

Read: Romans 12:14-21

Opposite Day!

Romans 12:14-16a

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Today, let's learn how to play a silly game called "Opposite Day!" It's simple. Do the opposite of what you normally do—like having spaghetti for breakfast and pancakes for dinner. Say something and then do the opposite of that. You might have to spend a good chunk of time trying to come up with different lines in order to get a rise out of a family member before saying, "Opposite Day!" in a sing-song voice. For example, "It's so rainy outside!" ("Opposite Day!") "I would much rather eat carrots than Cheetos!" ("Opposite Day!") "Your t-shirt is not cool!" ("Opposite Day!")

It almost seems as if Paul is playing "Opposite Day!" in our reading today: "Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse!" What!? That's so different from how we feel. Our sinful selves want to shout out, "Opposite, Paul! If someone is bullying me—then I'm going to bully them right back!" But if anyone knows about opposites, it's the apostle Paul. Before Paul became one of the greatest Christian missionaries; he was first Saul, one of the greatest slayers of Christians. Saul hated Christ and anyone who professed him. And then, God worked in Saul's heart an "Opposite Day!"

God worked an "Opposite Day" with us as well. We were conceived and born sinful. Every day since then we have sinned, and we deserve nothing but to suffer eternally in hell. But when God sent his only Son to take our place and suffer on the cross for us, he showed us grace! He gave us the opposite of what we deserved! We deserve hell—we get heaven. We deserve suffering—we get eternal life and happiness! What an amazing gift! Knowing about that amazing gift enables us, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to do what the passage tells us! We can be nice to those who are mean to us! We can show love to those who are not happy with the way we vote or view vaccinations! We can bless those who persecute us! And then, like a bunch of happy dominoes falling over each other; we can live in peace and harmony with everyone!

Let's play one last round of "Opposite Day!" to end our devotion: "God doesn't exist!" ("Opposite Day! God is real!") "Jesus is dead!" ("Opposite Day! Jesus lives!") "God doesn't care about you!" ("Opposite Day! God loves you!")

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for the Younger Children

- Playing the Opposite Game is fun! Can you think of any opposites?
- Grace is getting the opposite of what we deserve! What do we deserve? But what do we get?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- Ever heard a choir sing in parts or harmony? Describe what that sounds like.
- Now imagine a screechy, off-pitched, untuned clarinet player joins your choir. How would that change the sound? (*The point: Try to remember beautiful harmonious sounds of a choir the next time you feel like fighting with a sibling. "Live in peace and harmony" not "screechy, grinding noise."*)

Questions for Middle School and Above

- Can you think of a time when you were able to "rejoice with those who rejoice" or "mourn with those who mourn" even though it might not have been easy for you?
- Verse 21 says, "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." Can you think of one example in your own life where you could overcome evil with good?

Closing Prayer:

Dearest Jesus, even though at times we want to hurt those who hurt us, help us remember what you did for us on the cross! Help us to show love for everyone, even our enemies! Thank you for bringing us to heaven, the opposite of what we deserve. Amen!