



Theme: Simply Irresistible



“Irresistible Love”

Weekly Memory Verse:


¹⁸ *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor.”* - Luke 4:18

Spiritual Formation or Family Activity Ideas for the Week: Giving your child ongoing opportunities for dialogue, learning and action around caring about and serving others will help them to become a socially conscious citizen. Practice recognizing and respecting multiple viewpoints day to day. In your home, not everyone has the same favorite dinner, toy, or activity, or wants to watch the same movie. Recognize that this is ok! Practice peaceful conflict resolution when things don’t go your child’s way. Encourage positive dialogue with other children during school or play. Take part in church and community sponsored cultural events. To help your child develop a global mindset, put together an Operation Christmas Child Shoe Box and look on the web for places where you can see the world through another child’s eyes. Interactions with a wide range of people will teach your child that the world is an exciting place, rich with possibilities to serve others.

Monday, November 1 – Read 1 John 4:7-12 and Acts 2:42-47. As John wrote about how Christians treat one another, he likely remembered where he and Jesus’ other disciples began. They jockeyed for position and got angry with one another at times (see [Mark 10:35-45](#)). John knew that loving others with Christ’s love doesn’t just spring naturally from warm human feelings. It goes much deeper than just being “nice.” This kind of active *agape* love comes from the heart of God. The God of the universe loves us—that is the reason we love. The first Christians lived in loving community enabled by the Holy Spirit’s presence. They lived and worshiped together, rooted in the apostles’ teaching, fellowship, prayer and sharing as the Spirit kept the risen, loving Christ present with them.


-  The power of the Holy Spirit moved the first Christians to share. Acts 2:44 said they “were united and shared everything.” The Spirit gave them the ability to set aside a focus on their own gain to bless others. How does your readiness to live generously, to share with others reflect the Spirit’s impact on your life?
-  An unknown humorist wrote, “To live above with saints we love—ah, that will be glory! To live below with saints, we know—well, that’s another story.” But John (and the


other Bible writers) said that, in Christ, we need to grow beyond that very human kind of skepticism toward others. Which people, inside or beyond the church, do you find it hardest to love? Read and pray through this passage, plugging in their names and faces. Ask God to help you live out God's love even toward them.

 Today is All Saints Day. Who are the saints who have gone before that have loved you and shown you grace? Lift them up in prayer today as part of your quiet time.

Prayer: *Dear God, you ARE love—what an amazing, mind-stretching truth. You know that it's not quite as natural for me to love. Please keep loving me as I stretch and grow in my ability to reflect your love to others. Thank you for those saints who have blessed my life and shown me your love. Amen.*

Tuesday, November 2 – Read Luke 4:16-28. Early in Christ's public ministry, he boldly read from the prophet Isaiah's words, written centuries earlier. He stunned his hometown synagogue, saying in effect that, "God's promised a Messiah, the anointed one, and it's me." Then he upset and angered his hearers' national pride by pointing out, in verses 25-28, times when God's mercy had reached far beyond Israel's national and ethnic borders. Jesus knew his mission was to totally alter the world's priorities with inclusive good news, healing, and freedom.

 After Jesus spoke, his hometown hearers tried to kill him! Scholar N. T. Wright described Jesus' message in his commentary, *Luke for Everyone*: "The servant-Messiah has not come to inflict punishment, but to bring the nations God's love and mercy. That was a central theme in Israel's own scriptures, yet... Jesus' claim to be reaching out with healing to all people... was not what most first-century Jews wanted or expected." Does it inspire or frustrate you that Jesus loves and invites all people, not just those who are like you religiously, socially, racially, economically, and in all other categories we tend to make as humans?

 We often talk at Summit Church about how God longs of us to be the answers to the prayers of others. That is God's primary way of achieving his will today as he invites us to be the presence of Jesus in the world, bringing Good News, healing the sick, blessing the poor, and caring for the brokenhearted. How are you making yourself available now for God to work through you to make the world look more like God's kingdom?

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, "good news to the poor," "release to the prisoners," "recovery of sight to the blind," "liberate the oppressed"— you chose those phrases to define your mission. Guide me to the ways you've equipped me to advance that mission. Amen.*

Wednesday, November 3 – Read Luke 8:1-3 and 41-48. Mary Magdalene has played a large role in popular fiction about Jesus. So, it's a surprise to see how both vital and seemingly small a role she had in the gospels. Her name was only in Luke 8 before she became one of the first witnesses to Jesus' resurrection, yet it showed why she was so loyal to him. Later in Luke 8, a woman whose disease made her ritually unclean reached out to Jesus. His healing and approval changed her life forever. (See also Luke 13:10-17, where Jesus set free "a daughter of Abraham.")

🔥 Scholar William Barclay in *Barclay's Commentary*, noted of Galatians 3:28, “In the Jewish morning prayer, which Paul must all his pre-Christian life have used, the Jew thanks God that ‘Thou hast not made me a Gentile, a slave or a woman.’ Paul takes that prayer and reverses it.” The apostle simply put into words the way Jesus lived in cultures based on male dominance. How did Jesus' example make gender justice a basic (if too often overlooked) part of Christian ethics?

🔥 Pastor Frederick Buechner wrote in his book *The Hungering Dark*, “When [Jesus] was born, the whole course of history was changed. That is a fact as hard and blunt as any fact... all the way down the twenty centuries since [Jesus] was born, countless different kinds of people in countless different kinds of ways... have been grasped by him... in this man, there is the power of God to bring light into our darkness, to make us whole, to give a new kind of life to anybody who turns toward him in faith, even to such as you and me.” Jesus changed these women's lives for good. How has he changed your life? How will you remain open so he can keep changing your life for the better?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, of course men and women are different. But you made it clear that in your eyes they were not of different worth. Lead me beyond any residual gender bias I may have learned along the way. Amen.

Thursday, November 4 – Read Matthew 8:1-4 and Luke 17:11-19. In Jesus' day, people called any visible skin disease “leprosy.” Leviticus 13-14 gave detailed rules and called for isolating anyone with a skin disease to keep it from spreading. Most people feared these sufferers and avoided all contact. It was stunning, even forbidden, when, “Jesus reached out his hand, and touched,” the man in Matthew 8 and said, “Become clean.” Jesus also healed ten “lepers.” Some were Israelite, at least one a despised Samaritan, bonded by their shunned and outcast status.


🔥 The desperate isolation lepers faced seemed to have created an atypical group: Jewish lepers mixed with at least one Samaritan. The gospels say Jesus, unlike most Israelites, shunned neither lepers nor Samaritans. How good are you at seeing beyond surface differences? When has someone looked beyond your surface limitations and accepted you anyway?


🔥 Today we know more about leprosy and other skin diseases, so we don't see people literally wearing signs that say, “unclean.” But social shunning still goes on in 2021, based on race, age, gender, socioeconomic or educational level, religion, sexual orientation, disability, and even personal quirks, political beliefs, or looks. Have others ever shunned you? Have you ever shunned someone else? How is God calling you to live up to Jesus' example in touching the leper today?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, I might never favor a law or rule that shut a whole class of people out from services. Help me also to avoid the informal injustice of any kind of social shunning. Amen.

Friday, November 5 – Read Luke 7:1-10. Crucifixions were almost routine in Rome's occupied territories. Because we only hear much about Jesus' crucifixion today, we might think the Roman soldiers were all personally hostile to Jesus. In fact, like American troops in other parts of the world, they were far from home. They did their work, pleasant or unpleasant.


But they were sometimes friendly with the Jewish people, and at times even showed amazing faith in Jesus.

 History says many Romans held Israel's faith in contempt. Yet here was a Roman soldier who financed a synagogue, cared deeply about his servant's well-being, and showed faith in Jesus' healing power. In what ways do you tend to "label" people? How are you growing in your ability to see each human being through God's eyes of love, rather than letting easy group stereotypes determine how you treat people?

 The centurion sensed, more clearly than many people, that space or time did not limit God's power the way they limit ours. How did he apply his own experience as a military authority to help him realize ways Jesus' power might work? Which of your life and work experiences help you better understand and trust God's power?

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, the centurion impressed you, not so much because he'd financed the local synagogue as because he showed such faith in your healing power. Help me to live like that Roman soldier. Amen.*

Saturday, November 6 – Read Luke 23:34, 39-43, 47. Jesus had called his followers to live in bigger ways than anyone had dreamed of, to love their enemies, and pray for those who harassed them (see also Matthew 5:43-48). He sought forgiveness even for the Roman soldiers who crucified him. Even in extreme pain of body and mind, he was willing and able to share the good news of love and grace. When one of the men crucified with him reached out to Jesus in faith, Jesus promised him eternal life. Many of us, even the usually gracious ones, tend to discount "deathbed conversions." And, maybe moved by the startling sound of a crucified man asking God to forgive these executing him, one of the first to recognize Jesus' inclusive spirit was not a Temple theologian, but a Roman centurion directing the crucifixion. Mark 15:39 related an even stronger statement from the centurion: "Surely this man was the son of God!"

 Luke called the two men crucified with Jesus "criminals." Matthew 27 used a word that could mean "rebels." Some think they were part of Barabbas' gang, since it seems Barabbas was originally to have been crucified instead of Jesus (see Mark 15:7). Yet one of them expressed trust that Jesus would "come into" his kingdom, despite the cross. What is the process by which you have moved (or are moving) to trust Jesus as the just, merciful ruler of the universe and of your life? How can you emulate Jesus by loving your enemies without "stuffing" valid feelings of pain and hurt? Think of one "enemy," personal, corporate, or even national, and pray for that person today. (Then plan to do it again tomorrow.)

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, you didn't separate "justice" from "mercy." You lived them as connected facets of God's eternal heart of love. Teach me how to live out justice in ways that uplift and redeem all the people who need your love. Amen.*