UPC Family Devotional

March – Week 1

Memory Verse of the Week

“Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.”

-Luke 18:16b

Feb. 27 Sunday Luke 17:1-19

Because it is surely challenging to continually forgive someone who sins again you over and over again, the disciples ask for an increase of faith. Jesus’ reply reveals that the issue is not always about having more faith but simply exercising the faith you have. Rather than a grand achievement, a lifestyle of faith and good works is often nothing more than a proper response for what we have received from God. In the following story of the healing of the ten lepers, we see that, by simply seeing Jesus as his source of healing and responding with a heart of gratitude, the Samaritan demonstrates humility before God and received confirmation of his salvation.

Is there anyone you have caused to stumble or need to make amends with? What are some small, simple ways in which you can demonstrate your faith before God and others?

Feb. 28 Monday Luke 17:20 -37

A day will come when Jesus returns to bring this age to an end. This will include drawing all believers into His eternal presence as well as condemning those who have refused to repent. When that time comes, the overarching sinfulness of our world will reflect the days of Noah and Lot: a sudden and terrible judgment that no one expects. As God’s children living amid all this, we must commit to preparing for Jesus’ return rather than chasing the fleeting pleasures of this world. It is not for us to know when he will come but to trust that he WILL come, and that when he does, all will be made right in the world.

How are you preparing for Jesus’ return? How can you encourage others to do the same?

Mar. 1 Tuesday Luke 18:1-8

In today’s scripture a loathsome judge is willing to render on behalf of a widow for no other reason than her persistent cries. Her refusal to be turned away incites the judge to take matters into his own hands swiftly and forcefully. The goal of persistent prayer, on the other hand, is not to twist God’s arm into doing something He does not want to do – God’s very own nature is goodness itself! God does not grow tired or weary of our cries for help; He bends His loving ear toward us each and every time we call out to Him.

What have you been persistently praying for? How does God encourage you to not give up?

Junior Group

Jesus will one day return as a mighty warrior and judge to make sure that evil people get what they deserve. We ought to look forward to it as a day when God proves once and for all that he has always been on our side. In the meantime, he calls us to remain faithful and not give up hope. Let us wait and trust in him until the very end.

What injustices do you want God to make right in this world? How do your prayers reflect these desires?

Lord Jesus, I long for your return and for your justice to be established in this world. Help me to continue to cry out to you while I wait faithfully. In your name, amen.

Mar. 2 Wednesday Luke 18:9-17

Infants and toddlers are by far the weakest and most helpless of human beings. While many people are quick to dismiss young children as not having much status before God, Jesus sees them as the very paradigm of what is required to enter God’s kingdom! The willingness to accept, believe, and become completely dependent is absolutely crucial when coming to God. But more than just an initial attitude we adopt when coming to the faith, we need to always cultivate the sense of awe, passion, and faith that children naturally exhibit. No matter how much we grow and mature in the faith, we never graduate from being children of God. May the Holy Spirit always remind us of our deep need for Him.

When did you last feel a helpless dependence on God? What does a childlike faith look like in your life?

JG

Being childlike means having the ability to accept, believe, and become entirely dependent on God. When we first become believers, we usually have this attitude. But we need to continue having a sense of awe, passions and faith that children naturally show. As we grow and mature in the faith, we never stop being children of God. May the Holy Spirit always remind us of our deep need for him every day.

When did you last feel helplessly dependent before God? What does a childlike faith look like in your life?

Father, You are near to those who humble themselves and fear Your great name. Help me have a childlike faith that understands how weak I am and how strong You are. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Mar. 3 Thursday Luke 18:18-30

The rich ruler was personally invited by Jesus to become a disciple. But rather than lay hold of this golden opportunity, he chooses to store up his treasures on earth. This prompts Jesus to teach on the dangers of wealth, which leaves the disciples perplexed. In their minds, prosperity is one of the clearest evidences of covenant obedience. Sadly, extreme versions of this teaching ring from church pulpits around the world to this day, elevating material gain and promoting salvation by works. But Jesus strongly asserts that this is impossible. We are saved only by the sovereign grace of God that works in our sinful hearts, causing us to see the infinite worth of Jesus Christ.

What makes prosperity preaching so attractive yet so destructive? How do you understand the Bible’s teachings on financial blessing?

JG

A lot of people think that being rich is a sign that God looks on them with favor. They may even do religious things in order to become richer or have a more comfortable life. True believers, however, see that Jesus himself is the greatest treasure that anyone can have. He brings us into a relationship with God and blesses us with his joy that lasts forever. If we have Jesus, we have everything.

What are the things you value highly? How do these compare to knowing Jesus?

Father, forgive me when I fail to see how truly precious the gospel is. Help me be willing to lay down everything to follow Jesus with my whole heart. In his name, amen.

Mar. 4 Friday Luke 18:31-43

The phrase, “Have mercy on me!” is perhaps the most concise and essential prayer anyone can utter. It was the prayer of a tax collector in one of Jesus’ parables, who was reconciled to God. Here, it is the cry of a man who expresses the faith needed to restore his sight. At the center of his prayer is the acknowledgment that God has every right to do what He wants with His creatures, including the fact that, on account of our sin, we fully deserve God’s wrath. But this prayer also acknowledges God’s heart that looks beyond what we deserve and gives us the good we do not deserve. And this, Jesus is very willing to bestow on those who ask.

When did you last ask the Lord to have mercy on You? Take some time to contemplate the mercy God has shown you.

JG

“Have mercy on me!” is perhaps the shortest and most essential of prayers we can make. It recognizes that God has every right to do what He wants with His creatures, and because of our sin, we should be condemned. But more than that, it pleads that God will look beyond what we deserve and give us what we do not deserve. So, let us call on God to have mercy on us.

When did the Lord show mercy to you? In what ways do you need God’s mercy this week?

Lord Jesus, thank you for being the answer this world so desperately needs. Empower me by your spirit to proclaim your gospel without fear while walking in obedience to you. In your name, amen.

Mar. 5 Saturday Luke 19:1-10

Zacchaeus’ controversial vocation causes him to be rejected as a traitor by the Jewish people. But Jesus not only reminds him of his heritage as a child of Abraham, he also changes Zacchaeus’ life and gives him a new identity. When Jesus comes into our lives, he propels us forward into a new way of thinking and living, with a new purpose of shining his light to all nations. Like Zacchaeus, our good deeds demonstrate rather than merit our acceptance before God, and God’s Spirit in us empowers us to see our old lives and passions in a new light. Our hurts and baggage are no longer hindrances to our success; they become tools to serve others to the glory of God.

What hurtful experience of your past has Jesus healed? How has he used these to make himself better known to you and to others?

JG

Jesus calls Zacchaeus by name and invites himself to his house. No matter how distant, foreign, or inaccessible Jesus might seem, he knows everyone because he created everyone. He longs for authentic relationship regardless of status or background. With so many people around the world who have yet to hear about Jesus, let us do all we can to know him and make him known.

When did you first feel Jesus as near and accessible? How did it change the way you relate to him?

Lord God, thank you for reaching out and saving a sinner like me. As I receive Your love and power, help me share the good news of Your salvation to the ends of the earth. In Jesus’ name, amen.