

FAITH @ HOME

Way of Love

Week 2: Turn

ADULT AND SMALL CHILD

READ: James 5:16

REFLECT: When we are baptized, there is a question that is asked to the person being baptized or their parents and godparents that talks about turning. “Do you turn towards Jesus Christ...?” And the answer is “I do.”

When you turn your body towards something, you are now looking at it. That becomes what you are focused on and headed towards. When you make a mistake, the best thing to do, is turn your body towards it and say “I’m sorry”. If you hurt your brother’s or sister’s feelings or take a toy from them, you need to turn towards them and say “I’m sorry.” This is part of turning towards Jesus. We mess up and make mistakes all the time and that’s ok. The important thing is to name your mistake and apologize. If you don’t know who to apologize to, you can always say sorry to God and God will always forgive, no matter what you have done.

RESPOND: What are different ways to say “I’m sorry”? Sometimes we say it with our words and sometimes we say it with our actions. Make a list of ways to say it and to show it.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: HANNAH GRAHAM



For nearly 15 years, Hannah has served Episcopal parish communities in a variety of Christian Formation roles. As a gifted Godly Play storyteller and youth mentor, Hannah utilizes her knowledge of child and adolescent faith development not only in the classroom, but also in executing big picture planning to enhance the shaping of Christian community. Hannah has led the Education for Ministry Program as a trained mentor for 4 years, and regularly contributes to Diocesan events, camps, retreats, and committee work. She is recognized for her innovated use of social media to integrate liturgical seasons, parish programs, music, faith at home activities and outreach. In addition to the spiritual formation of St. Andrew’s Episcopal Church in Glenwood, Maryland, Hannah devotes herself to growing in faith as a beloved child of God, wife and mother of three boys, ages 10 months-5 years old.

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ADULT AND ELEMENTARY

READ: Mark 2:13-17

REFLECT: Last week, we heard the story of Jesus calling His disciples to come and follow Him. He picked ordinary people working family trades to follow Him, which was unheard of at the time. This week, we read in Mark's gospel about Jesus meeting Levi, the son of a tax collector; and Jesus calls for Levi to come and follow. Tax collectors were not the most trustworthy people in Jesus' time, and they were often guilty of cheating people out of money to make themselves richer. The fact that Jesus and His disciples would go and eat with them was a big deal. Some of the other religious leaders of the day, the Pharisees, were very upset, but Jesus reminded them that He came to heal sinners.

We are ALL sinners, but sometimes we forget that as we try our best to be good. When talking with the Pharisees, Jesus used the example of going to the doctor, "Healthy people don't need a doctor, but sick people do." Just as we turn to our doctors and medical teams when our bodies and minds need care, so we must turn to God when our spirit needs healing. We are all sinners; therefore, Jesus came for all, and we are reminded that God's love covers all.

RESPOND: Have a conversation with Jesus every day this week. Tell Him what's going on in your life—the things that are going well, the things that are going poorly, and the things you'd like to try differently. Where do you need God to heal you this week? You can either talk to Jesus in your prayer time, or you can write Jesus a letter. Find a quiet space, as you're able, for a few minutes every day and turn back to Jesus to take care of your spirit.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: ERIN WOLF



Erin Wolf is a Youth Minister hailing from Little Chute, WI where she lives with her four kids. She serves both All Saints Episcopal in Appleton and the Episcopal Diocese of Fond du Lac. Her ministry focuses include children & youth, camp & retreats, music, service work, interactive prayer for all ages, and more. You can connect with her via email at ewolf@diofdl.org.

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ADULT AND YOUTH

READ: Joel 2:12-13

REFLECT: All of us need to return to God. We are not perfect. We are not always on the right path. We fall short of fully loving God and loving other people. However, this passage from Joel reminds us that God is merciful and compassionate, gifting us with grace and forgiveness that remind us we are beloved children of God. Jesus' life and example teaches us this.

Practicing the way of love challenges us to turn and fix our eyes on Jesus, which means admitting the ways in which we have turned away in the first place. We seek out and ask for forgiveness and mercy in our lives, even in our imperfections. Turning and fixing our eyes on Jesus also means that we have to recognize the distractions and roadblocks that get in the way of turning and following where Jesus is calling us to go.

Turning toward and fixing our eyes on Jesus can be difficult. It is an intentional practice. In our highly busy and over connected world, it becomes all too easy for us to spend more time targeting others on social media than admitting the ways in which we have contributed to a conflict. It is also easy for us to dwell on past words and actions that have caused us to turn away. We have to leave our past behind and step into a present and a future filled with love, grace, mercy, and forgiveness.

RESPOND: Think of one thing that is weighing on your heart and causing you to turn away from Jesus. Perhaps it's a fear or worry; maybe it's a conflict you have with another person. Instead of dwelling in this weight, return to God and share what's on your heart in a way that makes sense to you. You may wish to journal, pray, or create your own artistic expression. Whatever you do, use this activity as an outlet for you to turn back to Jesus, following the way of love and recognizing God's mercy and forgiveness.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: VICTORIA HOPPES



Victoria Hoppes is the Camp Director at Waycross Camp and Conference Center and the Youth Ministry Coordinator for the Episcopal Diocese of Indianapolis. She has ministry experience with youth, family, and camping programs at both the parish and diocesan levels. She holds degrees from Texas Lutheran University and Luther Seminary. She also holds a certificate in Youth and Family Ministry from Forma's Faith Formation Academy. You can follow Victoria on her website, www.ministryincontext.com, or on social media (@vlhoppes).

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ADULT AND ADULT

READ: Matthew 13:10-17, 54-58

REFLECT: Matthew 13 gets to the essence of the practice of *turn*. The chapter begins with Jesus sitting on a boat, preaching to the crowd in parables. Over and over again, Jesus calls people to listen. Jesus also calls us to hear him every day in a thousand little ways. Just as he did with those hungry to listen to his message, he reaches out to us with examples of how to get closer to the kingdom. Like all good teachers, he doesn't offer just one explanation, because people are different and have different learning styles. Jesus meets us where we are and gives us the chance to turn and follow him.

The intriguing and heartbreaking verse of this chapter is verse 15. Those words hit me hard. Has my heart grown dull? Am I tired of hearing Jesus call to me? Have I closed my eyes to the truth of the gospel? Is my heart closed to the understanding of what the kingdom of heaven is like? How can I turn to Jesus when I failed yesterday? Will I be like the people in Jesus' hometown who couldn't respect his authority, intellect, and ability?

When we turn toward Jesus, we must turn away from something else. If you choose to turn to scripture to learn more about Jesus' preaching and teaching, you won't have time to play as many games on your phone or to watch TV. If you decide to begin a family Bible study, you may need to turn away from your family game night. You might face resistance from them and yourself as you orient yourself in the direction of Jesus. That's okay; Jesus is ready to take your hand and walk with you. All you have to do is turn.

RESPOND: Open your eyes and ears to Jesus. Let your loved ones know of your intention to turn and follow Jesus every day. Start by reading five minutes of scripture aloud with your loved ones every day for a week. Or, pray for five minutes each day as a family other than at mealtime. After a week, talk with your family about how it felt. Increase your time gradually.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: MIRIAM MCKENNEY



Miriam is a child of God who finds extreme joy parenting her three girls: Nia, Kaia, and Jaiya. She met her husband, David, at the Union of Black Episcopalians conference in 1981. Miriam works as Forward Movement's Development Director, and writes for their family blog, Grow Christians. She was a children's librarian and school media specialist for 20 years before joining Forward Movement's staff. She has recently discovered a love of outdoor fitness in extreme temperatures, as there is no bad weather, just incorrect clothing choices.

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