above serving your will. Teach us the way of Your kingdom that looks counter cultural. Strip from us the need to be seen, applauded, or elevated. Make us true representatives of Your heart serving those in need. Amen.”

# DAILY DEVOTIONAL | MARCH 11

## SYNOPSIS

**Whoever Is Not Against Us Is For Us -** Today's passage is always a bit interesting. Were the disciples worried that other people could do what they do, and maybe replace them? Were they jealous? Was this about status again—that only "the 12" should be called on to minister? Were they concerned that people were doing it wrong? That only "trained professionals" should minister to people? Either way, rather than rejoicing that evil was being defeated, the disciples were concerned with boundaries, procedure, and group identity. Their response exposes a narrow and exclusive mindset, shaped more by pride than by God's kingdom purposes.

Jesus firmly corrects them. He instructs the disciples not to stop the man, explaining that anyone who performs a genuine miracle in His name cannot easily turn around and speak against Him. This leads to the principle: "Whoever is not against us is for us."

With this statement, Jesus broadens their understanding of who belongs in God's work. Alignment with Christ is not determined by organizational affiliation or proximity to the Twelve, but by sincere action done in His name. God's kingdom is far larger than any one group, and He works through people in ways that may fall outside the way we think it should be or look like.

Jesus then emphasizes that even the smallest acts of kindness—such as giving a cup of water to someone because they belong to Christ—are seen, valued, and rewarded by God. No act of service done in faith is insignificant. Kingdom faithfulness is measured not by visibility or status, but by obedience and love.

The passage then turns sobering in verse 42. Jesus warns against causing "little ones"—new believers, the vulnerable, or those with fragile faith—to stumble. Using the vivid image of a millstone, He underscores the seriousness of hindering someone's faith. While Jesus' disciples must avoid exclusivity and judgment, they must also protect and nurture the spiritual well-being of others.

## READ

Mark 9:38-42; Numbers 11:26-29; Philippians 1:15-18

## REFLECT

What do these passages teach us about who is “called” or “allowed” to do the work of God?

## RESPOND

Where do you see yourself drawing unnecessary boundaries around who “belongs” in God’s work? In what ways might pride or a desire for control limit your ability to recognize God’s work in others?

Are your words and attitudes building faith in others, or subtly causing them to stumble?

What small act of obedience or kindness can you offer today, trusting that God sees and values it?

## PRAY

“Jesus, free our hearts from pride, jealousy, and narrow thinking. Help us rejoice whenever Your kingdom advances, even when it comes through unexpected people or ways. Teach us to value faithfulness over status, love over control, and obedience over recognition. Guard us from causing others to stumble through judgment or exclusivity, and make us gentle caretakers of those with fragile faith. May our lives reflect Your grace, humility, and expansive kingdom. Amen.”

# DAILY DEVOTIONAL | MARCH 12

## SYNOPSIS

**Courage to Look Inward and Live Free** - Jesus' words in Mark 9:43-50 are some of the most sobering in all of Scripture. "If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off… If your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off… If your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out." At first glance, these statements feel extreme—even unsettling. To be clear, Jesus is not promoting self-harm or saying that there is a piece of you beyond redemption. Rather, He is using violent, symbolic language to awaken us to the seriousness of sin and its power to destroy us.

Yesterday's devotional reminded us that our lives are never lived in isolation. Our choices, attitudes, and unhealed places impact others. Our sin is not just personal, it ripples outward into our relationships and can easily wound the most vulnerable. Today these His words make sure we turn inward. Jesus talks about our hands, feet, and eyes, which are everyday parts of life that represent what we do, where we go, and what we fix our attention on. His point is clear and unmistakable: if something in your life repeatedly leads you away from God, it must be confronted. Not excused. Not managed. Not spiritualized. **It must be removed.**

This is costly discipleship. It is choosing eternal life over temporary comfort. It is saying, *"Nothing in my life is worth losing intimacy with God."*

In Celebrate Recovery (our Monday night Care Group that is a Biblically based community program to help people gain lasting freedom from any past pains, strongholds, or unhealthy mindsets) we often talk about "the why behind the what."

The "what" are our emotions and mindsets that often lean to sin: self harm, addiction, isolation, anger, control or mistreatment of others. These are often labeled as frustration, depression or anxiety.

But the *why* reveals deeper truths:

- I'm frustrated because I can't control how things are going.
- I'm depressed because I feel like my life should look better by now.
- I'm anxious because I'm afraid of all the ways I could fail.

Jesus' words invite us into this kind of courageous honesty. He is not condemning us—He is protecting us. He loves us too much to let hidden wounds, unchecked habits, or distorted thinking quietly lead us away from life. He commands us to "cut it off," not for punishment but for freedom. It is choosing healing over hiding, surrender over self-protection, and life over slow spiritual decay. The Kingdom is worth everything. And nothing we release in obedience will ever compare to what we gain in Him.

## READ

Mark 9:43-50; Hebrews 12:1; Proverbs 4:23

## REFLECT

Is there anything in your life right now that consistently pulls you away from God's presence or peace? How have you been excusing, managing, or spiritualizing it instead of confronting it?

How might your unhealed places be affecting the people around you?

## RESPOND

What would "cutting it off" look like in a practical, Spirit-led way for you this week? What are you afraid that you might lose if you fully surrender this area to Jesus—and what might you gain?

## PRAY

"Father, give us courage to look honestly at our hearts and our lives. Help us to see the habits, wounds, and patterns that pull us away from You—and give us the strength to remove them, trusting in Your grace. Teach us to pursue Your path over comfort and instill the faith we need to walk through any refining. Let us walk in humility, honesty, and courage, knowing that what we surrender to You is far outweighed by the life You give. Keep our eyes, hands, and feet set on You, and may our hearts always choose the eternal over the temporary. Amen."

# DAILY DEVOTIONAL | MARCH 13

## SYNOPSIS

**Clear is kind. And Jesus is very kind**. - Perhaps you have heard Brené Brown's declaration that, *"Clear is kind. Unclear is unkind."* Looking at today's passage, it would seem that Jesus agreed.

Throughout Mark 9, Jesus confronts human nature with loving clarity. He exposes our tendency to choose comfort over obedience, control over surrender, status over service. Like the disciples, we resist suffering, crave significance, fear uncomfortable truth, avoid inner confrontation, and quietly shrink God's Kingdom down to what feels familiar.

So Jesus speaks plainly. No parables. No wiggle room.

- "You are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."
- "Whoever wants to be first must be last and servant of all."
- "Whoever is not against us is for us."
- "Cut it off."

Jesus doesn't blur the path because He loves us too much to let us wander and He doesn't abandon us when we miss it. He teaches, corrects, invites, and refines us instead. He meets our pride with heavenly humility, our fear with immense patience, our blindness with blunt truth, and our resistance with mercy and grace. Throughout His time with the disciples Jesus wanted them to be ready to do Kingdom life without His physical presence. He was imparting His legacy and mantle into them. And we now get to be His disciples. We get to read through their testimonies so we can learn from them and accomplish greater things. We aren't meant to see the disciples as our finish line, but a foundation to stand on and push forward.

Let His clear, kind voice shape your choices—say yes to obedience, lay down what holds you back, and step into a life that makes room for heaven to move. Revival lives in surrendered hearts, and miracles follow those who dare to walk faith first.

## READ

Psalm 37

## REFLECT

What clear words of Jesus or from today's Psalm stand out, convict or resonate with you today?

## RESPOND

What would it look like to trust Jesus more than your understanding?

If you truly believed that revival begins in surrendered hearts, what is one area of surrender the Holy Spirit is asking of you today?

What does it look like for you to build on the foundation of faith laid by the disciples and the saints that have gone before us and walk boldly into what God is calling you to now?

## PRAY

“Father, thank you for speaking with clarity and love. Forgive us for shrinking Your Kingdom with our pride, fear, and comfort-seeking. Help us hear Your words and obey without hesitation. Teach us how to set our minds on You, serve others without seeking status, and celebrate every step of Your Kingdom. We ask that you remove anything in our lives that destroys us. Refine us with Your Spirit, shape us with Your truth, and empower us to walk in holiness, humility, and peace. May our hearts be surrendered, our faith be fearless, and our lives be a space where Heaven moves. Let revival rise in us, Lord, as we dare to live boldly for You. Amen.”

# DAILY DEVOTIONAL | MARCH 14

## SYNOPSIS

**When Yes Still Means Yes -** In Mark 10:1-12, Jesus speaks into one of the most personal and painful areas of human life: marriage. But His words reach far beyond marriage alone—they reveal God's heart for covenant, commitment, and the integrity of our promises. When the Pharisees question Him about divorce, Jesus does not start with technical answers, legal loopholes, or cultural norms. He goes all the way back to the beginning. He reminds them that marriage was God's idea, rooted in creation itself: male and female, leaving and cleaving, becoming one flesh. This is not merely a paper contract between two people, but a sacred covenant designed by God for lifelong unity.

Jesus acknowledges Moses' allowance for divorce, but He names the real issue beneath it: hardness of heart. Human selfishness, fear, and brokenness fracture what God intended to be whole. Yet, Jesus does not lower God's standard to accommodate our weakness; instead, He lovingly redirects our focus to God's original design. What God joins together is meant to remain. Marriage, and every covenant we make before God, is not about convenience, cultural permission, or personal advantage. It is about faithfulness, connection, forgiveness, and love that chooses to endure.

These words can feel heavy, even painful, especially for those who carry the wounds of divorce (our own or our parents'), broken promises, or relationships under strain. But Jesus is not speaking to condemn. He does not invite us to label ourselves as damaged or disqualified. He confronts sin because He loves us and knows restoration is possible. He calls us to holiness not for performance, but because He desires us to live fully and freely. His words invite us to examine where hard-heartedness has replaced love and where sacred commitments have been reduced to personal preference.

Our commitment to Jesus—and to His Word—will be tested. Marriage is one of the clearest testing grounds, but it is not the only one. Every promise we make, every covenant we enter, every "yes" spoken before God, reveals what we truly believe about

faithfulness. In a world that treats commitments as disposable and integrity as optional, Jesus calls His followers to live differently—to see covenant as holy, sacred, meaningful, and worth fighting for.

For those who have failed, fallen, or feel burdened by the past, His grace still speaks louder than shame. And for those who have traded covenant for convenience or immediate satisfaction, His promises over your life remain true.

The same Jesus who upholds God's design also extends mercy, healing, and hope to every surrendered heart. The same Jesus that is our Cornerstone.

## READ

Mark 10:1-12

## REFLECT

What do Jesus' words about divorce say about the condition of the human heart as a whole? What does it say about his view of commitment?

## RESPOND

Where in your life do you look for exceptions instead of surrendering to God's design?

Where might hard-heartedness be affecting your relationships, promises, or obedience?

In what ways has convenience or self-protection tempted you to compromise faithfulness?

Are there promises that you have made—to God or to others—that you need to honor, repair, or revisit with humility and repentance?

## PRAY

"Jesus, you call us back to Your design—for marriage, for promises, for every covenant of our lives. Forgive our hardness of heart, our shortcuts, our compromises. Teach us to honor what You join, to love sacrificially, to forgive freely, and to keep our word as an act of faithfulness to You. Heal what's broken, restore what's fallen, and help us live boldly in Your grace. May our yes be steadfast, our hearts soft, and our lives a reflection of Your covenant love. Let Your mercy lead, Your truth guide, and Your Kingdom rise through our faithfulness. Amen."

# WEEK FOUR

## MEMORY VERSE

*Above all else, guard your heart,*
*for everything you do flows from it.*
*- Proverbs 4:23 (NIV)*

# **SUNDAY SERVICE** | MARCH 15

# FAMILY DEVOTIONAL
## WEEK FOUR

### READ

Mark 10:17-31 - Our family likes to use the Explorer Bible for Kids. Any Bible will work, though.

### WATCH

Here is a video that gives a short, visual summary of the story as well.

WEEK 4 FAMILY VIDEO

### REVIEW

Do you have a lot of things going on in your day-to-day life? Many of us fill our days with all sorts of things: sports, clubs, school, dance, helping out at home, and the list goes on and on. All of these things are good and important. In today's story, Jesus reminds us of the most important thing: putting Him first and following Him.

As we read more today of Jesus and His ministry, He is continuing to travel along: teaching, healing people, and leading people to the Kingdom of God. One of the times He was traveling, a rich young man came up to Him. The man asked Jesus what he needed to do to live in Heaven forever. Jesus first reminds the man that God the Father is good. Then, He tells the man that he needs to follow the laws that God had given His people. All of these things were good things that the man needed to do. Just like we have so many good things in our life that we need to do.

The man tells Jesus that he has been following the laws his whole life. Jesus then tells the rich young man that in order to inherit eternal life, the man needed to give up his possessions and follow Jesus. The man then walks away sad.

Many people find this story very confusing. I mean, if you look back, even the disciples were confused when Jesus told the crowd that it would be difficult for people who are rich to enter the Kingdom of God. Jesus was NOT saying that people who have a lot of things or do a lot of things cannot go to Heaven. He was saying those things, while good, are not enough.

Truly following Jesus is not just about following a set of rules or laws and doing "good" things for Him. Following Jesus is being willing to give up everything to put Him first. It means that, sometimes, we may have to miss doing something or getting something we like in order to put Jesus first. Maybe that looks like choosing not to play a favorite game or watch a favorite show to take time to read our Bibles. Maybe that means not buying something we really want in order to help someone who needs it more. It will not always look the same for everyone each time. Jesus calls us each in different ways. What we do know for sure, is following Jesus is never a boring life where we feel we are missing out on our favorite things. Following Jesus is an adventure that will lead you to places you never thought you would go and will give you blessings that you never thought you would receive. When we put Jesus first, He leads us to the life He has for us, which is better than anything we could ever imagine or dream.

## REFLECT

What are some of the good things you like to do?

Is there something that you think Jesus may be asking you to put aside to truly put Him first? What could that look like in your life?

## PRAY

As a family, pray that you will take time this week to stop and listen to what God may be telling you. Pray that you will be open to listening and hearing what He may have for you today. Pray that you will be open to following what He asks you to do to put Him first, even if it is difficult. Your prayer might sound like this:

"Father, our lives can become very full of good things. Help us remember that no matter how many good things we have, You are the best, most important thing. As we move through this week, help us find ways to put You first in our lives. We love you. Amen."

## REMEMBER

It can be fun to do an activity to help us remember the things that we are learning from the Bible. Today's activity helps us remember that, even as we do all the good and fun things in our life, we need to choose to put God first in our hearts and lives.

Materials

- Shape template page (printed on card stock, if possible), twine (or string/yarn) about 3 feet long
- Tape
- Pen or marker
- Thumbtack

Steps

- As a family, write on the heart shape - "We choose to put God first in our heart and lives."
- Work together to write or draw the other important, good, and fun things you do. (You can always make more shapes, if you would like.)
- Cut out all the shapes.

- Make a small loop at the top of the string or twine and tie a knot.
- Tape the heart to the top of the string.
- Tape all the other activities and things underneath the heart.
- Using the thumbtack, hang up the string somewhere everyone can see it. As you move through the week, check in to see if you are remembering to keep Jesus at the top of that list.

## MARCH MEMORY VERSE FOR FLIPT

*"…Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved."*

*- Acts 4:12 (NIV)*

# FSM DEVOTIONAL
## WEEK FOUR

### READ

Mark 10:1-12

### SYNOPSIS

At first glance this passage might be confusing and you might wonder how this would apply to you because marriage and divorce is not a struggle that most teens personally face. However, there is a lot we can learn from this passage. Let's focus on what God says about 1) our heart posture, and 2) why the law was first created in Moses' time. God didn't create marriage to be broken, however he allowed it in the Law of Moses for certain circumstances due to the Israelites' heart posture. A hardened heart prevented the Israelites and Pharisees from seeing God's perfect design. The same applies to us because our own heart posture can effect how we see the works of God. When we harden our hearts and have a small mindset about God's plan we are not able to see all of the potential God has for us.

The law was created as a way to fill in the areas of the Israelites' lives where they fell short of God's plan because of their hardened hearts. However, the law did not permanently fix their heart posture—it was only a temporary solution. This is why God sent Jesus. He is the only one that could wash away our sins with his blood and fill in those gaps where we fall short. I like to think of it as Jesus being the bridge that connects us to God and allows us to have a relationship with Him. The blessing of having a Savior and God that loves us even when we have a heart of stone is an indescribable one. So, this week, meditate in this truth: "But now in Christ Jesus, you who were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ." (Ephesians 2:13)

## REFLECT & RESPOND

What are some areas that you have hardened your heart towards God?

What are sin patterns in your life that you have and need to let the blood of Christ wash over?

How can you use the gift of a relationship with God to connect with Him on a deeper level this week? (Ex. prayer walk, memorizing Scripture, resting in his peace…)

## PRAY

Take some time to pray and ask God to soften your heart. Ask Him to reveal to you the sins of your heart and give them to Him. Thank Him for sending his Son to save you from your sins and the relationship you are able to have with Him because of that.

# GROUP DISCUSSION
## WEEK FOUR

### WEEKLY REVIEW

How have you seen God working in and/or through your life this week—personally, with your family and friends, at work, school, or church?

How has God's Spirit and His Word spoken into your life through this week's sermon and daily devotionals? What did you notice as you were completing them? What questions/thoughts arose?

What will you do differently because of what you have learned or experienced in your time in God's Word, prayer, and worship this week?

How can this group help you apply or follow through on what you are learning or experiencing this week?

## STORY SHARING

Have the person scheduled for this week share. Share about a time when Jesus' role as the Cornerstone of your faith grew, had an impact in how you approached a challenge, or framed how you viewed an opportunity in your life.

## GROUP READING AND DISCUSSION

**Read:** Mark 10:1-12

1. How does Jesus' answer to the Pharisees about divorce speak to the condition of our hearts when we want to excuse our disobedience to God and His Word (v. 2-5)?

**Read:** 1 Samuel 16:7

2. This verse comes from the account of Samuel anointing David as the future king of Israel. David did not look the part of a future king, yet God said it did not matter. How does God's emphasis on the condition of the heart offer further context for this week's key passage in Mark 10?

**Read:** 1 Corinthians 7:9-11

3. This is part of a larger passage you will read or have read as part of our daily devotionals this week. With both this passage and Mark 10:6-9 in mind how would you explain God's view of marriage and His intention for marriage?

4. What about singleness? How does Paul's charge to the Corinthians frame the idea of singleness? How does or should the focus of our heart inform how we approach singleness as followers of Christ and as the "big C" Church?

5. What makes it hard for people to accept the Bible's teaching about divorce, remarriage, singleness and physical intimacy?

## PRAY

Either using the Prayer Cards provided by your leader or using a format your group has decided upon, share anything you would like prayer for this week. If you have time, briefly share them with the group. If using the cards, exchange them. And regardless of how you share, commit to praying for at least one other person this week.

# DAILY DEVOTIONAL | MARCH 16

## SYNOPSIS

Let's start by addressing the "elephant in the room" right off the bat. This passage and others like it (Malachi 2:16 come to mind) has been downplayed by some and weaponized by others. (Check out the work of Dr. Joel Muddamalle on the topic. A brief summary unpacking just a little of this challenging passage can be found here: https://bit.ly/DrJMalachi216.) Now in this account in Mark, the Pharisees come to Jesus with this particular question on divorce because He is now in the region ruled by Herod. The very same Herod who had John the Baptist beheaded because his new wife didn't like what John said about her marriage to Herod. So, when the Pharisees posed their question about divorce, it seems likely that they wanted Jesus to say something similar to John so He too could face the wrath and sword of Herod and Herodias. But, as Jesus often does, He pivots the question. His concern is not about the letter of the law, but about the condition of their hearts—hard hearts that have turned them away from God's original design.

## READ

Mark 10:1-12

## REFLECT

Jesus says a lot of challenging things in Scripture as he calls us back to His original design "in the beginning of creation." Take a moment and jot down the actual phrases in this passage that form the key ideas in this account.

## RESPOND

What is your initial reaction to this passage?

Jesus challenges the Pharisees about their "hard hearts." Is there an area of your life where your heart is hard toward God? Where might God be calling you to soften your heart to Him?

## PRAY

Pray that God will show you where He is calling you to surrender and soften your heart this week and as part of the season of Lent.

# DAILY DEVOTIONAL | MARCH 17

## SYNOPSIS

The Pharisees' attempt to "trap" Jesus in Mark 10 is not the first, nor the last time they try to do so. In fact, just a few weeks ago we looked at Mark 7 where the Pharisees also tried to "catch" Jesus and His disciples saying or doing something they deem as blasphemous. When the Pharisees call out Jesus and His disciples for defying Jewish law, He similarly points to the condition of their hearts. He also once again "flips the script" and challenges the perception of those listening. It is not important what one eats, Jesus tells His listeners, but rather what is important is what flows out of our heart. Let's look back at this passage and the way Jesus responds.

## READ

Mark 7:1-23, Isaiah 29:13

## REFLECT

How does Jesus' response to the Pharisees here in Mark 7 put in perspective His response or relate to His response in the key passage for this week from Mark 10?

In verses 6 and 7 of Mark 7 Jesus quotes Isaiah 29:13. What stands out to you from this passage from Isaiah? How might it also apply to this week's key passage in Mark 10?

## RESPOND

Re-read Isaiah 29:13. Where in your life is God calling out your "worship" or elevation of man-made ritual or tradition, over what He says in His word? This could be in the form of extra "rules" you think you (and others) should follow OR it could be found in a dismissal of God's commands as being irrelevant or outdated. Consider WHY this has happened and ask God to show you HIS truth. Jot down what He is revealing to you below.

## PRAY

Praying scripture can be powerful. Pray Psalm 139:23-24 today, or something similar in your own words.

"Examine me, O God, and probe my thoughts. Test me, and know my concerns. See if there is any idolatrous way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way." (Psalm 139:23-24, NET)

# DAILY DEVOTIONAL | MARCH 18

## SYNOPSIS

There is a danger in taking a passage of Scripture written for a certain people and a certain time and applying it to our own lives as if it was written to us. It is important to keep in mind that much of the Bible was written to a particular group of people. For example, Old Testament prophets wrote to those in exile and New Testament disciples wrote letters to particular churches. However, we are reminded in 2 Timothy 3:16 that, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness…" So, all of God's word is for us but much of God's word is not to us.

With that in mind, today's reading comes to us from the book of Ezekiel. Ezekiel was a prophet who would have been a priest, except that he was taken captive from Jerusalem and forced to live in exile in Babylon. It is to his fellow Jews living in exile that Ezekiel writes and shares the visions and prophesies he has been given. And while we are not among his intended audience, there is a lot that Ezekiel's writings reveal about us, the human heart, and God's desire for redemption and restoration.

## READ

Ezekiel 36: 22-32

## REFLECT

God is very clear about WHY He is about to do good things among the people of Israel. What is that reason according to this passage, and why is that important?

In Scripture, a “heart of stone” is one that is unresponsive to God and a “heart of flesh” is responsive and obedient to God. In this passage, who is responsible for this heart transformation among the people of Israel?

Why do you think it is important that God is the one that transforms Israel’s heart? How does this bring Him glory?

## RESPOND

Scripture is full of dichotomies. We are reminded that we have a choice (free will to choose who we will serve) and that the work of transforming our heart is ultimately a work of Holy Spirit within us. How does your heart and mind respond to these two truths as you contemplate them today? How does it coincide with the idea of Christ as our Cornerstone?

## PRAY

Pray that Holy Spirit will reveal how you can partner with Him in the transformation of your heart. Pray that as you are transformed that God receives the glory and that His kingdom will be expanded.

# DAILY DEVOTIONAL | MARCH 19

## SYNOPSIS

While the heart of the matter in Mark 10:1-12 is, well, the heart, the passage does discuss marriage. So does today's passage from the letter Paul wrote to the Corinthians. Once again, we should keep in mind that this passage was written to a particular group of Christians who were facing a particular set of issues before we try to apply it to ourselves.

Additionally, I think we must stop and acknowledge that the big C church has often not served those who are single well. Perhaps this is inadvertent, perhaps this is because statistically most people will get married, or perhaps it's because of an incorrect belief that we all should get married. Regardless of the reason, it is healthy to acknowledge that this has caused hurt.

Paul makes it clear in this passage, that in his view, whatever path our life has brought us to—married or single—God has called us to live as unto Him in the place we have been assigned.

## READ

I Corinthians 7:1-17

## REFLECT

With his claim in verse seven, "I wish that everyone was as I am" and in verse ten, "I give this command,—not I, but the Lord," Paul makes a distinction between what he thinks and what God is saying. Why is that important in light of this passage?

## RESPOND

What is challenging to you about this passage? What parts are you perhaps tempted to ignore or explain away? What parts are comforting to you?

We often seem to think "the grass is greener on the other side." How does this passage challenge that notion for you in your relationships, living or work situation, etc.?

## PRAY

Pray that in whatever season the Lord has you in that you might find challenging, whether it's your relationship status, your work status, your education status, or financial status, that you can live in such a way as to bring glory to God—relying on Christ as your Cornerstone.

# DAILY DEVOTIONAL | MARCH 20

## SYNOPSIS

In today's Scripture reading we will look at just some of the verses that talk about the heart. In English, we use the term "heart" to refer to our emotional center but in the Hebrew language and culture the "heart" was more all-encompassing. It includes not only our emotions but our mind and intellect, our motives etc.—basically our entire inner person and our true self. So when Jesus tells the Pharisees in Mark 10 that Moses allowed them to issue certificates of divorce to their spouses because of their hard hearts, He wasn't just saying that their emotional center was off-base, but rather their entire inner life was out of alignment with God's. Take some time to read the following verses and, if time allows, some of the chapter around these passages as a reminder of what should be the condition of our complete inner life.

## READ

Deuteronomy 6:5, 1 Samuel 16:7, Proverbs 3:5-6, Proverbs 4:23, Jeremiah 17:9, Matthew 22:37-38

## REFLECT

What is our responsibility when it comes to our heart based on the passages listed above or other Scripture you may know? (Be sure to look up those other passages; don't assume you know what they say!)

## RESPOND

Why do you think Jesus regularly talks about or focuses on the condition of His listeners' hearts?

Why does the condition of our heart matter?

The passage we read yesterday in Ezekiel made it clear that the Spirit was responsible for giving Israel a new heart, while several of the passages today seem to indicate we as humans have a responsibility to guard our heart. How do you see these two ideas practically playing out in conjunction with one another? What does it mean for our faith and how we live as followers of Jesus?

## PRAY

One of the blessings some pray over their children is that they are not "conformed to the pattern of this world, but transformed by the renewing of their mind." This comes from Romans 12:2. And while the passage here mentions the mind and not the heart, a renewed heart and mind, sees the world as God designed it. Ultimately, putting God first, with Christ as the Cornerstone is the challenge of these verses. So take a moment praying Romans 12:1-2 over you and your household. Insert your names or the names of loved ones in the passage, or expand on certain aspects of the passage that highlight needs that feel of particular concern today.

"Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will." (Romans 12:1-2)

# **DAILY DEVOTIONAL** | MARCH 21

## SYNOPSIS

As we look towards the passage for tomorrow's sermon, we come to two vignettes where Jesus challenges the status quo when it comes to people's view on the Kingdom of God. Jesus often spoke of the "Kingdom of God" throughout His ministry and many of these revelations come from parables. However, in this case, the disciples and us readers learn about the Kingdom of God through interactions Jesus has with others.

## READ

Mark 10:13-31

## REFLECT

What phrases, ideas or words stand out to you in this passage?

What do you think Jesus is trying to say about the Kingdom of God in these two interactions?

## RESPOND

How does the message in these encounters about the Kingdom of God challenge, encourage, or reframe your belief about how God works?

## PRAY

Pray that your heart will be prepared for what God wants to teach you this upcoming week and that the lessons you learned this last week will influence your thoughts and actions and transform your heart.

# WEEK FIVE

## MEMORY VERSE

*Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God."*

*- Mark 10:27 (NIV)*

# SUNDAY SERVICE | MARCH 22

# FAMILY DEVOTIONAL
## WEEK FIVE

### READ

Mark 10:46-52 - Our family likes to use the Explorer Bible for Kids. Any Bible will work, though.

### WATCH

Here is a video that gives a short, visual summary of the story as well.

WEEK 5 FAMILY VIDEO

### REVIEW

Have you ever believed that Jesus would want you to do something even when others are telling you not to? Today's story is a short one, but it has a lot of very important things in it.

As Jesus and His disciples were walking to Jericho, they came along a man who was on the road. This man was blind and was a beggar. In those days, people who had disabilities (such as being blind) did not have a way to work, so they had to beg for their money to live. This man's name was Bartimaeus. When Bartimaeus heard that it was Jesus walking by, he called out to Jesus, saying, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Wait a minute. Why does Bartimaeus call Jesus the Son of David? Wasn't Jesus the son of God, born of Mary who had Joseph as His earthly Father? Yes, He was. But that phrase, "Son of David" is actually a very important phrase. The people of Jesus' day were very familiar with the Old Testament scriptures, especially the ones that talked about a future Messiah coming to save them. The people knew that the future Messiah would be a Son of David. This means that He would come from the line (or genealogy) of David. It also signified royalty, as David is one of the most famous kings of Israel in history. The image of King David would also lead the people of Israel to believe that the Son

of David was full of compassion and mercy. When Bartimaeus calls Jesus the Son of David, he is already showing a huge amount of faith. He is confessing that he knows Jesus is the Messiah. It's pretty amazing to think that this man who was on the side of the road begging for money because he was blind recognized right away that Jesus was the Messiah, and he was not afraid to shout it out loud.

Do you see what the people around Jesus (His followers) do? They obviously are impressed with Bartimaeus' faith and encourage him to come see Jesus to be healed, right? Wrong. The people actually rebuke, or harshly tell him, not to bother Jesus. They tell him to be silent. Wait, what? Why would the followers of Jesus do that? Here's the thing: as we have seen before, Jesus' followers often thought that Jesus only came to Earth to teach and heal "important" people. We saw this when the disciples tried to send the little children away. This just isn't the case. Jesus says many times in His ministry that He came to seek and save the lost. When we look at the people Jesus chose to spend time with and surround Himself with, we see that it often was not the people that the world would think of as important.

Bartimaeus' response to the followers of Jesus is my favorite part of this story. Even though they told him to be silent, he did not give up. He kept believing that Jesus could heal him. Have you ever had something like this happen? Was there ever a time when people told you something was impossible, but you knew God could do it? Did you ever think that your prayer request was too small to bring to God because you didn't want to "bother" Him? I've been there many times. The amazing thing is, though, Jesus WANTS to bring the things going on in our lives to Him. It does't bother Him, but it brings Him joy to see us have faith in Him that He can do all things. No matter what is going on in your life right now, big or small, you can bring it to Jesus. He loves you and cares about you.

As the story ends today, we see that Jesus heals Bartimaeus and tells him to go on his way. Go back and see what Bartimaeus does. He follows Jesus. When we see Jesus move and act in the world around us the best and most appropriate way to show our gratitude is to follow and worship Him. I pray today that your faith will be as strong as the faith of Bartimaeus, who never stopped

believing and continued to follow Jesus, no matter what the people around him said.

## REFLECT

Have you ever had a time where you kept believing in Jesus even when others told you it was impossible or you should stop? Describe that time.

Do you ever worry about bringing your requests to Jesus because they may seem too big or too small? Which one of those requests can you give over to Him today?

## PRAY

As a family, pray that you will take time this week to stop and listen to what God may be telling you. Pray that you will be open to listening and hearing what He may have for you today. Pray that you will be open to following what He asks you to do to put Him first, even if it is difficult. Your prayer might sound like this:

"Father, thank you for your compassion and mercy. Thank you for sending Jesus to the people of this world that most would think are not important. Help us remember that you love us so much that You want to hear what is going on in our lives. Give us the faith of Bartimaeus to call out and believe in you, no matter what others may say. We love you. Amen."

## REMEMBER

It can be fun to do an activity to help us remember the things that we are learning from the Bible. Today's activity helps us remember that we can continue to seek out Jesus and have faith in Him, no matter what is going on around us.

Materials

- Glasses Template (printed on cardstock), Markers/Crayons/ Colored pencils, Scissors, 5x5 inch square of colored cellophane (any color), glue or tape

FAMILY DEVO SUPPLIES

Steps

- As a family, write on the glasses template, "I want to see Jesus."
- Decorate the glasses with stickers, coloring, designs, or anyway you would like.
- Cut out the outside lines on the glasses.
- Have an adult cut out the inner portion (lenses of the glasses)
- Use the colored cellophane to cut a square and glue or tape to the back of each lens.
- Assemble the glasses and enjoy.

## MARCH MEMORY VERSE FOR FLIPT

*"…Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved."*

*- Acts 4:12 (NIV)*

# FSM DEVOTIONAL
## WEEK FIVE

### READ

Mark 10:13-31

### SYNOPSIS

Do you have a job? If not, you probably will someday. At a job, you work in order to earn money. You complete tasks, show up on time, work with others, and the more you work, the more you earn. We understand this idea of earning so well that we apply it to almost every area of life.

We work to earn outside of the workplace too. Some of you work hard on a school project to earn a good grade. Others put in hours practicing a sport or an instrument to earn a skill you're proud of. None of these things are bad. But often, we start working to earn more than just grades or skills. We work on how we look to earn compliments and affirmation. We try to impress others to earn their approval. We strive to be good or perfect to earn love. We work to fit in so we can earn acceptance.

It's easy, then, to start believing that God works the same way: that if we're good enough, spiritual enough, or put together enough, then Jesus will want us. But in this passage, Jesus lifts up children as the ones who receive the kingdom of God. The reality about children is that they are incapable of earning anything. They cannot strive the way adults do. They cannot perform, achieve, or present themselves as falsely perfect. And yet, they are exactly the ones Jesus points to as an example.

In fact, the disciples try to block the children from coming to Jesus, assuming He only has time for "important" people. But Jesus responds by welcoming them and declaring that the kingdom of God belongs to people like them. This moment reveals the heart of the gospel: salvation is not something we achieve; it is something we receive. We don't climb our way up to God. God comes down to us. Like a child being lifted into Jesus' arms, we are held by grace, not by effort.

## REFLECT & RESPOND

What makes you feel like you have to earn love or approval?

Do you ever feel that pressure in your relationship with God? Where does that pressure come from?

What would it look like to come to Jesus with open hands instead of trying to impress Him?

## PRAY

Take a few deep breaths. Reflect on the fact that you are chosen not for what you've done, but for what Christ has done and His love for you. Sit in that reality and let God love you in this space.

# SERVE EXPERIENCE

## WHAT IS THIS?

As people of faith we are called to service. We are called to take care of those in need (Matthew 25:31-46), and to use our gifts to encourage the body of believers (1 Corinthians 12:7). We encourage you as part of this Lenten season to intentionally serve those around you. This will look differently for each of us! If you are in a group, this might be something you do together. It could be something you do as a family or as an individual. This might be a spontaneous random act of kindness or an intentional service you perform. Pray and let Holy Spirit lead! As part of this process, if you have never taken a Spiritual Gift test, we would encourage you to start there to get an idea of where/how to serve while using your gifts.

FLIPSIDE SPIRITUAL GIFTS TEST

## SERVE IDEAS

This list is not exhaustive, but is provided to help you start your brainstorming!

EASTER VOLUNTEER SIGN-UP

1. Volunteer at one of our Easter gatherings - from the parking lot to ushering to greeting to kids, there will be plenty of opportunities to serve our community this Easter!

2. Put together kits to keep in your car (gift cards, water, snacks and personal care items) to distribute to those you come across in your day to day travels who might be experiencing homelessness.

3. Pick a coworker or classmate who needs encouragement, or is a challenge for you to get along with. Pray for them during the next week and consider surprising them with a coffee or sweet treat.

4. Write and mail (who doesn't like getting mail?!) cards or letters of encouragement or gratitude to folks you know. Or

send a text and perhaps a coffee gift card. Or write to one of our missionaries living overseas - they'd love to be remembered!

5. How can you serve your neighbor? Do you have older neighbors who might need help around the house or friends who are moving? Is there a young family who might need childcare for a date night? Consider offering a hand.

6. Prayer or Trash Walk - Grab a trash bag, maybe a grabber tool and gloves, and take a moment to walk around your neighborhood or local park and get to work! As you go, consider praying for those you encounter (quietly or if you want by offering to do so). Perhaps choose a school or government building and walk around its perimeter praying as you go.

7. Join Flipside in partnering with Missions of Hope to provide education and medical care to children in the Mathare Valley of Nairobi, Kenya.

8. Do you know someone who is struggling with illness or recovery or those who have welcomed a new baby and could be blessed by a meal? Take some time to provide one! Sound like something you would love to do but not sure where to begin? Volunteer with Flipside's Mobile Blessings or Special Deliveries! Sign-up with the Flipside Outreach QR code found here!

9.Join one of Flipside's local outreach events: Homeless Outreach (2nd Monday night monthly), Food Pantry (3rd Saturday morning monthly), Community Garden (one morning monthly) Lincoln Elementary School, San Bernardino outreach (3rd Thursday morning monthly). sign-up with the Flipside Outreach QR code found above!

If you want to find out more about any of these or other serve opportunities, contact Sherman@flipsidechurch.com.

# GROUP DISCUSSION
## WEEK FIVE

### SERVE EXPERIENCE

*Spend time talking about and planning a way to serve together as a group in the next few weeks. You can use the ideas on the previous page to get started!*

### WEEKLY REVIEW

How have you seen God working in and/or through your life this week—personally, with your family and friends, at work, school, or church?

How has God's Spirit and His Word spoken into your life through this week's sermon and daily devotionals? What did you notice as you were completing them? What questions/thoughts arose?

What will you do differently because of what you have learned or experienced in your time in God's Word, prayer, and worship this week?

How can this group help you apply or follow through on what you are learning or experiencing this week?

## STORY SHARING

Have the person scheduled for this week share. Share about a time when Jesus' role as the Cornerstone of your faith grew, had an impact in how you approached a challenge, or framed how you viewed an opportunity in your life.

## GROUP READING AND DISCUSSION

**Read:** Mark 10:13-16

1. How does the idea of receiving the Kingdom of God like a child reflect the simplicity of becoming a Christ-follower?

**Read:** Mark 10:17-25

2. What does Jesus' heart toward the rich man show us about how we should respond to people who are yet to know Christ (v. 21)?

3. What is Christ asking of us when we give our lives to follow Him?

4. What earthly attachments are barriers to you fully serving and submitting to Christ?

**Read:** Mark 10:26-31

5. We have all given up things we thought were valuable to follow Christ. How would you explain that the benefits of following Christ outweigh the loss of what you gave up?

## PRAY

Either using the Prayer Cards provided by your leader or using a format your group has decided upon share anything you would like prayer for this week. If you have time, briefly share them with the group. If using the cards, exchange them. And regardless of how you share, commit to praying for at least one other person this week.

# DAILY DEVOTIONAL | MARCH 23

## SYNOPSIS

Children in Jesus' time were viewed very differently than today. They were loved, of course, which is why people were bringing them for Jesus to heal. But there were no schools and there certainly weren't children's rights. They weren't seen as cute but more as useless nuisances in society until they were old enough to work or be more helpful.

But Jesus values children and values the qualities that we associate with children today: innocence, trust, and wonder. One of the lasting cultural impacts of Christianity is an elevation and protection for the least of these in society, like children.

## READ

Mark 10:13-16

## REFLECT

Childhood is rightly seen as a very special period in life. When the disciples were shooing kids away from Jesus, he reprimanded them. In fact, he told them that the kingdom of God belongs to children and only those with a childlike faith would enter the kingdom.

The Pharisees added layer after layer of legalism to the law, while the disciples saw the kingdom of God in human terms. Jesus is saying to return a simple faith, one like a child.

Some childlike characteristics are: faith to believe in miracles and wonder, comfort in knowing they are loved, trust to take someone at their word, joy in the simple things in life, a care and worry-free outlook.

What is this passage saying about how we should approach the Kingdom of God?

Why are are childhood character traits like being dependent, needy and humble necessary in receiving the kingdom of God?

## RESPOND

What are some childlike characteristics that would be helpful for you to return to or revive?

What are some “big person” issues or questions that you struggle with that you need to lift up in prayer?

## PRAY

“Lord Jesus, I lift up my childhood to you and all the happy - and painful - experiences. Thank you that you love the smallest and weakest of society. Help me to trust you fully as my Heavenly Father. Show me one way today that I may be more childlike in my faith. Amen.”

# DAILY DEVOTIONAL | MARCH 24

## SYNOPSIS

**Speak, for your servant is listening to you** - There are many times in the Bible when God works through children or teens: David, well before he was king; King Josiah, only eight years old! (2 Kings 22:1-2); the boy whose loaves and fishes were multiplied to feed thousands (John 6:9), all come to mind. Samuel was one such child. Let's look at one of his encounters with God.

## READ

1 Samuel 3:1-10

## REFLECT

Samuel's mother, Hannah, dedicated him to a life of serving the Lord as an act of thanks and praise for the gift of her son. This passage tells us that revelation or word from God was rare in those days. A big reason was that the priests were corrupt and immoral. In fact, "they had no regard for the Lord" (1 Sam 2:12). But that would not stop God from speaking to His people. He was looking for someone with a pure heart and with an attentive spirit to the Lord and He finds this in Samuel. The Lord was with Samuel and he was recognized as a righteous prophet of God. He anointed David, the greatest king of Israel.

"Here I am; you called me," and, "Speak, for your servant is listening." Samuel's two responses to God are beautiful in their simplicity. They express a willing and obedient spirit to follow God.

How does Samuel demonstrate child-like faith in his response to God's voice?

## RESPOND

Make these words of Samuel your prayer today. Pause and allow the Holy Spirit to answer.

"Here I am; you called me." "Speak, for your servant is listening."

What might God be calling you to do today? Or in the weeks and months ahead? Do you sense a long-term calling in your life?

If you need help discerning what God might be saying to you, talk and process it with a friend in Christ.

## PRAY

"Lord God, I want to follow your guidance and I want to know your will for me. Here I am, ready to be used by you, warts and all, weaknesses and strengths, failures and gifting. Show me how I can glorify you in my life. Amen."

# DAILY DEVOTIONAL | MARCH 25

## SYNOPSIS

**What are you holding on to?** - A man runs up to Jesus and asks about eternal life. It appears like it will be a great moment: Jesus pointing someone to heaven. But as the interaction goes on, it reveals more about the heart of this man, often referred to as the rich young ruler, and what matters most to him.

## READ

Mark 10:17-22

## REFLECT

The man asks, “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” He asks about how he can gain something for himself, when he could have asked about his relationship with God, like, “How can I be right with God?”

He asks what must I do? He is looking for a formula, for clear steps to follow. Jesus points him to the law, the Ten Commandments. Jesus begins his answer by saying that “no one is good.” He’s saying that keeping these commands perfectly is the only way to be “good” and no one is good enough to do that. No one is perfect except God alone.

But the man seems to think he is. “All these I have kept since I was a boy.” He is probably feeling pretty good about himself. And then Jesus gives him a command that pierces his heart. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor…Then come, follow me.”

Jesus knew the one thing that mattered to him the most. In essence, he is asking, “Are you willing to lay down the most important thing in your life to follow me?” For the rich young ruler it was his wealth that stopped him from following Jesus.

What does this passage teach us about things that are stumbling blocks for us humans in pursuing Jesus with our whole heart?

## RESPOND

What is something that is hindering you from following Jesus? Is it a question or doubt? Is it a past experience? Is it an insecurity or worry?

How are you doing in the area of giving or serving the poor?

How much of a hold does money and wealth have on you?

## PRAY

"Lord, I want to follow you fully. Show me the areas in my life that I am reluctant to surrender to you. "Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." (Psalm 139: 23-24)

# DAILY DEVOTIONAL | MARCH 26

## SYNOPSIS

I**nside vs outside** - Our inner lives and thoughts vs our outward appearances and behaviors—Jesus had a lot to say about those. What shows on the outside isn't necessarily an accurate representation on what's on the inside. Our inner life reveals who we really are, it's what really matters. Paul expresses this same idea in talking about sacrifice and worship.

Worship should be our natural response to God's love, goodness, and mercy. Paul contrasts two forms of sacrifice and worship. His readers would have been very familiar with "dead sacrifices," such as animal sacrifices. He plays on this by saying that in the new covenant, this new way of relating to God through Christ, we don't have offer animal sacrifices anymore. Instead, we are to be "living sacrifices," holy and pleasing to God. This is our true act of worship.

To "conform" means to be shaped by external forces that produce a surface-level change. Putting on the right appearances and going through the motions can be like that. Someone in those days might look like he or she was worshipping by sacrificing an animal—which might not correspond to the internal condition of their heart.

Transformation is a complete change that begins on the inside and works its way outward. God invites us to renew our minds and reorient our desires and dreams to be aligned with His word and His will.

Change is not easy, and sometimes painful. But when we die to our old ways and live for Christ, we make ourselves a living sacrifice, a true act of worship.

## READ

Romans 11: 33-36, 12:1-2

## REFLECT

What specific things does Paul praise God for in Romans 11:33-36?

What does Romans 12:1-2 say about our response to all of God's greatness and goodness?

## RESPOND

What mercy of God has felt most impactful in your life today?

In what ways do you feel pressure from the world to conform to its ways?

What is one action step you can take to live out Romans 12:1-2 this week?

## PRAY

"Almighty God, I praise you for your wisdom and knowledge, and thank you for the depth of your love and mercy to me. There is nothing I can do to repay you for what Jesus did on the cross for me. But I can offer myself as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to you. Show me how I can do that today so that you may be glorified in my life. Amen."

# DAILY DEVOTIONAL | MARCH 27

## SYNOPSIS

In our reading on Wednesday, Jesus told a rich young man that if he wanted to follow Him, he had to let go of what mattered most to him: his wealth. He told the man to sell his possessions and give to the poor. The man was dejected and went away sad. Jesus told the disciples, "It is easier to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God," to which the disciples ask: "Who then can be saved?"

## READ

Mark 10:23-31

## REFLECT

Verse 26 gives us a clue that the disciples still aren't completely understanding Jesus' upside-down kingdom. They are astonished that the rich will have a hard time entering the Kingdom of God, because they assumed the rich were wealthy as a sign of their blessing. How does Jesus challenge their assumptions yet again?

Verse 27 is a great one to memorize and keep close to our heart for any situation. It's a reminder of God's omnipotence and sovereignty. Jesus is using this in the context of personal salvation and can be used as the foundation of our intercession for others.

If there's someone in your life you've been witnessing to or praying and hoping that God will break through to them—someone who seems like they'll never give their lives to Christ—pray this prayer. If there is a sin pattern or stronghold or something in your life that you have battled but haven't experienced victory over; if there is something you have the

hardest time giving over to God, pray this prayer. God is in the business of changing hearts and drawing people to Him. He loves that person you're praying for, even more than you do. Keep praying and believing God to do the impossible.

## RESPOND

Who are people you want to see know Jesus?

Who and where are communities of people you're praying to know Jesus?

Look up the countries with the highest persecution of Christians and pray for them.

What feels like an impossibility in your life?

## PRAY

"Father, thank you for loving us. Thank you for revealing yourself to us, through creation, through your Word and by the Holy Spirit and through other people. I praise you that all things are possible with you. I lift up the impossible things in my life and believe that you make them possible. I lift up people in my life who I think will never call you Savior, and I believe you for their salvation. Amen"

# DAILY DEVOTIONAL | MARCH 28

## SYNOPSIS

Amidst the candy, eggs and bunnies, and the victory of the resurrection, we can't avoid the fact that crucifixion and death are essential to the story of Easter. As much as we want to downplay or sugarcoat or avoid the cross, we can't, because Jesus didn't. The disciples wanted to deny that aspect of Jesus' ministry and Messiah-ship, but he didn't give them that option. It was His mission to give His life for us, which would mean enduring suffering and humiliation and dying an excruciating death.

## READ

Mark 10:32-45

## REFLECT

The disciples, the brothers James and John in particular, still don't understand what it meant to follow Jesus. They envisioned Jesus overthrowing the Jewish and Roman powers of the day, and that they, as His loyal followers, would get an honored, privileged seat as His side.

But Jesus asks if they can drink of His cup, or be baptized with His baptism. He is saying: my mission is the cross and I will suffer. If you truly want to follow me, you must accept that you will experience the same. Peter writes, "To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps." (1 Peter 2:22)

True discipleship means that we understand that following Jesus is not all roses and rainbows, blessings and answered prayers. There will be difficult situations we face that we won't be able to find a positive or upside.

But there is some encouragement we can find in our suffering. Maybe a lot. Peter also tells us, " But rejoice in as much as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when His glory is revealed." (1 Peter 4:13)

What truths about Jesus and His ministry do the disciples miss in Mark 10, especially in light of what Peter learns by the time he writes the quoted Scripture in 1 Peter?

## RESPOND

Are you going through a period of suffering now? What was a time of suffering in the past?

What was your perspective on it? What did you learn from it?

For your past, present, or future sufferings, instead of praying for God to take it away, ask Him how the experience can help you identify a little more with Christ in His suffering for you and for the world.

## PRAY

“Lord, thank you for the perfect submission of Jesus to your will. Thank you for His prayer of obedience in Gethsemane before He was crucified, “Father, if it is your will, take this cup of suffering away from me. However not my will, but yours be done.” Give me eyes to see this suffering from your perspective. I echo the prayer of my Lord Jesus: not my will, but yours be done. Amen.”

# WEEK SIX

## MEMORY VERSE

*In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.*

*- Philippians 2:5-7 (NIV)*

# **SUNDAY SERVICE** | MARCH 29

# AN INTRO TO THE PASSOVER SEDER

## WEEK SIX

*This week at Flipside, our church will be hosting a Seder dinner. You might be wondering what a Seder dinner is. In lieu of a group or family devotional this week, you have this to guide as an introduction to some of the key elements of the Seder. We encourage you to read through it as a family or individual before you attend the Seder dinner. Be sure to check for announcements on dates and times, and how to sign-up and we encourage you to attend with your group!*

## READ

Exodus 12:1-14

## SYNOPSIS

The Seder meal is the meal that Jewish people would celebrate at Passover to remind them of God rescuing them from Egypt. It has many foods and drinks that serve as reminders of their story out of Egypt and in the desert.

As Christians, we can see the beauty of this story, but we also have an even more significant relationship to the Seder dinner. While the Israelites celebrated this dinner waiting for the arrival of the Messiah, we know that Jesus (the Messiah) came, lived, died, and rose again for our sins. We can look at the symbolism of this dinner and see how it points to the Israelites' history and to Jesus as the Messiah.

There are many elements of the Seder that have significance and meaning to help us remember. Here are some of them:

- **Matzah** (or unleavened bread) helps us remember that the Israelites had to leave Egypt quickly, so they had to cook bread without yeast, since there would be no time for the bread to rise. This can also help us remember Jesus' body, which was broken for our sins.

- **Maror** (or bitter herbs) helps us to remember the bitterness of slavery that the Israelites experienced in Egypt. It can also help us, as Christians, remember the bitterness of slavery or bondage to sin.

- **Charoset** is usually a sweet mixture of fruits and nuts. This mixture serves to remind us of the mortar that the Israelites used as slaves in Egypt. It can also serve as a reminder that the sweetness of redemption is so much better than the bitterness of slavery to sin.

- **Zeroa** (the shankbone) is a reminder of the Passover lamb. The Israelites used the blood of the lamb to paint the doorposts of their houses, so they would be saved from the final plague. As Christians, we see that Jesus was the ultimate sacrificial lamb. We are saved from sin because He shed His blood for us and took our place.

- **Beitzah** (roasted or boiled egg) represents the sacrifices that were brought to the Temple, which would bring about new life. We can also use the empty shell of the egg to remember Jesus' empty tomb which brings new life to Christians.

- **Karpas** (green vegetables - or parsley) are often dipped in salt water (which represents the tears of those in slavery in Egypt) to symbolize that after the tears came a new life. This also reminds us that after we believe in Jesus, we turn away from the hopelessness of living in our sin and we are given a new life.

- The **Afikomen** (a broken piece of Matzah, wrapped in a cloth napkin and hidden somewhere in the room/house) to the Israelites represented a replacement to sacrifices in the temple as well as an incompleteness in waiting for a future Messiah who would come and provide the ultimate redemption. As Christians, we know that this Messiah came and did redeem us all. This Afikomen represents Jesus' broken body, buried in the tomb for the three days before He rose again on Easter.

In addition to the food above, there are **four cups** of wine (or juice) that are served during this meal at specific times. Each one represents something different, reminding us of the promises of deliverance that God spoke to His people in Exodus 6:6-7: "Therefore, say to the Israelites: 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from

being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians."

- The first cup is called the **Cup of Sanctification and Freedom**. Some people think of this cup as the "I will bring out" cup and it serves to remind us that the people of Israel were brought out of slavery into the Promised Land. As Christians, we can also remember that Jesus brought us out of our sin into a life with Him.

- The second cup is referred to as the **Cup of Deliverance**, or the "I will deliver" cup and shows that God delivered His people from their slavery in Egypt. It also reminds us that God delivers us from our sin.

- The third cup, or the **Cup of Redemption**, or the "I will redeem" cup reminds us that God is the only One who can redeem us. It also serves as a reminder of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross and His blood poured out for us. Many people believe that it was at this point in the Seder with His disciples that Jesus told them, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you." (Luke 22:20).

- The final cup, the **Cup of Praise**, also known as the "I will take" cup, reminds us that God took the Israelites and made them His people. He kept His covenant with them, and as a result, their response should be to praise. It also serves to remind us that we have become children of God. Our response for the sacrifice of Jesus and all He has done should also be one of praise and worship.

*We hope that you will be able to join us at Flipside for the Seder dinner. However, if this is not possible for your schedule, there are many places you can lookup online on how to do one with your family, roommates, friends, etc. Here are a couple of resources that could be helpful, if you would like to do this at home.*

Simplified Seder

Messianic Seder with Kids

# FSM DEVOTIONAL
## WEEK SIX

### READ

Mark 10:32-52

### SYNOPSIS

There is a lot going on in today's section and there is so much we can learn from it. However, let's focus on the upside down life we have with Jesus. We first see this when Jesus predicts his death. Jesus will be persecuted, mocked, and hung on a cross dying a criminal's death. This section shows us that Jesus came to do the unexpected. Many thought that the prophesied king would come to take down the Roman empire, but that is definitely not what happened. Jesus humbled himself to live the life of a man and to a death on the cross. This humility and opposite way of living to the world is what being a follower of Jesus looks like.

Then Jesus tells the disciples that to live a life of Jesus you will first experience suffering. But also, you must lay your lives down for others just as Jesus did for us. This can be hard though because it requires us to put down our pride and humble ourselves in order to serve others. We can not go through suffering or live a service filled life without first being transformed by Him. Without His strength, without trusting in Him, without the grace and mercy we receive from Him we won't be able to live as He did. And in order to do that we must invite Jesus in to our hearts and be transformed by Him. When we walk with Him we no longer live as we used to, but instead we live a transformed life like Jesus. So, this week meditate on the this truth: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old has passed away, and see the new has come!" 2 Corinthians 5:17

## REFLECT & RESPOND

Where are some areas of your life that you need to put down your pride?

This week how can you have a servant heart? (Ex. doing something before your parents ask, being patient with your siblings, helping a classmate at school, etc.)

How does it feel to have a transformed life in Jesus?

## PRAY

Take some time to pray and invite Jesus into all the parts of your life—even the "small" parts. Ask Him to help you to put down your pride and to show you opportunities to serve others this week.

# DAILY DEVOTIONAL | MARCH 30

## SYNOPSIS

Gravity: the invisible force that keeps all things grounded to the earth. We don't give it much thought until we need to work against it or it's working against us. Few truly understand it. Life with Jesus can feel like this sometimes. Like gravity, we may have a rudimentary idea of the extent of God's presence in our lives, but understanding it is a whole other thing. The disciples are considered examples of people living directly within the force of God's promise being fulfilled, but struggle to understand the upside down kingdom He had come to establish. Did they think it was a parable? Were they not really listening? Was it too hard to hear so they chose to skirt the topic? Did the context of their time and culture have too great an influence? Or maybe they assumed He'd be stepping in as king, so of course there would be opposition. This was the third time Jesus predicted His coming fulfillment of Scripture, a role the disciples did not seem to recognize.

## READ

Jesus Foretells His Death a Third Time - Mark 10:32-34

## REFLECT

What aspects of the gospel message do you feel you don't quite grasp? Is there a part of Jesus' calling that you feel pressing on you, but you are pushing back?

## RESPOND

Take some time to sit quietly while listening to a song like “Holy Spirit” or “Come Thou Fount” that asks God to connect with us so that we might live with even the most basic understanding of His love for us.

## PRAY

“Lord, we have the benefit of being on the backside of your promise being fulfilled and yet, because we live in the already/not yet of your second coming, we too can fail to see what is laid right before us just as the disciples did. Thank you for the gift of your Word. Help us to live as people of promise, grounded and living in the light of your redemptive work. Amen.”

# DAILY DEVOTIONAL | MARCH 31

## SYNOPSIS

Oh, James and John… It's easy to criticize them from our perspective but there are times we struggle with similar thinking. Here are two people who have been dwelling in the presence of the King of Kings and heard that there were many aspects of a life in His presence that would be harsh, but still aren't comprehending the intent of the kingdom. Maybe they figured that their request was a lot less complicated than asking for a physical miracle but by focusing on status and position, they have shown that they are not grounded in Jesus' purpose. They are practically demonstrating opposition to the words Jesus spoke. They do not grasp a different kind of gravity—the kind referenced in yesterday's passage. The kind Jesus referred to in sharing how God would fulfill his promise through less-than-glorified means: humiliation and a criminal's consequence. But Jesus knew and rather than fulfilling the request, he helped reframe it (which will be the emphasis of tomorrow's devotional).

## READ

The Request of James and John - Mark 10:35-40

## REFLECT

Have you ever committed to something because you liked the premise, but you misunderstood what it would take to achieve the end goal?

## RESPOND

Make a list of people you can serve in small ways. Not because it will make you look or feel good, but because it would show obedience to the greatest Servant of All. Are there any of these people it is more difficult for you to serve in humility and love? (Did you even include those people?) How can you demonstrate God's love to these people today? (See I Corinthians 13:4-8 if you need a refresher on what love looks like.)

## PRAY

"Lord, make me a vessel of your peace. Fill me with your love, compassion and servant's heart. Help me to ask what is needed and see others through the lens of redemption. Amen."

# DAILY DEVOTIONAL | APRIL 1

## SYNOPSIS

Many modern day theologians refer to God's kingdom as an "upside down economy." In other words, as Ann Voskamp put it, "you must bend low to lift high." After the dear Sons of Thunder (James and John) were done vying for position the other disciples expressed their disdain for their behavior—after admitting they had been doing the very same thing themselves just a few short verses before. It is at this moment Jesus reminded them of one of the key themes we've seen throughout Mark: humility and servant leadership are the measures of greatness in the Kingdom. It's not about status, it's about posture: bending down in order to give a boost toward kingdom living.

## READ

Mark 10:31-45

## REFLECT

What part of this call to servant leadership is easy for you? What makes it difficult?

## RESPOND

Take a moment to take the challenge Pastor Jon gave in December: Where have you been trying to follow Jesus, but not die to self? Make the choice to be a servant to someone today. Start with someone in the closest circle of your Oikos (those whom God has placed in your circle of influence).

## PRAY

“Father, help us wake up and choose you every day. Make the rhythm of our days be that of servants who clothe ourselves with compassion, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Help us live out the words of Galatians 2:20: “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. Amen.”

# DAILY DEVOTIONAL | APRIL 2

## SYNOPSIS

“I once was lost, but now am found. Was blind, but now I see.” This refrain is ageless and evocative because spiritual darkness overcome by God’s redemptive power is the core of our stories. Understanding the impact of being separate from God’s plan can be tricky because we see with the limited lenses of our own experience. And yet, he said we only have to have faith like a child. So sit at the feet of the Rabbi and engage, wrestle with and absorb his ways, but maybe approach it like a small child who has just watched you take a picture and immediately says, “I want to see!” Yes Lord! We want to see you and look in amazement as we gaze at the picture of your great love for us. Give us your vision for the part we get to play by making you the lens through which we see.

## READ

Jesus Heals Blind Bartimaeus - Mark 10:46-52

## REFLECT

How would you respond to Jesus’ question, “What do you want me to do for you?”

In what ways has your faith healed you?

In what areas of your life are you only seeing your image in that developed picture and missing out on all that God has placed in the frame?

## RESPOND

Write out the areas of your life on the left where you've had uncertainty, fear, lack of direction, etc… Fill in where you saw God's promise fulfilled on the right. Include something you may not have an answer to yet and set a reminder to do a "Heart Vision Check" every few months to see how your eyes have been opened. It may not be the answer you expected or hoped for, but I bet you'll see His faithfulness sprinkled in along the way!

| Was blind | Now I see |
| --- | --- |
| | |

## PRAY

"Lord, may I never tire of calling for your mercy. Help me make space in my life to reveal your kindness and open the eyes of my heart to your goodness that I might faithfully serve those around me with your never stopping, never giving up, always and forever love. Amen."

# GOOD FRIDAY SERVICE | APRIL 3

*Join us tonight for one of our Good Friday services (see website for times) to reflect together as a community.*

# DAILY DEVOTIONAL | APRIL 4

## SYNOPSIS

Oh man! Now there was probably no misunderstanding what Jesus had been conveying in Monday's passage and in his response to James, John, and the indignant disciples. I'm fairly certain that James and John would no longer be asking to sit at the right hand of Jesus. Yes, they may have been able to join in this baptism of trial after trial (and inevitably would pay the ultimate price for their faith), but were probably far less excited to be a responsible party to the accusations and subsequent actions that were playing out. Jesus had done his best to prepare the disciples, but the gravity of the situation would make the myriad of responses inevitable: sadness, disbelief, anger and betrayal. And of course there is perhaps the strongest reaction when we look at Peter. Who moves from "I'm with you to the end, Lord," to "No, I never knew the man!"—in an act of denial. As we sit in the confusion and tension of this time after the crucifixion, may we consider the cost of following Jesus.

## READ

Luke 22 and 23

## REFLECT

Do you ever imagine how you would have responded in these circumstances? How do you respond today when Jesus is maligned or misunderstood? Do you trust in the promise or fight or even flee?

## RESPOND

Take a moment to lament:

- Be sad for the difficult parts of this story
- Apologize for any ways you may have contributed to that hurt
- Ask for forgiveness
- Pray for those who do not yet know God's never stopping, never giving up, unending, always and forever love

## PRAY

"Lord Jesus, we grieve the deep betrayal and loneliness that led to the tomb. We see the gravity of that even today. As we sit in the in-between that grief brings, help us to be truly engrossed in the story and the song that is your work being fulfilled. Let us be grounded by the force of your love as we allow you to tune our hearts and minds into instruments of your peace. Amen"

# **EASTER SERVICE** | APRIL 5

# WHAT'S NEXT?

You did it! You have completed your Lent journal! Whether you spent every day on these pages, skipped a few, or had to play catch-up a few times, you have spent significant time in prayer and reflection on God's Word over the last six-and-a-half weeks. We hope and pray that in doing so you find yourself with a deeper understanding of the role Jesus plays as the Cornerstone of your faith.

We encourage you to continue to reflect on the challenges and questions of Scripture by carrying on this habit of being in God's Word daily. There are many ways to continue to explore Scripture from reading plans in your Bible app to Small Groups here at the Flipside. If you have not done so already, we would encourage you to sign up for a season of Rooted. It is an intentional way to make the practices of the faith integrated into your everyday life.

No matter what is next for you in your faith journey, take some time to celebrate this milestone!

God is good. He came to earth in the person of Jesus Christ to reconcile the world unto Him. And in all the struggle or triumphs or heartache or challenges we face as we live out our faith, Jesus went first. We are reminded of this in Hebrews 12:1-3:

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart."

Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, has gone before us, laid the foundation of what it means to live for God with our whole heart, and was and is our Cornerstone. May the influence of the risen Lord be found in increasing measure in every aspect of our lives.

FLIPSIDE