



10/2016

DEVOTIONAL JOURNAL

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

EPHESIANS 6:11 (ESV)



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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

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER

MY GREATEST LOVE IS YOU

Chorus

Call me deeper
 Into Your grace
 The river that flows
 From the Holy Place
 Wash over me
 Cleansing me through
 My greatest love is You

Verse

Every new day
 Your glory unfolds
 Filling my eyes
 With Your treasures untold
 The beauty of holiness
 Brings worship anew
 My greatest love is You

Russell Fragar
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LOVE YOU SO MUCH

Verse 1

Hear these praises
 From a grateful heart
 Each time I think of You
 The praises start

Love You so much, Jesus
 Love You so much

Verse 2

Lord I love You
 My soul sings
 In Your presence
 Carried on Your wings

Love You so much, Jesus
 Love You so much

Chorus

How my soul longs for You
 Longs to worship You forever
 In Your power and majesty
 Lift my hands, lift my heart
 Lift my voice
 Towards the heavens
 For You are my
 Sun and shield

Russell Fragar
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PRAISE IS THE OFFERING

Verse 1

Come and let us sing for joy
 Let us praise and shout aloud
 To the lifter of our heads
 To the Rock we're standing on
 Your salvation is our song
 Now we can't stay silent
 We will sing how

Chorus

Great is Your love for us
 Great are the things You've done
 Praise is the offering we bring to You

All of our heart and soul
 All that You are and more
 Praise is the offering we bring to You

Verse 2

Lord we come to worship You
 Lord we bow our hearts in awe
 By Your love, we are redeemed
 We are Yours and You're our God
 Your salvation is our song
 Now we can't stay silent
 We will sing how

Verse 3

Lord we come to worship You
 Lord we bow our hearts in awe
 By Your love we are redeemed
 We are Yours and You're our God
 We are Yours and You're our God
 We are Yours and You're our God

LORD YOUR GOODNESS

Verse

I will come to You
 With an open heart
 And bring a sacrifice of praise
 I have seen Your power
 In the Holy place
 And I have known
 Your mighty ways

Pre-Chorus

I will remember Your mercy
 And Lord Your faithfulness

Chorus

Lord Your goodness
 And Your love will follow me
 All the days of my life
 I'm surrounded
 With the favour of the Lord
 Always and forever

ONE VOICE

Chorus

Let us be one voice
That glorifies Your name
Let us be one voice
Declaring that You reign
Let us be one voice
In love and harmony
And we pray, O God, grant us unity

Verse 1

Father we ask of You this day
Come and heal our land
Knit our hearts together
That Your glory might be seen in us
Then the world will know
That Jesus Christ is Lord

Verse 2

Now is the time for you and I
To join our hearts in praise
That the name of Jesus
Will be lifted high above the earth
Then the world will know
That Jesus Christ is Lord

Robert Gay
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TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

Verse

Love unfailing
Overtaking my heart
You take me in
Finding peace again
Fear is lost in all You are

Pre-Chorus

And I would give the world
To tell Your story
'Cause I know that You've called me
I know that You've called me
I've lost myself for good
Within Your promise
And I won't hide it
I won't hide it

Chorus

Jesus I believe in You
And I would go
To the ends of the earth
To the ends of the earth
For You alone are the Son of God
And all the world will see
That You are God
You are God

Joel Houston | Marty Sampson
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MIGHTY TO SAVE

Verse 1

Everyone needs compassion
 Love that's never failing
 Let mercy fall on me
 Everyone needs forgiveness
 The kindness of a Saviour
 The hope of nations

Chorus

Saviour, He can move the mountains
 My God is mighty to save
 He is mighty to save
 Forever, Author of salvation
 He rose and conquered the grave
 Jesus conquered the grave

Verse 2

So take me as You find me
 All my fears and failures
 Fill my life again
 I give my life to follow
 Everything I believe in
 Now I surrender

Bridge

Shine your light and let the whole world see
 We're singing for the glory of the risen King, Jesus
 Shine your light and let the whole world see
 We're singing for the glory of the risen King, Jesus

Ben Fielding | Reuben Morgan
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BE THOU MY VISION (BY ASCEND THE HILL)

Verse 1

Be Thou my Vision, O Lord of my heart
 Naught be all else to me, save that Thou art
 Thou my best Thought, by day or by night
 Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light

Verse 2

Be Thou my Wisdom, and Thou my true Word
 I ever with Thee and Thou with me, Lord
 Thou my great Father, I Thy true son
 Thou in me dwelling, and I with Thee one

Verse 3

Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise
 Thou mine Inheritance, now and always
 Thou and Thou only, first in my heart
 High King of Heaven, my Treasure Thou art

Chorus

Oh, God, be my everything, be my delight
 Be, Jesus, my glory My soul's satisfied
 Oh, God, be my everything, be my delight
 Be, Jesus, my glory My soul's satisfied

Verse 4

High King of Heaven, my victory won
 May I reach Heaven's joys, bright Heaven's Sun
 Heart of my own heart, whatever befall
 Still be my Vision, O Ruler of all

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FACING A TASK UNFINISHED

Verse 1

Facing a task unfinished
 That drives us to our knees
 A need that undiminished
 Rebukes our slothful ease
 We who rejoice to know Thee
 Renew before Thy throne
 The solemn pledge we owe Thee
 To go and make Thee known

Verse 2

Where other lords beside Thee
 Hold their unhindered sway
 Where forces that defied Thee
 Defy Thee still today
 With none to heed their crying
 For life, and love, and light
 Unnumbered souls are dying
 And pass into the night

Chorus

We go to all the world
 With (His) kingdom hope unfurled
 No other name has power to save
 But Jesus Christ The Lord

Verse 3

We bear the torch that flaming
 Fell from the hands of those
 Who gave their lives proclaiming
 That Jesus died and rose
 Ours is the same commission
 The same glad message ours
 Fired by the same ambition
 To Thee we yield our powers

Verse 4

O Father who sustained them
 O Spirit who inspired
 Saviour, whose love constrained them
 To toil with zeal untired
 From cowardice defend us
 From lethargy awake
 Forth on Thine errands send us
 To labour for Thy sake

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THE CHURCH BEYOND

WOMEN IN MISSIONS

“...And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?”
– Esther 4:14b (NIV)

There are many female missionaries in the Bible whom we can look to as examples for modern-day Christians. Esther, a Jewess carried into captivity when King Nebuchadnezzar invaded Jerusalem, rose up to become queen of the Persian Empire, winning the king’s confidence and love. Her position allowed her to play an incredibly important role in the lives of her people, who had been threatened with destruction. Esther exemplifies women who are “carried” overseas due to their own or their spouses’ work postings and believe that God has called them to a “royal position for such a time as this” (Est 4:14, NIV). These women chose from the start to see how they can get involved in the Lord’s work. One high-flyer, whose job requires her to work round the clock and fly frequently, dedicates every Saturday to disciple local believers who are mainly young professionals. A homemaker carves out time from her hectic home schedule to teach English in migrant schools and lead a small group in her home on weekends. Another homemaker leads Bible study, conducts marriage preparatory and parenting courses, and journeys with those who are going through emotional pain. I have the privilege of partnering some of these wonderful women as we encourage one another in our walk and work for the Lord!

Dorcas lived in the port city of Joppa and “was always doing good and helping the poor” (Ac 9:36, NIV). Modern-day

“I, too, have come across many Dorcas whose kind acts have helped pave the way for the Gospel message.”

examples of Dorcas are people like Mother Theresa, Amy Carmichael and Gladys Aylward whose kind and compassionate deeds have led many to the Kingdom of God. I, too, have come across many Dorcas whose kind acts have helped pave the way for the Gospel message.

Lydia (Ac 16), a businesswoman in the city of Philippi, personifies the spirit of hospitality which is present in women I’ve met whom the Lord uses to refresh His servants! They treat missionaries to sumptuous meals, speak kind words of encouragement to them and intercede for them and their family members, and so forth!

Priscilla (Ro 16:3) was a woman who had made an impact for God in at least three different nations – Rome, Greece and Asia Minor. She and her husband, Aquila, were fellow workers of the Apostle Paul. They supported Paul, hosted him in their home, led a house church and were assigned by Paul to disciple Apollos (Ac 18:26). Priscilla exemplifies the missionary’s wife who closely partners her husband in Gospel work and church planting. She is her husband’s closest companion in the battlefield, ministry partner, confidante, personal assistant and prayer partner. She manages daily household chores while overseeing the children’s education and spiritual intake, among other things. This role, I and many women have humbly assumed.

Esther, Dorcas, Lydia and Priscilla reflect some of the key ways in which today’s women have been used to fulfil the Great Commission. What role can you play?

» PRAY

- For favour at the workplace for women or their spouses who are posted overseas. Pray for protection from the darts of the evil one (e.g. office politics, evil schemes).
- That more women posted overseas will heed the Esther-like call and get involved in God’s work in their overseas postings
- That Dorcas-like mercy ministries will demonstrate the love of God and pave the way for the Gospel message
- For spiritual refreshment for those who are actively involved in Lydia-like hospitality ministries
- For unity in Priscilla-and-Aquila-like husband-wife teams



SATURDAY, 1 OCTOBER 2016

How Christ Treasures His Church (1)

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 5:25-30

■ OBSERVATION

What are Christ's acts of commitment to the church in verses 25 to 30?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

In presenting Christ and His church as the model for Christian marriage, Paul shows how Christ treasures His church through seven acts of commitment to her. Christ **loved** the church (v.25a). Christ loved the church with an everlasting love (cf. Jer 31:3): in His eternal pre-existence in pre-creation eternity before He created the Church (cf. Eph 1:4), most definitively on the cross as God-man and "having loved His own...He loved them to the end" (Jn 13:1) – the endless "end" in eternity. Christ **gave Himself up** for the Church (v.25b). This is divine love. Divine love is serving-love, and serving-love is giving-love. Jesus "came not to be served, but to serve and to give His life" (Mk 10:45). We are to "walk in love, just as Christ also loved us" (Eph 5:1-2). We have not truly loved until we are serving and giving to those we claim to love. In having given Himself up for us, Christ has given all that He could give: His whole person. In His self-giving, Christ has given us the best: "Himself" who is God Himself. There is nothing greater and better than what Christ has already given us (cf. Ro 8:32). How can we then not trust in His love in whatever circumstances we find ourselves in?

■ APPLICATION

What difference does it make in my life to know the way and the extent that Christ loves me?

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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:



■ 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

October 2016 – Week 1

**GOD MADE FAMILIES**

The family is a safe place to love, grow and learn.

Scripture: Proverbs 1:8-9

ACTIVITY BITE

Take turns as a family to complete these sentences: "Without this family, I will be..." and "without this family, I will not be..."

CHAT TIME

Q1: Why does God make families?

Q2: Why do you think God chose you to be in your family rather than someone else?

Q3: According to Proverbs 1:8, what is the responsibility of children in the family? Why did God make those commands?

LEARNING POINT

The best thing that God created in the beginning was the family. This is the place where God reveals His character: Parents' love for their children reflects how He loves His people deeply; the willingness of parents to go through tough times with their children reflects the patience God has in helping us grow. Even quarrels with siblings can teach us about God's patience towards us. The family is the best place where children can experience love, protection and the joy of growing up. It is good to give thanks to God for your family.

ACTION POINT

Think of one good thing about your parents or siblings and share it with them. Thank them for being in your family.

PRAYER POWER

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

Dear God, thank You for giving me a wonderful family. Help me to love my parents and siblings daily and to know my purpose in this family. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.



TUESDAY, 4 OCTOBER 2016

Christian Marriage Prefigures Something Greater

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 5:28-32

■ OBSERVATION

What is the great mystery that Paul talks about in verses 28 to 32?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

When Paul quotes Genesis 2:24 (v.31) in presenting Christ and His Church as the model for Christian marriage, his emphasis is on “the two shall become one flesh”. The theological point Paul is making is: Christ and the Church have “become one flesh”, just like husband and wife through their sexual union (cf. 1 Co 6:16). And Paul qualifies this by saying, “I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church” (v.32). And when he says “we are members of His body” (v.30), he means we are “one flesh” with Christ (v.31). Christ “has incorporated us into Himself, made us part of Himself in a profound and indissoluble union”¹. The Church is in Christ and Christ is in the Church. Paul calls this a “great mystery” (v.32) that there is something deeper in marriage when God the Creator first instituted it. The “one flesh” of husband and wife is “a divinely instituted illustration”² of the intimate union between Christ and the Church. It means Christ shares intimately with the Church in whatever that happens in and to the Church. Thus, when the Church is persecuted, Christ is persecuted (Ac 9:1-5). Christ is with the Church by being “one flesh” with her.

■ APPLICATION

How do I view Christ and His Church in light of their one flesh relationship?

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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:

¹ John Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, The Bible Speaks Today (IVP 1979), 230

² Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Zondervan, 2010), 397



WEDNESDAY, 5 OCTOBER 2016

One Flesh Covenant in Marriage

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 5:31; Malachi 2:13-14

■ OBSERVATION

What observations can you make about the marriage covenant in Malachi 2:13-14?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

The “one flesh” union of man and woman in marriage is formed by sexual union (1 Co 6:16). “One flesh” means that the husband and wife are a part of each other “in a profound and indissoluble union”³. It is not something that a married couple feels, but a God-made reality to hold onto and to live by in mutual commitment. Feelings are not constant but commitment can be, regardless of how we feel. But more fundamentally, at the heart of the “one flesh” union is the covenant – the marriage vow. The covenant is not just purely a human affair. God is “a witness” of the “covenant” (Mal 2:14), which makes it even more binding than being legally married under civil law. In the days of Malachi, God ignored and rejected the offerings of His people (Mal 2:13), withholding the long-awaited answers to their prayers despite their weeping and groaning before God. Why? Because of their failure to keep the marriage covenant (Mal 2:14). Husbands and wives are to be a “companion” of each other (Mal 2:14). The word “companion” refers to “a close friend, with whom interests, good or bad, are shared”⁴. Husbands and wives are to keep a lasting companionship in “one flesh”, sharing all things at all times – good or bad.

■ APPLICATION

What does the primacy of the marriage covenant mean to me in my marriage?

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■ PRAYER

Lord, we ask that You grant those who are married Your grace and strength, that they will keep close to You and to one another under Your lordship and in Your love. Grant that they may grow in the love that never gives up, that never loses faith, that is always hopeful and that endures through every circumstance.⁵ Amen.

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

³ John Stott, 230

⁴ Joyce G. Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (IVP, 1972), 240

⁵ 1 Corinthians 13:7



THURSDAY, 6 OCTOBER 2016

To Leave and to Cleave

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 5:31; Genesis 2:24

■ OBSERVATION

What does it mean to “leave” and to “cleave” (be joined to, be bonded to) in a marriage in verse 31?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

Marriage involves a twofold relationship movement of leaving one’s parents and cleaving to one’s spouse. “Leaving” points to establishing a new family unit. There must be the emotional and psychological security within marriage, which requires an emotional and physical separation from parents.⁶ A married couple must ensure that their parents do not come between them in any way, and yet without failing to honour them, keep the fifth commandment (Ex 20:12). In this, the husband must take leadership. To “leave” is to be “exclusive”⁷ and to “cleave” is to be “permanent”⁸. “Cleaving” is a “covenant-faithfulness word”⁹. Faithfulness to a **vow**: Married life is sustained by willing choice and committed intention, that for better or worse, the partners will not let any circumstances determine the future of their relationship. Faithfulness to a **calling**: Marriage is a calling to be lived before God, in which His steadfast covenant love can be displayed. Faithfulness to a **person**: “Cleaving” is “essentially a person-directed word”¹⁰. Faithfulness to a **relationship**: Marriage is a “delicate, fragile, often painful but potentially joyful relationship”¹¹ that calls for deep commitment and hard work.

■ APPLICATION

Which areas of faithfulness in my marriage (to the vow, God’s calling, my spouse or the relationship) do I need to pay particular attention to?

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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:

⁶ David Atkinson, *The Message of Genesis 1-11*, The Bible Speaks Today (IVP, 1990), 75

⁷ Derek Kidner, *Genesis*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (IVP, 1976), 66

⁸ Derek Kidner, *Genesis*, 66

⁹ David Atkinson, 75

¹⁰ David Atkinson, 76

¹¹ David Atkinson, 76 – citing Lewis B. Smedes



FRIDAY, 7 OCTOBER 2016

Not Committing Adultery Is Insufficient

■ SCRIPTURE

Matthew 19:3-12

■ OBSERVATION

Why does Jesus say that divorce is permitted only on the grounds of adultery in verses 3 to 12?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

The background to the Pharisees' question, "Is it lawful to divorce a wife for any reason?" (v.3), is that there were Jews in those days who divorced their wives for "any reason", "including burning the dinner"¹². Jesus pointed them to "the beginning" when God created man and woman in marriage (v.4). Jesus' emphasis is "the two shall become one flesh" (vv.5-6a). It is in this context that Jesus taught that God permits divorce only on the grounds of adultery (vv.8-9). Adultery is "willful and radical violation of the marriage covenant"¹³, the violation of "the 'one flesh' principle which is foundational to marriage"¹⁴. But it is not just the act of adultery that violates the one flesh covenant. It can be in other forms, like spousal violence or deliberate neglect, among others. The affirmative side of "You shall not commit adultery" (Ex 20:14) is love in marriage. But not committing adultery does not necessarily equate to loving one's spouse. "Staying out of a neighbour's bed is simple; creative fidelity to one's spouse in the boredom and agony of a bad marriage is complicated"¹⁵. Faithfulness in the one flesh covenant is much more than not committing adultery.

■ APPLICATION

How would I want to strengthen and deepen my commitment of love to my spouse?

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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 have a strong and deep commitment
of love to their spouses**

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

¹² R. T. France, *Matthew*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (IVP, 1985), 122

¹³ David Clyde Jones, *Biblical Christian Ethics* (Baker, 1994), 202

¹⁴ David Clyde Jones, 202 – citing John Stott

¹⁵ Lewis B. Smedes, *Mere Morality: What God Expects from Ordinary People* (Eerdmans, 1983), 62-63



SATURDAY, 8 OCTOBER 2016

Divine Model for Marital Love

■ SCRIPTURE

Hosea 1:1-3; 3:1

■ OBSERVATION

What observations can you make about God's love for His people in verses 1 to 3 and Hosea 3:1?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

When God made a covenant with Israel at Mount Sinai, He did so as “a husband to them” (Jer 31:31-32). Centuries later, God called Hosea to marry “a promiscuous woman” to present to Israel a prophetic picture of a faithful husband – God Himself, having married an adulterous wife: unfaithful Israel (vv.2-3). Then God commanded Hosea to love his wife “again” while she was still sleeping with other men, just as God Himself loved Israel while she was still committing adultery with other gods (Hos 3:1). Can this be divine love? The incongruity is outrageous! But capture the divine emotions. Revealed here is the tension within God's love for His unfaithful people. God “refuses to ease the pain of the relationship either by compromising or by quitting. He loves these people despite their blatant unfaithfulness, which He cannot for a moment condone.”¹⁶ For God and Hosea, loving an unfaithful spouse is a double pain. Marital unfaithfulness brings great pain and to love despite the unfaithfulness is rubbing salt into the wound. God still loves us, however painful that love can be to Him. This is the divine model for love in marriage.

■ APPLICATION

How does the divine model for love in marriage challenge me in my marital relationship?

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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:

¹⁶ Derek Kidner, *The Message of Hosea, The Bible Speaks Today* (IVP, 1976), 41



SUNDAY, 9 OCTOBER 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

October 2016 – Week 2

**WHEN DAD MARRIES MUM**

A promise to love each other before God.

Scripture: Ephesians 5:22-25

ACTIVITY BITE

Ask your parents to share how they first met and what they did during their courtship. Get them to share about the preparations for their wedding and their marriage vows.

CHAT TIME

Q1: What are some amazing things that you would do for someone you love?

Q2: Have you experienced times where it was difficult to love someone because of their bad behaviour?

Q3: How does making a promise to love someone before God help us stay true to this love?

LEARNING POINT

It is easy to love someone when we have fond feelings for the other person. We will do many things to please the person we love. However, nice feelings can fade away and loving that person can become really tough. In such moments, only God can give us the ability to stay committed to care for the one we chose to love. When your mum and dad got married, they made a promise before God to love each other faithfully. But they can tell you now that living together is never easy. Only by this promise and with God's help can they remain truly committed to love and stay together through difficult times.

ACTION POINT

Your mum and dad need your prayer so that they can continue to love each other faithfully with God's help. Choose to pray for them regularly.

PRAYER POWER

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

Lord, thank You for my mum and dad. I pray that You will help them to be patient and love each other every day. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.



MONDAY, 10 OCTOBER 2016

Obeying and Honouring Parents (1)

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 6:1; Colossians 3:20

■ OBSERVATION

Who are the “children” who are commanded to “obey” their parents in “all things” (v.1; Col 3:20)?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

Being Spirit-filled (Eph 5:18) shapes and shows our character, commitment and conduct in marriage (Eph 5:21-33) and family life (Eph 6:1-4). Paul talks about both obeying (v.1) and honouring (Eph 6:2) parents. The proper division of the Ten Commandments (Ex 20:3-17) is five and five¹⁷, placing the fifth commandment “Honour your parents” alongside the first four pertaining to God Himself. It means that parents are “never regarded as equivalent to our equals (neighbours), but as God’s representatives”¹⁸ – a special God-given honour and authority. “Children” are to “obey” (a stronger command than “honour”) their parents “in all things” (Col 3:20), except for what clearly violates God’s commandments. Who are the “children”? John Stott said, “No single answer can be given to this question.”¹⁹ But “children” should generally include minors and those still in a dependent relationship with their parents. Another guideline may be those who have not married and left home (Eph 5:31). Yet for independent single adults staying with parents, there may be situations to consider obeying or not doing so. The key lies in the phrase “in the Lord”. As we walk with the Lord, we can trust Him to give the necessary grace and wisdom to act.

■ APPLICATION

What changes do I need to make as a child or as a parent in light of God’s demand of children to obey their parents?

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■ PRAYER

God, we pray for those who have been disappointed and wounded by their parents who have failed them, and who are struggling to love and honour them when they see their human weaknesses and flaws. God of all grace and Father of mercies, grant that they may know Your love and grace and that they will be able to extend it to their parents. Amen.

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

¹⁷ W. H. Griffiths Thomas, *The Pentateuch: Chapter by Chapter* (Kregel, 1985), 94; John Stott, 239

¹⁸ W. H. Griffiths Thomas, 94

¹⁹ John Stott, 242



TUESDAY, 11 OCTOBER 2016

Obeying and Honouring Parents (2)

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 6:2-3; Mark 7:9-13

■ OBSERVATION

How does Jesus view honouring parents in Mark 7:9-13?

DEEPER REFLECTION

“Honour your father and mother” (v.2) applies to everyone whose parents are still alive. Showing “reverence” to parents is part of being “holy” before God (Lev 19:2-3). God makes reverence for parents an integral part of reverence for Him. To Jesus, it is unacceptable that whatever that is of help to parents is being offered to God in worship (Mk 7:9-13). So, on the one hand, if we love our parents more than the Lord we are not worthy of Him (Mt 10:37); yet on the other hand, there is a place where honouring parents takes precedence over worship to God. When I was a youth working part-time as a relief teacher while I was doing national service, I gave all my monthly wages to my mother to help her settle her debts. As a result, I could hardly give to God regularly, and I struggled with guilt over this failure, until one day, my friend asked me, “Don’t you think that what you’ve given to help your mother is giving to God?” We honour our parents not just in words and acts, but also in our thoughts and attitudes towards them. Taking care of ageing parents when they are very ill or physically or mentally handicapped can be very challenging and demanding. We honour them lovingly nonetheless.

■ APPLICATION

What changes do I need to make in honouring my parents?

■ 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, 12 OCTOBER 2016

Patient and Gentle Parenting (1)

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 6:4

■ OBSERVATION

Why is “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger” the first thing that Paul says concerning fathering in verse 4?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

Having instructed children to “obey” their parents (Eph 6:1) and calling for “unquestioning compliance”²⁰, one might expect Paul to exhort children not to provoke their fathers to anger through disobedience and rebellion. On the contrary, Paul’s instruction immediately after Ephesians 6:1-3 is “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger” (v.4) – the first thing he says about fathering. In Roman civilisation during Paul’s day, “a Roman father had absolute power over his family. He could sell them as slaves, he could make them work in his fields even in chains, he could punish them as he liked and could even inflict the death penalty.”²¹ Christian fathers are to be different. But, Paul recognises that it is not easy, for “fathers are more liable to be carried away by wrath”²² unlike mothers who “have a kind of divine patience”²³ (cf. 1 Th 2:7). Fathers, consciously refrain from reactionary flare-ups, overly harsh words, demeaning comments, unreasonable demands towards your children and anything that can be provocative. “How will my child feel?” should be a great concern of fathers — without being lax, permissive or indulgent.

■ APPLICATION

How can I keep myself from provoking my children to anger when parenting them?

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■ PRAYER

Father, help us as parents to understand our children as they grow in years and get exposed to the complex world. Grant us to be patient and compassionate in their temptations and failures, and to be encouraging as they seek after truth and values for their lives. Stir in us an appreciation for their ideals and sympathy for their frustrations.

Amen.

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

²⁰ Clinton E. Arnold, 415

²¹ William Barclay, *The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians*, The Daily Study Bible (Saint Andrews Press, 1976), 175

²² William Barclay, 177 – citing John Albert Bengel

²³ William Barclay, 177



THURSDAY, 13 OCTOBER 2016

Patient and Gentle Parenting (2)

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:21

■ OBSERVATION

What does Paul say about parenting in Colossians 3:21?

DEEPER REFLECTION

Fathers (mothers, too) can get angry with their children's rebellion or perceived rebellion, and anger can be wrongly expressed in harsh and hurting words. Not all of our children's non-conforming responses should be considered as "rebellion". Wise and discerning parents with a close relationship with their children will recognise that. Our children are ours, thus we have authority and responsibility over them. But, they are also themselves, with a God-given "life and personality of their own"²⁴ that is "to be respected"²⁵. Parents ought to bear in mind and make allowance for a child's immaturity and inexperience. When the late Howard Hendricks, one of the world's finest Christian educators, was in the fifth grade (age 10 to 11) in public school, he was "the worst kid" in school.²⁶ But look at what Hendricks had become. He said, "The kid who's today climbing the walls may become your pastor or a missionary tomorrow. Kids with enough creative energy to get into trouble can have enough drive to live highly significant lives for Jesus Christ later on."²⁷ Be patient and gentle in parenting your challenging children "so that they will not lose heart" (Col 3:21).

■ APPLICATION

How can I keep myself from causing my children to lose heart in my parenting?

■ 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:

²⁴ John Stott, 246

²⁵ John Stott, 246

²⁶ Howard G. Hendricks, *Teaching to Change Life* (Multnomah, 1987), 28

²⁷ Howard G. Hendricks, 29



FRIDAY, 14 OCTOBER 2016

Parenting in the Lord

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 6:4; Deuteronomy 6:4-9

■ OBSERVATION

What should characterise Christian parenting according to verse 4 and Deuteronomy 6:4-9?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

“Fathers” have the ultimate responsibility of bringing up their children. However, the Greek word for “fathers” in verse 4 “could be used for ‘fathers’ and ‘mothers’”²⁸, as in Hebrews 11:23 for Moses’ “parents”. To “bring up” means to feed, to raise, to nurture and to nourish with tender care in the “entire training process of child rearing” that could be “extended to adulthood”²⁹. A child is to be raised as a whole person, growing in “wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men” (Lk 2:52). This process should be grounded in and governed by the Word of God – “in the discipline and instruction of the Lord”, involving both structured teaching and spontaneous talking (Dt 6:7). My son has been wrestling with God for years over certain issues in his life and he stopped reading the Bible. And he is of an age where it is counterproductive to “enforce” the reading of the Scriptures on him. But during our conversations, I watch for moments where I can logically and spontaneously weave in biblical truths. God’s Word should flow from the parents’ hearts into the home (Dt 6:6-7). It has to be Bible-talk shaped by Bible-walk. My son is watching his parents’ lives, and he knows if we are real or not.

■ APPLICATION

What changes do I need to make in letting the Word of God have its proper place in my heart and my home?

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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 let God’s Word be the centre
of their heart and home**

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

²⁸ John Stott, 245; see also Johannes P. Louw & Eugene A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, Vol. 1 (UBS, 1988, 1989), 10:18, 114

²⁹ Clinton E. Arnold, 418



SATURDAY, 15 OCTOBER 2016

Parenting: Eli and Samuel

■ SCRIPTURE

1 Samuel 2:12-17, 22-32; 8:1-3

■ OBSERVATION

What observations can you make about fathering when you look at the behaviour of the sons of Eli (vv.12-17, 22-32) and Samuel (1 Sa 8:1-3)?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

Eli's sons committed "very great" sins before God (vv.12-17), and God took Eli to task with severe judgement for failing to father his sons rightly (1 Sa 2:29-32). Samuel's sons "turned aside after dishonest gain and took bribes and perverted justice" (1 Sa 8:3), but there was no divine rebuke for Samuel. It might be implied that Samuel had done his level best in fathering his sons, or had failed in some ways, but not like Eli. The father of the great Hudson Taylor, founder of China Inland Mission (the present Overseas Missionary Fellowship), conducted daily family devotions after breakfast and dinner, expecting all family members to be present. "He was very particular about giving them the whole Word of God, omitting nothing."³⁰ But in spite of that, between the ages of 11 to 17, Hudson Taylor came into "contact with the world...beyond the shelter of a Christian home"³¹, and his "joyous faith of childhood passed away"³². "His mother's concern was deep and prayerful, but do what she would, nothing seemed to restore that lost God-consciousness."³³ There is nothing parents can do to guarantee that their children will always walk rightly with God. But should they stray away from God, we need not lose hope.

■ APPLICATION

What are the challenges I face in parenting and how can I keep myself from losing hope?

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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:

³⁰ Dr & Mrs Howard Taylor, *Hudson Taylor in Early Years: The Growth of a Soul* (OMF, 1911, 1988, 1989), 48

³¹ Dr & Mrs Howard Taylor, 58

³² Dr & Mrs Howard Taylor, 59

³³ Dr & Mrs Howard Taylor, 59



SUNDAY, 16 OCTOBER 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

October 2016 – Week 3

**A CHILD IN THE FAMILY**

There is a purpose why you were born in your family.

Scripture: Luke 2:52; Ephesians 6:1-3

ACTIVITY BITE

Write down your roles as a child in your family. Your parents will also write what they think your roles should be. Compare the two lists and talk about them.

CHAT TIME

- Q1: Were you surprised at the roles your parents expect you to take on?
- Q2: What will happen if you ignore your roles at home and do whatever you want? What can go right or wrong?
- Q3: Why does Ephesians 6:1-3 specifically command children to obey their parents?

LEARNING POINT

Children are born into the world as little helpless babies who eat, sleep and poop all day while parents do all the hard work of taking care of their children and the house. But as children grow older, they will be able to help out with simple household chores like making their beds, taking out the garbage or folding the laundry. But a child's most important role is to learn and grow in values that are taught by his or her parents. That is why God wants children to obey and honour their parents.

ACTION POINT

Ask your parents for some additional roles you can start doing at home to show that you are willing to learn and grow as they lead you. Do the tasks to the best of your ability.

PRAYER POWER

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

God, I am thankful for being part of this family where I can learn and grow. Help me to obey my parents every time. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.



MONDAY, 17 OCTOBER 2016

Biblical Attitude Towards Slavery

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 6:5; Colossians 3:22; Titus 2:9-10; 1 Peter 2:18

■ OBSERVATION

What is the apostles' consistent teaching to Christian slaves (v.5; Col 3:22; Tit 2:9-10; 1 Pe 2:18)?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

“It has been computed that in the Roman Empire there were 60 million slaves.”³⁴ “Practically all work was done by slaves”³⁵ – in agriculture, manufacturing and domestic duties, and as doctors, teachers, writers, accountants, secretaries and sea captains,³⁶ just like how modern society is dependent on machinery.³⁷ Slaves could be inherited, bought from slave traders or acquired in the settlement of bad debts; most commonly, prisoners of war were made slaves.³⁸ Slaves were bought and sold like animals, punished indiscriminately, violated sexually and goaded into compliance through cajolery and intimidation.³⁹ Slaves were just “living tool[s]”⁴⁰ and “the ultimate victims of exploitation”⁴¹. It was in this context that slaves who were Christians were commanded to “obey” their masters – believers and non-believers, “good and gentle” or “unreasonable” (1 Pe 2:18) – “in all things” (Col 3:22; Tit 2:9). Without showing approval nor objection to slavery, the apostles teach and exhort slaves how to live out the Gospel that saved and changed them, within the constraints of a prevailing unjust and evil socio-economic system that promotes coercive possession of persons created in the image of God.

■ APPLICATION

What does it mean for me to live out the Gospel in a world with a socio-economic system that is unjust and fails to treat human beings properly?

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■ PRAYER

*Lord, I am part of the tension and injustice of the world. Forgive us our human selfishness, to which I contribute. Heal the resentment between people, of which I am a part. Come into the world's conflicts, in which I share by being human. Take my unworthiness and sorrow, and use them in Your great work of healing and redeeming humanity. Amen.*⁴²

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

³⁴ William Barclay, 179

³⁵ William Barclay, 179

³⁶ Clinton E. Arnold, 420

³⁷ John Stott, 255

³⁸ John Stott, 250; Clinton E. Arnold, 420

³⁹ Clinton E. Arnold, 421

⁴⁰ John Stott, 251

⁴¹ Clinton E. Arnold, 421

⁴² Angela Ashwin, *The Book of a Thousand Prayers* (Zondervan, 1996, 2002), 199



TUESDAY, 18 OCTOBER 2016

Basic Theology of Work

■ SCRIPTURE

Genesis 1:31 – 2:3, 15-16

■ OBSERVATION

What did God intend work to be like when He created the universe and humans according to Genesis 1:31–2:3, 15–16?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

For work to be significant and meaningful, we must grasp the basic theology of work. The idea of work began in God Himself – not when He created humans. God’s act of creating the universe is defined as “**His work**” (vv.2-3). When God created humans in His image, He created them to work as He works – to “work” and “keep” the ground in the Garden (v.15). “Work is a gift, not a punishment for sin. Even before the fall, humanity has duties to perform.”⁴³ Two Hebrew words in verse 15 define work theologically: *Abad* for “work” is commonly used in a religious sense of serving and worshiping God (Jos 24:14-15; Nu 3:7-8); *shamar* for “keep” is commonly used for observing religious commands and duties (Ge 17:9; Lev 18:5)⁴⁴. “Man’s life in the Garden was to be characterised by worship and obedience; he was a priest, not merely a worker and keeper of the Garden.”⁴⁵ As such, we are to view our work and workplace as **God’s placement** (“He took the man and put him”) in **God’s presence** (“into the Garden of Eden”) where we can have fellowship with God⁴⁶ (Ge 3:8), for the **purpose** of worshiping God in obedience (“to work and to keep”) and be assured of **God’s provision** (v.16; cf. Ge 1:29).

■ APPLICATION

What difference does it make to me in knowing that the idea of work started in God Himself?

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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:

⁴³ Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary*, (Zondervan, 2001), 787

⁴⁴ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary (Word Books, 1987), 67

⁴⁵ John H. Sailhamer, *Genesis*, The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, (Zondervan, 1990), 45

⁴⁶ John H. Sailhamer, 45



WEDNESDAY, 19 OCTOBER 2016

The Lord in Work

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 6:5-7

■ OBSERVATION

How does Paul show Christ-centredness in work in verses 5 to 7?

DEEPER REFLECTION

Having talked about being a Spirit-filled Christian (Eph 5:18) in marriage (Eph 5:22-33) and at home (Eph 6:1-4), Paul now turns to work (Eph 6:5-9). The principles Paul expounds for Christian slaves and masters are relevant and applicable to present-day Christian employees and employers. Christ is mentioned in all the four verses of Paul's instruction to slaves (Eph 6:5-8). What should be uppermost in our minds when at work ought not to be work itself, but Christ. We need to make a critical threefold shift in our theological mindset concerning our work. **Who we ultimately serve:** It is not our employer but Christ, although all that we do at work is purely at the human level and in worldly terms. We are to consider our work as service done directly to the Lord Himself – “as to Christ” (v.5), “as to the Lord” (v.7). **What we really are:** We work “as slaves of Christ” (v.6a), not “slaves of men” (1 Co 7:22-23). This was very liberating for Christian slaves in Paul's day, even though nothing had changed in their life condition: their lives were still controlled by earthly masters. **What we do fundamentally:** We ought to see that in our work we are “doing the will of God” (v.6b) before the audience of One.

■ APPLICATION

What does it mean for me to be Christ-centred in my work?

■ PRAYER

Creator King, You have created human beings with a calling – the calling to work, and to work as worship to You. I trust in You that whatever I do and wherever I am in my work, it is You who took me and put me there. So, each day I will consecrate my work to You. Grant me and increase in me the consciousness of fellowship with You and worship to You as I work. Amen.

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:



THURSDAY, 20 OCTOBER 2016

The Heart in Work

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 6:5-7

■ OBSERVATION

What characterises the posture of a person working as a slave of Christ in verses 5 to 7?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

Paul calls Christian slaves and employees to see and do their work in terms of two ultimate realities which are to be our clear twofold focus: **the Lord** and **the heart**. Paul's instruction is essentially one command: "obey your earthly masters [employers]" (v.5). To "obey" means "to do what one says or to carry out someone's orders"⁴⁷. At work, it is easy to "obey" our bosses in what we like to do, but not so in what we have to do. But even if we do "obey" in the latter, it is insufficient that we do it simply because we have no choice. God requires us to do so with a right posture. Obey with "reverential fear and respect"⁴⁸ (v.5), which points to how we look at our bosses, regardless of whether they are worthy of it or not. We do so "in the fear of Christ" (Eph 5:21), not grudgingly, but with sincerity and singleness of the heart (v.5), giving "undivided attention and effort to the task at hand"⁴⁹. With this posture, we work wholeheartedly without seeking human approval or favour, or to be seen by our bosses (v.6). And thus, it doesn't matter if we are not appreciated, recognised, rewarded or promoted. This is the heart of a true Spirit-filled slave of Christ (Gal 1:10).

■ APPLICATION

What do I need to change in my action or attitude at work?

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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:

⁴⁷ Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians, An Exegetical Commentary* (Baker, 2002), 806

⁴⁸ Harold W. Hoehner, 806

⁴⁹ Harold W. Hoehner, 808



FRIDAY, 21 OCTOBER 2016

How Work Should Be Viewed

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 6:8

■ OBSERVATION

What is the significance of the word “knowing” in verse 8?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

We may view work as just a job and nothing more. Or we may value work in worldly economic terms, like how certain jobs get higher pay and status than others. This runs against God’s view on work. But this doesn’t mean we reject the socio-economic system of the world or “go out of the world” (cf. 1 Co 5:9-10), which is not what God wants. But rather, we look at all kinds of jobs as God sees them: The value in a job does not lie in the job intrinsically. In line with this understanding, it is faulty thinking to view a calling to “full-time” Christian work as greater than others. Such thinking draws a faulty distinction between the sacred and the secular. What makes us think that a cleaner will not get a greater reward in heaven than a pastor? What really gives value to a job is that it is done with a Christ-centred heart as Christ’s slave (Eph 6:5-7). A slave in Paul’s day works with the assurance (“knowing”) that “the Lord will reward each one” – “whether slave or free” – “for whatever good they do” (v.8). A slave is to recognise that his condition (vocation) as a slave is part of being “called in the Lord”, and he is to “remain with God” in it (1 Co 7:21-24).

■ APPLICATION

What do I need to change in the way I view work?

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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 be Christ-centred in their work

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:



SATURDAY, 22 OCTOBER 2016

Christian Treatment of Employees

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 6:9; Colossians 4:1

■ OBSERVATION

What does it mean for Christian masters to treat their slaves “in the same way” (v.9)?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

How should Christian bosses relate to their employees? **Equality:** “Masters, treat your slaves in the same way” (v.9, NLT). Paul “intends for masters to act in the same way he has just instructed the slaves to behave”⁵⁰ (Eph 6:5-8), without meaning masters to “obey” their slaves. Put in another way, it means to treat them with “justice and fairness” (Col 4:1). It is to live by the dictum that “there is neither slave nor free...for you are all one in Christ” (Gal 3:28; Col 3:11). It is a matter of attitude. **Servanthood:** It is assumed here that this means following Jesus’ teachings and example, that those in authority positions “shall be a slave of all” with respect to those under them (Mk 10:42-45). A boss with a servanthood spirit will “give up threatening” – directly or indirectly, and gives thoughtful and caring consideration for his subordinates. When Rehoboam became king, his subjects requested him to “lighten the hard service” under Solomon’s reign (1 Ki 12:4). Rehoboam’s elders gave wise counsel to him: “If you will be a servant to this people and serve them, and speak good words to them...they will be your servants forever” (1 Ki 12:7). But Rehoboam foolishly rejected that counsel, and lost his leadership over his subjects (1 Ki 12:16).

■ APPLICATION

What do I need to change in my perspective or posture as an employer or supervisor in my workplace?

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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:

⁵⁰ Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Baker, 2010), 408



SUNDAY, 23 OCTOBER 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

October 2016 – Week 4

**A STUDENT IN SCHOOL**

Be a good learner and a responsible person in school.

Scripture: Luke 2:52; John 13:13-16

ACTIVITY BITE

Write down your roles as a student in your school. Your parents will also write what they think your roles are. Compare the two lists and talk about them.

CHAT TIME

Q1: What do you think is the most important role as a student? Why?

Q2: Apart from focussing on their studies, what is the purpose of students participating in co-curricular activities?

Q3: How would God want you, as a Christian, to be a blessing in your school?

LEARNING POINT

In the past, schools were just places to gain knowledge. But now, they also have an important role in teaching students good values such as responsibility, diligence and kindness. Some students are placed as class monitors to develop their responsibilities in taking care of the class. Co-curricular activities enable students to develop values that include kindness, teamwork, leadership and empathy for others and the environment. God uses these activities as training grounds for you to grow in maturity. He wants you to take up the tasks that have been given to you and to do them as best as you can, so that you can be a blessing to your school.

ACTION POINT

Reflect on your attitude towards the roles you have in your class and the co-curricular activities that you participate in. Think about how you can be more responsible in the tasks that are given to you.

PRAYER POWER

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

Dear Lord, thank You for the school You have placed me in. Thank You for the activities and responsibilities that have been given to me and that I can grow in character through them. Help me to be the best student I can be. Amen.



MONDAY, 24 OCTOBER 2016

Wealth, Walk and War in Christ

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 6:10-20 with 1:3 and 4:1

■ OBSERVATION

How do the beginning (Eph 1:3), the pivot (Eph 4:1) and the end (vv.10-20) of Ephesians correlate theologically?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

Paul's final exhortation in Ephesians on spiritual warfare (vv.10-20) is to be understood and applied in light of the whole letter. Paul begins majestically in worship to God (Eph 1:3, 6, 12, 14; 3:20-21) for our **wealth** in Christ (Eph 1-3 – note the recurring term “rich/riches” in Eph 1:7, 18; 2:4; 3:8, 16). Then he earnestly exhorts us to **walk** in a manner worthy of the wealth God has fully given us in Christ (Eph 1:3; 4:1) in the major arenas of life: in church (Eph 4:1-16), personal life and the world (Eph 4:17 – 5:21), marriage (Eph 5:22-33), home (Eph 6:1-4) and work (Eph 6:5-9). And in summing up, he urgently encourages us to engage vigilantly and victoriously in the inescapable **war** in the same realm where we enjoy our wealth in Christ and experience our walk with Christ – “the heavenly realms” (Eph 1:3, 20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12). It is a paradox: “The peace which God has made through Christ's cross is to be experienced only in the midst of a relentless struggle against evil.”⁵¹ The great evil powers that Paul mentions in the war (v.12), has already been referred to when he talks about the wealth (Eph 1:21; 2:2; 3:10) and the walk (Eph 4:27). It is noteworthy that Paul contemplates on all three dimensions of spiritual reality as “a prisoner of Christ”: wealth (Eph 3:1), walk (Eph 4:1) and war (v.20).

■ APPLICATION

How is my personal discipleship shaped by the three dimensions of spiritual reality: the Spiritual blessings I have in Christ, my walk with Him and spiritual warfare?

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■ PRAYER

Father, You have raised Jesus from the dead and seated Him at Your right hand in the heavenly realms to reign supremely over all rule, authority, power and dominion.⁵² And You have saved me in Christ and raised me up with Him and seated me with Him.⁵³ Help me to grasp and live in this reality, and to be victorious in Christ in spiritual warfare. Amen.

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

⁵¹ John Stott, 262.

⁵² Ephesians 1:20-21

⁵³ Ephesians 2:5-6



TUESDAY, 25 OCTOBER 2016

Stand Firm by the Power of God

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 6:10 with 1:18-19 and 3:16

■ OBSERVATION

What does it mean to be strengthened in the Lord in verse 10 (with Eph 1:18-19 and Eph 3:16)?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

Ephesians 6:10-13 may be summarised as: Be strengthened in the Lord and in His mighty power, and with that, put on and take up the full armour of God, so as to stand firm and resist the powerful supra-human enemies of God. **“Be strengthened”**: The verb is a command in the passive voice. We are not commanded to be strong in and by ourselves. We cannot. God has to do the strengthening. But how do we actively obey the divine passive command? The command implies volition and action on our part to seek God and yield ourselves to Him to fill us with His power. We are to be strengthened **“in the Lord”** – that is, in our growing relationship with the Lord in daily continual communion. “In the Lord” is the ultimate key – just as it is for all the other references of “in Christ” in Ephesians that we are to recall. It is as the Lord Himself puts it: “Remain in Me, and My words remain in you” (Jn 15:5, 7). Because we are “in the Lord” we share **“in His mighty power”**. Pray to know this power of “surpassing greatness” (Eph 1:18-19) “that works within us” (Eph 3:7, 20) as we seek to be filled and empowered by the Holy Spirit (Eph 5:18; 3:16) in daily spiritual renewal (cf. 2 Co 4:16; Ro 12:1-2).

■ APPLICATION

What does it mean for me in practical terms to be strengthened in the Lord for spiritual warfare?

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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, 26 OCTOBER 2016

Stand Firm with the Armour of God

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 6:10-13; 4:20-24

■ OBSERVATION

What does it mean to put on the full armour of God in verses 11 and 13 (with Eph 4:20-24)?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

“Put on the full armour of God...able to stand firm against” the devil’s schemes (v.11). To “stand firm” against the devil’s schemes (v.11) is to hold fast to one’s spiritual and doctrinal ground “in the Lord” (v.10), not being pushed around, but remaining in a position that “lasts and is stable, not subject to change or decay”⁵⁴. This corresponds to the spiritual maturity with doctrinal stability of being “no longer tossed here and there by waves and carried about” by false teachings (Eph 4:13-14). Stand firm by putting on “the full armour of God” (vv.11, 13) – that is, “to appropriate a set of divine gifts (the six weapons in Eph 6:14-17) and cultivate some important virtues”⁵⁵. The important virtues are already articulated in the “wealth” and “walk” sections of Ephesians: “truth” revealed in “the word of God” (Eph 6:14a, 17b; 1:13; 4:15, 21), “righteousness” (Eph 6:14b; 1:4; 4:24), “peace” (Eph 6:15; 2:14-18; 4:3), “faith” (Eph 6:16; 1:13, 19; 4:13) and “salvation” (Eph 6:17; 1:13; 2:8). “Put on” God’s armour corresponds to “put on the new self” (Eph 4:23-24). It is having “made all the necessary preparations”⁵⁶ (“having done everything” – v.13) “well in advance”⁵⁷ in our faithful walk with God. It’s not to simplistically pray or declare, “I put on this and that piece of the armour”.

■ APPLICATION

How would I put on the full armour of God in my daily discipleship?

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■ PRAYER

O Divine Warrior, You are my strength, my rock, my fortress, my stronghold, my shield and my deliverer⁵⁸. As such, in You and with You, I can have no fear even when tens of thousands of Your enemies set themselves against me all around⁵⁹. Train my heart and my hands for spiritual battle⁶⁰, as I follow You who always lead Your people in triumph in Christ⁶¹. Amen.

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

⁵⁴ Harold W. Hoehner, 823

⁵⁵ Clinton E. Arnold, 443

⁵⁶ Harold W. Hoehner, 836

⁵⁷ Clinton E. Arnold, 450

⁵⁸ Psalm 18:1-2

⁵⁹ Psalm 3:6

⁶⁰ Psalm 144:1

⁶¹ 2 Corinthians 2:14



THURSDAY, 27 OCTOBER 2016

Stand Firm Against the Enemies of God

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 6:11-13

■ OBSERVATION

What are “the schemes of the devil” and “the evil day” in spiritual warfare (vv.11, 13)?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

Spiritual warfare is a “struggle” or “wrestling” (v.12) – a picture of “close, difficult, tiring, hand-to-hand combat”⁶². Spiritual warfare involves struggling hard and standing firm against “a whole range of evil forces of varying rank, authority and capabilities”⁶³ (v.12). Spiritual warfare is particularly standing firm against the devil’s “schemes” (v.11) – plans that he carefully strategises against God’s redemptive purposes, the church and individual believers. Paul does not say how these “schemes” are discerned, so we should see them as an expansive variety and limitless array of the devil’s intelligently designed plots of attacks⁶⁴. It is significant that “schemes” (v.11) and “scheming” (Eph 4:14) are the same word in Greek, and used only twice in Ephesians. It implies that demonic forces are involved in the strategies of deception that false teachers use to lead God’s people astray. Spiritual warfare involves resisting “in the evil day” (v.13). “The evil day” includes the unusual demonic assaults in extraordinary trials or intense temptations and torments⁶⁵, the many “evil days” of this present evil age (Eph 5:16), the increasing and intensifying “difficult times” “in the last days” before Christ’s Second Coming (2 Ti 3:1; Mt 24:12).

■ APPLICATION

What are some of the devil’s schemes that he is attacking me with?

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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 Clinton E. Arnold, 446

⁶³ Clinton E. Arnold, 447

⁶⁴ Clinton E. Arnold, 445

⁶⁵ Clinton E. Arnold, 449



FRIDAY, 28 OCTOBER 2016

Spiritual Warfare: A Roaring Lion

■ SCRIPTURE

1 Peter 5:8-9

■ OBSERVATION

What characterises spiritual warfare according to verses 8 to 9?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

Satan “prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (v.8). “To devour” is “to destroy, to ruin completely”⁶⁶. Satan devours God’s people by inflicting them with sufferings (v.9b). With the lion imagery, Peter may be implying that “satanic powers are at work in the socio-political system of the Roman Empire, under which his readers are suffering”⁶⁷. But spiritual warfare suffering can come in many other forms, bringing physical, mental and emotional torment and pain. Satan’s primary interest is to destroy our faith, not just to make us suffer. Thus, we are to resist him by standing firm in our faith (v.9a) – faith in the faithful God and His reliable Word. The spiritual warfare suffering that demands such steadfast faith is not a “spiritual attack” in terms of some one-off kind of physical “suffering” that doesn’t quite dent our faith, like a non-fatal sickness or accident. But rather, it is the enemy’s relentless attack through sufferings that never seem to end, that make one feel so weary to the point of losing hope and giving up. Standing firm in our faith in spiritual warfare suffering is often a three-steps-forward-two-steps-back journey, where we tell the enemy, “Though I fall I will rise” (Mic 7:8; cf. Lk 22:31-32).

■ APPLICATION

What challenges do I face in standing firm in my faith when going through spiritual warfare suffering, and how will I counter them?

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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 be firm in faith in spiritual warfare sufferings

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

⁶⁶ Johannes P. Louw & Eugene A. Nida, Vol. 1, 20.52, 234

⁶⁷ Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Baker, 2005), 314



SATURDAY, 29 OCTOBER 2016

Spiritual Warfare: Angel of Light

■ SCRIPTURE

2 Corinthians 11:1-6, 13-15

■ OBSERVATION

What characterises spiritual warfare according to verses 2 to 6 and 13 to 15?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

When we see a prowling roaring lion from afar, we will instinctively flee. But what will you do when you see an angel of light appearing before you? Satan does “disguise himself as an angel of light” (v.14). But how can we tell the difference? **Discern the doctrine.** There were “false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ” (v.13) and “as servants of righteousness” (v.15), preaching “another Jesus”, “a different spirit” and “a different gospel” (v.4) to the Corinthians. Note that the word “disguise” is repeated thrice (vv.13-15). And the Corinthians easily and happily put up with them (v.4b). “Great speakers!” “Fantastic teachings!” The Corinthians were drawn to eloquent speakers and teaching informed by worldly wisdom (v.6; cf. 1 Co 2:1, 4). “Christians need to think about **what** they are being taught rather than being impressed by **who** is teaching them, however winsome he or she may be.”⁶⁸ **Doctrine for devotion:** The target of Satan’s deception is “the mind”, “the thoughts” (v.3a). It is “the mind” that Satan seeks to lead astray from a single-minded and pure devotion to Christ (v.3b). Right doctrine has pride of place in our devotion to Christ. Satan knows that. Do we?

■ APPLICATION

What challenges do I face in distinguishing a true “angel of light” from a false one, and how will I counter them?

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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:

⁶⁸ Paul Barnett, *The Message of 2 Corinthians*, The Bible Speaks Today (IVP, 1988), 164



SUNDAY, 30 OCTOBER 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

October 2016 – Week 5

**A CITIZEN IN YOUR COUNTRY**

Be a good citizen who submits to and prays for the government.

Scripture: Romans 13:1-10

ACTIVITY BITE

Discuss a situation where there is no law in the country and where everyone can do what they like. What will happen to that country?

CHAT TIME

- Q1: Is it important to have a good team of people working in the government? Why or why not?
Q2: Is it necessary for Christians to pray for the government? Why or why not?
Q3: Read Romans 13:1-10. Talk about the responsibilities of Christians in making their country a better place to live in.

LEARNING POINT

The Bible says that all authorities on earth are set up by God. However, the people who are in authority can choose to disobey God's law and do evil things instead. That is why it is very important that we pray for God to place good people in authority — people who will do what is right and care for the citizens. We have a part to play in making the country a safe place for everyone. Submitting to the authorities is very important because it will help them to run the country well. Keeping the environment clean, being helpful to one another and avoiding criminal acts are some ways that Christians can be good citizens.

ACTION POINT

Look for a list of government ministers on the Internet. Pray for each one of them that they will rule according to God's righteous law.

PRAYER POWER

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

Dear Lord, thank You for the good government that You have set up. I pray for every one of the government ministers that they will always rule righteously. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.



MONDAY, 31 OCTOBER 2016

Spiritual Nurturing Is Spiritual Warfare

■ SCRIPTURE

1 Thessalonians 2:17 – 3:5

■ OBSERVATION

In what way does Paul view the nurturing of new and young believers as spiritual warfare in 1 Thessalonians 2:17 – 3:5?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

Paul was separated from the Thessalonians (v.17) as a result of the Jewish opposition against his ministry in Thessalonica (cf. Ac 17:13-14). He was forced to leave these young converts abruptly and quite inadequately equipped with the teaching necessary to enable them to stand firm in the face of opposition to their faith. Paul viewed this situation as spiritual warfare with two battlefronts. **Disciplemaking battlefront:** “More than once”, Paul made attempts to reconnect with the Thessalonians, but “Satan hindered” him (v.18). This shows that spiritual nurturing is of critical interest and importance to Satan.

Discipleship battlefront: During this time of separation, Paul was fearful that “the tempter might have tempted” the Thessalonians in their suffering for their faith (vv.4-5). His fear and concern for them brought him to a point where he “could endure it no longer” (v.1a), such that he did as “best” as he could “to strengthen and encourage” them in their faith (v.1b-5). We ought to view nurturing of young believers as seriously as Satan. You can help a new or younger believer to grow spiritually as long as you are growing. You just need to be a few steps ahead, sharing what you’ve learned and how you live your life. You grow through growing others.

■ APPLICATION

How do I want to help younger believers to grow in light of the biblical idea that spiritual nurturing is spiritual warfare?

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■ PRAYER

Lord, grant me a heart that wants to help at least one spiritually young believer to grow in the faith. Help me to see this critical need. You know that I lack experience and confidence in this, but there has to be the first experience. As I commit myself to You for this important service, strengthen me and help me, give me Your grace and wisdom. Amen.

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

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