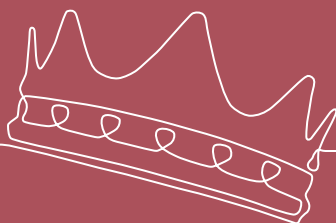


SEPTEMBER
2022
DEVOTIONAL
JOURNAL

*To this end we always pray for you, that
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calling and may fulfill every resolve for
good and every work of faith by His power.*

2 THESSALONIANS 1:11



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2 THESSALONIANS 1:11

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 COVENANT EFC MISSIONS

The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!" And he said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."...

Then turning to the disciples, he said privately, "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see! For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it."

LUKE 10:17-20; 23-24 (ESV)

JESUS IN LUKE 10:1 SENT OUT THE 72 AFTER SAYING

to them in verse 2, "the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few...Jesus gave clear instructions for the 72. Luke 10:17 captures the reports of the 72 to Jesus upon their return. Notice that the 72 rejoiced in their power over the demons. Jesus had to remind them that firstly, the authority they had was from Jesus and secondly, they should rejoice over their own salvation. In Luke 10:23 and 24, Jesus added that the disciples had the privilege of being with Jesus.

Brothers and sisters, indeed the harvest is plentiful. See how the Lord has been blessing our work among the migrant workers. 23 baptised in July and more than 130 received Christ since February 2022. When we reflect on these numbers, I am reminded of what Jesus urged us to do in Luke 10. Keep our eyes on Jesus and not get caught up in the numbers. Let us continue to point and lead others to Jesus, to know Him and love Him. While we do this, let us also grow our discipleship and relationship with Jesus.

PRAY:

- That the Lord of the Harvest will send forth His labourers to the harvest field. Yes, pray that God will send you, your children and your parents. Pray that God will help you to let go.
- That God will raise up new generations of missionaries in Covenant EFC that break new ground for the Gospel in a new normal world.
- That the Gospel be shared creatively and the converts be disciplined holistically.
- Protection for our missionaries and partners who are serving the communities in the midst of multiple uncertainties, economic strains and COVID-19.
- For Covenanters to love and reach out to their neighbours and to the nations.
- For the churches to love and serve the foreigners in our midst, including the domestic helpers at home.

WORSHIP SONGS

SEPTEMBER – OCTOBER

LIVING HOPE

Verse 1

How great the chasm that lay between us
 How high the mountain I could not climb
 In desperation, I turned to heaven
 And spoke Your Name into the night
 Then through the darkness
 Your loving kindness
 Tore through the shadows of my soul
 The work is finished, the end is written
 Jesus Christ, my living hope

Verse 2

Who could imagine so great a mercy?
 What heart could fathom such boundless grace?
 The God of ages stepped down from glory
 To wear my sin and bear my shame
 The cross has spoken, I am forgiven
 The King of kings calls me His own
 Beautiful Savior, I'm Yours forever
 Jesus Christ, my living hope

Chorus

Hallelujah, praise the One who set me free
 Hallelujah, death has lost its grip on me
 You have broken every chain
 There's salvation in Your Name
 Jesus Christ, my living hope

Verse 3

Then came the morning that sealed the promise
 Your buried body began to breathe
 Out of the silence, the Roaring Lion
 Declared the grave has no claim on me
 Jesus, Yours is the victory, whoa!

Ending

Jesus Christ, my living hope
 Oh God, You are my living hope

Brian Johnson | Phil Wickham

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HOPE OF THE NATIONS

Verse

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

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 LION AND THE LAMB

Verse 1

He's coming on the clouds
 Kings and kingdoms will bow down
 And every chain will break
 As broken hearts declare His praise
 For who can stop the Lord Almighty

Chorus

Our God is the Lion
 The Lion of Judah
 He's roaring with power
 And fighting our battles
 And every knee will bow before Him
 Our God is the Lamb
 The Lamb that was slain
 For the sins of the world
 His blood breaks the chains
 And every knee will bow before the Lion and the Lamb
 Every knee will bow before Him

Verse 2

So open up the gates
 Make way before the King of kings
 The God who comes to save
 Is here to set the captives free
 For who can stop the Lord Almighty

Bridge

Who can stop the Lord Almighty
 Who can stop the Lord (Almighty)

Brenton Brown | Brian Johnson | Leeland Mooring

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GOD IS HERE

Intro

Oh oh oh
Oh oh oh

Verse 1

Open our eyes, Lord
We want to see You
Open our hearts, Lord
We want to know You
Open our ears, Lord
We need to hear You
Jesus be revealed
Jesus be revealed

Chorus

God is here, God is here
God is here, He is able
We draw near to see Jesus face to face
God is here, God is here
God is here, He is faithful
We draw near to see Jesus
Oh, Jesus be revealed

Verse 2

Open the gates, Lord
Reveal Your glory
Open the nations
Establish Your Kingdom
Open the Heavens
Pour out Your Spirit
Jesus be revealed
Jesus be revealed

Bridge

Holy
We cry holy
Hallelujah, God is here
Holy
We cry holy
Hallelujah, God is here
(Repeat)

Darlene Zschech | Israel Houghton | Phil Wickham
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GOD IS GREAT

Verse 1

All creation cries to You
Worshipping in Spirit and in truth
Glory to the Faithful One
Jesus Christ God's Son

Verse 2

All creation gives You praise
You alone are truly great
You alone are God who reigns
For eternity

Chorus

God is great and His praise
Fills the earth fills the heavens
And Your Name will be praised
Through all the world

God is great sing His praise
All the earth all the heavens
'Cause we're living for the glory
Of Your Name
(The glory of Your Name)

Verse 3

All to You O God we bring
Jesus teach us how to live
Let Your fire burn in us
That all may hear and all may see

Bridge

Holy is the Lord
The whole earth sings
The whole earth sings

Ending

'Cause we're living for the glory
Of Your Name
The glory of Your Name

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IN JESUS' NAME

Verse 1

God is fighting for us
 God is on our side
 He has overcome
 Yes He has overcome
 We will not be shaken
 We will not be moved
 Jesus You are here (oh)

Verse 2

Carrying our burdens
 Covering our shame
 He has overcome
 Yes He has overcome
 We will not be shaken
 We will not be moved
 Jesus You are here

Chorus 1

I will live, I will not die
 The resurrection power of Christ alive in me
 And I am free in Jesus' Name

Chorus 2

I will live, I will not die
 I will declare and lift You high
 Christ revealed and I am healed in Jesus' Name

Bridge

God is fighting for us
 Pushing back the darkness
 Lighting up the Kingdom
 That cannot be shaken
 In the Name of Jesus
 Enemy's defeated
 And we will shout it out
 Shout it out

Ending

In Jesus' Name
 In Jesus' Name
 In Jesus' Name oh

Darlene Zschech | Israel Houghton
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HOW GREAT IS OUR GOD

Verse 1

The splendour of the King
Clothed in majesty
Let all the earth rejoice
All the earth rejoice
He wraps Himself in light
And darkness tries to hide
And trembles at His voice
Trembles at His voice

Chorus

How great is our God, sing with me
How great is our God, all will see
How great, how great is our God

Verse 2

Age to age He stands
And time is in His hands
Beginning and the end
Beginning and the end
The Godhead, three in one
Father, Spirit, Son
The Lion and the Lamb
The Lion and the Lamb

Bridge

Name above all names
Worthy of all praise
My heart will sing “How great is our God!”

Chris Tomlin | Ed Cash | Jesse Reeves

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YOU ALONE

Verse

You are the peace that guards my heart
My help in time of need
You are the hope that leads me on
And brings me to my knees
For there I find You waiting
And there I find release
So with all my heart I'll worship
And unto You I'll sing

Chorus

For You alone deserve all glory
For You alone deserve all praise
Father we worship and adore You
Father we long to see Your face
For You alone deserve all glory
For You alone deserve all praise
Father we love You
And we worship You this day

Don Harris

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THU
01

Worshipping Our King!

SCRIPTURE Daniel 4:1-3; Exodus 20:1-6

OBSERVATION

Who is God, how is He to be worshipped and by whom?

APPLICATION

How must I change or adjust the way I approach the Lord my God in worship and relate to Him in daily 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 Outreach/Missions/New Life leaders: To depend on God and passionately lead the Church to be actively involved in the cause of God's Kingdom
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

WE MUST REVERE GOD AS OUR KING! IN VERSE 2, THE Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar, referred to God as the “Most High God” – the most holy, highest and supreme God, whose power and wonders are unmatched, whose Kingdom lasts forever and whose rule continues through all generations! Exodus 20:1-6 tells us that He alone is God. He is faithful to all those who worship Him alone and the generations who love and obey Him! Today we are at risk of passing on to future generations an erroneous view of God – as our buddy, who does us a few big favours now and then to get us out of trouble when we desperately seek Him because everything we have tried does not work. But at all other times we can keep Him at a distance, so that He does not interfere with our lives and what we want to do. What an impoverished view of the sovereign and almighty God!

Yes, Jesus called His disciples friends.¹ But remember, Jesus the Son of God came to rescue us from slavery to sin and deliver us from condemnation. For our sake, God made Jesus, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that in Him we could be declared righteous by God!² Such inexplicable divine grace demands that all Christians humbly bow at Jesus' feet and honour Him with consecrated lives of devotion, love and obedience.

As our church emerges from the pandemic, we must disciple the generations to possess a biblical and full view of God, and serve Jesus as the King of kings and Lord of lords!³

¹ John 15:13-15.

² 2 Corinthians 5:21.

³ 1 Timothy 6:15; Revelation 17:14; 19:16.

FRI
02

Growing Our Capacity!

SCRIPTURE Deuteronomy 8:11-20; Psalm 145:4-7; Matthew 9:35-38

OBSERVATION

What is upon the heart of God for His people according to these passages?

APPLICATION

How will I courageously share the Gospel and resolutely disciple another in the coming weeks and months?

PRAYER

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

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for SGI leaders: That more CG members will arise to leadership roles, thus multiplying our discipling capacity
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

THERE ARE MANY SITUATIONS BEYOND OUR CONTROL, SUCH as rising geopolitical tensions, dreadful military conflicts, global economic problems and the climate crisis, just to name a few. The greatest reality is people's eternal destiny – damnation or glorification. However, this spiritual reality is masked by the by-products of humanity's increased intellectual and technological capacities. Along with great economic advances, there is a self-absorbed pursuit of pleasure in the consumption of goods and services. With increased knowledge and power, people come under an illusion that they are capable of self-salvation. Human pride erases humankind's need for God. Life devoid of a divine, holy Saviour can go on just fine. Ungodly people pass on their confidence in human ingenuity to the next generations, who increasingly are brazenly choosing to live in rebellion against God, mocking His existence and His called out people, the Church.

The Church has been given a holy aspiration – for one generation to “commend” the works of the Lord our God and to “declare” His mighty acts to another generation (Psa 145:4). May the audacious culture of “authentic discipleship and intentional discipling of a certain kind” mark future generations; so that the Church will multiply Christ-mastered messengers of the Gospel and missionaries to the world, and the Christian faith will flood every village, city and nation!

As we emerge from the pandemic and look forward as a church, it is imperative that the current generation courageously and resolutely imparts the faith to the future generations. May we collectively determine to build God's house for the harvest, so that our sending capacity will be greater than our seating capacity!

SAT
03

Pursuing God's Dream!

SCRIPTURE Matthew 28:18-20; Revelation 7:9-12

OBSERVATION

What must the global Church do to partner God to fulfil His “dream” for a new humanity in Jesus Christ?

APPLICATION

How will I participate in building a local church that reaches the unsaved with the Gospel?

PRAYER

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

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for Church Board: That God will give wisdom to them and the Senior Pastors' Office to steer our church to equip and send out multitudes of Kingdom workers
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

CAN YOU HEAR OUR KING JESUS COMMANDING HIS CHURCH, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations (v.19)? In obeying, we expect that we will be taunted by adversaries, tested by adversities and face trials of various kinds. Nonetheless, we must trust in our sovereign and faithful God, and courageously go forth to make disciples! Is this a compelling call for you?

Can you hear in heaven the vast multitude from every nation crying out, **“Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”** (Rev 7:10)? Do you desire to see your (currently) non-Christian family member, relative, neighbour, colleague or favourite hawker in future stand next to you in that brilliant light and glorious sight, worshipping Jesus the King? Is this something you long to see and will do something about?

As we emerge from the pandemic and look forward as a church, it is imperative that we desperately cry out to the Lord our God for mercy upon the generations of non-Christians. Would you make the words from this contemporary song your heartfelt prayer:⁴

Heal my heart and make it clean
 Open up my eyes to the things unseen
 Show me how to love like You have loved me
 Break my heart for what breaks Yours
 Everything I am for Your Kingdom's cause
 As I walk from earth into eternity

⁴ “Hosanna”. Written by Brooke Ligertwood. Capital Christians Music Group.

SUN
04

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

Trust:

Putting your confidence in someone you can depend on.

Memory Verse

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding."
– Proverbs 3:5 (NIV)

* Bottom Line

Trust God even when you have to wait.*

* Bible Story

Genesis 15-21 – Abraham and Isaac

* Activity

Untie Knots

Props: Nylon strings

Tie two short strings together. Make enough of these for each family member and get them to untie them.

After the game, invite everyone to share their experiences. Say, "Sometimes, we experience situations just like the knots and where we pray for help. At times, help does not come immediately and God wants us to wait. We can learn to wait upon God patiently. We can trust that God will untie all knotty situations when we look up to Him."

* Talk About It

- What did the stars in the story represent?
- How do we know that Abraham trusted God?
- What do we learn about God from the story?
- When we're waiting for something, what does it look like to wait well?
- How can waiting well show others that God can be trusted?

Parents: Share with your family members about an experience in which you waited well for God's answers. How long did you wait? What were you waiting for? What did you do? How did God answer your request for help? What did you learn from this incident?

* Prayer

Pray for a heart that trusts God wholeheartedly. Ask Him to help us to wait upon Him even though it can be hard.


BIBLE STORY VIDEO
<https://cefc.ch/22FD09W1>



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MON
05

Called to Be Fishers of Men

SCRIPTURE Luke 5:1-11; Matthew 4:17-22

OBSERVATION

What can we learn from Jesus' commands and Peter's responses (vv.4-5, 10-11) about what the Lord wants for His disciples, as well as the people who have yet to believe in Him?

APPLICATION

What must I do to follow Jesus' call to be a "fisher of men" (Matt 4:19)?

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, please open my spiritual eyes to see that Your commands are for our blessing and the blessing of many people through Your life-giving Gospel. Lead me in the things that You want me to do and help me to obey You fully to be a "fisher of men" in Singapore and beyond. Amen.



Prayer Pointers

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

DEEPER REFLECTION

FOR THE NEXT THREE WEEKS, OUR CHURCH DEVOTIONAL journal will focus on missions. Let us think further about our Faith Exploit 3 "Disciple The Nations" and do as the Lord leads us. For Week 1, we will consider snapshots from Apostle Peter's life to see how he became a disciplemaker to the nations in two parts: (1) Peter Comes: Encountering the Master (from the Gospels); and (2) Peter Goes: Embracing the Mission (from the book of Acts).

Jesus knew where the fish were. He wanted to bless Peter and his fishing partners. "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch" (v.4). Though exhausted and discouraged after an entire night of fruitless and frustrating fishing, Peter and his friends decided to obey Jesus' command. Their act of obedience paved the way for a mind-blowing miracle and a life-changing encounter with the Lord.

Jesus knew that Peter was looking for something more satisfying than fishing. He invited Peter to make a great exchange for an adventure of a lifetime. Jesus had previously given Peter this call: **"Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men"** (Matt 4:19). Peter now made a fresh commitment to the Lord. He accepted the invitation, though he has no details of what it entailed. He did not ask Jesus for His plans, negotiate a salary, bargain for medical benefits, nor state any conditions. Peter simply obeyed Jesus' call, **"left everything and followed Him"** (v.11). **Will you do likewise?** The Lord wants to bless us and many people through our work for the Gospel in Singapore and the nations beyond.

TUE
06

You Cannot Outgive God

SCRIPTURE Mark 10:17-31

OBSERVATION

What can you learn about God from these verses?

APPLICATION

What idols in my life (i.e. things that a person depends on for security and happiness) do I need to surrender to follow the Lord fully?

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 surrender any idols in their lives to follow the Lord fully and work for the sake of the Gospel
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

WHY IS IT SO DIFFICULT TO GIVE OUR ALL TO FOLLOW

Jesus? Perhaps deep down we fear that God will not supply our needs as promised. We have so many concerns about money, family and comfort. To ask us to sacrifice these for the Gospel would invite much rationalisation as to why we cannot do it. Perhaps the many reasons we produce are our attempts to soothe our conscience. In today's passage, the rich young man tried to justify himself as righteous in God's sight.⁵ What else could God want from him? Jesus exposed the hypocrisy in the young man's heart. He could not surrender the one thing that Jesus was asking for – his immense wealth. His wealth was his idol. Money was His Master!

Contrast this with Peter. He walked away from his livelihood for a life without a steady income. He trusted that Jesus would lead and provide for him, and work out the details. Sometimes when we sacrifice for Jesus' sake, it may seem that we lose out. But Jesus foretold that “many who are first will be last, and the last first” (v.31). The Lord will reward His faithful servants with a “hundredfold” in this present time and even greater blessings in the age to come. Peter learnt an important lesson that day: **We cannot outgive God!**

What is the Lord asking you to surrender today so that you can follow Him fully? Your resources? Your energy? Your time? Your pleasures? Whatever it is, entrust them to the Lord, because He will use them to greatly bless many people, as well as yourself.

⁵ Cf. Matthew 19:16-30; Luke 18:18-34.

WED
07

Let Love for Jesus Be Your Motivation

SCRIPTURE John 21:1-19

OBSERVATION

What do you observe are matters that are very important to Jesus from His conversation with Peter?

APPLICATION

How can I know that I love the Lord Jesus?

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 Nations: That all peoples will hear the Gospel in their own languages and understand God's love for them in Jesus Christ
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

AFTER DENYING JESUS THREE TIMES AND WITNESSING

His crucifixion and death, Peter must have felt like a total failure for not sticking up for Jesus. All his hopes of being rewarded with a place in Jesus' new Kingdom on earth were dashed. He returned to his former occupation – fishing – to resume doing what he knew best. Discouragement must have seeped in even more when he even failed at fishing (“but that night they caught nothing”, v.3)!

Then Jesus met Peter and restored him. After breakfast (which Jesus cooked for Peter and the disciples), Jesus asked him a soul-searching question three times: “Do you love Me?” When Peter answered, “Yes, Lord” and “You know I love You” (vv.15-17), Jesus commanded him to take care of His people by feeding and tending to them. Among other things, Peter was to teach people about Jesus and His Kingdom, and to disciple them to likewise be faithful to Jesus' mission.

Today Jesus asks us the same question: “Do you love Me?” Our sincere answer is very important to Him. If like Peter you say, “You know I love You, Lord”, then Jesus invites you to take care of His people. To love Jesus means to be committed to His mission in the world. The two matters cannot be separated. Do not let obstacles get in your way. Stop looking at your weakness or failures. Start looking to Christ and let His love for you compel you to work hard for the Gospel (2 Cor 5:14). We must go and make disciples of all nations, teaching them to know, love and obey the Lord Jesus!

THU
08

When Prayer Paves the Way

SCRIPTURE Acts 1:12–26

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about prayer, particularly in relation to Peter?

APPLICATION

How can I begin to pave the way through prayer before I take the first step towards discipling the nations?

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 lead from a place of personal prayer and be undergirded by corporate prayer
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

FOLLOWING JESUS' ASCENSION, THE ELEVEN RETURNED

to Jerusalem, huddling in the upper room and “devoting themselves to prayer” (v.14). They had learned from Jesus that “prayer is the attitude that grooms one to receive the comfort of God’s presence and the demands of God’s marching orders”⁶.

Against this backdrop, Peter “stood up among the believers” (v.15). Representing the eleven, Peter put forward the necessity of replacing Judas, the twelfth. Peter’s stepping up to lead proceeded from the believers’ ongoing prayerfulness. While he set forth the biblical imperative (vv.16, 20) and the requisite qualifications (vv.21-22), the decision between the final candidates, however, was submitted to the Lord, again, in prayer (v.24). The believers prayed for the Lord to exercise divine choice, as only He had knowledge of the hearts of all.⁷

Prayer paved the way to ready the hearts of the believers for Peter’s call to action. Prayer paved the way for God’s sovereign will in the final selection of Matthias. Prayer paved the way too, for the subsequent coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (cf. Acts 2:1) and for the empowerment to boldly proclaim God’s Word in the face of persecution (cf. Acts 4:31). Prayer paved the way, ultimately, in the grand fulfilment of Jesus’ commission for Peter and the apostles to be His witnesses “in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

No undertaking to stand up to do God’s work should be apart from prayer, just as no endeavour in world missions — to disciple the nations, no less! — must be undertaken if not first paved by prayer.

⁶ David E. Garland, *Acts*, ed. Mark L. Strauss and John H. Walton, Teach the Text Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books: A Division of Baker Publishing Group, 2017), 20.

⁷ I. Howard Marshall, *Acts: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 5, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1980), 71.

FRI
09

When Prayer Transforms the Heart and Mind

SCRIPTURE Acts 10:9-16; 34-35; 44-48

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about prayer, particularly in relation to Peter?

APPLICATION

How can I submit myself in prayer, asking God to reveal my blind spots and transform me into what He wants me to be?

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 seek God earnestly in prayer and experience transformation in their lives
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

WHAT WOULD CONVINC PETER, AN ORTHODOX JEW, TO accept an invitation to visit the home of a Gentile? Nothing short of divine revelation.⁸ It was when he was praying (v.9) then, that God confronted Peter’s cultural scruples by way of a puzzling vision (vv.10-16), preparing him (as he later realised) for even more mind-blowing action to come.⁹

In the fascinating development of events that followed, Peter soon realised that God’s desire to abolish cultural barriers reached far wider than Peter’s Jewish dietary restrictions. Not only had God cleansed all foods and made them edible, He had also cleansed the hearts of all peoples who sought Him by faith (cf. Acts 15:9) and made them acceptable to Himself. Just two days earlier, Peter would probably never have imagined that Gentiles, too, could receive the Holy Spirit (vv.44-46) and be baptised in Jesus’ name (vv.47-48)! Indeed, “God shows no partiality”, Peter conceded, “but in every nation, anyone who fears Him and does what is right is acceptable to Him” (vv.34-35).

Such a watershed paradigm shift and openness of heart by the leader of the Christ-following community — embracing Gentile believers as equals in the faith — was essential for the advancement of the Gospel from Jerusalem to the nations, from the Jews to the Gentiles. God initiated this phenomenal transformation when Peter was seeking God in his regular time of prayer. This giant leap in the early church’s move towards discipling the nations took place when Peter was in prayer — a “condition to receive a divine message”¹⁰ and a state ready for God to radically transform one’s heart and mind.

⁸ F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988), 205.

⁹ It can be safely assumed that, the day before, Cornelius, too, was praying when he received his vision from the Lord (cf. Acts 10:3-4), corresponding to Peter’s.

¹⁰ I. Howard Marshall, *Acts: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 5, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1980), 196.

SAT
10

When Prayer Repels the Opposition

SCRIPTURE Acts 12:1-12

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about prayer, particularly in relation to Peter?

APPLICATION

Which church leader or missionary can I pray for?

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 preserved and protected from the attacks of the enemy
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

TARGETED BY HEROD FOR HIS LEADERSHIP IN THE CHURCH,

Peter was now incarcerated in maximum-security prison, on death row and awaiting execution (vv.1-5). On an earthly dimension, this was an insecure emperor seeking to curry the favour of his Jewish subjects (v.3a). But in the heavenly realms, this was warfare as the this-worldly tyrant sought to hinder the Gospel's advance by striking at the church's leader and servant of the most high God.

While the carnal king wielded the power of the sword and the security of the prison, the church unleashed the power of prayer, her only and most effective weapon, drawing on her sole reliance on the King of Heaven.¹¹ The imperfect tense in the Greek text (v.5) indicates that the church did not simply pray once and move on, but prayed continually. Moreover, they prayed earnestly (*ektenōs*, v.5), the same adverb (though in slightly different form) as had been used by Luke to describe Jesus' intense agony praying in Gethsemane (Lk 22:44).¹²

God heard the cries of His church and answered, preserving His servant's life.¹³ Miraculously delivered from Herod's violent hands, Peter came to himself and found his way to the house where the church was gathered, praying late into the night (v.12)!

With the advance of the Gospel (cf. Acts 11:19-21), spiritual pushback inevitably follows. As we engage in missions and gain ground discipling the nations, expect and brace for the evil one's counterattack on our church and our leaders. Hunker down and unite in fervent, relentless prayer, utilising the most formidable weapon that Christ has conferred upon His Church to fend off the enemy's attacks.

¹¹ John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Acts: The Spirit, the Church & the World*, The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 208-209.

¹² David J. Williams, *Acts*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 212.

¹³ Why Peter was delivered but not James is a mystery of the divine will, since prayer is always a matter of "not my will but yours be done" (Lk 22:42), but it would be wrong to deduce from verse 5 that prayer had been offered for Peter but not for James (Williams, 212-213; Marshall, 220).

SUN
11

Sunday Journal

SCRIPTURE

OBSERVATION

APPLICATION

PRAYER

THE PAST WEEK

Review

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

◆ What gave me life and what drained me?

◆ How was the Spirit of God at work?

THE PAST WEEK

Reflect

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

Respond

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

Family Devotional

Week 2

Trust:

Putting your confidence in someone you can depend on.

Memory Verse

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding."
– Proverbs 3:5 (NIV)

* Bottom Line

Trust God no matter what.*

* Bible Story

Genesis 26:1-31 – Isaac's Wells

* Activity

Hold It!

Props: A long stick or hula hoop

Ask your family members to stand in a circle with their hands extended in front of them, parallel to the ground. Get everyone to point their index finger towards the centre of the circle, and rest a stick or hula hoop on everyone's index fingers. Ask everyone to lower that object to the ground gently together, without losing contact with the object or dropping it.

After the game, invite everyone to share their experiences. Say, "This is a challenging activity. Our fingers represent how God will hold us regardless of the situation. We can put our trust in Him even though it can be hard. We know God will not let us fall."

* Talk About It

- Why did the Philistines fill up Isaac's wells?
- What did Isaac do to respond to the Philistines?
- What did God ask Isaac to do in this story?
- What does Isaac's response tell us about his relationship with God?
- What was the result of Isaac's response to the Philistines?
- What are some ways we can show that we trust God no matter what?

Parents: Share with your family members about an experience in which you felt helpless, yet you placed your trust in God. How did you feel? How did God help you in this experience? What did you learn from it?

* Prayer

Thank God for being there for us all the time. Pray for wisdom to do the right thing and make the right decisions.

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BIBLE STORY VIDEO
<https://cefc.ch/22FD09W2>



MON
12

Break Down the Barriers

SCRIPTURE John 4:1-26

OBSERVATION

What possible barriers caused the Samaritan woman to feel unworthy of speaking with Jesus?

APPLICATION

What barrier(s) could possibly be holding back my overseas non-Christian relative or friend from coming to Jesus? Pray for these barriers to be broken down.

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, thank You for Your wonderful mercy and grace. Nothing can ever separate Your people from Your love. No obstacle should prevent us from reaching out to people whose hearts are currently far from You. Please break down the walls of shame and hostility that exist in many people, so that when we share the Gospel, they may respond to You in repentance and faith, receive your living water and thirst no more. Amen.

Prayer Pointers

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

DEEPER REFLECTION

AT LEAST THREE FACTORS POSE AS MAJOR BARRIERS TO the Samaritan woman when she considered having a conversation with Jesus: (1) “I’m a Samaritan. You are a Jew.” (2) “I’m a woman. You are a man.” (3) “I’m sinful. You are a holy man (rabbi).” First, the Jews despise the Samaritans as an impure breed because of their intermarriage with the people of other nations. No Jew would even want to step into a Samaritan town, let alone speak to any Samaritan. Thus, it came as a surprise to the Samaritan woman that Jesus – a Jew – would initiate a conversation with her.

Second, culturally in those days, women faced discrimination and would not receive the level of respect that men do. Even Jesus’ disciples were astonished to find him talking to a woman publicly.¹⁴ How uncomfortable the Samaritan woman must have felt when Jesus – a Jewish man and a stranger – started to speak to her openly in public.

Third, the Samaritan woman would have been ostracised by her community because of her string of relationships with six men, with the latest one not even willing to become her husband through marriage. People probably saw her as a loose and unwanted woman. Guilt, shame and rejection must have been emotions that she deeply felt every day as she went about her chores.¹⁵ Why would this Jewish rabbi – a holy man – want to speak with her?

Yet Jesus graciously reached out to the Samaritan woman to offer her living water, so that she will no longer thirst for love and acceptance once she has received those from God through faith in Jesus.

¹⁴ John 4:27.

¹⁵ It seems that the woman intentionally avoided the public eye by going to the well during midday when it was the hottest: Verse 6 “... It was about the sixth hour” would mean about noontime.

TUE
13

Offer the Living Water

SCRIPTURE John 4:11-14; 7:37-39

OBSERVATION

What was Jesus referring to when he talked about “living water”?

APPLICATION

How can I present the Gospel to unbelievers using the metaphor of “living water” that will permanently fulfil their deepest needs?

PRAYER

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

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for pastors and staff: To keep drawing spiritual refreshment and power from the Holy Spirit for Gospel-centred ministry for the long haul
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

THE CONVERSATION BETWEEN JESUS AND THE SAMARITAN

woman begins with the subject of drinking water from the well. Jesus, being the master teacher, used this as an object lesson to lead her from the physical aspects of human need, to a greater awareness of her spiritual needs. A man without God seeks happiness, security and peace from all sorts of sources – the possession of earthly riches, the power to control people, the ability to get what one desires, the blessing of false gods, and so on. But such efforts are like digging deep into the well of one’s own soul, only to find the waters of disappointment, frustration, anger, bitterness, guilt and shame. Such waters are polluted by the corruption of sin. Drinking them can never fully satisfy and one keeps getting thirsty again.

Jesus invites people to receive living waters, that is, the Holy Spirit. This can only be done through faith in Jesus. One must believe in Jesus. Then and only then will the living water become in the believer “a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (v.14) and “out of his heart will flow rivers of living water” (Jn 7:38). Such a person will never thirst again, because he has entered into a relationship with God, who will completely and permanently meet his deepest needs.

We who have received the living water must share this wonderful news with those who have not: If anyone thirsts, come to Jesus and drink (Jn 7:37); believe in Jesus and receive the Holy Spirit into your heart (Jn 7:39). May they do so and thus thirst no more.

WED
14

Promote True Worship

SCRIPTURE John 4:19-26

OBSERVATION

Where and how does the true worship of God take place?

APPPLICATION

How can I help people to worship God in spirit and truth?

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 Nations: That the peoples will turn their hearts to Jesus as the true source of salvation and worship God in spirit and truth
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION**I WAS BROUGHT UP IN A FAMILY CONTEXT OF ANCESTRAL**

worship, where my parents would bring me to various places to seek divine guidance and blessings from various deities. After I came to know Jesus Christ, the Son of the living and true God,¹⁶ I realised what was true worship.

During Jesus' time, the Jews would go to the Temple in Jerusalem on specific dates in a year to worship and pray to Yahweh, the God of Israel. At the same time, the Samaritans believed that God had designated Mount Gerizim as their place of worship (v.20). Jesus taught that true worship was ultimately about the true God and His true worshippers. Location is no longer relevant. The true God can be worshipped in spirit and truth – anywhere and at any time!

This is because God, by His Spirit, dwells in His people. We are the Temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 3:16; 6:19; 2 Cor 6:16). Through Jesus Christ, God's people now have direct access to God and direct communications with Him through our worship and prayers from our hearts directed in faith to God. Wherever and whenever we want to talk to God, He is just a prayer away. God journeys with us through life and we can approach Him in all of life's experiences – whether we are laughing on the mountaintops or crying in the valleys. In every step of our earthly pilgrimage, the nearness of God is our good! Let us tell others the good news of Messiah Jesus that they may believe in Him! Let us promote the true worship of the true God!

.....
¹⁶ 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10.

THU
15Embrace the “Zacchaeus”
Among Us

SCRIPTURE Luke 19:1-10

OBSERVATION

What observations can you make about the crowd’s attitude towards Zacchaeus (v.7)?

APPLICATION

How can I learn to embrace people who are often written off by society?

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 reach out and show compassion to those who have been written off by society
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

THE JEWS ESPECIALLY DESPISED CHIEF TAX COLLECTORS

because their wealth was built on the extortions made on the general population. This cultural background explains the crowd’s reaction to Jesus’ encounter with Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus was eager to see Jesus, but because Zacchaeus was short, he was blocked by the crowd (v.3). So he ran ahead and climbed up a sycamore tree in order to see Jesus (v.4). Such an act was undignified for a man of power and wealth. Yet it revealed Zacchaeus’ genuine interest towards Jesus.

When Jesus told Zacchaeus that He was going to stay at his house (vv.5, 6), “the people were displeased” and “they grumbled” (v.7, NLT). In their minds, “[Jesus] has gone to be the guest of a notorious sinner” (v.7, NLT). The people’s perception of Zacchaeus led to a very negative attitude towards him. They had “written off Zacchaeus”¹⁷. Although Zacchaeus was so receptive towards Jesus, he received such a negative response from the crowd. But Jesus did not write off Zacchaeus (v.5).

Have we written off any people group because we view them through tinted lenses? Have we missed seeing their yearning to know our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? For a long time, I have despised migrant workers. Their presence made me feel unsafe in my neighborhood. Until one day through an incident, God opened my eyes to see how marginalised these migrant workers are. God convicted my heart that I am not to write them off, but to show them compassion. Today, I’ve learnt to embrace them as part of the community and joyfully serve them in the migrant workers ministry.

¹⁷ Darrel L. Bock, *The NIV Application Commentary: Luke*, 479

FRI
16

Make Jesus' Mission Ours

SCRIPTURE Luke 19:1-10

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about Jesus in His encounter with Zacchaeus?

APPLICATION

To whom is God leading me to seek out and bring the Good News, and how am I to do it?

PRAYER

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

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for SGI leaders: To be carriers of the Gospel to the people whom the Holy Spirit leads them to
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

ZACCHAEUS WAS VERY EAGER TO SEE JESUS AND DID everything possible – even climbing a tree! – just to be able to catch a glimpse of Jesus' face as He passed by (vv.3, 4). Yet it was Jesus who “took the initiative in arranging a personal contact between the two”¹⁸. Zacchaeus' eagerness to see Jesus was “surpassed by Jesus' personal invitation to meet with Him”¹⁹. Jesus stopped at where Zacchaeus was, spotted him and called out his name (v.5a). **Jesus knew Zacchaeus.**

Jesus said, “I must stay at your house today” (v.5b). ‘The “must” (*dei*) implies a divine necessity’²⁰, in unfolding God's salvation plan. “Just as Jesus' forthcoming passion in Jerusalem was divinely ordained, so Jesus' individual actions all fit into the divine plan, even his bringing salvation to Zacchaeus' home.”²¹ **Jesus knew Zacchaeus' needs.**

Jesus disregarded the crowd's murmurs about His association with Zacchaeus (v.7), because “His priority is to associate closely enough with the lost that they may come to know the grace of God”²². **Jesus' love embraces the social disfavour.**

This narrative of Jesus' encounter with Zacchaeus ended with what may well be considered the key verse of the Gospel of Luke – “**For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost**” (v.10). “Jesus came to Jericho to save a lost Zacchaeus.”²³ Jesus had sought, found and saved Zacchaeus (vv.5, 9, 10). “Jesus' mission to seek and save the lost, a mission that now belongs to the church as His body.”²⁴ Brothers and sisters, **is Jesus' mission our mission today?**

¹⁸ William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Luke*, 855.

¹⁹ *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 10: Luke-Acts* (Revised Edition).

²⁰ Robert H. Stein, *The New American Commentary, Volume 24: Luke*, 467.

²¹ Robert H. Stein, *The New American Commentary, Volume 24: Luke*, 467.

²² Darrell L. Bock, *The NIV Application Commentary: Luke*, 479.

²³ Robert H. Stein, *The New American Commentary, Volume 24: Luke*, 466-467.

²⁴ Darrell L. Bock, *The NIV Application Commentary: Luke*, 481.

SAT
17

Persevere in Seeking the Lost

SCRIPTURE Luke 15

OBSERVATION

What are some similarities in the parables of the lost sheep (vv.3-7), the lost coin (vv.8-10) and the lost son (vv.11-32)?

APPLICATION

How can I pursue people who are lost without Christ and persevere in reaching out even to the least and the last?

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 have God's compassion for the lost and persevere in reaching out to them in love
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

THE PHARISEES AND THE SCRIBES BEGRUDGED JESUS FOR being with tax collectors, whom they regarded as sinners (vv.1-2). Therefore, Jesus told them three parables teaching that the return to God of even one repentant sinner is a cause for great rejoicing in heaven and on earth. The parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin have similar opening words: "... having a hundred sheep, **if he has lost one of them...**" (v.4); and "... having ten silver coins, **if she loses one coin...**" (v.8). Thus, Jesus highlighted the worth and value of even just one lost entity. The effort and perseverance involved in pursuing and searching for the lost one are seen in the similar phrases: "**go after/seek diligently...until he/she finds it**" (vv.4, 8). The climaxes of the two parables included the triumphal, communal rejoicing that followed the lost one being found (vv.6, 9). In the Gospel of Luke, "rejoicing and celebrating signify the witness of God's salvific acts in history"²⁵.

The parable of the lost son extends and completes the thoughts developed in the first two parables. The father saw the younger son "**while he was still a long way off**" (v.20). Probably, the father had been waiting daily for the son to return home. The father's running towards his son went against the cultural norm, but he could not help himself, being moved by his feelings of compassion for his son (v.20). And, as in the earlier two parables, there was now reason to celebrate with the community because the lost son "**was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found**" (vv.24, 32).

²⁵ *The Expositor's Bible Commentator, Volume 10: Luke-Acts (Revised Edition).*

SUN
18

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

Trust:

Putting your confidence in someone you can depend on.

Memory Verse

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding."
– Proverbs 3:5 (NIV)

* Bottom Line

You can trust that God has a plan.*

* Bible Story

Genesis 28:10-22 – Jacob's Dream

* Activity

Twin Drawings

Props: Colour markers and drawing board paper


BIBLE STORY VIDEO
<https://cefc.ch/22FD09W3>



Pair up your family members. Provide each pair with some paper and markers. Ask partner A to draw anything he or she likes, while partner B looks away. Once completed, get partner B to draw the same thing by following verbal instructions from partner A, without any physical guidance. Partner B's drawing must match exactly what Partner A has drawn.

After the activity, invite everyone to share their experiences. Say, "Partner A's drawing is like God's Master Plan. He has everything put in place and we are in this plan. Sometimes, we ask God to resolve a situation in a certain way, but things don't turn out the way we asked, just like partner's B drawing. We can still trust God to make things right again. His Master Plan remains in place."

* Talk About It

- Is Jacob someone you would trust all the time? Why or why not?
- How does that encourage us to trust God, knowing that even when we mess up, God still has a plan to love us and make things right in the end?
- What if you asked God to help resolve a situation a certain way, but things don't work out the way we want. Why can we still trust God at that moment?

Parents: Share with your family members about an experience where you messed up and God turned the situation around. How did God show His love to you? What did you do to demonstrate your trust in God?

* Prayer

Thank God for including us in His plan even though we mess things up at times. Pray for a willing heart that follows and puts His teachings into action.

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MON
19

The Mission to Everyone

SCRIPTURE Romans 10:8-13; 2 Peter 3:9

OBSERVATION

Why are the words “everyone” (vv.11, 13) and “all” (two occurrences, v.12) so important in God’s mission?

APPLICATION

Pray for the people from different nationalities you encounter and ask God to show you how to bless them.

PRAYER

God our Father, Your message of salvation is for everyone and all people regardless of race, language, background and nationality. Please open my heart to see their need for You and feel compassion for the unsaved people around me. And open the eyes of those who have not yet called upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer Pointers

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

DEEPER REFLECTION

THERE IS MUCH TALK ABOUT DIVERSITY, EQUALITY, EQUITY and inclusivity in today’s world. There is increasing concern that certain groups have been left behind in the wake of their nation’s economic progress. Our sense of justice and fairness tells us that all groups should have the opportunities to be blessed and enjoy prosperity. This idea is not new to God. In God’s economy (made known to us since the time of Abraham), His desire is for all – not some – nations of the earth to be blessed.²⁶

The Apostle Paul emphasised to both Jewish and Gentile Christians that **“there is no distinction between Jew and Greek [i.e. non-Jew]”** (v.12); **“the same Lord [Jesus] is the Lord of all, bestowing His riches [of salvation] on all who call on Him”** (v.12); and **“everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved”** (v.13). God’s people need constant reminders of God’s multi-ethnic heartbeat. Left unchecked, local church members will tend to reach out to unbelievers of the same ethnicity, income level and social status as themselves.

Covenant EFC may have begun as an ethnically Chinese, middle-class church in the heart of Bukit Timah. But under God’s leading and by His grace, we have over the years intentionally reached out to many nations, such as China, Japan, India, the Philippines, Vietnam, Thailand, Nepal and Indonesia. Let us pray that all Covenanters will grasp God’s heart and compassion for all people groups and nations. In these last days, may we intensify our efforts to bring to many nations the Gospel of Jesus Christ and biblical teaching on authentic discipleship and intentional discipling.

²⁶ Genesis 12:1-3.

TUE
20

How Can They Hear?

SCRIPTURE Romans 10:13-14; Matthew 13:20-23

OBSERVATION

Why are preaching and hearing the Gospel so critical in missions?

APPLICATION

Who has God currently placed in my life to hear the Gospel message through 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 pastors and staff: That God will give them a greater hunger for His Word and a greater readiness to share the Gospel with the unsaved.²⁷
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

JOHN CALVIN ONCE SAID, “WHERE THE WORD IS NOT preached and heard, there is no church”²⁸. One of the goals in missions is planting churches in places with little Christian presence. According to estimates, almost one third of the world has no access or opportunity to hear the Gospel.²⁹ That is almost one billion individuals who have not heard about the love of Jesus Christ!

What distinguishes Christian missions from secular NGOs and non-profits is the goal of preaching the Word of God to the unreached. Although God does indeed reveal himself through creation (Rom 1:18-32), we should not neglect the importance of preaching and teaching the Word of God in our missions activities. Even in the most hostile circumstances, the apostles did not neglect the reading and preaching of the Holy Scriptures. After people believed the Good News of Jesus, the apostles and church leaders faithfully taught the Word to establish the believers' faith, equip them for ministry, strengthen them with hope in the midst of persecution and protect them from false teachings.³⁰

During the COVID-19 pandemic, one of Covenant EFC's missionaries began planting churches in West Sumba Island – one of the poorest places in Indonesia. During her early outreach efforts, she discovered that many of the villagers could not read. How then could they learn and respond to the Word of God? She therefore constructed a radio station in her office, distributed radio receivers, and started to broadcast the reading of the Bible every day. May God multiply the fruit of people who hear, understand, believe and obey the Word of God (Matt 13:23)!

²⁷ Romans 1:16; 2 Timothy 4:2.

²⁸ <https://www.wscal.edu/resource-center/the-importance-of-preaching>

²⁹ <https://www.call2all.org/finish-lines/proclamation-everyone/>

³⁰ See, for example, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus.

WED
21

Beautiful Feet and Blessed Gospel

SCRIPTURE Romans 10:13-15; Matthew 9:35-38

OBSERVATION

Why is sending missionaries into the field so critical in missions?

APPLICATION

How can I support the sending of more missionaries into the field?

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 Nations: That the Lord of the harvest will send out workers into the harvest
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

WE LIVE IN AN INCREASINGLY GLOBALISED AND CONNECTED

world where the Word of God is readily available to anyone with a phone signal. Internet communications even to faraway countries are instantaneous and free. Some inevitable questions arise. Can traditional mission activities be replaced by Zoom meetings, video or audio calls, and social media messages? Is there still a need to send missionaries out to other nations?

In almost every age, there have been technological advances that have enhanced – but not replaced – the missions activities in the field. The modern printing press was invented in the mid-15th century. As a result of the Protestant Reformation in 1517, common people began to have access to mass printed copies of God’s Word in the vernacular for the first time; access to God’s Word was no longer restricted to the elites. The airplane (first invented in 1903) allowed missionaries to reach any part of the planet, paving the way for short-term missions. All these advances will enhance, but they will not replace **the incarnational aspect of missions**, exemplified by our Lord Jesus Christ – “the Word become flesh and dwelt among us” (Jn 1:14). After His resurrection and before His ascension into heaven, Jesus could have chosen, in His infinite power, to make known the Good News to the world through visions, dreams, signs and angels. Yet Jesus chose His disciples and the Church to carry the Gospel to all the nations, proclaiming salvation in His name to the ends of the earth.³¹ Today, God’s Spirit is still stirring and sending beautiful feet to the nations with the blessed Gospel. **How do your feet look?**

³¹ Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; 4:12; 13:47.

THU
22

The Salvation of Israel

SCRIPTURE Romans 11:25-36; 9:4-8

OBSERVATION

Who was the Apostle Paul referring to when he wrote concerning “Israel” (vv.25, 26. Cf. Rom 9:4-8)?

APPLICATION

How can I pray for and reach out to the people of Israel?

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 show and tell of the mercy of God to all people that they may receive it
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

THE APOSTLE PAUL WAS ADDRESSING GENTILE CHRISTIANS

regarding the right attitude and perspective concerning the people of Israel. The Gospel has gone out to the Gentiles for a period due to the “partial hardening” (v.25) of the hearts of the Israelites. “Partial” because there have been many Jews who have turned to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ since His First Coming. Before the Lord’s Second Coming, the hearts of many more Jews will no longer be hardened and they will believe the Gospel. The full number of Jewish Christians will thus enter the Kingdom of God through faith in Jesus Christ: “In this way, all Israel will be saved” (v.26). Paul refers to “all Israel” because with his God-given perspective he understood that “not all who are descended from Israel [the patriarch Jacob] belong to Israel [the group of redeemed descendants]” (Rom 9:6). Just because a person is a physical offspring of Abraham does not automatically make him or her a spiritual offspring of Abraham (Rom 9:7). One is a spiritual offspring of Abraham if one shares Abraham’s faith in the Word of God, and is thereby a child of the promise and a child of God.³² “It is not the children of the flesh [of Abraham] who are the children of God” (Rom 9:8). It is the children of the promise who are counted as Abraham’s spiritual offspring and who are in fact the children of God (Rom 9:8).

Therefore, let the Church not neglect to pray and work for the salvation of Abraham’s descendants – for their hearts to be softened and believe in the Gospel.

³² See also Romans 4; Galatians 3.

FRI
23

Look Like the Christ We Proclaim

SCRIPTURE Romans 13:8-14

OBSERVATION

What did the Apostle Paul teach here about the Christian duty to love and manner of living?

APPLICATION

How can I be more Christlike and love people with Christ's love?

PRAYER

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

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for SGI leaders: That they will grow in Christlikeness and love people with Christ's love
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

IN THE CHURCH TODAY, WE HAVE A GAPING GAP OF

credibility in the lives of many who profess to be followers of Jesus Christ. In his final public engagement, the late Reverend Dr John Stott spoke incisively about this major problem:³³

“Why is it, you must have asked, as I have, that in many situations our evangelistic efforts are often fraught with failure?...one main reason is that **we don't look like the Christ we are proclaiming.**”...John Poulton, who has written about this in a perceptive little book entitled *A Today Sort of Evangelism*, wrote: “The most effective preaching comes from those who embody the things they are saying. They are their message. **Christians need to look like what they are talking about.** It is people who communicate primarily, not words or ideas. Authenticity gets across. Deep down inside people, what communicates now is basically **personal authenticity.**”

The Apostle Paul is concerned about Christians' personal authenticity. Christians must love as Jesus exemplified and commanded. We must love each other and our neighbours and do them no wrong. “**Put on the Lord Jesus Christ**” – be Christlike! – “**and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires**” (v.14)! Do not allow carnality to take root in our hearts and bear bad fruit in our lives. Frequently examine ourselves before God and correct ourselves with His Spirit's help. Otherwise, by the habitual repetition of ungodly attitudes, unkind words and unloving actions, we will cultivate³⁴ lots of bad fruit that soon rot and stink. Our stench will turn people away from the Gospel that we try to share with them.

³³ Reported in an article by Christianity Today: <https://www.christiantoday.com/article/john.stott.concludes.public.ministry.be.more.like.jesus.christ/11717.htm> (emphasis added).

³⁴ With liberal application of worldly “fertilisers” derived from popular culture!

SAT
24

The Obedience of Faith

SCRIPTURE Romans 15:13-21; 16:25-27

OBSERVATION

What is the relationship between the Gospel, faith and obedience?

APPLICATION

How will I live out and proclaim the Gospel in my everyday life?

PRAYER

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

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for Church Board: That they will obey and proclaim the Gospel as faithful disciples of Christ
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

BELIEVING IN JESUS CHRIST (V.13) IS ALL ABOUT “SEEING”

(v.21), “understanding” (v.21) and “obeying” (v.18; Rom 16:26) the way of salvation that has been revealed by God in Christ His Son (vv.19, 20; Rom 16:25-26). Notice, too, the prominence and work of the Holy Spirit in bringing people to salvation (vv.13, 16, 19). On His part, God has done all that is necessary for people to be saved through Jesus Christ.³⁵ The Father has sent the Son from heaven. The Son has suffered, was killed and was raised to life on the third day. Before He ascended into heaven, the Lord Jesus commissioned His disciples to preach the Gospel to all nations (Matt 28:18-20; Rom 16:26). The Father and the Son have sent the Spirit to dwell in all believers, to empower the Church to proclaim the Gospel, and to convict unbelievers concerning sin, righteousness and judgment.³⁶

To preach the Gospel is to preach Christ (vv.19-20; Rom 16:25).

There is no true Gospel proclamation without setting forth before our hearers **who Christ is and what He has done**. He is the Son of God and the perfect Lamb of God who was the atoning sacrifice for our sins.

To proclaim the Gospel is the first step to be followed by the work of discipling – teaching believers **to obey all that Jesus has commanded** (v.18; Rom 16:26; Matt 28:19-20). The Church must not stop at merely giving mental assent to God’s Word. For true believers, the truth of the Gospel is to penetrate and permeate all of life. Christians are **to live out and proclaim the Gospel** in their everyday life.

³⁵ See Romans 3-6, 8.³⁶ John 14:16-18; Luke 24:44-49; Acts 1:8; John 16:7-11.

SUN
25

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 4

Trust:

Putting your confidence in someone you can depend on.

Memory Verse

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding."
– Proverbs 3:5 (NIV)

* Bottom Line

You can trust God even when you're worried.*

* Bible Story

Genesis 31:33 – Jacob and Esau's Reconciliation

* Activity

God's Promises

Props: Bibles

 **BIBLE STORY VIDEO**
<https://cefc.ch/22FD09W4>



Hold a "Find The Verse" competition among your family members. Call out a verse from the table below and get everyone to look it up in the Bible.

Proverbs 3:5-6	Psalms 37:4-5	Psalms 33:20	Isaiah 26:3	Proverbs 29:25
Isaiah 12:2	Psalms 9:10	Psalms 56:3	Jeremiah 17:7	Psalms 28:7

The person who finds all the Bible verses in the shortest time wins the game. After the competition, ask your family members to read each verse out loud. Get everyone to discuss the meaning of each verse and find the common message.

Say, "These verses have a common message. By trusting God, we don't need to be fearful. God won't give up on us. When we follow God's way, we are safe and He will take us to the right place. When we are worried about a situation, rest assured that God is in control."

* Talk About It

- What does it mean to trust God?
- When is it easy to trust God? When is it hard?
- Why do we know we can trust God even when we are worried or anxious about situations in our lives?
- What can we do to train ourselves to trust God no matter what?
- How does trusting God influence the decisions we make?

Parents: Share with your family members about a worrying incident in which you depended on God to solve a problem. How does your dependence on God influence the way you make decisions? What challenges did you face?

* Prayer

Thank God for His guidance and love despite the challenges we face. Pray that we will look up to Him in both good and bad times.

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MON
26

A Great Last Days Danger

SCRIPTURE 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3a

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about the Thessalonians?

APPLICATION

How can I keep myself from being destabilised and deceived by false teachings?

PRAYER

Lord, grant me a strong desire to seek to learn and live by the truth of Your Word. And as I do so, may the Spirit of truth teach me and guide me in knowing and understanding the truth, that I may grow in wisdom and be able to detect and discern false teaching. But most of all, guard my heart and keep me from falling into self-deception.

Prayer Pointers

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

DEEPER REFLECTION

THERE ARE TWO BATTLEFRONTS IN SPIRITUAL WARFARE:

affliction and **deception**. Satan can be the source of affliction, “prowling around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” by inflicting “suffering” (1 Pet 5:8-9). The target of attack in affliction is our **faith**. And so, we are to “resist” Satan in suffering by being “firm in your faith” (1 Pet 5:9). Satan is for sure the source of deception, “disguising himself as an angel of light” through his servants, false teachers and deceitful workers who “disguise themselves as servants of righteousness” (2 Cor 11:13-15). The target of attack in deception is **truth**. But faith and truth are interrelated. The basis of our faith is truth, and we build our faith on truth. When we are attacked through affliction, we can know it, because we can feel it. But when we are attacked through deception, we may not know it, because we do not see it. Deception is: We are deceived and we do not know that we are deceived.

The Thessalonians were afflicted by persecutions (2 Thess 1:4) and attacked by false teachers, teaching that “the day of the Lord has come”, and they were “quickly shaken/easily unsettled in mind” and “alarmed” (vv.1-2). And Paul urgently warns: “Do not be deceived” (v.3). It was the Thessalonians’ “mind” that was disturbed and destabilised. Deception is more potent than persecution. “In fact, the intellectual assault on Christianity is often fiercer than the physical.”³⁷ Do we know how to detect deception? We can discern deception only by knowing the truth and having a right heart.

³⁷ John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Thessalonians, The Bible Speaks Today* (IVP, 1991), 156

TUE
27

What Must Necessarily Come First (1)

SCRIPTURE 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3

OBSERVATION

What is the significance of the words “unless...comes first” (v.3) in the text?

APPLICATION

What does the coming of the apostasy/rebellion in the last days 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 pastors and staff: To be strongly and deeply rooted in the Scriptures
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

OFTENTIMES, AS IT HAS BEEN HISTORICALLY, PHENOMENAL physical, political, economic turmoil and troubles, like wars, famines and earthquakes (Matt 24:6-7) – and most recently, the COVID-19 pandemic – are taken as signs that Christ’s Second Coming is very near. But Jesus says that all these things are just “the beginning of birth pangs” (Matt 24:8). When the Thessalonians misthought that “the day of the Lord has come”, Paul points them to the clear order of things: What must come first – the Lord will not come “unless...comes first” (v.3). Two sure signs to watch out for: “the apostasy” or “the rebellion” (*apostasia*), and the appearance of “the man of lawlessness” (v.3).

Apostasia means “to rise up in open defiance of authority, with the presumed intention to overthrow it or to act in complete opposition to its demand”³⁸. The word “can refer to a political or religious crisis”³⁹. The Greek Old Testament uses the word only for religious crisis – unfaithfulness to God (Josh 22:22; 2 Chron 29:19).⁴⁰ The verbal form of *apostasia* – *aphistēmi* – is used for falling away from the faith (1 Tim 4:1) and from the living God (Heb 3:12). The “apostasy” that must come first refers to “a large-scale compromise of faith among God’s people”, which “will not occur in the non-Christian world but rather within the covenant community”⁴¹.

Jesus has warned that in the last days “many will fall away” (Matt 24:10). So, let us watch our hearts on the inside, rather than signs on the outside. Growing in “perseverance and faith” anchored in the truth is a critical necessity (2 Thess 1:4; 2:15).

³⁸ Johannes P. Louw & Eugene A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains, Second Edition, Volume 1* (UBS, 1988, 1989), 39-34

³⁹ G. K. Beale, 1-2 Thessalonians, *The IVP New Testament Commentary Series* (IVP Academic, 2003), 203

⁴⁰ G. K. Beale, 203

⁴¹ G. K. Beale, 204

WED
28

What Must Necessarily Come First (2)

SCRIPTURE 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4

OBSERVATION

What does Paul say about the man of lawlessness?

APPLICATION

How do I relate the coming of the man of lawlessness to discipleship?

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 Nations: To be delivered from the deception of false gods
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

THE “MAN OF LAWLESSNESS” WILL APPEAR WITH “THE apostasy” before Christ’s Second Coming (v.3). This “man of lawlessness” is what John calls “the antichrist” (1 Jn 2:18). Paul’s description of the antichrist is parallel to that of the anti-god figure prophesied in Daniel 11:21-45: “who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship...proclaiming himself to be God” (v.4) parallels “he will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will speak monstrous things against the God of gods” (Dan 11:36); “he takes his seat in the temple of God” (v.4) parallels “[he] will desecrate the sanctuary fortress...set up the abomination of desolation” (Dan 11:31).

This Daniel 11 prophecy had its initial fulfilment in Antiochus IV Epiphanes in 169 B.C. when he invaded Israel and “arrogantly entered the sanctuary” and “erected a desolating sacrilege [the abomination of desolation] on the altar of burnt offering”⁴². In predicting the 70 A.D. destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, Jesus highlighted “the abomination of desolation...standing in the holy place” to be another fulfilment of the Daniel 11 prophecy (Matt 24:1-2, 15-16). The appearance of the “man of lawlessness” will be the ultimate fulfilment of Daniel 11:21-45. He will come into the church and try to take control of the church by carrying out further deception in it that will lead many to fall away from the faith.⁴³ He will assume so much influence and religious authority in the worldwide community of faith that he becomes like God – the epitome of blasphemy.⁴⁴

So, be spiritually prepared for the coming of the antichrist.

⁴² 1 Maccabees 1:20-21, 54 (NRSV) in the Apocrypha

⁴³ G. K. Beale, 210

⁴⁴ G. K. Beale, 210

THU
29

He Who Restrains Him Now

SCRIPTURE 2 Thessalonians 2:3-7

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about the “restrainer” behind the man of lawlessness (vv.6-7)?

APPLICATION

How do I relate the activity of the restrainer to discipleship?

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 rest in God’s sovereign restraint on evil
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

THERE IS A “RESTRAINER” KEEPING THE “MAN OF LAWLESSNESS” from appearing, and he will appear only when the “restrainer” “is taken out of the way” (vv.6-7). What – “what [neuter] restrains him” (v.6), or who – “he [masculine] who restrains” (v.7), is this restrainer? Paul gives no details about it, because the Thessalonians already knew it: “You know” (v.6). So, we are in the dark. Let’s hear what Bible scholars say that give perspective on the identification of the restrainer.

Leon Morris: “This passage is probably the most obscure and difficult in the whole of the Pauline writings and the many gaps in our knowledge have given rise to extravagant speculations.”⁴⁵ G. K. Beale: “It is difficult to determine with probability the precise identification of the ‘restrainer’.”⁴⁶ Gary Shogren: “All our theories must be inferential and based on humble acknowledgement of our lack of evidence.”⁴⁷ Gordon Fee, who refrains from interpreting it: “So, at the end of the day, we should probably leave the sentence as it is – something that he and they both knew, and because they did know, we do not, and most likely never will this side of eternity.”⁴⁸

Indeed, there are things in the Bible that we can never know or understand. However, two things are clear about the restrainer: It is something good – since it restrains the greatest evil, and God is behind it – since the restrainer is more powerful than the antichrist.⁴⁹ When the antichrist appears openly and worldwide, such that we cannot miss, we know that the restrainer has been taken away.

⁴⁵ Leon Morris, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries* (IVP, 1985), 125

⁴⁶ G. K. Beale, 217

⁴⁷ Gary S. Shogren, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, *Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Zondervan, 2012), 287

⁴⁸ Gordon D. Fee, The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Eerdmans, 2009), 288

⁴⁹ G. K. Beale, 217

FRI
30

Invisible Coming of the Antichrist

SCRIPTURE 2 Thessalonians 2:3-7

OBSERVATION

What is the relationship between “the man of lawlessness” and “the mystery of lawlessness”?

APPLICATION

What does the reality of “the mystery of lawlessness is already at work” 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 SGI leaders: To be strong in the Lord amidst the lawlessness of the world
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

WHILE “THE MAN OF LAWLESSNESS” IS RESTRAINED FROM

appearing, “the mystery of lawlessness is already at work” (v.7). “The man of lawlessness” and “the mystery of lawlessness” have one thing in common: “lawlessness.” In the Bible, a “mystery” is something that God has hidden but reveals at the right time (cf. Eph 3:4-5). The “man of lawlessness” will appear in “full force and openly to all eyes”⁵⁰ as the final antichrist as prophesied in Daniel 11:21-45. But this prophecy is to be fulfilled “in an unexpected manner” – unknown in the Daniel 11 prophecy – and hence, a “mystery”⁵¹. Paul has insight into this “mystery”: “Paul sees that, though this fiend has not yet come so visibly as he will at the final end of history, he is already at work in the covenant community.”⁵² “The mystery of lawlessness” is the “unusual invisible coming”⁵³ of “the man of lawlessness”. Behind the visible “mystery of lawlessness” is the invisible “man of lawlessness”.

“Lawlessness” is violation of the Law of God – the Ten Commandments, as well as civil law, for governments are “established by God” (Rom 13:1-4). But still, injustice prevails insidiously in the justice department of certain nations. Jesus has predicted that in the last days, “lawlessness is increased, and most people’s love will grow cold” – in how human beings are increasingly being treated unkindly and unjustly (Matt 24:12). In the context of Paul’s warning, “Do not be deceived” (v.3), the “lawlessness” refers to the activity of the antichrist through “his deceivers, the false teachers”⁵⁴. The aim and effect of this “lawlessness” is “the apostasy” (v.3).

⁵⁰ G. K. Beale, 218

⁵¹ G. K. Beale, 218

⁵² G. K. Beale, 218-19

⁵³ G. K. Beale, 219

⁵⁴ G. K. Beale, 219

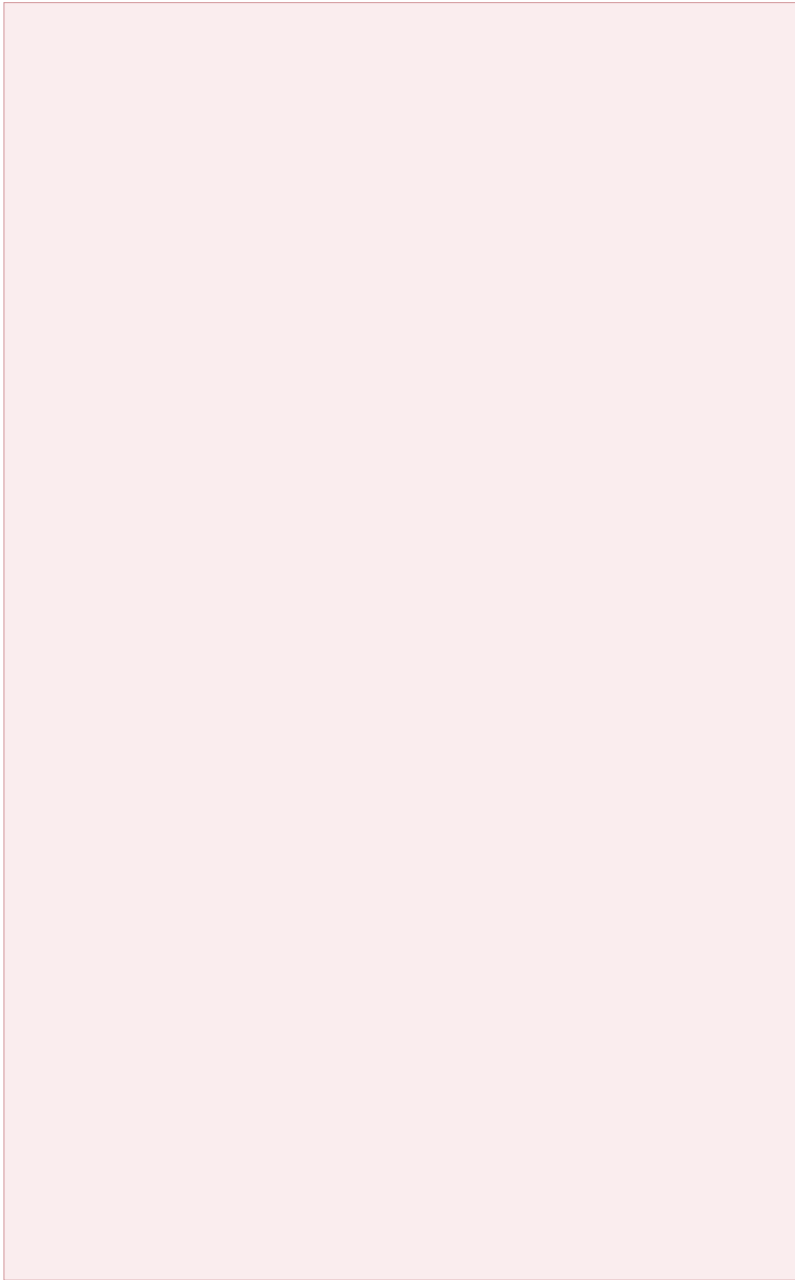
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