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THE UPSIDE-DOWN KINGDOM | MARCH 16-22, 2022
BOTTOM LINE: IN THE UPSIDE DOWN KINGDOM, HONOR IS GREATER THAN POWER.

*I call on you, my God,
for you will
answer me;
turn your ear to me
and hear my prayer.*

Psalm 17:6 NIV

>> MARCH 16

The story behind this verse is fascinating. David prayed this while running for his life from an evil king named Saul who wanted to kill him. While on the run, God didn't rescue David immediately. Instead, God was with David and helped him find a way out of that situation over time. But even though God didn't answer David's prayer immediately, God protected David the entire time he was on the run. So remember, no matter what's going on in your life, God hears your prayers. And even if God doesn't respond the way you expect or in the timing you want, know that just because God seems silent, it doesn't mean that God isn't there. God is with you, listening to you, and working for your good.

*Do to others as you
would like them
to do to you.*

Luke 6:31 NLT

>> MARCH 17

As middle/high schoolers, it's can be easy to believe that you don't have a lot of authority right now. And here's a secret: adults often feel the same way! It feels like there is not much we can actually be in charge of in our day-to-day lives. But here's the thing: You have so much more authority than you think! You're in charge of the way you treat people. You're in charge of the way you speak to people. You're in charge of the way you choose to live and interact with others. And if you want to use that authority wisely, you can follow Jesus' guidance here by using your authority to treat others the way you want to be treated.

*Don't repay evil for evil.
Don't retaliate with
insults when people
insult you. Instead,
pay them back with a
blessing. That is what
God has called you to
do, and he will grant
you his blessing.*

1 Peter 3:9 NLT

>> MARCH 18

When someone does something that hurts us, it's human nature to want to get them back. Payback feels great. So why does Peter say to do the opposite in this letter? Well, Peter had a life-changing experience that made him see everything differently. Not only did Peter know Jesus personally, but Peter hurt Jesus ... personally. But in return, Jesus didn't seek payback. Instead, He forgave him. Jesus showed Peter a way to live that was totally opposite from what he expected.

Today, think about the things people in your family or friend group do that hurt you or get on your nerves. What would it look like to tell them it hurt you in a way that doesn't hurt them in return?

*But I trust in your
unfailing love;
my heart rejoices in
your salvation.*

Psalm 13:5 NIV

>> MARCH 19

When you're waiting on something important, it's really hard to trust that everything will be okay. The writer of this verse, David, begins by asking, "How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever?" (Psalm 13:1). David is still on the run because he's being hunted by King Saul. His circumstances probably left him wondering if the worst would happen. Would he be in danger forever? But, instead of staying stuck in his worry, David reminds himself of something he knows is true: He can trust God's unfailing love, regardless of his circumstances. There's nothing wrong with having questions about life or wondering when God will answer our prayers. But even in our times of question, we can trust God, knowing that God loves us.

*Without wise
leadership,
a nation falls;
there is safety
in having many
advisers.*

Proverbs 11:14 NLT

>> MARCH 20

This proverb presents a simple truth: There's value in listening to other people. You should turn up the volume of authority figures you can trust and wise people in your life who want what's best for you. Why? Because their authority and guidance make your life better.

Without the wisdom of others, we can talk ourselves into some not-so-great choices. But with their help, we can walk toward good things for our lives.

So today, think about the good authority figures or wise people you have in your life. How can you turn up the volume of their voices this week?

*Dear brothers and
sisters, honor
those who are your
leaders in the Lord's
work. They work hard
among you and give
you spiritual guidance.*

*1 Thessalonians 5:12
NLT*

>> MARCH 21

We all have people in our life who lead us in some way. Those leaders might be teachers, coaches, parents, aunts, uncles, a youth pastor, or other authority figures. The good news is that these people can help guide you to grow in your relationship with Jesus.

Think of one leader in your life who you really look up to. What's one thing about them that you really admire? Spend one minute thanking God for putting them in your life and for their good example of authority.

*A new command
I give you:
Love one another.
As I have loved you,
so you must love one
another.*

John 13:34 NIV

>> MARCH 22

If we want to follow God more in our everyday lives, we have to first know what He said—that's why memorizing Scripture is important. Write this verse on a sticky note. Then put the sticky note somewhere you'll be able to see it every day: your bathroom mirror, your bedroom door, your laptop. Every time you see it, close your eyes and try to say it from memory. If you get stuck, open your eyes and read it out loud. Then, close your eyes and try again!