

*In the beginning, God created  
the heavens and the earth.*

■ GENESIS 1:1 ESV

*Reminder of*  
GOD AS CREATOR

JANUARY 2015

*In the beginning, God created  
the heavens and the earth.*

**GENESIS 1:1 ESV**

**COVENANT** EFC

# 2015 Memory Focus

FROM GENESIS (ESV)

## JANUARY

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

**Genesis 1:1**

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## FEBRUARY

So God created man in His own image, in the image of God  
He created him; male and female He created them.

**Genesis 1:27**

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## MARCH

And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

**Genesis 1:28**

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## APRIL

The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

**Genesis 6:5**

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## MAY

“I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonours you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

**Genesis 12:3**

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## JUNE

“Far be it from You to do such a thing, to put the righteous to death with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?”

**Genesis 18:25**

## JULY

He said, “Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.”

**Genesis 22:2**

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## AUGUST

“I am not worthy of the least of all the deeds of steadfast love and all the faithfulness that You have shown to Your servant, for with only my staff I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two camps.”

**Genesis 32:10**

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## SEPTEMBER

And there he built an altar and called the place El-bethel, because there God had revealed Himself to him when he fled from his brother.

**Genesis 35:7**

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## OCTOBER

“He is not greater in this house than I am, nor has he kept back anything from me except you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?”

**Genesis 39:9**

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## NOVEMBER

The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.

**Genesis 49:10**

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## DECEMBER

As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.

**Genesis 50:20**

# Foreword

BY SENIOR  
PASTORS

# 2015

*marks our Jubilee Year as a nation. God is the ultimate reason for Singapore's 50 years of peace and prosperity, safety and security, shalom and success. Indeed God alone deserves all praise, honour and thanksgiving for all the blessings from above!*

Jubilee has been called a super-Sabbath. God is looking for devoted disciples who flee from *clamour, hurry and crowds* and cultivate the habit of abiding in God's Word, delighting in God's will and walking in God's way. Those who are intentional about a stronger foundation, a closer walk and a deeper life. Those who are tired of their hit-and-run, hide-and-see, touch-and-go relationship with Him. This Jubilee Year, will you intentionally and zealously commit yourself to be among the first fruits of this new Jubilee generation by scheduling personal time alone with God?

Psalm 1:2-3 speaks of the blessed person as one whose "delight is in the law of the LORD, and on His law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers".

The Psalmist finds great joy in relating to the Word of God...

He meditates upon the Word when day comes and when night falls...

Far beyond outward prosperity, the Psalmist desires the inward prosperity of his soul...

We invite you to take this year to grow deeper in faith and in His Word. Deal decisively with distractions in your life. Cut yourself off from habits and modern gadgets that displace communion with God. Fast from social media. Overhaul your schedule. Remove activities that desensitise you to the gentle promptings of the Spirit.

There is a dailyness in discipleship – soaking daily in His Word, applying His truth, reaping the fruits and passing them on.

Some years ago when Jerry Bridges was in Singapore, he talked about encountering God daily in the Word and especially the Gospel. When asked what it was like, Jerry said, "God always shows up."

What an assurance! This Jubilee Year 2015, draw near to Him. Linger in His presence. Allow Him to refresh you, renew you and restore you – a people prepared for the Day of His Visitation.

Jesus is Our Jubilee!

***Ps Tony Yeo and Ps Tan Kay Kiong***

God is looking for devoted disciples who flee from *clamour, hurry and crowds* and cultivate the habit of abiding in God's Word, delighting in God's will and walking in God's way.

# 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 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 can use the guiding questions provided.*

### What's New in 2015?

A "Deeper Reflection" section has been introduced 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 2015?

- Suggested prayers are included twice weekly to serve as an aid to those who may find them helpful in their prayer response.
- On Sundays, you may want to meditate on the Psalms, the Gospel or the Scripture passage of the sermon. This may be followed by reviewing and reflecting on the past week and then responding in prayer. Examining your life is essential in your faith journey as a redeemed disciple of Christ.

January  
2015

# Worship Songs

## BE WITH YOU

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### Verse 1

Saviour of my soul  
I confide in You  
Through all my darkest moments

In You I find my peace  
My comfort when I'm weak  
I trust in You  
Through storm and raging sea

### Verse 2

Faithful, You're my God  
You're the glory and lifter of my head  
Your light it fills my days  
It leads me in Your ways  
Forever I surrender all to You

### Chorus

And I live to worship You  
My Jesus, You're the only one for me  
Nothing will ever take Your place  
My precious saviour  
Who can stand between my Lord and me

Lord I live to honour You  
And I long to bring my life an offering  
Take me higher  
Draw me deeper  
I give all to be with You

*"Be With You" Words & Music: Sindy Stepvina  
Year & Publisher: 2013 City Harvest Cover*

## COME HOLY SPIRIT

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Come Holy Spirit fall on me now  
I need Your anointing  
Come in Your power  
I love You, Holy Spirit  
You're captivating my soul  
And every day I grow to love You more

### Chorus

I'm reaching for Your heart  
You hold my life in Your hand  
Drawing me closer to You  
I feel Your power renew

Nothing compares to this place  
Where I can see You face to face  
I worship You in spirit and in truth

*Year & Publisher: City Harvest Church*

## JUST AS I AM

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### Verse 1

Just as I am without one plea  
 But that Thy blood was shed for me  
 And that Thou bidst me come to Thee  
 O Lamb of God I come, I come

### Verse 2

Just as I am and waiting not  
 To rid my soul of one dark blot  
 To Thee whose blood can cleanse each spot  
 O Lamb of God I come, I come

### Chorus

I come broken to be mended  
 I come wounded to be healed  
 I come desperate to be rescued  
 I come empty to be filled

I come guilty to be pardoned  
 By the blood of Christ the Lamb  
 And I'm welcomed with open arms praise God  
 Just as I am

### Verse 3

Just as I am I would be lost  
 But mercy and grace my freedom bought  
 And now to glory in Your cross  
 O Lamb of God I come, I come

### Ending

Praise God just as I am  
 Just as I am

*"Just As I Am" Words & Music by: Charlotte Elliott | David Moffitt | Sue C. Smith | Travis Cottrell | William Batchelder Bradbury*  
 © 2009 CCTB Music (Admin. by Universal Music Publishing MGB Australia Pty Limited); © 2009 CCTB Music (Admin. by CopyCare Asia Ltd (Singapore Branch) First Hand Revelation Music (Admin. by CopyCare Asia Ltd (Singapore Branch) Universal Music – Brentwood Benson Publishing (Admin. by CopyCare Asia Ltd (Singapore Branch)  
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## BE THOU MY VISION

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Be Thou my vision, O Lord of my heart  
 Nought 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

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

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

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

*"Be Thou My Vision" Words & Music: Eleanor Henrietta Hull | Mary Elizabeth Byrne*  
 Year & Publisher: © Words: Public Domain  
 CCLI License # 324618

## AMAZING GRACE (MY CHAINS ARE GONE)

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### Verse 1

Amazing grace how sweet the sound  
That saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost, but now am found  
Was blind but now I see

### Verse 2

T'was grace that taught my heart to fear  
And grace my fears relieved;  
How precious did that grace appear  
The hour I first believed

### Chorus

My chains are gone, I've been set free  
My God my Saviour has ransomed me  
And like a flood His mercy rains  
Unending love Amazing Grace

### Verse 3

The Lord has promised good to me  
His Word my hope secures  
He will my shield and portion be  
As long as life endures

### Verse 4

The earth shall soon dissolve like snow  
The sun forbear to shine  
But God, who call'd me here below  
Will be forever mine

*"Amazing Grace My Chains Are Gone" Words & Music: Chris Tomlin | John Newton | Louie Giglio  
Year & Publisher: © 2006 sixsteps Music (Admin. by EMI Christian Music Publishing);  
Vamos Publishing (Admin. by EMI Christian Music Publishing); worshiptogether.com songs  
(Admin. by EMI Christian Music Publishing)  
CCLI License # 324618*

## PSALM 23

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The Lord's my Shepherd, I'll not want  
He makes me lie in pastures green  
He leads me by the still, still waters  
His goodness restores my soul

And I will trust in You alone  
And I will trust in You alone  
For Your endless mercy follows me  
Your goodness will lead me home

He guides my ways in righteousness  
And He anoints my head with oil  
And my cup, it overflows with joy  
I feast on His pure delights

And I will trust in You alone  
And I will trust in You alone  
For Your endless mercy follows me  
Your goodness will lead me home

And though I walk the darkest path  
I will not fear the evil one  
For You are with me, and Your rod and staff  
Are the comfort I need to know  
And I will trust in You alone  
And I will trust in You alone  
For Your endless mercy follows me  
Your goodness will lead me home

For Your endless mercy follows me  
Your goodness will lead me home

*"Psalm 23" Words & Music: Stuart Townend  
Year & Publisher: © 1996 Thankyou Music (Admin. by EMI Christian Music Publishing)  
CCLI License # 324618*

## TIMES OF REFRESHING

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Times of refreshing  
Here in Your presence  
No greater blessing  
Than being with You

My soul is restored  
My mind is renewed  
There's no greater joy, Lord  
Than being with You

*"Times of Refreshing" Words & Music: Don Harris | Martin Nystrom  
Year & Publisher: © 1993 Integrity's Hosanna! Music (Admin. by Crossroad Distributors Pty. Ltd.)  
CCLI License # 324618*

## AS THE DEER

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### Chorus 1

You alone are my strength my shield  
To You alone may my spirit yield  
You alone are my heart's desire  
And I long to worship Thee

### Verse 1

As the deer panteth for the water  
So my soul longeth after Thee  
You alone are my heart's desire  
And I long to worship Thee

### Verse 2

You're my friend  
And You are my brother  
Even though You are a King  
I love You more than any other  
So much more than anything

### Verse 3

I want You more than gold or silver  
Only You can satisfy  
You alone are the real joygiver  
And the apple of my eye

*"As The Deer" Words & Music: Martin Nystrom  
Year & Publisher: © 1984 Maranatha Praise, Inc. (Admin. by Maranatha! Music)  
CCLI License # 324618*

## GIVE THANKS

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### Verse 1

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

### Chorus 1

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

*"Give Thanks" Words & Music: Henry Smith  
 Year & Publisher: © 1978 Integrity's Hosanna! Music (Admin. by Crossroad Distributors Pty. Ltd.)  
 CCLI License # 324618*

## AARONIC BENEDICTION

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### Verse 1

May the Lord, may the Lord bless and keep you  
 May His grace and His face shine upon you  
 May the Lord lift up His countenance upon you  
 And give you peace  
 And give you peace

### Verse 2

Y'varech'cha Adonai v'yishm'recha  
 Yaer panav alecha vichuneka  
 Yisa Adonai panav alecha  
 V'yaseml'cha shalom v'yaseml'cha shalom

### Bridge

This is the way  
 You shall be blessed  
 From day to day  
 He'll be your rest

### Ending

And give you peace  
 And give you peace

*"Aaronic Benediction" Words & Music by Misha Goetz  
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# The Church Beyond

■ FOCUS OF THE MONTH:

## **CALLED TO MAKE DISCIPLES OF ALL NATIONS**

**T**he Gospel of Jesus begins with “they shall call His name Immanuel (which means God with us) in Matthew 1:23. The Gospel promises again in Matthew 28:18-20 that God (Immanuel) shall be with His disciples in every age to come, to empower them in their commission to make disciples of all nations. What an assuring reaffirmation by Jesus at the close of Matthew’s Gospel!

Underpinning God’s mission is God’s everlasting love. His heart is to dwell in the midst of His people (Ex 25:8). When human history is completed, the triumphant proclamation to His Church shall be that “the dwelling place of God is with man, He will dwell with them and they will be His people” (Rev 21:3) in the new heaven and earth. Praise God for His unchanging passion for His people! May what is upon God’s heart be upon our hearts too.

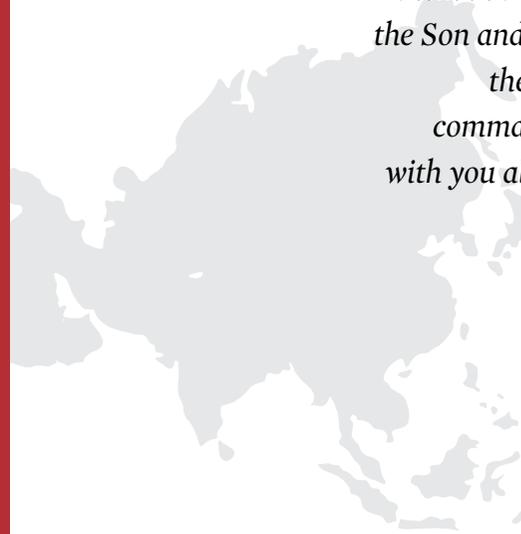
The account of God’s loving mission starts in Genesis and concludes in Revelation. God creates, redeems and restores. He blessed Abraham and his generations to be a blessing to all nations. As followers of Jesus, we too are part of His plan to be ambassadors of blessing. Jesus commissioned His church that He would grant them power to witness to all nations. When we go forth in obedience to reach the nations, may we grow in the assurance of His presence and divine power. Indeed, God is with us!

### PRAY

- For our full-time missionaries, bi-vocational missionaries and those going on mission trips that we may be rooted in the assuring promises of “God with us”.
- For Covenanters to see that we are blessed with eternal life to be a blessing to the nations.
- That we will feel God’s love deeply, moving us to an outward ministry of prayer, service and evangelism to others.
- That the Holy Spirit will teach us to pray for nations and people groups, and for His redemptive and restorative work amidst chaotic situations in the world today.

*And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*

**MATTHEW 28:18-20**



January 1  
Thursday  
2015

# In God's Good Timing

## ■ Scripture

Luke 3:1-3

### ■ Observation

*How are God's sovereignty and hope seen in "the Word of God" coming amidst that oppressive political and religious setting?*

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### Deeper Reflection

God is sovereign. He superintends time, space and people. His plans are for welfare and not evil, for a hope and a future (Jer 29:11). In Luke 3, the Word of God came in His time into the existing political and religious situations, like a ray of bright hope shining through the thick dark clouds of oppression. This brought a deep sense of hope and a new dawn, especially since "the Word of God" for public proclamation had not come to any prophet since Malachi in about 460 BC. The Word came to John in the wilderness. In a harsh and unlikely place, God appoints His Word that announces the coming redemption in the person of Israel's Messiah. Truly, "God's will is totally sovereign, gloriously redemptive, sometimes puzzling, but always perfect!"<sup>1</sup> As Christ's disciples, we were born and placed here for such a time as this – to be part of God's redemptive plan for the world.

## ■ Application

*What are a few specific steps that God is leading me to take as Christ's disciple in 2015?*

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## ■ Prayer

Almighty and Eternal God, please draw my heart to You. So guide my mind, fill my imagination and rule my will, that I may be wholly Yours, utterly dedicated to You. Then please use me as You will, for the welfare and redemption of people, to the glory of Your name always. Through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.<sup>2</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Rev Edmund Chan, IDMC Conference 2012.  
<sup>2</sup> Adapted from Anglican Book of Common Prayer (1979).

January 2  
Friday  
2015

# In God's Mighty Promises

## ■ Scripture

Luke 3:4-6

### ■ Observation

How significant is the fact that the quote from Isaiah climaxes with the universal significance of this dawn of salvation?<sup>3</sup>

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### Deeper Reflection

“Valley filled and mountain levelled” are poetic ways of declaring the mighty advance of the way of the Messiah. We can discern three promises from the Lord. Firstly, the **Promise of Expansion:** The Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ will advance notwithstanding all kinds of opposition; the Lord is expanding the Kingdom’s work of building a global community of disciples and disciplinemakers who will exalt His glorious name. Secondly, the **Promise of Restoration:** God comes gently yet firmly to restore us from our crookedness, corruption, and compromises of our time, talent and treasures. Thirdly, the **Promise of Salvation:** God’s desire and intent is for everyone to receive God’s mercies and grace. Indeed, the promise that “all flesh” shall see God’s salvation gives hope that all people will have the opportunity to receive salvation in Christ.

## ■ Application

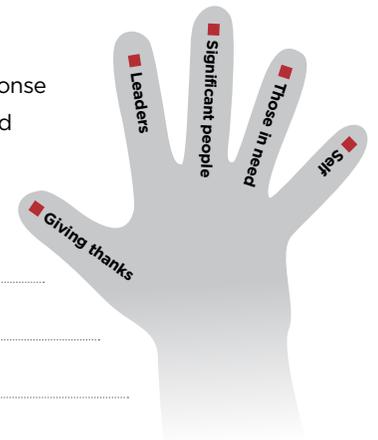
This year, what is the one character quality I must grow in to better contribute to the work of extending God’s Kingdom in our part of the world?

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## ■ Prayer

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

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<sup>3</sup> G.K.Beale and D.A.Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*.

January 3  
Saturday  
2015

# In God's Tender Mercies

## ■ Scripture

Isaiah 40:1-5

### ■ Observation

What do you observe about God's response towards His sinful people?

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### Deeper Reflection

God is tender towards His people. We belong to Him: "My people", "your God" (v. 1). Isaiah 40-55 begins with such a tender double consolation. This section of the book of Isaiah is the "ultimate fulfilment of God's salvific message" and "the arrival of God's deliverance"<sup>4</sup>. God promises to restore His people after He – in His justice and righteousness – punished them for their sins. Isaiah 40:3-5 serves as a response to verses 1 to 2 "in its call for the transformation of the wilderness in the preparation for the Lord's return"<sup>5</sup>. These metaphors of valleys filled and mountains levelled also have moral dimensions: The arrogant and proud will be humbled, the crooked will be transformed, the humble and lowly will be lifted up. May God's consolation and tender mercies draw us to humbly return to our God.

## ■ Application

Which attitudes of my heart do I need God to transform the most?

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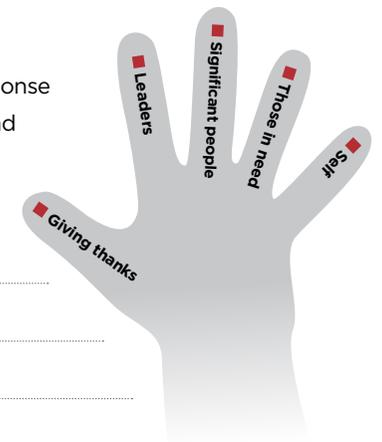
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## ■ Prayer

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



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<sup>4</sup> G.K.Beale and D.A.Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*.  
<sup>5</sup> G.K.Beale and D.A.Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*.

January 4  
Sunday  
2015

■ **Scripture** .....

■ **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?*

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**RESPOND**

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

COMMIT IN PRAYER

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**FAMILY DEVOTIONAL  
January 2015 - Week 1**

**BE READY**

Jesus is coming back soon. We must be ready to meet Him.

**Scripture - 2 Peter 3:10-18**

**1. Activity Bite**

School has now begun. How did you prepare for the first day of school? List down all the things you did in sequence.

**2. Chat Time**

**Q1:** Imagine that you did not get ready for the first day of school. What would have happened and how would you have felt?

**Q2:** Why is it so important to get ready for any occasion?

**Q3:** Reading from 2 Peter 3:10-18, what does it mean to get ready for Christ's return?

**3. Learning Point**

Though Jesus has gone to heaven, He gave us the Bible so that we can continue to know who God is and how to live according to His ways. He will come back again one day to bring us to heaven for eternity. Will we be ready to meet Him or will we be found too busy doing our own things instead of worshipping Him and doing what He wants us to do? The good thing is that God will help us to be ready when we desire to do so.

**4. Action Point**

Three simple things we can do regularly - read the Bible, pray to God and do good to others. With your parents, decide on one thing you want to start doing at the beginning of this year and do it as a family.

**5. Prayer Power**

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

Dear God, I pray for Your blessings as we start this new year together. Help us to be ready when Jesus comes again. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

January 5  
Monday  
2015

# The Year of Rest

## ■ Scripture

Leviticus 25:1-5

### ■ Observation

Do you think it was easy for the Israelites to take a year off from labouring the land? Why or why not?

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### Deeper Reflection

The Sabbatical year happens after every six years. As an agricultural society, food comes from sowing, planting and reaping from the land. It is hard and tiresome labour. Yet if one does not work the land, there would be no food. In the midst of this cycle of preparing, ploughing, planting, pruning, watering and harvesting, God gave the people a year off! A year of rest! Notice it was not just a season of rest for the labourer; it was mostly to be a year of rest for the land!

## ■ Application

What would you do if you had a year off from work (assuming you are in good health and fully supplied)?

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## ■ Prayer

Dear Father, besides Your call for me to rest once a week before You, it seems that You are also calling me to take seasons off from my labour to allow the "land" to rest. Help me to find such extended times to be with You, trusting that You will take care of things. In Jesus' name, amen.



January 6  
Tuesday  
2015

# Resting for Others

## ■ Scripture

Exodus 23:10-11

### ■ Observation

How would you feel if others are allowed to partake of your "land"?  
How do you think the Israelites would feel about the above command concerning their land?

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### Deeper Reflection

The sabbatical year was to be a year of rest for the land and the labourer. But there was another reason for the rest. It was to be a year of blessing for the poor in the land – that whatever the land produced in that year was to be a blessing for the marginalised people in society. Certainly, this was not the only time the poor were to be remembered (Lev 19:9-10; 23:22). But it was to be a year of rest for God's people and the land, and a year of special blessing for the poor!

## ■ Application

In this year of Singapore's Jubilee, how can your "land" be a blessing for others?

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## ■ Prayer

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



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January 8  
Thursday  
2015

## The Year of Jubilee

### ■ Scripture

Leviticus 25:8-10

### ■ Observation

What additional dimension was added to the Year of Jubilee in verse 10 which was beyond the Sabbatical year?<sup>6</sup>

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### Deeper Reflection

The term “Jubilee” comes from the Hebrew word “yobel” which means literally a ram’s horn. It only occurs in three places in the Bible – Leviticus 25 and 27 and Numbers 36:4. The Jubilee is a special Sabbatical year because it comes after the seventh Sabbatical year. This means that the Israelites would be experiencing two consecutive years of rest. It begins on the 10th day of the seventh month (which is the Day of Atonement), with the blowing of the trumpets throughout the land proclaiming the start of the Jubilee year. It was a year of forgiveness, freedom and family inheritance! (cf. 1 Co 15:52).

### ■ Application

What is my spiritual heritage? How do I value it?

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### ■ Prayer

Dear Father, thank You for the Year of Jubilee. It is a picture of release – liberty to return to our inheritance. Thank You for Jesus, my Jubilee, who set me free to return to You, my true inheritance! Help me to set others free through the sharing of the gospel. Enable me to proclaim the gospel boldly and passionately in this new year. In Jesus’ name I pray, amen.



<sup>6</sup> Answer: Release of land back to their original owners, i.e., the return of family inheritance. In a normal Sabbatical year, there was release from labour, rest for the land, release of debts (Dt 15:1-2), and the release of Hebrew slaves (Dt 15:12).





January 11  
Sunday  
2015

■ Scripture

■ Observation

■ Application

■ Prayer

The Past Week

REVIEW

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

*What gave me life and what drained me?*

*How was the Spirit of God at work?*

**REFLECT**

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

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**RESPOND**

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

COMMIT IN PRAYER

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**FAMILY DEVOTIONAL**  
**January 2015 – Week 2**

**STARTING POINT: LOVE GOD**

The most important thing we must get right is to love God with all our hearts.

*Scripture - Luke 10:27*

**1. Activity Bite**

Imagine your house is on fire. If you can only take one thing with you, what would it be?

**2. Chat Time**

**Q1:** The item that you take should be the most important item to you. Explain why you chose that particular item.

**Q2:** Will your life be different if you do not take that item with you? (You can answer “yes” or “no”.) Why?

**Q3:** If loving God is not the most important thing, what will Christian life be like?

**3. Learning Point**

Jesus says that the most important thing for a Christian to do is to love God with all his heart, soul, mind and might. If not, everything we do will be very religious – doing it because we have to rather than doing it delightfully because we love God. Without love, we can do things for our selfish gain rather than to bless others. Loving God is the most important thing and everything we do starts from there.

**4. Action Point**

Share how you would love God with all your heart. What are the things you would do? Consider putting this into action by making these the first things you do in the morning.

**5. Prayer Power**

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

Jesus, thank You for teaching me that loving God with all my heart is the most important thing. Help me love You more every day. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

January 12  
Monday  
2015

# A Holy Jubilee

■ **Scripture**

Leviticus 25:11-12

■ **Observation**

What is the relationship between the Jubilee Year and work (in this context, farming)?

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*Deeper Reflection*

The Jubilee was to be holy, set apart for the people of Israel. One of the purposes for the Jubilee was rest. In that year, the people were to rest from their normal, organised work of sowing and harvesting. They were not to gather food, but they could eat the land's produce which grew naturally. The land was to lie fallow, to be rested. It benefits the soil. It benefits the people, for they learn to recognise that God is the Lord of the land's produce, and God is the One who blesses and provides for His people. The Sabbath principle is in view here. While Christians today are not bound by the legalism and outward forms of the Sabbath, the Sabbath principle still operates to bestow holistic blessings on those who practise it.

■ **Application**

How are you practising the Sabbath principle in your life?

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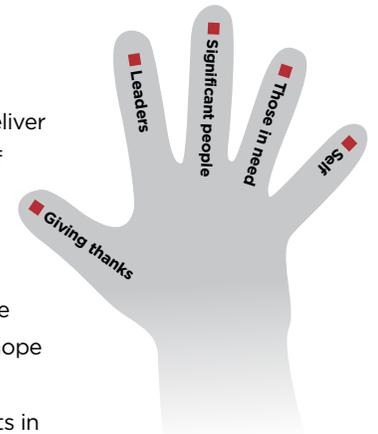
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■ **Prayer**

Lord God of life and all our years, teach me to find my rest in You. Deliver me from constantly busying myself with ceaseless but meaningless activities. All my striving is like chasing after the wind. All my pursuit of emptiness only leaves me feeling empty. In Christ alone, my hope and security are found. Tutor me in these things, especially when events in my life do not turn out as I expect. In Christ's name I pray, amen.



January 13  
Tuesday  
2015

# Return to Property

## ■ Scripture

Leviticus 25:13-17

### ■ Observation

*How does the land pricing principle work?*

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### Deeper Reflection

The principle is simple. In view of the Jubilee Year, land that can be possessed (to produce crops) for, say, 40 years will cost more than land that can be possessed for 10 years. The land must be priced accordingly and fairly. God requires fairness in the Israelites' property transactions with one another. Every 50th year, the wealth of the people of Israel gets redistributed when the plots of sold land revert to their original owners. No family can be permanently disadvantaged through a permanent dispossession of divinely allotted land. This law reflects God's care for the poor (see Ex 22:25-27). To fear the Lord means that one will obey God's law and do one's part to care for the poor and disadvantaged in society.

## ■ Application

*How are you doing your part to care for the poor and needy in society?*

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## ■ Prayer

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

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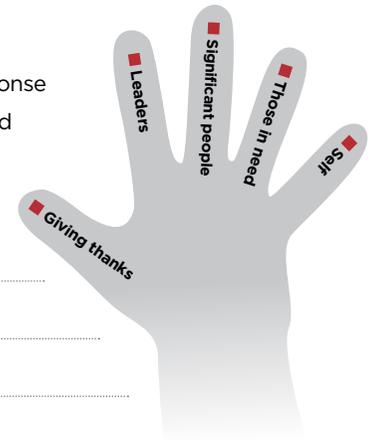
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January 14  
Wednesday  
2015

# Provided with Plenty

## ■ Scripture

Leviticus 25:18-22

### ■ Observation

What did God promise to those who obey Him?

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### Deeper Reflection

God will wonderfully and perfectly supply His people's needs for sustenance and security. The Israelites can sow until and including the sixth year. They cannot sow in the seventh year and can resume sowing in the eighth year. The new crops will only be harvested in the ninth year. Therefore, in order for the people to be sustained throughout this period of three years – the seventh, eighth and ninth years – there must be a bumper crop from the sixth year's sowing. The land must produce sufficient crops in the seventh year's harvest to provide food for the Israelites for a period of three years. As such, these verses describe God's providential blessings for His people. It points us to God's covenant with His chosen people. If they obey Him, they will enjoy His promised blessings.

## ■ Application

How are you trusting God to supply your present and future needs? Is there any disobedience in your life that stems from a lack of trust in God's provision?

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## ■ Prayer

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



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January 15  
Thursday  
2015

## Not in Perpetuity

### ■ Scripture

Leviticus 25:23-28

### ■ Observation

What was the value of land to a man during those times of Israel's history when society was agricultural?

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### Deeper Reflection

The land belongs to God. "The land is mine," says the Lord. The land is God's provision to His people. It is God's gift to them. It is their inheritance. It provides food and shelter. The land is closely bound up with their lives and security. The key principles here are: God is the owner of the land (and all things), and God cares for the needs of His people. As such, God puts in place a system whereby the original owner will not be permanently dispossessed of his allotted land. If due to poverty he is forced to sell part of his land, it can be redeemed by his closest relative, or by himself when he has sufficient means. In any event, if the land remains unredeemed, the buyer will have to release it back to the original owner in the Year of Jubilee.

### ■ Application

To what extent do you consider all your possessions as belonging to God?

How can you be a better steward of your God-given resources?

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### ■ Prayer

Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and on the earth is Yours. Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as Head above all. Both riches and honour come from You, and You rule over all. I thank and praise You that I am able to be a steward of all my God-given resources for Your purposes. I acknowledge that all things come from You and what I give back to You is out of what You have first given me.<sup>7</sup> Amen.



<sup>7</sup> 1 Chronicles 29:10-14.

January 16  
Friday  
2015

# Within the Walled City

## ■ Scripture

Leviticus 25:29-31

### ■ Observation

Why was an unredeemed house within a walled city not released in the Jubilee?

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### Deeper Reflection

Real estate in a walled city had premium value. It would have the protection of fortifications against enemies. The value of such a property was greater than a house in a village without a wall around it. To live in a walled city is a privilege, not a right. Therefore, there were added protections for the buyer of a house in a walled city. While the seller had the right of redemption within a year of the sale, an unredeemed house after one year would belong in perpetuity to the buyer; it would not be released in the Jubilee. In contrast, a house in a village (without a wall around it) was counted with the fields of the land. It could be redeemed at any time and, if unredeemed, would be released in the Jubilee.

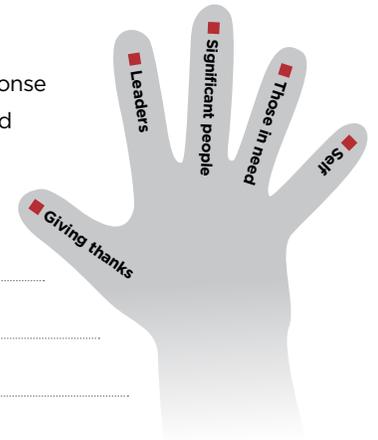
## ■ Application

Thank the Lord for the privilege of knowing Him as your fortress and stronghold. As the psalmist says, "I love you, O LORD, my strength. The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. I call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised, and I am saved from my enemies."(Ps 18:1-3)

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## ■ Prayer

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



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January 17  
Saturday  
2015

# The Levitical Priority

## ■ Scripture

Leviticus 25:32-34

### ■ Observation

Why could the Levites redeem their property in walled cities at any time?

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### Deeper Reflection

After Joshua and the people of Israel took possession of the land of Canaan, the Levites were given cities to dwell in, along with their pasturelands for the Levites' livestock (Jos 21, cf. Nu 35:1-8). Many, if not all, in the Levitical cities were walled. As we have seen earlier, for property in walled cities, the right of redemption was limited to a period of one year. If there was no exception for the Levites, they could eventually lose their houses and cities permanently. The Levites usually had no property outside those cities. The exception to the rule that applied to the Levites meant that they could redeem their sold property (in the walled cities) at any time. No Levitical house could be bought in perpetuity by others. If unredeemed, the property would be released in the Jubilee. Further, the Levites were to possess forever the fields of the pasturelands belonging to the Levitical cities; those fields could not be sold. God carefully provided for His servants, the Levites, who were consecrated to serve in the area of worship, and, later, also in the teaching of the Law (2 Ch 35:3; Ne 8:5-9).

## ■ Application

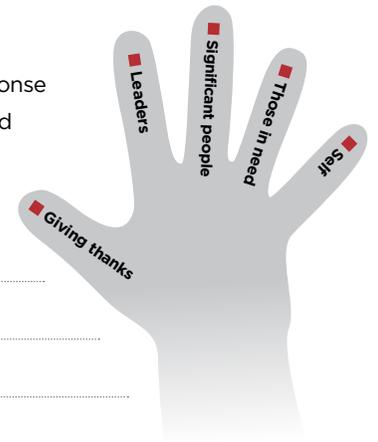
How much priority do you give to the worship of God and the Word of God in your daily life?

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## ■ Prayer

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

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January 18  
Sunday  
2015

■ Scripture

■ Observation

■ Application

■ Prayer

The Past Week

REVIEW

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

*What gave me life and what drained me?*

*How was the Spirit of God at work?*

**REFLECT**

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

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**RESPOND**

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

COMMIT IN PRAYER

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**FAMILY DEVOTIONAL**  
**January 2015 – Week 3**
**STARTING POINT: OBEY GOD**

Obeying God's Word is the next most important thing apart from loving Him.

**Scripture - John 15:14**

**1. Activity Bite**

Make up some sentences beginning with: "I love you but I will not..." Say it to one another. For example, "I love you but I will not help you fix your broken toy" or "I love you but I will not care for you when you fall sick."

**2. Chat Time**

**Q1:** How would you feel if someone said those things to you?  
**Q2:** Why is it important to put love into action rather than just words alone?

**Q3:** Reading from John 15:14, could you name some commands that the Bible has for us?

**3. Learning Point**

It is very important for us to love God with all our hearts, souls, minds and might. However, words without actions mean nothing. Obeying God's commands simply means doing what He tells us to do. We can find all of God's commands in the Bible. As we read, we must always be asking how we can obey God out of love for Him.

**4. Action Point**

Think of one good thing you can do for your parents. Say to them before you do it, "I will \_\_\_\_\_  
(name the task you want to do) because I want to obey God to love you."

**5. Prayer Power**

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

Dear God, thank You for teaching me to obey You. I want to obey because I love You. Amen.

January 19  
Monday  
2015

## No Interest in Interest

### ■ Scripture

Leviticus 25:35-38

### ■ Observation

What did God prohibit His people from doing to their fellow brothers and sisters?

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### Deeper Reflection

God forbade that His people charge interest on a loan to a fellow brother. This sounds odd to our modern ears, for we would expect interest to be levied on loans. Which bank does not charge you interest when you borrow money? In the ancient world, interest on loans was deducted *in advance*, thus the sum that the debtor received would be less than the principal loan amount itself. If the loan was not repaid in time, extra interest would be charged. Needless to say, with the compounding interests, he would have no other choice but to sell himself into slavery.<sup>8</sup> But slavery in Egypt was exactly what God had delivered His people from (v. 38). And the people of God were called to do whatever it took to ensure that those in God's family would never have to experience the oppression of slavery again, in any form: "If your brother becomes poor..." (v. 35).

### ■ Application

In my life, how can I best practise the principle of lending to fellow brothers and sisters without benefitting myself or enslaving them?

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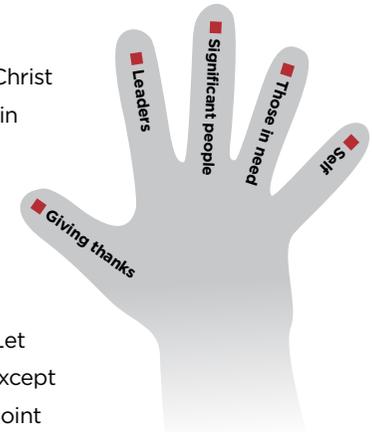
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### ■ Prayer

Eternal God, through the cross of Christ You brought me out of slavery to sin and death. I have been redeemed because of the redemption price that Jesus paid with His blood. Praise and thanks be to You that I am now a co-heir with Him and a child of the living God! Let me no longer live a life of slavery except in wholehearted service to You. Anoint me now to be Your instrument to bring freedom to others, so that they too can taste the freedom that Christ came to bring. In His name I pray, amen.



<sup>8</sup> L. R. Harris, F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *Expositor's Bible Commentary Volume 2*, Leviticus 25:35-38, Grand Rapids: MI, Zondervan 1990.

January 20  
Tuesday  
2015

# Not My Slaves, But God's Servants

## ■ Scripture

Leviticus 25:39-43

### ■ Observation

What did God ask His people to do if their fellow brother sold himself to them?

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### Deeper Reflection

Getting the most out of other people is the way of the world. That's how businesses work. We drive a hard bargain. We negotiate for the best possible deal. We aim for maximum returns from minimum investment. Yet God was asking His people to do the reverse! The poor brother in verse 39 has no more credit to obtain any further loan.<sup>9</sup> If his richer kinsman has no one to answer to and no consequences to face, then it would be tempting to take advantage of him. But when the kinsman lives in the fear of God, he recognises that the poor brother whom God has placed under him has been given as a sacred trust. The poor brother must be given his just reward (v. 40)<sup>10</sup> and due treatment (v. 43)<sup>11</sup>, because he is not a slave. God said, "For they are MY servants, whom I brought out of Egypt..." (v. 42). The poor brother is to serve until the Year of Jubilee. Jubilee is about rightful ownership and stewardship!

## ■ Application

How does this change the way I treat those whom God has placed under my care and control, and for whom I must one day account to God?

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## ■ Prayer

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

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<sup>9</sup> L. R. Harris, *Expositor's Bible Commentary Volume 2*, Leviticus 25:39-46.  
<sup>10</sup> In this case, as a hired labourer (see Dt 15:12-18), and not as a slave who is not entitled to payment (see Ex 21:2-6).  
<sup>11</sup> To treat ruthlessly is literally to break something apart severely (see *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Brown, Driver and Briggs, H6531, Hendrickson Publishers, England, 1996).

**January 21**  
 Wednesday  
 2015

# Beyond a Domestic Employment Policy

■ **Scripture**

*Leviticus 25:44-46*

■ **Observation**

*What did God allow His people to do with regards to foreign slaves?*

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*Deeper Reflection*

God's people were not allowed to be slaves again, because they had been delivered from Egypt. They were also God's servants. But what's the rationale behind allowing the Israelites to buy slaves from other nations? Furthermore, these foreign slaves were not released at the Jubilee.<sup>12</sup> The issue here is not about hiring foreign talent who were brighter or cheaper as an economic strategy. See beyond the buying of slaves from other nations! This was an act of faith that pointed to the sons of Israel inheriting the nations (v. 46), as echoed in Psalm 2:8 ("Ask of Me and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.") It was when those foreigners lived among God's people that they would in time come to embrace Yahweh, the God of Israel, as their own God (Ex 12:48; Jer 12:16). There is something so much bigger here! It is about our global God with a global destiny for His people! And that destiny permeates even into a domestic issue like this. Let's be missional in every arena of life!

■ **Application**

*How does being missional in my family and workplace change the way I view and relate to other people, especially those from other nations?*

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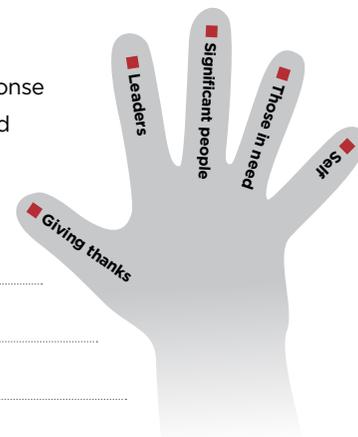
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■ **Prayer**

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



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<sup>12</sup> L. R. Harris, *Expositor's Bible Commentary Volume 2*, Leviticus 25:39-46

January 22  
Thursday  
2015

## Redemption – Whose Responsibility Is It Anyway?

### ■ Scripture

Leviticus 25:47-49

### ■ Observation

What did God instruct His people to do should one of their brothers be sold as a servant?

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### Deeper Reflection

To redeem essentially means to buy back or deliver from slavery. Notice who could redeem the Israelite sold as a servant. Firstly, his brother. If not him, next would be his uncle. If not him either, then next would be his cousin. If not the cousin, then someone from his clan. This tells us, firstly, that a kinsman has a responsibility to redeem a relative who has become a servant due to poverty. By going down the family line, it also tells us how much God wants His people to be redeemed, to be free. While the Israelite servant could, when he grows rich, even redeem himself (v. 49), the truth for all people is that when it comes to slavery to sin, we are absolutely unable to redeem either ourselves or others! Therefore, God spared no expense and took it upon Himself to redeem us by paying with the life of His own Son (Eph 1:7)! The Lord Jesus is our Kinsman-Redeemer!

### ■ Application

What are my roles and responsibilities when I see a Christian brother or sister living in sin or falling into sin?

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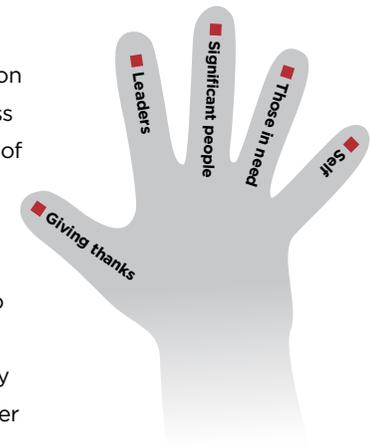
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### ■ Prayer

Lord Jesus, in You I have redemption through Your blood, the forgiveness of my sins, according to the riches of Your grace.<sup>13</sup> Thank You for paying the price that I can never ever repay so that I can be free! Let me now, O Lord, be Your instrument to a brother or sister who sins. Grant me a spirit of gentleness, that I may be used by You to restore him or her through confession and repentance. Help me to keep watch over myself, lest I be tempted.<sup>14</sup> Amen.



<sup>13</sup> Ephesians 1:7

<sup>14</sup> Galatians 6:1

January 23  
Friday  
2015

# Justice and Fairness to Both

## ■ Scripture

Leviticus 25:50-52

### ■ Observation

How was the redemption price to be calculated if an Israelite servant wanted to redeem himself?

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### Deeper Reflection

Verses 50 to 52 give us the Human Resources and Finance policy for redemption. Notice how the redemption price was pro-rated according to the number of years worked. Why not just pay a lump sum to be agreed upon by both parties? No, because the outcome may not be fair. There would be inequality of bargaining power and subjectivity in the negotiation process. This may cut either way, to the disadvantage of either party. God's command provided an equitable law, not just to the Israelite servant who wanted to be redeemed, but also to the non-Israelite employer who should be paid proportionately in return.<sup>15</sup> In other words, God's concern was not just WHAT should be done (i.e. redemption of His people), but HOW it should be done (i.e. with fairness to both parties). Thus, even the stranger or sojourner might see the fairness and justice of the God of Israel!

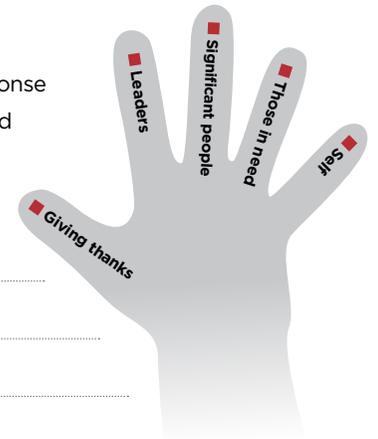
## ■ Application

How can I discharge my responsibilities at work or at home in such a way that provides fairness to those in authority over me?

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## ■ Prayer

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



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<sup>15</sup> Clarke, A., *Commentary On The Bible*, G. Lane and P. P. Sanford publishers, 1820-1826. Leviticus 25:50.

January 24  
Saturday  
2015

# The Law – Not Just For Israel

## ■ Scripture

Leviticus 25:53-55

### ■ Observation

*How is the stranger or sojourner expected to treat the Israelite who has sold himself to him?*

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### Deeper Reflection

Notice how the same rules of treatment apply, even if the boss was not an Israelite but a stranger or sojourner. The Israelite servant was not to be treated ruthlessly, but with justice and compassion (Lev 25:43, 46). He and his children were to be released in the Year of Jubilee (Lev 25:40-41, 54), even if the non-Israelite boss did not celebrate the Jubilee, or abide by the rules stipulated by the God of Israel or worship Him. The rationale: The Israelites are God's servants (v. 55, cf. v. 42). Israel as God's people were meant to show the world how life was to be lived under God's law, so that the nations might know the right way to relate to this God who is not just the God of Israel, but also of all nations. Even if the rest of the nations did not receive the law, they are obligated to keep it, because the same law is written in their conscience (Ro 2:14-16).

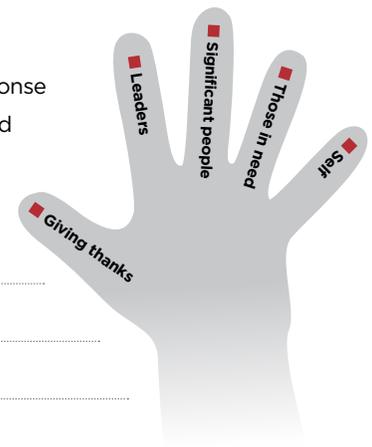
## ■ Application

*How does knowing that God's laws have universal applicability change the way that I pray for and witness to unbelievers around me?*

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## ■ Prayer

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



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**January 25**  
Sunday  
2015

■ **Scripture** .....

■ **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?*

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**RESPOND**

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

COMMIT IN PRAYER

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**FAMILY DEVOTIONAL  
January 2015 – Week 4**

**STARTING POINT:  
ONE GOOD CHANGE**

A brand new change in a brand new year.

**Scripture - 2 Corinthians 5:17**

**1. Activity Bite**

List down all the brand new things you would like to have this year.

**2. Chat Time**

**Q1:** Share with everyone what you have written and explain why you want them.

**Q2:** Why is it good for some old things to be replaced with new ones?

**Q3:** What are our old behaviours that need to be replaced with new ones?

**3. Learning Point**

We love to have brand new things and throw away the old ones. Some changes are needful (like old broken shoes or torn shirts) while some are just because we desire something new (like the latest phone models). Our “old-person” behaviours like impatience, anger or selfishness are attitudes that God wants us to change. The “new-person” behaviours like kindness, helpfulness or patience please God and these are what He wants us to develop.

**4. Action Point**

Reflect on one behaviour that you want to work on this year. For example, would you like to be more patient with your younger brother or more helpful to your mother? Ask your parents to help you work on this behaviour in the coming few months.

**5. Prayer Power**

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

Dear God, I want to be more like Jesus. Please help me change my behaviour for the better this year. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

January 26  
Monday  
2015

# Where Is God Moving Towards in History?

## ■ Scripture

Genesis 1:1; Revelation 21:1

## ■ Observation

What is the Bible telling us by how it begins in Genesis 1:1 and ends in Revelation 21:1 (cf. Isa 65:17; 2 Pe 3:13)?

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## Deeper Reflection

Despite the Bible's diversity in history, authorship, language and subject matter, there is historical and theological continuity and unity within it. The Bible is one meta-narrative, intended to be read as a whole. The story of the Bible is a four-part symphony: Creation (Ge 1-2), Transgression (Ge 3), Salvation (Ge 4 – Rev 20), and Recreation (Rev 21-22). The Bible begins and ends with the same theme of creation. It begins with "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (Ge 1:1), and ends with "I saw a new heaven and a new earth" (Rev 21:1). Humankind came under a curse for their disobedience (Ge 3:17); but when God completes His redemption of sinful humanity, "no longer will there be any curse" (Rev 22:3 NIV). Fallen humankind was driven out of God's direct presence from the Garden of Eden (Ge 3:8, 23-24); but redeemed humanity will eventually "see His face" (Rev 22:4). While this is where God is moving towards as history unfolds, the "new creation" in Christ is already present now (2 Co 5:17; Gal 6:15). And now we seek God's face continually, seeing Him "dimly" until we see Him "face to face" (cf. 1 Co 13:12).

## ■ Application

What does it mean for me to seek and see God's face?

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## ■ Prayer

Creator God and Sovereign Lord of history, help me not to lose heart as I live in a world that is physically and morally decaying; but to rest assured in the hope of the new heaven and new earth, where righteousness dwells and I will see You face to face. So, help me now to seek Your face continually and earnestly. Amen.



January 27  
Tuesday  
2015

# Creation: Intention for Good and Blessing (Genesis 1-2)

## ■ Scripture

Genesis 1:3-31

## ■ Observation

What does God repeatedly do to His creation in verses 4, 10, 12, 18, 21-22, 25, 28 and 31?

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## Deeper Reflection

The narrative of Genesis can be seen as interwoven by two pairs of repeated contrasting terms: blessing and curse, good and evil. And we can observe three key theological movements in Genesis working around these two pairs of contrasting terms: creation – intention for good and blessing (Ge 1-2); corruption – disruption by evil and curse (Ge 3-11); and covenant – restoration of good and blessing (Ge 12-50). At six different points in the process of creating the universe and human beings, God saw His work as “good” (vv. 4, 10, 12, 18, 21-22, 25, 28). And at the end of His creative work, God “saw all that He had made was...very good” (v. 31 NAS). When God created living creatures and human beings, He blessed them (vv. 22, 28). God’s intention for creation to be blessed and good remains steadfast despite humanity, the crown of His creation, having fallen into sin. This divine intention is restored in Jesus Christ. God “has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ” (Eph 1:3 NAS). While, as God’s children, we suffer in the decaying creation (Ro 8:18-21), we are assured that “God causes all things to work together for good...according to His purpose” (Ro 8:28 NAS).

## ■ Application

How is God’s intention for humanity’s blessing and good true in my life?

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## ■ Prayer

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



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January 28  
Wednesday  
2015

# Corruption: Disruption by Evil and Curse (Genesis 3-11)

## ■ Scripture

Genesis 6:1-8

### ■ Observation

*How does the narrator describe fallen humankind in verses 5 to 8 when their sin reached a certain climax in history?*

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### Deeper Reflection

Genesis 3 to 11 presents a history of early fallen humanity: Adam and disobedience (3:1 – 6:8); Noah and destruction (6:9 – 9:29); nations and dispersion (10:1 – 11:26). The whole of creation was subjected to the divine curse because of sin (Ge 3:17). The transgression of humankind resulted in the prevailing presence of evil both inside humans themselves and in the world around them – “the wickedness of man was great on the earth” and the human heart is “only evil continually” (Ge 6:5 NAS). So evil transformed humankind such that God had to blot them out together with the whole of creation (Ge 6:7). Evil and curse brought about a disruption of the God-intended good and blessing. After the fall of humankind (Ge 3), Genesis 4 to 50 presents in different ways the conflict between good and evil, as God set about restoring the lost good and blessing. The first conflict between good and evil in Genesis occurred when a wicked brother murdered his righteous brother (Ge 4:8). Evil seeks to destroy good – true then and today. However, surrounded or afflicted by destructive evil, we can still live life finding “favour in the eyes of the LORD” (Ge 6:8).

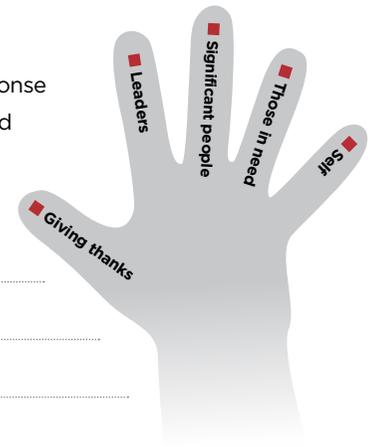
## ■ Application

*What are some evil that trouble me and how do I face them?*

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## ■ Prayer

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



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January 29  
Thursday  
2015

## Covenant: Restoration of Good and Blessing (Genesis 12-50)

### ■ Scripture

Genesis 12:1-3

### ■ Observation

*How do Genesis 12:1-3 function as the turning point in Genesis against the backdrop of Genesis 1-11?*

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### Deeper Reflection

Genesis 12:1-3 is the turning point in Genesis against the backdrop of Genesis 1-11. The key word is “blessing” – repeated five times in the three verses, in four significant expressions: “I will bless you” (v. 2a), “you shall be a blessing” (v. 2b), “I will bless those who bless you” (v. 3a), and “in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (v. 3b). God called Abraham to make a covenant with Him with a redemptive purpose in mind: restoration of the good and blessing lost through Adam’s transgression. The statistics of the two contrasting terms “blessing” and “curse” in Genesis 1 to 11 and 12 to 50 is very telling. “Blessing” and “curse” occur six times each in Genesis 1 to 11, but 72 times and twice respectively in Genesis 12 to 50. The theological point is clear. In Genesis 1 to 11, the battle between “blessing” and “curse” is a draw. But how “blessing” overcomes “curse” so overwhelmingly in Genesis 12 to 50! That tells how much God wants and seeks to bless sinners. The blessing is summed up in Genesis 15:6 and expounded in Romans 4:3-5: Abraham believed in God who declares the guilty to be innocent, and counts the faith in Him as righteousness.

### ■ Application

*How does knowing how much God wants and seeks to bless sinners affect my life?*

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### ■ Prayer

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.<sup>16</sup> I thank You that the greatest blessing I have in Christ is You made Him, who had no sin, to be sin for sinners, that sinners might become the righteousness of God in Him.<sup>17</sup> Help me to live out that righteousness through the Holy Spirit. Amen.



<sup>16</sup> Ephesians 1:3

<sup>17</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:21

January 30  
Friday  
2015

# God's Covenant with Abraham: Ultimate Purpose

## ■ Scripture

Genesis 12:1-3; 18:17-18; 22:16-18; 26:2-5; 28:13-15

## ■ Observation

What is God's ultimate purpose in His covenant with Abraham to bless him and his descendants?

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## Deeper Reflection

God's ultimate purpose in His covenant with Abraham to bless him and his descendants is His blessing of the nations: "I will bless you" (Ge 12:2) and "in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (12:3). The Hebrew word for "nation" occurs 25 times in Genesis, of which 15 times are in the plural – "nations". The phrase "all the nations/families of the earth will be blessed" is repeated five times in Genesis in the context of God's covenant with Abraham – and always in the climatic position. God mentions it when He makes and expands His covenant with Abraham (12:3; 18:18; 22:18), and when He renews the covenant with Isaac (26:4) and with Jacob (28:14). And this ultimate purpose is ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ, through His death and resurrection – "in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles [nations]" (Gal 3:14). Through our faith in Christ, we are "blessed with Abraham" (Gal 3:9 NAS), and are "children of Abraham" (Gal 3:7, NIV). And this, in turn, means God's ultimate purpose for us is also that in us "all the nations of the earth shall be blessed".

## ■ Application

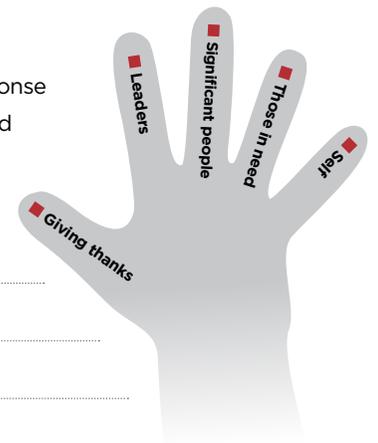
In what specific ways can "in you all the nations of the earth shall be blessed" be fulfilled in my life?

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## ■ Prayer

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

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January 31  
Saturday  
2015

# First and Last Word of Genesis

## ■ Scripture

Genesis 50:15-21

### ■ Observation

What is the theological significance of Genesis concluding with the words of Joseph in verse 20?

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### Deeper Reflection

When Joseph’s brothers sold him away to slavery in Egypt (Ge 37), it was an act of “evil”, as Joseph said to them after his reconciliation with them (“As for you, you meant evil against me”, v. 20). Evil was done by a band of brothers to a brother. It is Genesis 4 repeated. But after having come out of the dark tunnel of “you meant evil against me”, Joseph saw the light of “but God meant it for good”. Joseph’s statement is more than just a conclusion of his story. The narrator meant it to be a theological crescendo of the book of Genesis. After the fall of humankind (Ge 3), Genesis 4-50 presents in different ways the conflict between good and evil, as God was in the process of restoring the lost good and blessing. Oftentimes in Genesis, evil seems to have the upper hand in its attempts of destruction and obstruction against good. But good will ultimately have the last say, because it is “God” who is sovereign and faithful, who “meant it for good”. Genesis begins with God seeing His creation as “good” and ends with “God meant it for good”.

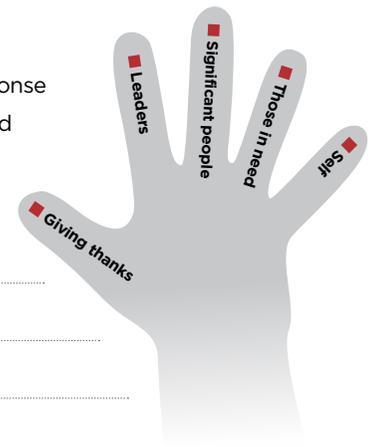
## ■ Application

How can I live out the truth of “you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good” in my life?

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## ■ Prayer

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



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