



Theme: Simply Irresistible

“Irresistible Life”

Weekly Memory Verses:

¹⁷ This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun. –2 Corinthians 5:17

Spiritual Formation or Family Activity Ideas for the Week: At church, we meet many different people with different thoughts and opinions, yet we are all there to worship God! How does your family approach church? Are you excited and joyful? Do you make it seem irresistible? Do you complain about the weather or the walk from the parking lot or how sports schedules get disrupted? Do you struggle to get dressed and out the door on time if you go in person, or do you struggle to find time if you are watching online? Is your home filled with uplifting words, or hollered, hurried words as you prepare for worship? To help you remember that worship is about reminding yourself of God’s presence, consider playing worship music as you prepare. You might pray for a receptive heart and positive spirit the afternoon or evening before you go or watch online. Read a Bible story to help center your mind on God. Choose one idea to try this next week and enjoy a more fulfilling experience in God’s presence!

Monday, October 18 – Read Matthew 11:28-30. Through the prophet Jeremiah, God called Israel to find rest by trusting his covenant with them. Sadly, the people refused God’s offer in Jeremiah 6:15-16. Literally, a “yoke,” was a wooden device linking the necks of farm animals to keep them pulling in the same direction. In Jesus’ day, rabbis spoke of the law as the yoke which needed to be carried to fulfill God’s kingdom. Jesus used the same word, “yoke,” but made it a magnetic invitation to find rest in his humble, gentle lordship.

 Jesus declares in this passage that he is “gentle and humble,” but he isn’t boasting that he’s attained some special level of spiritual achievement. He is encouraging us to believe that he isn’t going to stand over us like a policeman, isn’t going to be angry with us like an unscrupulous boss. The welcome Jesus offers, for all who abandon themselves to God’s mercy, is the welcome God offers through Christ. Can you sense in yourself why people who’d lived faith under “the yoke of the law” found Jesus humble, gentle invitation magnetically attractive and irresistible?

 We don’t receive the rest Jesus spoke about by trying hard to put our worrying spirits at rest. It’s by listening to and trusting Jesus that we find rest. How can you “try” less, and trustingly open your life more to Jesus’ teachings and presence so that God can

give you the gift of rest? How can an active life of service and sharing grow out of receiving Jesus' gift of inner rest?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, sometimes my hectic life leaves me feeling exhausted. I'm strongly drawn to your offer of rest and ask you to guide me in making your rest a reality in my life. Amen.

Tuesday, October 19 – Read Mark 10:42-45. Today's passage did not grow out of a quiet classroom discussion of greatness. The disciples James and John upset the other disciples by asking for the highest ranks in Jesus' kingdom in the verses just before this (Mark 10:35-41). Jesus said their request grew from a flawed human, status-seeking model. He saw greatness in a startlingly different way. He didn't come to be served, he said, but to serve. Humble service is his kingdom's path to greatness.

 Jesus said: "The ones who are considered the rulers by the Gentiles show off their authority over them and their high-ranking officials order them around." Does that sound right? Jesus went on to say, "That's not the way it will be with you. Whoever wants to be great among you will be your servant." Where do you have power (parent, boss, teacher, pastor, public office, etc.)? Do you usually use your power for the good of others, or are you tempted to use it to advance your own interests?

 Ambition seems to be a natural part of almost all human hearts. But ambition for outward rewards and perks can produce mixed motives and as many bad consequences as good ones. In what specific ways does choosing to follow Jesus change your ambitions and attitudes? Is God growing you into a secure, content "servant" primarily motivated to glorify God and serve others?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, I want to let your love's transforming power increasingly motivate me to live a servant life. Teach me how to treat others as you treat me. Amen.

Wednesday, October 20 – Read Matthew 21:1-9. When Jesus entered Jerusalem, he very deliberately echoed part of Israel's history we read about in 1 Kings 1:32-39, as well as Hebrew prophecy in Zechariah 9:9-10. Our culture often sees donkeys as comical mounts for losers to ride. Zechariah's prophecy saw a king on a donkey, not as comical, but as one who humbly came in peace instead of using the war horses and chariots of a conqueror. By riding on a donkey, Jesus claimed to be a peacemaking, humble king.

 About 125 years before Jesus, Israel was briefly free. The Hasmonean family drove out foreign rulers and kept Israel free until Rome forcibly put Herod's family on the throne. Israel's coins from that time used palm branches as the Hasmoneans' symbol. Some who greeted Jesus with palm branches no doubt hoped he would wipe out the Roman troops and restore Israel's power. His ride on a donkey must have frustrated them. They didn't want a humble king who said to love your enemies. Do you?

 We sometimes imagine Jesus' entry into Jerusalem as a gigantic, happy parade. The church has often called the event a "Triumphal Entry." But Mark 11:18 and Luke 19:39 said some powerful people hated Jesus' entrance into the holy city. Do you think you would more likely have been with "the establishment" who didn't want the orderly status quo disrupted, or with the disturbingly humble rabbi from Galilee?

Prayer: *Loving Lord, when you were born, there wasn't room for you. When you came to Jerusalem, they still didn't have room for you. Lord, I open my heart—I want to make room for you in my life always. Amen.*

Thursday, October 21 – Read John 13:2-15, 34-35. Jesus didn't just “talk the talk” about humble service. He “walked the walk.” In first-century Palestine, washing others' feet was normally a task for servants. Dirt roads made feet dusty, which meant this was very messy work. Disciples served teachers rather than the reverse, and the one act of service specifically not expected even of them was dealing with the master's feet. Jesus brought his teaching about true greatness to life by washing the disciples' feet himself.

🏠 Robert Greenleaf, Max DePree, James Autry, and other business leaders have authored powerful books about “servant leadership.” Do you find “servant leadership” nothing more than an idealistic oxymoron, unrealistic in the “real world”? Or might Jesus' way of leading be a life-giving alternative to the more usual views of leadership? Have you seen one or more “servant leaders” be effective?

🏠 There is an underlying spiritual question this story asks each of us, and Jesus wants to make sure his followers ask it. “Am I worried about who appears to be the greatest, or am I focused on humbly serving others?” What's your answer? Has Jesus' effect on you changed your answer over time?

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, teach me how to find my glory in serving God and others, as you did, rather than in having others serve me. This is a hard prayer, but I mean it. Amen.*

Friday, October 22 – Read Philippians 2:4-11. Philippians quoted an early Christian hymn in which Christians boldly called Jesus “Lord.” By praising his willingness to “empty himself” for us, it said Jesus lived out values at odds with much of his culture, as well as our culture today. We know Roman emperors clung to the title “Lord” with ruthless violence. But Christians said Jesus, the true “Lord,” was humble, loving, and gracious. With Rome's military might against Jesus' seemingly naïve followers, the contest looked absurdly uneven. It was—but 2,000 years of history show that Jesus, not Caesar, had the unstoppable power.

🏠 The early Christian hymn the apostle Paul quoted said Jesus “emptied himself... by becoming like human beings.” And not like a powerful, wealthy human being: “When he found himself in the form of a human, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” Do you recoil from that kind of humbling career or life path, or do you sense the freedom and power of it? How does this deepen your sense of what it means to want to “be like Jesus”?

🏠 Scholar H. C. Hewlett said, “Humility is the recognition of our true littleness as those dependent utterly on God.” That's quite different from yielding outwardly while being irate inside about someone else “winning” or depriving you of a treasured “perk.” How can the kind of deep humility Jesus modeled open your heart to God's love? How can it clear away inner barriers that may block us from loving one another?

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, you chose to save me rather than preserve your own comfort or dignity. Help me to have your attitude in my daily life. Amen.*

Saturday, October 23 – Read James 3:13-18. We’re virtually certain that Jesus’ brother James (referred to in Matthew 13:55, 1 Corinthians 15:7, and Galatians 1:19) wrote this letter. Many of its phrases echoed Jesus’ teaching. Today’s reading clearly distinguished the supposed “wisdom” that the Greco-Roman culture taught (still echoed in much human “wisdom” today) from what James called “the wisdom from above.” James laid out clear examples of what life apart from God’s principles looks like and contrasted that with the kind of life to which his brother and Savior called us to as his followers.

 James 3:13-15 said, “bitter jealousy” and “selfish ambition” are things to “stop,” and certainly nothing to brag about. Instead, he said a “humble lifestyle” is the result of living with wisdom. Have you ever seen jealousy or selfish ambition damage relationships between people? How does humility protect against these hurtful ways of thinking and acting? Do you believe you can act with confidence, in any setting, out of humility rather than pride? What attitudes or actions does it take to make that a reality? Prayerfully review the harmful qualities James listed and the ones he said come “from above.” Which are most characteristic of your life? How can you work with God to make the wisdom from above increasingly the dominant guiding principle in all your everyday relationships?

Prayer: *God of wisdom, I want to increasingly live out your wisdom in my earthly life. Guide me as I prune and shape my character to match more closely your ideal for me. Amen.*