



07/2016

DEVOTIONAL JOURNAL

...with all humility and gentleness,
with patience, bearing with one
another in love...

EPHESIANS 4:2 (ESV)

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Also available online at www.cefc.org.sg



MEMORY FOCUS

FROM EPHESIANS (ESV)

2016

JANUARY

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
who has blessed us in Christ with every
spiritual blessing in the heavenly places...

EPHESIANS 1:3

FEBRUARY

...even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that
we should be holy and blameless before Him.

EPHESIANS 1:4

MARCH

In love He predestined us for adoption as sons
through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will.

EPHESIANS 1:5

APRIL

For by grace you have been saved through faith.
And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,
not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

EPHESIANS 2:8-9

MAY

Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly than
all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us,
to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all
generations, forever and ever. Amen.

EPHESIANS 3:20-21

JUNE

I, therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner
worthy of the calling to which you have been called...

EPHESIANS 4:1

JULY

...with all humility and gentleness, with patience,
bearing with one another in love...

EPHESIANS 4:2

AUGUST

...eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

EPHESIANS 4:3

SEPTEMBER

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.

EPHESIANS 6:10

OCTOBER

Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able
to stand against the schemes of the devil.

EPHESIANS 6:11

NOVEMBER

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood,
but against the rulers, against the authorities,
against the cosmic powers over this present darkness,
against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

EPHESIANS 6:12

DECEMBER

...praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer
and supplication. To that end keep alert with
all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints...

EPHESIANS 6:18

FORE BY SENIOR PASTORS 2016 WORD

BACK TO THE ESSENTIALS IN 2016!



The more you grow as a Christian, the more you realise you have to return to the bare essentials of Christian living. Perhaps it is the discipline of **starting again**, the devotion to **persevere** or the decision to **stop doing something** so that we can start doing something.

Spiritual Growth is a choice!

This year, the Lord gave us Acts 20:28 as a spiritual anchor towards Covenant EFC's Golden Jubilee in 2028.

“Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which He obtained with His own blood.” (Acts 20:28)

These are the bare essentials God wants us to return to in the midst of increasing messiness in the world and the glaring weaknesses within the Church:

- **Pay Attention to Yourself.** We seem to have grown up thinking in this order: Jesus first, others second and yourself last! While there is some validity in this order of living, there is also a flaw. If we do not take care of ourselves, we cannot take care of others. Our mission as a Church is clear: To raise authentic disciples and intentional disciplemakers of *A Certain Kind*. This is why we led the *Covenant Groups* to do a spiritual audit on their *Authentic Discipleship and Intentional Disciplemaking (A.D.I.D.)* growth journey and action plan – to find out where we are spiritually so that we can chart our growth intentionally. It is not only to grow as an individual but to grow as a community. There is rampant nominalism and powerlessness within the Church! It's time to let the Spirit break those chains over our lives and let the Word of God bring forth newness. Pay attention to yourself – not selfish narcissism but spiritual realism!
- **Pay Attention to Your Family.** The family institution is under attack. No one can take better care of your family than you. You are the 24/7-best-children-and-youth disciplemaker. The Church will complement and support you. The truths of God must be taught, caught and made real in times of distraught. So use this journal in family devotions and take proactive steps and establish a household of faith!
- **Pay Attention to Others.** Your spiritual growth will be capped until you give of yourself to care for others. In the process, you will discover what God is saying through the Word. And the ultimate test is: **What are you going to do about it?** Without obedience, there is no growth. Without growth, you cannot impart. Without impartation, there is no legacy. Would you want to be remembered as someone who lived for himself or lived for others?

For 2016, the book of Ephesians is the overarching frame for the daily devotional. This Epistle was written a few years after the account in Acts 20. It points us to the essential Doctrines (Eph 1-3) and Discipleship (Eph 4-6) of our lives. As we plough through this fascinating Epistle, we will be challenged to anchor our lives in Jesus as the only Lord and Saviour and to pay allegiance to the only Master and King of our lives. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ! (Eph 1:2)

Rev Tony Yeo and Rev Tan Kay Kiong

GUIDE TO USING THIS DEVOTIONAL JOURNAL

1 Prepare your heart in God's presence

- Select a fixed time (preferably in the morning before you begin your day) and a quiet place where you can be alone and undisturbed.
- Observe a moment of silence as you acknowledge God's presence. Centre down.
- Begin with a song of worship. Meditate on the lyrics even if you are unfamiliar with the tune. (Refer to the list of worship songs provided.)
- Ask God to open your heart to hear Him.

The English Standard Version (ESV) is the default Bible version translation unless otherwise specified.

2 Allow God to S.O.A.P. you with His Word and Spirit

- Scripture – Take your time to meditate on the Scripture passage for the day. Pause and mull over words and phrases that stand out to you.

- Observation – Jot down significant insights and reflections from the passage you have read. You could use the guiding questions provided. *The “Deeper Reflection” section is to aid your contemplation of the Scripture. It is not to replace your own observation, for the Holy Spirit illuminates the Scripture to you as you seek Him earnestly.*
- Application – Note down a specific and practical commitment to God's Word for you. Is there a command to obey, a sin to avoid, an example to follow, or a principle to live out? Where appropriate, share your devotional entry with someone.
- Prayer – Bring your heartfelt response to God in prayer.

WHAT'S NEW IN 2016?

Suggested prayers are included twice weekly on Mondays and Wednesdays, to serve as an aid to those who may find them helpful in their prayer response. On each Friday, there is a prayer pointer for the leaders (Covenant Group leaders, ministry leaders, Board and staff) whom God brings to your mind to pray for.

Examining your life is essential in your faith journey. Your redeemed life as a disciple of Christ deserves careful examining. May you take root and bear fruit in Him!



WORSHIP SONGS

JULY/AUGUST

MY HEART IS FILLED WITH THANKFULNESS

Verse 1

My heart is filled with thankfulness
 To Him who bore my pain
 Who plumbed the depths of my disgrace
 And gave me life again
 Who crushed my curse of sinfulness
 And clothed me with His light
 And wrote His law of righteousness
 With pow'r upon my heart

Verse 2

My heart is filled with thankfulness
 To Him who walks beside
 Who floods my weaknesses with strength
 And causes fears to fly
 Whose every promise is enough
 For every step I take
 Sustaining me with arms of love
 And crowning me with grace

Verse 3

My heart is filled with thankfulness
 To Him who reigns above
 Whose wisdom is my perfect peace
 Whose every thought is love
 For every day I have on earth
 Is given by the King
 So I will give my life my all
 To love and follow Him

10,000 REASONS (BLESS THE LORD)

Chorus

Bless the Lord O my soul
 O my soul
 Worship His holy name
 Sing like never before
 O my soul
 I'll worship Your holy name

Verse 1

The sun comes up it's a new day dawning
 It's time to sing Your song again
 Whatever may pass and whatever lies before me
 Let me be singing when the evening comes

Verse 2

You're rich in love and You're slow to anger
 Your name is great and Your heart is kind
 For all Your goodness I will keep on singing
 Ten thousand reasons for my heart to find

Verse 3

And on that day when my strength is failing
 The end draws near and my time has come
 Still my soul will sing Your praise unending
 Ten thousand years and then forevermore

Ending

I'll worship Your holy name
 Worship Your holy name
 Worship Your holy name

BEFORE THE THRONE OF GOD (FESTUS)

Verse 1

Before the Throne of God above
 I have a strong and perfect plea
 A great High Priest Whose Name is Love
 Who ever lives and pleads for me
 My name is graven on His Hands
 My name is written on His Heart
 I know that while in Heaven He stands
 No tongue can bid me thence depart
 No tongue can bid me thence depart

Verse 2

When Satan tempts me to despair
 And tells me of the guilt within
 Upward I look and see Him there
 Who made an end to all my sin
 Because the sinless Saviour died
 My sinful soul is counted free
 For God the just is satisfied
 To look on Him and pardon me
 To look on Him and pardon me

Chorus

Hallelujah Hallelujah
 Praise the One
 Risen Son of God

Verse 3

Behold Him there the Risen Lamb
 My perfect spotless righteousness
 The great unchangeable I am
 The King of glory and of grace
 One in Himself I cannot die
 My soul is purchased by His blood
 My life is hid with Christ on high
 With Christ my Saviour and my God
 With Christ my Saviour and my God

Charitie Lees Bancroft
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HOW GREAT THOU ART

Verse 1

O Lord my God when I in awesome wonder
 Consider all the works Thy hand hath made
 I see the stars I hear the mighty thunder
 Thy pow'r throughout the universe displayed

Chorus

Then sings my soul my Saviour God to Thee
 How great Thou art how great Thou art
 Then sings my soul my Saviour God to Thee
 How great Thou art how great Thou art

Verse 2

When through the woods and forest glades I wander
 And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees
 When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur
 And hear the brook and feel the gentle breeze

Verse 3

And when I think that God His Son not sparing
 Sent Him to die I scarce can take it in
 That on the Cross my burden gladly bearing
 He bled and died to take away my sin

Verse 4

When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation
 And take me home what joy shall fill my heart
 Then shall I bow in humble adoration
 And there proclaim my God how great Thou art

Stuart Wesley Keene Hine

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WONDERFUL GOD

Verse 1

There is no other God like You
 Who made the heavens and the earth
 And fills my heart with joy unending
 All I can do is give my life
 Offer to You a sacrifice
 Here is my heart for You unending

Bridge

All of my life, belongs to You alone
 With every breath, my song will rise to You

Chorus

You are the joy of every nation
 The giver of salvation
 Wonderful God
 You are God throughout the ages
 Enthroned upon our praises
 Wonderful God

Verse 2

Every morning when I rise
 It is Your presence I desire
 To see Your faithfulness unending

Mercy and goodness follow me
 For in Your presence I am free
 I put my trust in You unending

Denis Campos

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FOR ALL YOU'VE DONE

Verse

My Saviour, Redeemer
 Lifted me from the miry clay
 Almighty forever
 I'll never be the same

Pre-chorus

Cause You came near from the everlasting
 To the world we live, the Father's only son

Chorus

You lived, You died
 You rose again on high
 You opened the way
 For the world to live again
 Hallelujah for all You've done

Reuben Morgan

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EVERLASTING GOD

Verse 1

Strength will rise as we wait upon the Lord
 We will wait upon the Lord
 We will wait upon the Lord
 Strength will rise as we wait upon the Lord
 We will wait upon the Lord
 We will wait upon the Lord

Pre-chorus

Our God You reign forever
 Our Hope our strong Deliverer

Chorus

You are the everlasting God
 The everlasting God
 You do not faint
 You won't grow weary
 You're the defender of the weak
 You comfort those in need
 You lift us up on wings like eagles

Verse 2

Strength will rise as we wait upon the Lord
 We will wait upon the Lord
 We will wait upon the Lord
 Strength will rise as we wait upon the Lord
 We will wait upon the Lord
 We will wait upon the Lord

Brenton Brown | Ken Riley

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BEAUTIFUL SAVIOUR

Verse 1

Jesus, beautiful Saviour
 God of all majesty, risen King
 (Lamb of God, holy and righteous)
 (Blessed Redeemer, bright morning star)

Pre-chorus

All the heavens shout Your praise
 All creation bows to worship You

Chorus

How wonderful, how beautiful
 Name above ev'ry name exalted high
 How wonderful how beautiful
 Jesus, Your name name above ev'ry name, Jesus

Verse 2

Jesus, beautiful Saviour
 God of all majesty, risen King
 (Lamb of God, holy and righteous)
 (Blessed Redeemer, bright morning star)

Bridge 1

Saviour, Redeemer, You are God, You are God

Bridge 2

I will sing forever
 Jesus I love You
 Jesus I love You

End

Jesus Jesus

Ending

Jesus beautiful Saviour
 (Repeat)

Henry Seeley

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EMPOWER ME

Verse 1

Nobody knows how weak I am better than You
 Nobody sees all of my needs better than You
 And nobody has the power to change me
 To what I was born to be
 Jesus be strong in my weakness, empower me

Chorus

Empower me like a rushing river flowing to the sea
 Lord send Your Holy Spirit flowing now through me
 Till I'm living as Your child victorious and free
 Send the power of Your love, empower me

Verse 2

Nobody's eyes see through my soul better than Yours
 And nobody's love can make me whole
 No love but Yours
 And nobody has the power to lift me
 To reach for eternity
 Jesus break through all my defenses, empower me

Ending

Send the power of Your love, empower me
 Empower me, empower me
 Send Your love and Lord empower me

Claire Cloninger | David T. Clydesdale

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GIVE THANKS

Verse

Give thanks with a grateful heart
 Give thanks to the Holy One
 Give thanks because He's given
 Jesus Christ His Son

Chorus

And now let the weak say I am strong
 Let the poor say I am rich
 Because of what the Lord has done for us
 And now let the weak say I am strong
 Let the poor say I am rich
 Because of what the Lord has done for us

Ending

Give thanks

Henry Smith

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THE CHURCH BEYOND

DISCIPLEMAKING CHURCH IN MISSIONS

BY ELDER JOHNNY TAN, DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS

*“The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.
Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send
out workers into His harvest field.”*
– Luke 10:2 (NIV)

In Matthew 9:35-38, it is recorded that “Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When He saw the crowds, He had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field.”

What did Jesus do immediately? The answer is in Matthew 10:1.

“Jesus called His twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.”

And Matthew 10:5-8.

“These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: ‘Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. As you go, proclaim this message: “The kingdom of heaven has come near.” Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons.

*“Everyone who
goes into the
harvest field needs
to be a practicing
disciple.”*

Freely you have received; freely give.”

This is reiterated in Luke 10:1-3.

“After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of Him to every town and place where He was about to go. He told them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field. Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves.”

What can we learn from these verses? Firstly, that the harvest is in need of workers. This means you and I, Covenanters, are needed. Secondly, it is the Lord that sends out the workers. This means there must be a calling from God. Thirdly, everyone sent is appointed and given authority. This means that everyone who goes into the harvest field needs to be a practicing disciple. Fourthly, we need to pray to the Lord of the harvest. This means that the sending is preceded by prayers. Finally, the harvest field will be tough. This means that deep faith, more prayers and willing hearts are needed.

Let’s pray for the following in light of what Jesus has called us to do and in view of July’s Missions Week.

» PRAY

- That the Lord will call covenant disciples to the mission field in various capacities and that at least 10 percent of Covenanters will be sent
- That Covenanters who are called will be obedient to God’s calling for their lives
- That Covenanters will participate in praying, giving and supporting Covenant EFC’s missions efforts
- That our missionaries and their families in Asia will be effective in forming bridges and bringing the Gospel to the local communities via the five strategic thrusts employed by Covenant EFC
- That God will deepen the relationship with our missions partners, and that He will add like-minded churches and agencies with the same passion for the lost and for discipling to be our partners



FRIDAY, 1 JULY 2016

Snake and Ladders: Hold the Ladder

■ SCRIPTURE

Philippians 3:10-14; 2 Timothy 2:2

■ OBSERVATION

What is the goal in verse 14?

DEEPER REFLECTION

Overwhelmed, over-committed and over-connected: This summarises the next generation who experience FOMO (Fear Of Missing Out), fill up all their schedules and constantly peer at screens¹. They are ambitious. Parents recognise that they can no longer shelter their children, so they train them to deal with future challenges in life and set higher expectations and goals for them². But despite all these tips, encouragement and education, the next generation – just like the generations before them – will one day discover that although they have climbed so many ladders, they will soon become disappointed. Christ calls us to climb a different ladder, so that we may know Him and the power of His resurrection. To successfully climb this ladder, someone needs to hold the ladder for us. It is not easy to pursue all that Christ wants us to. In 2 Timothy 2:2, there is a call to “entrust” the Gospel to reliable people. The Greek word for “entrust” is the verb *parathou*, which means “to set aside, to place before”³. It has the idea of making a deposit in someone’s life, an investment that will reap future value. Are you investing in someone so that they will pursue the goal set up by Christ? Will you pray about serving in the Children’s Ministry or among the youth? Others have held the ladder for you. Will you do likewise for the next generation?

■ APPLICATION

In whom can you invest your life so that they may pursue knowing the Lord in deeper ways?

■ PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

To have the strength to love and the wisdom to mentor the next generation

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

¹ <http://growingleaders.com/blog/category/generation-z/>

² [http://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/EY-rise-of-gen-z-new-challenge-for-retailers/\\$FILE/EY-rise-of-gen-z-new-challenge-for-retailers.pdf](http://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/EY-rise-of-gen-z-new-challenge-for-retailers/$FILE/EY-rise-of-gen-z-new-challenge-for-retailers.pdf) (p. 7)

³ <http://biblehub.com/greek/3908.htm>



SATURDAY, 2 JULY 2016

Snake and Ladders: Winning

■ SCRIPTURE

1 Corinthians 2:1-5, 14; 2 Timothy 4:6-7

■ OBSERVATION

Why would God's words sound like foolishness to someone without God's Spirit?

DEEPER REFLECTION

No child wants to look dumb. Especially today's children. The next generation have a strong desire to be self-reliant and innovative. With technology at their fingertips, they have a stronger belief that they can do things better and faster while having more fun⁴. Today there are many attractions that seem much more exciting than what the Church can offer. The next generation are easily enticed by fanciful gadgets and magnificent displays of technology. Simultaneously, as technological barriers are constantly pushed, so too are ideological and social boundaries. It is little wonder why the Bible would seem to them to be old-fashioned and irrelevant today. The Apostle Paul was a well-educated Jew who was taught by Gamaliel (Ac 22:3). Yet he says in 1 Corinthians 2:1 that he did not come with "eloquent or superior wisdom", nor with "wise and persuasive words" (1 Co 2:4). Instead, Paul came in the power of the Spirit. The next generation need to be guided in the ways of the Holy Spirit, who will guide them into all truth and help them discern sin (Jn 16:5-15). They must be convinced of the realities of the spiritual realm and fight the good fight of faith for the sake of Christ. Then they will truly win in life. The best way they can be trained is by seeing and experiencing faith in action. Ultimately for a child or youth, they must be inspired by those who have gone before them. They need ladder-holders, so that they can climb and succeed as children of God. We win best when there are people cheering us on!

■ APPLICATION

How can you cheer the next generation on in the Christian faith?

■ PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

⁴ [http://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/EY-rise-of-gen-z-new-challenge-for-retailers/\\$FILE/EY-rise-of-gen-z-new-challenge-for-retailers.pdf](http://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/EY-rise-of-gen-z-new-challenge-for-retailers/$FILE/EY-rise-of-gen-z-new-challenge-for-retailers.pdf) (pp. 10-11)



SUNDAY, 3 JULY 2016

■ SCRIPTURE

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■ OBSERVATION

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■ APPLICATION

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■ PRAYER

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THE PAST WEEK

REVIEW

What was my high point and my low point for the week?

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What gave me life and what drained me?

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How was the Spirit of God at work?

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REFLECT

What is one key thing that God said to me this week
in light of what has happened?

RESPOND

What is one thing I need to do in light of what God is saying?

COMMIT IN PRAYER

FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

July 2016 – Week 1

**TRUTH OR LIE?**

Know what is based on God's Word and what is not.

Scripture: Ephesians 4:14

ACTIVITY BITE

Take turns to test each other's Bible knowledge. Ask close-ended questions from the Bible that only require "yes" or "no" answers. For example, "Does the book of Psalms come after Isaiah?"

CHAT TIME

Q1: How do you rate yourself in terms of your Bible knowledge?

Q2: In Ephesians 4:14, why does the Bible warn us not to easily believe in teachings that seem right?

Q3: How can we know what is biblically true or false?

LEARNING POINT

We have heard of many cult groups who claim to be messengers of God and teach the truth. We are puzzled at how people can believe those lies. But how then can they know what is the truth? The only way is to refer to the Bible. God's Word carries all truths that come from Him. The more we read His Word, the better we will be able to discern the truths from the lies. Believing in lies will cause us to live outside of God's ways.

ACTION POINT

Start a simple Bible reading plan if you do not have one. You can begin with a book in the New Testament and read a chapter each day. You can do it together as a family. Make it fun by having quizzes too.

PRAYER POWER

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

Dear God, I realise that I know so little about the Bible. I want to believe only in Your truth. Help me to be diligent in reading Your Word daily. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.



MONDAY, 4 JULY 2016

No Longer Infants

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 4:13-14

■ OBSERVATION

What is the theological connection between verses 13 and 14?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

Spiritual maturity is marked by doctrinal stability: “no longer infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching” (v.14, NIV). Immature Christians (“infants”) “never seem to know their own mind or come to settled convictions. Instead, their opinions tend to be those of the last preacher they heard or the last book they read, and they fall an easy prey to each new theological fad.”⁵ They are “susceptible to deception”⁶, and with gullibility they “follow a variety of teachings and lack of any clear direction”⁷. Their “vulnerability to false teaching”⁸ makes them “easily taken advantage of”⁹ and “totally at the mercy of the waves and the wind, which can carry them far off course”¹⁰ from the truth. Do you see yourself in this picture in some ways? Spiritual maturity brings with it the capacity to evaluate various forms of teaching, to accept what is true and reject what is false. The spiritually mature “have their senses trained to discern good and evil” (Heb 5:14). We need to grow to a point where we believe something not just because someone teaches it, but because we know from Scripture that this is true.

■ APPLICATION

In what way is doctrinal stability critical to me in my Christian life?

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■ PRAYER

Lord, grant that Your Church will seriously and vigilantly heed Your warning in Your Word that in the last days many false prophets will arise from both outside and inside the Church to mislead many,¹¹ by seeking to grow in doctrinal soundness and stability, so as to be able to discern sharply what is true and false. Amen.



⁵ John Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, The Bible Speaks Today (IVP, 1979), 170

⁶ Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Baker, 2010), 283

⁷ Frank Thielman, 283

⁸ Frank Thielman, 283

⁹ Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Zondervan, 2010), 267

¹⁰ Clinton E. Arnold, 267

¹¹ Matthew 24:4-5, 10



TUESDAY, 5 JULY 2016

Doctrine and Warfare

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 4:14

■ OBSERVATION

What is the significance of Paul using the terms “trickery”, “craftiness” and “deceitful scheming” in verse 14?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

Once, as I was teaching a class on biblical doctrine, I observed that one student didn't seem to show interest. I talked with him and discovered that whenever I mentioned the word “theological”, he heard “theoretical”. Biblical doctrine is by no means theoretical stuff, which many Christians tend to perceive; unfortunately as a result they don't take biblical doctrine seriously. The first thing that Paul talks about regarding spiritual maturity is doctrinal stability (Eph 4:13-14). And with critical urgency, because behind “every wind of teaching” that seeks to prevent doctrinal stability is “the trickery of men” and “craftiness in deceitful scheming” (v.14). Doing biblical theology is engaging in spiritual warfare. The four important words, “trickery”, “craftiness” and “deceitful scheming” underscore the intensity of the warfare. The Greek word for “scheming” is mentioned again when Paul later speaks of “the schemes of the devil” – the object of spiritual warfare (Eph 6:11). “There is a large strategy of deception that seeks to deceive believers and prevent them from growing to maturity.”¹² When we do not see the vital importance or have no spiritual interest in biblical doctrine, the devil has already won half the battle!

■ APPLICATION

How is my Christian life affected by the fact that there is a spiritual warfare dimension in doing biblical theology?

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■ PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

¹² Clinton E. Arnold, 294



WEDNESDAY, 6 JULY 2016

Strong Biblical Foundation

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 4:14; 1 Timothy 3:15

■ OBSERVATION

Why is building a strong biblical foundation in our lives crucial in light of verse 14 and 1 Timothy 3:15?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

It is clear in verse 14 that spiritual maturity and immaturity are shaped by **“teaching”** – be it true or false, right or wrong, good or bad. The starting point of doctrinal instability is doctrinal ignorance. Doctrinal stability begins with knowledge of the truth, and the source must be the Scriptures. But knowledge must grow progressively to understanding, to conviction, to wisdom and discernment. The church is to be “the pillar and support of the truth” (1 Ti 3:15). It is not surprising then that Paul wants the church “to know that it is simply inevitable for new and varied forms of unhealthy teaching to surface”¹³ (Ac 20:29) to attack the truth and the church from within and without. And this church is formed by every believer, who has a theological responsibility in building and establishing this “pillar and support of the truth” as a body. Once, when I warned my children to be careful about what they read, my son said, “In that case, we might as well just read the Bible.” My response was: “However, when we misread and misinterpret the Bible, it is equally dangerous.” So, we must learn and grow in “accurately handling the Word of truth” (2 Ti 2:15).

■ APPLICATION

How do I go about “accurately handling the Word of truth”?

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■ PRAYER

Lord, teach me and help me to do my part in building and establishing the church to faithfully be the pillar and support of the truth together with fellow members of the body. Grant me to see the vital importance of handling accurately the Word of truth, and handling the Holy Scripture carefully, faithfully and responsibly. Amen.

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

¹³ Clinton E. Arnold, 267



THURSDAY, 7 JULY 2016

Truth and Love

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 4:15

■ OBSERVATION

What is “speaking the truth in love” (v.15)?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

“Speaking-the-truth”¹⁴ (v.15) means “possessing and professing the truth”¹⁵ – “the truth of the Gospel”¹⁶ (Eph 1:13; cf. Eph 6:14). It means “speaking it out loud in the corporate gatherings of worship, talking about it with fellow believers and upholding it firmly”¹⁷. It means “believers cannot make use of the same means of manipulation and deceit as those who are ready to lead believers astray [Eph 4:14]”¹⁸. We may not go to that extreme; but we may be telling others, in small groups or when giving counsel to individuals, what we think is biblical truth when it really is not. In this way, we are not “speaking-the-truth”. When I was a young believer, I said, “The Bible says we cannot watch movies, because it is the worldly ‘lust of the eyes.’” (based on 1 Jn 2:15-16) This arose from “a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge” of the truth (Ro 10:2). So we must strive to learn to know and grow in biblical truth. But ultimately, “love” must be central in “speaking-the-truth”. “Truth becomes hard if it is not softened by love; love becomes soft if it is not strengthened by truth.”¹⁹ A “life of love is the embodiment of truth”²⁰ where “speaking-the-truth” “has love as its style and as its power”²¹.

■ APPLICATION

How can I cultivate a life of love that is the embodiment of truth?

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■ PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

¹⁴ In the Greek, “speaking-the-truth” is one word, which literally means “truthing” (John Stott, *Ephesians*, 172).

¹⁵ Clinton E. Arnold, 269

¹⁶ Clinton E. Arnold, 269

¹⁷ Clinton E. Arnold, 269

¹⁸ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 42 (Word Books, 1990), 260

¹⁹ John Stott, *Ephesians*, 172

²⁰ Andrew T. Lincoln, 260

²¹ Andrew T. Lincoln, 260



FRIDAY, 8 JULY 2016

The Whole Body

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 4:15-16

■ OBSERVATION

How has God designed the Church as a body of Christ (vv.15b-16)?

DEEPER REFLECTION

In verse 16, “several prominent ideas” in Ephesians 4:7-15, “such as unity and diversity within the body, together with the body’s growth in love, are repeated in summary form”²². Paul’s focus here is the nature of “the whole body” (v.16) according to divine design. **Composition** of and **connections** within the body: “the whole body, being fitted and held together” (v.16). It is Christ, the Head (“from whom”), who fits in the individual parts to where He wants them to be, and holds the whole body tightly together. Ask yourself: Where am I in the body? “Every joint” (v.16) in the body receives nourishment from Christ²³ in one’s personal walk with Him, and “becomes a source of supply for the well-being of all other members”²⁴. In this, we make our **commitment** and **contribution** to the body by “the proper working of each individual part” (v.16), as “God empowers each with a certain measure of His grace and strength”²⁵ (Eph 4:7). Ask yourself: How am I working properly in the body? **Character** of the body: “love”. In “forbearing one another in love” (Eph 4:2) and “speaking the truth in love” (v.15), the body is built up “in love” (v.16). Love is “the ultimate criterion for the assessment of the Church’s growth”²⁶.

■ APPLICATION

How am I working properly in the body towards building it up in love with others?

■ PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

For faithfulness in fulfilling their leadership roles

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

²² Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Apollos, 1999), 313

²³ Clinton E. Arnold, 270

²⁴ Clinton E. Arnold, 271

²⁵ Clinton E. Arnold, 271

²⁶ Andrew T. Lincoln, 264



SATURDAY, 9 JULY 2016

It's Christ Alone

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 4:7-16

■ OBSERVATION

How is Christ-centredness shown in verses 7 to 16?

DEEPER REFLECTION

“Although the church is at the forefront of Paul’s thinking” in Ephesians 4:1-16, “Christology has not collapsed into ecclesiology.²⁷ The lordship of Christ is clearly evident throughout.”²⁸ “Christology takes a central place.”²⁹ Verses 13 to 16 are parallel to Ephesians 2:20-22, where we see that Christ is the **critical foundation** upon which we stand: “**in whom** the whole building is growing into a temple **in the Lord, in whom** you also are...a dwelling of God” (Eph 2:21-22). Christ is the **single goal** we strive towards: “we are to grow up in every way **into Him**” (v.15), “moving closer to the full union with Christ”, which is “the church’s eventual destiny”³⁰. Thus, in the body of Christ, “each functions best in union with Him and with others”³¹. We are to grow into Christ “in every way” – “a growth that should touch every area of our lives”³². Christ is the **controlling centre** we submit to: Christ is “the head” (v.15), meaning “He rules or governs”³³ (see Eph 1:9-10, 21-23). Christ is the **ultimate source** we seek after: “from Him” as “the head” (vv.15-16). Christ “is actively involved in directing, stimulating and coordinating the ministry of the church, as well as in nourishing and providing the church all that it needs to develop and reach full maturity”³⁴.

■ APPLICATION

In what areas of my life do I need to grow to be Christ-centred?

■ PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

²⁷ Ecclesiology: the doctrine of the Church (ekklesia)

²⁸ Peter T. O'Brien, 317

²⁹ Clinton E. Arnold, 273

³⁰ Frank Thielman, 286

³¹ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Eerdmans, 1984), 353

³² Clinton E. Arnold, 269

³³ Peter T. O'Brien, 313

³⁴ Clinton E. Arnold, 270



SUNDAY, 10 JULY 2016

■ SCRIPTURE

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■ OBSERVATION

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■ APPLICATION

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■ PRAYER

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THE PAST WEEK

REVIEW

What was my high point and my low point for the week?

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What gave me life and what drained me?

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How was the Spirit of God at work?

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REFLECT

What is one key thing that God said to me this week
in light of what has happened?

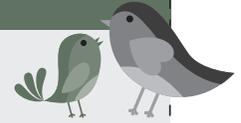
RESPOND

What is one thing I need to do in light of what God is saying?

COMMIT IN PRAYER

FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

July 2016 – Week 2

**BODY BUILDING**

We must train ourselves to grow in the Lord.

Scripture: Ephesians 4:14-16

ACTIVITY BITE

Search the Internet for more information about bodybuilders. Find out how they train and the type of food they eat or avoid eating to make themselves stronger and more muscular.

CHAT TIME

- Q1: If you want to be very strong and muscular, what type of exercises will you need to do?
Q2: Does reading only one chapter of the Bible in a whole year make you very knowledgeable about God's Word?
Q3: If you want to memorise a Bible verse, how many times do you need to recite it before you can remember it?

LEARNING POINT

If someone wants to become strong and muscular, he has to go through very stringent physical exercises. There are no shortcuts. Growing in our spiritual life is like bodybuilding. We have to keep reading and studying the Bible even though we are tired after a long day in school or at work. We have to keep memorising Bible verses even if we find it hard to do so. We have to keep doing what the Bible says even though it is difficult or we fear others may laugh at us. We have to train ourselves to grow spiritually strong in God, just like in bodybuilding.

ACTION POINT

Name one area that you haven't been doing much of, for example praying, reading the Bible, memorising verses or doing what God says. Set a goal within your family to do so more often within a period of time. Encourage one another so that you won't give up easily.

PRAYER POWER

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

Dear God, I want to read the Bible more because I want to grow stronger in You. Please help me not to give up. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.



MONDAY, 11 JULY 2016

The Church as God Intends

■ SCRIPTURE

Acts 1:1-14

■ OBSERVATION

What does God intend His Church to be according to verses 1 to 14?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

Acts shows that “all that Jesus began to do and teach” until His ascension³⁵ He continues to do through His Church by the Holy Spirit (vv.1-5). Acts is about the Church³⁶ as God intends, founded on certain fundamentals (vv.1-14). **Kingdom as Focus:** Jesus spent His last 40 days on earth teaching His disciples about the central theme of His earthly ministry – “the kingdom of God” (v.3), “the saving, sovereign action of God through Him”³⁷. It is imperative for us then to grasp theologically the kingdom of God from Scripture, internalising and personalising it. Together with this, God’s rule in our lives becomes a present and living reality, forming in us kingdom values and kingdom living (cf. Mt 6:33). **Missions as Purpose:** It is God’s purpose that His kingdom invades the nations worldwide redemptively through His Church as Christ’s witnesses (v.8) out of their real experience of Jesus and the saving and transforming power of His Gospel. **Spirit for Empowerment** is a critical necessity for world missions (v.8). Thus Jesus insisted that His disciples “wait” for the Spirit’s descent before action in missions (vv.4-5). **Prayer as Initiation:** Jesus’ disciples “wait” for Spiritual empowerment by being “all with one mind continually devoting themselves to prayer” (vv.12-14).

■ APPLICATION

How will I incorporate the four fundamentals in the Church that God intends as mine in my personal discipleship journey?

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■ PRAYER

Lord, help me to seek first Your kingdom, and live by kingdom values. Show me and help me to fulfil my God-given part in world missions. Empower me through Your Spirit to be a light of the world, and a faithful witness for You through the Gospel. Help me to walk in continual communion with You in my daily living. Amen.

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

³⁵ As in the Gospel of Luke

³⁶ “Church” is a key word in Acts, occurring 20 times.

³⁷ I. Howard Marshall, *Acts*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (IVP & Eerdmans, 1980), 57



TUESDAY, 12 JULY 2016

When God's Spirit Breaks In

■ SCRIPTURE

Acts 2:1-18, 37-42

■ OBSERVATION

What do you observe about the Holy Spirit breaking in into the Church in verses 1 to 18, and 37 to 42?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

The task of world missions of the early church was started by a divine breaking in: “they were all filled with the Holy Spirit” (vv.1-4). What characterises this divine breaking in? **God's sovereign way:** God's act is timely. He acted at a time (“the day of Pentecost”, v.1) when “Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven” were gathered at one place (v.5). God acts “suddenly” (v.2). And God acts fittingly. The 120 disciples of Jesus spoke in tongues such that everyone “was hearing them speak in his own language” “of the mighty deeds of God” (vv.6, 8, 11). **God's faithful Word:** the Holy Spirit filling Christ's disciples was according “to what was spoken through the prophet Joel” (vv.14-16). And God fulfils His Word in His own sovereign way. **God's transforming work:** 3,000 unbelievers, whose hearts were pierced by the Word of God, were “saved” and “baptised” (vv.37-41). What happened before and after the divine breaking in? Before, Jesus' disciples were “continually devoting themselves” to prayer (Ac 1:14). Afterwards, they were “continually devoting themselves” to growing spiritually (v.42). The fruits of revival can only be preserved through the ongoing process of renewal by the Word and the Spirit.

■ APPLICATION

In what areas of my life do I desperately need and earnestly seek God to break in for breakthroughs?

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■ PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:



WEDNESDAY, 13 JULY 2016

Problems in a Missional Church

■ SCRIPTURE

Acts 5:1-11; 6:1-7; 15:36-40

■ OBSERVATION

What were some internal problems that the New Testament Church faced (vv.1-11; Ac 6:1-7; Ac 15:36-40)?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

The early Spirit-empowered missional church, progressing in proclaiming the Gospel from Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria and towards the ends of the earth (Ac 1:8), was not without internal problems. **Deception (vv.1-11)**: A couple gave the apostles the false impression that they were giving to the church all that they had sold (vv.1-2). But their deception, considered as lying to God, was exposed and they died under divine judgment (vv.3-10). It is sobering to realise that in a missional church filled with the Spirit there can be hearts that are filled by Satan (v.3). **Distraction (Ac 6:1-7)**: There was a legitimate complaint over a neglected physical need in the church (Ac 6:1). Such genuine needs can be a distraction that leads to neglecting the highest priority – devotion to prayer and the ministry of the Word (Ac 6: 2-4). **Discord (Ac 15:36-40)**: The Holy Spirit sent the two finest missionaries, Paul and Barnabas, to penetrate new frontiers in the mission field (Ac 13:1-3). They planted churches and “made many disciples” (Ac 14:21-28). Then they had “such a sharp disagreement that they separated from one another” (Ac 15:36-39). But because of “the grace of the Lord” (Ac 15:40), internal problems will not permanently prevent the church from progressing in the mission field.

■ APPLICATION

How will I guard myself against deception, distraction and discord in my personal life and in the church?

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■ PRAYER

Lord, should I be deceived by falsehood or self-deception, be gracious and merciful to me to expose that to me and restore me to the path of truth. Should I have let worldly things distract me from a pure devotion to You, bring me back to You. Keep me from causing any discord among Your people through words or deeds. Amen.

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:



THURSDAY, 14 JULY 2016

Great Persecution as Divinely Intended

■ SCRIPTURE

Acts 7:54-60; 8:1-4

■ OBSERVATION

What do you observe about the great persecution that came upon the church in verses 54 to 60 and Acts 8:1-4?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

I don't know what a "great persecution against the church" (Ac 8:1), which can be quite traumatic (Ac 8:3), is like. But since persecution is expected in biblical discipleship, for now, I can only prepare myself theologically, spiritually and mentally for it. And I can know if I am prepared only when it happens. **What do we see?** When we think of persecution, we tend to look at external situations, and become frightened. When Stephen was persecuted, "he saw the glory of God" and the supreme lordship of Jesus (vv.55-56). Stephen could see what he saw because he was "full of the Holy Spirit" (v.55). What Stephen saw visibly, we can "gaze intently" with eyes of faith. The presence of God's glory and Jesus' lordship in persecution remain unchanged. **What we cannot see.** The great persecution caused the church in Jerusalem to be "scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria" (Ac 8:1) and "went about preaching the word" (Ac 8:4), fulfilling the Acts 1:8 missions mandate. The church did not expect this. "Saul" is mentioned thrice in this great persecution (v.58; Ac 8:1, 3). God was purposefully at work in the heart of this young man. But no one could see this until the next chapter of Acts. Such was a great persecution as divinely intended.

■ APPLICATION

How much thought do I give to persecution in light of Scripture as a way of preparing myself for it?

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■ PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:



FRIDAY, 15 JULY 2016

Missions with the Life-transforming God

■ SCRIPTURE

Acts 9:1-16

■ OBSERVATION

What observations can you make about the Lord in Saul's encounter with Him on the road to Damascus (vv.1-16)?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

Saul was “ravaging the church” in Jerusalem after Stephen’s martyrdom (Ac 8:3). The Greek word for “ravaging” is “used in Psalm 80:13 (LXX)³⁸ of wild boars devastating a vineyard; and it especially refers to the ravaging of a body by a wild beast”³⁹. And now Saul was “still breathing threats and murders” against Jesus’ disciples (v.1), as he was “not satisfied with his campaign in Jerusalem itself but still anxious to do more”⁴⁰. As “a bitter opponent of Christ and His church”⁴¹, with “his heart filled with hatred and his mind poisoned by prejudice”⁴² and “furiously enraged” with Jesus’ disciples, he “kept pursuing them even to foreign cities” (Ac 26:11). This Saul was on his church-destroying mission to Damascus (v.2). “As he was travelling”, the Lord appeared to him “suddenly” in a bright blinding light to touch and transform this “self-appointed inquisitor”⁴³ (vv.3-8). No life is too difficult for God to touch and transform. God does act “suddenly” and surprisingly. A person “more a wild animal than human being”⁴⁴ can become God’s “chosen instrument” for world missions (v.15). This is God’s sovereign grace. We go on our intentional discipling mission resting in such a God.

■ APPLICATION

How does our Lord being a life-transforming God challenge and encourage me in my outreach to pre-believers and ministry to fellow believers?

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■ PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

To lead confidently in the life-transforming God

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

³⁸ LXX: The Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, which was the Bible of the New Testament Church.

³⁹ John Stott, *The Message of Acts*, The Bible Speaks Today (IVP, 1990), 168

⁴⁰ I. Howard Marshall, 167

⁴¹ John Stott, *Acts*, 168

⁴² John Stott, *Acts*, 169

⁴³ John Stott, *Acts*, 168

⁴⁴ John Stott, *Acts*, 169



SATURDAY, 16 JULY 2016

Moving in Sync with God

■ SCRIPTURE

Acts 10:1-23

■ OBSERVATION

What do you observe about God and Peter in verses 1 to 23?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

In Acts 10, God was calling the Jewish Christians to move in sync with Him to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles. We may find it hard to move in sync with God. **God's call may be uncomfortable.** When God, through a vision, commanded Peter to eat unclean animals (vv.9-13), his response was "by no means, Lord" (v.14). For a Jew to eat unclean animals was unthinkable and repulsive. But God was attempting to remove the Jewish Christians' racial pride and prejudice, which was a major obstacle to them in bringing the Gospel to the Gentiles whom they considered as "unholy and unclean" (Ac 10:14, 28). **God's call may seem incomprehensible.** Peter was "greatly perplexed in mind as to what the vision might be" (v.17). God's call for us may run against our human reasoning, conventional understanding or theological views. It could be "You don't understand now what I am doing, but someday you will" (Jn 13:7, NLT). **God's call is unquestionable.** God's command to Peter was simple and clear: "Get up, Peter, kill and eat!" (v.13). When we clearly hear God's call, however uncomfortable or incomprehensible it may be, we have only to trust and obey, and move in sync with God.

■ APPLICATION

In what areas of my life do I sense God calling me to move in sync with Him?

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■ PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:



SUNDAY, 17 JULY 2016

■ SCRIPTURE

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■ OBSERVATION

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■ APPLICATION

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■ PRAYER

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THE PAST WEEK

REVIEW

What was my high point and my low point for the week?

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What gave me life and what drained me?

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How was the Spirit of God at work?

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REFLECT

What is one key thing that God said to me this week
in light of what has happened?

RESPOND

What is one thing I need to do in light of what God is saying?

COMMIT IN PRAYER

FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

July 2016 – Week 3

**GRATEFUL FOR BLESSINGS**

Be grateful for all the blessings from God.

Scripture: Psalm 34:8; James 1:17

ACTIVITY BITE

From the words “grateful” and “blessing”, name one good thing you have that begins with each letter from the two words. For example, g – grapes, r – refrigerator, and so on.

CHAT TIME

- Q1: Are you surprised by the number of blessings you have?
Q2: Are non-physical blessings like joy and peace more valuable than physical ones like toys? Why or why not?
Q3: Why does God want you to be grateful for all the blessings you have?

LEARNING POINT

Singaporeans are known to complain a lot about many things. They complain about the weather or when the food at a restaurant is not served quickly. Quite seldom do we hear people say “thank you” to bus drivers when they get off the bus. But God wants us to have a different attitude. He wants us to have a grateful heart that gives thanks for even the little things we have. He wants us to notice the good things more than the bad ones. Know that every blessing comes from above and when we learn to be grateful, the people around us will feel more of God’s love.

ACTION POINT

Carry a small notepad and a pen wherever you go. Whenever you give thanks to God for something, put a tick in the notebook. Count the number ticks at the end of the day and be amazed at how much we have to be thankful for.

PRAYER POWER

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

Thank You, God, for the blessings that are all around us. You are a wonderful God who gives good things to the world. Let everyone know Your love! Amen.



MONDAY, 18 JULY 2016

Doing Theology in the Spirit

■ SCRIPTURE

Acts 15:1-7a

■ OBSERVATION

What do you observe about the theological crisis in verses 1 to 7a?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

The church at Antioch was in a **theological crisis**. Some Jewish Christians insisted that Gentiles “cannot be saved” unless they keep the Law of Moses (vv.1, 5). The truth of the Gospel that salvation is by grace through faith apart from keeping the Law (Ro 3:28; Eph 2:8-9) was at stake. Thus, Paul and Barnabas “had great dissension and debate” with these Jewish Christians (v.2a). When the matter was unresolved, the church sent the two men to “the apostles and elders” in Jerusalem for **theological consultation** (v.2b). The leaders in Jerusalem “came together to look into this matter” (v.6) as a **theological community**. We learn and do theology through **community interaction**, not independently. The leaders in Jerusalem did not just pray and wait for God to give them the solution. Instead, they engaged in “**much debate**” (v.7a) that is “extensive and profound”⁴⁵. But certainly there was **prayerful dependence** on the **Holy Spirit** during their “much debate”, as implied in their conclusion: “it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us” (Ac 15:28). Some 20 years⁴⁶ had passed after Jesus’ three-year training of the apostles, and they were still in a **growing process** of developing theology. Here is a paradigm of doing theology in the Spirit.

■ APPLICATION

How will I give myself to learning and doing theology in the Spirit?

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■ PRAYER

Lord, when I open the Scriptures, grant that You will open the Scriptures to me.⁴⁷ Open my eyes to see wonderful things from Your Word.⁴⁸ Open my mind to understand Your truth.⁴⁹ And through the Spirit of truth, teach me, guide me, reveal to me⁵⁰ the treasures of Your Word, and empower me to live by the living heavenly Bread. Amen.

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

⁴⁵ Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Acts*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Zondervan, 2012), 632

⁴⁶ The Jerusalem conference took place about 20 years after Pentecost.

⁴⁷ Luke 24:32

⁴⁸ Psalm 119:18

⁴⁹ Luke 24:45

⁵⁰ John 14:26; 16:13



TUESDAY, 19 JULY 2016

The Nature of Divine Appointment

■ SCRIPTURE

Acts 16:6-34

■ OBSERVATION

What do you observe about divine appointment in missions in verses 6 to 34? (Note vv.6-8 and Ac 16:9-10, 11-15, 16-24, 25-34)

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DEEPER REFLECTION

The proclamation of the Gospel that began in Jerusalem was well on its way to reaching “the ends of the earth” (Ac 1:8). But twice consecutively, when Paul attempted to preach the Gospel in certain places, he was “forbidden” and “not permitted” by the Holy Spirit (vv.6-7) – the very same Holy Spirit who empowers the Church for world missions. A need does not necessarily mean a call. In leading Paul negatively, God was leading him positively to preach the Gospel in Europe, starting at Macedonia (vv.8-12). At “a place of prayer” (v.13) “the Lord opened the heart” of Lydia to respond to the Gospel (vv.14-15). This was divine appointment. Then at the same “place of prayer” (v.16), having been “greatly annoyed” by the harassment of a demon-possessed slave girl “for many days”, Paul decided to cast the demon out of her (vv.16-18). This incident led to Paul and Silas being thrown into prison (vv.19-24). This was also divine appointment. Prayer and praise in prison (v.25) led to a sudden “great earthquake” (v.26) which led to the conversion and baptism of the jailer and “his whole household” (vv.27-34). Walk by divine appointment.

■ APPLICATION

How will I cultivate the lifestyle of walking by divine appointment?

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■ PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:



WEDNESDAY, 20 JULY 2016

How to Receive God's Word

■ SCRIPTURE

Acts 17:10-12

■ OBSERVATION

What do you observe about the way the Bereans received Paul's preaching of God's Word in verses 10 to 12?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

The way the Bereans received Paul's preaching of the Word of God in verse 11 has come to be known as "Berean Bible study"⁵¹ – studying the Scriptures "with impartiality and care"⁵². **Their Attitude:** The Bereans were "more open-minded than those in Thessalonica" (v.11, NLT) when they listened to Paul's preaching. They "received the Word with great eagerness", "with all readiness of mind"⁵³. **Their Action:** Their commendable attitude does not mean they just thoughtlessly and uncritically followed and swallowed everything that Paul said. Instead, they "examined the Scriptures every day" (and not merely on the Sabbath) – "to see if Paul and Silas were teaching the truth" (v.11, NLT). The Greek word for "examine" "is used of judicial investigations, as of Herod examining Jesus (Lk 23:14-15)"⁵⁴. They "tested the truth of Paul's message by the touchstone of Scripture"⁵⁵. "Many of them believed" (v.12): this was "no mere emotional response...but one based on intellectual conviction"⁵⁶. We need critical teachability anchored in accurate understanding of Scripture (cf. Ac 18:24-26). Teachability without criticalness can be mere gullibility, and criticalness without teachability is sheer arrogance.

■ APPLICATION

How will I go about cultivating the discipline of "Berean Bible study" for my spiritual growth?

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■ PRAYER

Lord, grant me a humble and teachable spirit to learn the Word of God from others, and yet at the same time keep me from becoming gullible, thoughtlessly and uncritically embracing wrong and bad teachings. Grant me the eagerness and wisdom to examine the Scriptures for myself and grow in discernment. Amen.

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

⁵¹ Daniel P. Fuller, *The Unity of the Bible: Unifying God's Plan for Humanity* (Zondervan, 1992), 105

⁵² John Stott, *Acts*, 274

⁵³ F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Eerdmans, 1983), 346

⁵⁴ John Stott, *Acts*, 274

⁵⁵ Richard N. Longenecker, *The Acts of the Apostles, The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 9 (Zondervan, 1981), 471

⁵⁶ I. Howard Marshall, 280



THURSDAY, 21 JULY 2016

Some Basics in Intentional Disciplemaking

■ SCRIPTURE

Acts 20:17-21, 27-35

■ OBSERVATION

What does Paul's intentional disciplemaking in the church at Ephesus look like in verses 17 to 21 and 27 to 35?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

Every disciple of Jesus is called to make disciples (Mt 28:19-20). From Acts 20:17-35 we can identify some basics in intentional disciplemaking. **Exemplary in the Walk:** Paul's address to the Ephesian church leaders begins and ends with "You yourselves know" (vv.18, 34) – of "how he had lived during the whole time he was with them from beginning to end"⁵⁷ for "three years" (v.31). They had watched him "serving the Lord with all humility" (v.19). That is, "with selfless devotion to the Lord", "not for selfish reasons", or "selfish striving for advantage"⁵⁸, but with "the refusal to claim anything for himself"⁵⁹. It is intentional disciplemaking out of authentic discipleship that is able to truly say, "In everything I showed you" (v.35). **Faithful in the Word:** Paul "did not shrink from" teaching them "anything that was profitable" (v.20) and "the whole will of God" (v.27, NIV) as revealed in "all Scripture" (2 Ti 3:16). Such responsible faithful teaching presupposes knowing and keeping the Word. **Intensive in the Watch:** "Keep watch" (v.28), first over ourselves (cf. Pr 4:23), then over our sheep – against "savage wolves" seeking to draw us away from the truth (vv.29-30). Word, walk and watch – all go together.

■ APPLICATION

What areas in my life and ministry do I need to pay attention to, in order to ensure intentional disciplemaking out of authentic discipleship?

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■ PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

⁵⁷ John Stott, Acts, 325

⁵⁸ Eckhard J. Schnabel, 839

⁵⁹ I. Howard Marshall, 230



FRIDAY, 22 JULY 2016

God Knows Better Than Us

■ SCRIPTURE

Acts 22:17-21

■ OBSERVATION

What do you observe about God in His dialogue with Paul in verses 17 to 21?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

When Paul was converted to “the Way”, God called him to missions work among the Gentiles (Ac 9:1-6, 15-16). Then Paul went to Arabia. Three years later, he returned to Jerusalem (Ac 9:23-26; 22:17a; Gal 1:17-18), and apparently he was seeking to witness to the Jews there. While praying in the temple, God spoke him, “Make haste, and get out of Jerusalem quickly” (vv.17-18a). Notice the great urgency. Reason? The Jews “will not accept your testimony about Me” (v.18b). But Paul objected, reasoning that being once a great persecutor of the faith that he now embraced, his testimony would be “incontrovertible evidence that Jesus is Israel’s Messiah and Saviour”⁶⁰ (vv.19-20). Paul was confident that “they themselves” would “understand” (v.19) and his testimony would be effective. Paul’s objection reflects “his reluctance”⁶¹ to leave Jerusalem. His objection flies in the face of God’s clear call for him. God had to sternly repeat to him His call, “Go! For I will send you to the Gentiles” (v.21). Sometimes, we think or act as though we know better than God. God says, “My ways are higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts” (Isa 55:8-9).

■ APPLICATION

What areas of my life do I need to yield to God and trust Him in, knowing that He knows better than I do?

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■ PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

**To live by this biblical dictum,
“Have Thine own way, Lord!”**

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

⁶⁰ Eckhard J. Schnabel, 907

⁶¹ John Stott, Acts, 348



SATURDAY, 23 JULY 2016

Always on the Winning Side

■ SCRIPTURE

Acts 28:16, 30-31

■ OBSERVATION

What is the significance of the way Luke concludes the Book of Acts (vv.30-31)?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

Acts begins with Jesus commissioning His disciples to proclaim the Gospel from Jerusalem to “the ends of the earth” (Ac 1:8). **Power for Proclamation (Ac 1-2):** The promise of power through the Holy Spirit for world missions was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost. **Progress in Proclamation (Ac 3-20):** The empowerment of the Holy Spirit enabled the church to progress in proclaiming the Gospel: to the Jews “in Jerusalem, and in all Judea” (Ac 3-7), to the Samaritans in “Samaria” (Ac 8), and to the Gentiles in “the ends of the earth” (Ac 9-20). **Prison and Proclamation (Ac 21-28):** Towards the end of Paul’s third missionary journey, he planned to visit Rome (Ac 19:21). But Paul did not expect things to happen in such a way that he ended up in Rome as a prisoner. Acts 21 to 28 trace the events that led to Paul’s unexpected destination. But Acts concludes with a victorious and glorious statement: Paul was “proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance” (v.31). While in prison, Paul wrote Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon.⁶² The **prison** could not prevent the **proclamation** from **progressing** through the **power** of the Holy Spirit!

■ APPLICATION

How does the way the Book of Acts concludes challenge and encourage me in my life and ministry?

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■ PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

⁶² See Ephesians 3:1; 4:1; Philippians 1:7, 12-14; Colossians 4:3, 18; Philemon 1, 10



■ SCRIPTURE

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■ OBSERVATION

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■ APPLICATION

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■ PRAYER

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THE PAST WEEK

REVIEW

What was my high point and my low point for the week?

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What gave me life and what drained me?

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How was the Spirit of God at work?

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REFLECT

What is one key thing that God said to me this week
in light of what has happened?

RESPOND

What is one thing I need to do in light of what God is saying?

COMMIT IN PRAYER

FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

July 2016 – Week 4

**ATTITUDE IS EVERYTHING**

God looks at the heart more than outward appearance.

Scripture: 1 Samuel 16:7

ACTIVITY BITE

Describe the taste of raw vegetables and chocolate-frosted doughnuts. Which one would you prefer to eat?

CHAT TIME

Q1: Which would have more nutrients and vitamins – vegetables or doughnuts?

Q2: What does this teach us about the importance of having a good attitude rather than a nice outward appearance?

Q3: Name some behaviours of a person with a good attitude.

LEARNING POINT

Two people can do a similar task, but what differentiates them is their attitude – one may do it grudgingly while another joyfully. We can hide what is in our hearts behind a big smile, but our attitude will reveal our true motives. Are we angry with our brothers or sisters? Do we desire for bad things to befall them? Only God and we know the exact conditions of our hearts. God wants us to have a good attitude about everything because this pleases Him. It is hard to do it but when we surrender our hearts to Him, He will help us to have a heart like Jesus'.

ACTION POINT

If you have a bad attitude about something, commit it to God now. Ask Him to give you the strength to change and start living with a good attitude.

PRAYER POWER

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

God, I am sorry for having a bad attitude about so many things. Help me to have an attitude like Jesus'. I want to do what pleases You. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.



MONDAY, 25 JULY 2016

Live No More the Pagan Lifestyle

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 4:17-19

■ OBSERVATION

How does Paul emphasise the seriousness and urgency of his exhortation in verse 17?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

In Ephesians verses 17 to 19, Paul paints a dark picture of the pagan lifestyle – a life “alienated from the life of God” (v.18), characterised by “idolatrous thinking, culpable ignorance of God, and rebellion against Him and moving to a further darkened understanding and downward spiral into sin”⁶³ (vv.17c-19). Christians were like this before they came to know Christ. And Paul exhorts us: “You must no longer walk as the Gentiles do” (v.17), because in Christ we are a new creation, “created after the likeness of God” (Eph 4:24). Therefore, in Christ our lifestyle must be sharply differentiated from the godless world. Paul is giving “a strong, urgent exhortation”⁶⁴ “not to fall back into the patterns of thinking and behaviour of their (our) former Gentile way of life”⁶⁵. The urgency and solemnity of Paul’s exhortation is underscored by “and insist on it in the Lord” (v.17, NIV). We must pay attention to the crucial implication: Christians can fall back into a godless pagan lifestyle. The sad hard reality is that it is possible for Christians to behave worse than unbelievers (1 Co 5:1). Christians can become “alive” but “dead”, and need to “wake up” (Rev 3:1-2).

■ APPLICATION

What are the dangers that can ensnare me to fall back into a godless pagan lifestyle which I need to pay attention to?

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■ PRAYER

Lord, keep me from having a false assumption that being a new creation in Christ with my old life gone⁶⁶, I will not fall into the pagan lifestyle of those who are without the life of God. Help me to be aware and alert that I can become spiritually dead if I am not careful. Help me to walk faithfully with You, daily seeking Your grace, Your strength and Your help. Amen.

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

⁶³ Peter T. O'Brien, 318

⁶⁴ Peter T. O'Brien, 318

⁶⁵ Peter T. O'Brien, 318

⁶⁶ 2 Corinthians 5:17



TUESDAY, 26 JULY 2016

Alienated from the Life of God

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 4:17-19

■ OBSERVATION

What characterises a life alienated from the life of God according to verses 17 to 19?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

What characterises a life alienated from the life of God? **Darkened Mind:** When we have no true relationship with God (“the life of God”), we lose touch with reality, and our thinking or “mindset”⁶⁷ becomes “futile” (v.17) – “idle, empty, fruitless, useless, powerless, lacking truth”⁶⁸; and we find ourselves “fumbling with inane trivialities and worthless side issues”⁶⁹. “Darkened in understanding” (v.18), we become “blind to the truth”⁷⁰. This results in “ignorance” (v.18) – “a state of being incapable of grasping the truth of God”⁷¹. **Hardened Heart:** “Hardness of the heart” (v.18), produced by a darkened mind, is the “obstinate rejection of God’s truth”⁷², the “deliberate refusal of the moral light available to them for their own thought and conscience”⁷³. And “having lost all sensitivity” (v.19, NIV), we “lose the capacity to feel shame or embarrassment”⁷⁴. **Insatiable Lust:** Giving oneself over to “sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity” (v.19, ESV). The “lack of moral feeling and discernment”⁷⁵ leads to “no restraints to their plunging into all kinds of degrading activities”⁷⁶ and “an obsessive propensity to live for themselves”⁷⁷. We must walk daily with God in “the truth” (Eph 4:21, 24), lest we become “dead” while we “live” (1 Ti 5:6).

■ APPLICATION

What should I watch for to prevent myself from having a darkened mind, a hardened heart or insatiable lust?

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■ PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

⁶⁷ Peter T. O'Brien, 320

⁶⁸ Frank Thielman, 296

⁶⁹ Peter T. O'Brien, 320

⁷⁰ Peter T. O'Brien, 320

⁷¹ Peter T. O'Brien, 321

⁷² Peter T. O'Brien, 322

⁷³ Peter T. O'Brien, 322

⁷⁴ Peter T. O'Brien, 322

⁷⁵ Peter T. O'Brien, 322

⁷⁶ Peter T. O'Brien, 322

⁷⁷ Clinton E. Arnold, 283



WEDNESDAY, 27 JULY 2016

Learning Christ in Following Christ

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 4:20-21

■ OBSERVATION

What does it mean to “learn Christ” in verses 20 to 21?

DEEPER REFLECTION

The pagan lifestyle without “the life of God” (Eph 4:17-19) is sharply contrasted to “learn Christ” (v.20). Having “the life of God” and to “learn Christ” are theologically related. In Greek, “learn” is the verbal form of “disciple”. Biblical discipleship is learning Christ in following Christ. Learning Christ is **personal**. To “learn Christ” – a “rather unusual statement”⁷⁸ – is “to learn a person”⁷⁹. “One normally learns content (e.g. the law, statutes and ordinance, etc.) or a certain pattern of behaviour (e.g. to obey God or to do good), but not a person.”⁸⁰ Christ Himself is the content and substance of the learning. In this personal dimension is also included: “to learn about Him by becoming well acquainted with the oral Jesus tradition [in the four Gospels] and the apostolic teaching of Christ [in the epistles]”⁸¹, and the Old Testament that “testify about” Christ (Jn 5:39; Lk 24:27). Learning Christ is **relational** – developing a relationship with Christ as a living person, walking with Him closely, knowing Him deeply and following Him faithfully. In learning Christ, Christ is **central** in our lives. Verses 20 to 21 are totally Christocentric: “learn **Christ**...heard **Him**...taught in **Him**...as truth is in **Jesus**”.

■ APPLICATION

What does it mean for me to make learning Christ the central focus of my growth journey?

■ PRAYER

Lord Jesus, grant me a heart that will consider everything else as worthless when compared to the infinite value of knowing You as my Lord; that I may, for Your sake, be willing to discard everything else, counting it all as garbage, that I may gain You, and know You and experience the mighty power that raised You from the dead⁸². Amen.

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

⁷⁸ Clinton E. Arnold, 284

⁷⁹ Peter T. O'Brien, 324

⁸⁰ Clinton E. Arnold, 284

⁸¹ Clinton E. Arnold, 284

⁸² Philippians 3:8, 10



THURSDAY, 28 JULY 2016

Renewal in the Likeness of God (1)

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 4:22-24

■ OBSERVATION

What is to “learn Christ” (Eph 4: 20-21) like according to verses 22 to 24?

DEEPER REFLECTION

Learning Christ (vv. 20-21) is elaborated in verses 22-24: Take off the old self, and through being renewed in the mind by the Spirit put on the new self, which is created after the likeness of God. It is important to note that taking off the old self (v.22) and putting on the new self (v.24) are in the eschatological tension of “the already” and “the not yet”⁸³. **What we already are:** When we became a Christian, “we have already put off our old nature, in that decisive act of repentance called conversion”⁸⁴, and have put on the new self. For “anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!” (2 Co 5:17, NLT). **What we must be:** Because of what we already are, we must no longer go back to our old lifestyle (Eph 4:17-19), but live as God’s new creation in Christ (v.24). But is the old self in us totally gone? No. Discipleship – maturing into Christlikeness – is characterised by the inner conflict between the old self of the flesh and the new self of the Spirit (Gal 5:17). It is a growth journey towards **what we shall be:** when Christ appears, we will be like Him (1 Jn 3:1), fully filled with “the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4:13).

■ APPLICATION

What does it mean for me to live in the reality of the eschatological tension of the “already” and “the not yet”?

■ PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

⁸³ Peter T. O'Brien, 328; Clinton E. Arnold, 286

⁸⁴ John Stott, *Ephesians*, 180



FRIDAY, 29 JULY 2016

Renewal in the Likeness of God (2)

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 4:22-24

■ OBSERVATION

What does it mean “to be renewed by the Spirit in your mind”⁸⁵ (v.23)?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

Is “the spirit” in verse 23 the Holy Spirit or the human spirit? There is no consensus among commentators. Whichever is correct, the key focus here is “be renewed”; and biblically, “the Spirit is the operative agent, effecting renewal”⁸⁶ (Tit 3:5; Ro 8:5-11, 13). “To renew” is “to cause something to become new and different, with the implication of becoming superior”⁸⁷. Renewal takes place in our “mind” (v.23) where we let God’s Word and God’s Spirit “reshape our way of thinking and thereby resist the deceitful desires of sin [v.22]”⁸⁸. The “mind” has to do with “the capacity to understand and reason and thereby to make moral decisions and lifestyle choices”⁸⁹. We ought not to think or give the impression, as we often do, that the intellectual works **against** the spiritual. In so doing, we may be consciously or unconsciously advocating anti-intellectualism to our detriment. God intends that the intellectual works **together** with the spiritual integratively. Renewal of the mind is the key to the transformation of life (Ro 12:2). The biblical portrayal is **Spiritual-intellectual**, rather than spiritual versus intellectual. After all, the biblical call is: “in your thinking be mature” (1 Co 14:20).

■ APPLICATION

In what ways do I make the Spiritual renewal of my mind to be of vital importance in my Christian life?

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■ PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

To grow in holistic Spiritual-intellectual
discipleship

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

⁸⁵ Clinton E. Arnold, 288

⁸⁶ Clinton E. Arnold, 288

⁸⁷ Johannes P. Louw & Eugene A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, Vol. 1 (UBS, 1988, 1989), 58:72, 594

⁸⁸ Clinton E. Arnold, 288

⁸⁹ Clinton E. Arnold, 289



SATURDAY, 30 JULY 2016

Renewal in the Likeness of God (3)

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 4:22-24; 2 Corinthians 4:16; Colossians 3:10

■ OBSERVATION

What do you discover about Spiritual renewal in comparing verses 22 to 24 with 2 Corinthians 4:16 and Colossians 3:10?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

In Ephesians, Paul teaches us how to pray for Spiritual renewal.⁹⁰ Spiritual renewal of the mind (v.23) is also renewal of the “inner being” (2 Co 4:16). So, we pray for the Spirit to empower us in our “inner being” so that we may continually live a Christ-centred life (Eph 3:16-17). Spiritual renewal is also renewal in the “true knowledge” of God and to “become like Him” (Col 3:10, NLT). So, we ask God for “the Spirit of wisdom and revelation” that we may know God better (Eph 1:17). The new self we put on through Spiritual renewal is “created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness” (v.24, ESV). So, we are to become what we already are, maturing into “the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4:13) and “be imitators of God” (Eph 5:1). Biblical discipleship is a three-steps-forward-two-steps-back journey. We “still need to take off the old self”⁹¹; thus, Spiritual renewal is a critical “day by day” necessity (2 Co 4:16). “The life and power of Christ within is thus being constantly renewed, as Christ-likeness is being reproduced more and more in the believer’s life.”⁹² (cf. 2 Co 3:18) Make your daily devotions a time for the “day by day” Spiritual renewal through the Word and prayer, and live out the renewed life in your daily living.

■ APPLICATION

How will I keep my daily devotions as a time of Spiritual renewal instead of a religious ritual and routine?

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■ PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

⁹⁰ “Spiritual renewal” here means renewal through the Holy Spirit.

⁹¹ Clinton E. Arnold, 287

⁹² F. F. Bruce, *Colossians, Philemon, and Ephesians*, 146



SUNDAY, 31 JULY 2016

■ SCRIPTURE

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■ OBSERVATION

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■ APPLICATION

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■ PRAYER

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THE PAST WEEK

REVIEW

What was my high point and my low point for the week?

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What gave me life and what drained me?

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How was the Spirit of God at work?

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REFLECT

What is one key thing that God said to me this week
in light of what has happened?

RESPOND

What is one thing I need to do in light of what God is saying?

COMMIT IN PRAYER

FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

July 2016 – Week 5

**THINK ANEW**

Our minds must think in the way God wants us to.

Scripture: Romans 12:2; Philippians 4:8-9

ACTIVITY BITE

Play a game of wrong thoughts, right thoughts. One person will describe a scenario and the others will describe the wrong thoughts and right thoughts about that situation. For example, "I saw a friend fall down." Wrong thought: "Good for him. He's rather naughty in school. Serves him right!" Right thought: "I hope he is alright. I will go and help him."

CHAT TIME

- Q1: Which comes to mind easier – wrong or right thoughts? Why?
Q2: How does having the right thoughts help us in our relationship with others and God?
Q3: In Philippians 4:8-9, how can we train our minds to think like Jesus?

LEARNING POINT

Oftentimes, wrong thoughts occur more easily than right ones. This is because of sin. It makes us very selfish and only think of what will benefit us. Our brain is a powerful organ created by God. It has the power to think of many things, but when it is unguarded it can think badly about anything and anyone. That is why God wants us to renew our minds by reading and believing in His Word. A renewed mind will think of what is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable and praiseworthy – all of which please God. Seek to have a renewed mind!

ACTION POINT

Play the wrong thought, right thought game again. But now, try to stop thinking the wrong thoughts and only think of the right ones.

PRAYER POWER

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

Dear God, I only want right thoughts in my mind. I want Your Word to fill my mind so that I will only think right thoughts. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

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