

## FAMILY DINNER LITURGY 2018

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# The Upside-Down Love

Over the years of leading the children's and youth ministry, I have come to really appreciate the wisdom of seasons. We learn what we live out, especially children. Seasons give us rhythm and teach us about balance, letting go of control, and harmony. Seasons like Lent (at the River we call it "40 Days of Faith") or Advent prepare us to fully enter into and celebrate the big days like Easter or Christmas. For families who want to partake in drawing closer to God through this season, here is what we have prepared:

### **This Year's Theme: "The Upside-Down Love of Jesus"**

This year, we want to take a deeper look at Jesus' love . . . how boundless and radical it is. Because of Jesus' kind and gentle ways, we often forget how radical his approach to faith and life was. And that's why people, including his own disciples, were constantly confounded by his words and actions. The world's understanding of the strong and the weak, the rich and the poor, the greatest and the least, the righteous and the humble, are put upside-down in Jesus' love. We will spend this season hearing stories about Jesus and pondering his Upside-Down Love.

### **How to Celebrate the Season as a Family**

- Regular attendance on Sundays will help everyone in the family immerse themselves in the spirit of the season. Six weeks of looking at different ways Jesus put things upside-down will hopefully influence how we look at others and ourselves.
- Family Dinner Liturgy: At home, we encourage families to have a family dinner once a week with a short liturgy we have prepared. The liturgy is an opportunity to take a pause in our busy family lives and intentionally turn toward God together.
- Reflection: As an option, we included a "Reflection" section in the liturgy. As a family, you can talk about what Jesus is like in the story and meditate on a word that describes Him.
- Bonus Fun: During "40 Days of Faith," get together with other families for dinner and liturgy.

FAMILY LENTEN DINNER LITURGY  
WEEK 1 | The Strong and the Weak

**Opening Prayer**

*(Together holding hands)*

We make room for you,  
Come and fill us with your Spirit.

**Candle Lighting**

*(Any kind of candles; as many as you want)*

**Blessing**

*(This is worth memorizing. A grown-up can say the blessing as she/he looks into everyone's eyes OR everyone can recite this together for each other.)*

"The Lord bless you  
and keep you;  
the Lord make his face shine on you  
and be gracious to you;  
the Lord turn his face toward you  
and give you peace." (Numbers 6:24-26)

**Story of the Week | Jesus' Birth**

*(Families with young kids might want to skip this part.)*

John 1, Luke 2:7

In the very beginning, Jesus was there. Jesus was with God and Jesus was God.  
He existed in the beginning with God.  
God created everything through Jesus, the universe, the sun, the moon, and the stars.  
Jesus gave Life to everything that was created, to trees, animals, birds, and people.  
Jesus' Life brought Light to everyone.  
Jesus made everything in the world possible and was over everything.  
Jesus was with God and was ONE with Him.

But to show us His Upside-Down Love, Jesus came into our world. Jesus became human and made His home among us. He was born to a young woman, Mary, by the power of the Holy Spirit. When He was born, she wrapped him in cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them.

He came into the very world He created as one of us and the world did not recognize Him. They did not understand the Upside-Down Love of God. He became small to show us how big His love for us is. He became weak and His love became stronger to reach us. Jesus was filled with never-failing and never-ending love for all. He gave Life and Light to whoever turned toward Him. No one has seen God, but Jesus, who is Himself God, has revealed God to us.

## Reflection

- “Jesus is \_\_\_\_\_ in this story”
- Discuss how you would fill in the blank (e.g. “forever”, “loving”, “humble”).
- Together, decide on one word.
- On a post-it, draw an upside-down heart and write the word inside it.
- Stick the post-it where it will be visible for a week. Everytime you see it, hold the word inside of your heart for a few moments.