

Hi Everyone,

How are you all doing? Caroline and I want you to know that we think and pray for you everyday. Last week we talked about how Jesus is there no matter what is happening and this is very true but that doesn't mean that we still don't get afraid or angry or frustrated. This week we want to look at and talk about how Jesus wants us to handle those feelings and how we can do that.

When COVID-19 officially became a pandemic in mid-March of 2020, the news wasn't immediately bad for kids. After all, what was the first thing that affected you? School got canceled. Spring break started early and was suddenly extended for weeks and weeks. No more waking up early. No more racing to the bus. It was like having summer vacation in spring.

Or was it? Summer vacations, after all, mean taking fun trips to the pool and the beach and the amusement park. Where did we all get to go? We went to far away places like... the living room. The play room. The kitchen. We were stuck at home. We could still go outside, weather permitting, but there was no shopping, no dining out, and no road trips.

Things got worse from there. Birthday parties were canceled. Sports were canceled. Plays and concerts got canceled. All the fun things we were looking forward to were taken away from us. We couldn't see our friends. We couldn't go to grandma's. We were on lockdown, and that was hard to take.

How did you react when you were told no more visits to your friends' house? How did it feel to know all the activities you used to enjoy - sports, music, play dates, dinner at a restaurant - were put on permanent hold? For many of us the reaction was anger. It felt unfair! A simple virus that offers little threat to kids canceled all of our plans.

It's okay to be disappointed. It's okay to be upset. But we need to be careful that the real reason for our anger is not selfishness. If all we are thinking of is ourselves, we need a change of heart. We need to open our eyes and realize what's happening is not all about us. We need to have a better attitude than the Israelites did, when they became angry at God because there was no water to be found.

READ EXODUS 17:1-7 *The whole Israelite community set out from the Desert of Sin, traveling from place to place as the LORD commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. ² So they quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water to drink." Moses replied, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you put the LORD to the test?"³ But the people were thirsty for water there, and they grumbled against Moses. They said, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to make us and our children and livestock die of thirst?"⁴ Then Moses cried out to the LORD, "What am I to do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me."⁵ The LORD answered Moses, "Go out in front of the people. Take with you some of the elders of Israel and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the*

Nile, and go. ⁶ I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink." So Moses did this in the sight of the elders of Israel. ⁷ And he called the place Massah^[a] and Meribah^[b] because the Israelites quarreled and because they tested the LORD saying, "Is the LORD among us or not?"

- Where were the Israelites?
- Why were they angry?
- What did God do for them?
- What could they have done instead of getting mad?
- Why is it so hard to think of others when we are disappointed?

The people of Exodus were angry. To be honest, they probably sounded a lot like the angry mobs of people lined up to buy all the toilet paper at the grocery store every morning. It was all about their problem. It was all about their selfish desires. Selfishness led to anger, and anger led them to say terrible things about Moses and God.

The Apostle Paul offers an alternative in the book of Philippians. Instead of being all about ourselves, we need to be more like Christ, who thought of others before Himself.

READ PHILIPPIANS 2:3 ³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves,

- What kind of attitude does Paul say we should have?
- What do we need to do when we feel mad?
- How can we remind ourselves to think of others when we just want to be mad?

The Bottom Line is instead of being selfish and getting angry, think of others first in hard times.

To put it simply: When we feel mad, we need to put others first.

When this whole thing started one of the things that flew off the shelves in early 2020 was bottled water. People were stocking up on toilet paper, canned foods, pastas, milk, and yes... bottled water. The funny thing is, clean water was not an issue. The problem was a virus, not our water. Yet people were acting so selfishly, they grabbed all sorts of things they really didn't need.

Selfishness leads us to think of ourselves. It can make us angry, and it can make us do selfish things, like the Israelites who were screaming for water in the wilderness. Instead of getting mad, we need to put others first. Instead of focusing on our wants, we should concentrate on the needs of others. We can be a blessing if we put others first. We can do a lot of good, too.

The shoppers panic buying toilet paper and hand sanitizer and cleaning supplies may have grabbed all the big headlines in early 2020, but if you dug a little deeper, you'd see there were other people taking a different attitude. Teachers who were home from school offered to tutor other people's kids with their homework via the Internet. Athletes like Zion Williamson stepped up to pay out of work arena staff during the NBA and NHL shut down. Neighbors did chores and made shopping runs for people who were elderly or high risk.

What's the difference between panic buying toilet paper for yourself and shopping for someone in need? It's an attitude. It's looking past our disappointment so we can see other people in need. It's choosing to be selfless rather than selfish. It's asking, "What can I do for others?" instead of crying out, "Why me???"

This is not an easy thing to do. Sin, at its heart, is selfish, and since we're all sinful people, we're all inclined to be selfish. With God's help, we can change our hearts. We can give God our selfishness and anger and ask Him to open our eyes to see how we can help others.

Our natural inclination is to think that we will be happiest with things going our way. When we were all sheltered at home, the one thing we wanted most was for life to be normal again. There was nothing we could do to make things be normal, but there was plenty to do to help others. Helping others doesn't make things normal for ourselves, but we can find joy helping to make things a little more normal for someone else.

We can get angry. We can be selfish. We can act out and stomp our feet and be mad. Or we can give our frustrations to God and ask Him how we can help others. Let's choose to love others the next time we get mad. Let's be selfless instead of selfish.

I know this is a lot to think about and very hard to do but by sticking together, talking to each other and asking God for his strength we can do it. Here is our prayer for you this week.

Dear God,

Let these children and families remember that you are there for them. Help them remember there are people out there that care about them. Help us all to think of others and be a blessing in hard times.

In Jesus' name,
Amen