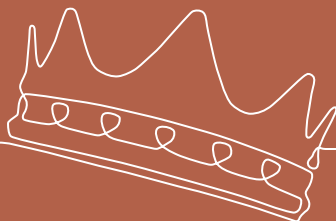


COVENANT^{EFC}

NOVEMBER
2022
DEVOTIONAL
JOURNAL

*But the Lord is faithful. He will establish
you and guard you against the evil one.*

2 THESSALONIANS 3:3



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Also available at www.cafc.org.sg and "Covenant EFC" mobile app.

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

THAILAND, VIETNAM AND NEPAL

“...For He is the living God and He endures forever; His kingdom will not be destroyed, His dominion will never end. He rescues and He saves; He performs signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth. He has rescued Daniel from the power of the lions.”

DANIEL 6:26B-27 (NIV)

■ THAILAND¹

After 400 years of missionary work, Thai Christians still comprise around 1% of the population. Most of Thailand's churches are small (30-50 members). More than 6,000 of Thailand's 7,415 sub-districts have no church. Nearly half of Protestants come from tribal groups (less than 5% of Thailand's population). 85.3% of the population are Buddhist.

PRAY FOR

1. Thai leadership in the churches. The lack of it is one reason for slow church growth. The national church leaders currently have a bold goal of reaching every one of Thailand's 80,000 villages and neighbourhoods with the Gospel.
2. Breakthrough of church growth and for developments in the following areas: a national prayer network, leadership development, extensive research, community development ministry and evangelism.
3. The extensive sex trade. For the sex workers, families who sold them, the clients, the pimps, the police, the NGOs and the culture that accepts it. An estimated 2.8 million people are involved in this line of work, which is focused in Bangkok, Pattaya, Phuket and Hat Yai.

■ VIETNAM²

Vietnam is one of the few Communist nations left in the world. Its people still suffer from continued oppression, increased social problems such as drug addiction, HIV/AIDS, prostitution, and the exploitation of women and children. 9.4% of its population are Christians and 52.5% are Buddhist.

PRAY FOR

1. Registration of churches. Although this is required to operate in Vietnam, many are not registered. Registered churches battle government pressure to compromise and conform to strict regulations. Unregistered churches are harassed by the police, with meetings broken up and leaders detained and questioned. Open evangelism and itinerant ministry are forbidden and contact with foreign Christians restricted. For a solution to this issue that best unifies and builds the Church of Vietnam. For divine protection over house churches and missionaries who are being watched or having visa troubles.
2. The establishment of a Christian community in the Cao Bang Province. For effective outreach and the believers to stand firm.
3. The Mustard Seed Academy, which is in its third year, with 40 students. For the renovation of a newly rented building for school and the registration of a tuition centre licence.

■ NEPAL³

Despite becoming a secular democracy, Nepal's social structure remains dominated by Hinduism. This perpetuates the caste system, which oppresses many, most notably the Dalits, who make up as much as 14% of the population. Caste discrimination is technically illegal but still practised. Converts from Hinduism to Christianity usually become outcastes. 2.8% of the population are Christians, while 75% are Hindu.

PRAY FOR

1. Freedom of religion. This is guaranteed by law, but only in limited measures. Non-Hindus cannot proselytise. If they do, they risk fines, imprisonment and, in the case of expatriates, expulsion. For the legal and religious rights of Christians regarding arbitrary arrests, evangelism, property, discrimination and other maltreatments. For the perseverance of the believers, that neither the laws of man nor threats of violence will deter them from sharing the Gospel.
2. Nepal's young people, who comprise two-thirds of Nepal's population and most of whom live in rural areas. They are deprived of education and opportunity, vulnerable to economic exploitation, sex trafficking, drug abuse, HIV/AIDS and radicalisation (political or religious). For changes that will offer the young people a hope and a future.
3. Effective outreach to Banepa, Satdobato and Simthali, and disciplinemaking strategies and processes to be implemented throughout Nepal.
4. Provision for the land and building project of NGCF Banepa.

¹ Adapted from Operation World, <https://operationworld.org/>

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

WORSHIP SONGS

NOVEMBER – DECEMBER

ANCIENT GATES

Verse 1

There is singing at the ancient gates
There's a melody of ceaseless praise
Age to age, the sound is only growing stronger

There's a throne beneath the Name of Names
There is seated on it One who reigns
And His Kingdom now is here and getting closer

Chorus 1

Praise Him like we're there in glory
Here and now He's just as holy
Jesus He's so worthy of it all

Verse 2

He exists in everlasting light
So on heaven's streets, there is no night
Every tear is wiped away
We'll know no sorrow

Worship Him with joyful sound
Sing until your voice gives out
No matter where or who's around
Release your worship

Chorus 2

Bring your song, He loves to hear it
Bring Him every prayer-soaked lyric
Jesus, He's so worthy of it all

Bridge

The One who was
The One who is
The One who is to come

Brooke Ligertwood | Jason Ingram | Scott Ligertwood

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CCLI Song # 7192505

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GLORY HONOUR POWER

Verse 1

Most worthy, worthy of praise
Exalted above all things my God
You are my God

Verse 2

Your splendor and majesty
Your wonder fills everything my God
You are my God

Chorus

Holy is the Lord
Holy is the Lord Almighty
Seated on the throne
Seated on the throne of Glory
High and lifted up
Your presence fills the temple
When we worship You
Oh, we worship You

Verse 3

Creation points to the King
The heavens can't help but sing to You
To You, our God

Bridge

Hallelujah to the One who came and made a way
Hallelujah to the One who died and rose again
Hallelujah to the only Name above all names
Glory and honour and power forever

Jeff Pardo | Melody Noel | Tiffany Hudson

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CCLI Song # 7147455

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HOSANNA (PRAISE IS RISING)

Verse 1

Praise is rising
Eyes are turning to You
We turn to You
Hope is stirring
Hearts are yearning for You
We long for You

Pre-Chorus

'Cause when we see You
We find strength to face the day
In Your presence
All our fears are washed away
(Washed away)

Chorus

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

Verse 2

Hear the sound of
Hearts returning to You
We turn to You
In Your Kingdom
Broken lives are made new
You make us new

Ending

Hosanna, hosanna

Brenton Brown | Paul Baloche

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CCLI Song # 4662491

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DID YOU FEEL THE MOUNTAINS TREMBLE

Verse 1

Did you feel the mountains tremble?
Did you hear the oceans roar?
When the people rose to sing of
Jesus Christ, the risen One

Verse 2

Did you feel the people tremble?
Did you hear the singers roar?
When the lost began to sing of
Jesus Christ, the saving One

Pre-Chorus 1

And we can see that God You're moving
A mighty river through the nations
And young and old will turn to Jesus
Fling wide you heavenly gates
Prepare the way of the risen Lord

Chorus

Open up the doors and let the music play
Let the streets resound with singing
Songs that bring Your hope and
Songs that bring Your joy
Dancers who dance upon injustice

Verse 3

Do you feel the darkness tremble
When all the saints join in one song?
And all the streams flow as one river
To wash away our brokenness

Pre-Chorus 2

And here we see that God, You're moving
A time of jubilee is coming
When young and old return to Jesus
Fling wide you heavenly gates
Prepare the way of the risen Lord

Martin Smith

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CCLI Song # 1097028

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BLESSED BE YOUR NAME

Verse 1

Blessed be Your Name
In the land that is plentiful
Where Your streams of abundance flow
Blessed be Your Name

Verse 2

Blessed be Your Name
When I'm found in the desert place
Though I walk through the wilderness
Blessed be Your Name

Pre-Chorus

Every blessing You pour out, I'll
Turn back to praise
When the darkness closes in, Lord
Still I will say

Chorus

Blessed be the Name of the Lord
Blessed be Your Name
Blessed be the Name of the Lord
Blessed be Your glorious Name

Verse 3

Blessed be Your Name
When the sun's shining down on me
When the world's all as it should be
Blessed be Your Name

Verse 4

Blessed be Your Name
On the road marked with suffering
Though there's pain in the offering
Blessed be Your Name

Bridge

You give and take away
You give and take away
My heart will choose to say
Lord blessed be Your Name

Beth Redman | Matt Redman

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CCLI Song # 3798438

CCLI Licence # 324618

HALLELUJAH TO THE LAMB

Verse 1

Lord I stand in the midst of a multitude
Of those from every tribe and tongue
We are Your people
Redeemed by Your blood
Rescued from death by Your love
There are no words
Good enough to thank You
There are no words to express my praise
But I will lift up my voice
And sing from my heart
With all of my strength

Chorus

Hallelujah hallelujah
Hallelujah to the Lamb
Hallelujah hallelujah
By the blood of Christ we stand
Every tongue every tribe
Every people every land
Giving glory giving honour
Giving praise unto the Lamb of God

Verse 2

Lord we stand by grace in Your presence
Cleansed by the blood of the Lamb
We are Your children
Called by Your Name
Humbly we bow and we pray
Release Your power
To work in us and through us
Till we are changed to be more like You
Then all the nations will see
Your glory revealed
And worship You

Bridge

Every knee shall bow
Every tongue confess
That You are Lord of all

Debbie Graafsma | Don Moen

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CCLI Song # 2316323

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A THOUSAND HALLELUJAHS

Verse 1

Who else would rocks cry out to worship
Whose glory taught the stars to shine
Perhaps creation longs to have the words to sing
But this joy is mine

Chorus

With a thousand hallelujahs
We magnify Your Name
You alone deserve the glory
The honour and the praise
Lord Jesus this song is forever Yours
A thousand hallelujahs
And a thousand more

Verse 2

Who else would die for our redemption
Whose resurrection means I'll rise
There isn't time enough to sing of all You've done
But I have eternity to try

Bridge

Praise to the Lord
To the Lamb
To the King of heaven
Praise for He rose
Now He reigns
We will sing forever

Brooke Ligertwood | Phil Wickham | Scott Ligertwood

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CCLI Song # 7190270

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O PRAISE THE NAME (ANÁSTASIS)

Verse 1

I cast my mind to Calvary
Where Jesus bled and died for me
I see His wounds, His hands, His feet
My Saviour on that cursed tree

Verse 2

His body bound and drenched in tears
They laid Him down in Joseph's tomb
The entrance sealed by heavy stone
Messiah still and all alone

Chorus

O praise the Name of the Lord our God
O praise His Name forevermore
For endless days we will sing Your praise
Oh Lord, oh Lord our God

Verse 3

Then on the third at break of dawn
The Son of heaven rose again
O trampled death where is your sting?
The angels roar for Christ the King

Verse 4

He shall return in robes of white
The blazing sun shall pierce the night
And I will rise among the saints
My gaze transfixed on Jesus' face

Benjamin Hastings | Dean Ussher | Marty Sampson

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CCLI Song # 7037787

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THE COMPASSION HYMN

Verse 1

There is an everlasting kindness
You lavished on us
When the radiance of heaven
Came to rescue the lost
You called the sheep without
A shepherd to leave their distress
For Your streams of forgiveness
And the shade of Your rest

Verse 2

And with compassion for the hurting
You reached out Your hand
As the lame ran to meet You
And the dead breathed again
You saw behind the eyes of
Sorrow and shared in our tears
Heard the sigh of the weary
Let the children draw near

Chorus

What boundless love, what fathomless grace
You have shown us, O God of compassion
Each day we live an offering of praise
As we show to the world Your compassion

Verse 3

We stood beneath the cross of Calvary
And gazed on Your face
At the thorns of oppression
And the wounds of disgrace
For surely You have borne our suffering
And carried our grief
As You pardoned the scoffer
And showed grace to the thief

Verse 4

How beautiful the feet
That carry this Gospel of peace
To the fields of injustice
And the valleys of need
To be a voice of hope and healing
To answer the cries
Of the hungry and helpless
With the mercy of Christ

Keith Getty | Kristyn Getty | Stuart Townend

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CCLI Song # 5468807

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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 Saviour, 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
(Repeat)
Jesus Yours is the victory

Ending

Jesus Christ, my living hope

Oh God, You are my living hope

Brian Johnson | Phil Wickham

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I SPEAK JESUS

Verse 1

I just want to speak the Name of Jesus
Over every heart and every mind
'Cause I know there is peace within Your presence
I speak Jesus

Verse 2

I just want to speak the Name of Jesus
'Til every dark addiction starts to break
Declaring there is hope and there is freedom
I speak Jesus

Chorus

('Cause) Your Name is power
Your Name is healing
Your Name is life
Break every stronghold
Shine through the shadows
Burn like a fire

Verse 3

I just want to speak the Name of Jesus
Over fear and all anxiety
To every soul held captive by depression
I speak Jesus

Verse 4

Shout Jesus from the mountains
Jesus in the streets
Jesus in the darkness over every enemy
Jesus for my family
I speak the holy Name Jesus

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NOTES

TUE
01

Are There Still Apostles Today?

SCRIPTURE 2 Thessalonians 3:6-9; Luke 6:12-13; Ephesians 2:19-20

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about apostles in these passages?

APPPLICATION

What is my understanding and attitude toward those leaders today who are considered as apostles?

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 work mightily through their spiritual gifts in ministry
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

THE WORD *APOSTOLOS* OCCURS 80 TIMES IN THE NEW

Testament. The word can mean “one who is sent with a message”¹ – as in “nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him” (Jn 13:16); Titus and an unnamed famous evangelist were “our brothers, they are messengers of the churches” (2 Cor 8:18, 23). But the word is mostly used to refer to “one who fulfils the role of being a special messenger (generally restricted to the immediate followers of Jesus Christ, but also extended, as in the case of Paul, to other early Christians active in proclaiming the message of the Gospel)”² – like Jesus choosing the Twelve among His many disciples and named them “apostles” (Lk 6:13).

Apostles like the Twelve and Paul were “special messengers” of Christ in salvation history, who are “the foundation” on which the Church is built (Eph 2:19-20). They were eyewitnesses of the historic risen Jesus (Acts 1:21-22, 25). They had such authority that disobeying their commands was equivalent to disobeying God (vv.6-9). And “their authority is preserved today in the New Testament”³. While there are today no apostles of Christ with an authority comparable to that of these apostles, “it is certainly possible to argue that there are people with apostolic ministries of a different kind, including episcopal jurisdiction, pioneer missionary work, church planting and itinerant leadership”⁴. So, we have people like William Carey – the “father of modern missions” and Dawson Trotman – the founder of The Navigators, who is considered as an apostle of disciplinemaking. Hence, it is not incorrect that some leaders today are considered as apostles.

¹ Johannes P. Louw & Eugene A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains, Second Edition, Volume 1* (UBS, 1988, 1989), 33-194

² Johannes P. Louw & Eugene A. Nida, 53-74

³ John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Ephesians, The Bible Speaks Today* (IVP, 1979), 161

⁴ John R. W. Stott, *Ephesians*, 161

WED
02

A Patron and Client Relationship

SCRIPTURE 2 Thessalonians 3:6; Galatians 1:10; James 2:1

OBSERVATION

What does Scripture teach about favour and favouritism (Gal 1:10; Jas 2:1)?

APPPLICATION

What changes do I need to make in my life with regards to seeking or showing favour and favouritism?

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 grow and walk in righteousness and justice
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

ONE KEY REASON WHY CERTAIN THESSALONIAN BELIEVERS

were not working but “walking in idleness” (v.6) has to do with “the institution of patronage that was pervasive in the ancient world”⁵. It was like this: “Clients depended on their rich patrons, receiving benefits from them such as food, money and representation, while the patrons enjoyed the public honour that accrued to their account for having so many clients. In this relationship, the patron was under social obligation to continue the economic and social support of his or her clients. To cut a client off would place the patron in a relationship of enmity with the client.”⁶ This patron-client relationship was one of mutual benefit.

Paul is telling the Thessalonian believers who were clients not to depend on their patrons (believers or unbelievers) for their support, and Christian patrons not to be obliged to continue supporting those in the church who simply did not want to change their status as client and work.⁷ However, Paul encouraged the Christian patrons to continue as benefactors to those who were in true need (2 Thess 3:13).⁸

We may find ourselves in a kind of “patron-client” relationship when we seek to find favour with people who are well-to-do, well-known, influential and powerful, for personal benefits. Or we may seek association with such people to make ourselves feel and look important and significant. Or we may show favour to certain people for self-serving reasons. But Scripture teaches us to seek no favour from man (Gal 1:10) and to show no favouritism (Jas 2:1).

⁵ Gene L. Green, The Letters to the Thessalonians, *The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Apollos, 2002), 342

⁶ Gene L. Green, 342

⁷ Gene L. Green, 342

⁸ Gene L. Green, 342

THU
03

Grace and Discipline in Discipleship

SCRIPTURE 1 Thessalonians 4:10-11; 5:14; 2 Thessalonians 3:6

OBSERVATION

How did Paul go about dealing with the problem of idleness among some believers in Thessalonica?

APPPLICATION

How do I relate with people who are walking on the wrong path and do not want to change?

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 work with the weak sensitively and graciously
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

THREE GROUPS OF PEOPLE WERE DISTURBING THE

Thessalonian church: persecutors (2 Thess 1), false teachers (2 Thess 2) and idlers (2 Thess 3). In both Thessalonian letters, Paul uses three similar words to identify the “idlers” in the church: “the idle [*ataktos*]” (1 Thess 5:14), “walk in idleness [*ataktōs*]” (2 Thess 3:6, 11), and Paul as the contrast, “we were not idle [*atakteō*]” (2 Thess 3:7). Paul uses the term four times, and only in 1 and 2 Thessalonians. This suggests that idleness was a serious problem among the Thessalonians. As to the meaning of the term, “outside Christianity, in relation to work, its emphasis is ‘not in the first instance...on sloth but rather on the irresponsible attitude to the obligation to work’”⁹.

Paul dealt with this pastoral problem in four progressive steps. Apparently, the problem was there when he was in Thessalonica and he addressed it, as indicated in his exhortation in 1 Thessalonians 4: “work with your hands, **as we instructed you**” (v.11). This was the first step. It seems that after he had left Thessalonica, he learned that nothing had changed. So, the second step: In his first letter to them, “**we urge you...** to work with your hands” (vv.10b-11). And the third step: To ensure that his instruction is followed, he rallied the discipleship community to help: “**admonish** the idle” (1 Thess 5:14). Still nothing had changed. And so the fourth step: Church discipline – “**keep away** from any brother who is walking in idleness” (2 Thess 3:6). We see here a portrait of grace and discipline in community discipleship.

⁹ John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Thessalonians, The Bible Speaks Today* (IVP, 1991), 87-88

FRI
04

Leadership Authority Through Living Example

SCRIPTURE 2 Thessalonians 3:6-9

OBSERVATION

What is the significance of the verb “imitate” being repeated twice in Paul’s instruction to the Thessalonians?

APPLICATION

What areas in my life do I need to change so as to be good example?

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 by example at home, in the workplace and ministry
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

THE PROBLEM OF IDLENESS AMONG THE THESSALONIANS

was serious enough for Paul to exert his apostolic authority to demand obedience from them to “the things that we command” (2 Thess 3:4, 6, 10, 12, 14). How Paul exercised his apostolic authority shows us the Christian way to exercise leadership authority in, not just the church, but also our family, the workplace and other settings. First and foremost of all is leading by example.

Exercising his apostolic authority, Paul commands the Thessalonians to implement church discipline on those who disobeyed the apostolic “tradition” and refused to work and “walk in idleness” (v.6). Paul’s apostolic command was undergirded by how he lived his life: “we were not idle” (v.7) and how “with toil and labor we worked day and night” for their own sustenance (v.8). This gave Paul the authority to say without any sense of pride that his life was “an example” for them “to imitate” (v.9). More than that, he had the authority to direct them: “You **ought to** imitate us” (v.7). This reflects Paul’s confidence that his life was to be an example to be followed. It was a humble confidence, not of himself, but in the Lord (cf. 2 Cor 10:17-18).

We do not live by example **because** we are leading, but rather that the way we live our lives – whether we are leaders or not – naturally **becomes** an example when we lead. The central principle in Paul’s leadership is: The starting point is “I follow the example of Christ” and out of this is “Follow my example” (1 Cor 11:1, NIV).

SAT
05

Denying Rights in Self-Giving Love

SCRIPTURE 2 Thessalonians 3:6-9; 1 Corinthians 9:14-15

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about Paul regarding material support in his ministry?

APPPLICATION

What areas of my life do I need to deny my rights in self-giving 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 Church Board: To serve people with self-giving love wisely and appropriately
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

A TRUE TEACHER IS ONE PRACTISES WHAT HE TEACHES.

Like Ezra, who “set his heart to study the Law of the LORD, and practise it”, “and teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel” (Ezr 7:10). Paul teaches this: “Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches” (Gal 6:6), and “Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor [in terms of ‘wages’], especially those who labor in preaching and teaching” (1 Tim 5:17-18). But in this case, Paul “did not practise” what he was teaching. He expected the church to apply the teaching, but he did not let the teaching be applied to himself.

Paul told the Corinthians, “The Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel” (1 Cor 9:14). Mark these words: “The Lord commanded.” But for Paul, with regards to this divine command, it was “But I have made no use of these rights” (1 Cor 9:15). He also did not use this apostolic “right” in ministering to the Thessalonians (v.9a). Instead, Paul worked hard to support himself, ensuring that he did not “eat anyone’s bread without paying for it” (v.8). It was Paul’s act of **self-giving love by denying his right**: “that we might not be a burden to any of you” (v.8).

We are to “serve one another” (Gal 5:13). “One another” means reciprocity. And God expects this reciprocity. But a true servant serves without expecting to be served. A true servant does not insist on the reciprocity.

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

Stand:

Don't face your fears alone.

Memory Verse

"Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go." – Joshua 1:9b (NIV)

* Bottom Line

You can do what you should even when others are afraid.*

* Bible Story

Numbers 13-14 – You Make Me Brave

* Activity

Stack Up Tower

Props: Paper cups

Provide each family member with many paper cups and ask them to do the following.

Activity 1: Stack up as many cups as possible within a minute. Do it alone.

Activity 2: Pair up into groups of two or three. Get each group to stack up as many cups as they can within one minute. Members of the group can work together to keep the cup tower from toppling.

After the game, invite everyone to share their experiences.

Say, "We find it hard to keep the cup tower from toppling when doing it alone. When we do it with others, it seems possible. Courage is contagious. As God's followers, we encourage others to put their trust in God and offer one another the courage to do the impossible."

* Talk About It

- How can you help others when they are afraid?
- How can you demonstrate contagious courage and help others to do what is right even when it seems hard?
- What can you do when you feel like fear is controlling you?
- What should you do when faced with situations where you are tempted to listen to the crowd instead of God?

Parents: Share an experience in which you overcame fear and did what others were afraid to do. Where was God in this experience? What did you do to overcome your fear? What did you learn about God?

* Prayer

Thank God for His patience and guidance when we face problems at work or in school. Pray that God will give us the courage to do what is right and help others who need help.

 **BIBLE STORY VIDEO**
<https://cefc.ch/22FD11W1>



MON
07

Persistent Disobedience and Hardened Heart

SCRIPTURE 2 Thessalonians 3:6-12; 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12

OBSERVATION

How do these passages show the persistent disobedience of certain people among the Thessalonians?

APPLICATION

How can I guard myself from falling into persistent disobedience to God?

PRAYER

O God, I come before Your throne of grace in my weaknesses, in my propensity to fall into temptation. Give me Your grace and mercy to help me to walk with You faithfully. When I stray away from You in my heart, seek me and restore me to Yourself. In Your mercy, keep me from hardening my heart in persistent disobedience.



Prayer Pointers

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

DEEPER REFLECTION

PAUL EXPRESSES HIS “CONFIDENCE IN THE LORD” ABOUT

the Thessalonians, that “you are doing and will do the things that we command you” (2 Thess 3:4). Then Paul immediately addresses the problem of idleness present in the church – and rather extensively in 10 verses (2 Thess 3:6-15). The Thessalonians that Paul had confidence in the Lord about were the “faithful majority”¹⁰ and those who were “walking in idleness” (v.6) were the “unfaithful minority”¹¹. Paul does not leave this minority group alone just because the majority were faithful and thus thinks that the church was doing alright. He does not see the problem as small and insignificant, simply because it was a problem of the minority. For Paul, in the church, “a little leaven leavens the whole lump” (1 Cor 5:6). And Paul’s goal in ministry is to “present everyone mature in Christ” (Col 1:28), leaving no one behind.

The problem of the “unfaithful minority” is persistent disobedience. Paul had instructed the Thessalonians – in person and by letter – on the matter of working and not living idly – (1 Thess 4:10-12). But this unfaithful minority stubbornly rejected his teaching,¹² such that Paul has to call for church discipline (v.6). Persistent disobedience can harden our hearts. Scripture solemnly warns against the hardening of our hearts: “Take care...lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God...that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin” (Heb 3:12-14). Be watchful, be fearful about our own hearts and take sin seriously (Jer 17:9; Prov 4:23).

¹⁰ John R. W. Stott, *Thessalonians*, 190

¹¹ John R. W. Stott, *Thessalonians*, 190

¹² John R. W. Stott, *Thessalonians*, 190

TUE
08

Discipleship Personal Responsibility and Self-Discipline

SCRIPTURE 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 10-12

OBSERVATION

What do these texts tell us about the “busyness” of certain Thessalonians?

APPLICATION

What are the wrong things that I am busy with and what changes do I need to make?

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 strengthened in discipline for godly living
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

THE THESSALONIAN BELIEVERS WHO WERE IDLING

around were busy, but in the wrong things. They were “not busy at work, but busybodies” (v.11): “Having no work of their own to keep themselves occupied, they had become meddlesome in the affairs of others.”¹³ And to Paul, the problem of walking in idleness was so severe, that he gives this rather extreme “command”: “If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat” (v.10). Every culture is likely to have such a similar proverb, and Paul adopts “a maxim applied no doubt hundreds of times by industrious workmen as they forbade a lazy apprentice to sit down to dinner”¹⁴, and makes it into an apostolic “command”.

Behind this behaviour of not working but living idly is having no sense of personal responsibility and self-discipline. We may by extension apply the principles of personal responsibility and self-discipline from the realm of physical work to the realm of our spiritual life. It is necessary for us to grow from just being fed the Word of God by others to feeding ourselves as well. We take personal responsibility for our own spiritual growth by feeding ourselves, which requires self-discipline. There is this saying: “Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach him how to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.” To feed ourselves the Word, we need to learn how to read the Scriptures properly and correctly – “accurately handling the word of truth” (2 Tim 2:15). Are you fishing abundantly from the Scriptures and feeding yourself richly for a lifetime?

¹³ John R. W. Stott, *Thessalonians*, 192

¹⁴ John R. W. Stott, *Thessalonians*, 192

WED
09

Work as God Has Intended

SCRIPTURE Genesis 2:1-3, 5, 15

OBSERVATION

What do these passages say about work that God has intended in creation?

APPPLICATION

How do I view my work?

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 work in the way that God has intended
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

THE BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF WORK DOES NOT BEGIN WITH

man created by God to work, but the God who works: “By the seventh day God completed His **work**...He rested on the seventh day from all His **work**...He rested from all His **work**” (vv.2-3). Created in God’s image, man is to work and rest like God (Exo 20:8-11). It is within this theological framework that man is created to work: To “work” (*abad*) and “keep” (*shamar*) the ground in the Garden of Eden (v.15). “Work is a gift, not a punishment for sin. Even before the fall, humanity has duties to perform.”¹⁵

The two Hebrew words, *abad* and *shamar* (v.15), define work theologically. *Abad* is commonly used in a religious sense of serving and worshiping God: “Fear the LORD and serve (*abad*) Him” and not “the gods your ancestors worshiped (*abad*)” (Josh 24:14, NIV). *Shamar* is commonly used for observing religious commands and duties: “keep My commandments” (Exo 20:6).¹⁶ “Man’s life in the Garden was to be characterised by worship and obedience; he was a priest, not merely a worker and keeper of the Garden.”¹⁷ So, we are to view our work and workplace as **God’s placement** (“He took the man and put him”) in **God’s presence** (“into the Garden of Eden”) where we could have fellowship with God¹⁸ (Gen 3:8), for the **purpose** of worshiping God in obedience (“to work and to keep”). God remains the centre of our work, even when we “eat bread by the sweat of your face” in this fallen world (Gen 3:19).

¹⁵ Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Zondervan, 2001), 87

¹⁶ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15, Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 1* (Word Books, 1987), 67

¹⁷ John H. Sailhamer, *Genesis, The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, Vol. 2* (Zondervan, 1990), 45

¹⁸ John H. Sailhamer, 45

THU
10

Work as Answering God's Call

SCRIPTURE 1 Corinthians 7:17, 20-22

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about Paul's teaching concerning believers who were slaves?

APPPLICATION

How do I see my work as answering God's call?

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 have a sense of answering God's call in their work
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

CHARISMA – GIFT FROM GOD – CAN BE “ETERNAL LIFE”

(Rom 6:23) or spiritual gift (1 Cor 12:4, 7). Celibacy and marriage are also a *charisma* – “gift from God” (1 Cor 7:7). And “if the term can extend to celibacy and marriage, every person, Christian or not, is a charismatic; that is, every person has received a gracious gift from God”¹⁹. So, God has given *charisma* to both believers and unbelievers under both the creation and redemption order. This means “there is **a large diversity of *charismas*** such as intercession, helping the aged, promoting justice and equity, breaking the power of evil spirits, practicing a profession, rearing children, doing theology or physics, witnessing to the great deeds of God, and propagating ecological balance and global peace”²⁰.

What we can do and like to do as our vocation, and where we work, should be considered as God's gift, and thus also God's calling, for us for the benefit of others under both the creation and redemption order. This includes changing of jobs as God leads and guides us. Christian slaves in New Testament times did not have the liberty to do what they liked. But they were to work as answering God's call for them: “the calling in which he was called” (vv.20-22). If they could “become free”, Paul says, “rather do that” (v.21) – “Change job!” Whether the Christian slave remained as a slave, or was freed from being a slave, both are God's call for him either way – as “the Lord's freeman” and “Christ's slave” (v.22). Central in our work as God's call is following Jesus.

¹⁹ D. A. Carson, *Showing the Spirit: A Theological Exposition of 1 Corinthians 12-14* (Baker, 1987), 21

²⁰ Henry I. Lederle, *Treasures Old And New: Interpretations of “Spirit-baptism” in the Charismatic Renewal Movement* (Hendrickson, 1988), 228 (emphasis is mine)

FRI
11

Work as a Practical Necessity

SCRIPTURE 2 Thessalonians 3:10

OBSERVATION

What does Paul's apostolic command tell us about work?

APPLICATION

What does it mean for me that work is a practical necessity?

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 see the sacredness of work in its mundaneness
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

PAUL GIVES THE THESSALONIANS WHO REFUSED TO WORK

his apostolic command: “If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat” (v.10). There is a relationship between working and eating. God said to the first humans that He created, “Behold, I have given you every plant... every tree yielding fruit; it shall be food for you” (Gen 1:29). But God’s way in His provision is, humans must “cultivate the ground” for the plants and trees to grow to become food for them (Gen 2:5, 15). Theologically, work is to be also seen as a practical necessity, besides viewing work as answering God’s call. We work because we need to eat.

When I was doing my national service (1976-78), I thought about what I would do after completing it. I thought of becoming a teacher or a nurse. My highest education is secondary four. At that time, with that educational qualification I could apply to be a teacher or a nurse. I first applied to be teacher. I was unsuccessful. I still had one more option, I thought. But I did not get into nursing as well. So now, having a profession as my career was no longer an option for me. But I needed to work – out of practical necessity. So, I applied for any job that I could. I ended up working in a factory as a blue-collar worker for nine years until the time I answered God’s call to full-time ministry. In serving God full-time, I did become a teacher and a nurse. I teach the Word of God and nurse the souls of people.

SAT
12

Work and Provision of God

SCRIPTURE Genesis 2:5, 9

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about work?

APPPLICATION

Where is God in my work?

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 rest in God's faithful provision in their work
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

GOD DOES NOT INTEND FOR US TO LOOK AT WORK PURELY

in economic terms like the world. But we must “work” that we may “eat” (2 Thess 3:10). It is both a divine design and divine command. And there is a place for working hard for one’s sustenance, as Paul demonstrated (2 Thess 3:8). But we must not view work just in terms of being practical and realistic. We are to look at work theologically – as God sees it.

There was a point in creation when “no shrub of the field was yet in the earth and no plant of the field had yet sprouted” (v.5a). Why? Because “the LORD had not sent rain upon the earth” and “there was no man to cultivate the ground” (v.5b). God has designed work to be a divine-human operation. But the primary part belongs to God. Unless God sends the rain upon the earth, nothing will happen, no matter how smart and how hard man cultivates the ground. Overarching and undergirding our work must be “Behold, **I have given** you every plant...every tree...[to] be food for you” (Gen 1:29). As God sends the rain and man cultivates the ground, ultimately, it is “**the LORD God [who] caused to grow** every tree out of the ground” (v.9).

God is the source of whatever we earn from work. But we must “seek first His kingdom and His righteousness”, and God will provide “**all** these things” that we need (Matt 6:33). And we can work without worry, knowing that God “knows that you need **all** these things” (Matt 6:31-32).

SUN
13

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

Stand:

Don't face your fears alone.

Memory Verse

"Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go." – Joshua 1:9b (NIV)

❖ Bottom Line

You can do what you should even when things seem impossible.**

❖ Bible Story

1 Samuel 16:1-13; 17:1-51 – Whatever It Takes

❖ Activity

Defeat the Giant

Props: An empty 500ml bottle, some paper or ping pong balls, balloons and paper cups

Pair up your family members. Get each pair to make paper cup shooters using balloons and paper cups (refer to instructions @ <https://tinyurl.com/2bupkvw>).

The bottle represents "Goliath". Place it at least one metre away from the starting point. Then ask everyone to shoot ping pong balls or crushed paper balls using the paper cup shooter at "Goliath". The first pair to shoot it down wins the game.

Say, "We don't have to face our fears alone. David was able to defeat Goliath because he believed that God would be with him. Indeed, he defeated Goliath with a slingshot. Do not be afraid of the 'Goliaths' in our lives. Be free to tell God our troubles. God is like the paper cup slingshot. He will give us the courage to topple our fears!"

❖ Talk About It

- What does courage look like to you?
- What are some things you fear in your life that feel just as big and impossible as Goliath?
- In what way does believing in God give you the courage to face your fears?
- What life challenges are you facing where God is asking you to be courageous in dealing with them?

Parents: Recall a courageous experience in which you defeated a "Goliath" in your life. What did you experience? How did God help you? What did you learn from this experience?

❖ Prayer

Nothing is too big or small for God. Pray for courage and guidance to face the "Goliaths" at work, home or in school.

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BIBLE STORY VIDEO
<https://cefc.ch/22FD11W2>



PAPER CUP SHOOTERS
<https://tinyurl.com/2bupkvw>



MON
14

Doing Good in the Spirit

SCRIPTURE 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13; Galatians 6:7-10

OBSERVATION

What do these texts say about doing good?

APPLICATION

How can I not grow weary in doing good?

PRAYER

God, I thank You that You have saved me by Your grace and created me in Christ for good works, by which I may shine as light that You may be glorified.²¹ Strengthen my heart to persevere in doing good and not grow weary when it looks like and I feel that I am serving in vain, and be assured in You that in due time I will reap what I have sown.

Prayer Pointers

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

DEEPER REFLECTION

THE THESSALONIANS WHO REFUSED TO WORK BUT LIVED

in idleness persisted in being clients in the pervasive “institution of patronage” and “depended on their rich patrons, receiving benefits from them such as food, money and representation”²². And Paul is calling the Christian patrons in the church not to be obliged to continue supporting these people.²³ It is in this context (vv.6-12) that Paul gives this exhortation: “Do not grow weary in doing good” (v.13).

Paul is instructing the Christian patrons that, while they are to stop supporting the idlers, they should continue “in doing good” by helping those who are truly in need and deserving. And he exhorts them not to grow weary in this “doing good”. What Paul is saying in this context is: “Do not become so exasperated by the troublesome conduct of a few loafers that you begin to tire of exercising charity with respect to those who are deserving. Don’t let a few people who neglect their duty keep you from doing yours. Never grow tired in doing what is right, honourable and excellent.”²⁴

The “doing good” does not refer just specifically to giving to the poor, but “performing what accords with God’s will in every walk of life”²⁵. We are to “do good” to “all people”, and “especially” fellow believers in God’s family (Gal 6:10). We may grow weary when we don’t see any returns. Disappointment over unmet expectations breeds this growing weariness. But we should not when we “do good” in “the Spirit”, because “in due time” – God’s time – we will reap fruits that are eternal (Gal 6:8-9).

²¹ Ephesians 2:8-10; Matthew 5:16

²² Gene L. Green, 342; see *Devotional Journal* 2022, November 2 entry

²³ Gene L. Green, 342

²⁴ William Hendrickson, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus, *New Testament Commentary* (The Banner of Truth Trust, 1955), 204

²⁵ William Hendrickson, 204

TUE
15

The Place for Church Discipline (1)

SCRIPTURE 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14; Matthew 18:15-17

OBSERVATION

What do these passages tell us about church discipline?

APPPLICATION

How will I relate with a fellow believer who lives in sin?

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 minister to the spiritually weak wisely in God's way
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

CONCERNING THOSE WHO WERE “WALKING IN IDLENESS” (V.6),

Paul had repeatedly communicated his teaching by word of mouth, personal example and letter. What had been done was more than sufficient. So now, for those who persisted in disobedience, Paul calls for church discipline: “If anyone does not obey what we say in this letter, take note of that person...” (v.14a).

Consider what the late John Stott said about church discipline on members who are guilty of serious misbehaviour in the church today: “To be sure, many churches nowadays would do nothing. The administration of discipline had fallen into disuse and the thought of reviving it is viewed with distaste.”²⁶ Is this true of us as an intentional discipling church?

Church discipline is for those who are “guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolator, reviler, drunkard, or swindler” (1 Cor 5:11), whose conduct is “a public, deliberate and persistent disobedience”²⁷ to God’s Word. The church discipline is “a measure of social ostracism”²⁸: “Do not associate (*synanamignumi*) with them” (v.14b, NIV). *Synanamignumi* means “to associate with one another, normally involving special proximity and/or joint activity, and usually implying some kind of reciprocal relation or involvement”²⁹. Such “social ostracism” is to be carried out only if the culprit remains unrepentant after three rounds of confrontation of grace: first, one on one, then by “two or three witnesses” and lastly by the larger community (Matt 18:15-17). The purpose is “that he may be ashamed” (v.14b) – “to shame them into repentance for the past and amendment of life in the future”³⁰.

²⁶ John R. W. Stott, *Thessalonians*, 193

²⁷ John R. W. Stott, *Thessalonians*, 193

²⁸ John R. W. Stott, *Thessalonians*, 193

²⁹ Johannes P. Louw & Eugene A. Nida, 34.1

³⁰ John R. W. Stott, *Thessalonians*, 194

WED
16

The Place for Church Discipline (2)

SCRIPTURE 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15; Galatians 6:1

OBSERVATION

What do these passages tell us about church discipline?

APPPLICATION

How will I journey with a fellow believer who struggles to walk rightly with 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 leaders
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for the Generations: To journey with the spiritually weak in edifying ways
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

CHURCH DISCIPLINE IS A NECESSITY IN COMMUNITY

discipleship. Discipleship is not just about carrying the cross, but also being cleansed through the cross. Discipleship is redemptive and so is church discipline. God's judgment on His people for their sins in the form of inflicting them with weakness, sickness and death is a redemptive discipline: "we are disciplined, so that we may not be condemned along with the world" (1 Cor 11:30, 32).

The verb *synanamignumi* for "associate" in the church discipline called by Paul, "Do not associate with him" (v.14b, NIV), "may imply differing degrees of ostracism, ranging from the total separation involved in excommunication (as in 1 Cor 5:9, 11) to a more moderate avoidance of free and familiar fellowship" as for the Thessalonians here.³¹ The call of "Do not associate with him" is coupled and tempered with "Do not regard him as an enemy" (v.15a). The church discipline must be "friendly, not hostile"³². The culprit is to be treated "as a brother" in Christ, and the action toward that person is to "warn him" (v.15b), not humiliate or destroy him. Paul teaches that for "anyone who is caught in any trespass", those who are "spiritual" are to "restore in the spirit of gentleness" (Gal 6:1). In church discipline, the spirit of love and grace must be felt by the one being disciplined. And when the church discipline is deemed as "enough", there must be forgiveness and reaffirmation of love, lest we give to Satan a foothold in the church – in being unforgiving and feeling unforgiven (2 Cor 1:6-11).

³¹ John R. W. Stott, Thessalonians, 193

³² John R. W. Stott, Thessalonians, 194

THU
17

From the Lord of Peace (1)

SCRIPTURE 2 Thessalonians 3:16

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about Paul's prayer in verse 16a?

APPLICATION

What does it mean for me to know the Lord as the Lord of peace?

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 know the Lord of peace in their discipleship journey
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

IN 2 THESSALONIANS, PAUL CONCLUDES WITH “A THREEFOLD

blessing”³³: “Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace at all times in every way” (v.16a), “The Lord be with you all” (v.16b) and “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all” (2 Thess 3:18). What prayers that we can pray daily for ourselves and for the church! Note the centrality of the **“the Lord”** in these three prayers. We cannot assume when we pray – just because prayer is to God – that our prayer is God-centred. God-centredness is a deliberate consciousness.

Paul’s first prayer – prayer for “peace” (v.16a) – is made in both the immediate and larger context of the letter. The immediate context is his call for church discipline for those who persisted in disobeying his apostolic command to work and not living in idleness (2 Thess 3:6-15). The persistent disobedience and the exercising of church discipline would be a “chaotic situation” in the church, which “certainly involved personal conflict, pain, confrontation” and “a lack of peace”³⁴. And there will be a lack of peace if the persistent disobedience is left unchecked and undealt with. However, when the church discipline results in the sinners’ repentance, there will be peace: between the sinners and God, and between the sinners and the rest of the church.³⁵ But our hope for relational peace among God’s people lies on “the Lord of peace” (Paul’s emphasis), who “He Himself is our peace” (Eph 2:14), and it is He “Himself” (another emphasis) who gives the peace. The emphases underline the Lord’s commitment to give us His peace.

³³ John R. W. Stott, *Thessalonians*, 197

³⁴ G. K. Beale, 1-2 Thessalonians, *The IVP New Testament Commentary Series* (IVP Academic, 2003), 264

³⁵ G. K. Beale, 265

FRI
18

From the Lord of Peace (2)

SCRIPTURE 2 Thessalonians 3:16

OBSERVATION

How is Paul's prayer for peace related to the Thessalonians' situations in 2 Thessalonians 2:4-5 and 3:1-2?

APPLICATION

What do I do when I go through times of trouble?

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 empowered by God's peace in their trials
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

THE “PEACE” IN VERSE 16 REFERS TO RELATIONAL HARMONY

in the immediate context, and broadly includes inner steadiness in the larger context of the letter. Some commentators understand the “peace” in terms of only the former. But the peace that Paul prays that the Lord of peace will give is “at all times in every way”. “The phrase [at all times in all ways] implies a multitude of troubles, and the letter has revealed a persecuted, doctrinally confused and socially troubled church. Thus the plea for peace should be understood as broadly as this phrase and the larger context demand.”³⁶

The Thessalonians were suffering for the kingdom of God, and enduring persecutions and afflictions with steadfastness and faith in God (2 Thess 1:4-5). Surely, they needed peace from the Lord to strengthen their hearts. False teachings were going around that “the day of the Lord has come”, which caused these young believers to be “quickly shaken from your composure” and “disturbed” (2 Thess 2:1-2). How they needed the divine peace to stabilise their hearts.

The Lord gives us peace “at **all** times” and “in **every** circumstance” (NASB). But having inner peace does not necessarily mean an absence of disturbing feelings. “Biblical peace is not often a general tranquillity but rather a rightness at the centre in the midst of much turmoil.”³⁷ Jesus was “very distressed and troubled” in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mk 14:33) – but in the most intimate relationship and communion with God. Where is the peace of God in Jesus here? The peace is “Thy will be done” (Matt 26:42).

³⁶ Jeffrey A. D. Weimar, 1-2 Thessalonians, *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Baker Academic, 2014), 634 – citing D. M. Martin

³⁷ Dale Ralph Davis, 1 Samuel, *Focus on the Bible* (Christian Focus, 2000), 213

SAT
19

God's Presence of Grace and Peace

SCRIPTURE 2 Thessalonians 3:16-18; Numbers 6:23-26

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about the threefold blessing of Paul (vv.16, 18) and the Aaronic blessing (Num 6:23-26)?

APPLICATION

How is the threefold blessing of Paul relevant to 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 walk in God's presence of grace and peace
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

PAUL'S THREEFOLD BLESSING OF THE PEACE, PRESENCE

(v.16) and grace of the Lord (v.18), that he prays to be upon the Thessalonian church reflects the Aaronic blessing in Numbers 6:23-26. In the Old Testament, the “face” (*panim*) of God is also the presence of God (e.g., Gen 3:8; 4:16³⁸). The blessing of “The LORD make His face (*panim*) to shine upon you” and “The LORD lift up His countenance (*panim*) upon you” (Num 6:25a, 26a) parallels “The Lord be with you all” (v.16b). And in His presence with us, the Lord will “be gracious to you” (Num 6:25b) – with “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ” (v.18), and “give you peace” (Num 6:26b) as “the Lord of peace” (v.16a).

In both the blessing of Paul and Aaron, the Lord's presence, peace and grace are theologically interlinked. God is our **covenant God**, and we are His **covenant people**, whom He has redeemed with “My blood of the new covenant” (Matt 26:28; Lk 22:20) into a **covenant relationship** with Him. Our covenant relationship is with the very person of God, and thus, God's presence is with us. The presence of God is the person of God. God's presence with us is His **covenant presence** in our covenant relationship with Him, as reflected in this parallelism: “Fear not, for **I am with you** (presence); do not be dismayed, for **I am your God** (relationship)” (Isa 41:10). God's presence with us is a presence of all-sufficient empowering grace (2 Cor 12:9-10) and a presence of peace “at all times in every circumstance”.

³⁸ “...hid themselves from the presence (*panim*) of the LORD;” and “...went away from the presence (*panim*) of the LORD”

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

Stand:

Don't face your fears alone.

Memory Verse

"Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go." – Joshua 1:9b (NIV)

* Bottom Line

You can do what you should because God is with you.*

* Bible Story

Daniel 6 – Safe and Sound

* Activity

Would you rather...?

Props: Pens and strips of paper

Write down on each strip of paper a "Would you rather..." question.

Examples include:

- Would you rather have more time or more money?
- Would you rather spend your free time talking to God or watching TV?

Have each family member randomly pick a strip of paper without looking. Then ask him or her to read the question out loud, and get everyone to answer it and share why they choose it.

Say, "Doing what is right when others are doing otherwise is not easy. We may be 'penalised' for not doing what others are doing. In the story of Daniel, we know that God will be with us and give us the courage to do what is right. God will not let us stand alone when we are in trouble."

* Talk About It

- Do you think Daniel did the right thing in disobeying the king's law? Why or why not?
- Why is it so scary to stand alone – even when you know you're right and God is with you?
- How can you be afraid but still have courage?
- Who can you turn to for help in building up your courage?
- What can we do when we lack courage?

Parents: Share an incident where you had to stand alone to do what was right. How did you pluck up the courage to do what you did? Who helped you? What did you learn about God in this incident?

* Prayer

Ask for God's guidance to look up to Him when we are in trouble.
Pray that we can have courage and put our trust in God.


BIBLE STORY VIDEO
<https://cefc.ch/22FD1IW3>



MON
21

Stop for the Needy

SCRIPTURE Luke 10:25-37

OBSERVATION

In what ways was the Samaritan willing to put his own needs aside to help the man in need?

APPPLICATION

Which needy person(s) is the Lord leading me to stop for?

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, I am so thankful that You stopped for us. Please teach me to stop for those in need around me. Amen.

Prayer Pointers

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

DEEPER REFLECTION

THROUGHOUT THIS WEEK LEADING UP TO NEW LIFE SUNDAY

with its theme “To Love the Community as Christ Does”, we will be reflecting deeper on the parable of the Good Samaritan.

The priest walked by. The Levite walked by. Presumably they had something to get to, perhaps temple duty. If they stopped to help the injured man, they would have risked becoming unclean and thus unfit to perform their duties. Or they might have been afraid. Pausing to help the man may make them vulnerable to attack by robbers.

Today, we Christians also appear to have valid reasons for not pausing to help those around us. The report we need to finish. The child we need to pick up. The project we need to run. We have so much to deal with that helping the needy means we must interrupt our own lives. For example, it means waking up early to distribute food to migrant workers on a daily basis.³⁹ It means using our precious Saturdays to clean up the flats of elderly or disabled people. Or making special efforts to help kids with special needs do better in school. Or sometimes going without dinner to make it on time to help Steady Readers kids with their English twice a week. Or giving up weekends to mentor kids and youths who may not be appreciative. Or spending mornings to connect with lonely seniors. All these seem like such huge sacrifices. Until we remember that Christ left heaven for earth to save us from our sins. He laid down His life for us. As Christ’s disciples, shouldn’t we follow His example?

³⁹ Thousands of migrant workers were locked down in factory-converted dormitories in 2020 without adequate basic necessities during the COVID-19 pandemic. A lot of time and energy were joyfully spent by many Christians over several months to contact suppliers of cooked food and logistics, coordinate church volunteers, collect and distribute the daily meals and basic necessities to hundreds of migrant workers.

TUE
22Meet Real Needs
in Real Ways

SCRIPTURE Luke 10:34

OBSERVATION

What strikes you most about what the Samaritan did to meet the man's needs?

APPLICATION

Regarding the needy person(s) whom I identified from yesterday's devotion: What are their real needs and how can I directly meet those needs or work with others to do so?

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 help them to pray, observe, ask good questions, think clearly and minister practically to those in need
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

THOSE OF US WHO HAVE HAD TO TREAT REAL WOUNDS

know that it is generally not pleasant and can sometimes be difficult. You do not get a warm and fuzzy feeling. At times, the treatment is done in the face of the injured person yelling in pain. In fact, we may have to be quite clinical and precise in trying to ensure that the treatment is effective. The same applies more broadly to helping the needy.

What does he or she really need? Sometimes, a quick injection of money is warranted. For example, a family where the sole breadwinner has suddenly lost his or her job may require quick financial relief to help them get through the subsequent weeks or months. At other times, kids and youths may need counselling, because they have undergone or are going through something traumatic. In some instances, the root of their trauma may have to do with parental expectations and behaviour. Sometimes, kids or youths who show bullying tendencies may be driven by a sense of insecurity. Delivering groceries to the elderly is good and can sometimes be a great way to begin longer-term engagement. But some of them may be craving interaction with other people. Some may simply be longing to be accorded some respect and dignity.

In yesterday's devotion, we focused on the need to stop for the needy. But after we stop, we need to observe. To look and to listen, both to what is said and what is unsaid, so that we can meet their real needs in real ways.

WED
23

Change of Plans

SCRIPTURE Luke 10:33-35

OBSERVATION

In what ways did the Samaritan have to change his plans to help the man?

APPLICATION

What life interruption(s) do I need to accept in faith, to help someone in need?

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 Christians will put aside their agenda, wants and plans for the greater joy of obeying the Lord and loving their neighbours
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

THE SAMARITAN WAS NOT JUST OUT FOR A JALAN-JALAN

(Malay for a stroll). He was likely going somewhere on specific business. The next day, he told the innkeeper that he would leave but return later. We are not told to what extent he risked losing a client, maybe, or had less time to prepare for his meeting or whatever business engagement. We are also not told whether he might have subsequently struggled to find lodging in the place he was going to because he arrived late.

But that is the reality of the uncertainty that we must accept when we change our plans to help the needy. For example, if we organise an event for migrant workers and some volunteers suddenly cancel their participation, it means that others must step up and step in to make sure that the migrant workers still receive adequate attention and the activities go on as planned. At other times, Steady Readers mentors might suddenly fall ill or be too tied up to come for the session, and other Steady Reader volunteers on stand-by must be activated to ensure that the kids still get their sessions. We have had New Life Community Services (NLCS) staff show up late at night at a hospital to help beneficiaries who suddenly needed medical help. Other NLCS teachers have gone out of their way, beyond their official job descriptions, to extend care for children who need help beyond what the curriculum prescribes. We can change our plans to still joyfully serve others when we remember that God truly holds our paths and such interruptions are fully within His control.

THU
24

First Reckon, Then Risk

SCRIPTURE Luke 10:30, 33

OBSERVATION

What were the risks that the Samaritan took to help the injured man?

APPLICATION

What risk(s) should I manage responsibly to help the needy?

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 and attentive in balancing the risks that they need to undertake to help people in need
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

I SOMETIMES WONDER, WHEN THE SAMARITAN STOPPED

to help the injured man, whether he kept looking around to see if there might be other robbers who would attack him as well. It would have been understandable. I recall that when I served with a church's homeless ministry in the US, I would continually scan the surroundings even as we gave out lunches to the homeless folks, as the area was known for the occasional stabbing. At other times, some of the homeless guys would be high and one would have to factor that when engaging with them. Another friend who used to distribute food to the needy in a tough neighbourhood went back to her car to find the tyres slashed. A friend's father who ministered to prisoners once got injured because a prisoner got agitated during a Bible study and hit his head. Thankfully, the injury was not serious.

If we are going to meet the needy where they are, then sometimes we will have to accept some risks. However, this is not a call to be reckless. Whenever I walked onto that train station in the US to give out food, I kept my eyes and ears alert to discern whether there might be any heightened threat. If we are going to be in a dodgy area, it is probably wise to go at least in pairs. As a former German commander said, "First reckon, then risk". But I also recall what a pastor once told me during a mission trip: "The safest place in the world is to be in the centre of God's will."

FRI
25

Pay the Price

SCRIPTURE Luke 10:34-35; Matthew 6:24-34

OBSERVATION

What personal costs were the Samaritan willing to incur to help the injured man?

APPLICATION

If I really believe that the Lord will provide for my needs, how am I acting on this belief?

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 give in such a way that reflects the truth that the Lord is our Provider
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

HOW MUCH WAS TWO DENARII? IT WAS PROBABLY WORTH

two days' wages for a skilled labourer. In today's context, that is around US\$200. It was not small change. That was in addition to the fact that the Samaritan used some of his own oil and wine to treat the injured man's wounds, and undertook to pay the innkeeper's further expenses. Overall, it cost him substantively. And it should cost us substantively too when we give to the needy. In his book *Mere Christianity*, C. S. Lewis wrote: "Charity – giving to the poor – is an essential part of Christian morality...I do not believe one can settle how much we ought to give. I am afraid the only safe rule is to give more than we can spare. In other words, if our expenditures on comforts, luxuries, amusements, etc. is up to the standard common among those with the same income as our own, we are probably giving away too little. If our charities do not at all pinch or hamper us, I should say they are too small. There ought to be things we should like to do and cannot do because our charitable expenditure excludes them." May these words challenge us deeply!

But there is a second part to the matter of giving: God does not short-change us. As we obey and give, God provides. He truly is the Lord who will provide (Gen 22:14).⁴⁰ A.W. Tozer said, "What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us." When we know that God is our Provider, we are emboldened to give.

⁴⁰ Transliterated *Yahweh-Yireh* from Hebrew; traditionally, *Jehovah-Jireh*, in earlier English Bible translations.

SAT
26

Keep at It!

SCRIPTURE Luke 10:36-37

OBSERVATION

How did Jesus expect the lawyer (who spoke with Him) to emulate the Samaritan?

APPPLICATION

What walls of discouragement and disappointment do I need to acknowledge to God and ask for His strength to persevere?

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 (and New Life Board) will know that God sees what they go through and understands how they feel, and will sustain them to persevere in the ministry
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

JESUS COMMANDED THE LAWYER TO DO AS THE SAMARITAN

did: Be a neighbour to those in need by showing them mercy. In the Greek language, the verb “do” is an imperative in the present active tense, which means **“do and keep doing”**. True commitment is sustained commitment. One major challenge of engaging in charity work is sustained commitment. There tends to be an initial burst of enthusiasm. We get an initial emotional buzz from engaging someone in need, and we feel good about the work and ourselves. But whether it is relief work⁴¹ or developmental work⁴², real long-lasting impact requires sustained effort. Most of us, sooner or later, hit a sort of wall when we feel that nothing is changing and our efforts are not working. And an inevitable question pops up: “Why bother?” At this point, things become real. Because we can then cross the point of depending on good feelings and move into the realm of living by principles. The biblical principle is “love your neighbour as yourself”. As Jesus’ disciples, we must personally answer some basic questions: “Who is my neighbour? How does God want me to love him (or her)?”

Amid disappointment and discouragement, real discipleship kicks in, reflected in our determination and discipline to keep at it. The work is not futile, though we may not see the fruits in the near term. What gives us strength is God’s faithfulness. We put our hope in Him, that in His time fruits will be borne. And this hope in God spurs us to keep at it for the long haul to bring hope to others.

⁴¹ For example, providing financial or other resources to sustain families.

⁴² For example, following up with kids, youths or seniors to attend to their mental and emotional needs.

SUN
27

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

Stand:

Don't face your fears alone.

Memory Verse

"Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go." – Joshua 1:9b (NIV)

* Bottom Line

You can do what you should even when you don't know what will happen.*

* Bible Story

Esther 3-4; 7-8 – Stand Up

* Activity

Fear in a Box

Props: An empty box, pieces of paper and pens

Get each family member to write their fears (anonymously) on a piece of paper. The "fear" note should be as specific as possible. Place all the notes in a box.

Ask everyone to take turns picking a "fear" note from the box, read it out loud, and then attempt to explain what it means. After the activity, discuss as a family what are some common fears.

Say, "Esther was afraid when she was asked to save her people. She prayed and fasted for courage and wisdom before she met the king. She did not know what would happen, but she plucked up the courage to face her fears. God answered the prayers of His people! They were saved from a huge disaster. Regardless of how big or small our fear is, God will walk alongside us and help us to overcome our fears."

* Talk About It

- How did Esther demonstrate courage?
- Do you think it's possible to have that same kind of courage that Esther had today? Why or why not? What might it look like if we did?
- If we miss an opportunity to show courage, what should we do?
- How can we build up our courage to trust God more over time?

Parents: Share an incident in which you depended on God to face a problem with wisdom and courage. What challenges did you face? How did you overcome the odds?

* Prayer

Ask God for wisdom and courage to face our problems. Pray for our trust in God to be enlarged daily.

 **BIBLE STORY VIDEO**
<https://cefc.ch/22FD11W4>



MON
28

1-2 Thessalonians Revisited: Establishing the Walk

SCRIPTURE 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3; 3:1-3; 2 Thessalonians 1:3-4

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about discipleship and discipling in these passages?

APPPLICATION

How can I grow from discipleship to discipling?

PRAYER

Lord, teach me the way of Your decrees, that I may follow it to the end. Give me understanding, so that I may keep Your law and obey it with all my heart. Direct me in the path of Your commands, for there I find delight. Turn my eyes away from worthless things and turn my heart toward Your statutes.⁴³

Prayer Pointers

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

DEEPER REFLECTION

IN THE 1970'S, WHEN I WAS A YOUNG BELIEVER AND DISCIPLED

by a Navigator, 1 Thessalonians was seen as a letter of Paul on following up new and young believers, especially chapters 1 to 3, from which we could glean principles for discipling. The Thessalonians were young believers whom Paul was forced to leave abruptly by strong opposition against him (Acts 17:1-9). They were left to fend for and feed themselves spiritually – and in adverse circumstances, facing persecutions and suffering afflictions (1 Thess 2:14; 3:4). Paul was fearful that they might fall apart spiritually and fall away from the faith under the onslaught of Satan (1 Thess 3:5).

But the Thessalonians did not just survive spiritually but thrive, growing in “work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope” (1 Thess 1:3). Faith, love and hope are fundamentals in the Christian life. And they are grounded in and grow out of a living relationship with God characterised by a consistent, faithful walk with God. The Thessalonians’ faith, love and hope were “growing abundantly” and “increasing” (2 Thess 1:3). Their abundant growth shows that Paul had laid a strong and firm foundation in their walk with God by discipling “each one of you” personally (1 Thess 2:12). The “word of God” that Paul fed them continued to be “at work” in them as they now fed themselves the living Word of God (1 Thess 2:13). And further and deeper discipling took place when Timothy went to “establish and exhort you in the faith” (1 Thess 3:2).

True discipleship will not stop there. It wants to give by discipling others.

⁴³ Adapted from Psalm 119:33-37 (NIV)

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1-2 Thessalonians Revisited: Expecting the Parousia⁴⁴

SCRIPTURE 1 Thessalonians 4:11-17; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-11

OBSERVATION

What is the order of the significant eschatological events that we can construct from these two texts?

APPPLICATION

What does it mean for me to live my life eschatologically?

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 minister to people with eschatological hope
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

OUT OF THE EIGHT CHAPTERS IN 1 AND 2 THESSALONIANS, the Second Coming of Christ is mentioned in seven.⁴⁵ This strong eschatological emphasis is a discipleship call to **eschatological living with eschatological consciousness.**

We can construct the order of the significant eschatological events from the two letters. Since Paul's time until today "the mystery of lawlessness" has been "at work" (2 Thess 2:7). Behind this visible "mystery of lawlessness" is the yet to appear invisible "man of lawlessness" – the antichrist (2 Thess 2:3). The end-times is marked by "lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold" (Matt 24:12), and the activities of "many false prophets", behind which is "the spirit of the antichrist" (1 Jn 4:1, 3). Then comes "the apostasy" (2 Thess 2:3a) – the falling away from the faith, as "the Spirit explicitly says" will happen "in the later times" (1 Tim 4:1). And "the man of lawlessness" will appear and 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.⁴⁶ Then eventually "the coming of the Lord", when Christ will "descend from heaven", and "the dead in Christ will rise first", "to meet the Lord" together with the alive believers who will be raptured and "we will always be with the Lord" (1 Thess 4:15-17).

What is eschatologically most critical is that we do not fall away from the faith. We must then diligently know the truth, live faithfully by the truth and cling steadfastly to the truth. "Your Word is truth" (Jn 17:17).

⁴⁴ Parousia: Greek for "coming", and it is used as a theological term for Christ's Second Coming (see Matt 24:3, 27, 37, 39)

⁴⁵ 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:13-18; 5:1-11, 23; 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10; 2:1-11

⁴⁶ G. K. Beale, 2010

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1-2 Thessalonians Revisited: Engaging in Warfare

SCRIPTURE 1 Thessalonians 2:17-18; 3:4-5; 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about Satan from these passages?

APPPLICATION

What do I need to pay attention to in spiritual warfare?

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 recognise the reality of spiritual warfare
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

SATAN IS MENTIONED FOUR TIMES IN 1 AND 2 THESSALONIANS

and in two discipleship arenas: suffering afflictions and countering deception.

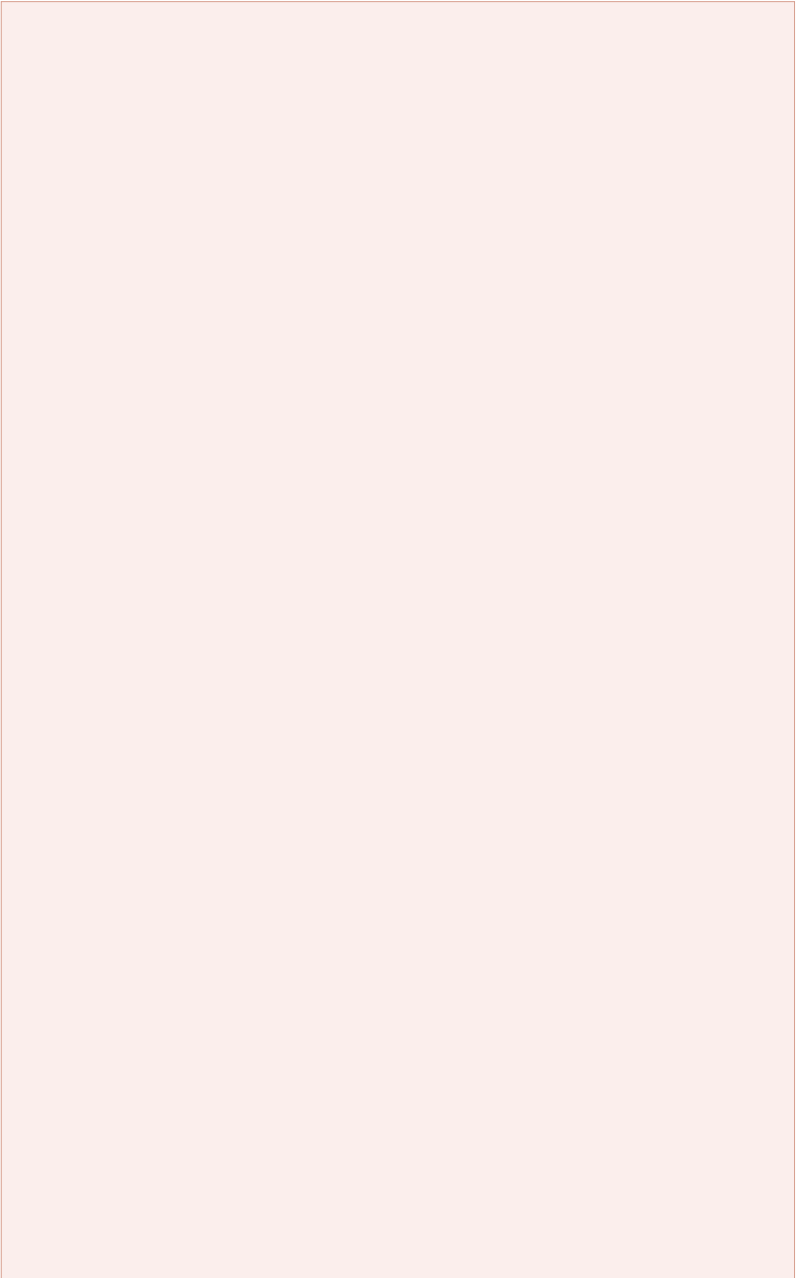
Opposition against the Gospel forced Paul to leave Thessalonica abruptly (Acts 17:1-9). This put the young Thessalonian believers into a spiritually precarious situation which caused Paul to be fearful over. They were suffering afflictions for their faith (1 Thess 2:14). Behind these afflictions was “the tempter” who was tempting them to give up their faith (1 Thess 3:5). Thus, it was critical for Paul to return to “establish” and “supply what is lacking” in the Thessalonians’ faith (1 Thess 3:2, 10). But “Satan hindered” him in all his attempts (1 Thess 2:18). Satan attacks in both the discipleship and discipling battlefront. Victory in suffering afflictions is when we are “enduring” with “perseverance and faith” (2 Thess 1:4).

The Thessalonians were “quickly shaken in mind” by false teachings on Christ’s Second Coming (2 Thess 2:1-2). Deception in any form is “the activity of Satan” (2 Thess 2:9-10). “Let **no one** deceive you in **any way**” (2 Thess 2:3) ought to be one of our discipleship mottos. We can detect and discern falsehoods by the truth. So, we are to have “the love of the truth” (2 Thess 2:10) and grasp the Word of the truth (cf. 2 Tim 2:15).

In suffering afflictions and countering deception, we anchor in “the faithful Lord” who “will establish you and guard you against the evil one” (2 Thess 3:3), and then we can and must “stand firm and hold to” the Word of God (2 Thess 2:15).

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