

COVENANT^{EFC}

devotional journal 2014

1 may - 30 june

1 John 2:17

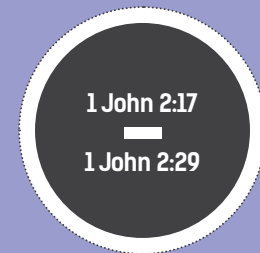


1 John 2:29

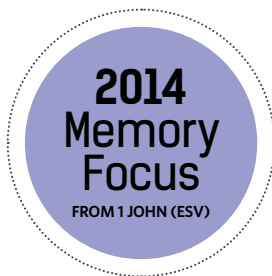
shine
righteously

shine

righteously



COVENANT EFC



JANUARY

This is the message we have heard from Him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.

1 John 1:5

february

1 JOHN 1:9

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

march

1 JOHN 2:15

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

APRIL

1 John 2:16

For all that is in the world - the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions - is not from the Father but is from the world.

may

And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

1 John 2:17

JUNE

1 JOHN 2:29

If you know that He is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of Him.

JULY

1 John 3:1

See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know Him.

AUGUST

1 JOHN 4:4

Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

SEPTEMBER

1 JOHN 4:10

In this is love, not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

OCTOBER

1 JOHN 4:12

No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and His love is perfected in us.

november

There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.

1 JOHN 4:18

december

And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

1 JOHN 5:11-12

foreword

by senior pastors

There must be something more in 2014!

There must be something more every new year!
We long for something deeper, something satisfying,
something radical, something life-changing, something
that would really make a difference every new year.
What will that “something more” be for you?

St. Augustine once said, *“To fall in love with God is the greatest of all romances; to seek Him, the greatest adventure; to find him, the greatest human achievement.”* The deepest longing of the soul is for intimacy with God. It begins with God and is rooted IN HIM! *“One thing I have asked from the Lord, that I shall seek: That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to meditate in His temple.”* (Ps 27:4)

1. Intimacy as Our PURPOSE in Life:

“One thing I have asked from the Lord, that I shall seek...”

The goal of every disciple of Christ is not merely to do things for God – these are significant parts of God’s redemptive order as seen in the Great Commission. Enjoying the intimacy with God is part of the creative order as seen in the Great Commandment. The ONE thing that is the most important in 2014 is our relationship with God! Everything revolves around this one defining purpose.

2. Intimacy as Our PURSUIT in Life:

“One thing I have asked from the Lord, that I shall seek...”

Someone once said, “We do not see things as they are. We see them as we are.” In other words, who we are determines what we see and what we pursue, and we become what we pursue. “I shall seek” expresses a determination to pursue intimacy with God. What are you pursuing in 2014? What are you seeking?

There must be
something more
than this!

3. Intimacy as Our PREOCCUPATION in Life:

“That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life...”

“All the days of my life” is not simply stating a period of time but a preoccupation of life! David declares “to dwell in the house of the Lord” as his prevailing desire, his grand preoccupation and his magnificent obsession. True spirituality stems not from some form of activity but from God’s presence as the centre of his life. The dwelling place of God is in the quiet depths of our lives. May you experience and enjoy His presence throughout the year 2014!

4. Intimacy as Our PASSION in Life:

“To behold the beauty of the Lord and to meditate in His temple.”

David made a decisive choice to not only see, but behold and be captivated by the beauty of the Lord. God is of ultimate importance in his life and God is the one who gives meaning to life. David committed himself to “meditate in His temple”. A person is often defined by abilities, accomplishments, appearance, acquisitions and associations. But God defines us by our personal relationship with Him. May your passion for spiritual intimacy with God attract and fuel pre-believing friends to know God in 2014.

There Must be Something More Than This!

Psalm 27 was written in the context of fear and uncertainty. Fear is mentioned three times in two verses (vv. 1, 3). Yet, in spite of the anxieties and fears, David focused on God and saw God Almighty as his revelation, redemption and refuge (vv. 1-3).

May we like David says, *“When You said, ‘Seek My face,’ my heart said to You, ‘Your face, O Lord, I shall seek’.”* (v. 8).

***In Christ,
Ps Tony and Ps Kay Kiong***

guide to using this journal



S.O.A.P.

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.
- Worship God with a song or hymn. (Refer to the list of worship songs provided.)
- Offer a prayer to God as you prepare to listen to His Word.

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

Each daily devotional entry is divided into four parts:

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. Use the guiding questions provided.

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 response to God in prayer using the suggested prayer for the day.

calendar

may 2014

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
			1 Labour Day	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11 Mother's Day Service
12	13 ACKCentre Open House	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25 New Life Friends' Day/ Church Camp Briefing
26	27	28	29	30	31	

june 2014

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
30						1 Global Day of Prayer
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9 Leaders' Retreat	10 Church Camp	11 Church Camp	12 Church Camp	13 Church Camp	14	15 Father's Day Service
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29 TNG Sunday



"What Will You Do If You Know...?"

SCRIPTURE

1 John 2:28; Matthew 24:36-44

In 1 John 2:28, John is basically calling us to be ready for Christ's Second Coming. We sometimes ask this question to test our readiness: "What will you do if you know that Jesus is coming in a week's time?" Often, it is only when asked that we start to make a list of things that we would do. When we respond to the question in this manner, it reflects a very serious flaw in our lives. It reveals the conditions of our hearts. It means that if Jesus does not come in a week's time, we won't be working on our list of things. In the two millennia of church history, there have been many Christians who seek to determine mathematically the time of Christ's return, despite the Lord saying explicitly, "You do not know which day the Lord is coming" (Mt 24:42). God knows how wicked our hearts can be, albeit redeemed, that should we know the exact time of Christ's return, we are very likely to be relaxed in the way we live our lives until sometime near the exact moment. That's God's mercy and wisdom.

OBSERVATION

What does Jesus teach about readiness for His Second Coming in Matthew 24:36-44?

APPLICATION

What areas in my life do I need to work on to make myself ready for Christ's Second Coming?

PRAYER

Lord, You are so emphatic in calling us to "Take heed, keep on the alert!", "Stay on the alert!" and "Be on the alert!"¹ in waiting and watching for Your glorious return. You are so emphatic because You know we have the tendency to slack in this regard. Pardon me for this spiritual slackness. Help me to be consciously ready, for I will be able to be alert when I am ready. Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:
- Pray for leaders:
- Pray for significant people:
- Pray for those in need:
- Pray for self:

¹Mark 13:33-35, 37

May 2,
Friday
2014

Confident Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

SCRIPTURE

1 John 2:28; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

We are to be confident before Jesus “when He appears” and “not shrink away from Him in shame” (v. 28) – confident yesterday, today and tomorrow until His coming. John very plainly and clearly tells us the key to that confidence: “Remain in Him”, walk with Him and follow Him with daily faithfulness. “By far the best way to be ready for the coming of Christ is to live with Him every day. If we do that, His coming will be no shock to us but simply the entry into the nearer presence of one with whom we have lived for so long.”² “For every man’s life will someday come to an end; God’s summons call to all to rise and bid this world farewell. If we have never thought of God and if Jesus has been but a dim and distant memory, that will be a summons to voyage into a frightening unknown. But if we have lived consciously in the presence of Christ, if day by day we have talked and walked with God, that will be a summons to come home and to enter into a nearer presence of one who is not a stranger but a friend.”³

OBSERVATION

What does Paul teach about discipleship in light of Christ’s Second Coming in 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11?

APPLICATION

How do I evaluate my personal discipleship in relation to Christ’s Second Coming?

PRAYER

Truly, Lord, the best way to be ready for Your return is to live with You every day. Teach me and help me to walk with You today as if You may return today. Help me to begin my day asking, “Will the Lord return today?” and end it with “Will the Lord return tomorrow?” Thank you, Lord; every day is one day nearer to Your glorious return. Come, Lord Jesus. Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:

- Pray for leaders:

- Pray for significant people:

- Pray for those in need:

- Pray for self:

² William Barclay, *The Letters of John and Jude*, The Daily Study Bible (Theological Publications in India, 1958, 1976), 71
³ William Barclay, 71-72

May 3,
Saturday
2014

Staying True to God

SCRIPTURE

Psalms 1:1-3; Jeremiah 17:5-10

Psalm 1:1-3 portrays a person staying true to God until the end, separated from the world (v. 1), saturated with God's Word (v. 2) and sturdy in his walk in four ways (v. 3). He is spiritually fed (and fat!) – "He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams (plural) of water", intentionally transplanted near to resources for spiritual nourishment, and constantly getting into, building on and living by God's Word. Being spiritually fed, he becomes spiritually fruitful – "yields its fruit in its season", marked by inner-life depth, spiritual maturity and godly character. Being spiritually fruitful, he becomes spiritually fit – "its leaf does not wither". He is like a tree remaining evergreen in the midst of a drought or a forest fire. He is spiritually fulfilled – "in whatever he does, he prospers". He prospers whether his circumstances are good or bad. Biblically, to prosper means to be at the centre of God's will.

OBSERVATION

How is a person who stays true to God described in Jeremiah 17:5-10?

APPLICATION

How am I specifically challenged by Psalm 1:1-3 and Jeremiah 17:5-10 to stay true to God?

PRAYER

Lord, I want to be like a tree firmly planted by the river, with my roots reaching deep into its living waters, regularly nourished by the living Word of God;⁴ so that I will be like trees that are neither fearful of the heat nor worried by long months of drought, whose leaves remain evergreen and whose boughs never stop producing fruit.⁵ Help me to be such a tree! Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:

- Pray for leaders:

- Pray for significant people:

- Pray for those in need:

- Pray for self:

⁴ Psalm 1:2-3
⁵ Jeremiah 17:8

Sermon Notes

May 4,
Sunday
2014

Topic:

Scripture:

Main Points:

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Principles to Live by:

What are the biblical principles found in this passage?

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Practical Life Applications:

What is one thing that I will do in the coming week?

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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?

RESPONSE:

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

b. Journal your prayer.

STAY ON THE RIGHT PATH

Don't turn left or right. If we stray from the truth, we will get into trouble.

Scripture - 1 John 2:27-29; Psalm 1

1. ACTIVITY BITE

While seated down, ask your child to close his or her eyes and listen to you. They will have to mentally walk to a spot or find something in your house as you direct them verbally. You can only say "Turn left", "Walk right", "Go straight", etc. See if he or she can locate the place or things you are thinking of.

2. CHAT TIME

Q1: How do you feel about this activity?

Q2: What happens when you didn't stay on the path?

Q3: Why do you think God wants us to stay on the right path - God's path? (refer to Ps 1:1)

3. LEARNING POINT

Psalm 1:1 tells us that we are blessed when we stay on God's path. Walking in God's path means we need to believe in Him and do what He says. But it is so easy to be tempted to walk another way, like telling lies to get what we really want. Sometimes we listen to our friends rather than listen to God because we want to play with them. Doing that is like walking along a safe jungle path but you sidetrack and go after a beautiful butterfly that happens to fly past. You may end up getting lost or encounter a wild animal.

4. ACTION POINT

Read the Bible always to know what God's way is. Decide on one thing you know God wants you to do and do it over the next few days.

5. PRAYER POWER

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

Dear God, thank You for showing me the right path. If I stray away, please help me come back and walk in Your ways again. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

may

family devotional week one

May 5,
Monday
2014

The Posture of People of Hope

SCRIPTURE

Romans 8:18-25

As a result of sin, “the whole creation has been groaning” in “its bondage to decay” (Ro 8:21-22, ESV) in all forms – physical, geological, environmental, sociological, political, economic, moral and spiritual. God’s children, having “the Holy Spirit within us as the foretaste of future glory” (v. 23, NLT), are not exempted from these sufferings. But we are to live in hope of Christ’s Coming, when “our bodies” will be redeemed (v. 23) with certain posture. Wait patiently for His Coming (“wait”, vv. 23, 25; “with perseverance”, v. 25), as we suffer the wear and tear of our earthly being and existence. Want longingly His Coming (“wait eagerly”⁶, vv. 23, 25). Life in this world is not just pains and pressures; it has much gains and pleasures too. Be careful that life will not be so comfortable that we secretly wish the Lord will not return so soon. Walk faithfully until His Coming (“with perseverance”, v. 25) or, in John’s words, “remain in Him” (1 Jn 2:28) and “practice righteousness” (1 Jn 2:29).

OBSERVATION

What shapes our posture as people who hope in Christ’s Second Coming, according to Romans 8:18-25?

APPLICATION

How am I living as one whose hope in life is fixed upon Christ’s Second Coming?

PRAYER

Father, allow me to see myself as a co-heir of God with Christ, that in my suffering I suffer with Christ and will be glorified with Him,⁷ so that I can say with deep conviction that I consider the sufferings of this present time in this decaying world unworthy to be compared with the glory to be revealed to the children of God in Christ.⁸ Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:

- Pray for leaders:

- Pray for significant people:

- Pray for those in need:

- Pray for self:

⁶ “Wait eagerly” is a translation of one word in Greek.

⁷ Romans 8:17

⁸ Romans 8:18

May 6,
Tuesday
2014

Privilege of Grace

SCRIPTURE

1 John 2:27; 1 Corinthians 2:6-12

"As for you, the anointing...abides in you" (v. 27). "The anointing" is "a reference to the Holy Spirit"⁹. In Hebrew thought and practice, anointing was connected to three kinds of people.¹⁰ Priests were anointed; "and their anointing shall qualify them for a perpetual priesthood" (Ex 40:13-15). Prophets were anointed; for example, Elijah was to anoint Elisha (1 Ki 19:16). Kings were anointed; for example, Samuel was to anoint Saul (1 Sa 9:16). In Old Testament times, anointing was "the privilege of the chosen few...but now it is the privilege of every Christian"¹¹. But most significantly, we have received "the anointing Spirit"¹² in Christ, the supreme Anointed One (2 Co 1:21-22). Having the anointing Spirit abiding in us is a privilege of God's grace – His undeserved and unmerited favour. Be consciously aware of this privilege in Christ. Be thankfully appreciative of this gracious privilege from God. Be actively appropriating the anointing Spirit dwelling in you.

OBSERVATION

What does Paul say about God giving to us His Spirit in 1 Corinthians 2:6-12?

APPLICATION

What difference does it make in my life to know the significance of God giving me His Spirit?

PRAYER

How can it be that the Holy Spirit – the Spirit of the Father¹³ and the Spirit of Christ¹⁴, the Spirit of the holy and glorious Triune God – should dwell in this lowly earthen vessel of mine? This is but the privilege of Your grace, O Blessed Three-in-One! Fill me¹⁵ and empower me¹⁶ each day with Your Spirit, that I may be constantly led by the Spirit¹⁷ and kept in step with the Spirit.¹⁸ Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:

- Pray for leaders:

- Pray for significant people:

- Pray for those in need:

- Pray for self:

⁹ John R. W. Stott, *The Letters of John*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (IVP, 1964, 1988), 118

¹⁰ William Barclay, 69

¹¹ William Barclay, 69

¹² John Stott, 119

¹³ Matthew 10:20

¹⁴ Romans 8:9

¹⁵ Ephesians 5:18

¹⁶ Ephesians 3:16

¹⁷ Romans 8:14

¹⁸ Galatians 5:25 (NIV)

May 7,
Wednesday
2014

Anointing for Abiding

SCRIPTURE

1 John 2:27; John 16:7, 12-15

The anointing Spirit is a present God has given us in Christ, and we received Him to be our possession. His presence is in us ("He abides in you", v. 27) for the purpose of teaching us God's Word ("His anointing teaches you", v. 27), and holds the promise of teaching us "all things" - "all that you need to know"¹⁹. But what is the anointing Spirit God has given us in Christ ultimately for? It is ultimately so that we can abide in Christ ("and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him", v. 27). Here we are to actively appropriate the anointing Spirit in us in learning God's Word through His enlightening and living it out through His enabling. Our role is to set aside time regularly for getting into the Scripture. Read the Word unhurriedly and carefully. Use the mind prayerfully and patiently to understand. Apply the truths concretely. John is calling his readers "to abide in the things which they have learned (1 Jn 2:24), for if they do, they will abide in Christ"²⁰.

OBSERVATION

What does Jesus say about the Holy Spirit and His followers in John 16:7, 12-15?

APPLICATION

How do the benefits of the Holy Spirit promised by Jesus in John 16:7, 12-15 affect my spiritual life?

PRAYER

Gracious God, thank You for the gift of the Holy Spirit that You have given me to be my teacher and guide in my learning of and living by the Word of God; so that I may remain in the Lord Jesus, following Him faithfully. So, Spirit of truth, alert me and correct me when I err in understanding God's Word. Restrain me and restore me when I stray away from the truth. Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:
- Pray for leaders:
- Pray for significant people:
- Pray for those in need:
- Pray for self:

¹⁹ I. Howard Marshall, *The Epistles of John*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Eerdmans, 1978), 163
²⁰ William Barclay, 69

May 8,
Thursday
2014

A Tale of Two Mothers: The God of Repair

SCRIPTURE

Genesis 21:1-13; Joel 1:4, 2:25-26

Genesis 21 is a tale of two mothers: Sarah (vv. 1-13) and Hagar (Ge 21:14-21). It was a time of divine favour (vv. 1-7) and an occasion of family festivity (v. 8), but also a moment of human failure (vv. 9-10). Sarah saw Ishmael, who was then 16, making fun of Isaac (v. 9, NLT). Ishmael was likely “just being a typical nasty older brother engaging in adolescent misbehaviour”²¹. But Sarah was filled with “antagonism and hostility”²², and demanded that Abraham drive out Hagar and Ishmael (v. 10a). Sarah appears to be an insecure and protective mother, viewing Ishmael as a threat to Isaac’s heirship (v. 10b). Her demand “distressed Abraham greatly” (v. 11). Abraham was forced to abandon his two precious loved ones and people were greatly hurt. But God personally took upon Himself the responsibility to repair the wrongs and the damages done, and was faithful in keeping His covenant promises concerning both Isaac and Ishmael (vv. 12-13; Ge 16:9, 10).

OBSERVATION

How does Joel 1:4 with 2:25-26 demonstrate that our God is a God of repair?

APPLICATION

What areas in my life do I want to commit to God to repair?

PRAYER

My Redeemer God, there is no mess in my life, as a result of my own mistakes or mistakes made by others, that can be too great before You to be beyond repair. You in Your omnipotence are able to repair. You in Your wisdom know how to do it. And You are willing to repair the broken parts of my life because You are gracious and merciful. Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:

- Pray for leaders:

- Pray for significant people:

- Pray for those in need:

- Pray for self:

²¹ D. Stuart Briscoe, *Genesis, The Preacher’s Commentary* (Nelson, 1987), 178

²² D. Stuart Briscoe, 178

May 9,
Friday
2014

A Tale of Two Mothers: The God of Despair

SCRIPTURE

Genesis 21:14-21

Hagar was dumped into despair. Now a single mother with only “some food and a leather bag full of water” (Ge 21:14, GNB) for her immediate survival, she faced an uncertain future. Dumped, but not doomed. God was the God of Hagar’s despair. Hagar had known God as “a God who sees” when she was previously abandoned (Ge 16:13), and now as the God who has heard (Ge 21:17). Her son’s name, “Ishmael”, means “God hears”. God faithfully sustained the helpless, but not hopeless, mother and son from the time they “wandered about in the wilderness” (v. 14) with Ishmael almost dying (v. 16) to Ishmael growing and living in the wilderness and eventually getting married (v. 20-21); from the water in the skin being used up (v. 15) to Hagar filling the skin with water from a miraculous well of water (v. 19). In our despair, we can hear God saying, “Do not fear, for I have heard your voice where you are” (v. 17b).

OBSERVATION

What are the particular divine acts toward Hagar in Genesis 21:12-21?

APPLICATION

How do the particular acts of God toward Hagar help me in knowing God?

PRAYER

Deliver me, O Lord, from the mire and do not let me sink.
Deliver me from my enemies and from the deep waters. May the flood of water not overflow me, nor the deep swallow me up, nor the pit shut its mouth on me.
Answer me, O Lord, for Your steadfast covenant love is good.
According to the greatness of Your compassion, turn to me.²³ Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:

- Pray for leaders:

- Pray for significant people:

- Pray for those in need:

- Pray for self:

²³ Psalm 69:14-16

May 10,
Saturday
2014

The Maternal Heart of God

SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 49:13-16; Luke 13:31-35

There will be moments in our discipleship journey when we feel the divine SAD – Silence, Absence, Distance – and say like God’s afflicted people exiled to Babylon (v. 13), “The Lord has forsaken me, and the Lord has forgotten me” (v. 14). God knows that such feelings are real, but we need to know that feelings are not fact. Behind the dark clouds, however dark they are, the sun is always there and still shining. The faithful covenant of God shows His maternal heart by highlighting a double impossibility. It is impossible for a compassionate mother to forget her child (v. 15a). “Her nursing child” and “the son of her womb” (v. 15a) underscores the intimate relationship. Even if the impossible becomes possible, it is still impossible for God to forget us (v. 15b). And our compassionate God gives us a triple assurance: “I will not forget you”, “I have engraved you on the palms of My hands” and “your walls in ruins are ever before Me” (vv. 15b-16).

OBSERVATION

How is Jesus’ maternal heart revealed toward God’s people represented by Jerusalem in Luke 13:31-35?

APPLICATION

How does knowing the maternal heart of God affect my relationship with God?

PRAYER

Father of mercies, I ponder upon Your heart in Your words to Your unfaithful people: “How can I give you up, Israel? How can I let you go? How can I destroy you like Admah or demolish you like Zeboiim? My heart is torn within Me, and My compassion overflows.”²⁴ I can rest assured and I thank You that You will never forsake me nor fail me.²⁵ Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:

- Pray for leaders:

- Pray for significant people:

- Pray for those in need:

- Pray for self:

²⁴ Hosea 11:8 (NLT)

²⁵ Deuteronomy 31:8

Sermon Notes

May 11,
Sunday
2014

Topic:

Scripture:

Main Points:

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Principles to Live by:

What are the biblical principles found in this passage?

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Practical Life Applications:

What is one thing that I will do in the coming week?

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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?

RESPONSE:

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

b. Journal your prayer.

MOTHER'S DAY

Loving our mothers as God's gift to the families.

Scripture - Proverbs 31:10-31

1. ACTIVITY BITE

Props: Pen, pieces of paper

With your child, list down all the things that his or her mother does from the morning to the time he or she goes to sleep. Next, imagine a world without mothers. Go down the list and tell each other who will be doing the things on the list.

2. CHAT TIME

Q1: What are the things your mother does that none of us can do or hate to do?

Q2: Who do you think she does all these things for and why would she do that?

Q3: From Proverbs 31, why do you think God wants us to honour our mothers?

3. LEARNING POINT

Proverbs 31 speaks of mothers who love God. They are definitely a gift from God to families. Too often we think they nag a lot and often stop us from having fun. But we need to know that mothers sacrifice a lot for their families because of their amazing love. God wants us to honour them and have a right attitude towards them. He wants us to love, forgive and pray for them too as they are not perfect. Celebrate with them in the coming Mother's Day.

4. ACTION POINT

Do up some cards or buy some flowers. Dress up nicely and start taking lots of photos together with your dad, sister or brother. Email or message your mom on the phone all the greetings and photos. Do all this to surprise her!

5. PRAYER POWER

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

God, I want to thank You for my mom. I am sorry for behaving badly towards her. Help me to love her always. Bless her and make her beautiful every day! In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

may two

family devotional week two

May 12,
Monday
2014

Children of God: Special

SCRIPTURE

1 John 3:1; Deuteronomy 7:6-11

"See how much the Father has loved us! His love is so great that we are called God's children" (v. 1, GNB). The manner of God's love: The Greek word *potapos* (literally meaning "what sort of, what kind of, what manner of") meant originally 'of what country'. It is as if the Father's love is so unearthly, so foreign to this world, that John wonders from what country it may have come."²⁶ The word "'always' implies astonishment"²⁷. It is a word that "expresses surprise in encountering something foreign, something we are not used to"²⁸. God's love is "in a different category from anything we have come across before"²⁹. The measure of God's love: A love that God "gives lavishly and freely to those who are utterly undeserving"³⁰. The meaning of God's love: being God's children means being loved by God the Father. 1 John 3:1 may be summarised as God saying to us more than anything else, "I love you. I am Your Father. You are My child." God is saying to you, "You are so, so special to Me!"

OBSERVATION

What does Deuteronomy 7:6-11 tell us about God in choosing Israel to be His people?

APPLICATION

What is it about God in Deuteronomy 7:6-11 that is of personal significance to me?

PRAYER

My loving Father, I have a fear when I think of Your love for me. I fear that when I think of how much You love me and how You have made me so special to Yourself, my Christian faith becomes me-centered. Lord Jesus, teach me through Your Spirit to be like You, how in being loved so much by Your Father, You have only one concern – to glorify Your Father. Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:

- Pray for leaders:

- Pray for significant people:

- Pray for those in need:

- Pray for self:

²⁶ John Stott, 122

²⁷ John Stott, 122 – citing Alfred Plummer

²⁸ David Jackman, *The Message of John's Letters*, The Bible Speaks Today (IVP, 1988), 81

²⁹ David Jackman, 81

³⁰ David Jackman, 81

May 13,
Tuesday
2014

Children of God: Selected

SCRIPTURE

Romans 8:14-16; Deuteronomy 7:6-11

We became God's children because God adopted us. When we became Christians, we "received the Spirit of adoption as sons" (v. 15, ESV) - "God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, prompting us to call out, 'Abba, Father'" (Gal 4:6, NLT). Adoption is an act of selection. In adopting us as His children "the choice lay entirely with the Father and was motivated only by His nature of love. Adoption is a legal action by which a person takes into his family a child who is not his own, who has no rights within that family, in order to give that child all the privileges of his own children. In Roman law, as in ours, an adopted child was entitled to all the rights and privileges of a natural-born child"³¹. In Christ, God has given His children all the rights and privileges of His Son. There "was nothing attractive or even deserving in us to draw out" this magnificent love of God, "but God chose to love us, because He is love"³². O, how the Father cherishes you, His child!

OBSERVATION

What does Deuteronomy 7:6-11 tell us about what it means to be a special people chosen by God?

APPLICATION

How am I to live my life as one chosen by God to be special to Him?

PRAYER

Who am I, O Eternal God,
that You chose me to be
adopted as Your child even
before creation? There is
absolutely nothing that I have
or I can do to deserve or merit
Your choice of me. It is purely
Your sovereign love, grace
and pleasure! Help me not to
take Your love and grace for
granted. Teach me to live my
life worthy of Your special
choice of me. Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:

- Pray for leaders:

- Pray for significant people:

- Pray for those in need:

- Pray for self:

³¹ David Jackman, 81-82

³² David Jackman, 82

May 14,
Wednesday
2014

Children of God: Status

SCRIPTURE

Philippians 2:5-7

Believers and followers of Jesus Christ are “called children of God” (1 Jn 3:1). This is their God-given status. Status is something that matters a lot in the world. Our status does determine the amount of importance, respect, admiration and applause the world gives to us. Consider two questions with a bifocal vision. *What status do we value?* Is it the positions and titles that we hold, or people and places we associate ourselves with? Or is it the only one status that really matters, that is of true value and is enduring because it is everlasting, that of a child of God? It has to do with whose we are – children of God. No status accorded to humans can be greater than that. *How do we view status?* The status of God is the greatest status. Yet, the Son of God, “although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself” (vv. 6-7). That’s how Jesus viewed even His status as God. And we are called to embrace the same mindset and attitude (v. 5).

OBSERVATION

What else can you observe about the divine mindset concerning status in Philippians 2:5-11?

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APPLICATION

How does the divine mindset concerning the status of Jesus challenge me in the area of status?

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PRAYER

Lord Jesus, You have shown by Your life, the life of God in human form, the downward path from the most highest heaven to the most humiliating cross, that it knows nothing of and cares nothing for any human acknowledgment, approval, acclaim, applause or adoration. It centres on and cares for only one thing – the glory of God! I want to follow You, Lord. Help me. Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:
- Pray for leaders:
- Pray for significant people:
- Pray for those in need:
- Pray for self:

May 15,
Thursday
2014

Children of God: Substance

SCRIPTURE

1 John 3:1; Matthew 5:43-48

Christians are “called children of God” because “that is what we are” (v. 1, NIV). We are called by the name “children of God” because it has become our nature – just like children who are born to their parents and are their flesh and blood. My first name follows my father’s because I am his child by birth. We are God’s children not just in status but fundamentally and essentially in substance. The Greek word *tekna* for “children” is derived from the verb *tekein*, which means “to beget” or “to give birth to”. The word *tekna* is “the allusion being to the divine nature we have received through being born of God rather than to our filial status”³³. This means we can be like God and we must be like Him. In the human realm, children cannot avoid being like their parents, and “likeness is the proof of the relationship”³⁴. This is equally true for God’s children. Growing into and glowing with God-like character should be our primary concern, conscious pursuit and conscientious practice.

OBSERVATION

What does Jesus teach about being “sons of your Father” in Matthew 5:43-48?

APPLICATION

In what ways do I want to grow more like my heavenly Father?

PRAYER

O my Love, I cannot love
Thee, but I must desire
above all things to be like my
Beloved. O give me grace to
tread in Thy steps and conform
me to Thy divine image, that
the more I grow like Thee, the
more I may love Thee, and the
more I may be loved by Thee
(Thomas Ken).

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:
- Pray for leaders:
- Pray for significant people:
- Pray for those in need:
- Pray for self:

³³ John Stott, 122

³⁴ David Jackman, 80



Children of God: Significance

SCRIPTURE

1 John 3:1; Hebrews 2:5-11

Being God's children, in substance and status and being special, gives us significance. God has given us this "privileged designation" "whatever other people may think or say"³⁵. The children of God and the world are "so different from each other"³⁶, that "the world does not know (or recognise) us" (v. 1). The world does not know our significance as God's children. The world has its own version and standard of significance defined by the physical, external and temporal. But do I know my significance in being a child of God? Do I recognise the significance of others as God's children? The world does not know "because it did not know Him (Christ³⁷)". Similarly, we do not know our significance as God's children because we do not know Christ. The worth of the Son of God is our worth as children of God. What do I think and say about myself? John calls us to take one key action to recognise our significance as God's children - "See!"(v. 1).

OBSERVATION

In what ways can Hebrews 2:5-11 help us see the significance of being children of God?

APPLICATION

How am I doing with regard to finding my significance in being a child of God?

PRAYER

Lord, my heart is inclined to be somebody in the world and fearful of being nobody. Help me to grasp this true and right perspective, that one can become somebody only when it is God who makes it so. But Lord, You who alone are the true somebody became nobody in the world, that through the cross, God has made me somebody in Christ – a child of God. Thank you, Lord. Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:
- Pray for leaders:
- Pray for significant people:
- Pray for those in need:
- Pray for self:

³⁵ John Stott, 123

³⁶ John Stott, 123

³⁷ John Stott, 123

May 17,
Saturday
2014

Children of God: See!

SCRIPTURE

1 John 3:1; Ephesians 2:4-7

"Behold!" "Look!" "See!" (v. 1). John wants us "to grasp how radically different from all other sorts of love God's love really is"³⁸. "The force" of "See!" is that "we need to take time to contemplate this love and allow its reality to sink down into the depths of our being. It is meant to take our breath away; to startle and amaze us so that we are left gasping, 'What sort of love is this?'"³⁹ What should we see? See the Lover. See the love. See the loved. But we can see the Lover and His love with greater appreciation and gratitude when we see ourselves who are the loved. "When we contemplate our sin and rebellion against the background of God's unapproachable light, His total holiness, we begin to sense something of John's wonder that God should ever bother with people like us. Yet the love of God delights to change rebels into children who belong to His family."⁴⁰ John calls us to "See!" (v. 1). Do you see?

OBSERVATION

What does Paul tell us about the love of God in Ephesians 2:4-7?

APPLICATION

How does the extent of God's love toward me affect my life?

PRAYER

Lord, let the flame of Your
love set on fire my whole
heart. May I wholly burn
towards You, wholly love
You, set aflame by You.
(St Augustine of Hippo)

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:
- Pray for leaders:
- Pray for significant people:
- Pray for those in need:
- Pray for self:

³⁸ David Jackman, 81

³⁹ David Jackman, 81

⁴⁰ David Jackman, 81

Sermon Notes



Topic:

Scripture:

Main Points:

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Principles to Live by:
What are the biblical principles found in this passage?

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Practical Life Applications:
What is one thing that I will do in the coming week?

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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?

RESPONSE:

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

b. Journal your prayer.

GOD'S WONDERFUL LOVE

God's love for us cannot be measured. It is greater and bigger than the whole universe!

Scripture - Ephesians 3:14-21; Romans 8:38-39

1. ACTIVITY BITE

Props: Pen, paper

On a piece of paper, fill in the blanks:

a. I love God because _____.

b. God loves me because _____.

Share with each other what was written.

2. CHAT TIME

Q1: Was there a time when you got into a quarrel with a friend and ended up not talking to him anymore? Why?

Q2: What does it mean when God says He loves us very much? Does it mean He will always give us anything we want?

Q3: From Romans 8:38-39, why is there nothing that can separate us from God?

3. LEARNING POINT

Our love is like a glass with water. Sometimes it is half full, other times, it is empty. There are times we can love a person so much but there are moments when we are so angry with the same person that we don't want to talk to him or her. But God's love is like a big ocean that can never run dry. We may find it hard to imagine but His love does not depend on how we can understand it. He loves us and that is it. His love is higher than the sky and deeper than any ocean.

4. ACTION POINT

Write a love letter to God, telling Him why you love Him. Keep the letter in a very safe place. You can watch this video of the song "Thank You for Loving Me" by Tommy Walker and praise God together: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WicvVsGozFO>.

5. PRAYER POWER

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

Dear God, thank You for loving me. Thank You that Your love is not like a glass of water that can go empty. Thank You that Your love is more than all the water in the ocean. I love You too. Amen.

may

family devotional week three

May 19,
Monday
2014

Discipleship Journey: Destiny

SCRIPTURE

1 John 3:2-3; Philippians 3:15-21

1 John 3:2 portrays a discipleship journey paradigm marked by three perspectives – the “now” (“now we are God’s children”), the “not yet” (“what we will be has not yet been revealed”, NRSV) and the “will be” (“we will be like Him”). The journey is about living in the “now”, waiting in the “not yet” and hoping on the “will be”. The discipleship journey begins with a focus on destiny – “we will be like Him”. I long for the day when I shall be like Jesus. I long to be like Him in my inner being, with a pure heart and holy character of Him. “Wretched man that I am!”⁴¹ How I long to be freed from my defeats in the inner conflict between the flesh and the Spirit!⁴² I long to be like Him in my outer body, to have “the body of His glory”⁴³. How I long to be freed from my ageing “decaying”⁴⁴ body, afflicted by sicknesses, ailments, weaknesses and infirmities. How I long to be freed from my groaning to His glory!⁴⁵ Come, Lord Jesus.⁴⁶

OBSERVATION

What is the destiny of the discipleship course that Paul talks about in Philippians 3:20-21?

APPLICATION

How should I live my life in my journey towards the destiny God has redeemed me to (Php 3:15-19)?

PRAYER

God of peace, make me holy in every way. Keep my whole spirit and soul and body to be blameless before You until the Lord Jesus Christ returns again. God, You will make this happen, because You who call me are faithful.⁴⁷ Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:

- Pray for leaders:

- Pray for significant people:

- Pray for those in need:

- Pray for self:

⁴¹ Romans 7:24

⁴² Galatians 5:16-17

⁴³ Philippians 3:21

⁴⁴ 2 Corinthians 4:16

⁴⁵ Romans 8:21-23

⁴⁶ Revelations 22:20

⁴⁷ 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

May 20,
Tuesday
2014

Discipleship Journey: Identity

SCRIPTURE

1 John 3:2-3; Matthew 11:25-30

Our God-given destiny defines our identity – “we are children of God” (v. 2). Our identity is more than who we are; it also encompasses whose we are. Our identity as God’s children is formed by what God is to us – God is our Father. “God is my Father”: What does this mean to me personally? The reality of “God is my Father” and its significance to me ought to be increasing in the dominant consciousness of my mind and heart. To have that, I must first know who my Father is and how He is a father to me; I can know only by finding out from the place He has revealed Himself – the Scriptures. For instance, if my heavenly Father cares enough to feed the birds, how much more will He care for me, His beloved child (Mt 6:26)? Reflect on God as your Father through Scripture. Be deliberate and conscious in relating with God as your Father. Address God as “My Father” (Mt 26:39) meaningfully to the person of God, being consciously present in His presence.

OBSERVATION

What does Jesus say about knowing the Father in Matthew 11:25-30?

APPLICATION

How can I know my Father?

PRAYER

O gentle and humble Lord,
I heed Your invitation to
come to You and take Your
yoke upon me and learn from
You, that You may reveal the
Father to me so that I may
know Him as my Father; for
no one truly knows the Father
except You, the Son, and
those whom You choose to
reveal Him to. For indeed, in
knowing my Father, I will find
rest in You.⁴⁸ Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:

- Pray for leaders:

- Pray for significant people:

- Pray for those in need:

- Pray for self:

⁴⁸ Matthew 11:25-30

May 21,
Wednesday
2014

Discipleship Journey: Purity

SCRIPTURE

1 John 3:2-3; Hebrews 12:9-13

Our destiny calls for purity (v. 3), and our identity is to be characterised by purity. Purity is “primarily ‘freedom from moral stain’ and so ‘that element in holy character which is wrought out by the discipline of temptation’”⁴⁹. Purification is a discipline of three steps forward, two steps back, strengthened by God’s Spirit and sustained by His grace on a daily basis. Purification is a process. When the late godly Doug Sparks spoke to the U.S. Navigators staff in 1975, he said, “If I sometimes come across rather strong about something, it’s not because I am trying to rebuke you, but probably because I sense that I need it so much. I wouldn’t dare to speak to you on this topic (“The Man of God”) if I was supposed to have attained something. I am in a very slow process. I’ve always talked about the process of becoming a man or woman of God, and all I can say is that the process in Doug Sparks’ life is very slow.”⁵⁰

OBSERVATION

How is the discipline for holiness described in Hebrews 12:9-13?

APPLICATION

What is God doing in my life to help me grow in holiness?

PRAYER

Almighty God, You have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in You. Grant us purity of heart and strength of purpose, that no selfish passion may hinder us from knowing Your will, and no weakness hinder us from doing it; but that in Your light we may see light and in Your service find our perfect freedom through Jesus Christ our Lord. (St Augustine of Hippo)

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:

- Pray for leaders:

- Pray for significant people:

- Pray for those in need:

- Pray for self:

⁴⁹ John Stott – citing Robert Law, 125

⁵⁰ Doug Sparks, *Starting Over* (Nav Media, 2013), 19-20

May 22,
Thursday
2014

Discipleship Journey: Eschatology

SCRIPTURE

1 John 3:2-3; 2 Peter 2:8-15

Eschatology⁵¹ is the doctrine of the last things – “the ultimate destiny both of the individual soul and the whole created order”⁵². Our destiny is eschatological – “when He appears, we will be like Him” (v. 2), which is our “hope” (v. 3). God’s people in the New Testament lived consciously and conscientiously as an eschatological people (1 Thessalonians and 1 Peter are two classic examples). Biblical eschatology is practical. Eschatology gives us an aim in life (“we will be like Him”, v. 2). It gives us assurance that the increasing evil, chaos and pain in this world (Mt 24:12) will definitely come to an end. It calls for actions like purifying ourselves in holy living. It calls for attitudes like waiting eagerly and loving His appearing (Ro 8:23; 2 Ti 4:8). And biblical eschatology is devotional. It is seeking and waiting for, not an event, but a person – Jesus, the object of our devotion. Come, Lord Jesus.⁵³

OBSERVATION

What does Peter say about the Second Coming of Christ in 2 Peter 3:8-15?

APPLICATION

How should I live in view of the “the coming day of God” (2 Pe 3:12)?

PRAYER

Lord, I look for the coming of the day of God, when the heavens and the earth will be destroyed. Help me to live for what lasts forever. I look for the new heavens and new earth, in which righteousness dwells. Help me to make every effort to be found living a peaceful life that is pure and blameless before You.⁵⁴ Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:
- Pray for leaders:
- Pray for significant people:
- Pray for those in need:
- Pray for self:

⁵¹ Eschatology” is from the Greek word *eschatos*, which means “last” or “final”.

⁵² F. L. Cross & E. A. Livingstone, editors, *Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford University, 1997; Hendrikson, 2007), 560

⁵³ Revelations 22:20

⁵⁴ 2 Peter 3:10-15



Discipleship Journey: Tenacity

SCRIPTURE

1 John 3:2-3; James 5:7-11

“What we will be has not yet been revealed” (v. 2, NRSV). The “not yet” implies waiting. The waiting can be waiting for the intermediate, for God to fulfill His particular purposes for particular individuals at particular times in particular ways on earth. The waiting can be waiting for the ultimate (“when He appears we will be like Him”, v. 2). The intermediate that we are waiting for is temporary and, therefore, secondary; but the ultimate is eternal, therefore, primary. Nonetheless, the intermediate does have eternal value, for they all contribute in one way or another to the ultimate – growing in Christlikeness. But waiting, be it for the intermediate or the ultimate, involves tenacity, patience and perseverance. God leads us to wait usually in trials and tribulations; thus the necessity as well as the nurturing of tenacity in us (“tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope”, Ro 5:3-4).

OBSERVATION

What does James teach about patience and the coming of the Lord in James 5:7-11?

APPLICATION

What does patience and the coming of the Lord mean to me personally?

PRAYER

God of love and light, help me when troubles come my way to consider them as a divine gift for the testing and training of my faith in You, to let my faith result in the ability to endure, and to make sure that my endurance carries me all the way without failing, so that I may be mature and complete, lacking nothing.⁵⁵ Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:

- Pray for leaders:

- Pray for significant people:

- Pray for those in need:

- Pray for self:

⁵⁵ James 1:2-4



Discipleship Journey: Certainty

SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 11:1, 8; 10:32-39

Tenacity is shaped and strengthened by certainty of our destiny (“we know”, 1 Jn 3:2). Faith is certainty (“faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see”, Heb 11:1, NIV). By faith Abraham obeyed God when He called him to leave his homeland for “a place which he was to receive for an inheritance” (v. 8). But Abraham left “not knowing where he was going” – that’s uncertainty. Faith in God is a paradox. Faith consists of both certainty and uncertainty; it is in fact certainty in uncertainty. We can be certain in our God. Faith is defined by the faithfulness of God. Take away God’s faithfulness and faith is meaningless and useless. We can be certain in our Guide – the Word of God. Abraham acted in obedience of faith according to what God spoke to him (“He called him”, v. 8). God’s Word is our only sure compass in life. “We have something more sure, the prophetic word” – the “prophecy of Scripture” which is the “lamp shining in a dark place” (2 Pe 1:19-20).

OBSERVATION

What characterises a life lived with the certainty of “He who is coming will come, and will not delay” according to Hebrews 10:32-39?

APPLICATION

What characteristics of a life lived with the certainty of Christ’s Second Coming are of relevance to me personally?

PRAYER

Forgive me, Lord, when I want proof for my faith and demand absolute certainty before I commit myself to You. Strengthen my trust in You so that I, who have not seen You, may still believe, and in believing may be blessed with the fullness of joy now and always. For You have said, “Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed.”⁵⁶ Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:

- Pray for leaders:

- Pray for significant people:

- Pray for those in need:

- Pray for self:

56 Adapted from Angela Ashwin (based on Jn 20:24-29), *The Book of a Thousand Prayers* (Zondervan, 1996, 2002), 116

Sermon Notes



Topic:

Scripture:

Main Points:

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Principles to Live by:
What are the biblical principles found in this passage?

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Practical Life Applications:
What is one thing that I will do in the coming week?

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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?

RESPONSE:

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

b. Journal your prayer.

JESUS WILL COME BACK

We need to be ready for Jesus when He comes again.

Scripture - Acts 1:1-11; Hebrews 9:28; 1 John 3:2-3

1. ACTIVITY BITE

Say to your children, "Imagine you will be going on a holiday to a very cold country. Name the things you will pack to prepare yourself for the trip."

2. CHAT TIME

Q1: Name one of the things you will pack. What will happen if you forget to bring it along?

Q2: What will happen to the trip if you are not really prepared in your packing?

Q3: Jesus wants us to be prepared to see Him when He comes back again. What is it that He wants us to be prepared in?

3. LEARNING POINT

1 John 3:2-3 says that a man will purify himself in preparation to see Jesus. This does not mean taking a good shower or wearing new and clean clothes. The verse is talking about the heart that needs to be pure. Being pure in heart means to be filled with love for one another. It is not pure when we have anger, wrong motives, bad thoughts about someone or show no respect to our parents. Jesus wants to see that we are growing towards having His character in us.

4. ACTION POINT

Choose to be kind to someone this coming week. Think of one kind thing you can do for someone. You can ask your parents for advice. When you have done so, tell your parents about it.

5. PRAYER POWER

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

Dear Jesus, I am excited that You are coming back but I want my heart to be pure when I see You. Help me to be kind and caring toward others. I want to please You in whatever I do. Amen.

may

family devotional week four

May 26,
Monday
2014

Taking a Hard Look at Sin

SCRIPTURE

1 John 3:4; Mark 7:14-23

Sin is a key idea in 1 John, which highlights the gravity of sin. In Greek, the word is repeated 27 times in the letter and is found in every chapter. John speaks about sin in 1 John 3:4-9 in very strong terms. He calls us to take a hard look at sin. "Sin is lawlessness" (v. 4) is "the clearest and most revealing"⁵⁷ definition of sin. "Lawlessness" is defined as "a defiant violation of God's moral law" - "essentially an active rebellion against God's known will"⁵⁸. Sin "is in its very nature lawlessness"; lawlessness is the essence of sin.⁵⁹ This is how God views sin, and we must view sin as God does. Therefore, we must refrain from considering certain sins as more serious or less serious than others; even though in reality, murdering someone by calling him an idiot has less serious effects and consequences than physically killing him (Mt 5:21-22). The "first step towards holy living is to recognize the true nature and wickedness of sin."⁶⁰

OBSERVATION

What is Jesus calling us to "listen to Him and understand" in Mark 7:14-23?

APPLICATION

How does the nature of sin, as Jesus points out in Mark 7:14-23, help me to look at sin?

PRAYER

Lord of my darkest place: let in Your light. Lord of my greatest fear: let in Your peace. Lord of my most bitter shame: let in Your word of grace. Lord of my oldest grudge: let in Your forgiveness. Lord of deepest anger: let it out. Lord of my loneliest moment: let in Your presence. Lord of my truest self - my all: let in Your wholeness.
(Alison Pepper)

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:
- Pray for leaders:
- Pray for significant people:
- Pray for those in need:
- Pray for self:

⁵⁷ John Stott, 126

⁵⁸ John Stott, 126

⁵⁹ John Stott, 126

⁶⁰ John Stott, 127

May 27,
Tuesday
2014

Taking a Heart Look at Sin

SCRIPTURE

1 John 3:4; 2 Chronicles 32:24-31

We need to take a heart look at sin in our lives. The most dangerous state of sin is “practising sin” (v. 4) – continual habitual sinning. Sinning has become a lifestyle. We give excuses for our sin. We rationalise and justify it, saying, “What’s wrong with that?” or “Other Christians are also doing that.” We have become complacent about sin. We cherish it; we delight and indulge in it. We become indifferent to sin with attitudes like “I don’t care”, “I am not interested”, “I don’t want to pay attention to sin” and “I don’t want to work on it.” Consider four ABCD self-examination questions: A) What is my attitude toward sin? B) What do I believe about sin? C) What is my conviction regarding sin? D) What do I do with sin? Psalm 1:1 warns against the subtle progression of walking to standing to sitting in sin. The safeguard against falling into continual habitual sinning is this: When we sin, we immediately say, “I will get up and go to my Father and say to Him, ‘I have sinned.’” (Lk 15:18).

OBSERVATION

What does 2 Chronicles 32:24-31 tell us about the heart of Hezekiah?

APPLICATION

What does the Scripture say about the heart of Hezekiah? How does it challenge me regarding my own heart?

PRAYER

O Lord, do not rebuke me
in Your anger or discipline
me in Your rage! Your
arrows have struck deep and
Your blows are crushing
me because of my sins. My
guilt overwhelms me; it is
a burden too heavy to bear.
But I hope in You, O God of
my salvation.⁶¹ Forgive me
my sins, for in Christ I have
redemption through His
blood, the forgiveness of my
trespasses.⁶² Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:

- Pray for leaders:

- Pray for significant people:

- Pray for those in need:

- Pray for self:

⁶¹ Psalm 38:1, 4, 15

⁶² Ephesians 1:7

May 28,
Wednesday
2014

Christians Must Be Sinless?

SCRIPTURE

1 John 3:6; Psalm 130

John seems to be saying that a Christian not only should not sin, but does not sin and cannot sin (1 Jn 3:6, 9). Is John, therefore, saying that Christians must be sinless? We need to look at this verse in relation to what John says about sin in the whole letter. Possibility of sinning: We cannot say “we have no sin” (1 Jn 1:8) or “we have not sinned” (1 Jn 1:10); to do so “we make Him a liar” (1 Jn 1:10). Pardon for sin: When we sin, we are to confess our sins and God will forgive and cleanse us of our sins (1 Jn 1:9). Perfect and sinless: “When He appears we will be like Him” (1 Jn 3:2). Process toward sinlessness: Until He appears and we become like Him, we purify ourselves (1 Jn 3:3). If John is teaching that a Christian must be sinless in 1 John 3:6, he is contradicting himself. In the light of all that John has said before, 1 John 3:6 refers to the potential for sinlessness which will be fully realised “when He appears”. And it is in this total theological reality that we pursue holiness.

OBSERVATION

What does Psalm 130 teach about sin?

APPLICATION

How should I live in the reality of sin according to Psalm 130?

PRAYER

From the depths of despair, O Lord, I call for help. Hear my cry, O Lord, pay attention to my prayer. If You, O Lord, kept a record of my sins, how could I survive? But I have hope in You; for with You is unfailing love and overflowing redemption. I thank You that You offer me forgiveness through the blood of Jesus, that I may learn to fear You.⁶³ Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:

- Pray for leaders:

- Pray for significant people:

- Pray for those in need:

- Pray for self:

⁶³ Adapted from Psalm 130:1-4, 7

May 29,
Thursday
2014

Voluntary and Involuntary Sins

SCRIPTURE

1 John 3:6; Nehemiah 9:26-31

1 John 3:6 says that if we see, know and abide in Christ, we do not sin. Since John cannot be talking about a sinless Christian, some have suggested that it means we do not sin voluntarily or willfully. "To the truly regenerate man, it is altogether impossible willingly and wilfully to do that which he knows to be forbidden by God", "knowingly and willingly to act contrary to the will of God."⁶⁴ But in response to this, "we have to ask whether a clear line can be drawn between voluntary and involuntary transgressions, and whether it is true that God's servants do not sin voluntarily"⁶⁵. There are "many examples of God's people in the Bible who have sinned knowingly and wilfully" (e.g., David in 2 Sa 11); and "Christian biographies would endorse this"⁶⁶. Jesus died on the cross for all sins, and His blood cleanses us from "all sin" and "all unrighteousness" (1 Jn 1:7, 9) - both voluntary and involuntary sins.

OBSERVATION

What does Nehemiah's confession of Israel's sins in Nehemiah 9:26-31 tell us about sin and God?

APPLICATION

What will I do should I fall into sin again and again?

PRAYER

Gracious and compassionate God, with soberness, reverence and gratitude, I ponder upon this. How You have borne with patience the persistent unfaithfulness and rebellion of Your people! How in judging them You did not make an end of them or forsake them!⁶⁷ But all this is possible because of the redemptive death of Your Son! Blessed be Your name. Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:
- Pray for leaders:
- Pray for significant people:
- Pray for those in need:
- Pray for self:

⁶⁴ John Stott - citing John H. A. Ebrard, 138

⁶⁵ John Stott, 139

⁶⁶ John Stott, 139

⁶⁷ Nehemiah 9:30-31

May 30,
Friday
2014

The "Him" Decisive Factor

SCRIPTURE

1 John 3:5-6; 2 Corinthians 5:14-21

The most important word in 1 John 3:5-6 is "Him" (repeated four times in Greek), which refers to Jesus Christ. "Him" is the decisive factor for us to make a decisive choice not to live in sin, but in holiness. What Christ is before us: He is holy, He is sinless (v. 5b). The unholy cannot walk with the Holy, because the Holy cannot walk with the unholy. Thus, we must be holy in order to walk with the Holy. What we are in Christ: Jesus appeared to remove our sins so that in Him we can be holy (v. 5a). On the cross, the Holy became unholy to make it possible for the unholy to walk with the Holy (2 Co 5:21). What Christ gives to us: He gives us His gracious gift of seeing, knowing and dwelling in Him (v. 6). In our holy relationship and fellowship with the holy Him, to live in sin is fundamentally incompatible and incongruent. How we live our lives should be determined by *from Him, in Him, with Him, through Him, for Him and to Him.*

OBSERVATION

How does Paul present a Christ-centered life in 2 Corinthians 5:14-21?

APPLICATION

How can I, in concrete ways, live a more Christ-centered life?

PRAYER

Lord, You died and were raised on my behalf for my salvation. I give myself to You day by day. I give myself to You with my mind and its thinking; with my hands and their working; with my eyes and their seeing; with my body and its actions; with my heart and its loving.⁶⁸ Lord, I give myself to You today.
Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:

- Pray for leaders:

- Pray for significant people:

- Pray for those in need:

- Pray for self:

⁶⁸ Adapted from David Adams, *The Edge of Glory: Prayers in the Celtic Tradition* (SPCK, 1985), 69

May 31,
Saturday
2014

Redemptive Holy Living

SCRIPTURE

1 John 3:4-6; Psalm 103:8-13, 17-18

1 John calls to our attention the gravity of sin. We cannot walk in the light and in darkness at the same time (1 Jn 1:5-6; 3:6). However, John balances up the gravity of sin with the grace for sin. As we walk in the light, we can be and must be attuned to the moments when we stray into darkness when the Light exposes them (1 Jn 1:7). But we must acknowledge and admit that we have sinned, and appropriate God's promised forgiveness and cleansing (1 Jn 1:8-10). And we can be assured of the faithful and righteous God's forgiveness "for His name's sake" (1 Jn 2:12). Not only that, we have Jesus, the Righteous One, as our Advocate before His righteous Father; His intercession on our behalf will always be accepted because He has atoned for our sins on the cross (1 Jn 2:1-2) – an act of divine love (1 Jn 4:10). In following Jesus, we must constantly keep in mind the gravity of sin and the grace for sin. Biblical discipleship is redemptive holy living.

OBSERVATION

What is walking in the fear of God like according to Psalm 103:8-13, 17-18?

APPLICATION

How does the portrait of redemptive holy living in Psalm 103:8-13, 17-18 encourage me in my walk with God?

PRAYER

Lord, may Your strength pilot me. May Your power preserve me. May Your wisdom instruct me. May Your hand protect me. May You direct me in Your way. May Your shield defend me. May Your hosts guard me against the snares of the evil one and the temptations of the world. Lord, be with me, above me, in me and before me.⁶⁹ Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:

- Pray for leaders:

- Pray for significant people:

- Pray for those in need:

- Pray for self:

⁶⁹ Adapted from a prayer of St Patrick (David Adams, *The Edge of Glory*, 85)

Missions Prayer

FOCUS OF THE MONTH

Indochina

PERSPECTIVE

1. There are 400,000 Christians in Thailand. Christianity has existed in the country for the past 200 years. The local church there hopes to have one million Christians in 2015.
2. Pastor Glen is the regional coordinator of Indochina. His role is to initiate Disciplemaking Church Plants (DCPs) in partnership with strategic national partners and strategic missions partners (local) and to advocate the Intentional Disciple-Making Church (IDMC) movement in Thailand.
3. Pastor Glen also has a heart to align local pastors and leaders to disciple-making roots and to mentor and nurture them towards intentional disciple-making.

POSTURE

"We are a generation who avoids pain at all costs. This is why there are so few intercessors. Most Christians operate on the shallowest level of prayer, but God wants to take us into the deep levels of intercessory prayer that only a few ever experience. Deep, prolonged intercession is painful. It involves staying before God when everyone else has gone away or sleeps (Lk 22:45). It involves experiencing brokenness with the Father over those who continually rebel against Him. How many of us will experience this kind of fervent intercession?" (Henry and Richard Blackaby).

PRAYER POINTERS

1. Pray for the local church in particular Streams of Blessings Church under Pastor Ohm that it will become a community of Grace, Growth and Godliness.
2. Pray for open doors in Laos, Myanmar, Nepal and Cambodia.
3. Pray for Pastor Glen that he will be able to identify the entry points in the lives of the key Thai Christian leaders and to minister to them. Local church pastors need to be spiritually awakened and have an encounter with the Lord in their personal walks.
4. Pray for Pastor Glen's wife, Bim, and their two sons, Philip and Matthew, as well as his parents who are in Australia. His father has advanced Alzheimer's and his mother is in a nursing home.

"For nothing will be impossible with God."

LUKE 1:37

Sermon Notes



Topic:

Scripture:

Main Points:

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Principles to Live by:

What are the biblical principles found in this passage?

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Practical Life Applications:

What is one thing that I will do in the coming week?

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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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RESPONSE:

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

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b. Journal your prayer.

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NOT SINNING ANYMORE!

If we love Jesus, we will choose not to sin anymore.

Scripture - 1 John 3:4-6

1. ACTIVITY BITE

Say to your kids, "If you want to do better in your studies (or piano skills, sports, etc), list down three things that you must cut down or stop doing, and three things you must start doing or do better."

2. CHAT TIME

Q1: Why must you cut down or stop doing the things you have listed down?

Q2: How can the things you choose to start doing help you?

Q3: Why must we choose to stop sinning when we say we love Jesus?

3. LEARNING POINT

1 John 3:6 tells us that if we keep on sinning, it shows that we don't love Jesus at all. How can we say we love pizza yet don't like to eat it? If we love pizza, we will crave for it. If we love Jesus, we will not do things that will not please Him and are against His ways. It is a choice we must make. If we say we love Jesus, we must choose not to sin anymore.

4. ACTION POINT

Think of one thing that you know is wrong in God's sight (like stealing, disobedience or being lazy). Tell yourself that you will choose not to do it again. Share with your parents what you will be doing so that they can help you.

5. PRAYER POWER

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

Dear God, there is one thing I choose not to do anymore, and that is

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Please help me. I want to love and please You in all that I do. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

june one

family devotional week one

June 2,
Monday
2014

Discipleship Fundamentals: Doctrine (1)

SCRIPTURE

1 John 3:7-9; Titus 2:1-10

1 John 3:7-9 presents five discipleship fundamentals: doctrine, conduct, nature, power and lordship. John exhorts his readers: "Make sure no one deceives you" (v. 7a) with regard to what false teachers teach and how they live, which reflect what they believe. Deception has three sources: the devil, people (1 Jn 2:26) and the self (1 Jn 1:8). We must be deliberate in guarding ourselves against deception ("make sure", v. 7a, NASB; literally, "let no one"). But to be deliberate, we must first be able to discern and distinguish what is true and false "by the infallible Word which God has already spoken in Scripture."¹ In other words, we must be sound in biblical doctrine ("nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine", 1 Ti 4:6). Spiritual maturity is marked by: "No longer to be children (immaturity), tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming" (Eph 4:13-14).

OBSERVATION

How does Paul relate doctrine to discipleship in Titus 2:1-10?

APPLICATION

What area(s) do I need to pay attention to concerning doctrine in my discipleship?

PRAYER

Lord, Head of the Church, You have called and created the Church of the living God to be the pillar and support of the truth.² I pray that the Church will be faithful in guarding this sacred trust with vigilance. Spirit of truth,³ empower and enable the Church to grow in theological and spiritual maturity, stable in the truth and sensitive to falsehood and half-truths. Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:

- Pray for leaders:

- Pray for significant people:

- Pray for those in need:

- Pray for self:

¹ David Jackman, *The Message of John's Letters*, The Bible Speaks Today (IVP, 1988), 92

² 1 Timothy 3:15

³ John 16:13

June 3,
Tuesday
2014

Discipleship Fundamentals: Doctrine (2)

SCRIPTURE

Genesis 3:1-7; 2 Timothy 3:14-17

When the serpent, the devil (Rev 20:2), tempted the first humans and caused humankind to fall into sin, the focus was on the Word of God. The first words the devil said to the woman were, "Has God said?" (v. 1). He was casting doubt in the woman's mind concerning God's Word to lure her into disbelief. When we are tempted in this way, possible responses would be "Yes, God has said" (in this case, it is true), "No, God has not said" or "Not sure". The devil's second attack on God's Word was, "You surely shall not die" (v. 4) - a blatant distortion of what God had said to Adam that should he eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, "you shall surely die" (Ge 2:17). This twofold attack of the devil on God's Word continues on until today. We need to be sound in understanding God's Word, steadfast in trusting God's Word and strong in living by God's Word.

OBSERVATION

What can you learn about the Word of God in 2 Timothy 3:14-17?

APPLICATION

How can I let the Word of God equip me to be a man/woman of God?

PRAYER

Help me, O Lord, to be devoted, diligent and disciplined in getting into Your Word. Spirit of truth, teach me and guide me into all truth.⁴ Give me understanding that I may grow in sound knowledge of the Scriptures. Guard my mind and my heart from every form of deception. I want to live not by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of God's mouth.⁵ Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:
- Pray for leaders:
- Pray for significant people:
- Pray for those in need:
- Pray for self:

⁴ John 14:26; 16:13

⁵ Matthew 4:4



Discipleship Fundamentals: Conduct

SCRIPTURE

1 John 3:7-10; Colossians 3:18 - 4:1

Doctrine must lead to conduct. Our behaviour is shaped by our beliefs. Thus, we need to pay as much attention to our beliefs as to our behaviour. This is well-illustrated in Ephesians 1 to 3 on beliefs and 4 to 6 on behaviour. However, it is possible that our behaviour is not in sync with our beliefs. Thus, the surest test of spiritual authenticity is conduct - "the one who practices righteousness is righteous" (v. 7) and "the one who practises sin is of the devil" (v. 8). To keep ourselves from sinning does not necessarily mean we are practising righteousness. Biblical conduct consists of both the negative and positive sides. Biblically, there are sins of commission (doing what is wrong) and sins of omission (failing to do what is right, Jas 4:17). "Being a Christian is less about cautiously avoiding sin than courageously and actively doing God's will" (Dietrich Bonhoeffer). To practise righteousness is to love (v. 10). "Love is righteousness in relationship with others."⁶

OBSERVATION

Where and how is Christian conduct practised according to Colossians 3:18 to 4:1?

APPLICATION

What area(s) in my life do I need to change to reflect Christian conduct?

PRAYER

Indeed, Lord, much of my life is lived at home, in my workplace, in my neighbourhood and in society, where You have called me and placed me to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. ⁷Help me to live my life worthy of You and Your calling, ⁸to be blameless, innocent and above approach in the midst of this crooked and perverse generation. ⁹Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:

- Pray for leaders:

- Pray for significant people:

- Pray for those in need:

- Pray for self:

⁶ David Jackman, 96

⁷ Matthew 5:13-16

⁸ Colossians 1:10; Ephesians 4:1

⁹ Philippians 2:15

June 5,
Thursday
2014

Discipleship Fundamentals: Nature

SCRIPTURE

1 John 3:7-9; Matthew 7:15-20

Conduct is formed out of nature (“the one who practises righteousness is righteous”, v. 7). It is not when a Christian practices righteousness that he becomes righteous, but rather, he is righteous in Christ (2 Co 5:21) therefore he practises righteousness. We are to be what we are. John further says that “no one who is born of God practises sin” (v. 9a). As a father’s seed is within his child, so, when a person is born of God, “the life of God is implanted within that life”¹⁰ (“God’s nature abides in him”, v. 9b, RSV). The “new birth involves such a radical change at the heart of our experience that, whereas sin used to come naturally to us, now it is unnatural to continue to sin.”¹¹ A man with a bad temper who becomes a Christian can no longer go on losing his temper without concern. He loses it from time to time, but he is always convicted of his sin and seeks God’s forgiveness. Gradually he begins to overcome it as he grows in the Lord.

OBSERVATION

What does Jesus teach about the nature of a person in Matthew 7:15-20?

APPLICATION

How does Jesus’ teaching about the nature of a person challenge me in my discipleship?

PRAYER

God my Father, I thank You that in Christ I have been born of the Spirit,¹² so that Your divine nature now abides in me.¹³ Strengthen me each day to live by the Spirit, to keep in step with the Spirit,¹⁴ so that I may grow and bear the fruits of the Spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.¹⁵ Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:
- Pray for leaders:
- Pray for significant people:
- Pray for those in need:
- Pray for self:

¹⁰ David Jackman, 95

¹¹ David Jackman, 95

¹² John 3:5

¹³ 1 John 3:9 (RSV)

¹⁴ Galatians 5:25

¹⁵ Galatians 5:22-23

June 6,
Friday
2014

Discipleship Fundamentals: Power

SCRIPTURE

1 John 3:7-9; 1 Peter 1:23-2:2

Someone once said, "It is not difficult to live the Christian life; it is impossible." To follow Jesus, we must think and live in terms of power – power that is beyond and above human. First, the fundamental spiritual disablement: "The Son of God appeared to destroy the works of the devil" (v. 8). The "works (plural) of the devil" target us in different ways: morally – enticement to sin; physically – infliction of suffering; and intellectually – seduction into error.¹⁶ When the devil's works are destroyed, it does not mean they are liquidated or annihilated, but rather that they are deprived of force, rendered inoperative and can be conquered and overcome.¹⁷ "His seed abides in him" (v. 9) refers to the vital spiritual enablement. It is "the life of God within" us "to expel and destroy the old habits and characteristics" of sin.¹⁸ It is also the "indwelling power" of God's Word (Jas 1:18; 1 Pe 1:23).¹⁹ The divine power is available in Christ; we have to appropriate it in Christ.

OBSERVATION

How should we appropriate the provision and power of God's Word in living our spiritual lives according to 1 Peter 1:23 to 2:2?

APPLICATION

What attitude and/or action do I need to adopt regarding the Word of God?

PRAYER

Lord, let Your Word, perfect and powerful, living and lasting forever, revive my soul, make me wise, give me insight for living and bring joy to my heart.²⁰ Help me not to let Your Word depart from my heart, but to eat and drink it with deep hunger and thirst on a daily basis, and to live by it through the power of Your Spirit dwelling in me. Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:
- Pray for leaders:
- Pray for significant people:
- Pray for those in need:
- Pray for self:

¹⁶ John R. W. Stott, *The Letters of John*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (IVP, 1964, 1988), 129

¹⁷ John Stott, 129

¹⁸ David Jackman, 95

¹⁹ William Barclay, *The Letters of John and Jude*, The Daily Study Bible (Theological Publications in India, 1976), 79

²⁰ Psalm 19:7-8

June 7,
Saturday
2014

Discipleship Fundamentals: Lordship

SCRIPTURE

1 John 3:7-9; Luke 22:28-34

We can appropriate God's power for discipleship only in our relationship with Christ, living under His lordship. We walk with the victorious Lord, who "appeared to take away sins" (1 Jn 3:5) and "appeared to destroy the works of the devil" (v. 8). Thus, in Christ, it is possible for us not to sin habitually. We walk with the righteous Lord. It is incompatible and incongruent for us to be in Christ and yet living in sin as a lifestyle. We are righteous in Christ, and so we "practise righteousness...just as He is righteous" (v. 7). We walk with the gracious Lord. Our discipleship is always one of three steps forward, two steps back. We do sin. But when we sin, "the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 Jn 1:7), and "we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense" (1 Jn 2:1-2). "While we are not to expect perfection on the one hand, neither are we to settle for a mediocre level of Christian experience on the other."²¹

OBSERVATION

What can you learn about discipleship from what Jesus says to Peter in Luke 22:28-34?

APPLICATION

How does what Jesus said to Peter encourage me in following the Lord?

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, You are Lord over everything, always and absolutely. You are Lord when You permit the enemy to sift me like wheat and defeat me. You are the Lord who knows ahead when I will fail and fall, even when I am at my level best in seeking to follow You. You are my Lord, who still holds my hand to lift me up that I may eat and drink at Your table once again. Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:

- Pray for leaders:

- Pray for significant people:

- Pray for those in need:

- Pray for self:

²¹David Jackman, 95

Sermon Notes



Topic:

Scripture:

Main Points:

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Principles to Live by:
What are the biblical principles found in this passage?

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Practical Life Applications:
What is one thing that I will do in the coming week?

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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?

RESPONSE:

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

b. Journal your prayer.

MORE OF GOD

Let our hearts desire more of God each day.

Scripture - Psalm 73:25; 84:10

1. ACTIVITY BITE

Props: Pen, small pieces of paper, one large sheet of paper, masking tape

Paste the large sheet of paper on the wall. Draw two columns. Write "Must go" on one side and "Ok not to go" on the other. Hand the small pieces of paper to your children and say, "On each piece of paper, write down one place that you long to visit (e.g. Disneyland) and are willing to give up everything just to go there. Once done, paste the pieces of paper on the appropriate columns."

2. CHAT TIME

Q1: Why do you long to go to these places?

Q2: Why does life still go on if you don't get to go?

Q3: If there is a place that is 10 times better and 10 times more fun than your choices, would you want to go there?

3. LEARNING POINT

Psalm 84:10 talks about another place that is far better than what you have written - it is the Temple of God. In the olden days, the Psalmist would give up anything just to be there. It refers to being in God's presence. Places on earth will last only for a short time while God's presence lasts forever. God's presence is not a place that we go to, but it is in our hearts. Only in God's presence will we find joy, satisfaction, peace for our worries, security and so much more - things that other places on earth can never give (or can give only for a short period). We can be there when we want to know Him, worship and read His Word.

4. ACTION POINT

Go back to the activity. Create another piece of paper and write "God's Presence" and paste it on the "must go" column. Reflect to see if we can move the papers on the "must go" column to the "ok not to go" column. This must be an individual response.

5. PRAYER POWER

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

God, I am sorry that I don't have much hunger for You or Your Word. There are other things in the world that have grabbed my heart's attention. Please help me to choose Your presence instead as the top priority. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.



Biblical Model of Successful Fathering

SCRIPTURE

2 Kings 21:19 - 22:2; Ephesians 6:1-4

How do we define successful fathering? We should define it in terms of true achievement - a fathering that produces godly children. Does the Scripture give us any model for successful fathering? Consider four models in Scripture. Godly father, godly son: David (1 Ki 2:1-3) and Solomon (1 Ki 3:3), though in the end Solomon "did not follow the Lord fully" (1 Ki 11:6). Ungodly father, ungodly son: Jehoram (2 Ki 8:16-18) and Ahaziah (2 Ki 8:25-27). Godly father, ungodly son: Hezekiah (2 Ki 18:1-3) and Manasseh (2 Ki 20:21 - 21:3). Ungodly father, godly son: Amon, son of Manasseh (vv. 19-20), and Josiah (vv. 1-2). What is the Scripture telling us? We parent our children in this theological reality: Sinful parents parenting sinful children in a sinful world. Even when we have done our level best, there is no guarantee that our children will become godly people. Parenting has to do with changing the human heart (we are impotent) and counting on divine grace (God is sovereign).

OBSERVATION

What do the commandments in Ephesians 6:1-4 imply about parenting in reality?

APPLICATION

What is my greatest challenge in parenting and how will I deal with it?

PRAYER

My Father, I am but a sinful person, albeit redeemed by You, who has been given this sacred trust of parenting children who are born in sin and living in an increasingly evil world. I don't have what it takes to parent them with some measure of success. My hope is in Your grace alone. Give me Your grace to be faithful and do Your work of grace in my children's hearts. Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:

- Pray for leaders:

- Pray for significant people:

- Pray for those in need:

- Pray for self:

June 10,
Tuesday
2014

Has God Failed as a Father?

SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 1:2-3; Mark 4:14-20

There is only one biblical model for successful fathering - God our heavenly Father, the perfect father. However, this model is not a model of how to father successfully. Rather, it is a model of fathering in reality by a perfect father. The people of Israel were God's sons whom He "reared and brought up" (v. 2). God parented them. The result? His children "revolted against" (v. 2) Him. The result was so pathetic that even the ox and donkey behaved better than God's children (v. 3) - and this was God's own evaluation. Later in Isaiah, God says, "What more was there to do for My vineyard that I have not done in it?" (Isa 5:4). Essentially, God did all that He could. Did God fail as a father? No. Rather, it was His children who failed. God understands the challenges of parenting, and He is with us in it. Parenting means changing the hearts of children, and much of it has to do with sowing seeds in their hearts and then watching how they grow.

OBSERVATION

What principles on sowing and growing in Mark 4:14-20 can be applied to parenting?

APPLICATION

What does God's parenting experience with Israel mean to me in parenting my children?

PRAYER

Gracious Father, it is comforting to know that I am not alone in this challenging sacred trust of parenting, for You are with me every step of the way. Give me wisdom to sow the seeds of love and truth in my children's hearts, as I keep entrusting their hearts to You through prayer, asking You to touch and transform them. Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:

- Pray for leaders:

- Pray for significant people:

- Pray for those in need:

- Pray for self:

June 11,
Wednesday
2014

Fathering with Limits

SCRIPTURE

Luke 15:11-24; 1 Corinthians 13:4

Through the parable of the prodigal son, Jesus reveals God the Father. When the younger son asks for his share of his father's estate before he dies, the father accedes to the request with no objection or question (v. 12). And when his son leaves home with his inherited wealth, he does not stop him (v. 13). Why such inactive responses? The Bible does not tell us. But it shows how God fathers His children with limits. There are times when we keep insisting on our wayward ways that God will let us go. But before that happens, most certainly He has been patiently speaking to us while we persist in not listening. Then, in God's wisdom, the best thing for Him to do is to let us go. But God waits patiently for our return to Him. We, too, parent our children with limits. We may have to let them go when they keep wanting their own ways, and there is nothing we can do except to pray and wait.

OBSERVATION

What is the significance of Paul's portrait of love in 1 Corinthians 13:4-13 beginning with "love is patient" (v. 4)?

APPLICATION

How should I apply "love is patient" in parenting my children?

PRAYER

God is love. Love is patient, for God is patient. O God, You love me with patience because I still fall into sin again and again. You forgive me with patience. With patience, You work in my heart to change it. At times, in loving wisdom, You let me go my way but only to wait patiently for my return and to receive me again. But help me, save me, change me, O God! Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:
- Pray for leaders:
- Pray for significant people:
- Pray for those in need:
- Pray for self:

June 12,
Thursday
2014

Fathering with Grace

SCRIPTURE

Luke 15:20-24; Micah 7:18-20

The father responds to his prodigal son's return with compassion (vv. 20-21) and celebration (vv. 22-24), which Jesus paints in eleven specific ways to show concretely the immensity of our Father's grace. "While he was still a long way off, his father saw him" (v. 20) - this implies the father had been waiting at the door every day. God sees us before we see Him. He "felt compassion" for him. He "ran" to him. God runs to us even before we see Him. He "embraced" and "kissed him many times"²². What lavishing love! He did not reply to his son's words, "I have sinned...I am no longer worthy to be called your son" (v. 21); instead, he "quickly" calls to prepare for a celebration (v. 22). Through his actions, he has spoken loudly and clearly to his son, "I have forgiven you!" The celebration consisted of "the best robe" for the son to wear, "a ring on his hand", "sandals on his feet" and "the fattened calf".

OBSERVATION

What are God's last words to His rebellious people through the prophet Micah (Mic 7:18-20)?

APPLICATION

What does the way God fathers me with grace mean to me personally?

PRAYER

Where is there another
pardoning God like You,
who pardons the guilt of Your
covenant people, overlooking
their sins? You will not stay
angry with Your people forever,
because You delight in showing
unfailing love and compassion.
You will trample my sins under
Your feet and throw them into
the deepest ocean,²³ because
Jesus is the atoning sacrifice for
my sins.²⁴ Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:

- Pray for leaders:

- Pray for significant people:

- Pray for those in need:

- Pray for self:

²² Leon Morris, *Luke*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (IVP, 1974, 1988), 260

²³ Micah 7:18-19

²⁴ 1 John 2:2



Responsibility in Reality

SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 6:1-4; Leviticus 10:1-3; Numbers 25:10-13

The "highest duty of Christian parents"²⁵ is to "nourish"²⁶ their children in "the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Eph 6:4b). It is "the nurture of the body, mind and soul" and "development by care and pains"²⁷. Parents "should care more for the loyalty of their children to Christ than anything else, more for this than for their health, their intellectual vigour and brilliance, their material prosperity, their social position, their exemption from great sorrows and great misfortunes"²⁸. God's commands for children to obey and honour their parents (vv. 1-2) and fathers not to "goad your children to resentment" (v. 4, REB), imply a reality of family life. Children and parents can fail each other, even when the whole family is redeemed in Christ. Our hope lies in "the Lord" (vv. 1, 4). We rely on and rest in Him to be our resource and refuge, to reign over, to redeem and to restore our imperfect family life.

OBSERVATION

What lesson(s) can we learn concerning parents and their children in the contrast between Nadab and Abihu (Lev 10:1-3) and Phinehas (Nu 25:10-13)?

APPLICATION

How should I, in parenting my children, fulfill my responsibility in reality?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, from whom all fatherhood and family derives its name,²⁹ despite our hopes and efforts, we fail and things go wrong in parenting our children. We bring to You the mistakes we have made, ourselves and our children, as well as everything that has gone wrong, and hold them before You, asking for Your healing love, grace and mercy. Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:

- Pray for leaders:

- Pray for significant people:

- Pray for those in need:

- Pray for self:

²⁵ Francis Foulkes, *Ephesians*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (IVP, 1989), 173

²⁶ "Nourish" - in Greek the word is the same word as in Ephesians 5:29.

²⁷ Francis Foulkes, 172

²⁸ Francis Foulkes - citing R. W. Dale, 173

²⁹ Ephesians 3:15

June 14,
Saturday
2014

A Tale of Two Fathers

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 7:9-11; Hebrews 12:4-11

Matthew 7:9-11 is a tale of two fathers – the perfect heavenly Father and the imperfect human father. Being a father helps me to know my Father. And we know Him through this perspective: “If you being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good gifts to those who ask Him!” (v. 11). Oftentimes, I go to my children while they are asleep and lovingly touch and care for them, and they don’t realise it. Upon reflection one day, I realised how much more my Father must have touched and cared for me in my life. And I did not know it! I am always ready to forgive my children no matter how rebellious or rude they are, no matter how much they hurt me. It reminds me – “Am I not also often like them?” It gives me assurance – “How much more is my Father ready to forgive me!” Being a father, I seek to make known my Father to my children. My children are always assured of my forgiveness, and I tell them, “I love you like this, because that’s how God loves me as my Father.”

OBSERVATION

How does the writer to the Hebrews compare the heavenly Father and earthly fathers in fathering their children (Heb 12:4-11)?

APPLICATION

How does God being my Father affect my parenting of my children?

PRAYER

My Father, You have redeemed me that I may be perfect as You are perfect;³⁰ not to be without sin, but to mature and be complete in the likeness of God. It is Your will that I live my life – be it at home, in church or in the world – in such a manner that God can be seen in a real way. Renew my mind and my inner being and transform my life.³¹ Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:

- Pray for leaders:

- Pray for significant people:

- Pray for those in need:

- Pray for self:

³⁰ Matthew 5:48

³¹ Romans 12:2; 2 Corinthians 4:16

Sermon Notes

June 15,
Sunday
2014

Topic:

Scripture:

Main Points:

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Principles to Live by:

What are the biblical principles found in this passage?

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Practical Life Applications:

What is one thing that I will do in the coming week?

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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?

RESPONSE:

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

b. Journal your prayer.

FATHER'S DAY

Fathers are given by God to be the spiritual leaders of families.

Scripture - Proverbs 14:26; Psalm 128:1-4

1. ACTIVITY BITE

Props: Pen, paper

Say to your children, "List down all the responsibilities you think a father has. I will also make a list and we will compare."

2. CHAT TIME

Q1: What do you think is the best thing a father can do for his children?

Q2: What do you think a father must do more or stop doing to be a better person?

Q3: Reading Psalm 128, why do you think it is very important for fathers to fear God?

3. LEARNING POINT

Fathers are given by God to be the heads of their households. A father must lead, provide, protect and teach his wife and children good values according to the Bible. It is not an easy task but God is always there to help him. In Psalm 128, we know that God will help and bless the fathers so that they can take care of their homes. As children, we must obey and respect our fathers so that God's blessing will also come to us.

4. ACTION POINT

Write a card with pictures, photos and a Bible verse for your father. Tell him one good thing that you have learnt from him, something that you will remember for life.

5. PRAYER POWER

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

Dear God, thank You for giving us our Daddy. He has taken good care of us. Please bless him and make him a better person every day. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

june
family devotional week three

June 16,
Monday
2014

Command to Love

SCRIPTURE

John 13:34-35; Romans 12:9-10

God commands His children that “we should love one another” (1 Jn 3:11) (“a new commandment I give to you that you love one another”, Jn 13:34a). The love is to be a reciprocal love, a mutual love; “you love one another” is repeated three times (vv. 34-35). It is very emphatic. One-sided love is incomplete love. It is difficult and painful in any kind of relationship. The more persistent a love is despite being unreciprocated, the more painful that love. We are expected to love because we have experienced Christ’s love (“even as I have loved you”, v. 34b). This is the starting point of love. We can only give what we have received from the Lord. We are expected to love because Jesus is the example of love (“even as I have loved you”). Our love exhibits the life of Christ: “By this all men will know that you are My disciples” (v. 35), who “walk in the same manner as He walked” (1 Jn 2:6). And it is not by loving the unsaved of the world, but by loving one another, the saved community of Jesus.

OBSERVATION

How should we practise love according to Romans 12:9-10?

APPLICATION

What is one area of loving others that I need to work on?

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, make us, Your Church, into the people You want us to be, and forgive us where we fall short. Teach us to be gracious in judgment, unsparing in forgiveness, bold in commitment, sensitive in listening, selfless in serving and generous in giving. And where we find no love, let us bring love and make us more like You.
Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:
- Pray for leaders:
- Pray for significant people:
- Pray for those in need:
- Pray for self:

June 17,
Tuesday
2014

Centrality of Love

SCRIPTURE

1 Corinthians 13:1-3; Ephesians 4:31 - 5:2

In 1 John, love takes a central place simply because God is love (1 Jn 4:8, 16). The New Testament lays great stress on love as “the pre-eminent virtue”³²: love is the first fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22), the reality of faith (Gal 5:6) and the pinnacle of spiritual maturity (2 Pe 1:5-7). It is possible to be very gifted and “know all mysteries and all knowledge” yet be without love (vv. 1-2a). It is possible to attempt great things for God and expect great things from Him like having “all faith so as to move mountains”, “give all my possessions to feed the poor” and “surrender my body to be burned” in martyrdom, but do these without love (vv. 2b-3). Paul is not being hypothetical here. He is underscoring that it can happen like this, although it appears rather strange or incongruent to be true. But this is what God’s Word is telling us. To God, just serving someone a cup of cold water with love (Mt 10:42) is greater than these “great” Christian endeavours done without love.

OBSERVATION

How does Paul show the preeminence of love in Ephesians 4:31 to 5:2?

APPLICATION

How preeminent is love in my life in the context of Ephesians 4:31 to 5:2?

PRAYER

Lord, You have taught us that all our doings without love are worth nothing. Send Your Holy Spirit and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of love, the true bond of peace and of all virtues, without which whoever lives is counted dead before You. Grant this for the sake of Your only Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.³³ Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:

- Pray for leaders:

- Pray for significant people:

- Pray for those in need:

- Pray for self:

³² John Stott, 98

³³ *The Alternative Service Book* 1980

June 18,
Wednesday
2014

Challenge of Love

SCRIPTURE

1 John 3:12-13; Romans 12:17-21

The hatred of Cain (v. 12) is “the prototype of the world”³⁴ – a world that hates God’s people (v. 13) and behind which is the evil one. Let the world hate; we do not hate, but love. We love the world even when the world hates us. Jesus teaches His disciples how to live in such an anti-God world: “Love your enemies! Do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who hurt you” (Lk 6:27-28). This is the challenge of love. Praying for our enemies – not just for their salvation, but their wellbeing – is not meant to be just an act of Christian piety, just to show that Christians are different. Praying in this way presupposes that God will answer the prayer, otherwise, God is making a mockery of Himself. And God does not have to answer the prayer with either us or our enemies knowing. God answers simply because He loves His enemies, just as we pray for our enemies simply because we love them.

OBSERVATION

How should we relate to our enemies according to Romans 12:17-21?

APPLICATION

How does the teaching in Romans 12:17-21 challenge me in living in a world hostile to the Christian faith?

PRAYER

God of all grace, have mercy on those who bear me ill will and will hurt or harm me, and forgive their faults and mine together, by such easy, tender, merciful means as Your infinite wisdom can best devise. Amend and redress and make us saved souls in heaven together, where we may ever live and love together with You and Your blessed saints.³⁵ Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:

- Pray for leaders:

- Pray for significant people:

- Pray for those in need:

- Pray for self:

³⁴ John Stott, 143

³⁵ Adapted from a prayer of St Thomas More

June 19,
Thursday
2014

Capacity to Love

SCRIPTURE

1 John 3:14-15; 1 Peter 1:22-23

For John, love and life are an inseparably interconnected reality. Love is the evidence that we have life – “brotherly love is an indispensable mark of genuine Christianity”³⁶. Life enables us to love. Our capacity to love is the result of having “passed out of death into life” (v. 14), which is a twofold divine redemptive accomplishment. First, “we have passed out of death” and the result is we can be freed from hatred (“he who does not love [that is, to hate] abides in death”, v. 14). And we have passed out of death “into life” – eternal life that is knowing God and having a relationship with God (Jn 17:3). God is the only source of love. We “do not have to look into our poverty-stricken selves to generate”³⁷ love. In relating with the God of love, we receive His love and release His love. But we cannot love when we reject God’s love. The capacity to love is in us but we must choose to love.

OBSERVATION

What does Peter say about a Christian’s capacity to love in 1 Peter 1:22-23?

APPLICATION

What difficulties do I face in loving people?

PRAYER

Lord, pick me up and put me together again. Sometimes things become unbearable and being with certain difficult people brings out the worst in me. Help me. Forgive me my resentment and sharp reactions. Free me from the endless churning arguments in my mind. Stay at my centre, Lord, where I am known by You and not condemned.³⁸ Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:

- Pray for leaders:

- Pray for significant people:

- Pray for those in need:

- Pray for self:

³⁶ David Jackman, 97

³⁷ David Jackman, 101

³⁸ Adapted from Angela Ashwin, *The Book of A Thousand Prayers* (Zondervan, 1996, 2002), 154

June 20,
Friday
2014

Character of Love

SCRIPTURE

1 John 3:15-16; 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

John shows the stark contrast between hatred that manifests itself in slaying another life (v. 15) and love that sacrifices one's own life (v. 16). "Jesus Christ laid down His life for us" and this "demonstrates God's definition of love".³⁹ Love does not destroy another life, whether in thought, attitude or deed, "whether physical life or reputation or character"⁴⁰. Love "gives its own life so that another may live"⁴¹. It is "the nature of God's love to give, just as it is the nature of the sun to shine."⁴² Love is fundamentally characterised by giving. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son" (Jn 3:16). "Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her" (Eph 5:25). God also loves us individually ("the Son of God loved me and gave Himself up for me", Gal 2:20). Consider what it means "to walk in the same manner as He walked" (1 Jn 2:6). Jesus' call for us is: "Follow Me to love."

OBSERVATION

How does Paul describe love in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7?

APPLICATION

What characteristics of love are found wanting in my life?

PRAYER

God who is love, help me to love and care for those I find hard to like. Teach me to understand and befriend all who have been so hurt by life that they can only express themselves in hurtful ways. Through Jesus Christ my Lord, whose healing power brings wholeness of life to all who come to Him.⁴³ Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:
- Pray for leaders:
- Pray for significant people:
- Pray for those in need:
- Pray for self:

³⁹ David Jackman, 100

⁴⁰ David Jackman, 100

⁴¹ David Jackman, 100

⁴² David Jackman, 100

⁴³ Adapted from a prayer of Rachel Stowe

June 21,
Saturday
2014

Commitment to Love

SCRIPTURE

1 John 3:16; John 13:1-17

Love is “not primarily an emotion, but an act of the will”⁴⁴. Love “as a feeling only is useless”⁴⁵. For instance, “no marriage can survive on feelings”⁴⁶. We are to love like Christ loved (1 Jn 3:16). It is a love that “gives without counting the cost, without any thought of return, without first weighing up whether or not such love is deserved – a love that is entirely without self-interest”⁴⁷. Love “governs the stewardship”⁴⁸ of our time, our money, our talents, our energy and our possessions. Christ’s love is a servant love. Serving is giving. Love is a commitment to give. We do not give only when others have given to us. We do not give hoping or expecting others to reciprocate. We do not seek for others to give to us. It does not matter to us when no one gives to us. This kind of love is “superhuman. It does not grow naturally in this world’s soil. It is the gift of God.”⁴⁹ God has given His children this gift.

OBSERVATION

What do you observe by Jesus’ demonstration of His love in John 13:1-17?

APPLICATION

What are some practical ways in which I want to love like Jesus?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, help me to be a peacemaker, for I am Your child; more ready to call people friends than enemies, more ready to trust than to mistrust, more ready to love than to hate, more ready to respect than to despise, more ready to serve than to be served, more ready to absorb evil than to pass it on. Help me to be more like Your Son.⁵⁰ Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:

- Pray for leaders:

- Pray for significant people:

- Pray for those in need:

- Pray for self:

⁴⁴ David Jackman, 96

⁴⁵ David Jackman, 96

⁴⁶ David Jackman, 96

⁴⁷ David Jackman, 100

⁴⁸ David Jackman, 101

⁴⁹ David Jackman, 96

⁵⁰ Adapted from *The Mother’s Union Anthology of Public Prayers*

Sermon Notes



Topic:

Scripture:

Main Points:

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Principles to Live by:

What are the biblical principles found in this passage?

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Practical Life Applications:

What is one thing that I will do in the coming week?

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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?

RESPONSE:

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

b. Journal your prayer.

GOING THE SECOND MILE

Doing more good than what is expected.

Scripture - Matthew 5:38-48; 1 John 3:10-16

1. ACTIVITY BITE

Props: Pictures of superheroes

Say to your children, "Let's outdo each other. I will say one good thing that I will do for you. Then you will tell me one good thing you will do for me, but it has to be better than what I have just said. The next person will then say an even better thing to do."

2. CHAT TIME

Q1: What does it mean to be fair?

Q2: Imagine someone gives you a sweet. How would you feel if I asked you to give back two sweets in return?

Q3: Jesus showed His great love by dying for us. Why do you think God wants us to show love beyond what is expected?

3. LEARNING POINT

In 1 John 3:10-16, we know that Jesus showed His love by going to the extent of dying for us. Not that He wants us to die to show love for others, but He is teaching us to love without being calculative. This is how we can be calculative when we say, "If you love me this much, I will also love you this much only." God's way is that we love others without asking for anything in return, and to do more than what is expected. This will bring honour to God's name.

4. ACTION POINT

Think of one good thing that you have been doing regularly for your family or friends. What more can you do? Trying doing it in the coming few days.

5. PRAYER POWER

Dear Jesus, thank You for loving me even though at times I am not nice to others. Please help me to change my behaviour to become better and to be able to do more good to others than what others do for me. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

June 23,
Monday
2014

Pass It On: The Will of God

SCRIPTURE

Psalm 78:1-8; Genesis 18:17-19

Psalm 78 is about transmission of spiritual heritage, that “which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us...tell to the generation to come” (vv. 3-4). It is the will of God for spiritual heritage to be passed on from generation to generation, for “He commanded our ancestors to teach them” (v. 5, NLT). Such spiritual transmission is to take place in the family and in the church. The starting point of such spiritual transmission is not the next generation but the now generation – the transmitters. To start with, the now generation should ask itself: “It is God’s will for me to pass on my spiritual heritage. Has it become my conviction? Do I want to do it?” Having the conviction, God calls us to have a vision, to look and live our lives beyond our lifetime toward “even the children not yet born” (v. 6, NLT). It is a vision of spiritual multiplication. And there must be intentionality (“we will not conceal them from their children, but tell”, v. 4). What is my spiritual heritage that I want to pass on?

OBSERVATION

What does God say about Abraham in Genesis 18:17-19?

APPLICATION

Where am I now with regard to spiritual transmission to the next generation?

PRAYER

Eternal God, You have given me this one life that I should live it not just for myself, but for You.⁵¹ You have redeemed and designed this one life to be lived for something larger than itself and longer than its lifespan. It is a seed that was never meant to remain a seed, but to die so that it bears much fruit.⁵² I want to live in such a way that when I am dead, I still speak.⁵³ Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:

- Pray for leaders:

- Pray for significant people:

- Pray for those in need:

- Pray for self:

⁵¹ Romans 14:7-8

⁵² John 12:24

⁵³ Hebrews 11:4

June 24,
Tuesday
2014

Pass It On: The Word of God

SCRIPTURE

Psalm 78:1-8; Deuteronomy 6:4-9

What is my spiritual heritage that I want to pass on? First and foremost is the Word of God. "Listen to my instructions, give ear to what I am saying" (v. 1). The psalmist is calling God's people to pay attention to his teaching. His call indicates that he is teaching with credibility and authority. So must we be when we teach God's Word to the next generation. To teach God's Word with credibility and authority requires a study-practice-teach lifestyle like Ezra who "set his heart to study the law of the Lord and to practice it and to teach" (Ezr 7:10). Our teaching ought to be a growing-teaching - we grow in order to teach and we grow as we teach. None of us have arrived (Php 3:12), and we never will. We are always in the process, and a progressing process at that. This is teaching in reality with authenticity. Through God's Word, we will teach the next generation confidence in God, gratitude to God and faithfulness to God (v. 7).

OBSERVATION

What does God say about transmitting His Word to future generations in Deuteronomy 6:4-9?

APPLICATION

What should I do to go about transmitting God's Word to the next generation?

PRAYER

Grant me, O God, such desire for and delight in Your living Word that I will consider it more valuable to me than millions in gold and silver.⁵⁴ That I may devote my heart to get into Your Word. Teach me and give me understanding that I may grow in the wisdom of God. Empower me to live by Your Word. Give me the passion to pass it on from the inside out. Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:
- Pray for leaders:
- Pray for significant people:
- Pray for those in need:
- Pray for self:

⁵⁴Psalm 119:72 (NLT)

June 25,
Wednesday
2014

Pass It On: The Works of God

SCRIPTURE

Psalm 78:4; Psalm 44:1-8

What is my spiritual heritage that I want to pass on? The works of God (“tell to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and His power and His wondrous works”, v. 4). How do you view your life? Do you view it as God writing the story of your life, formed by and filled with the “wondrous works” of God? In spiritual transmission to the next generation, tell the stories of your life and show them the places where God was and is in your life. Your God-written stories reveal who God is against what He has revealed of Himself in the Scripture. God becomes real in concrete, down-to-earth ways in your life. And God can be seen not as an idea, but a real person you are relating with in the everyday of your life. Tell the stories of other lives, of people who lived in the past or are living in the present, people whom you know personally or at a distance. In this way, God is seen as real in a universal dimension.

OBSERVATION

What effects did the psalmist's ancestors' experience of God have on him (Ps 44:1-8)?

APPLICATION

What story has God written in my life that I would like to pass on?

PRAYER

God, my Creator and my Father, I give thanks to You that I am fearfully and wonderfully made by You.⁵⁵ And with wisdom, love and grace, You are writing a unique story of my life according to Your purpose and plan. Help me, on my part, to walk with You faithfully as You write my story. My story is for Your glory! Let it be so, O God! Let it be so! Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:

- Pray for leaders:

- Pray for significant people:

- Pray for those in need:

- Pray for self:

⁵⁵ Psalm 139:14

June 26,
Thursday
2014

Pass It On: Our Walk with God

SCRIPTURE

Psalm 78:8; 2 Timothy 3:10-11

What is my spiritual heritage that I want to pass on? My walk with God. In his spiritual transmission, the psalmist gives a very solemn warning from God: "Not be like their fathers" (v. 8). The simple principle is: Let my walk with God be a godly example, not a bad one. If a picture speaks more than a thousand words, so does a life. At the heart of transmission of spiritual heritage is a life-to-life transmission. The next generation watch how we live. Then, they catch it. In learning, things are often more caught than taught. Then, they are challenged and convicted to match it. Pastor Chua Chung Kai once said this concerning the curriculum for mentoring: "Your life is the curriculum." "We teach who we are."⁵⁶ Walk with God according to His Word, that His wondrous works may be demonstrated in your life. Central in your walk with God is the "heart"⁵⁷ - to be "steadfast" and "faithful to God" (v. 8, ESV).

OBSERVATION

How was Timothy's life impacted and influenced by Paul's life (2 Ti 3:10-11)?

APPLICATION

How do I want my life to impact and influence others?

PRAYER

My God, I pray that I may know You and love You that I may rejoice in You. And if I may not do so fully in this life, let me go steadily on to the day when I come to the fullness of life. Meanwhile let my mind meditate on Your eternal goodness, let my heart live it, let my mouth speak it, let my soul hunger for it, and my whole being desire it until I enter into Your joy.
(St Anselm)

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:

- Pray for leaders:

- Pray for significant people:

- Pray for those in need:

- Pray for self:

⁵⁶ Parker J. Palmer, *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life* (Jossey-Bass, 1998, 2007), 1
⁵⁷ Psalm 78:8: "Heart" parallels "spirit" - "whose heart was not steadfast" mirrors "whose spirit was not faithful to God" (ESV)



"What's That Burning in Your Heart?"

SCRIPTURE

2 Chronicles 24:1-5, 17-19; 2 Timothy 4:5-8

Joash became king of Judah when he was seven (v. 1). He "did what was right in the sight of the Lord" but only during "all the days of Jehoida the priest" (v. 2). Jehoida was the kingmaker⁵⁸ and mentor to Joash. His spiritual influence was immense. After the temple was repaired and worship restored, sacrifices were offered to God "continually all the days of Jehoida" (2 Ch 24:14). "But after the death of Jehoida" things changed for the worse (v. 17). Joash listened to ungodly counsel, led his people to idolatry and rejected God's Word spoken through the prophets (vv. 18-19). He died under God's judgment (2 Ch 24:24-25). Once I ran a youth camp with the theme "Dynamic Discipleship". Hearts were stirred up through the messages. My response was: "What's that burning in your heart? Is it coal or paper?" Is it a lasting conviction or a momentary emotion? The test of time will tell.

OBSERVATION

What can you learn from Paul and Timothy about finishing well in the discipleship course (2 Ti 4:5-8)?

APPLICATION

What challenges me about finishing well in my own discipleship course?

PRAYER

It is a comfort, Lord, to know that You did not entrust the fulfillment of Your will to one so pitiable as me. I would have to be very good if the accomplishment of Your will were in my hands. Although my will is still self-centered, I give it, Lord, freely to You.
(St Teresa of Avila)

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:
- Pray for leaders:
- Pray for significant people:
- Pray for those in need:
- Pray for self:

⁵⁸ 2 Chronicles 22:10 - 23:21

June 28,
Saturday
2014

"I Will Build My Church"

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 16:18; 1 Corinthians 3:1-9

When we seek to build the next generation, we are talking about the future of the church. Most fundamental and foundational to the future of the church is the commitment of Jesus: "I will build My church" (Mt 16:18a). Who builds the church? Jesus. Whose church is it? Jesus'. And Jesus "WILL" build His church. And Jesus has promised that "the gates of Hades (death) will not overpower it" (v. 18b) - His church will never die! How did the New Testament church end (Rev 2-3)? It ended with the need for revival. This has been a frequent challenge to building the church throughout its much checkered history. But the church has not died. There has always been a next generation through which Jesus continues to build His church. Any generation that has a preceding generation is the next generation. Every generation was at one time a next generation. We commit ourselves to passing on our spiritual heritage to the next generation with certainty and confidence as we stand on "I will build My church".

OBSERVATION

What are the dynamics of spiritual growth like according to 1 Corinthians 3:1-9?

APPLICATION

What is my understanding of spiritual growth in the lives of others?

PRAYER

Lord, fill Your Church with all truth, in all truth with all love and peace. Where it is corrupt, purge it; where it is in error, direct it; where it is superstitious, rectify it; where anything is amiss, reform it; where it is right, strengthen and confirm it; where it is in want, furnish it; where it is divided and rent asunder, make up the breaches thereof.⁵⁹ Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:

- Pray for leaders:

- Pray for significant people:

- Pray for those in need:

- Pray for self:

⁵⁹ Adapted from A Prayer of Archbishop Laud for the Church, William Barclay, A Barclay Prayer Book (SCM Press, 1990, 2003), 320

Sermon Notes

June 29,
Sunday
2014

Topic:

Scripture:

Main Points:

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Principles to Live by:

What are the biblical principles found in this passage?

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Practical Life Applications:

What is one thing that I will do in the coming week?

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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?

RESPONSE:

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

b. Journal your prayer.

JUNIOR POWER!

God can use young children and youths to do His good works on earth.

Scripture - Matthew 19:14; Ephesians 2:10

1. ACTIVITY BITE

Say to your kids, "List down all the children or young people in the Bible that God uses to do His work. Briefly share how God uses them to do great works."

2. CHAT TIME

Q1: Why is it that many adults seldom believe that children can do many good works?

Q2: Why did God choose to use little children or young people to do His work?

Q3: How do you think God can use you to do His work on earth now? Maybe you can start thinking about your abilities and things you are able to do.

3. LEARNING POINT

The Bible has many stories about children and young people that God uses to do His great work. It helps us know that God can do anything with anyone He chooses, so that men cannot boast about what they do with their own strength. God loves the little children not only because they are cute, but He believes that children and young people can bring His love to the world. Trust in God for His plan for your life.

4. ACTION POINT

Believe that God can use you to do good works. It can be as simple as being kind to your school friends. If you are still wondering how God can use you, pray to Him and He will show you.

5. PRAYER POWER

Dear God, thank You for choosing me to do Your good works. I want to let others know that You love them by the good works I am doing. Please help me to shine for You everyday. In Jesus' I pray, Amen.

June 30,
Monday
2014

"I Have Hope!"

SCRIPTURE

Lamentations 3:19-26

Lamentations is filled with the theological emotion of the exiles in Babylon expressed in theological reflection. Each of the five poems begins with a dark depressive mood. "How lonely sits the city that was full of people!" (La 1:1). "How the Lord has covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in His anger!" (La 2:1). "I am a man who has seen affliction because of the rod of His wrath" (La 3:1). "How dark the gold has become!" (La 4:1). "Remember, O Lord, what has befallen us. Look, and see how we have been disgraced!" (La 5:1). The darkness would last for a long 70 years (Jer 25:11). Yet every morning of those dark days when the exiles woke up, without fail the first light greeted them with newness. It is the steadfast covenant love of Israel's covenant God that never ceases, and His compassions that never fail are "new every morning" (vv. 22-23a). And this daily newness declares "Great is Thy faithfulness!" (v. 23b). Thus, however dark the darkness, the exiles could still say, "I have hope!" (v. 21).

OBSERVATION

How else did the exiles in Babylon express their hope in Lamentations 3:19-26?

APPLICATION

How can I also say "I have hope" in the dark journey that I am going through?

PRAYER

O Covenant Lord, You are my portion, therefore I have hope in You. You are good to those who seek You and wait silently for You and Your salvation.⁶⁰ You do not reject or abandon Your own forever.

Though You bring grief, You also show compassion because of the greatness of Your unfailing steadfast covenant love.⁶¹ Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:

- Pray for leaders:

- Pray for significant people:

- Pray for those in need:

- Pray for self:

⁶⁰ Lamentations 3:24-26

⁶¹ Lamentations 3:31-32

Missions Prayer

FOCUS OF THE MONTH

East Timor and The Next Generation Missions

PERSPECTIVES

Timor-Leste suffered over 450 years of oppressive rule from various nations, but gained independence in 2002. The poorest nation in Asia, the people have started to rebuild the economy and infrastructure. Progress is slow and the needs are great. The greatest need is Jesus. The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Local believers are passionate and willing to grow. We must pray and train them to build a strong and vibrant spiritual community and Biblical foundation!

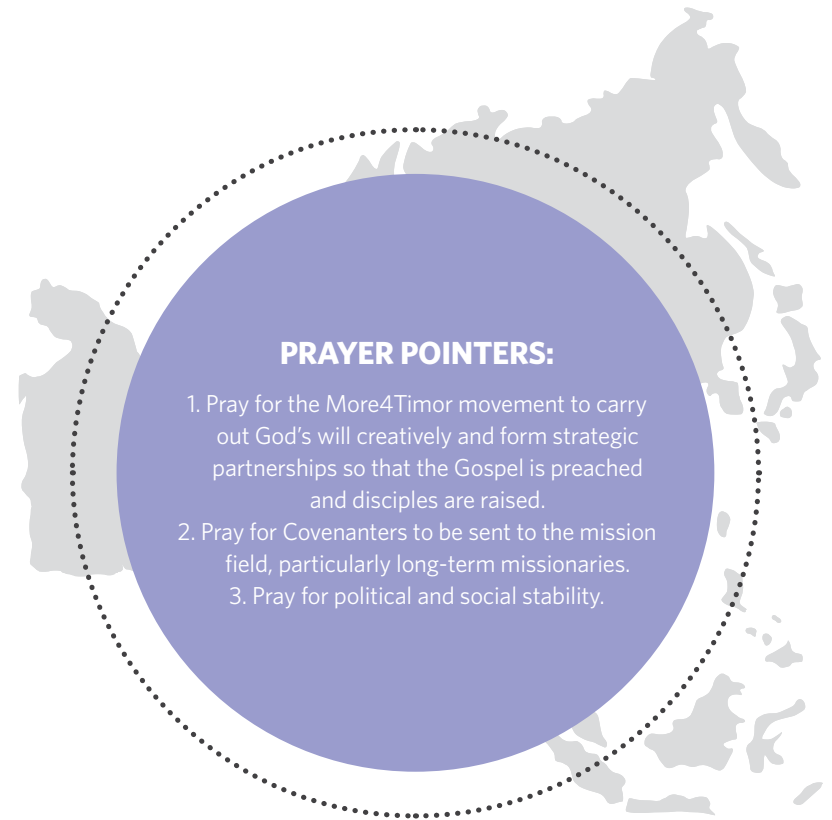
DEMOGRAPHICS

Population: 1.21 million

Religion: 98% Roman Catholic, 1% Protestant, 1% Muslim
(strong animistic beliefs)

PRAYER IDEAS

1. Pray over the map of Timor-Leste.
2. Remember the colours of the flag of Timor-Leste - yellow and red. Stop and pray for Timor-Leste each time you reach a traffic light which turns from amber/yellow to red.
3. Pray during your CG meetings this month under "Pray for Those in Need" for Timor-Leste and The Next Generation in Missions.
4. Pray with your children during your family devotion:
 - a. How can I be a part of missions as a family? What can we give?
 - b. Pray for the young people in Timor and Singapore (including your children).



PRAYER POINTERS:

1. Pray for the More4Timor movement to carry out God's will creatively and form strategic partnerships so that the Gospel is preached and disciples are raised.
2. Pray for Covenanters to be sent to the mission field, particularly long-term missionaries.
3. Pray for political and social stability.

"Just as I watched over them to uproot and tear down, and to overthrow, destroy and bring disaster, so I will watch over them to build and to plant," declares the Lord.

JEREMIAH 31:28

worship songs

JUST AS I AM

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

JUST AS I AM (CONT'D)

Misc 1

(Ending)
 Praise God just as I am
 Just as I am

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 Travis Cottrell | William Batchelder Bradbury
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BE THOU MY VISION

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

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

Words & Music: Eleanor Henrietta Hull | Mary Elizabeth Byrne
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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
And great are the things You've done for us
And praise is the offering we bring to You
All of our heart and soul
And all that You are and more
And 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

Author: Glenn Packiam
Year & Publisher: © 2010 GWC Publishing
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GOD IS ABLE

God is able
He will never fail
He is almighty God

Greater than all we seek
Greater than all we ask
He has done great things

Lifted up
He defeated the grave
Raised to life
Our God is able

In His name we overcome
For the Lord
Our God is able

God is with us
God is on our side
He will make a way
Far above all we know
Far above all we hope
He has done great things

Lifted up
He defeated the grave
Raised to life
Our God is able

God is with us
He will go before
He will never leave us
He will never leave us

God is for us
He has open arms
He will never fail us
He will never fail us

Lifted up
He defeated the grave
Raised to life
Our God is able

Word & Music: Ben Fielding | Reuben Morgan
Year & Publisher: © 2010 Hillsong Music
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HERE I AM TO WORSHIP

Verse 1

Light of the world you stepped down into darkness
Opened my eyes, let me see
Beauty that made this heart adore You
Hope of a life spent with You

Chorus

Here I am to worship, here I am to bow down
Here I am to say that You're my God
You're altogether lovely, altogether worthy
Altogether wonderful to me

Verse 2

King of all days, oh so highly exalted
Glorious in heaven above
Hungry You came to the earth You created
All for love's sake became poor

Bridge

I'll never know how much it costs
To see my sin upon that cross

Words & Music: Tim Hughes
Year & Publisher: © 2000 Thankyou Music (Admin. by EMI Christian Music Publishing
CCLI License #: 324618

AS THE DEER

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

Chorus

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 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

Words & Music: Martin Nystrom
Year & Publisher: © 1984 Maranatha Praise, Inc. (Admin. by Maranatha! Music)
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YOU ARE MY ALL IN ALL

Verse 1

You are my strength when I am weak
You are the treasure that I seek
You are my all in all
Seeking You as a precious jewel
Lord, to give up I'll be a fool
You are my all in all

Chorus

Jesus, Lamb of God
Worthy is Your Name
(repeat)

Verse 2

Taking my sin, my cross, my shame
Rising again I bless Your Name
You are my all in all
When I fall down You pick me up
When I am dry You fill my cup
You are my all in all

Words & Music: Dennis Jernigan
Year & Publisher: © 1991 Shepherd's Heart Music, Inc. (Admin. by
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MY JESUS I LOVE THEE

Verse 1

My Jesus I love Thee I know Thou art mine
 For Thee all the follies of sin I resign
 My gracious Redeemer my Savior art Thou
 If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now

Verse 2

I love Thee because Thou hast first loved me
 And purchased my pardon on Calvary's tree
 I love Thee for wearing the thorns on Thy brow
 If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now

Verse 3

I'll love Thee in life, I will love Thee in death
 And praise Thee as long as Thou lendest me breath
 And say when the death dew lies cold on my brow
 If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now

Verse 4

In mansions of glory and endless delight
 I'll ever adore Thee in heaven so bright
 I'll sing with the glittering crown on my brow
 If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now

Words & Music by: Adoniram Judson Gordon | William Ralph Featherstone
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EVERLASTING GOD

Verse 1

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

Strength will rise
 As we wait upon the Lord
 We will wait upon the Lord
 We will wait upon the Lord
 Our God, You reign forever
 Our hope, our Strong Deliverer

Chorus 1

You are the everlasting God
 The everlasting God
 You do not faint
 You won't grow weary

Verse 2

Our God You reign forever
 Our hope, our Strong Deliverer
 You are the everlasting God
 The everlasting God
 You do not faint
 You won't grow weary

Chorus 2

You're the Defender of the weak
 You comfort those in need
 You lift us up on wings like eagles

Words & Music: Brenton Brown | Ken Riley
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IN YOUR PRESENCE

Chorus

In Your presence that's where I am strong
 In Your presence, O Lord my God
 In Your presence that's where I belong
 Seeking Your face, touching Your grace

In the cleft of the rock
 In Your presence, O God

Verse

I want to go
 Where the rivers cannot overflow me
 Where my feet are on a rock

I want to hide
 Where the blazing fire cannot burn me
 In Your presence, O God

I want to hide
 Where the flood of evil cannot reach me
 Where I'm covered by Your blood
 I want to be where the schemes of
 Darkness cannot touch me

Words & Music: Lynn DeShazo
 Year & Publisher: © 1994 Integrity's Hosanna! Music
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AARONIC BENEDICTION

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

Words & Music: Misha Goetz
 Year & Publisher: © 2009 Misha Goetz Music [Admin. by CopyCare
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THRIVE

Intro

Oh oh

Verse 1

Here in this worn and weary land
Where many a dream has died
Like a tree planted by the water
We will never run dry

Pre-Chorus

So living water flowing through
God we thirst for more of You
Fill our hearts and flood our souls
With one desire

Chorus

Just to know You and to make You known
We lift Your name on high
Shine like the sun, make darkness run and hide

We know we were made for so much more
Than ordinary lives
It's time for us to more than just survive
We were made to thrive

Verse 2

Into Your Word we're digging deep
To know our Father's heart
Into the world we're reaching out
To show them who You are

THRIVE (CONT'D)

Bridge

Joy unspeakable
Faith unsinkable
Love unstoppable
Anything is possible
(repeat 3X)

Interlude

Oh oh
Oh oh

Ending

We were made to thrive

Words & Music: Mark Hall | Matthew West

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notes

A large rectangular area with a light purple background and horizontal dashed lines, intended for writing notes. The area is bounded by a solid black line on the left and a solid black line on the top. The dashed lines are evenly spaced and run horizontally across the entire width of the area.

COVENANT EFC

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