



Family Worship Experience for August 8

Topic: Resurrection Power

Scripture: Mark 5: 24b-30 & 2 Corinthians 5: 17-20a

Focus Verse: "She was thinking, If I can just touch his clothes, I'll be healed. Her bleeding stopped immediately, and she sensed in her body that her illness had been healed." Mark 5: 28-29

"So then, if anyone is in Christ, that person is part of the new creation." 2 Cor. 5: 17a

Family Activity:

Supplies Included:

- Balloon
- Butterfly cutout

Instructions:

Place the butterfly cut outs on the table laying flat. Have one member of your family blow up the balloon in your kit. Once the balloon has been blown up and tied together, have one member rub their hair with the balloon to create electricity. Once your balloon is powered up, closely wave it over the butterflies and see them fly. Butterflies are a beautiful example of the power of change. (Also check out your family members' hair... I bet it changed too :)) As they follow the balloon we are reminded that when we follow God his power can change us!

Family Discussion Questions:

- Who do you choose to follow and how do you decide who/what to follow?
- How can we clear away barriers that may keep us from fully following Jesus?
- How does choosing to follow Jesus Christ change us?

Devotion:

We live in a world where it is very easy to “Like” and “Follow” just about anyone on earth. There are teens out there, called “social media influencers,” who are making millions of dollars right now because they’ve somehow managed to rack up tens of thousands of followers, so companies pay these teens to sell their products through social media posts. Many of you know by now that I love cycling. I discovered during the Tour de France a few weeks ago that I can “follow” many of these elite cyclists on this social media platform called Strava. Strava is a place where people can share their workouts. It shows things like pace, power, and calories burned. So on Strava I started following all these famous cyclists so I can see how my own cycling compares. (Needless to say, I’m a far cry from the professionals!)

The point I’m trying to make is that in our high tech-connected world, it is beyond easy to “follow” just about anyone we want. So, I’ve been thinking this week, and I’m wondering this morning: who do I choose to follow? Who do you choose to follow? How do we follow them? And even more, as you follow them, whether on social media or otherwise, what sort of influence do these people have on your life?

Two thousand years ago, Jesus traveled all around the Sea of Galilee calling and inviting people to follow him. But following Jesus then and now requires far more than clicking a button or subscribing to a feed. Following Jesus requires a whole life change. As we think about what it means to follow Jesus with our whole lives, this story of the woman who had been hemorrhaging for 12 years is important.

The woman, who is ritually unclean and has been suffering for more than a decade, makes her way through Capernaum until she finds Jesus. Mark tells us at the beginning of this passage that a swarm of people is following Jesus. When the bleeding woman sees the crowd, she begins to push through, which means that every person she touched became ritually unclean as well. But after twelve years of dealing with the affliction, this woman is not concerned about that. She wants to be healed, and she knows that Christ can do it.

But what about us? Does Jesus’ love and power compel us to seek him out and reach for him? Even more though, does my life seem to draw people into an irresistible posture that compels everyone around me to seek Jesus’ power for themselves? Does my faith point to the power of Christ’s love?

When that bleeding woman touched Jesus’ clothes, her life changed. Jesus’ power healed her. Paul reminds us of Jesus’ power in 2nd Corinthians – a power so great that we can be fearless, even in the face of death. Christ’s power makes us new! If we really want our lives to change, then we have to throw ourselves at Christ our Lord. We have to seek him out above all else. We have to follow him, not just on paper, not just by signing on a dotted line or clicking a little button, but with our whole lives – with a faith that trusts that Jesus really can make us new. Then, then, when he calls, “Follow me,” and we turn our whole lives over to him, everything old will, indeed, pass away.

Virtual Family Worship Experience:

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Family Worship Experience for August 15

Topic: The Power of a Servant's Love

Scripture: Luke 4: 14-20

Focus Verse: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me. He has sent me to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to liberate the oppressed, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor"

Family Activity:

Supplies Needed:

- jumbo craft sticks
- medium binder clips
- coin cell battery
- LED lights
- 2 strips of Copper tape
- transparent tape

Instructions:

First, test your battery and LED light by sliding your C cell battery between the prongs of the LED. Once you know everything is working, place your LED on the tip of the curved end of your Jumbo craft stick. Guide the tape from the curved tip, completely covering the LED prongs, down towards the cut end of the stick. Repeat on the other side. Add the binder clip to the bottom of the popsicle stick with the prongs flipped up. Use transparent tape (or any non-conductive tape) to secure the battery in place. Only cover the top of the battery with the tape so that the metal prongs of your clips can make contact with the battery. **You may need to fiddle with the placement of the battery. You'll know it's in the right spot when your light turns on.** As our lights turn on we can remember that when we are connected to God, his love can be shared to others and the world around us.

Family Discussion Questions:

- In what ways do God's values challenge the world's values?
- Do your personal values align more closely with those of God, or the world around you?
- How are you making yourself available now for God to work through you to make the world look more like God's kingdom?

Devotion:

This moment that Luke records with Jesus in the synagogue is near the beginning of Christ's ministry. Jesus is in his hometown of Nazareth, and he has gone to the synagogue to worship. As the service begins, the synagogue attendant hands Jesus a scroll from the book of Isaiah, and Jesus reads, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me. He has sent me to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to liberate the oppressed, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." After he reads this, then Jesus preaches a super short sermon. He says, "Today, this scripture has been fulfilled just as you heard it." So let's talk about what Jesus meant.

This is Jesus' mission statement; Christ proclaiming how he is going to accomplish the work God has sent him to do. This was Jesus' life work from that moment forward. And Jesus is sharing this message, this mission. He's letting people know that God will loosen chains, liberate bound people, help folks see who weren't just blind, but mentally blind, and spiritually blind, whose eyes hadn't seen real life in a really long time. But even in this proclamation in the synagogue of Nazareth, there is also a call from Jesus, a summoning to the very same sort of work. Jesus' mission should be our mission. His life's work is also our life's work, his purpose is our purpose. The power of Jesus' work is not that he is a powerful Lord, but a servant.

You know, one of the things I've noticed happening increasingly in recent years is that when people describe who Jesus is, this Jesus sounds a lot like them. So Jesus favors the church I am a part of, or Jesus tows the party line, or Jesus chooses a particular person or group to hold and wield all power. Yet, the power of Jesus' work was precisely that he shook up all worldly expectations. He didn't look like the Roman soldiers who were conquering the world and persecuting their captors. He didn't look like the Pharisees who would cast out anyone who didn't meet their standards of purity. Jesus' power wasn't worldly power. Jesus' power was in his servanthood, his willingness to love and to serve the people that the rest of the world didn't want to have anything to do with – the poor, the oppressed, the marginalized, the imprisoned.

Friends, there is no power for us in this world. Jesus completely shakes up the ways of the world, and Jesus' power to change lives lies in his call to serve. Let Jesus' words challenge our lives, our prejudices, our exclusivism, our comfort, our narrow and unbending ways. We may surprise people, but didn't Jesus surprise the world? We might be called blasphemous, or whatever names people can come up with, but no matter. It's time to claim our purpose, to follow the anointed Christ who upends the world. It's time to share Jesus' life and power as we serve one another.

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Family Worship Experience for August 22

Topic: The Overwhelming Power of “Each Other”

Scripture: John 13: 34-35 & Romans 12: 9-21

Focus Verse: “I give you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, so you also must love each other.” John 13: 34

Family Activity:

Supplies Needed:

- two pipe cleaners (ends stripped of fuzz)
- two paper clips
- small rubber band
- one lithium button battery
- one LED light with anode and cathode legs curled

Instructions:

As you discuss the family questions below, work together to make the light come on with two pipe cleaners. It is amazing the power of two! This reminds us that when we are connected to God and love others, His power and love can light up the world!



Steps:

1. Check that the light works with the battery by having it straddle the battery. Set the battery aside.
2. Wrap a raw wire end of a pipe cleaner to a paper clip. Then take the second pipe cleaner and attach a paperclip in the same way. You will have two pipe cleaners, each with a paperclip foot. Double check that the wire is tightly wrapped around each paper clip and that the wire of the pipe cleaner is touching the wire of the paper clip.

3. The other end of each pipe cleaner (the end not attached to a paper clip) is wrapped around one loop of the LED light (the anode and cathode legs have been curled already for you already).
4. The LED light now looks like it has two pipe cleaner legs with paper clip feet. Test out the circuit by touching the paper clips at the same time to different sides of the battery. If it doesn't work one way, flip the battery and try again.
5. Attach one paper clip foot to the battery with a rubber band or tape. The other paper clip foot is the on/off switch that they tap against the battery to turn on.

Family Discussion Questions:

- Who do you know that has shared generous, sacrificial, unconditional love in action?
- In what ways does Jesus' work in you and through you give you strength and a sense of purpose everyday?
- How is God calling you to share love in your life? With whom?

Devotion:

For the last two weeks, we've been talking about the power of Jesus' life and love. How Jesus' love is so powerful it draws us to him. How Jesus' life, ministry, death, and resurrection has the power to change our lives and to change the world. We're going to wrap up this series this morning as we consider the power of Jesus' love when it is shared with each other.

You know, people long to be loved deeply. I think that's why Jesus was so irresistible, why crowds flocked to him. He had a servant's heart, and everything that he did was in love and service of others. People were drawn to Jesus because of his love for them; this agape, sacrificial, unconditional love in action. Such love is what every person longs for!

Think for a minute about what Jesus' love looked like. Most of us will go to his sacrifice on the cross, the fullest measure of love. But every aspect of his ministry, everything he did, was a snapshot of that same generous, unconditional, sacrificial love. From the very moment Christ entered the world, it was clear that he was here for us, Emmanuel. There was no place he wouldn't go, even into Samaria; no person he wouldn't love, even the lepers and tax collectors. Jesus meets us wherever we are, no matter what. And Jesus meets us where we are so that he can love us because Christ knows such deep, abiding, genuine love is what we need more than anything else. Love is so important that Jesus leaves his disciples with this one commandment we heard a few moments ago, "love each other." And he says, "If you do this, people will know that you are my disciples." This command to love each other is the ethical standard that should undergird the daily living of every disciple. It's not that we've got to go out and start doing extra, but that everything we do must emanate from love. Do we have this kind of love? Is this our grand standard? Are we willing to shape our whole lives around this? Because, actually, that's nothing less than what Jesus is calling out of his disciples.

Friends, love binds everything together and makes possible a future filled with hope. We all want to experience love. I truly believe we are all anxious to share such love, too. But I also think that sometimes we can be overwhelmed trying to figure out exactly how to do that. Paul helps us out in this letter to the Romans. "Love each other like you would love your own family." "Honor each other." "Contribute to the needs of God's people...welcome strangers...Be happy with those who are happy, and cry with those who are crying..." This is what love looks like. Love like THIS.

We must love each other in small and large ways. When we do this, we're actually inviting people to experience the unbelievably powerful love of God.

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