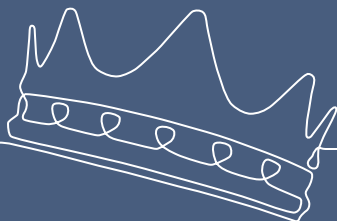


COVENANT^{EFC}

MARCH
2022
DEVOTIONAL
JOURNAL

*That each one of you know how to control
his own body in holiness and honour*

1 THESSALONIANS 4:4



MARCH
2022
DEVOTIONAL
JOURNAL

*That each one of you know how to control
his own body in holiness and honour*

1 THESSALONIANS 4:4

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 this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality

– 1 Thessalonians 4:3 (ESV)

◆ March

That each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honour – 1 Thessalonians 4:4 (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

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

– 1 Thessalonians 5:14 (ESV)

◆ July

See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone.

– 1 Thessalonians 5:15 (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

But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.

– 2 Thessalonians 2:13 (ESV)

◆ November

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

◆ December

As for you, brothers, do not grow weary in doing good.

– 2 Thessalonians 3:13 (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 HOME MISSIONS

*And He said to me, "Son of man,
can these bones live?"*

EZEKIEL 37:3A (ESV)

IN THE HOME MISSIONS MINISTRY TO MIGRANT

guest workers, domestic workers and foreign professionals, the picture of "very many", "very dry" bones (Eze 37:2) represent the multitudes of migrants who need the life of God to enter them. They face daily challenges – no respect, little free time and no opportunities to improve their knowledge and skills. Most of all, without Jesus Christ, they have no hope of eternal life and glory.

Through the prophet Ezekiel, the Word of God promised hope to His people: "And I will put My Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I am the Lord; I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the Lord." (Eze 37:14). God's Spirit will come upon His people and give them life. He will turn their situation around and bring about a glorious reversal. Because God cares for and desires to bless His people.

In 2022, we look to God to do His great work among the migrant communities to give very many spiritually dead people new life in Jesus Christ! As the Lord has done great things in the past, we believe that He will do so again. God

was the One who opened the door for our outreach work to migrant workers over the past two years. Hundreds of migrant workers were blessed by God's love through Covenanters during the COVID-19 pandemic. We provided food, care packages (necessities, disposable masks and hygiene products) and friendship. We visited them at their dormitories and chatted with them. We organised recreational activities, educational workshops and Christmas parties. We befriended them and invited them into our homes for meals. The befriending continues and more Covenanters are coming on board. On another front, our outreach to domestic workers is also gaining traction among the Indonesian and Filipino migrant communities.

As we work hard in both evangelism and discipleship, let us pray for the dry bones to be filled with God's Spirit, for the migrant workers to live and stand on their feet, "an exceedingly great army" (Eze 37:10), who will grow in spiritual maturity and multiply disciples while they are in Singapore and after they return to their home countries!

Pray for:

1. The guest workers, domestic workers and foreign professionals

- a. That God will do His mighty, stirring work in their hearts to reveal their need for Jesus Christ
- b. To develop friendships with Christian Singaporeans and be brought to a Christian community to hear and experience the Gospel
- c. To be daily protected at work, have their well-being cared for during this pandemic, and be able to provide for their families back home

2. The leaders in Home Missions

- a. To arise and lead strongly in evangelism and discipleship, and strengthen our four Fellowships to more effectively equip and produce disciplemakers

- b. To lovingly shepherd and care for our flock
- c. To faithfully teach the Word of God, disciple the people and model for them what it means to be authentic disciples and intentional disciplemakers
- d. To walk daily with God and practise self-care

3. Covenanters of all age groups

- a. That more of us will keep praying for and supporting this ministry
- b. That we will bring our domestic workers and invite our friends who are guest workers or foreign professionals to join the Fellowships
- c. That more of us will come and serve together in Home Missions

4. The working conditions in Singapore

- a. That employers will act justly and treat their workers with respect, kindness and care
- b. That the government will continue to improve the provisions for the welfare of migrant workers in our land

NOTES

WORSHIP SONGS

MARCH – APRIL

ANCIENT OF DAYS

Verse

Blessing and honour, glory and power
 Be unto the Ancient of Days
 From every nation all of creation
 Bow before the Ancient of Days

Chorus

Every tongue in heaven and earth shall declare Your glory
 Every knee shall bow at your throne in worship
 You will be exalted, O God
 And Your Kingdom shall not pass away
 O Ancient of Days

Bridge

Your kingdom shall reign over all the earth
 Sing unto the Ancient of Days
 For none can compare to Your matchless worth
 Sing unto the Ancient of Days

Gary Sadler | Jamie Harvill
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THROUGH IT ALL

Verse

You are forever in my life
 You see me through the seasons
 Cover me with Your hand
 And lead me in Your righteousness
 And I look to You
 And I wait on You

Chorus

I'll sing to You, Lord
 A hymn of love
 For Your faithfulness to me
 I'm carried in everlasting arms
 You'll never let me go
 (Through it all)

Bridge

Hallelujah
 Hallelujah
 Hallelujah
 Hallelujah

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PRAISE IS THE OFFERING

Verse 1

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

Chorus 1

Great is Your love for us
 And great are the things You've done
 And praise is the offering
 We bring to You

Verse 2

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

Chorus 2

All of our heart and soul
 And all that You are and more
 And praise is the offering
 We bring to You

Verse 3

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

Glenn Paekiam | Shannon Alford | Sion Alford
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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
And 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 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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BLESSINGS

Verse 1

We pray for blessings
 We pray for peace
 Comfort for family, protection while we sleep
 We pray for healing, for prosperity
 We pray for Your mighty hand to ease our suffering
 All the while, You hear each spoken need
 Yet love is way too much to give us lesser things

Chorus 1

'Cause what if Your blessings come through raindrops
 What if Your healing comes through tears
 What if a thousand sleepless nights are what it takes to know
 You're near
 What if trials of this life are Your mercies in disguise

Verse 2

We pray for wisdom
 Your voice to hear
 We cry in anger when we cannot feel You near
 We doubt Your goodness, we doubt Your love
 As if every promise from Your Word is not enough
 All the while, You hear each desperate plea
 And long that we'd have faith to believe

Bridge

When friends betray us
 When darkness seems to win
 We know that pain reminds this heart
 That this is not, this is not our home

Tag

It's not our home

Chorus 2

'Cause what if Your blessings come through raindrops
 What if Your healing comes through tears
 And what if a thousand sleepless nights are what it takes to
 know You're near
 What if my greatest disappointments
 Or the aching of this life
 Is the revealing of a greater thirst this world can't satisfy
 What if trials of this life
 The rain, the storms, the hardest nights
 Are Your mercies in disguise

Laura Story

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MY WORTH IS NOT IN WHAT I OWN (AT THE CROSS)

Verse 1

My worth is not in what I own
Not in the strength of flesh and bone
But in the costly wounds of love
At the cross

Verse 2

My worth is not in skill or name
In win or lose, in pride or shame
But in the blood of Christ that flowed
At the cross

Chorus

I rejoice in my Redeemer
Greatest treasure
Wellspring of my soul
I will trust in Him, no other
My soul is satisfied in Him alone

Verse 3

As summer flowers we fade and die
Fame, youth and beauty hurry by
But life eternal calls to us
At the cross

Verse 4

I will not boast in wealth or might
Or human wisdom's fleeting light
But I will boast in knowing Christ
At the cross

Verse 5

Two wonders here that I confess
My worth and my unworthiness
My value fixed, my ransom paid
At the cross

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GOD OF AGES

Verse 1

God of ages
 Bringing glory here
 You are good, You are good
 Son of righteousness
 You are all I seek
 With all my heart

Pre-Chorus

Giver of life
 Hope for the lost is in You
 All of the earth
 Shines with Your light, Your glory

Chorus

You are the God who lives
 You are the God who heals
 You are my hope, my everything
 You brought salvation to us
 Offered Your peace to the world
 You are my Lord, my everything

Verse 2

In your promise
 and your faithfulness
 I will trust all my days
 King forever
 Reign in majesty
 Be glorified

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HOPE OF THE NATIONS

Verse 1

Jesus, hope of the nations
 Jesus, comfort for all who mourn
 You are the source of heaven's hope on earth
 Jesus, light in the darkness
 Jesus, truth in each circumstance
 You are the source of heaven's light on earth

Pre-Chorus

In history, You lived and died
 You broke the chains, You rose to life

Chorus 1

You are the hope, living in us
 You are the Rock, in whom we trust
 You are the light, shining for all the world to see
 You rose from the dead, conquering fear
 Our Prince of Peace, drawing us near
 Jesus our hope, living for all who will receive
 (Lord we believe)
 (Lord we believe)
 (Lord we believe)

Ending

Lord we believe
 (Jesus hope of the nations)
 Lord we believe
 (Jesus hope of the nations)
 Lord we believe
 (Jesus Lord we believe)
 Lord we believe

Brian Doerksen
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THE POTTER'S HAND

Verse 1

Beautiful Lord, wonderful Saviour
I know for sure, all of my days are held in Your hand
And crafted into Your perfect plan

Verse 2

You gently call me into Your presence
Guiding me by Your Holy Spirit
Teach me dear Lord
to live all of my life through Your eyes

Pre-Chorus

I'm captured by Your holy calling
Set me apart
I know You're drawing me to Yourself
Lead me Lord, I pray

Chorus

Take me, mould me
Use me, fill me
I give my life to the Potter's hand
Call me, guide me
Lead me, walk beside me
I give my life to the Potter's hand

Darlene Zschech

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NOTES

TUE
01

Blessed to Be a Blessing

SCRIPTURE Genesis 12:1-4; 22:15-18

OBSERVATION

What do you observe about the relationship between God's blessings, the generations and the nations?

APPLICATION

How can I be faithful to obey what God has called me to do to bless the generations according to His will?

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 obedient to God's will, so that they may release God's blessings to the generations and, through them, the nations
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

VERSES 1 TO 3 WOULD BE A FAMILIAR PORTION OF SCRIPTURE

to many of us. We remember how God first promised to bless Abram, who was later named Abraham. However, we often forget the condition of the promise and the purpose for the promise. The **condition** of God's promised blessings can be seen in verses 1 and 4. God began his dialogue with Abram thus: "Go..." (v.1). In the context, God gave Abram a command to leave everything that he knew, possessed and loved – from his country, his people and even his father's household. Abram was to leave everything and go to an unknown place that God would reveal in His timing. In response to God's command to go, Abram believed God's promise, obeyed and went away (v.4). God said go and Abram went. **Obedience** was the condition of God's promised blessings. We see it explicitly mentioned by God in Genesis 22:18 – "...because you have obeyed My voice." The reason the nations will be blessed through Abram was because of his obedience to the voice of God.

As for the **purpose** for God's promised blessings, verse 2 tells us: "...so that you will be a blessing." Abram was blessed to be a blessing to **the nations** through the generations. We see in verse 3 and Genesis 22:18 that God's blessings (ultimately in Jesus Christ) are for all the nations. And that God's means of bringing His blessings to the nations are the generations of faithful men and women who, like Abraham, are obedient to the voice of God. Are you one of them?

WED
02

Blessings Through the Family

SCRIPTURE 2 Timothy 1:1-5

OBSERVATION

Who were the persons who greatly impacted Timothy's life and in what specific ways?

APPLICATION

What will I do this year to pass on the Christian faith to people in the next generation and to invest spiritually in their lives?

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 the Generations: That one generation may pass on the Christian faith to another and nurture believers towards spiritual maturity
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

IN THIS PASSAGE, WE SEE THE APOSTLE PAUL WRITING

tenderly to his spiritual son, Timothy. He addressed Timothy as “my beloved child” (v.2). Clearly, Paul had great affection for Timothy and likened their relationship to a biological father-and-son relationship. For some of us, when we think of discipling the generations, we think that the role belongs only to those who have offspring. But this passage shows us that discipling the generations is for all believers, regardless of whether the Christian has biological children. In Paul’s view, he had served God with a pure conscience, just as his ancestors did (v.3). Their practice of sincere, genuine service to God seemed to have flowed to Paul, who was glad to carry on such a legacy. It seemed that Paul was very grateful to God that he could pass the baton, so to speak, to someone like Timothy. Now Timothy was the one to carry the torch and run with it in the next lap of faithful service to God.

The phrase “sincere faith” in verse 5 carries the notion of having no pretence or hypocrisy. As Paul thought about Timothy’s sincere faith in Christ Jesus, he recalled that such faith first resided in Timothy’s grandmother, then his mother and was evidently passed on to Timothy (v.5). What a godly relay race! Timothy’s sincere faith was something both taught and caught, and his ancestors were instrumental in its transmission! Since the faith of the previous generations – whether in one’s biological or spiritual family – can have a major impact on the lives of next generation believers, let us labour to make disciples!

THU
03

Praising Our Good Shepherd

SCRIPTURE Psalm 100

OBSERVATION

What can you learn about the nature of God from these verses?

APPLICATION

Tell a Christian from another generation about a time when God's goodness was evident in your generation (e.g. God brought about a certain spiritual awakening, national evangelistic outreach, Christian unity movement, concerted prayer across churches, etc.).

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 testify to others about the great things that God has done in their respective generations
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

IN VERSES 1 AND 2, THE PSALMIST CALLS EVERYONE ON earth to praise and worship God. God is the eternal, creator God – the great I AM who rules over all the earth, indeed all of creation! How should people approach God to praise and worship Him? With hearts of gladness, gratitude and adoration (vv.2, 4). With songs in our hearts that break out in voices and instruments of God's praise! Because the Lord is good! God's goodness is manifested in His steadfast love and faithfulness – two enduring and unchanging attributes – towards His people (v.5). His steadfast love endures forever. His faithfulness endures to all generations. Human history has proved, is proving and will prove the truth of these declarations made by the Psalmist.

In verse 3, the Psalmist commands God's people to know that the covenant-keeping God of Israel is the God of creation. God is our Maker and we rightly belong to Him. In this blessed knowledge, we can find rest in God, fully satisfied and completely secure in His ownership, leadership and care over our lives. When we know whose we are, we will know who we are! Brothers and sisters, we can have deeply anchored peace and security when we truly know that we are God's own possession and God's beloved children through faith in Christ Jesus! Such peace and security can weather all storms and prevail through all turmoil and uncertainties. Let us therefore entrust ourselves and all generations of Christians to the Lord God, our Good Shepherd!

FRI
04

Trusting in God's Steadfast Love

SCRIPTURE Psalm 103:8-18

OBSERVATION

What can you learn about God's "steadfast love" (Hebrew *hesed*) from these verses?

APPLICATION

What are two specific areas in my life that I need to learn to fear the Lord and obey 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 SGI leaders: To live reverently and righteously before God, fearing God and obeying His Word
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

PSALM 103 CENTRES AROUND THE *HESED* OF GOD. THE

Hebrew word *hesed* (vv.4, 8, 11, 17) has been variously translated in different versions of the Bible: "steadfast love" (ESV, NRSV); "love" (NIV, NLT); "lovingkindness" (NASB); and "loyal love" (NET). The essence of the word is the idea of covenantal faithfulness. Psalm 103 calls all God's servants to praise God because of His *hesed* shown to the individual and the community that fears Him and obeys His Word (vv.11, 17-18). The Psalmist contrasted the temporal nature of human life (vv.15-16) with the permanence of God's *hesed* (vv.17-18). The former is fleeting like grass and a flower in the field, whereas God's *hesed* is "from everlasting to everlasting" (v.17) for all those who fear Him. The gift of God's righteousness is passed down from generation to generation provided that the people keep His covenant and obey His commandments (vv.17-18).

Brothers and sisters, we must not just know the Word of God intellectually. We must live it out in the fear of the Lord! If we desire the next generation in our families and church to know God and make Him known in their spheres of influence, we must authentically live out our faith in daily obedience to the Lord our God. In this way, we help our next generation to "taste and see that the Lord is good" (Psa 34:8). They will in later years recall and declare, "The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness" (Lam 3:22-23).

SAT
05

Serving the Covenant-Keeping God

SCRIPTURE Matthew 1

OBSERVATION

From this genealogy (vv.1-17), what significant observations can you make about the people in the generations that came before the birth of Jesus Christ?

APPLICATION

What personal doubts, fears or worries do I need to release to the Lord today and trust in His faithfulness to fulfil His promises?

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 trust in the covenant-keeping God, whose sovereign hand is bringing to pass everything according to His will
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW BEGINS WITH

the genealogy of Jesus Christ from the time of Abraham.¹ This is because Matthew was writing with a Jewish audience in mind.² Right from the beginning, Matthew made it clear that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah prophesied about in the Old Testament. God had given Abraham the promise of great blessings,³ the fulfilment of which came through the person of Jesus Christ, who was from the line of Abraham and King David. Jesus the Messiah was the one who would bless all the nations of the earth through his life, death, resurrection and ascension. This royal genealogy included people of different ethnicities, backgrounds and social statuses. Both Jews and Gentiles were included. Further, the women mentioned in verses 3, 5 and 6 were considered scandalous persons in the society, yet God still used them for His glorious redemptive purposes.

Some of us may wonder how God could use us after what we have done in the past. Others may feel that our lives are out of control and that God is absent. Today's passage shows us that God's hand was at work in and through the generations, orchestrating His plans to bring them to fulfilment at His appointed time. Some parents among us may feel discouraged that our children are going down a different path and worried that they will not turn back to walk with the Lord. Our faithful, covenant-keeping God reminds us today that He is at work in every generation. Let us trust in the Lord, continually serve Him and do not give up!

¹ Unlike the other Gospel accounts by Mark, Luke and John.

² In Hebrew tradition, they began the story of an individual by listing his genealogy. The Hebrew word *toledot* means "generations". We see this word in the genealogies of different individuals in the book of Genesis, for example, Adam (Gen 5:1); and Noah (Gen 6:9).

³ See examples in Genesis 12 and 22.

SUN
06

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

Cooperation:

Working together to do more than you can do alone.

Memory Verse

"Two people are better than one. They can help each other in everything they do."
- Ecclesiastes 4:9 (NIRV)

* Bottom Line

God wants us to work together.*

PROPS VIDEO
by Piano Guys

BIBLE STORY VIDEO
<https://cefc.ch/22FD03W1>

* Bible Story

Exodus 25 – Building the Tabernacle



* Activity

Working Together

Props: Instrumental Music Video

"One Direction – What Makes You Beautiful" by Piano Guys
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0VqTwnAuHws>)

Get your family members to share their observations about the video, for example, everyone has a role to play and so on.

Say, "The video shows that when we decide to work together, we can make beautiful music together. This is what God wants us to do. He wants us to work harmoniously and put our talents together to do His work."

Invite everyone to share an incident where they worked with others to create great work.

* Talk About It

- What is a tabernacle?
- Could Moses have built the tabernacle alone? Why or why not?
- What were the different roles and people needed to build the tabernacle?
- What can happen when we decide we don't want to work with others or when we think we can do things better alone?
- What are some benefits of working together with others?

Parents: Share with your family members about a time when you worked with a team and accomplished more than what you could have done alone. What happened? How did you feel? How did God help everyone? How did the incident change the way you think or behave?

* Prayer

Thank Jesus for giving us opportunities to work with others. Ask God for a willing heart to listen and learn from others.

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MON
07

God's Covenantal Promises to Abraham's Descendants

SCRIPTURE Genesis 17:1-10; Jeremiah 31:31-34; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

OBSERVATION

How did God reveal that His covenantal promises to Abraham (Gen 12:1-3) included the generations beyond (vv.7-10) and were also to be understood in the light of the new covenant (Jer 31:31-34; 1 Cor 11:25)?

APPLICATION

How does my understanding of the scope and nature of God's covenantal promises impact my decisions in life and ministry?

PRAYER

Lord God, please help me to see Your heart for the generations and to do my part to make known your covenantal promises in Jesus Christ to all generations. Help me not only to understand what Your covenant means for myself, but to embrace it and pass it on to the next generation as well. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.



DEEPER REFLECTION

GENESIS 17 MARKED A TURNING POINT IN GOD'S

covenantal promises to Abram (renamed "Abraham") in two ways. **First**, it was the first occasion that the covenant was extended to include Abraham's offspring. The covenant was not just between God and Abraham, but also between God and Abraham's offspring after him "throughout the generations" (vv.7, 9). In Genesis 12:2, God promised to make Abram into a "great nation". God told Abram that his descendants will be as countless as the dust of the earth (Gen 13:16) and as the stars in the sky (Gen 15:5). Just as God promised, Abraham had his own offspring who over time became a multitude of nations. God's everlasting covenant with Abraham and his descendants was for the purpose of a relationship with them ("to be God to you and your offspring after you", v.7).

Second, the command to keep God's covenant was not just directed to Abraham, but to his descendants as well (vv.9-10). All of them were to observe God's covenantal obligations (requirements), thereby keeping His covenant.

This turning point in God's covenantal promises to Abraham reflects a transition from understanding God's covenant as one made by God with Abraham, to a covenant made by God also with all subsequent generations of Abraham's descendants. The Bible makes clear that all people who have faith in God and His Son Jesus Christ are descendants of Abraham.⁴ God's will and purpose are for His covenant to be passed on from generation to generation. As believers in Christ, have we wholeheartedly committed ourselves to **pass on the knowledge of God's covenant to our own and subsequent generations?**

⁴ See Romans 4; Galatians 3; and Romans 2:25-29.

TUE
08

Passing on God's Covenant to the Next Generation

SCRIPTURE Deuteronomy 6:1-9, 25; Romans 3:21-26

OBSERVATION

How are God's people to pass on the knowledge of His covenant to their next generation (vv.6-9)?

APPLICATION

What is one intentional and sustained action that I can take to be diligent and consistent in passing on the knowledge of God's covenant in Jesus Christ to my children, grandchildren or the next generation in my church?

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 diligent and consistent in telling the next generation about God's covenant in Jesus Christ
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

DEUTERONOMY 6 IS PART OF MOSES' SPEECHES GIVEN

to the next generation of Israelites before they entered the Promised Land. In verses 1 to 9, Moses exhorted them to fear, obey, worship and love God alone. The people were to hear and observe all the covenantal requirements that God had given them, and to pass them on to future generations. God's covenant with His people was to permeate family life in two dimensions. **First**, the knowledge of God's covenant was to be **diligently passed on to future generations** (v.7a). The *Shema* (vv.4-5)⁵ is central in this passage and reminded the Israelites about the exclusivity of God – God's people were to worship no one else and to love God with their whole being by being careful to obey all His commandments (vv.1-3, 6, 25). The Israelites throughout their generations were to remain devoted exclusively to the Lord their God and not be seduced by false gods. By uttering and teaching the *Shema*, the Israelites and their descendants repeatedly pledged to God their total allegiance, undivided devotion and full obedience. Christian parents bear the primary responsibility of diligently passing on to their children the knowledge of the new covenant of **the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ** (Rom 3:21-26).

Second, the knowledge of God's covenant was to be **consistently taught throughout all of family life** (vv.7-9). From family devotions, mealtimes and bedtimes, to schooling, attending worship services and playing sports – everything was to be founded upon and interpreted through God's words. God's words were to be relevantly applied to every aspect of life and consistently shared at any given opportunity.

⁵ The *Shema* was traditionally recited by the Jews at least twice a day – morning and evening. To learn more about the *Shema*, see <https://bibleproject.com/blog/what-is-the-shema/>

WED
09

The Fulfilment of God's Covenant for His People

SCRIPTURE Luke 1:46-55; Matthew 1:18-21

OBSERVATION

How does Mary's song clue us in on the significance of the birth of Jesus for all generations?

APPLICATION

How can I make known to all generations God's mercy and grace given through Jesus Christ?

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 the Generations: To receive salvation through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

MARY'S SONG IS THEOLOGICALLY SIGNIFICANT. ITS

inclusion in this narrative reveals to us that the Gospel account was intended more to be a story to be heard than a history to be read.

Mary's song carries for us two significant shifts that impact the way we view God's covenantal promises in relation to future generations.

First, Mary's song reveals **a reversal of her social situation**, in that God has looked upon the "humble estate of His servant" and caused her to be counted "blessed" in the eyes of all future generations (v.48). This is the basis for declaring that God is merciful and pours out His grace on all, even the lowly, from generation to generation. Friends, how does this change our mindset about reaching out to and helping children and young people from poor families and marginalised communities in Singapore or our neighbouring countries?

Second, Mary's song tells of **the fulfilment of God's covenantal promises** to the people of Israel, because the promised Messiah has come to provide salvation to God's people. As announced by an angel of the Lord to Mary's husband Joseph, "She will bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins" (Matt 1:21). God has fulfilled His covenantal promises given to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The birth of Jesus was the redemptive historical fulfilment of God's promised Messiah for His people – all those people throughout history, from every nation and generation, who believe in God's promised Messiah, Jesus. They are all considered Abraham's "offspring forever" (v.55) and are recipients of God's mercy through His Son.

THU
10

Telling Stories to the Next Generation

SCRIPTURE Psalm 78:1-4

OBSERVATION

What stories must we tell the next generation?

APPLICATION

In what creative way(s) can I tell the next generation about God and His wondrous works?

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 tell the next generation about God's stories and lead believers to faithfully and creatively proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

PSALM 78 RECOUNTS THE STORY OF THE PEOPLE OF

Israel's persistent rebellion and unfaithfulness towards God and their redemption by the mercy and faithfulness of God. We will consider the first eight verses in two parts over two days to see what we can learn about passing on the Christian faith to the next generation.

Telling the next generation begins with us listening to God's redemptive story. The Psalmist began here with an exhortation to "give ear" and "incline our ears" to the "parable" that he was narrating (vv.1-2). Why did the Psalmist recount the history of Israel in this psalm? He did so to emphasise the theological significance of Israel's wilderness journey after the exodus from Egypt, highlighting negative examples of the past generation so that the present and future generations would know how they ought to follow the Lord their God. They were not to repeat their forefathers' sins of rebellion and disobedience against the Lord. The Psalmist desired that the future of Israel would be much better than the past.

By listening closely to God's redemptive story from the past generations, Christians living today can humbly learn precious historical lessons and then actively tell future generations the stories of God's works of power, righteousness, mercy and faithfulness. Let us carry out our responsibility to tell the next generation "the glorious deeds of the LORD, and His might, and the wonders that He has done" (v.4), especially through His Son Jesus Christ. Let us be bold and creative in telling the next generation the stories of God and His wondrous works, that they may walk faithfully with Him!

FRI
11

Why Tell the Next Generation?

SCRIPTURE Psalm 78:5-8

OBSERVATION

What is the purpose behind telling the next generation about God and His works?

APPLICATION

How does my understanding of this passage impact and affect my conviction and purpose regarding telling the next generation about God and His works?

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 lead our church in a God-centred purpose and a clear focus for proclaiming the whole Gospel to the next generation
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

WHY DID GOD COMMAND HIS PEOPLE TO TELL THE NEXT generation about His covenant and redemptive story in their lives?

Verses 5 to 8 are instructive regarding God's purpose. The end goal of the preceding generation telling the next generation about God's story is "so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments" (v.7). The next generation should not follow the examples of their forefathers, who were a "stubborn and rebellious generation", a people "whose heart was not steadfast, whose spirit was not faithful to God" (v.8). In other words, their hearts were not fully given to God and, consequently, they were repeatedly unfaithful to Him. When we tell the next generation about God, His covenantal requirements and redemptive love, we seek to teach them to put their hope in God who remains faithful to His people even when His people are unfaithful to Him, and to keep coming back to God and His Word. We encourage them toward a deeper trust in Jesus Christ, the Word of life (1 Jn 1:1-3)⁶. Further, we encourage them to remember the faithfulness of God in the lives of the generations past and in their own lives. The tendency for God's people, under pressure, to forget the many signs, wonders and glorious works of God in their lives, is evident in Israel's journey⁷. This forgetfulness results in rebellion and disobedience towards God. Remembrance is a key outcome that we desire from telling the next generation about God's story, so that they may continually trust, obey and be faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ.

⁶ Cf. John 1:1, 14.

⁷ 4 Psalm 78:11, 42.

SAT
12

Loving Different Generations

SCRIPTURE 1 Timothy 5:1-2; 4:12

OBSERVATION

How are we to love and relate to people from different generations in the church?

APPLICATION

If I have been despising someone from a younger generation or treating harshly someone from an older generation, or both, what can I do to love the person(s) in the way that God intends for 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 Church Board: To be wise and loving in addressing the needs and concerns of the different generations within the church
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

HERE, THE APOSTLE PAUL GAVE SEVERAL OVERARCHING principles to Timothy on how he was to relate to the different generations in the church at Ephesus. Timothy was likely in his 30s when he started to care for and lead the church. **First**, Paul urges Timothy not to “rebuke” an older man (v.1). The Greek verb *epiplesso* has two spheres of meaning: (1) to strike upon, beat upon; and (2) chastise with words, to chide, upbraid, rebuke⁸. Referring to the latter sense, Paul urged Timothy not to use harsh words to “strike”, chastise and correct an older man. Instead, Timothy was to “encourage” him (v.1). The Greek verb *parakaleo* means “to address, speak to (call to, call on), which may be done in the way of exhortation, entreaty, comfort, instruction, etc⁹.” For ancient Jews, Greeks and Romans, elders were highly esteemed. Timothy was to treat older men and women with the honour and respect that he accorded fathers and mothers. This value is of timeless relevance and application, notwithstanding considerable challenges to its validity in the youth culture of many societies today. **Second**, Timothy was to relate to younger men and women like brothers and sisters, with the affection, respect and purity as was proper in such familial relationships. We must not despise or ill-treat younger men and women, just as we would not so do to our own brothers and sisters. **Third**, Paul commanded Timothy to not let his youth be despised by others. Paul reaffirmed Timothy’s leadership by encouraging him to be an example to the believers from all the different generations that he is serving (1 Tim 4:12).

⁸ According to Thayer’s Greek Lexicon: <https://biblehub.com/greek/1969.htm>

⁹ According to Thayer’s Greek Lexicon: <https://biblehub.com/greek/3870.htm>

SUN 13 SUNDAY JOURNAL

SCRIPTURE

[Empty box for Scripture]

OBSERVATION

[Empty box for Observation]

APPLICATION

[Empty box for Application]

PRAYER

[Empty box for Prayer]

THE PAST WEEK

Review

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

[Empty box for high/low point review]

◆ What gave me life and what drained me?

[Empty box for life/drainage review]

◆ How was the Spirit of God at work?

[Empty box for Spirit of God review]

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

Cooperation:

Working together to do more than you can do alone.

Memory Verse

"Two people are better than one. They can help each other in everything they do."
- Ecclesiastes 4:9 (NIRV)

* Bottom Line

Work together to help someone succeed.*

* Bible Story

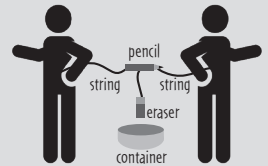
Exodus 17:8-13 – Joshua Wins the Battle

* Activity

Pencil Drop

Props: A pencil, an eraser, a container and three two-metre-long strings

Using the first string, tie one end to the eraser and the other to the middle of the pencil. Then tie the second and third strings to each of the two ends of the pencil and secure it around the waist of two family members respectively. Get them to stand with their backs facing each other, and move back and forth to lower the eraser into a container on the floor, without using their hands.



Get everyone to share their experience after the game.

Say, "To place the eraser into the container successfully, both participants need to help one another. When we help others succeed, we feel successful too. As God's followers, we are to encourage and guide others, not to trip up their walk with God or their lives."

* Talk About It

- Has anyone helped you to succeed or have you helped someone else succeed?
- What are the benefits of working together to help someone else succeed?
- What could be the disadvantage of working together to help someone succeed?
- Why would you want to help someone succeed if you aren't going to get credit for your efforts?

Parents: Share with your family members about a time when you worked with a team to help someone else succeed. How did it feel when someone succeeded with your help? How did the experience change the way you behave or think?

* Prayer

Thank God for sending the right people to us during difficult times. Teach us to be the light for others when they need our help.

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BIBLE STORY VIDEO
<https://cefc.ch/22FD03W2>



MON
14

Putting Aside Our Rightful Rights

SCRIPTURE 1 Thessalonians 2:6-9

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about how Paul relates to the Thessalonians (vv.6, 8-9)?

APPLICATION

In what situations should I put aside my rightful rights?

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, fill me with the vision of Yourself – that You, who although You existed in the form of God, did not regard it as something to be grasped, but emptied Yourself of what was rightfully Yours, and walked the downward path of the cross, exchanging the form of God with the form of a servant.¹⁰ Fill with me with Your Spirit that I may follow You.

Prayer Pointers

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

DEEPER REFLECTION

THE CHURCH IN PHILIPPI SENT SOME GIFTS TO PAUL WHILE

he was in Thessalonica (Phil 4:16), but “these were evidently inadequate for his needs, perhaps because the Macedonian churches suffered from ‘extreme poverty’ [2 Cor 8:1-2]”¹¹. In these circumstances, Paul “could have made demands” on the Thessalonians by asking them for money “as apostles of Christ” (v.6), which was his God-given apostolic right (1 Cor 9:14 – note “the Lord commanded”). But Paul chose “not [to] be a burden to any of you” (v.9). Instead, he put aside his rightful rights and “worked night and day” “in labor and toil” for his personal sustenance. Probably, Paul preached by day and worked by night¹² as a tentmaker (Acts 18:3). Paul was staying with Jason (Acts 17:5-7). He earned his living and “presumably paid Jason for his board and lodging”¹³, as he reminded the Thessalonians, “we did not eat anyone’s bread without paying for it” (2 Thess 3:8). In this way, Paul showed the Thessalonians how he gave his own self to them as he proclaimed to them the Gospel (v.8).

Christian leaders can abuse God’s Word, “Obey your leaders” (Heb 13:17), to assert their authority in a self-centred and autocratic manner. Self-centred husbands can likewise abuse God’s command, “Wives, submit to your husbands” (Eph 5:22), toward their wives. The starting point in godly leading, in whatever setting, is giving ourselves to serve in love, and with this we will wisely put aside our rightful rights when it is necessary.

¹⁰ Philippians 2:6

¹¹ John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Thessalonians, The Bible Speaks Today* (IVP, 1991), 53

¹² John R. W. Stott, 53

¹³ John R. W. Stott, 53

TUE
15

Combining the Father's and Mother's Roles

SCRIPTURE 1 Thessalonians 2:7, 11-12; Ephesians 6:4; Proverbs 1:8

OBSERVATION

What do these passages say about the roles of a father and a mother?

APPLICATION

What changes do I need to make regarding my parenting roles?

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 effective in spiritual parenting of people under their charge
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

DISCIPLEMAKING IS SPIRITUAL PARENTING. IN BUILDING

the faith of the Thessalonians, Paul did so “like a mother feeding and caring for her own children” (v.7, NLT) and “like a father with his children”, exhorting, encouraging and urging them in their walk with God (vv.11-12).

There is no need to deduce from the two metaphors that Paul uses, that he is laying down a stereotype of sexual roles in the home: the mother feeding and the father teaching their children.¹⁴ In instructing fathers to “bring them [children] up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” (Eph 6:4), Paul is not saying that this is solely the father’s role and not the mother’s – a way which we tend to take. Even in the patriarchal culture in Old Testament times, the call of wisdom is, “My son, keep your **father’s** commandment, and forsake not your **mother’s** teaching” (Prov 1:8). It is not healthy nor helpful in parenting to draw such clear lines regarding the father’s and mother’s roles. In parenting our children, it is wholesome that fathering and mothering are done in combining both the father’s and mother’s roles, and to do so in partnership as a team. I have observed over the years that many parents are not on the same page in parenting. And this results in conflicts between husband and wife, confusion for the children and division in the family. Parenting ought to be grounded on the foundational “one flesh” commitment of husband and wife (Gen 2:24).

¹⁴ John R. W. Stott, 54

WED
16

Exemplary Life in Making Disciples

SCRIPTURE 1 Thessalonians 2:9-11; 1 Corinthians 11:1

OBSERVATION

In what ways was Paul exemplary in his ministry?

APPLICATION

What does it mean for me to live my life with authenticity?

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 The Generations: That the older generation will be godly models for the younger generation
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP, MAKING DISCIPLES AND PARENTING,

being exemplary is most vital. What we say and do stand on what we are. When we fail badly in what we are, what we say and do can become meaningless. But then, perhaps, the only meaningful thing here is, sadly, we become a bad example for people not to follow.

Paul's conduct before the eyes of the Thessalonians was "holy and righteous and blameless" (v.10). "Holy" refers to "our being devout, pious and pleasing to God", "righteous" in "our dealings with our neighbours" and "blameless" in "our public reputation"¹⁵. Mark Paul's **confidence in his transparent authenticity**: "You are witnesses, and God also" (v.10). Concerning his working for his personal sustenance and not burdening the Thessalonians, Paul could confidently say, "You remember, brothers" (v.9). Paul would be presumptuous if he did not know for sure that the Thessalonians did remember this. "Educational theorists are fond of saying that we remember 20 percent of what we hear, 50 percent of what we see, and a greater percentage of what we hear *and* see."¹⁶ And "there is a broad consensus that visual memories are more lasting than audible memories"¹⁷. In our life and ministry, what do people remember us for?

Paul has this twofold confidence: His life has shown and is seen to be exemplary, and he can call people to follow his example. At the heart of Paul's ministry is: "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ" (1 Cor 11:1), labouring "until Christ is formed in you" (Gal 4:19).

¹⁵ John R. W. Stott, 53

¹⁶ Gary S. Shogren, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, *Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Zondervan, 2012), 105

¹⁷ Gary S. Shogren, 105, footnote 58

THU
17

Spiritual Education in Making Disciples

SCRIPTURE 1 Thessalonians 2:11-12

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about Paul's ministry to the Thessalonians?

APPLICATION

How do I go about exhorting and encouraging fellow believers in my community?

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 build lives with discerning wisdom and befitting encouragement
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

BIBLICAL DISCIPLING AND PASTORING PEOPLE ARE A

double-barrelled ministry: By example and by education. In forming Christ in people's lives (cf. Gal 4:19), it is example that gives weight to education. A principle I seek to apply in teaching and preaching is, "Preach from the heart and out of my life."

Paul's spiritual education in discipling has three dimensions.

Instructional dimension: "we exhorted you...encouraged you...charged you..." (v.12). The Greek word for "exhort" could refer to "command (appeal, exhort, request, implore) or comfort (encourage, comfort, cheer up, console)"¹⁸. The word for "encourage" outside of Scripture "almost always has affective connotations, with the highly nuanced meanings of 'advise, encourage, console, comfort, speaking calm words to, appease and soothe'"¹⁹. It speaks of "encouragement for those whose stamina is flagging"²⁰. The word for "charge" refers to authoritative imploring, requiring, insisting and urging, with strong emotion, that certain discipleship action be taken.²¹ There are overlaps in meaning for the three terms,²² which shows that in ministry, there must be a dynamic combination of exhorting, encouraging and charging, and also when to wisely give particular emphasis. **Relational dimension:** Paul had a very close relationship with the Thessalonians "like a father with his own children" (v.11). **Personal dimension:** "we exhorted each one of you" (v.12). Paul paid attention to and spent personal time with individuals. This was Paul's style. He did the same with the Ephesians during his three-year stay with them (Acts 20:31). The relational and individual dimensions require time, and thus underscore the priority of intentionally investing time in people.

¹⁸ Jeffrey A. D. Weima, 1-2 Thessalonians, *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Baker Academic, 2014), 155

¹⁹ Jeffrey A. D. Weima, 155

²⁰ Gary G. Shogren, 108

²¹ Jeffrey A. D. Weima, 155; Gary G. Shogren, 108; Gene L. Green, The Letters to the Thessalonians, *The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Apollos, 2002), 136

²² Gordon D. Fee, The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Eerdmans, 2009), 82

FRI
18

Living Life Worthy of God (1)

SCRIPTURE 1 Thessalonians 2:11-12; Revelation 5:12; 1 Corinthians 15:9-10

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about the idea of worthiness in these three passages?

APPLICATION

What should be my perspective and posture regarding walking in a manner worthy 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 SGI leaders: To be Spirit-empowered to live lives worthy of God
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

PAUL'S GOAL IN EXHORTING, ENCOURAGING AND IMPLORING

the Thessalonians was they “walk in a manner worthy of God” (v.12). It means then, that this also ought to be our goal in life. “Walk” speaks of “the way one conducts oneself – either [positively] before God or [negatively] in sin”³³. In seeking to live our lives **worthy of God**, it is helpful that we consider two other facts: **God is worthy** and **we are unworthy**.

God is the One who alone is worthy of anything. There will come the day when “the Lord alone” – no one else and nothing else – “will be exalted” (Isa 2:17). God and the Lamb are “worthy to receive” the sevenfold (symbolising completeness and fullness) “power and wealth and wisdom and might and honour and glory and blessing” (Rev 4:11; 5:12). On the other extreme end, we are unworthy of God. Jacob said to God, “I am not worthy of the least of all the deeds of steadfast love and all the faithfulness that you have shown to Your servant” (Gen 32:10). And Paul said of himself, “I am unworthy to be called an apostle” (1 Cor 15:9). Note that Paul was speaking in the present tense. He felt that way continually.

How then can we, who are unworthy of God, live a life worthy of God, who alone is worthy? It is “by the grace of God” (1 Cor 15:10). It is by God’s saving grace through the blood of Christ and God’s empowering grace through the Holy Spirit. There is no place for any sense of personal achievement.

³³ Gene L. Green, 137

SAT
19

Living Life Worthy of God (2)

SCRIPTURE 1 Thessalonians 2:11-12

OBSERVATION

What does it mean to be called by God into His own kingdom and glory (v.12)?

APPLICATION

What does God's calling of me into His own kingdom and glory mean to me in my discipleship journey?

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 grasp the significance of being called into God's kingdom and glory
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

TO “WALK IN A MANNER WORTHY OF GOD” IS TO “LIVE IN a way that corresponds to the character and demands of God²⁴, to live “the holy life, one that honours God in all its relationships and activities”²⁵. Instead of giving a list of specific commandments to be obeyed, Paul sets before us “the goal of living in a way that is consistent with the nature of God”²⁶. This presupposes that knowing God is a critical necessity. And we can truly know God in where He has revealed Himself: The Scriptures. And we also pray, that we “may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all Spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him” (Col 1:9-10).

God “calls” us “into His own kingdom and glory” (v.12). “Calls” in the present tense indicates that it is an ongoing call.²⁷ This call is particularly significant and relevant to a discipleship context of suffering, which was that of the Thessalonians (1 Thess 1:6; 2:14). God’s kingdom is “the kingly rule, the reign, the dominion and the sovereignty of God in the hearts of people”²⁸, and God’s glory is God’s presence (Exo 40:34-35). Both are present and future realities. So, we anchor in the present with an assured future. Because we are in God’s “kingdom”, we can have “patient endurance” in our “tribulation” “in Jesus” (Rev 1:9). And as “we rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Rom 5:2), “the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon” us in our suffering (1 Pet 4:14).

²⁴ Jeffrey A. D. Weima, 157

²⁵ Gene L. Green, 137

²⁶ Jeffrey A. D. Weima, 157

²⁷ Jeffrey A. D. Weima, 157

²⁸ James A. Brooks, Mark, *The New American Commentary* (Broadman, 1991), 47

SUN
20

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 3

Cooperation:

Working together to do more than you can do alone.

Memory Verse

"Two people are better than one. They can help each other in everything they do."
- Ecclesiastes 4:9 (NIRV)

* Bottom Line

Work together to help someone in need.*

PROPS VIDEO
on working together

BIBLE STORY VIDEO
<https://cefc.ch/22FD03W3>

* Bible Story

Luke 5:17-26 – Four Friends and the Lame Man



* Activity

Helping Others in Need

Props: Video on working together – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GPeZ6viNgY>

Watch the video and discuss with your family members:

- What difference does it make when everyone comes together to help?
- What do we gain when we help others?

Say, "The lone boy was not able to move the huge log, but when everyone chipped in to help, the impossible task can be made possible. Everyone benefits when we cooperate to do something to help others. We only need to give others the little things we have. We can work with others to help those in need, just like the people who brought the man through the roof to Jesus!"

* Talk About It

- In our story today, who worked together to help the man who couldn't walk?
- Does Jesus work together with us today to help others? Why or why not?
- What do we gain when we help others?
- Why does God encourage Christians to work together to help others?

Parents: Share with your family members about a time when you worked together with others to help someone in need. What happened? What surprised you in this incident? How was God involved?

* Prayer

Thank God for giving us the ability to see and help others in need. Ask for God's continuous guidance to work with one another at home, work or in school to help others in need.

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MON
21

The Centrality of the Word

SCRIPTURE 1 Thessalonians 1:4-6; 2:4, 12-13

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about the Word of God in these texts?

APPLICATION

What aspects about the Word of God are particularly relevant to me?

PRAYER

Lord, it is good for me that I am afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes. For Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. Make me to know Your ways, O Lord, and teach me Your paths. Lead me in Your truth and teach me. O that the Law of Your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces!²⁹

Prayer Pointers

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

DEEPER REFLECTION

PAUL “EXHORTED...ENCOURAGED...CHARGED” THE

Thessalonians to “walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into His own kingdom and glory” (2 Thess 2:12). **How** did Paul exhort, encourage and charge his new converts? **With the Word of God. Where** did Paul get the idea of living our lives worthy of God who call us into His kingdom and glory? **From the Word of God.** In Paul’s disciplinemaking and pastoring work, **the Word of God is central.** In 1 Thessalonians 1 and 2, the Word of God and the Gospel of God are synonymous, together occurring eight times.³⁰

Observe the nature and character of the Word of God. The Word of God is spoken and received “in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction” (v.5), “in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit” (v.6) and “in the midst of much conflict” (1 Thess 2:2). The Word of God – and so are also those who trust in and hold fast to God’s Word – is tested and tried by all opposition and obstacles but proves true and triumphs over them. The Word of God is so sacred that to be entrusted with it, our hearts must be tested and approved by God (1 Thess 2:4). The infinite worth and transforming power of the Word of God convinced and compelled Paul to serve with self-sacrificial love in his ministry of the Word (1 Thess 2:8, 9). There are two dimensions in our relationship to the Word of God: active and passive. Actively, we walk by God’s Word; passively, God’s Word “is at work” in us (1 Thess 2:13).

²⁹ Psalm 119:71-72, 105; 25:4-5

³⁰ 1 Thessalonians 1:5, 6, 8; 2:2, 4, 8, 9, 13

TUE
22

Divine Word in Human Words

SCRIPTURE 1 Thessalonians 2:13

OBSERVATION

What does it mean that the Thessalonians received Paul's preaching of the Gospel to them as the Word of God and not the word of men?

APPLICATION

How can I know that what I hear in a teaching or sermon, or what I teach others, is not the word of men but the Word 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 faithfully keep a Word-centred and Word-directed ministry
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

WHAT THE THESSALONIANS “HEARD FROM” PAUL, THEY “received” and “accepted it not as the word of men”, but “the word of God” (v.13). But what the Thessalonians “heard” were human words spoken by Paul. How then could they consider that “not as the word of men” but “the word of God” – and with the emphatic “what it really is”?

The nature of the ministry of the Word is shaped by the nature of the Bible, the Word of God given as divine revelation. “The Bible is the Word of God given in the words of men in history.”³¹ That was how God gave us the Bible: “in the words of men” – the only way He can speak to us such that we can understand. Paul’s letters in the New Testament are considered as “Scriptures” (2 Pet 3:15-16), which he wrote as he was “carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet 1:20-21) and are thus “God-breathed” (2 Tim 3:16). But they are all written in human words, nonetheless. So, when we read Paul’s letters, we hear Paul’s voice and God’s voice through Paul’s voice.

When we communicate in human words, thoughts, ideas and insights that are based on and built from the Scriptures, and we do so “not in persuasive words of [human and worldly] wisdom” (1 Cor 2:4), but by the power of the Holy Spirit with deep conviction (1 Thess 1:5), we are speaking the Word of God. Our speech can become “Scripturated” – influenced, formed and directed by the Scriptures – that we speak Scripturally, even without citing Scriptures. Jesus was like that.

³¹ George Eldon Ladd, *The New Testament and Criticism* (Eerdmans, 1967), 12

WED
23

God's Word "Works in You" (1)

SCRIPTURE 1 Thessalonians 2:13

OBSERVATION

What can you learn about the Word of God?

APPLICATION

How is the Word of God working 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 leaders
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for The Generations: To know and see the powerful working of God's Word in their lives
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

WHEN WE RECEIVE THE WORD OF GOD THROUGH HEARING

it being preached or taught, or in our reading of the Scriptures, something happens. The Word of God "is **at work in you** believers" (v.13). We relate with the Word of God in two interlinked positions: active and passive. Actively, we **walk** by God's Word – through reading, hearing, understanding and applying it. Passively, the living Word of the living God **works** in our lives. But does God's Word work in our lives only at the point when we receive it – like, as we used to say quite commonly, "God spoke to me"?

Paul recalled for the Thessalonians the way they "received" and "accepted" God's Word when he was with them (v.13). That was something that happened in the past. However, Paul pointed out to them that this very Word of God "is at work" (literally, "works" – in the present tense) in them. The Word of God continues to work in our lives beyond the point when we received it. We emphasise doing the Word of God, which is critically necessary (Matt 7:24-27). But how conscious are we of the Word of God's doing in us? Our lives are changed when we apply the Word, it is not just because "we apply" the Word. This by itself can be rather anthropocentric. Our lives are changed because God applies His Word in our lives – God's Word "works in you" – as we apply His Word. Ultimately, it is God who changes our lives through His Word as He empowers us to live by His Word.

THU
24

God's Word "Works in You" (2)

SCRIPTURE 1 Thessalonians 2:13-14

OBSERVATION

How is verse 14 related to verse 13?

APPLICATION

How do I see the Word of God working in me in my suffering?

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 God's Word works powerfully in their ministry
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

FOR THE THESSALONIANS, THE INDICATION OF THE WORD of God "is at work in you" (v.13) was how they imitated God's churches in Judea in their suffering from their own countrymen (v.14). Suffering is an indication of the Word of God working in our lives. This doesn't make sense, does it? But this is what the Word of God tells us, however strange it may sound. This "strange" reality presupposes that we seek to live by the Word of God – as it was with the Thessalonians. And closely knitted to this kind of suffering is endurance. The Thessalonians suffered with "endurance inspired by hope" (1 Thess 1:3, NIV). Biblically, suffering and endurance go hand-in-hand, which are necessary for character development toward Christlikeness (Rom 5:3-4; Jas 1:2-3).

There is a trial that has been ongoing daily for a long time, and increasingly difficult, for my wife and I. As we seek to "not grow weary and lose heart" (Heb 12:3), we also at times ask, "How long, O Lord?" (Psa 13:1). Recently, I memorised Job 6:11-13: "What is my strength, that I should wait? And what is my end, that I should endure? Is my strength the strength of stones, or is my flesh bronze? Have I any help in me, when resource is driven from me?" This Scripture gives me the Word of God to speak to God about my struggles. But its power enables me to endure.

As we suffer with endurance by the Word of God, know that the Word of God is at work in us (see Rom 15:4).

FRI
25

The Darkened, Hardened Human Heart

SCRIPTURE 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16a; Matthew 23:29-33; Genesis 12:1-3

OBSERVATION

How can it be that the Jews had a long history of opposing God (vv.14-16a; Matt 23:29-33) when God had chosen Israel to be a channel of His redemptive blessings to the world (Gen 12:1-3)?

APPLICATION

How can I keep myself from thinking and believing that I am standing on the side with God, when in reality it is on the side against 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 SGI leaders: To be spiritually sensitive to the condition of their hearts
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

IN NEW TESTAMENT TIMES, THE CHURCHES OF GOD IN Judea suffered persecution from their fellow-Jews, who “killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets”, and opposed the proclamation of the Gospel (vv.14-15). These Jewish opponents pursued Paul from Thessalonica to Berea (Acts 17:5-10), and from Berea to Athens (Acts 17:10, 13-15). At this point of salvation history, only a minority of the Jews became followers of Jesus the Messiah. And even today, “secularism is becoming the unifying factor in Jewish identity...today the majority of the Jews worldwide identify themselves as secular rather than religious”³².

God had “come down” to “meet” Israel to reveal Himself personally to them (Exo 19:9-10, 16-20), having chosen them to be His channel of redemptive blessings to the world (Gen 12:1-3; 26:3-5; 28:13-14). But sadly, Israel had a long history of covenant unfaithfulness and “shedding the blood of the prophets” (Matt 23:29-33). Can one really reject God blatantly in the face of divine personal revelation, which is unmistakably true and real? God’s faithful miraculous daily provision of “bread from heaven” can end up with “We loathe this worthless food!” (Neh 9:15; Num 21:5). The problem lies in the darkened, hardened human heart. Sometimes, we think that pre-believers received Christ because of our acts of love and unwittingly we take the credit. And note that “genuine coming to faith is never finally a matter of autonomous human decision”³³. Ultimately, it is “No one can come to Me unless it is granted by the Father” (Jn 6:64-65). This is the only hope for the darkened, hardened human heart.

³² Salim J. Munayer & Lisa Loden, *Through My Enemy's Eyes: Envisioning Reconciliation in Israel-Palestine* (Paternoster, 2013), 80

³³ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, (IVP, 1991), 302-303

SAT
26

God Judges in His Mercy

SCRIPTURE 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16; Genesis 15:13-16; 1 Corinthians 11:27-32

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about the judgment of God on His people in 1 Corinthians 11:27-32?

APPLICATION

How does the possibility of God's disciplinary judgment on sin affect the way I live 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: To walk in fear of God who is a consuming fire³⁴
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

SOME BIBLE SCHOLARS CALLED PAUL'S WORDS IN VERSES

15 to 16 “the Pauline polemic against the Jews”³⁵. Paul wasn't anti-Jew. When he went to Corinth, where he wrote to the Thessalonians, he first preached the Gospel to Jews (Acts 18:1, 5); and likewise, when he went to Ephesus from Corinth (Acts 19:1, 8). Paul himself was a patriotic Jew (Rom 11:1; 2 Cor 11:22). He longed and prayed for his fellow Jews' salvation (Rom 10:1) with such “great sorrow and unceasing anguish” as to declare that he was willing to forfeit his salvation if only thereby they might be saved (Rom 9:1-3). And yet, quite ironically, he seemed to conclude that God's “wrath has come upon them at last” because they have “fill[ed] up the measure of their sins” (v.16), as if they were a gone case. What kind of missionary mindset was that?

We must be wary of the danger of filling up the measure of our sins that leads to divine judgment. God's disciplinary judgment came upon “many” of the Corinthians in the form of weakness, illness and premature death (1 Cor 11:29-32). God's judgment came upon the Canaanites only “after four generations” from Abraham, because their sins “do not yet warrant their destruction” (Gen 15:16, NLT). God in “the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience” gives people sufficient time to repent of their sins (Rom 2:4). We can never know when we cross the line in sinning that results in divine judgment. God determines that line. Let us carefully keep short accounts of our sins with God (1 Jn 1:9).

³⁴ Hebrews 12:29

³⁵ John R. W. Stott, 55

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SCRIPTURE

[Empty box for Scripture]

OBSERVATION

[Empty box for Observation]

APPLICATION

[Empty box for Application]

PRAYER

[Empty box for Prayer]

THE PAST WEEK

Review

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

[Empty box for high/low point reflection]

◆ What gave me life and what drained me?

[Empty box for life/drainage reflection]

◆ How was the Spirit of God at work?

[Empty box for Spirit of God reflection]

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

Cooperation:

Working together to do more than you can do alone.

Memory Verse

"Two people are better than one. They can help each other in everything they do."
- Ecclesiastes 4:9 (NIRV)

* Bottom Line

Make a habit of working together.*

* Bible Story

Acts 2:42-47 - The Early Church Works Together

* Activity

Paint-A-Picture

Props: An A3 size piece of cardboard or equivalent, paints and paintbrushes

Read 1 Corinthians 12:14 together as a family.

Discuss with your family members: How does working together look like?

Get everyone to paint a picture on the cardboard together, so that the images created are connected to each other.

Say, "For God's love to spread far and wide, the Church needs its people to work together to make it happen. The painting we created may not be perfect, but it is a result of us sharing our lives and ideas. God wants us to learn to work together as one body. He will take care of the outcome."

* Talk About It

- How many examples are there in this passage of how the early church worked together?
- Why do you think cooperation and working together were so important for the early church?
- What was the result of them working well together?
- How does our church work together?
- How are we similar or different compared to the early church?

Parents: Share with your family members about an experience in church that needed everyone's contributions and help to get things done. Who was involved? How did the event turn out? How did everyone overcome their differences and work together? How did the experience affect you?

* Prayer

Thank God for being there with us all the time. Pray for perseverance and understanding when we work with others. Let us learn to appreciate and see the goodness of others.

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BIBLE STORY VIDEO
<https://cefc.ch/22FD03W4>



MON
28

Building People's Faith Is Critical

SCRIPTURE 1 Thessalonians 2:17-18; Acts 15:36-41; 16:4-5

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about Paul's ministry to people whom he had led to faith in Christ?

APPLICATION

How can I contribute to building the faith of new and young believers in Christ?

PRAYER

Lord, grant me to walk with You closely and know You deeply, that I may mature and be transformed by You into Your likeness. And I ask that out of this growth journey of mine I may be used by You to build the faith of those spiritually younger than me in life-to-life transmission in Christ by the life-touching power of the Holy Spirit.

Prayer Pointers

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

DEEPER REFLECTION

OPPOSITION FROM THE JEWS FORCED PAUL TO LEAVE

Thessalonica abruptly and his ministry of building the faith of his new converts was greatly disrupted (Acts 17:5-10). Feeling that he had not built their faith adequately, he longed greatly to see them again (vv.17-18). In his ministry, Paul sought to **“return and visit”** his converts **“in every city”** to **“see how they are”** and to **strengthen them in the faith** (Acts 15:36, 41; 16:5). Such was Paul's intense concern.

There was a time when Dawson Trotman, the founder of The Navigators, made it a rule in his life never to end his day without sharing Christ with someone;³⁶ and he had won many to Christ. One day, he made a shocking discovery when he shared Christ with a man. He was “one of his ‘converts’ whose decision had not been followed up and had virtually died on the vine”³⁷. Shaken, Dawson reasoned that there must be countless such persons who had sincerely received Christ, but whose lives had not been changed. Lost souls were saved but became lost again. From that time on, Dawson “resolved to follow up anyone he led to Christ – a work more difficult than winning souls”³⁸. Dawson said, “You can lead a man to Christ in 20 minutes to a couple of hours, but it takes 20 weeks to a couple of years to adequately follow him up.”³⁹ Dawson began to put “less emphasis on getting the decision and more on growing up into Christ”⁴⁰.

Building the faith of new and young believers is highly critical.

³⁶ Betty Lee Skinner, *Daws, A Man Who Trusted God* (Navpress, 1974), 67

³⁷ Betty Lee Skinner, 70

³⁸ Betty Lee Skinner, 70

³⁹ Betty Lee Skinner, 70

⁴⁰ Betty Lee Skinner, 70

TUE
29The Interests of
Jesus Christ

SCRIPTURE 1 Thessalonians 2:17a; Philippians 2:19-21

OBSERVATION

What does Paul's description of his separation from the Thessalonians, "we were made orphans from you" (v.17a, NIV), tell us about him?

APPLICATION

What changes do I need to make in my feelings toward people?

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 not neglect people in fulfilling their ministry tasks
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

PAUL'S FORCED DEPARTURE FROM THESSALONICA RESULTED

in a separation from his new converts, which he describes as "we were made orphans from you" (v.17a, NIV). Paul uses the word, *aporphanizō*, which means "to cause to be an orphan"⁴¹, to describe the "extremely painful"⁴² separation. Paul felt a great sense of loss, like a child who has lost his parents. We need to capture Paul's intense feelings, which shows how much the Thessalonians meant to him.

The separation was unbearable even though it had been only "for a short time". While being separated "in person", for Paul, it was "not in heart". Although they were separated physically, Paul carried the church in his heart and thoughts. It was out of sight, but never out of mind. In a similar vein, Paul said to the Philippians, "I hold you in my heart" (Phil 1:7), and to the Corinthians who had brought him many heartaches (cf. 2 Cor 2:1) he spoke of "the abundant love I have for you" (2 Cor 2:4) and the "earnest care I have for you" (2 Cor 8:16).

These intense emotions of Paul tell us the importance of people to him. Disciplemaking is not just a task to be done or a mission to be accomplished. It is essentially about building people's lives. Paul sees people as the "**interests...of Jesus Christ,**" and because of this we ought to be "genuinely concerned for the welfare" of people (Phil 2:19-21). How we sensitively feel for people and are consciously concerned about them is an indicator of the importance of people to us.

⁴¹ Johannes P. Louw & Eugene A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains, Second Edition, Volume 1* (UBS, 1988, 1989), 85:17

⁴² Gene L. Green, 150

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Irreplaceable Dynamics in Face-to-Face Contact

SCRIPTURE 1 Thessalonians 2:17-18

OBSERVATION

What does Paul's attitude and action toward the Thessalonians tell us about face-to-face contact in life and ministry?

APPLICATION

What changes do I need to make in my relationships and ministry on face-to-face contact?

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 The Generations: To treasure and be committed to building interpersonal relationships
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

PAUL'S DEEP SENSE OF LOSS LIKE AN ORPHANED CHILD

in his “extremely painful”⁴³ separation from the Thessalonians (v.17a) resulted in a great longing “to see you face to face” (v.18). Paul uses “highly emotive”⁴⁴ words to describe his loss and longing. Note the attitude and action of Paul in seeking to see the Thessalonians face to face. He “endeavoured the more eagerly” to see them again. The verb for “be eager”, *spoudazō*, is an intensive word. It means “do one’s best, spare no effort, work hard”⁴⁵, eager to do something with readiness to expend energy and intense effort.⁴⁶ The intensity of Paul’s eagerness is intensified further by the expressions “more abundantly” and “with great desire” (v.17). And with this attitude, Paul “wanted to come to you” with many attempts – “again and again”, until it became clear to him that it was impossible (v.18).

Paul’s intensive attitude and action underscores the significant importance of face-to-face contact and communication in life and ministry. God created human beings to be personal and relational beings, with personal face-to-face contact and communication in relationship – with God and fellow human beings – as vitally essential. It has certain living life-to-life dynamics that cannot be replaced by technology. A good example is sexual intimacy. We can communicate through technology without relating interpersonally. God’s most definitive self-revelation in “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (Jn 1:14) was a face-to-face contact with His creatures, where He could be heard, seen, gazed at and touched personally (1 Jn 1:1-2).

⁴³ Gene L. Green, 150

⁴⁴ Gary S. Shogren, 125

⁴⁵ Dictionary in *The Greek New Testament, Fifth Revised Edition* (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2014), 168

⁴⁶ Johannes P. Louw & Eugene A. Nida, 25:74, 68:63

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Spiritual Warfare in Making Disciples

SCRIPTURE 1 Thessalonians 2:17-18; 3:1-5

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about spiritual warfare in discipling?

APPLICATION

How does the reality of spiritual warfare in discipling affect my life and ministry?

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 alert to spiritual warfare in discipling people
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

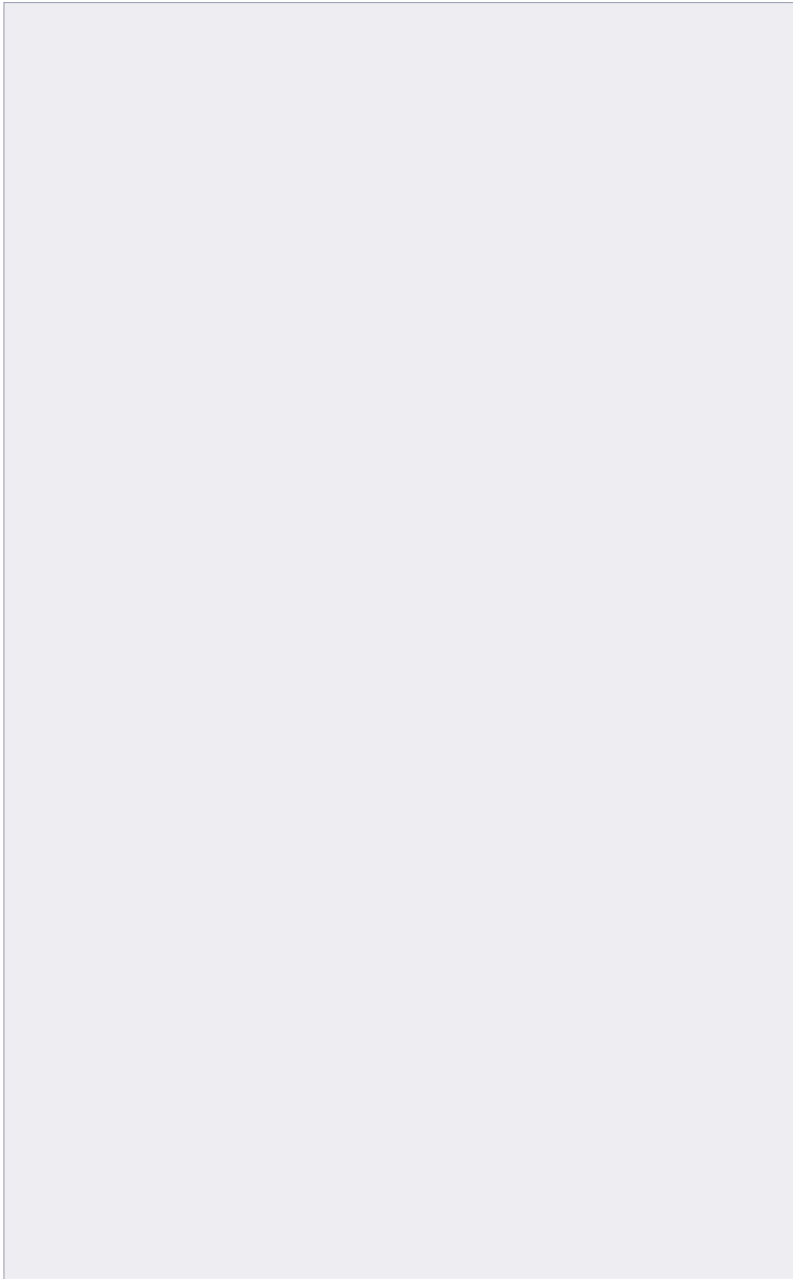
DEEPER REFLECTION

A CHURCH MAY AT THE END OF A YEAR REPORT ON THE number of pre-believers who received Christ through its personal and congregational evangelistic efforts. But does that church check on the number of these new believers who remain in the faith, how are they being discipled and who are those who have fallen away? We can safely assume from Paul's close relationship with the Thessalonians, and his desire and attempts to reconnect with them after being forced to leave them abruptly, that he had such concerns. And this would be especially so when Paul recognised the reality of spiritual warfare in discipling.

Satan is mentioned twice in 1 Thessalonians, which point to two battlefronts in spiritual warfare in discipling. **Discipleship battlefront:** The Thessalonians in their young faith were suffering affliction and Paul felt that he had not adequately built their faith. So, he was fearful in his absence from them that "the tempter" might have "tempted" them (1 Thess 3:5), they were "being shaken by the troubles you are going through" (1 Thess 3:3, NLT) and fell away from the faith. A very critical discipling curriculum is suffering in discipleship. **Discipling battlefront:** Paul made attempts to return to Thessalonica "again and again", but to no avail, because "Satan hindered us" (v.18). The Greek word for "hindered" applies to "breaking up a road to render it impassable"⁴⁷. When we fail in committing ourselves to disciple new and young believers, we may have already lost in the discipling battlefront without being "hindered" by Satan.

⁴⁷ John R. W. Stott, 62

NOTES



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