

COVENANT^{EFC}

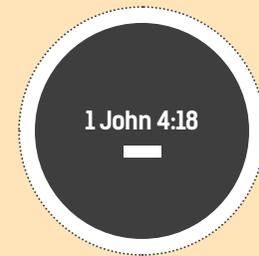
devotional journal 2014

1 - 30 november

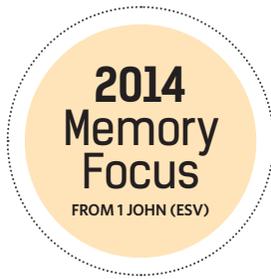
1 John 4:18

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 of life – 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 – although 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 say, *"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.

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

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

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

november 2014

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
					1	2
3	4	5 Alpha Session	6	7 Men's BTW	8 Men's BTW	9 Men's BTW/ Domestic Helpers' Appreciation Dinner
10	11	12	13	14	15 Alpha Weekend	16 New Life Day
17	18	19	20	21 Marriage BTW	22 Marriage BTW	23 Marriage BTW
24	25	26 One80 begins	27 KidzCamp	28 Prayer & Praise KidzCamp	29 KidzCamp	30

Strongly Encouraged

december 2014

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
1	2	3	4	5 Women's BTW	6 Women's BTW	7 Women's BTW
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25 Christmas/ Christmas Day Service	26	27	28
29 One80 ends	30	31 Watch Night Service				

Strongly Encouraged

November 1,
Saturday
2014

The Primacy of the Truth

SCRIPTURE

3 John 8; 2 Timothy 2:15-18

As we “love in truth” (3 Jn 1) and walk “in the truth” (vv. 3-4), we serve the truth as “fellow workers with the truth” (v. 8). The phrase “fellow workers with the truth” may mean that “all Christians are thought of as fellow workers with the truth itself”, or “fellow workers in the cause of the truth”². John seems to have “both meanings”³ in his thought. The truth must be primary in Christian ministry. Jesus is “the Truth” (Jn 14:6), the Word of God “is truth” (Jn 17:17) and “the church of the living God is the pillar and support of the truth” (1 Ti 3:15). The goal of Christian service is to build the church to maturity in Christ, marked by stability in the truth and “speaking the truth in love” (Eph 4:13-15). When Paul lays down the qualifications for church leadership, the emphasis is on godly character and one primary ministry competency: Being “able to teach” the Word of God (1 Ti 3:2) and “holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict” (Tit 1:9).⁴

OBSERVATION

How does Paul emphasise the primacy of the truth in 2 Timothy 2:15-18?

APPLICATION

How am I doing in “handling accurately the word of truth” (2 Ti 2:15)?

PRAYER

Father, You are the only true God. Lord Jesus, You are the Truth. Holy Spirit, You are the Spirit of truth. God, the eternal life I have in Christ is to know You, the only true God. I can truly know You only in Your Word. Your Word is truth. Help me to walk faithfully in the truth. By Your grace and mercy keep me from straying into falsehoods and half-truths. Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:

- Pray for leaders:

- Pray for significant people:

- Pray for those in need:

- Pray for self:

¹ I. Howard Marshall, *The Epistles of John*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Eerdmans, 1978), 87

² Stephen Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, Word Biblical Commentary (Word, 1991), Vol. 51, 352

³ Stephen Smalley, Vol. 51, 353

⁴ 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9

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 KNOWS BEST

God knows what is best for us. All things will be good if we trust Him.

Scripture - Isaiah 55:9

1. ACTIVITY BITE

Name all the candies and chocolates you have seen or tasted before. Which of these are your favourites?

2. CHAT TIME

Q1: Imagine a baby wants to eat the candies and chocolates you mentioned instead of milk. Would you allow the baby to eat these items? Why?

Q2: Who knows better - you or the baby? Why is that so?

Q3: What does it mean when we say that God knows better than all of us?

3. LEARNING POINT

Sometimes we are like the baby who doesn't know what is good or bad. We refuse to listen to our parents because we think we know better. So we disobey them but often we end up in trouble. God is an all-wise God who knows what is best for us. Imagine trusting God fully. We'll be getting the best of what God wants to give us. We need to learn how to trust our parents because God has made them wiser than us. We need to trust God fully because He is the all-wise One.

4. ACTION POINT

Ask your parents to tell you about the times when you refused to listen to their advice. What were the consequences? Are there still areas where you insist on your way instead of following their advice? How about deciding to listen to them and trust God that He will make all things good?

5. PRAYER POWER

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

Dear God, I am sorry for not believing that You know best. Please help me believe that my parents who are wiser can give me good advice. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

november one

family devotional week one

November 3,
Monday
2014

Can I See My Pride?

SCRIPTURE

3 John 9; 1 Timothy 6:3-4a

Two tempers disturbed the Christian life in Asia Minor in the first century: "intellectual arrogance"⁵ – those "who [went] too far" in doctrine (2 Jn 9), and "personal aggrandisement"⁶ – Diotrephes "who loves to have the preeminence" (v. 9, NKJV) in the church. Diotrephes, "a dominant personality", may or may not be "a constitutional leader"; if he is not, then he is "a self-promoted demagogue".⁷ My New Testament professor at Regent University, Dr Lyle Story, once said, "Humility is something that is there. You keep striving at it, but you don't see it. You have it when you don't see it; but once you see it, you've lost it. Similarly with pride, you have it when you don't see it; but once you see it, you've lost it." What the proud sees of himself is directly opposite of what he cannot see. He is spiritually blind, unable to see the true condition of his heart as God sees (cf. 1 Sa 16:7). The proud is unable to see because he is unwilling to see. Can I see pride in my heart?

OBSERVATION

What does Paul say about conceit in 1 Timothy 6:3-4a?

APPLICATION

What areas in my life can I see pride?

PRAYER

Gracious Redeemer, help me to see that at the heart of sin is the pre-eminence of the self, which is pride. For we all like sheep have gone astray, and each of us has turned to our own self-centred ways.⁸ So much of who I am and what I do come out of pride. Give me eyes to see my pride in me whenever it appears. Teach me and help me to walk in lowliness. Amen.

Prayer Pointers

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

⁵ John R. W. Stott, *The Letters of John*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (IVP, 1964, 1988), 231

⁶ John Stott, 231

⁷ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles of John* (Pickering Paperbacks, 1970), 152

⁸ Isaiah 53:6

November 5,
Wednesday
2014

Truth and Love, and Pride

SCRIPTURE

3 John 3, 6, 9-10; James 3:13-18

Gaius' life is so characterised by truth and love that others "testified" to it (vv. 3, 6); and his direct opposite is the arrogant Diotrephes (v. 9). When Diotrephes "loves to be first", his heart is wrong, and he errs "both from the truth and from Christian love".⁹ Persistent pride indicates the lack or absence of truth and love, and conversely, truth and love keep us from pride. The Word of God is truth (Jn 17:17). The "word of God" that is "able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart" is "the eyes of Him" before whom "all things are open and laid bare" (Heb 4:12-13). When I look at my heart through God's Word, I seek to see myself as God sees, and I can and will check for pride in me. In this sense, truth is inward looking. Love is outward looking, for the object of love is people. Diotrephes' love to be first is "loving himself more than others",¹⁰ in refusing to welcome the travelling missionaries and forbidding others to do so (v. 10). Love puts others before the self (cf. 1 Jn 3:16).

OBSERVATION

What does James teach about arrogance, the truth and wisdom in James 3:13-18?

APPLICATION

What kind of wisdom do I have and live by?

PRAYER

Lord, save me and keep me from jealousy, selfishness and arrogance which lie against the truth. Give me wisdom from above to understand God's ways – wisdom that is marked by humility; persistent sincerity, gentleness at all times; showing no favouritism; and being peace loving, willing to yield to others and full of mercy and good deeds . Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:

- Pray for leaders:

- Pray for significant people:

- Pray for those in need:

- Pray for self:

⁹ David Jackman, *The Message of John's Letters*, The Bible Speaks Today (IVP, 1988), 197

¹⁰ John Stott, 228

November 6,
Thursday
2014

Building Words or Biting Words

SCRIPTURE

3 John 9-10; Proverbs 10:18-21

Diotrephes rejects John's apostolic authority, refusing to accept what he has written to the church (v. 9). His words opposing John are slanderous and senseless ("with malicious words talking nonsense [about] us"¹¹, v. 10), accusations made "entirely without substance"¹². Words are powerful ("Death and life are in the power of the tongue", Pr 18:21). Words build or bite. Words bite intentionally or unintentionally - that is, carelessly. It may be helpful to keep in mind three key words in our speech. Power: Be conscious of the power of our words. When we are conscious of this reality, we will be careful in our speech. We will think before we talk. People: Words are spoken to and received by people. Consciously recognising this, we will be caring and considerate in our speech. Purpose: Ask before we speak, why we say what we want to say and how we want to say it. In this way, we will choose and control what we say and how we say. And words reveal what we are - "his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart" (Lk 6:45). Diotrephes's pride shows up in his words.

OBSERVATION

What does Proverbs 10:18-21 teach about human speech?

APPLICATION

What area(s) in my speech do I need to change in my life?

PRAYER

Fill me with Your Spirit,
Lord Jesus, so that the words
I speak may come forth
from a spiritually renewed
inner being. Help me to
be conscious of the effect
of my words, be careful to
choose and control what I
say and how I speak, and to
speak in truth and love. Let
my speech be like Yours -
gracious words falling from
Your lips.¹³ Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:

- Pray for leaders:

- Pray for significant people:

- Pray for those in need:

- Pray for self:

¹¹ *The New Greek-English Interlinear New Testament* (Tyndale, 1990)

¹² David Jackman, 197

¹³ Luke 4:22

November 8,
Saturday
2014

Whose Church is "the Church"?

SCRIPTURE

3 John 10; Ephesians 5:25-27

Diotrephes is part of "the church" and is most probably one of its leaders. Yet he refuses to show hospitality to God's travelling servants, and forbids others to do so, threatening to put them out of "the church" (v. 10). There is something theologically incongruent here. Diotrephes' attitude and action reveal that he is not consciously thinking and living theologically; otherwise, he will be aware of the theological incongruence. What is most fundamental about "the Church" is certainly not in Diotrephes' consciousness. Whose church is the Church? To Diotrephes, is it Christ's church or his church? There is only one who has pre-eminence in the church: the Lord Jesus Christ, the Head of the church (Eph 5:23). But Diotrephes "usurped Christ's lordship of the church to feed his own ambition".¹⁴ As members, servants and leaders of Christ's church, in all that we are, we have and we do, increasingly "He must become greater; I must become less" (Jn 3:30, NIV).

OBSERVATION

What does Paul say concerning the Church in Ephesians 5:25-27?

APPLICATION

How should I follow Christ in attitude and action towards His Church?

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, Head of the Church, fill Your Church with all truth; in all truth with all peace. Where she is corrupt, purify her; where she is in error, direct her; where anything is amiss, reform her; where she is right, strengthen and confirm her; where she is in want, furnish her; where she is divided and rent asunder, make up the breeches in her.¹⁵ Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:

- Pray for leaders:

- Pray for significant people:

- Pray for those in need:

- Pray for self:

¹⁴ David Jackman, 199

¹⁵ Adapted from *The SPCK Book of Christian Prayer* (SPCK, 1995), 429

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 IS HOLY

God is perfect. He does no wrong. He will help us avoid doing the wrong things.

Scripture - John 16:13

1. ACTIVITY BITE

Props: Two big sheets of paper

Imagine there are two people - one does only wrong things while the other does only good things. Write down all the wrong things that the person can do on one sheet of paper and all the good things that the other person can do on the other sheet of paper. Use a red marker for the wrong items and a blue marker for the good items.

2. CHAT TIME

Q1: Guess which type of person God wants you to be.

Q2: How is it that sometimes we do wrong things even though we know that we shouldn't?

Q3: John 16:13 tells us that the Holy Spirit will guide us in all truth. Can you name an occasion where you know He is telling you not to do something that is wrong?

3. LEARNING POINT

God is a perfect and holy God who does no wrong. But we are not. We like having our own way and often disobey Him. God loves us and will help us walk in His ways. He will guide and teach us in the way of truth, which is to do what is right just like Jesus. We must always desire to follow Him.

4. ACTION POINT

From what you have written on the two sheets of paper, be honest and put a tick next to the wrong things you have done. Tell God that you are sorry for what you have done and ask Him to help you do what is right instead.

5. PRAYER POWER

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

God, thank You for helping me to do what is right. Please help me choose to walk in Your ways always. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

november two

November 11,
Tuesday
2014

What is Authentic Discipleship?

SCRIPTURE

3 John 12; 1 Peter 3:1-4

"Truth" and "testimony" are two key words in 3 John that are interlinked. "Truth" is repeated six times (3 Jn 1, 3, 4, 8, 12), and "testimony" as a verb and a noun occurs five times (vv. 3, 4, 12). Demetrius receives "the full complement of three witnesses (Dt 19:15; 1 Jn 5:7-8)"¹⁹ concerning his character: "everyone" – "every Christian who knew him"²⁰, "the truth itself" and John himself (v. 12). What's most amazing is "the truth itself" testifies to him as "walking in the truth" (vv. 3, 4). It means that the truth Demetrius professes is "embodied in him"²¹, such that "if the truth could speak, it too would testify that his life was in accord with its own standards"²². It is as good as saying that God Himself testifies to his life. The Christian genuineness of Demetrius is "self-evident"²³ – "apart from the human voice, the facts themselves testified in his favour"²⁴. But it is "possible for a person to miss obtaining human favour and yet to enjoy God's favour"²⁵. Authentic discipleship is what God sees in you.

OBSERVATION

*How does Peter describe authentic discipleship in 1 Peter 3:1-4?*²⁶

APPLICATION

How do I want to grow in "the hidden person of the heart" (1 Pe 3:4)?

PRAYER

God, You are my Father who is in secret, who sees in secret.²⁷

I want to live my life in this reality, in the audience of One. Let it be that it matters nothing to me how humans may see me or what they may think of me. Help me to, above all else, watch over my heart with all diligence,²⁸ and walk in 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, 93

²⁰ I. Howard Marshall, 93

²¹ John Stott, 233

²² F. F. Bruce, 155

²³ John Stott, 233

²⁴ F. F. Bruce, 155

²⁵ I. Howard Marshall, 93

²⁶ What Peter teaches specifically for Christian wives in 1 Peter 3:1-4 are relevant and applicable in general.

²⁷ Matthew 6:6

²⁸ Proverbs 4:23

November 13,
Thursday
2014

Root and Fruit of Discipleship

SCRIPTURE

3 John 11; Colossians 2:6-7

“Do not imitate what is evil, but what is good” (3 Jn 11a). “What is good” and “what is evil” are realities fleshed out by “the one doing good” and “the one doing evil” respectively (v. 11b). “The one doing good” and “the one doing evil” refer to people – their character. The practice reflects the person. The being is expressed and evident in the doing. Good or bad, it is an inescapable from-the-inside-out reality. And the root of our being inside us is theological: It is “of God” and “have seen God” (v. 11b). To be “of God” is “being born of God and [in possession of] that eternal life which is the power of God within a redeemed personality. A life of goodness can be produced only by the life of God within”.³⁰ To “have seen God” is “not referring to a mystical vision of God perceived in a state of heightened emotion or spiritual sensitivity”.³¹ We see God in Christ, the living Word, revealed to faith in the pages of the written Word (cf. Jn 14:7). The theological is the root; the practical is the fruit. And the root determines the fruit.

OBSERVATION

How does Paul describe the Christian life in Colossians 2:6-7?

APPLICATION

What would I do with areas in my Christian life that lack being firmly rooted and built up in Christ?

PRAYER

Lord, I pray that as I take time to feed on Your living bread and drink Your living water, nourish and nurture my soul and spirit, that my spiritual roots may grow strong and deep in You, and that I continue to live in You and You in me, and bear much fruit, for apart from You I can do nothing.³² Amen.

Prayer Pointers

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

³⁰ David Jackman, 200

³¹ David Jackman, 200

³² John 15:5

November 14,
Friday
2014

The Lord's Church in Reality

SCRIPTURE

3 John 5-6, 9-10; Ephesians 4:1-6

"The church" is mentioned three times in 3 John (vv. 6, 9, 10). Gaius, Diotrephes and Demetrius are "three different, and yet representative, church members"³³ around whom 3 John revolves, giving us "a clearer glimpse into the inner life of a first-century church".³⁴ While the Church is "the church of God" (cf. 1 Co 10:32), the evil is ever mingled with the good in the visible Church.³⁵ The early church was certainly not without its problems, nor is its 21st century equivalent. They are "problems of our sinful human nature, which will be with us until Christ comes again - and yet every one of them could be met by God's superabundant grace"³⁶. Oftentimes, we talk negatively and critically about the church, "Why is the church like that?" We talk as if we are not part of the church. If there is a problem in the church, we are part of the problem. It is not enough for us to point out the problems of the church; we should also suggest possible solutions to the problems, and most importantly, offer ourselves to be part of the solution.

OBSERVATION

What does God want His Church to be characterised by according to Ephesians 4:1-6?

APPLICATION

How am I contributing to the qualitative growth of the church through my life and service to God?

PRAYER

Grant more of Thy Spirit to all Thy churches and servants in the world; that as their darkness and selfishness and imperfections have defiled and divided and weakened them, and made them scandalous and harsh toward unbelievers, so may their knowledge, self-denial and impartial love truly reform, unite and strengthen them - that the glory of their holiness may win an unbelieving world to Christ. (Richard Baxter)

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:

- Pray for leaders:

- Pray for significant people:

- Pray for those in need:

- Pray for self:

³³ David Jackman, 202

³⁴ John Stott, 220

³⁵ John Stott, 228

³⁶ David Jackman, 202

November 15,
Saturday
2014

Redeemed Relationship of Redeemed People

SCRIPTURE

3 John 13-15; Colossians 3:12-14

3 John concludes with a picture of the redeemed relationship of God's redeemed people. Personal in contact: John has "many things to write" to Gaius, but he is "not willing to write" (v. 13), for he prefers to "see" him and "speak face to face" with him (v. 14). Peace in conflicts: "Peace be to you" (v. 15a), a Hebrew greeting "invested with new meaning by Jesus after the resurrection (Jn 20:19, 21, 26), is an appropriate prayer for Gaius"³⁷, in view of "the pressures Gaius was under and the state of war that seems to have existed in the church"³⁸. Conflicts between the imperfect redeemed people of God – in marriage, home and church – continue to happen. It is an inevitable part of the growth process. Friends of truth: The "friends" John mentions (v. 15b) are friends in Christ, who "share a friendship based on common faith and truthful living"³⁹. Such friends are friends of Jesus (Jn 15:14-15). Worth of individuals: John greets his friends "by name" (v. 15b). Christians "should not lose their individual identity and importance in the group"⁴⁰.

OBSERVATION

What should characterise the redeemed relationship of God's redeemed people according to Colossians 3:12-14?

APPLICATION

What is lacking in my character in my relationship with God's people as listed in Colossians 3:12-14?

PRAYER

Father, help me to see myself and Your other children together as chosen of God, holy and dearly loved by You. Grant me to grow in compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience, to be able to bear with others and forgive whatever grievances I may have against others, as You forgive me. Build us all up in love, which is the perfect bond of unity. Amen.

Prayer Pointers

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

³⁷ John Stott, 234

³⁸ David Jackman, 201

³⁹ Stephen Smalley, 364

⁴⁰ John Stott, 234

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 WILL PROVIDE

God will provide all the things we need. We don't have to worry about anything.

Scripture - Philippians 4:19

1. ACTIVITY BITE

Props: A piece of cake, jam, honey or a toy car

For each item, think of how it was made and where the raw materials come from. You can search the Internet for information (e.g. bread is made from flour, and flour comes from wheat).

2. CHAT TIME

Q1: Guess who made all these raw materials?

Q2: What if these raw materials are no longer available anywhere in the world? How would we make these items (i.e. how can we make bread if there isn't any wheat)?

Q3: Philippians 4:6 says that God will meet all our needs. What are the things you really need and what are the things you want?

3. LEARNING POINT

We need many things in life to live and work, such as food, friends and rest. These are the things we can't live without. However, there are things we want to have that we can live without like big houses, expensive shoes or luxury jewellery. God promises to provide what we need so that we will have enough. However, He may not give us the things we want so that we can learn to be contented. So stop worrying and trust Him to take care of us.

4. ACTION POINT

Do you have any extra items that you don't need like stationery or watches? Consider passing some to those who don't have them. God may be using you to provide for those who need them.

5. PRAYER POWER

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

Dear God, I thank You for providing everything I need. Help me think of those who don't have much. Maybe I can bless them too. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

november

family devotional week three

November 21,
Friday
2014

Sovereignty of the Servant-King (2)

SCRIPTURE

Mark 5:21-43

Jairus' little daughter is so sick that she is "at the point of death" (Mk 5:23). So, Jairus searches for Jesus, his only one hope. When he finds Him, he pleads with Him earnestly and fervently to heal his dying daughter so that she can live (vv. 22-23). There's a great sense of urgency. On their way to Jairus' home, Jesus stops to heal a very sick woman (vv. 25-34). Imagine how Jairus feels at this moment, as he is conscious of the clock ticking away. Every second counts for him. But, Jesus does not have the same sense of urgency as Jairus' - and ours. Just after Jesus healed the woman, Jairus receives the bad news: "Your daughter has died" (v. 35). It's over. "Why trouble the Teacher anymore?" (v. 35). God has come too late! Has He? The theological point of the story is God is in sovereign control, and He does let things go "beyond redemption". But He can easily and "immediately" raise our "Jairus' daughter" from the dead (vv. 41-42). However, God exercises His sovereign power according to His sovereign purpose. That's God's sovereign freedom and wisdom.

OBSERVATION

How do the condition of the sick woman in Mark 5:25-26 and Jesus' response to her in verses 27-34 demonstrate the sovereignty of the Servant-King?

APPLICATION

How do I place the sovereignty of God in "beyond redemption" situations in my personal life and ministry to people?

PRAYER

Lord, when my understanding is perplexed by doubt or I am at the point of giving up, when the most intelligent men see no further than the coming evening, and know not what they shall do tomorrow, send me a clear assurance that You are there and that You will ensure that not all the roads of goodness are barred.⁴⁷ Into Your loving sovereign hands I commit my life. Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:

- Pray for leaders:

- Pray for significant people:

- Pray for those in need:

- Pray for self:

⁴⁷ Adapted from *The SPCK Book of Christian Prayer*, 284

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 IS WITH ME

God is with me all the time. He will never leave me.

Scripture - Isaiah 41:10**1. ACTIVITY BITE**

Prop: A clear plastic bag

Blow some air into the bag until it is full. Ask your children: "What's in the bag?" (Air!) "Can you see it?" (No!) "Yes, you can't see it but it's inside the bag. Where else can you find air?" (Everywhere or all around you).

2. CHAT TIME

Q1: Was there a time when you felt alone or scared?

Q2: During those moments, which person did you wish was there to make you feel better?

Q3: What does Isaiah 41:10 tell you about God?

3. LEARNING POINT

God is like the air around you. He is there whether you are in your bedroom, at a shopping centre or on top of a mountain. He wants to be with you all the time because He wants to care for you. This is His promise to you. So whenever you feel alone or scared, He is there like the air that surrounds you. And you can talk to Him right there.

4. ACTION POINT

Close your eyes and take a deep breath. Feel the air around you. Talk to God now because He is next to you like the air that surrounds you. You can do this too, wherever you go!

5. PRAYER POWER

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

Thank You, God, for being with me. I don't have to feel lonely or scared anymore. I can talk to You whenever I want to. Amen.

november

family devotional week four

November 24,
Monday
2014

Be Real: Check Before God

SCRIPTURE

1 John 2:3-6

1, 2 and 3 John call us to authentic discipleship: Be real. "Truth" is a key word in John's three letters, repeated 20 times altogether (nine times in 1 John,⁴⁸ five times in 2 John⁴⁹ and six times in 3 John⁵⁰). There are two inescapable opposing realities in the world we live in: truth and lies, light and darkness. "God is Light" (1 Jn 1:5), and He is "the true Light" (1 Jn 2:8). And because of this, it is of absolute necessity that we belong to the light and the truth; that what is true in God is also true in us (2:8). Otherwise, darkness and falsehood dominate our lives. We cannot be neutral. Being real or not is found in what we believe and how we live. What we believe shapes how we live, and how we live shows what we believe. In John's call to be real, the first thing he addresses is a reality check: "If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie" (1 Jn 1:5-6) - we lie to God, to others, to ourselves. We know we are real when we do regular reality checks before God.

OBSERVATION

What is authentic discipleship like according to 1 John 2:3-6?

APPLICATION

How can I be sure that my life is one of authentic discipleship?

PRAYER

God who alone can see the deepest depth of my heart, You have revealed in Your Word that it is possible for me to do what is right and pleasing in Your sight, but not with a whole heart.⁵¹ Show me from Your Word how You see, for I can see as You see only when I know how You see, especially my heart. Help me to be real before You. Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:
- Pray for family:
- Pray for bosses:
- Pray for peers and staff:
- Pray for self:

⁴⁸ 1 John 1:6, 8; 2:4, 21; 3:18, 19; 4:6; 5:6

⁴⁹ 2 John 1-4

⁵⁰ 3 John 1, 3, 4, 8, 12

⁵¹ 2 Chronicles 25:2

November 28,
Friday
2014

Be Real: Confidence Before God

SCRIPTURE

1 John 4:16-18

John talks about our confidence before God in terms of the past, the present and the future. We can be confident before God in the future “when He appears...at His coming” (1 Jn 2:28) and “in the day of judgment” (4:17). What gives us that confidence is we “remain in Him” (2:28) - following Him faithfully, living a righteous life (2:29), as “children of God” who know God (3:1) and love God and people (4:7-8). When we live our lives like this, “we have confidence before God” in the present - that is, “whatever we ask we receive from Him” (3:21-22). For when we walk rightly with God, we will know His will, and “ask anything according to His will”, with “the confidence before Him” that “He hears us” (5:14-15). But we do sin when we seek to follow the Lord faithfully; and when this happens, “our heart condemns us” (3:20). But God wants to “set our hearts at rest in His presence whenever our hearts condemn us”, for He the forgiving God (cf. 1:9) is “greater than our hearts, and He knows everything” (3:20). We can be confident before God concerning our past sins.

OBSERVATION

What characterises a life of confidence before God according to 1 John 4:16-18?

APPLICATION

How would I deal with areas in my life where I lack the confidence before God that He wants me to have?

PRAYER

God, I thank You, that You have made me right before You in Christ, and through Him I have peace with You. Because of my faith in You, Christ has brought me into this place of undeserved privilege where I now stand with confidence, even Your gracious and glorious presence. And I confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing Your glory.⁶⁰ Amen.

Prayer Pointers

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

⁶⁰ Romans 5:1-2

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 IS MY GOOD SHEPHERD

God is our good shepherd. He will take care of us.

Scripture - John 10:1-18

1. ACTIVITY BITE

Search the internet for information about how shepherds take care of sheep.

2. CHAT TIME

Q1: How does a shepherd take care of his sheep?

Q2: What dangers do sheep face? What could happen to a sheep if it does not want to listen to the shepherd?

Q3: What does this tell us about God who is called the good shepherd in John 10?

3. LEARNING POINT

Sheep are weak animals that are unable to take care of themselves or defend themselves from wild animals on their own. They totally depend on the shepherd for care and protection. The shepherd will go all the way to make sure that his sheep are safe and have enough food to eat. Jesus says that He is our good shepherd. It means He will care for us and protect us against the enemy. So we must listen to His voice by obeying Him and not wander off on our own.

4. ACTION POINT

Let's practice listening to God by obeying His Word. Go through the Fruit of the Spirit from Galatians 5:22. Select one and talk about what it means and how to put it into action. Do this as a family.

5. PRAYER POWER

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

Dear God, thank You for being our good shepherd. I am safe in Your hands. Help me to listen to Your voice and obey You daily. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Missions Prayer

FOCUS OF THE MONTH

East Asia Marketplace Ministries

WE HAVE HEARD THAT INTENTIONAL DISCIPLESHIP HAPPENS AT

work when we intentionally communicate biblical values in word and deed. What if you are placed in a country or a culture where giving or accepting bribes is considered the norm? Or what if upholding God's moral standards in the marketplace could potentially result in losing your job or a business deal? Will you stand firm, and continue to trust God to provide and to make a difference for Him? These are some of the tough choices that believers face in countries or societies where the majority do not know God.

In the account of Luke 19:29-35, the donkey was a symbol of commerce in Jesus' day, which provided a source of income to people. When Jesus told the disciples to go untie the donkey, He was taking over someone's work and source of income. But Jesus had need of that donkey to make His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Today He has need of our "donkeys" to build His kingdom through the marketplace.¹

Here are some areas where we can pray for our workers and their co-workers who are serving in the marketplace in East Asia (read Matthew 13:3-8,18-23 to help you in prayer):

1. SH&LY - Pray for:

- God's enabling to find balance in family life, home-schooling and medical responsibilities with the increase in ministry opportunities.
- The right people to work with the medical team - some may be pre-believers. Pray for those who join to have hearts that are prepared to hear and receive the gospel.
- Divine appointment opportunities for people seeking treatment.
- Local business cooperatives, started by minority believers as a form of outreach to the communities, to thrive and become a self-sustaining livelihood. Ask God to keep them united and to cling on to their business and spiritual goals.

2. J&S - Pray for:

- God's protection over the health of the family (the city is frequently enveloped by smog and food and water are often polluted).
- The training process and God's empowering of the local leaders to take over leadership.
- Those who have been trained and mentored to be fruitful and impact lives whether in the marketplace or the ministry.

3. AK - Pray for:

- The business to thrive, while continuing to uphold God's moral standards in business.
- The salvation of the business partner, "Ms L".
- God's protection, rest and strength in the midst of running the business and the discipleship group. Pray also for wisdom to encourage the core group members to attend cell meetings in the midst of work travel and stress.

¹ Os Hillman, *The 9 to 5 Window* (Regal Books, 2005)

Passages to read:

LUKE 19:29-35
MATTHEW 13:3-8,18-23

worship songs

HOLY SPIRIT

Verse 1

There's nothing worth more that will ever come close
No thing can compare You're our living hope
Your Presence

Verse 2

I've tasted and seen of the sweetest of loves
Where my heart becomes free and my shame is
undone
In Your presence Lord

Chorus 1

Holy Spirit You are welcome here
Come flood this place and fill the atmosphere
Your glory God is what our hearts long for
To be overcome by Your presence Lord

(Your presence Lord)

(Your presence)

(Oh God how we love Your presence Lord)

Bridge

Let us become more aware of Your presence
Let us experience the glory of Your goodness (Lord)

"Holy Spirit" words & music by Bryan Torwalt | Katie Torwalt
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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.

Chorus

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

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

"Be Thou My Vision" words & music by Eleanor Henrietta Hull | Mary Elizabeth Byrne
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OUR GOD

Verse 1

Water You turned into wine
 Opened the eyes of the blind
 There's no one like You
 None like You

Verse 2

Into the darkness You shine
 Out of the ashes we rise
 There's no one like You
 None like You

Chorus

Our God is greater
 Our God is stronger
 God You are higher than any other
 Our God is Healer

Awesome in power,
 Our God
 Our God

Bridge

And if our God is for us
 Then who could ever stop us
 And if our God is with us
 Then what could stand against

"Our God" words & music by Chris Tomlin | Jesse Reeves | Jonas Myrin | Matt Redman
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WHOM SHALL I FEAR

Verse 1

You hear me when I call
 You are my morning song
 Though darkness fills the night
 It cannot hide the light

Whom shall I fear
 You crush the enemy underneath my feet
 You are my sword and shield
 Though troubles linger still
 Whom shall I fear

Chorus

I know Who goes before me
 I know Who stands behind
 The God of angel armies is always by my side
 The One who reigns forever
 He is a friend of mine
 The God of angel armies is always by my side

Verse 2

My strength is in Your name
 For You alone can save
 You will deliver me
 Yours is the victory
 Whom shall I fear
 Whom shall I fear
 (Whom shall I fear)

WHOM SHALL I FEAR (CONT'D)

Bridge

(And) nothing formed against me shall stand
 You hold the whole world in Your hands
 I'm holding on to Your promises
 You are faithful
 You are faithful

"Whom Shall I Fear" words & music by Chris Tomlin | Ed Cash | Scott Cash
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TIMES OF REFRESHING

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

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

"Times Of Refreshing" words & music by Don Harris | Martin Nystrom
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HALLOWED BE THY NAME

Chorus

You are the Holy One
 Father Spirit Son
 King of kings and Lord of lords
 Hallowed be hallowed be
 Hallowed be Thy name

Verse

We will worship
 The Maker of all things
 Almighty God to You
 Our voices sing
 Hallowed be Thy name
 Hallowed be Thy name

"Hallowed Be Thy Name" words & music by Bill Ancira

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CHRIST IS ENOUGH

Verse 1

Christ is my reward
 And all of my devotion
 Now there's nothing in this world
 That could ever satisfy

Pre-Chorus

Through every trial
 My soul will sing
 No turning back

Chorus

Christ is enough for me
 Christ is enough for me
 Everything I need is in You
 Everything I need

Verse 2

Christ my all in all
 The joy of my salvation
 And this hope will never fail
 Heaven is our home

Pre-Chorus

Through every storm
 My soul will sing
 Jesus is here
 To God be the glory

Bridge

I have decided to follow Jesus
 No turning back
 No turning back

The cross before me
 The world behind me
 No turning back
 No turning back

"Christ Is Enough" words & music by
 Jonas Myrin | Reuben Morgan
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AT THE CROSS

Verse 1

Oh Lord You've searched me
You know my way
Even when I fail You
I know You love me

Your holy presence
Surrounding me
In every season
I know You love me
I know You love me

At the cross I bow my knee
Where Your blood was shed for me
There's no greater love than this
You have overcome the grave
Your glory fills the highest place
What can separate me now

Verse 2

You go before me
You shield my way
Your hand upholds me
I know You love me

Bridge

You tore the veil You made a way
When You said that it is done
You tore the veil You made a way
When You said that it is done

Verse 3

And when the earth fades
Falls from my eyes
And You stand before me
I know You love me
I know You love me

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REACHING FOR YOU

Verse

I can't believe the way
Your love has got a hold on me
Each morning I wake to find You near
You lift me above my fears
And set my feet on solid ground
All of my days belong to You

Pre-Chorus

And I breathe in Your breath of life
That fills my heart
You are my all consuming fire

Chorus

And I stand here before You
In wide opened wonder
Amazed at the glory of You
The power of heaven
Revealing Your purpose in me
As I'm reaching for You

Ending

Reaching for You
Reaching for You

"Reaching For You" words & music by Raymond Badham
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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

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