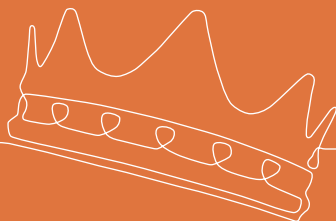


JANUARY
2022
DEVOTIONAL
JOURNAL

*And you became imitators of us
and of the Lord, for you received
the word in much affliction, with
the joy of the Holy Spirit.*

1 THESSALONIANS 1:6



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1 THESSALONIANS 1:6

MEMORY VERSES

2022

From 1 & 2 Thessalonians

◆ January

And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit.

– 1 Thessalonians 1:6 (ESV)

◆ February

For when we were with you, we kept telling you beforehand that we were to suffer affliction, just as it has come to pass, and just as you know.

– 1 Thessalonians 3:4 (ESV)

◆ March

For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor. – 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4 (ESV)

◆ April

For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep.

– 1 Thessalonians 4:14 (ESV)

◆ May

For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. – 1 Thessalonians 5:2 (ESV)

◆ June

So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. – 1 Thessalonians 5:6 (ESV)

◆ July

And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.

– 1 Thessalonians 5:14 (ESV)

◆ August

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

– 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (ESV)

◆ September

To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of His calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power. – 2 Thessalonians 1:11 (ESV)

◆ October

And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of His mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming. – 2 Thessalonians 2:8 (ESV)

◆ November

But the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one. – 2 Thessalonians 3:3 (ESV)

◆ December

For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you. – 2 Thessalonians 3:7 (ESV)

FOREWORD

BY SENIOR PASTORS

PREPARING TO MEET KING JESUS

What do times of crisis and uncertainty compel us towards? They compel us to confront our own mortality, scrutinise our foundations and evaluate our purpose. Most of all, they compel us to seek the face of God.

As we sought the Lord, He assured us through these verses:

“And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

– Matthew 16:18-19 (ESV)

In these uncertain times, we can be rested in Jesus because He has promised that He Himself will build His Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail. The keys of the Kingdom of God

are the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ – His incarnation, death, resurrection, ascension and second coming. And we are to proclaim it! As the Church, it is our responsibility and privilege to do so. When people believe the Good News, they are able to enter God’s Kingdom.

We are reminded of the charge that the Apostle Paul gave to Timothy as the spiritual leader of the church at Ephesus:

“I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in

season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.”
– 2 Timothy 4:1-4 (ESV)

Hence, this year’s spiritual burden is “Preparing to Meet King Jesus” — make ready God’s Kingdom people to prepare the world to meet King Jesus in eternity. The world is in darkness and pain. The task is urgent. We believe that we are now in the final hour. We have to prepare ourselves and others to meet King Jesus. This is really what the Church is all about.

How can we prepare ourselves to meet King Jesus?

A People Prepared for His Coming: Be Watchful!

In Luke 1:17, John the Baptist’s calling was to prepare the people for the first coming of our Lord. Like him, we are called to prepare the people for Christ’s second coming. We are to be watchful and persevere in prayer, so as to be ready for the coming of the Lord.

A People Prepared to Stand Firm and Take Action: Be Fruitful!

In times of great distress, those who know their God will stand firm and take action (Dan 11:32). This pandemic is a time of harvest. Many people everywhere are looking for hope. So let us stand firm in our calling as a church

We have to prepare ourselves and others to meet King Jesus. This is really what the Church is all about.

(to be disciples of *A Certain Kind* and return the Church to its disciplemaking roots through Authentic Discipleship and Intentional Disciplemaking) and take action to multiply leaders and disciplemakers for great fruitfulness.

A People Prepared in Personal Holiness: Be Faithful!

1 Thessalonians 4:1-3 remind us to guard our hearts and be faithful, for our own personal sanctification and holiness. Let’s be faithful in our personal integrity and walk with God, aligning our lives back to God in holiness and faithfulness.

This Devotional Journal is designed to help you walk daily with God and experience the transforming power of His Word and Spirit as you reflect, pray and obey the Lord in everything. May you be greatly blessed as you prepare yourselves and many others to meet King Jesus!

In Christ,
Rev Tan Kay Kiong and
Rev Tony Yeo

GUIDE TO USING THIS DEVOTIONAL JOURNAL

Step 1

PREPARE YOUR HEART IN GOD'S PRESENCE

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

NEW IN 2022

You can now type in the PDF copy of the Devotional Journal using your digital device as we have allotted fillable boxes for you to journal your thoughts and prayers without space constraints.



SOMETHING TO PONDER

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

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

Step 2

ALLOW GOD TO **S.O.A.P.** YOU WITH HIS WORD AND SPIRIT

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



PRAYER POINTERS FOR 2022

We have provided prayer pointers for Pastors and Staff every Tuesday and for one of the 3 Faith Exploits (Disciple the Generations, Singapore and the Nations) every Wednesday. Every Thursday, a prayer pointer is included for Outreach/Missions/New Life Leaders. On each Friday, there is a prayer pointer for SGI Leaders (e.g. Zone Mentors, CG Leaders and Assistant CG Leaders). A prayer pointer for Church Board Members is included every Saturday. Please pray for each group as well as any specific individuals whom God may bring to your mind.

PRAY FOR

THE CHURCH BEYOND & COVENANT MISSIONS

“When you come into the land and plant any kind of tree for food, then you shall regard its fruit as forbidden. Three years it shall be forbidden to you; it must not be eaten. And in the fourth year all its fruit shall be holy, an offering of praise to the LORD. But in the fifth year you may eat of its fruit, to increase its yield for you: I am the LORD your God.”

LEVITICUS 19:23-25 (ESV)

2022 IS A NEW YEAR DAWNING. COVID-19 HAS NOT gone away and the world is learning to live with the virus and its variants as a new normal. The international borders are opening up as more people are vaccinated. We are entering a new era in this global pandemic. Leviticus 19:23-25 provides us with a good applicational framework as we press on in the work of the Lord:

- Plant any kind of fruit trees: Keep proclaiming God’s Word, keep seeding.
- In the initial three years, not to eat the fruits: Be disciplined to tend the field, be patient, keep at it to build and strengthen the foundations.

- In the fourth year, to consecrate the fruits as a praise offering to God: Give thanks in everything.
- Eat the fruits from the fifth year onwards, to increase the yield: The promised fruitfulness is not just to be sustained but increased in the subsequent years.
- I am the Lord your God: Our personal and relational God will make all these things possible as we continue to walk with Him and in His ways.

Therefore we want to seed the field patiently, dedicate all the outcomes to the Lord, and continue to work diligently to receive increasingly fruitful harvests from the Lord in the years to come! Throughout the month of January, let us pray along these themes.

Give Thanks

- For the acceleration of digital adoption in the church, e.g. digital mission trips
- For partners that open new pathways for evangelism
- For the addition of new missions partners, bringing our total to 113 partners
- For the planting of 184 Disciplemaking Church Plants (DCPs)
- For salvation and baptisms among foreign workers

Keep Proclaiming the Gospel

- Even when the circumstances are difficult and may get more so
- Even when there is no sight of the possibility of a harvest

Build Foundations

- Ask the Lord to send more and younger missionaries into the field
- Covenant Missions is pivoting more partners towards church planting efforts by providing training – may this gain momentum!

Pray for the Harvest

- More new disciples and disciplemakers in Home Missions
- More DCPs in our harvest field (Asia)
- More disciplemaking movements to take shape in various countries

WORSHIP SONGS

JANUARY – FEBRUARY

NEW DOXOLOGY

Verse 1

Praise God from Whom all blessings flow
Praise Him, all creatures here below
Praise Him above, ye heavenly hosts
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost

Verse 2

Let earth and heavenly saints proclaim
The power and might of His great Name
Let us exalt on bended knee
Praise God, the Holy Trinity

Chorus

Praise God, praise God
Praise God, Who saved my soul
Praise God, praise God
Praise God from Whom all blessings flow

Verse 3

Praise to the King, His throne transcends
His crown and Kingdom never end
Now and throughout eternity
I'll praise the One Who died for me
(Repeat Chorus)

Verse 4

Praise God from Whom all blessings flow
Praise Him, all creatures here below
Praise Him above, ye heavenly hosts
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost

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10,000 REASONS (BLESS THE LORD)

Chorus

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

Verse 1

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

Verse 2

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

Verse 3

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

Ending

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

Jonas Myrin | Matt Redman
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BE THOU MY VISION

Verse 1

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

Verse 2

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

Verse 3

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

Ending

Be Thou my vision

Eleanor Henrietta Hull | Mary Elizabeth Byrne | Russell Mauldin
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GOODNESS OF GOD

Verse 1

I love You Lord
Oh Your mercy never fails me
All my days
I've been held in Your hands
From the moment that I wake up
Until I lay my head
I will sing of the goodness of God

Chorus

All my life You have been faithful
All my life You have been so, so good
With every breath that I am able
I will sing of the goodness of God

Verse 2

I love Your voice
You have led me through the fire
In darkest nights
You are close like no other
I've known You as a father
I've known You as a friend
I have lived in the goodness of God

Bridge

Your goodness is running after
It's running after me
Your goodness is running after
It's running after me
With my life laid down
I'm surrendered now
I give You everything
Your goodness is running after
It's running after me

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HOSANNA (PRAISE IS RISING)

Verse 1

Praise is rising
 Eyes are turning to You
 We turn to You
 Hope is stirring
 Hearts are yearning for You
 We long for You
 'Cause when we see You
 We find strength to face the day
 In Your presence
 All our fears are washed away
 (Washed away)

Chorus

Hosanna, hosanna
 You are the God who saves us
 Worthy of all our praises
 Hosanna, hosanna
 Come have Your way among us
 We welcome You here, Lord Jesus

Verse 2

Hear the sound of
 Hearts returning to You
 We turn to You
 In Your Kingdom
 Broken lives are made new
 You make us new
 'Cause when we see You
 We find strength to face the day
 In Your presence
 All our fears are washed away
 (Washed away)

Ending

Hosanna, hosanna

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WONDERFUL GOD

Verse 1

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

Bridge

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

Chorus

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

Verse 2

Every morning when I rise
 It is Your presence I desire
 To see Your faithfulness unending
 Mercy and goodness follow me
 For in Your presence I am free
 I put my trust in You unending

Denis Campos
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WE PRAISE YOU

Verse 1

Let praise be a weapon that silences the enemy
Let praise be a weapon that conquers all anxiety
Let it rise, let praise arise

Verse 2

We sing Your name in the dark
And it changes everything
We sing with all we are and we claim Your victory
Let it rise, let praise arise

Chorus

We'll see you break down every wall
We'll watch the giants fall
For fear cannot survive when we praise You
The God of breakthrough's on our side
Forever lift Him high
With all creation cry, God we praise You

Interlude 1

Oh, we praise You, oh

Verse 3

Let faith be the song
That overcomes the raging sea
Let faith be the song
That calms the storm inside of me
Let it rise, let faith arise

Interlude 2

Oh we praise You, oh we praise You
Oh we praise You, oh we praise You

Bridge

This is what living looks like
This is what freedom feels like
This is what Heaven sounds like
We praise You
We praise You
(Repeat)

Ending

Oh, we praise You
Oh, we praise You
Oh, we praise You
Oh yes, with all Your praise

Brandon Lake | Brian Johnson | Matt Redman | Phil Wickham
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GLORIFY YOU ALONE

Verse 1

Who is this King of glory
Beautiful and matchless one
Who is this King so holy
Every knee will bow at His throne

Pre-Chorus

Jesus, the Lamb of God
Saviour and King

Chorus

You alone are worthy of our praise forever
You alone are seated on the throne of Heaven
Glorify, glorify, You alone

Verse 2

Who is this King of mercy
Wonderful and full of grace
Who is this King so worthy
Nations fear and kingdoms praise

Verse 3

You are the King that saves us
Powerful and full of love
You are the King that gave us
Life with every drop of Your blood

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ALABASTER JAR

Verse 1

This alabaster jar is all I have of worth
I break it at Your feet, Lord
It's less than You deserve
You're far more beautiful
More precious than the oil
The sum of my desires
And the fullness of my joy
Like You spilled Your blood, I spill my heart
As an offering to my King

Chorus

Here I am take me as an offering
Here I am giving every heartbeat for Your glory
Take me

Verse 2

This time that I have left is all I have of worth
I lay it at Your feet, Lord
It's less than You deserve
And though I've little strength
And though my days are few
You gave Your life for me
So I will live my life for You
Like You spilled Your blood, I spill my heart
As an offering to my King

Bridge

(You are)
Worthy, worthy
You are worthy
Worthy is the Lord
(Repeat 8x)

Walker Beach | Zach Neese
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ANTHEM

Verse 1

So many reasons
Too many to count
To say that I love You
To worship You now
Your love is perfect
Your heart is kind
I'm Yours forever
Forever You're mine

Chorus

Jesus, the anthem of my heart
Jesus, the anchor of my soul
I'm overwhelmed by all You are
Oh how I love You

Verse 2

You call me beloved
You call me friend
Your grace says I'm worthy
You welcome me in
Now all that I long for
All that I need
Is to be in Your presence
Forever I fall at Your feet

Bridge

Faithful to the end
God, You are always good
Where do I begin
There's so many reasons to love You
Your promise never breaks
Your beauty never fades
What else can I say
There's so many reasons to love You

Interlude

Oh, there's so many reasons to love You
Oh

Ending

I'm overwhelmed by all You are
Oh how I love You
I'm overwhelmed by all You are
Oh how I love You

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SAT
01

Preparing to Meet King Jesus

SCRIPTURE 2 Peter 1:1-11

OBSERVATION

According to Apostle Peter, how should Christians prepare themselves to meet King Jesus in His eternal kingdom?

APPLICATION

Which qualities among the seven listed (in vv.5-7) does God want me to make special effort to grow in this year and what am I going to do about this?

PRAYER

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

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for Church Board: To grow in Christlike qualities and be effective and fruitful as believers in Jesus Christ
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

THIS SECOND¹ LETTER BY APOSTLE PETER WAS PROBABLY written in the early AD 60s to an unspecified group of Christians (v.1).² In it, Peter took pains to remind them of foundational truths and warn them of dangerous deceivers who sought to destroy their Christian faith.³ Thus, Peter prepared his hearers and readers **to meet King Jesus at His return.**⁴

In this passage, Peter highlights two foundational truths to which Christians must hold fast if they want to live effective and fruitful lives as they await Christ's Second Coming and have confidence that they will enter His eternal Kingdom (vv.8-11).⁵ First, **Jesus Christ is fully God** – the deity of Christ! In verse 1, one divine person was referred to: "...our God and Saviour Jesus Christ"⁶. Then in verse 2, two distinct divine persons were referred to: "...of God and of Jesus our Lord". Clearly then, the Lord Jesus is fully God – the second divine Person of the Trinity – even as He is fully human⁷. True believers put their faith in the true God and Saviour.

Second, **true Christians develop Christlike character.** The saving knowledge of Jesus Christ provides Christians with the divine power to grow in Christlikeness (vv.3-4). However, believers must make strenuous and sustained personal efforts ("make every effort", v.5) alongside God's divine work within them, to grow and increase in Christlike qualities. Seven are mentioned here: **virtue, knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, godliness, brotherly affection and love** (vv.5-7). Decisive actions and continual practice are required. Over time, the true believers will develop a Christlike character that is distinct from the world and glorifies God.

¹ 2 Peter 3:1.

² Likely the same recipients identified in 1 Peter 1:1. Peter had previously ministered to them through preaching (2 Pet 1:16) and now when he was anticipating his impending death (2 Pet 1:14; presumably from persecution).

³ 2 Peter 1:12-15; 2:1-3; 3:1-3.

⁴ 2 Peter 3:10-14.

⁵ The fruitfulness of a Christian's life provides evidence of salvation.

⁶ Likewise, Titus 2:13.

⁷ The apostles and early disciples were first-hand witnesses of the fact that Jesus had lived, walked and ate with them and the people, and had taught, ministered and served among them.

SUN
02

SUNDAY JOURNAL

SCRIPTURE

OBSERVATION

APPLICATION

PRAYER

THE PAST WEEK

Review

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

◆ What gave me life and what drained me?

◆ How was the Spirit of God at work?

THE PAST WEEK

Reflect

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

Respond

- ◆ What is one thing I need to do in light of what God is saying? Commit in prayer.

Family Devotional

Week 1

Self-Control:

Choosing to do what you should even when you don't want to.

Memory Verse

"God's power has given us everything we need to lead a godly life." - 2 PETER 1:3 (NIRV)

* Bottom Line

Be ready to do the right thing.*

* Bible Story

Luke 4:1-13 - Temptation

* Activity

Oh! So Ticklish

Props: A feather or something similar

Play a tickling game. Pair up your family members. Then ask the first person in the pairing to use a feather or something similar to tickle the other person on the arm, neck or face, while he or she tries to resist touching where it itches. Do this for about 30 seconds before switching roles. After playing a few rounds, get everyone to share how they feel about resisting temptation.

Say, "In Luke 4:1-13, Jesus faced immense temptations from Satan. He could have used His power to prove that He could do what Satan was asking Him to do, but He chose to stay firm. What would you have done if you were Jesus? Our friends may persuade us to do the wrong things and threaten not to be our friends. Doing the wrong thing causes more harm. As followers of Christ, we can trust God's power to guide us to do the right thing."

* Talk About It

- Describe a person who lives a godly life.
- How did Jesus react to Satan's temptation?
- Why is it difficult for us to do the right thing when everyone is doing otherwise?
- God can give us the power to do what's right. How do we get God's power?

Parents: Share with your family members about an experience in which you did the right thing against all odds. What happened? How did you feel? How did God help you? How did the incident change the way you think or behave?

* Prayer

Thank God for His everlasting power that helps us do the right thing! Ask God to give us a strong heart and mind to stay away from sin.

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 BIBLE STORY VIDEO
<https://cefc.ch/22FD01W1>



MON
03

Disciple the Nations

SCRIPTURE 2 Peter 1:1-11

OBSERVATION

What knowledge was Apostle Peter emphasising in this passage (vv.2, 3, 8) and why is it important?

APPLICATION

What steps will I take this year to disciple people, whatever their nationality or ethnicity, in that knowledge?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, thank You for the Gospel – it is Your power for salvation for everyone who believes in Your Son Jesus Christ. Thank You that by Your grace I have come to know Jesus as my Lord and Saviour and put my faith in Him. Please help me to grow in my knowledge of Jesus and to live a godly life. In His name I pray. Amen.



DEEPER REFLECTION

THIS WEEK WE WILL REFLECT ON FAITH EXPLOIT 3 –

Disciple the Nations. This global task is of such scope and immensity! No local church nor denomination can accomplish it alone. It is a task for the global Church, empowered by the Holy Spirit, to work together in unity, concert and partnership. Discipling the nations is, as expressed by the Lausanne slogan, “The Whole Church taking the Whole Gospel to the Whole World”⁸.

The Apostle Peter described his addressees as “those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours” (v.1). All believers in Jesus Christ are equal in God’s eyes, regardless of their background, ethnicity, status and title. Gentiles and non-apostles who have faith in Christ can be confident that their faith – received⁹ as a gift from God – is in no way inferior to that of Christian Jews and the apostles. **The Gospel is for all peoples in the whole world!** In Christ, all believers are fellow children of God and fellow servants of Christ.

The whole Gospel centres on Jesus Christ! A fuller knowledge¹⁰ of Jesus Christ starts with believing in who He is (the Son of God) and trusting in what He has done (died on the cross as an atoning sacrifice for our sins and rose on the third day). Such knowledge results in believers receiving the forgiveness of sins and the righteousness of God as a gift by His grace. They are reconciled to God their Creator and King, saved from condemnation, and will one day enter God’s glory. **The whole Church must therefore disciple people in the knowledge of Jesus Christ!**

⁸ <https://lausanne.org/content/twg-three-wholes> (accessed 2 Dec 2021).

⁹ The Greek verb (*lanchanō*) is translated as “obtained” in the ESV and “received” in the NIV. It means “obtain by lot”, “receive”. ... and has “the connotation of reception of a gift or in the least reception of something that one does not deserve”.: The NET Bible translation notes.

¹⁰ The Greek noun (*epignōsis*) used in verses 2, 3 and 8 means a fuller knowledge. “As an intensified form of *gnōsis*, *epignōsis* (“apt-experiential knowledge”) refers to knowledge gained through direct, personal experience. This “fits” the individual situation and hence is “appropriate, suitable” (“apt”) knowledge”. The Discovery Bible HELPS Lexicon.

TUE
04

Reminders of the Truth

SCRIPTURE 2 Peter 1:12-21

OBSERVATION

Why was the Apostle Peter so intent (vv.12, 13, 15) on giving reminders to the hearers and readers of his letter?

APPLICATION

What will I do this year to know the Scriptures better, so that I can remind people of the truth of the very words of God?

PRAYER

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

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for pastors and staff: To be faithful students and effective communicators of God's Word
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

THE APOSTLE PETER WAS BENT ON REMINDING HIS HEARERS

of the truth of God's Word: "...I intend always..." (v.12); "...as long as I am in this body..." (v.13); "I will make every effort..." (v.15). The reminders were to protect them from various deceptions (see 2 Pet 2-3). What Peter (and the other apostles) had to offer were eyewitness accounts of what they had seen and heard concerning the Lord Jesus Christ (vv.16-18).¹¹ In addition, they had the reliable prophetic word, i.e. the Old Testament Scriptures, which were inspired by the Holy Spirit (vv.19-21).

People everywhere in every generation would do well to pay attention to the divinely inspired Scriptures, because it is as "a lamp shining in a dark place" (v.19a)¹² that will bring clarity to their sight and hope to their hearts ("until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts", v.19b). Peter probably used "the morning star" to refer to the ultimate Davidic king, Jesus the promised Messiah.¹³ So the Scriptures reliably reveal Jesus Christ, who can be received by faith into the hearts of the hearers or readers of the Scriptures.

In addition, Peter makes an all-important point about **the source of the Scriptures**. The source was God, not man. The prophets did not think up the words for themselves and originate the Scriptures (vv.20-21). The men were chosen mouthpieces and spokesmen who "spoke from God" (v.21). Every biblical prophecy was inspired by the Holy Spirit (v.21). The Scriptures are a divine product. Therefore, God's Word in totality and in every part is truth that lasts forever (Psa 119:160).

¹¹ Peter, James and John had personally witnessed the majesty of Jesus' divine glory on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt 17:1-8; Mk 9:2-8; Lk 9:28-36).

¹² God's Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path (Psa 119:105).

¹³ Numbers 24:17; Matthew 2:2.

WED
05

Beware of False Prophets and Teachers

SCRIPTURE 2 Peter 2:1-11

OBSERVATION

What are the dangerous influences and destructive teachings of false prophets and teachers?

APPLICATION

What false teachings am I lately in danger of accepting to my detriment and possible destruction?

PRAYER

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

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for leaders
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for Singapore: That God will continue to raise up godly leaders for our nation in the Church and in the government
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

FALSE PROPHETS AND TEACHERS WILL ARISE AMONG

human societies and even church communities. They will “secretly bring in” (v.1), insidiously teach and spread heresies (i.e. beliefs that are against those of the historic Christian faith). Heresies are destructive to people’s present lives and eternal destinies, but many of these false teachings will not be detected because church leaders and members lack vigilance. Heresies include even denying the Master (i.e. the Lord Jesus Christ) who bought sinners with His blood (v.1). The false prophets and teachers will speak words that offend and show no respect for God’s way of truth (v.2). They will twist and distort the correct understanding of truth, such that truths will be presented as lies, and falsehoods will be promoted as facts. Evidence of these abound today.

Have there not arisen around the world many celebrity preachers of the prosperity gospel – the teachings that tell hearers that believing in Jesus Christ entitles them to health and wealth in the here and now? Do we not see the rise of online falsehoods, disinformation and misinformation about human origins, spirituality and the end of the world? Are there not attempts at revisionist interpretations of Scripture to support unrestricted and unnatural sexual relations, and gender fluidity?

Thus the false prophets and teachers will exploit ignorant and unstable people, as well as those who welcome the prospect of having a licence to sin or an endorsement of their sinful lifestyles (vv.2, 3, 10). As a result, there will be many who profess to be Christians but do not follow Christ, and live as though God does not exist.

THU
06

The Ungodly Are Headed for Destruction

SCRIPTURE 2 Peter 2:12-22

OBSERVATION

What are Apostle Peter's descriptions of the ungodly and their destiny?

APPLICATION

How does this statement, "For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved" (v.19b), apply to me and what will I do about it?

PRAYER

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

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for Outreach/Missions/New Life leaders: To keep themselves from being deceived into ungodly living
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

THE LORD IS GRACIOUS AND MERCIFUL. IN THE SCRIPTURES,

God has given His people repeated warnings against turning away from Him, forsaking His righteous ways and going astray. We know that many people in the last days will be "lovers of self", "lovers of money" and "lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God".¹⁴

Do not become like ungodly people who are headed for judgment and destruction by God (vv.12, 13, 17b)¹⁵! Based on what Peter is saying in this text, such people may be in our congregations! They could be in your small groups! Such people are those who have in the past heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ and perhaps partially believed it, but subsequently reject the Lord's teaching and return to their old ways and sinful practices (vv.20-22). They are "slaves to corruption" (v.19), entangled and overcome by the defilements of the world (v.20), and now in a worse state than before they sought to follow Jesus (vv.20-21). They are like the dog that returns to eat its own vomit and the pig that returns to dirty itself in the mud (v.22).

Avoid these deceivers! They themselves have been deceived by the devil and now seek to deceive others.¹⁶ They promise freedom when they themselves have been enslaved to sin. They sell the idea of being free to do as one wishes – even wilfully and continually sinning against God.¹⁷ They champion self-fulfilment and urge people to pursue the sensual passions of the flesh and monetary gain to feed the greed in their hearts (vv.14-15, 18)¹⁸. God will certainly punish and destroy them.

¹⁴ 2 Timothy 3:1-5.

¹⁵ See also verses 3b to 10a.

¹⁶ Verses 13, 18; 2 Timothy 3:13.

¹⁷ Perhaps perversely asserting that, on the basis of God's grace, it is not a problem to sin because Christ has already paid the penalty for all our sins! This is the cheapening of grace – promoting faith in Jesus Christ without the repentance of sins. A desire for God's blessings without the commitment to carry one's cross and follow Jesus.

¹⁸ See also 2 Peter 2:2, 3, 10.

FRI
07

The Righteous Await an Eternal Home

SCRIPTURE 2 Peter 3:1-13

OBSERVATION

What will the day of the Lord bring about for this present world and the people in it?

APPLICATION

How do I want to live the rest of my life, knowing that the day of the Lord will surely come?

PRAYER

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

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for SGI leaders: To live godly lives with a hope for the future that is secure in God's perfect plan
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

TOGETHER WITH THE EXISTING HEAVENS AND EARTH, all ungodly people will be destroyed on the day of the Lord, i.e. the day of judgment (vv.7, 10, 12). In contrast, righteous people – all those who have repented of their sins and received the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ¹⁹ – will henceforth dwell in the new earth that God will bring about. In that eternal dwelling place of God and His people,²⁰ there will only be righteousness (v.13). Evil and wickedness will be absent forever.²¹

God's people must persevere in living godly lives while they wait for the day of the Lord, the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. That day will certainly come, as God has promised (vv.5-7), and suddenly and unexpectedly "like a thief" (v.10). In the last days, God's people must be careful not to be discouraged or distracted by scoffers who, motivated by their sinful desires, will scoff at God's promise and mock His beloved people who are waiting for the return of Christ (vv.3-4). Such scoffers deliberately suppress the truth and deceive themselves to justify continuing their sinful lifestyles. If there is no God or no judgment day to come, then one has no need to account for one's works of evil and wickedness, the deeds of darkness.

It is a mistake to perceive slowness on God's part to fulfil His promise. Any "delay" is correctly to be regarded by us as God's exercise of patience in giving sinners more time to repent and turn from their sins to believe in the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ for salvation and eternal life.

¹⁹ Romans 3:21-26.

²⁰ Revelation 21:1-4; 22:1-5.

²¹ Revelation 21:8, 27; 22:15.

SAT
08

The Remnant Anchor in God's Word

SCRIPTURE 2 Peter 3:14-18

OBSERVATION

What are Peter's closing exhortations to Christians who will certainly encounter false teachings, lawlessness and opposition in the last days as they wait for Christ's return?

APPLICATION

As a disciple of Christ, how can I stand firm to the end and help others do likewise?

PRAYER

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

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for Church Board: To grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

IN THE LAST DAYS, CHRISTIANS WILL ENCOUNTER FALSE prophets and teachers, and ungodly and lawless people. We need to keep growing in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus, living godly lives, trusting in the reliability of the apostolic witness and the Scriptures, and waiting for the Lord's return. Peter now gives us two final exhortations.

First, **“be diligent to be found by [God] without spot or blemish, and at peace. And count the patience of our Lord as salvation”** (vv.14-15). The Greek verb translated as “be diligent” (ESV; NASB) or “make every effort” (NIV) is a command.²² It conveys fervency to accomplish all that God assigns and being “eager to do something, with the implication of readiness to expend energy and effort”.²³ Christ's disciples must be fervent and eager to live a godly life of Christlike character,²⁴ at peace with God and people, and to maximise opportunities to lead unbelievers to salvation in Christ.

Second, **“take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ”** (vv.17-18). The Greek verb translated as “take care” (ESV) or “be on your guard” (NIV; NASB) is another command.²⁵ It means to preserve by “having an eye on”, like the constant vigilance displayed by shepherds in keeping their flocks.²⁶ We must maintain a lifestyle of constant vigilance against error and deception, so that we will not be led astray and have our faith shaken. We must grow to know Jesus more and more through the Scriptures – both the Old and New Testaments.²⁷

²² The Greek aorist imperative commands mandatory action to be completely done (“checked-off”); it focuses on the first, most immediate (“nearest”) attainment if a series of episodes is intended: The Discovery Bible.

²³ The Discovery Bible HELP Lexicon.

²⁴ Cf. 1 Peter 1:19.

²⁵ The Greek present imperative commands ongoing action, i.e. a regular, long-term way of doing something as an ongoing lifestyle; the process-action must happen again and again over multiple situations or repeatedly (progressively) in the same scenario: The Discovery Bible.

²⁶ The Discovery Bible HELP Lexicon.

²⁷ Peter considered Paul's writings in all his letters as on par with the (Old Testament) Scriptures: vv.15b-16.

SUN
09

SUNDAY JOURNAL

SCRIPTURE

OBSERVATION

APPLICATION

PRAYER

THE PAST WEEK

Review

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

◆ What gave me life and what drained me?

◆ How was the Spirit of God at work?

THE PAST WEEK

Reflect

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

Respond

- ◆ What is one thing I need to do in light of what God is saying? Commit in prayer.

Family Devotional

Week 2

Self-Control:

Choosing to do what you should even when you don't want to.

Memory Verse

"God's power has given us everything we need to lead a godly life." - 2 PETER 1:3 (NIRV)

* Bottom Line

When you lose control, it can cause trouble.**

* Bible Story

Proverbs 25:28 - Calm Down

* Activity

Domino Effect

Props: Dominoes (at least 50 pieces)

Ask your family members to form the word "God" with the domino pieces in an upright position. When complete, get someone to push the starting piece to topple all the dominoes. Think about how one action can cause a domino effect down the line.

Say, "The domino pieces are like our words or actions. If we do not learn to control our habits, words or anger, everything else will fall. We can cause further damage and make more people angry. But the opposite is also true. When we treat others well, good things will come forth. We can ask God for help. He can guide us and do the right thing."

* Talk About It

- How does a person with good self-control behave?
- Why is self-control so important? Why can't we just do what we feel like doing?
- Where do we most need to grow in self-control?
- What can we do if we feel that we are losing control?

Parents: Share with your family members about an experience in which you lost control, for example, your temper, addiction, words and so on. How did it affect you and those around you? What changes did you make to your behaviour after the incident?

* Prayer

Ask for God's help to develop control over our words and actions so that others will get to see His glory and goodness through us.

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BIBLE STORY VIDEO
<https://cefc.ch/22FD01W2>



MON
10

Disciple Singapore

SCRIPTURE Revelation 1:1-8

OBSERVATION

In this passage, what descriptions are there of the identity of the Apostle John's readers and hearers, both then and now (see vv.1, 4-6)?

APPLICATION

What are the implications of me being a priest of God in Singapore (or wherever God has placed me in this world)?

PRAYER

Almighty God, You are the Alpha and the Omega, who is and was and who is to come. Thank You for the First Coming of Your Son Jesus Christ. We are so grateful that Jesus loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood. We anticipate His Second Coming soon. Until then, please empower us by the Holy Spirit to be Your priests and faithful witnesses in Singapore or wherever we are.

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for leaders
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

THIS WEEK WE WILL REFLECT ON REVELATION 1 TO 3 AS we think about **Faith Exploit 2 – Disciple Singapore**. May the Lord our God lead us in the action steps to be taken as individual Christians, families and a local church in Singapore. Our beloved country is a city-state known for many strengths.²⁸ However, more than 80% of the people have yet to believe in the Gospel.²⁹

The Apostle John wrote the book of Revelation to bear witness to all that he saw, as shown by Jesus Christ through an angel (vv.1-2). John probably received this revelation around A.D. 95, in the context of persecution of Christians by the Roman Emperor Domitian.³⁰ John's message was first given to seven churches in the Roman province of Asia (v.4), but is also meant for all churches.³¹ Jesus Christ is “the ruler of kings on earth” (v.5). Indeed, He is the “King of kings and Lord of lords” (Rev 19:16)! Jesus has made all His disciples “a kingdom, priests to His God and Father” (v.6). Therefore, we are to tell our fellow Lion City-dwellers (Singapore citizens, permanent residents and foreigners who live here for work or study) about King Jesus who is coming again soon to judge the world in righteousness (“Behold, He is coming with the clouds and every eye will see him,...and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him”, v.7; Psa 96:13). That day is much sooner than when John wrote Revelation.³² So, with love and compassion, let us urgently implore people to repent of their sins and believe in Jesus Christ while there is still time.

²⁸ E.g. world-class education, healthcare and transport; low crime levels, strong political stability and forward-thinking economic strategy. In 2021, Singapore was the fourth strongest nation brand in the world, scoring particularly high for Global Soft Power Index pillars of Business & Trade, and Governance: <https://brandirectory.com/rankings/nation-brands/>

²⁹ According to the Singapore Census of Population 2020, 18.9% of the population 15 years and over in 2020 identify themselves as Christians: https://www.singstat.gov.sg/-/media/files/visualising_data/infographics/c2020/c2020-religion.pdf

³⁰ <https://www.biblica.com/resources/scholar-notes/niv-study-bible/intro-to-revelation/>

³¹ <https://www.esv.org/resources/esv-global-study-bible/introduction-to-revelation/>

³² Cf. “the things that must soon take place” (v.1); “the time is near” (v.3).

TUE
11Behold the Lord
Jesus Christ

SCRIPTURE Revelation 1:9-20

OBSERVATION

What are the descriptions of Jesus in this passage (see vv.13-18)?

APPLICATION

What would I feel and how would I respond if I saw the Lord Jesus and heard His words today?

PRAYER

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

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for pastors and staff: To listen to the Lord Jesus' voice through the Scriptures and His Spirit, and obey His commands
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

THE APOSTLE JOHN WAS ON THE ISLAND OF PATMOS³³, probably exiled there by the Roman authorities because he was considered a threat to public order by his uncompromising commitment to proclaim the word of God and the Good News of Jesus Christ (v.9). According to verse 10, John received the revelation on a Sunday (“the Lord’s day”) while in a state of heightened spiritual sensitivity (“in the Spirit”). He was to record the revelation in writing to be sent to the seven churches (v.11). The voice which commanded John regarding these things belonged to the resurrected, ascended and sovereign Lord Jesus Christ (vv.17-18).

Jesus was vividly described in verses 13 to 16. He looked like a human being and a divine being at the same time (“one like a son of man”, v.13; cf. Dan 7:13-14)³⁴. Seeing Jesus, John immediately fell at His feet as though dead and in great fear (v.17). If we were in John’s sandals, the blinding radiance of Jesus’ glory would overwhelm us too – perhaps like how we cannot bear to look directly at the blazing noonday sun with our naked eyes. A glimpse of Jesus in His incomparable majesty and power would instantly make us weak and our knees would involuntarily buckle, causing us to fall face down to the ground and remain there trembling uncontrollably in great fear and awe.

Although we have not had John’s experience of seeing the Lord Jesus, we can nonetheless learn to approach and worship Him **in reverent awe**. There is simply no place for a casual approach, a flippant attitude, an irreverent posture and a distracted heart.

³³ Patmos was a small island off the West coast of Asia Minor; it was one of the places to which Rome banished its criminals: <https://biblehub.com/topical/p/patmos.htm>

³⁴ The Son of Man receives from the Ancient of Days a glorious, universal and everlasting dominion, and an eternal Kingdom.

WED
12Return to the Love
Once Fervent

SCRIPTURE Revelation 2:1-11

OBSERVATION

In what ways has the church in Ephesus abandoned the love they had at first (vv.4-5)?

APPLICATION

What must I do to return to the love I had at first?

PRAYER

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

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for leaders
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for Singapore: That multitudes will repent of their sins, believe in Jesus Christ, and be faithful to Him and fervent for Him
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

“PATIENT ENDURANCE” (VV.2, 3) WAS A KEY THEME

repeated in the Lord’s messages to the seven churches (see also 1:9; 2:19; 3:10). It means steadfastness or perseverance. The Lord’s disciples need this quality, because they will be tested in the trials and tribulations that will come (vv.9-10a). Jesus promised a great reward to those who remain faithful even unto death (vv.10b-11). Brothers and sisters, how are you responding to evil doers and false teachers (v.2), and bearing up under persecution and suffering for your faith (vv.9-10)?

Although the Lord commended the church in Ephesus for their patient endurance, he pointed out, **“You have abandoned the love you had at first”** (v.4). It was not that the Ephesian Christians abandoned or forsook the Lord Jesus. For if they did, they would not have patiently endured severe challenges for His sake (v.3). Rather, the problem was that the Christians lost the extent of love and fervour that they had for Jesus when they first believed in Him and began to follow Him. They probably also lost much of their love and affection for one another in the church.³⁵ In other words, the Christians fell from their initial heights of love for Jesus and one another (v.5). What about the church in Singapore? Brothers and sisters, if you recognise that this has happened in your **devotional life, worship, small group communities, ministry and outreach**, the Lord calls you today to **repent of a love grown cold** and to **return to the love once fervent!** Recall your early love for Jesus and one another, and do again the works that flowed from that!

³⁵ Cf. Mark 12:29-31; 1 John 4:20.

THU
13Repent of
Sexual Immorality

SCRIPTURE Revelation 2:12-29

OBSERVATION

What are the major sin problems in the churches of Pergamum and Thyatira?

APPLICATION

What specific sins do I need to repent of (i.e. decisively change my mind about those sins, abhor them and consequently stop doing them)?

PRAYER

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

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for Outreach/Missions/New Life leaders: To be determined to pursue lives of holiness with the help of God and Christian community
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

SEXUAL IMMORALITY WAS A MAJOR SIN PROBLEM IN BOTH

the churches in Pergamum and Thyatira due to false teaching and alluring seductions (vv.14, 20). Likewise in the Singapore society and Church.

Although Singapore is still a relatively conservative society, the trend over the past two decades is towards being more liberal, according to the Institute of Policy Studies survey findings released in February 2021.³⁶ From interviews with over 2,000 adult Singapore citizens and permanent residents, 32.7% said that having **casual sex** was sometimes, mostly or always justifiable, and 54.1% said the same regarding **sex before marriage**.³⁷

Research has shown that the vast majority of Christians in Singapore consider pornography and premarital sex as going against biblical teaching and unacceptable. However, many Christians do struggle on a practical level to pursue a life of holiness. 7,209 Christians across 10 churches took the Whole Life Inventory³⁸ in 2016. Key findings include:³⁹

- 42% viewed **pornography** at least once in the past 12 months. Higher prevalence among men (68%) than women (24%). Frequency: 17% viewed pornography at least once a month.
- 9% had at least one **sexual encounter outside of marriage** in the past 12 months. Young adults who were dating or engaged (33%) were disproportionately more likely to engage in premarital sex.

Christ's disciples **must** do battle with strong internal desires for self-gratification and external pressures to conform to the world's patterns, and resist the devil's temptations towards sexual sins. Singapore church leaders and communities **must** offer practical assistance and provide better support to members who are struggling, so that they feel safe to seek and receive help.

³⁶ <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/community/singapore-still-conservative-on-moral-sexuality-issues-but-more-liberal-since>

³⁷ <https://lkyspp.nus.edu.sg/docs/default-source/ips/ips-exchange-series-16.pdf>

³⁸ A multi-dimensional instrument designed for churches to assess and understand the health of their congregation.

³⁹ *Whole Life Research Brief 2016: Essential Findings on the State of Family in Singapore Churches*, pp.7-8.

https://www.wholelife.sg/wholelife/downloads/wl_research_brief/Whole_Life_Research_Brief_2016.pdf

FRI
14

Wake Up and Hold Fast

SCRIPTURE Revelation 3:1-13

OBSERVATION

What contrasts do you observe in the respective messages that the Lord Jesus gave to these two churches?

APPLICATION

Which church does the Singapore Church resemble more and what do I as an individual Christian learn from these two early churches?

PRAYER

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

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for SGI leaders: To be continually vigilant against spiritual backsliding and to always hold fast to the Lord's words
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

IN THE CONTEXT, "WAKE UP" (VV.2, 3) MEANS, FIGURATIVELY,

be continually vigilant.⁴⁰ Such a warning was necessary for the church in Sardis, because they were on a downward trend that had to be arrested immediately. If this was not stopped and reversed, the Christians will continue to go downhill spiritually, notwithstanding an appearance of health (merely a thin veneer!) and reputation of vitality (unmatched by real substance!). The church had to wake up and stay awake! The Christians had to strengthen their deteriorating body and build on the remaining functioning aspects, in order to complete the works that God expected of them (v.2). Verses 3 and 4 seem to indicate that the church (as a whole) had not faithfully obeyed God's commands, though some individual believers remained courageously faithful to Christ. The Lord Jesus warned of an impending sudden judgment on the church if they did not repent (v.3), but promised an eternal reward if they walked in faithfulness (v.5).

In contrast, the church in Philadelphia **held fast** to the Lord's commands in the face of strong persecuting pressures to deny His name (v.8). The Lord had no rebuke for this church,⁴¹ but only commendation and encouragement. Despite having little strength, these Christians showed patient endurance and steadfastly kept the Lord's words (vv.8, 10). For that reason, Jesus promised His beloved people that He will protect and preserve them throughout a coming period of worldwide trial and testing. When the Lord returns, He will reward them bountifully for all eternity (vv.10-12). May Singaporean Christians also eternally dwell with God and bear His names!

⁴⁰ "The command to 'wake up' is a reminder that twice in its history Sardis had been sacked (in 547/546 B.C. by Cyrus II, and in 214 B.C. by Antiochus III) when the watchmen on the wall failed to detect an enemy army sneaking up its supposedly impregnable cliffs and walls": ESV Study Bible.

⁴¹ The only other church that received no rebuke from the Lord was the church in Smyrna (Rev 2:8-11).

SAT
15Behold, I Stand at the
Door and Knock

SCRIPTURE Revelation 3:14-22

OBSERVATION

Why did the Lord Jesus address His hearers with the words of this passage?

APPLICATION

What is Jesus saying to me about the true state of my heart and how will I respond to Him?

PRAYER

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

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for Church Board: To give the Lord Jesus full access to their hearts to lovingly restore them from the inside out
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

VERSE 20 IS SOMETIMES USED FOR GOSPEL INVITATIONS

in evangelistic messages. **“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.”** Based on these words, the preacher would paint a picture of the Lord Jesus standing outside the door of your heart, knocking and waiting for you to let him come in. If you open the door, He will come in to dine with you and, indeed, live in your heart forever. Thus begins the new convert’s new life through faith in Christ.

Yet in the original context, the Lord Jesus was addressing the church in Laodicea and His words were directed to believers, not unbelievers. The Laodicean Christians were materially rich, prosperous and self-sufficient, but unaware of their spiritual poverty, blindness and nakedness (v.17). Their useless outward religiosity (“lukewarm,....neither hot nor cold”, v.16) so repulsed the Lord that He wanted to spit them out of His mouth (vv.15-16).⁴² Why then did Jesus stand at their door and knock to seek entry? First, **He loves them**. The preceding verse 19 says, **“Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.”** Second, Jesus wanted them to experience **spiritual restoration through repentance** (vv.18-19). Today, the Lord gives His counsel and invitation to us. Are we willing to open the doors of our hearts to Jesus, to accept His loving reproof and discipline, and to repent of any lukewarmness in our discipleship? If so, Jesus will come in and lovingly restore us **from the inside out**.

⁴² “The waters of the nearby Lycus River were muddy and undrinkable, and the waters flowing by aqueduct from hot springs 5 miles (8 km) away were **lukewarm** when they reached Laodicea. Likewise, Jesus found His church’s tepid indifference repugnant. **Cold** and **hot** water represents something positive, for cold water refreshes in the heat, and hot water is a tonic when one is chilly.”: ESV Study Bible.

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SCRIPTURE

OBSERVATION

APPLICATION

PRAYER

THE PAST WEEK

Review

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

◆ What gave me life and what drained me?

◆ How was the Spirit of God at work?

THE PAST WEEK

Reflect

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

Respond

- ◆ What is one thing I need to do in light of what God is saying? Commit in prayer.

Family Devotional

Week 3

Self-Control:

Choosing to do what you should even when you don't want to.

Memory Verse

"God's power has given us everything we need to lead a godly life." - 2 PETER 1:3 (NIRV)

* Bottom Line

Don't be controlled by your anger.*

* Bible Story

1 Samuel 24 - Bad Blood

* Activity

Anger Awareness Dice

Props: A small cube-shaped paper box

Write a question on each side of the box (see below). Get each family member to take turns rolling the box and answering the question shown on top.

Side 1 When I am mad, why do I feel anger?	Side 2 What do I do when I am angry?	Side 3 How can I control my anger?
Side 4 What makes me angry?	Side 5 How do I feel when others are angry with me?	Side 6 Who gets hurt when I am angry?

Say, "Saul wanted to kill David. David must have been very upset. He had helped Saul win many battles. When David had the chance to kill Saul, he controlled his anger and spared Saul's life. If he had killed Saul, he would have sinned against God. If we do not control our anger, we are likely to say or do things that could cost us dearly."

* Talk About It

- What does the Bible say about anger?
- What is it about anger that makes it so hard to control?
- What situations make us angry? Why?
- What are some things that we can do to help us remember to stop and think before losing our temper?

Parents: Share with your family members about an incident where you lost your temper. How did it affect you or others? What changes did you make to prevent it from happening again?

* Prayer

Ask God to teach us to be calm like Him during angry moments. Pray for God's wisdom to handle difficult situations so that we do not cause ourselves or others to sin.

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MON
17

Disciple the Generations

SCRIPTURE 1 John 1:1-2:6

OBSERVATION

What repeated words and phrases do you observe in this passage?

APPLICATION

What insights have I learnt about "fellowship" and how will I apply them in this new year?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, I praise You for the worldwide family of God who share in the saving knowledge of Your Son Jesus Christ. His death on the cross has brought us life now and forevermore! His blood has bought us freedom from slavery to sin! His victory over sin and death has given us hope of the glory of God! Thank You for my local church. Help me to love Your people with Your love. Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for leaders
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

THIS WEEK WE WILL REFLECT ON FAITH EXPLOIT 3 –

Disciple the Generations. Early church tradition has it that the author of the letter of 1 John was the Apostle John writing from Ephesus around A.D. 85-95. The elderly apostle's concern in this letter⁴³ was with heretical teachings – an early form of Gnosticism – that was infiltrating the churches. John wrote to disciple the generations that came after him with teachings about the deity and humanity of Jesus Christ, obedience to the truth, righteous living, dealing with sin, having love for God and fellow-Christians, exposing the works of the devil and false teachers, and the nature of the antichrist.

In today's passage, there are many repeated words and phrases, such as "fellowship", "light", "darkness", "walk", "truth", "lie / liar", "sin / sins", "know Him" and "keep His commandments".⁴⁴ Today we focus on one word – "**fellowship**" (mentioned four times, vv.3, 6, 7). "Fellowship" means "what is shared in common, as the basis of fellowship (partnership, community)"⁴⁵. Christians are sinners saved by God's grace through faith in His Son Jesus Christ, who was the propitiation (or atoning sacrifice) for our sins.⁴⁶ As fellow Christians, we share in the saving knowledge of God and share a kindred relationship across the generations. As brothers and sisters in Christ, we must learn to share our resources with one another in the love of God. Through the Scriptures, prayers, encouragements, and emotional and material support, we are to help one another in our small group communities to **walk in the light (v.7), keep God's Word (1 Jn 2:3-6) and make disciples across the generations.**

⁴³ The letter seemed to have been a circular letter sent to the churches of the province of Asia.

⁴⁴ These are themes that occur throughout this letter.

⁴⁵ HELPS Lexicon, The Discovery Bible. "Believers are fellow-partners (**sharers**) in the true knowledge of God because each **belongs to the Lord**. Accordingly, they share **unique companionship** with each other – a **kindred spirit** and fellowship that **transcends** all racial and economic barriers."

⁴⁶ 1 John 2:2. "The Greek word (*hilasmos*) behind the phrase **atoning sacrifice** conveys both the idea of 'turning aside divine wrath' and the idea of 'cleansing from sin': NET Bible study note.

TUE
18Who and What
Do We Love?

SCRIPTURE 1 John 2:7-17

OBSERVATION

Who and what are Christians to love?

APPLICATION

What wrong and unworthy loves must I turn away from and how can I continually guard myself against them?

PRAYER

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

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for pastors and staff: To keep close to God, love one another, desire the things of God and do His will
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

THE APOSTLE JOHN EMPHASISES THE LORD'S COMMAND

for Christians to **love one another**; it is an old commandment renewed and highlighted with intensity (vv.7-11). This is because Jesus Christ has already come to bring light into the world and those who believe in Him **must walk in His light and love** (vv.8, 10). Otherwise, they show their spiritual blindness and lack of understanding of the truth regarding their new identity as children of God (vv.9-11). Those who walk in darkness are, notwithstanding their professions of faith in Christ, people who are ignorant of the truth and live in ways that are incongruent with true belief in the Lord. If we are brothers and sisters in the Lord, then there must be mutual love, respect and honour among us and between the generations.⁴⁷

Christians are to **love God**. They **must not love the world or the things of the world** (v.15a). It is so easy for believers who stray from the Lord to be enticed, enamoured and entangled by the things of the world. No one can love the world and at the same time love God (v.15b). The “desires of the flesh” are sensual. The “desires of the eyes” are covetous. “Pride in possessions” is the boastful arrogance arising from material wealth and security. The desires for the things of the world are not from the Father (v.16). They are temporal and are passing away together with the world itself (v.17a). Contrasted with the temporal are people who **love God, desire the things of God and do His will**; they will not pass away but remain forever (v.17b).

⁴⁷ All believers, whether older or younger, need assurance and encouragement in the Lord (vv.12-14).

WED
19Do We Have Family
Resemblance?

SCRIPTURE 1 John 2:18-3:10

OBSERVATION

What does this passage say about the children of God (see v.28-1 Jn 3:10)?

APPLICATION

How can I abide in Christ and practise righteousness (vv.27-29; 1 Jn 3:6-7)?

PRAYER

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

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for leaders
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for Singapore: That our nation will turn to Christ and multitudes will be born again into God's family in this last hour
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

THE TERM “ANTICHRIST” (GREEK *ANTICHRISTOS*)⁴⁸ REFERS

to a false teacher who opposes Christ. Antichrists arose from within the Christian communities (v.19) and propagated two central lies – Jesus is not the Christ (v.22) and Jesus Christ has not come in the flesh (1 Jn 4:1-3). Essentially, they denied that Jesus was both fully God and fully man. In denying the Son, they also denied the Father (vv.22-23). Under demonic influence directed by Satan,⁴⁹ antichrists will continue to arise and oppose the true knowledge of Jesus in “the last hour” (v.18) – the final period before His Second Coming (v.28).⁵⁰ Taught by the Holy Spirit, true believers know the truth and can discern the lies (vv.20, 27).

The Holy Spirit also empowers God's children to practise righteousness (v.29; 1 Jn 3:7). When we abide in Christ, we will not keep on sinning (1 Jn 3:6). It is the devil's children who make a practice of sinning (1 Jn 3:4, 8, 10).

No one born of God will keep practising sin (1 Jn 3:9). It is not that Christians are perfectly righteous and do not sin at all in this present life.⁵¹ Rather it is that God's children have been transformed by God's Word and Spirit, such that they cannot live in a pattern of continual sin. When we do sin, we must confess and repent of our sins, receive God's forgiveness and cleansing,⁵² and renew our fellowship with God. The glorious truth is that when Jesus returns, all of God's children will be like Jesus (1 Jn 3:2) – conformed to Jesus' image, perfected in purity and righteousness, and without any sin in us!⁵³

⁴⁸ Mentioned only five times in the Bible and all in John's letters (vv.18, 22, 1 Jn 4:3; 2 Jn 7).

⁴⁹ See 1 John 4:1-6.

⁵⁰ See further <https://thirdmill.org/studybible/note.asp?id/42444>

⁵¹ See 1 John 1:8-10.

⁵² On account of Jesus' atoning sacrifice for our sins: 1 John 2:1-2; 4:10.

⁵³ Cf. 1 Jn 3:3, 5, 7. Jesus is perfectly pure and righteous, without any sin.

THU
20

Overcoming Hate and Deception

SCRIPTURE 1 John 3:11-4:6

OBSERVATION

Why and how should we love one another as brothers and sisters in Christ?

APPLICATION

What will I commit to do this year to love my Christian brothers and sisters in my small group community, extended family, workplace or neighbourhood?

PRAYER

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

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for Outreach/Missions/New Life leaders: To be filled with God's love and share that with non-Christians through humble service and faithful witness
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

GOD HAS COMMANDED US TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER AS

fellow believers in Christ (vv.11, 23). We are spiritual brothers and sisters in God's family. God abides in us by His Spirit who indwells us and we abide in God by keeping His commandments (v.24), including the commandment to love one another. When we do so, we please our heavenly Father and receive His blessings (v.22). We can only genuinely love one another when God's love abides in us. Without God's love in our hearts, we will only profess our love, but be unable to prove it by action and giving practical help that costs us something (vv.17-18). In fact, our Lord Jesus has shown us the greatest example of love by laying down His life for us, and **He calls us to even lay down our lives for one another** (v.16). Sacrificial love through self-giving service to one another is solid evidence of our genuine faith in Christ and that we really have a relationship with God. If we find ourselves unable to humbly serve our fellow believers because we envy or hate them, we are in deep trouble! In God's sight, those who hate their brothers and sisters are murderers like Cain⁵⁴ (vv.12, 15). Would such people have an actual relationship with God and have passed from death to life (vv.14-15)? It should not surprise us that the world hates Christians for their beliefs (v.13), but it should surprise us that a Christian would hate another Christian. May the Holy Spirit grant us spiritual discernment to overcome any false teaching that opposes God's Word (1 Jn 4:4).

⁵⁴ See Genesis 4:8.

FRI
21

Maturing in God's Love

SCRIPTURE 1 John 4:7-21

OBSERVATION

What has the quality of our relationship with God got to do with the way we love people?

APPLICATION

What is God saying to me about how I am experiencing and living out His love in my life?

PRAYER

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

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for SGI leaders: To mature in their experience and expression of God's love
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

SINCE GOD IS LOVE (VV.8, 16), IF WE ARE BORN OF GOD and know (i.e. have a relationship with) Him, we will experience and express God's love for one another (vv.7, 11). God's love is not a sentimental, feelings-only kind of love. It is an intentional act of the will. **It is a choice to put the interests of others first.** God Himself is the supreme example of that love. Because God chose to put the interests of fallen, spiritually dead human beings – sinners who rebel against His rule and disobey His commands – before His own interests, He sent His only Son Jesus Christ into the world to die on our behalf to give us life (v.9) by being the “propitiation”⁵⁵ for our sins (v.10).

Through believing in Jesus the Son of God and the Saviour of the world (vv.14-15), we enter into a relationship with God and His Spirit dwells in us (v.13). When we abide in God and He in us,⁵⁶ His indwelling Spirit enables us to love people with God's love; in this way, God's love runs its course in our lives and we will increasingly be like God in His central attribute of love (vv.16-17). As the day of God's judgment upon the world approaches, true believers will not fear but have great confidence that they belong to God and bear His likeness in the way they love people (vv.17-18).⁵⁷ Indeed, **God is the source and motivation of our love** – we love God because He first loved us (v.19) and we love other people with God's love because He has commanded us to do so (v.20).

⁵⁵ Or atoning sacrifice (Greek *hilasmos*). This has “the idea of turning away the divine wrath...God's love for us is expressed in his sending his Son to be the propitiation (the propitiatory sacrifice) for our sins on the cross...The contemporary English 'atoning sacrifice' communicates this idea more effectively”; NET Bible study note.

⁵⁶ I.e. we remain closely connected to God through His Word and prayer.

⁵⁷ When God's love is perfected (i.e. reaches the end of its course) in God's people, they will find themselves having fully matured in their experience and expression of God's love.

SAT
22

Living by Faith in Jesus

SCRIPTURE 1 John 5:1-21

OBSERVATION

Why is so important for people to believe in Jesus the Christ (i.e. the Messiah), the Son of God?

APPLICATION

What will I do in 2022 to make Jesus known to the different generations?

PRAYER

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

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for Church Board: To continue to work joyfully in proclaiming the Gospel to all generations
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

FAITH IN JESUS THE MESSIAH IS EVERYTHING. THE WORD

“believe” from the Greek verb *pisteuo* occurs six times in this final chapter (vv.1, 5, 10, 13).⁵⁸ Believing in Jesus produces a new birth spiritually. Therefore, a believer is described as “born of God” (vv.1, 4, 18).⁵⁹ Not only does the believer have physical life, he also has spiritual life, having been reconciled to God. Christians have a relationship with God and therefore “eternal life” (vv.11-13, 20), which is knowing God and His Son Jesus Christ (Jn 17:3). This relational knowing of the true God gives us a quality of life that none else can give. God will enable everyone who believes in Jesus to overcome the world (v.4). God will hear and answer all their prayers according to His will (vv.14-15). And Jesus will protect God’s children from the power of the evil one, i.e. the devil, Satan (vv.18-19; cf. 1 Jn 3:8, 12).

No idol or false god can give people life. Only Jesus can give us life and only through Him can we have life abundantly in the present and for all eternity.⁶⁰ Hence, John exhorts Christians to keep themselves from trusting in idols (v.21). People must turn to believe in the Son of God for eternal life. If Jesus is not in their lives, if they do not trust in Him alone for victory over sin and death, they do not have eternal life (vv.11-12)! Therefore we must **proclaim the Gospel to all generations** – from the young to the old – in ways that they can understand, **so that by faith in Jesus they can truly live!**

⁵⁸ The Greek verb for “believe” occurs a total of nine times in 1 John, six of which in chapter 5 alone. The word “faith”, which is the noun form (Greek *pistis*), occurs once (v.4). Believing in Jesus Christ is a key theme here, and even more so in the Gospel according to John (the verb occurs there 96 times in 21 chapters).

⁵⁹ Or “born again” (Jn 3:3, 7).

⁶⁰ John 10:10, 27-28.

SUN
23

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SCRIPTURE

OBSERVATION

APPLICATION

PRAYER

THE PAST WEEK

Review

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

◆ What gave me life and what drained me?

◆ How was the Spirit of God at work?

THE PAST WEEK

Reflect

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

Respond

- ◆ What is one thing I need to do in light of what God is saying? Commit in prayer.

Family Devotional

Week 4

Self-Control:

Choosing to do what you should even when you don't want to.

Memory Verse

"God's power has given us everything we need to lead a godly life." - 2 PETER 1:3 (NIRV)

* Bottom Line

Think before you speak.*

* Bible Story

Proverbs 12:18 - Choice Words

* Activity

2-D Scrabble

Props: An empty page from an exercise book with small squares

Get your family members to write down a word that someone had used to hurt them. Take turns forming words using one of the letters from the first word. Get everyone to share why they chose that word. Then, complete another "scrabble game", this time using words that motivate (see example below).

a	w	e	s	o	m	e			
i									
n	i	c	e						
n									
e	n	c	h	a	n	t	i	n	g
r									

Say, "God reminds us in Proverbs 12:18 that our words are a weapon. Nasty words are like swords that hurt.

Encouraging words heal and uplift a person. Therefore, we must be slow to anger. Think before we speak."

* Talk About It

- How can words "cut like swords" and hurt us?
- When is it hard to control the things we say?
- What does it look like to THINK before we SPEAK?
- How does God want us to use our words?

Parents: Share with your family members about an incident in which (1) you might have been hurt by someone's negative words or (2) you hurt someone with your negative words. How did you feel? How was it resolved?

* Prayer

Ask for God's forgiveness if we have hurt someone with our words. Pray for God's guidance to use our words to encourage and love others.

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BIBLE STORY VIDEO
<https://cefc.ch/22FD01W4>



MON
24

The Running Man

SCRIPTURE Jonah 1:1-3; Psalm 139:7

OBSERVATION

What repeated words and phrases do you notice in these verses?

APPLICATION

What instruction or burden is God placing upon my heart, and what am I going to do about it?

PRAYER

O LORD, thank you for the message of Jonah. We confess that we too are inclined to run away from You, especially when You call us to something that disagrees with our preferences. Help us this day to run **toward** You instead, even in the midst of life's pains, pressures and perplexities. Give us the grace to hear and obey You, and the eyes of faith to see that Your ways are always good. Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for leaders
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

IN THIS WEEK LEADING UP TO BLESSING SUNDAY, WE consider the story of Jonah. This story is well-loved and included in children's Bibles everywhere because of the appearance of the great fish (Jon 1:17)! But it is really **not** about the fish. In the first three verses of this masterpiece, the main cast is introduced – the LORD who commands and Jonah who rejects the command. The book of Jonah⁶¹ is a unique prophetic book for two reasons. First, it focuses more about the personal experiences of Jonah, rather than Jonah's message. This is very different from all the other Old Testament prophetic books.⁶² Second, the prophet Jonah is portrayed negatively. Biblical scholar Douglas Stuart tells us that we can boil down the overall message of the book of Jonah to a simple warning: "Don't be like Jonah!"⁶³

Jonah was perhaps the original "running man". Twice in verse 3 it was mentioned that Jonah sought to run "from the presence of the LORD". It was also mentioned twice that Jonah "went **down**" (v.3, NAS) – to Joppa and into the ship that Jonah believed would take him to freedom. Jonah's life was indeed rolling **downhill** because of his rebellion against the LORD. Puzzling why Jonah thought that he could escape God (see Psa 139:7!). Jonah may have believed that if he stayed in Israel, he would have heard more from God, but if he left, he would have been let off the hook.⁶⁴ Have we ever done the same – shut our ears to God's voice and (secretly) told God to leave us alone? There is a bit of Jonah in all of us.

⁶¹ Located within the collection of the minor prophets in the Old Testament.

⁶² Douglas Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah* (Dallas: Word, 1987), 431.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 434.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 450.

TUE
25

The Fearful Men

SCRIPTURE Jonah 1:4-16; Psalm 86:11

OBSERVATION

How did the sailors' fear change from verse 5 to verse 16?

APPLICATION

What does the fear of the Lord mean to me and how does it impact the way I live?

PRAYER

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

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for pastors and staff: That they will have an undivided heart that fears the name of the LORD (Psa 86:11)
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

THE NARRATIVE OF THE STORM AND SAILORS IS FULL OF irony and comedy. Picture the drama. The seasoned mariners were scared out of their wits (v.5). In an utter frenzy, they dumped cargo, desperately trying to save themselves. In contrast, Jonah the rebellious prophet was oblivious to the danger, sleeping in the bowels of the ship. The mariners were frantically calling out to their gods. But the prophet of the LORD was asleep.

And so the flabbergasted captain came to Jonah and commanded him, "Arise, call out to your god!" (v.6). This is a parody of the divine command that Jonah rejected: arise,...and call out against Nineveh (Jon 1:2).⁶⁵ After an exercise of lot-casting to determine who is responsible for the disaster, the sailors discovered that it is Jonah, who then disclosed, "I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land" (v.9). Jonah's talk about "fear" must have sounded incredibly hollow to the sailors who knew about his wilful rebellion!⁶⁶ It was them, and not the LORD's prophet, who understood the gravity of what Jonah had done (v.10).

Another irony of the story is that because of Jonah's irreverence, the sailors came to genuinely revere his God (v.16). How about us? Are we like Jonah, professing to fear God but treating God flippantly? Pastor Timothy Keller defines the fear of the Lord as being "overwhelmed with wonder before the greatness of God and His love"⁶⁷. Let us ask the LORD for an undivided heart that truly fears His name (Psa 86:11).

⁶⁵ D. J. Wiseman, T. D. Alexander, and B. K. Waltke, *Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah*, Tyndale Old Testament commentaries v. 26 (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 2009), 114.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 116.

⁶⁷ Timothy Keller and Kathy Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage* (New York: Dutton, 2011), 68.

WED
26

The Rescued Man

SCRIPTURE Jonah 1:17-2:10

OBSERVATION

How was Jonah's life transformed in the belly of the fish?

APPLICATION

Recall the story of how God saved you and consider how God wants you to be part of someone else's salvation story?

PRAYER

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

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for leaders
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for Singapore: That the LORD will continue to sustain and deliver our nation in times of crisis, and that we the Church will arise to be a blessing in our land
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

ANYONE HEARING THE STORY OF JONAH FOR THE FIRST time would expect Jonah to surely be a goner after being thrown overboard. But there is a surprising twist: he did not die! A fish swallowed Jonah, not to digest Jonah but to deliver him. The story did not specify what kind of fish this was or how Jonah survived inside it. That was not the author's point.⁶⁸ Rather, the focus was that the LORD provided or appointed the fish (v.17). Just as the LORD sovereignly hurled the storm at the sailors (Jon 1:4), so He now orchestrated Jonah's way of escape.

Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights. In ancient Near Eastern mythology, this was the time required to journey to the underworld.⁶⁹ It is clear that Jonah very nearly died (vv.5-7)! The ancient Israelites believed that *Sheol* (v.2) was where wicked people would remain after death while they awaited final judgment – it was a place of complete separation from God (v.4).⁷⁰

The word “yet” or “but” indicates the stunning rescue that God wrought in Jonah's life. **Yet** Jonah was brought back from the pit (v.6) – God graciously allowed him to start over. **Yet** Jonah, who ran away from the presence of the LORD, could return to the temple where the LORD's presence dwelt (v.4). Filled with gratitude, Jonah responded the way the sailors did earlier – sacrificing to God and fulfilling his vows. His personal thanksgiving psalm climaxes in one of the central theological declarations of the entire book – “**Salvation belongs to the LORD**” (v.9)!

⁶⁸ Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 474.

⁶⁹ Wiseman, Alexander, and Waltke, *Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah*, 123.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 125.

THU
27

The Preaching Man

SCRIPTURE Jonah 3; 1 John 1:8-9

OBSERVATION

What did the Ninevites do to repent before God?

APPLICATION

How can I regularly practise the spiritual discipline of confession and repentance?

PRAYER

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

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for Outreach/Missions/New Life leaders: That they will lead the church to proclaim the Gospel sensitively and boldly, and that many will be led to turn to Christ in repentance
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

AT THE START OF CHAPTER 3, JONAH WAS BACK AT SQUARE one, with a second chance to obey the LORD. This time he made it to Nineveh. Interestingly, the author mentions that the city was “three days journey in breadth” (v.3). This could have been a reference to the **time** needed to visit the city due to ancient diplomatic protocol – the first day would be for arrival, the second for the purpose of the visit and the third for return.⁷¹ Given this protocol, Jonah’s preaching was extraordinarily successful. On the first day he would not have met the king; and he would have only been able to preach extensively on the second and third days. Yet somehow, on the first day, as Jonah was just warming up, the Ninevites already enthusiastically believed God *en masse* (v.5)!⁷² Jonah’s message even reached the king, moving him to don sackcloth and sit in ashes (v.6)!

The stunning repentance of Nineveh brought about a staggering turnaround – God **relented** from bringing disaster on them (v.10). Now, the text does not actually indicate that the Ninevites’ repentance led them to become full worshippers of the LORD.⁷³ However, the text suggests it was genuine. The point is this – **even** the cruel Ninevites **could** and **did** repent! The implication is that it is not too late for people to turn back to the LORD with all their hearts. May we experience the liberating joy of coming back to God again and again when we do sin, for He is faithful and just to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 Jn 1:8-9).

⁷¹ Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 487.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 488.

⁷³ Wiseman, Alexander, and Waltke, *Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah*, 138.

FRI
28

The Angry Man

SCRIPTURE Jonah 4:1-9

OBSERVATION

What question does God ask Jonah twice in this passage?

APPLICATION

How do I deal with feelings of "unfairness" when I do not receive the blessings that I think I deserve, or when I see others blessed "more" than me?

PRAYER

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

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for SGI leaders: That all small group leaders will depend deeply on God's grace and serve others because of it
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

IN CHAPTER 4 WE GET A GLIMPSE OF THE REBELLIOUS

prophet's true worldview and values. We would expect Jonah to be delighted that the Ninevites experienced God's mercy, as he himself did (Jon 2:6). Then, the first word of chapter 4 – BUT – hits us like a sledgehammer. BUT Jonah was exceedingly displeased! He was angry!

Why? Because, as verse 2 reveals, Jonah the rebellious prophet had **not** truly changed his perspective, even after his fish belly experience. He tells God: I told you so! That is why I never wanted to preach to the Ninevites – because I knew that You would forgive them. Jonah had preached, hoping that God would **not** be gracious to Nineveh, or that the Ninevites would not repent, thereby incurring judgment. Jonah resented God's grace to the undeserving – except when he himself was the recipient.⁷⁴ God asks Jonah a rhetorical question twice in verses 4 and 9: do you have a right to be angry? The second time, Jonah actually answers this question – YES, I DO, I'm angry enough to die.

Aren't we all somewhat petulant and immature like Jonah? We love God's grace – primarily when it is extended to us. When we see others receive God's grace, our first instinct may be to cry "Unfair!" rather than rejoice with them. Or we think it unfair when we do not receive the grace we (ironically) think we deserve. Jonah was very happy when God graciously provided him a plant (v.6), but furious when God took it away. God's grace is His prerogative – we never have a right to demand it. And He is gracious to all!

.....

⁷⁴ Stuart, *Hosca-Jonah*, 443.

SAT
29

Seeing as God Sees

SCRIPTURE Jonah 4:10-11

OBSERVATION

How does the author draw a contrast between Jonah's plant and the city of Nineveh?

APPLICATION

Seeing that my own city and community are important to God, what impact does that have on my life?

PRAYER

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

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for Church Board: That God will enable them to see things as He sees them, so that they can lead the church to do what God calls us to do
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

THE LORD HAD THE FINAL WORD. HE SPOKE – GRACIOUSLY

– to Jonah, who was seething in bitterness and resentment, preferring to die than to accept the workings of God's sovereign grace (Jon 4:8-9). Jonah could not see past his own comfort and well-being, and was desperately unhappy when the plant God gave for his shade was taken away. Make no mistake, Jonah was probably near heatstroke (Jon 4:8) and if you or I had been in the same position, we would surely have complained too.

Jonah completely failed to grasp the heart of God and see things from God's point of view. God's heart was for the people of Nineveh, which is why he called Jonah to go there. God's reference to Nineveh is usually translated as "great city". But the word "great" is perhaps more appropriately translated as "important".⁷⁵ Nineveh's inhabitants were important to God and mattered to Him.

When we see things from God's point of view, we are better able to act as He wants us to. B.L.E.S.S. is Covenant EFC's model for relational evangelism. It starts with B – Begin in Prayer. Through prayer, our communion with God, God graciously gives us His power and shows us His perspective. That is why we are encouraging all our small groups to go out on a **prayer walk** tomorrow – **Blessing Sunday**. The practice of prayer walking gives us an opportunity to be spiritually attentive to needs in the community, and to experience God's compassion for people as we silently pray for others to experience God's redemptive grace in their lives. May we learn to see Singapore from God's point of view.

⁷⁵ Wiseman, Alexander, and Waltke, *Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah*, 132.

SUN
30

SUNDAY JOURNAL

SCRIPTURE

OBSERVATION

APPLICATION

PRAYER

THE PAST WEEK

Review

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

◆ What gave me life and what drained me?

◆ How was the Spirit of God at work?

THE PAST WEEK

Reflect

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

Respond

- ◆ What is one thing I need to do in light of what God is saying? Commit in prayer.

Family Devotional

Week 5

Self-Control:

Choosing to do what you should even when you don't want to.

Memory Verse

"God's power has given us everything we need to lead a godly life." - 2 PETER 1:3 (NIRV)

* Bottom Line

Know when to stop.*

* Bible Story

Proverbs 25:16 - Should've Said

* Activity

Say Stop

Props: Balloons

Ask someone in your family to blow up a balloon until someone says "stop".

Discuss:

- How do we know when to stop blowing up the balloon?
- What happens if we continue to blow up the balloon?
- What do we learn about "having too much" without self-control from this activity?

Say, "Too much of a good thing is not a good thing. What does it mean? It's just like the balloon. If we blow it until it is just big enough, we get to play with it. But things get out of control when we become greedy and want a bigger balloon. It gets bigger and bigger until it bursts! In the end, we get nothing! Too much gaming, screentime and overeating will cause our health to "burst" and we lose sight of the good things awaiting us."

* Talk About It

- What does God give to help us identify where we need more self-control?
- What might God use to help us know when to stop doing something?
- How can those who care about us help us know when to stop doing something?
- How does growing in self-control demonstrate our love for God and a desire to live for Him?

Parents: Share with your family members about an incident when you failed to exercise self-control. How did it affect you or others? What did you do to rectify the issue?

* Prayer

Thank God for guiding and teaching us to be better people. Ask God to help us to make good decisions in what we do and say.

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Adapted by JoshuaWong/CEFC/Jan2022

 **BIBLE STORY VIDEO**
<https://cefc.ch/22FD01W5>



MON
31

Disrupted Shepherding Work

SCRIPTURE Acts 17:1-10, 14-15; 1 Thessalonians 3:1-10

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about the situation that Paul and the Thessalonians were in?

APPLICATION

How does the theological truth that God is still at work even when God's work seems to be falling apart affect me and my ministry?

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, You loved Your Church and gave Yourself up for her, that You might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the Word, so that You might present the Church to Yourself in glory, holy and without blemish.⁷⁶ Thank you Lord, for Your commitment and promise to us: "I will build My Church, and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it."⁷⁷

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for leaders
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

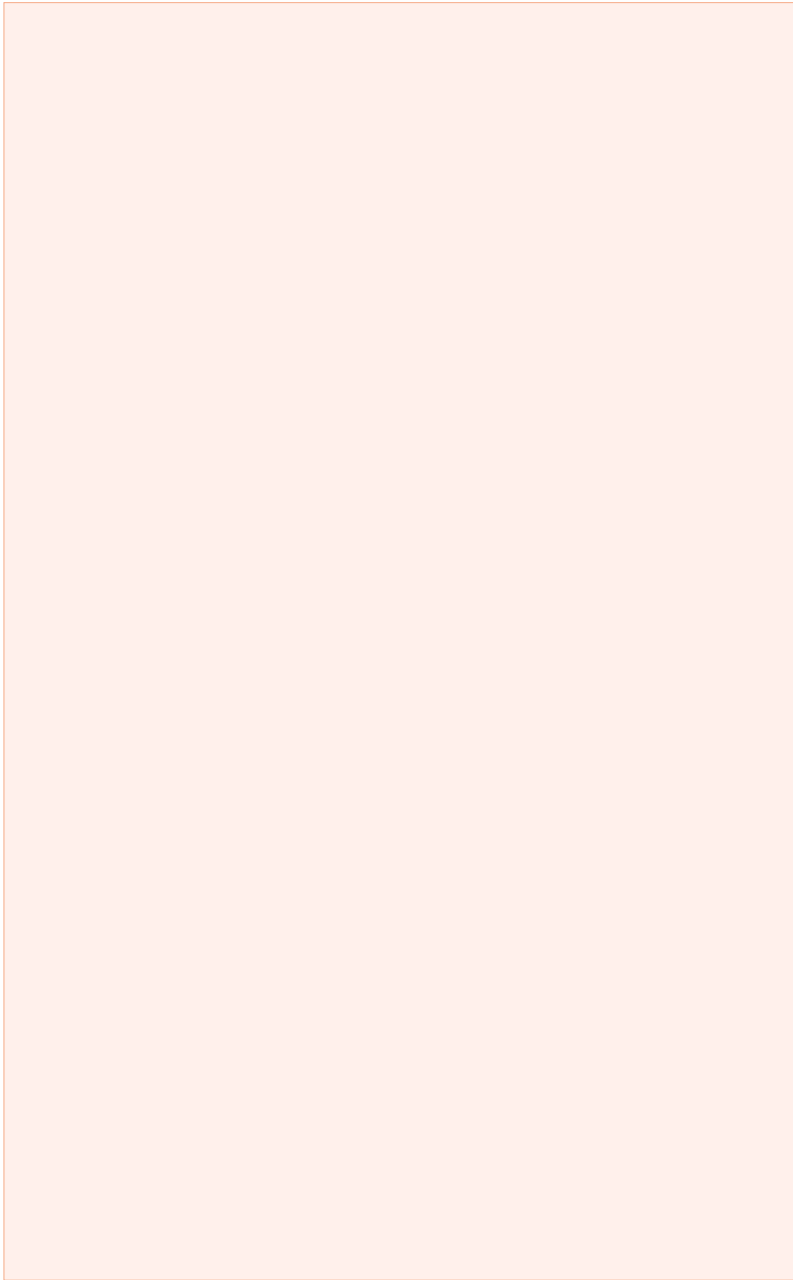
ANSWERING THE “MACEDONIAN CALL” DURING HIS second missionary journey, Paul and his team moved from Philippi to Thessalonica (Acts 16:6-40; 17:1). Paul preached the Gospel in the synagogue there, and “some” Jews and “a great many of the devout Greeks” – who worshipped at the synagogue, but were not circumcised to become full proselytes – and “not a few of the leading women” were “persuaded” (vv.2-4). With these new converts, Paul planted “the church of the Thessalonians” (1 Thess 1:1) around A.D. 49/50. But Paul faced strong opposition from some of the Jews, who out of jealousy “gathered some troublemakers to form a mob and start a riot” and accused him of “treason against Caesar” in proclaiming “allegiance to another king, named Jesus” (vv.5-7, NLT). Paul was then forced to leave Thessalonica, leaving behind a very young church – “only a few months old”⁷⁸ – facing persecution and with his shepherding work in building up their faith abruptly disrupted (v.9). Then from Athens, Paul sent Timothy to the Thessalonians “to establish and exhort you in your faith” (1 Thess 3:1-2). And Timothy returned to Paul at Corinth (Acts 18:1, 5) with the “good news” that these young believers were “standing firm in the Lord” (1 Thess 3:6-8). In response to this, Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians. When God’s work is under threat of falling apart, God is still at work. The work of God is the work of God.

⁷⁶ Ephesians 5:25-27

⁷⁷ Matthew 16:18

⁷⁸ Gary S. Shogren, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, *Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Zondervan, 2012), 17

NOTES



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