



04/2016

DEVOTIONAL JOURNAL

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

EPHESIANS 2:8-9 (ESV)



04/2016

DEVOTIONAL JOURNAL

For by grace you have been saved
through faith. And this is not your
own doing; it is the gift of God,
not a result of works, so that
no one may boast.

EPHESIANS 2:8-9 (ESV)

Also available online at www.cefc.org.sg



MEMORY FOCUS

FROM EPHESIANS (ESV)

2016

JANUARY

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
who has blessed us in Christ with every
spiritual blessing in the heavenly places...

EPHESIANS 1:3

FEBRUARY

...even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that
we should be holy and blameless before Him.

EPHESIANS 1:4

MARCH

In love He predestined us for adoption as sons
through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will.

EPHESIANS 1:5

APRIL

For by grace you have been saved through faith.
And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,
not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

EPHESIANS 2:8-9

MAY

Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly than
all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us,
to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all
generations, forever and ever. Amen.

EPHESIANS 3:20-21

JUNE

I, therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner
worthy of the calling to which you have been called...

EPHESIANS 4:1

JULY

...with all humility and gentleness, with patience,
bearing with one another in love...

EPHESIANS 4:2

AUGUST

...eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

EPHESIANS 4:3

SEPTEMBER

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.

EPHESIANS 6:10

OCTOBER

Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able
to stand against the schemes of the devil.

EPHESIANS 6:11

NOVEMBER

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood,
but against the rulers, against the authorities,
against the cosmic powers over this present darkness,
against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

EPHESIANS 6:12

DECEMBER

...praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer
and supplication. To that end keep alert with
all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints...

EPHESIANS 6:18

FORE BY SENIOR PASTORS 2016 WORD

BACK TO THE ESSENTIALS IN 2016!



The more you grow as a Christian, the more you realise you have to return to the bare essentials of Christian living. Perhaps it is the discipline of **starting again**, the devotion to **persevere** or the decision to **stop doing something** so that we can start doing something.

Spiritual Growth is a choice!

This year, the Lord gave us Acts 20:28 as a spiritual anchor towards Covenant EFC's Golden Jubilee in 2028.

“Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which He obtained with His own blood.” (Acts 20:28)

These are the bare essentials God wants us to return to in the midst of increasing messiness in the world and the glaring weaknesses within the Church:

- **Pay Attention to Yourself.** We seem to have grown up thinking in this order: Jesus first, others second and yourself last! While there is some validity in this order of living, there is also a flaw. If we do not take care of ourselves, we cannot take care of others. Our mission as a Church is clear: To raise authentic disciples and intentional disciplemakers of *A Certain Kind*. This is why we led the *Covenant Groups* to do a spiritual audit on their *Authentic Discipleship and Intentional Disciplemaking (A.D.I.D.)* growth journey and action plan – to find out where we are spiritually so that we can chart our growth intentionally. It is not only to grow as an individual but to grow as a community. There is rampant nominalism and powerlessness within the Church! It's time to let the Spirit break those chains over our lives and let the Word of God bring forth newness. Pay attention to yourself – not selfish narcissism but spiritual realism!
- **Pay Attention to Your Family.** The family institution is under attack. No one can take better care of your family than you. You are the 24/7-best-children-and-youth disciplemaker. The Church will complement and support you. The truths of God must be taught, caught and made real in times of distraught. So use this journal in family devotions and take proactive steps and establish a household of faith!
- **Pay Attention to Others.** Your spiritual growth will be capped until you give of yourself to care for others. In the process, you will discover what God is saying through the Word. And the ultimate test is: **What are you going to do about it?** Without obedience, there is no growth. Without growth, you cannot impart. Without impartation, there is no legacy. Would you want to be remembered as someone who lived for himself or lived for others?

For 2016, the book of Ephesians is the overarching frame for the daily devotional. This Epistle was written a few years after the account in Acts 20. It points us to the essential Doctrines (Eph 1-3) and Discipleship (Eph 4-6) of our lives. As we plough through this fascinating Epistle, we will be challenged to anchor our lives in Jesus as the only Lord and Saviour and to pay allegiance to the only Master and King of our lives. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ! (Eph 1:2)

Rev Tony Yeo and Rev Tan Kay Kiong

GUIDE TO USING THIS DEVOTIONAL JOURNAL

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.

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

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

- 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 could 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.

WHAT'S NEW IN 2016?

Suggested prayers are included twice weekly on Mondays and Wednesdays, to serve as an aid to those who may find them helpful in their prayer response. On each Friday, there is a prayer pointer for the leaders (Covenant Group leaders, ministry leaders, Board and staff) whom God brings to your mind to pray for.

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!



WORSHIP SONGS

MARCH/APRIL

BEFORE THE THRONE OF GOD (HOUR OF PRAYER)

Verse 1

Before the Throne of God above
I have a strong and perfect plea
A great high priest
Whose name is Love
Who ever lives and pleads for me
My name is graven on His hands
My name is written on His heart
I know that while in Heaven He stands
No tongue can bid me thence depart

Verse 2

When Satan tempts me to despair
And tells me of the guilt within
Upward I look and see Him there
Who made an end of all my sin
Because the sinless Saviour died
My sinful soul is counted free
For God the just is satisfied
To look on Him and pardon me

Verse 3

Before Him there the risen Lamb
My perfect spotless righteousness
The great unchangeable I Am
The King of glory and of grace
One in Himself I cannot die
My soul is purchased
By His blood
My life is hid with Christ on high
With Christ my Saviour
And my God

Words & Music: Charitie Lees Bancroft |
William Batchelder Bradbury
© Words: Public Domain
Music: Public Domain
For use solely with the SongSelect Terms of Use.
All rights reserved. www.ccli.com
CCLI License #324618

I NEED THEE

Verse 1

I need Thee every hour
Most gracious Lord
No tender voice like Thine
Can peace afford

Chorus

I need Thee, O I need Thee
Every hour I need Thee
O bless me now my Savior
I come to Thee

Verse 2

I need Thee every hour
Stay Thou nearby
Temptations lose their pow'r
When Thou art nigh

Verse 3

I need Thee every hour
In joy or pain
Come quickly and abide
Or life is vain

Verse 4

I need Thee every hour
Most Holy One
O make me Thine indeed
Thou blessed Son

Words & Music: Annie Sherwood Hawks | Robert Lowry
Year & Publisher: © Words: Public Domain; Music: Public Domain
CCLI License #324618

HOLY SPIRIT (LIVING BREATH OF GOD)

Verse 1

Holy Spirit living Breath of God
 Breathe new life into my willing soul
 Let the presence of the risen Lord
 Come renew my heart and make me whole

Cause Your word to come alive in me
 Give me faith for what I cannot see
 Give me passion for Your purity
 Holy Spirit breathe new life in me

Verse 2

Holy Spirit come abide within
 May Your joy be seen in all I do
 Love enough to cover ev'ry sin
 In each thought and deed and attitude

Kindness to the greatest and the least
 Gentleness that sows the path of peace
 Turn my strivings into works of grace
 Breath of God show Christ in all I do

Verse 3

Holy Spirit from creation's birth
 Giving life to all that God has made
 Show Your power once again on earth
 Cause Your church to hunger for Your ways

Let the fragrance of our prayers arise
 Lead us on the road of sacrifice
 That in unity the face of Christ
 May be clear for all the world to see

Words & Music: Keith Getty | Stuart Townend
 Year & Publisher: © 2006 Thankyou Music
 (Admin. by Crossroad Distributors Pty. Ltd.)
 CCLI License #324618

KEEP ON PRAYING

Chorus

Keep on praying in the Spirit
 Keep on praying in the Spirit
 At all times with all kinds of prayers
 Ephesians six eighteen says
 Keep on praying

Verse

Keeping this in mind
 Stay sharp in the Spirit
 Praying all the time
 For the people of God

Words & Music: Ramon Pink
 Year & Publisher: © 1989 Universal Music - Brentwood Benson Publishing
 [Admin. by CopyCare Asia Ltd (Singapore Branch)]
 For use solely with the SongSelect Terms of Use.
 All rights reserved. www.ccli.com
 CCLI License #324618

OCEANS (WHERE FEET MAY FAIL)

Verse 1

You call me out upon the waters
The great unknown where feet may fail
And there I find You in the mystery
In oceans deep my faith will stand

Chorus 1

And I will call upon Your name
And keep my eyes above the waves
When oceans rise
My soul will rest in Your embrace
For I am Yours and You are mine

Verse 2

Your grace abounds in deepest waters
Your sov'reign hand will be my guide
Where feet may fail and fear surrounds me
You've never failed and You won't start now

Chorus 2

So I will call upon Your name
And keep my eyes above the waves
When oceans rise
My soul will rest in Your embrace
For I am Yours and You are mine

Interlude 1

Oh and You are mine oh

Bridge

Spirit lead me where my trust is without borders
Let me walk upon the waters
Wherever You would call me
Take me deeper than my feet could ever wander
And my faith will be made stronger
In the presence of my Saviour

Interlude 2

Yeah yeah yeah yeah
Oh Jesus yeah my God

Chorus 3

I will call upon Your name
Keep my eyes above the waves
My soul will rest in Your embrace
I am Yours and You are mine

Words & Music: Joel Houston | Matt Crocker | Salomon Ligthelm
Year & Publisher: © 2012 Hillsong Music Publishing
For use solely with the SongSelect Terms of Use.
All rights reserved. www.ccli.com
CCLI License #324618

GIVE ME JESUS

Verse 1

In the morning when I rise
 In the morning when I rise
 In the morning when I rise
 Give me Jesus

Chorus 1

Give me Jesus give me Jesus
 You can have all this world
 But give me Jesus

Verse 2

And when I am alone
 Oh and when I am alone
 And when I am alone
 Give me Jesus

Verse 3

And when I come to die
 Oh and when I come to die
 And when I come to die
 Give me Jesus

Chorus 2

Give me Jesus give me Jesus
 You can have all this world
 You can have all this world
 You can have all this world but give me Jesus

Words & Music: Fernando Ortega
 Year & Publisher: © Words: Public Domain; Music: 2000 DeJamesolo Music
 [Admin. by CopyCare Asia Ltd (Singapore Branch)];
 Word Music, LLC [Admin. by CopyCare Asia Ltd (Singapore Branch)]
 CCLI License #324618

MY HEART IS FILLED WITH THANKFULNESS

Verse 1

My heart is filled with thankfulness
 To Him who bore my pain
 Who plumbed the depths of my disgrace
 And gave me life again
 Who crushed my curse of sinfulness
 And clothed me with His light
 And wrote His law of righteousness
 With pow'r upon my heart

Verse 2

My heart is filled with thankfulness
 To Him who walks beside
 Who floods my weaknesses with strength
 And causes fears to fly
 Whose every promise is enough
 For every step I take
 Sustaining me with arms of love
 And crowning me with grace

Verse 3

My heart is filled with thankfulness
 To Him who reigns above
 Whose wisdom is my perfect peace
 Whose every thought is love
 For every day I have on earth
 Is given by the King
 So I will give my life my all
 To love and follow Him

Words & Music: Keith Getty | Stuart Townend
 Year & Publisher: © 2003 Thankyou Music [Admin. by CopyCare Asia Ltd (Singapore Branch)]
 For use solely with the SongSelect Terms of Use.
 All rights reserved. www.ccli.com
 CCLI License #324618

LORD YOUR GOODNESS

Verse

I will come to You
 With an open heart
 And bring a sacrifice of praise
 I have seen Your pow'r
 In the Holy place
 And I have known
 Your mighty ways

Pre-chorus

I will remember Your mercy
 And Lord Your faithfulness

Chorus

Lord Your goodness
 And Your love will follow me
 All the days of my life
 I'm surrounded
 With the favour of the Lord
 Always and forever

Words & Music: Reuben Morgan
 Year & Publisher: © 1997 Hillsong Music Publishing
 For use solely with the SongSelect Terms of Use.
 All rights reserved. www.ccli.com
 CCLI License #324618

OUR GOD

Verse 1

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

Verse 2

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

Chorus

Our God is greater
 Our God is stronger
 God You are higher than any other
 Our God is healer
 Awesome in power, our God, our God

Bridge

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

Words & Music: Chris Tomlin | Jesse Reeves | Jonas Myrin | Matt Redman
 Year & Publisher: © 2010 Said And Done Music [Admin. by CopyCare Asia Ltd (Singapore Branch)]; sixsteps Music [Admin. by CopyCare Asia Ltd (Singapore Branch)]; Thankyou Music [Admin. by CopyCare Asia Ltd (Singapore Branch)]; Vamos Publishing [Admin. by CopyCare Asia Ltd (Singapore Branch)]; worshiptogether.com songs [Admin. by CopyCare Asia Ltd (Singapore Branch)]; SHOUT! Music Publishing
 For use solely with the SongSelect Terms of Use. All rights reserved. www.ccli.com
 CCLI License #324618



THE CHURCH BEYOND

TURNING ONE80 FOR JESUS

ONE80 was born in 2013 out of a desire for us, as a church, to intentionally disciple our youths in spiritual discipline, character and growth.

Why ONE80? Because we want to see our youths make a 180-degree change for Jesus. ONE80 is a five-week discipleship training programme for youths between the ages of 15 and 18. At the heart of the ONE80 journey is the building of an authentic community of young people, a place where our youths feel they belong and are part of the body of Christ. Going on missions trips is one of the outworking opportunities for youths who go through ONE80.

Caitlin Ng, one of the ONE80 graduates, has this to share about her missions trip to Lautem, East Timor.

"In many ways, I was particularly drawn to the people of Timor-Leste, particularly in Ira-Hara. At the village, I saw a girl around the age of 10 and I had the strong conviction from God that I would see her again and the indescribable feeling that I had to go back to this village. This feeling still sits with me to this day.

My catchphrase throughout this trip was, 'Satisfaction with simplicity'. It is a principle that I will always keep with me.

I was struck by how the villagers were so contented with the little they had and were so thrilled with items such as skipping ropes constructed from rubber bands, bubbles and twigs – things that we from a developed nation would deem dull to play with. It made me wonder, 'Who am I to complain when I already have everything I need?'

"I am reminded it's just as important to thank God and to be grateful for the 99 things I have and not the one I lack."

It's easy for me to forget how blessed I am, and I am reminded it's just as important to thank God and to be grateful for the 99 things I have and not the one I lack.

During a dinner debrief, one thing that came up was the shortness of life. We had that very day witnessed the aftermath of a horrific car accident and it was made even more poignant as it involved friends and relatives of the partnering church team that had come with us for the trip.

So life is short. This means that we have a lot of work to do in order to play our part in The Great Commission. We may think that going on missions trips have little influence and is a one-off event, but I stand by the fact and testify that through love and passion for Christ, we can all make an impact in someone's life – for eternity."

Psalm 78 instructs us to teach our children, so that the next generation will know God's statutes and laws, and they, in turn, will tell their children. Our prayer for our youths is that they will put their trust in God, will not forget His deeds and keep His command to go and make disciples of nations. It is in His divine mission plan that the world will believe the Father who sent His Son for us, and so we thank Him for the transformational work which He has begun through ONE80.

» PRAY

- For God's transformational work in young people so that they will have a kingdom mindset
- That God will move many more hearts of young people to avail themselves to be involved in missions
- For young people to be the salt and light in their immediate sphere of influence and beyond Singapore



FRIDAY, 1 APRIL 2016

Saved for Good Works

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 2:10; Titus 3:5-8

■ OBSERVATION

What are the good works that God has prepared beforehand for those whom He has saved to walk in (v. 10)?

.....

.....

.....

.....

DEEPER REFLECTION

We are not saved by good works, but we are saved for good works. Good works are “God’s design for His new creation and flow from His gracious salvation as its consequence or fruit”¹. **General Christian Conduct:** In verse 10, “‘good works’ is a general and comprehensive expression for godly behaviour. It is not further defined, but its implications will be taken up and amplified in the exhortatory sections of the letter (in Eph 4:17 – 6:20). Put simply, it is God’s will that those who belong to the new creation should be characterised by a lifestyle which ultimately reflects His own character and action.”² **Personal Christian Calling:** God prepared beforehand the good works “by calling us. He wants one person to be a master and another to be a servant, one as a husband and so on, so that human society can function properly. Therefore each person must consider what his calling is, remain in it and fulfil it. Let him cultivate what he has found in Sparta³ and embellish it. God’s works are not all the same for everyone everywhere but are distributed in individual gifts and functions, because each individual calling has its own particular kinds of good works.”⁴

■ APPLICATION

What does it mean to me personally for God to have saved me for good works which He has prepared beforehand?

.....

.....

.....

■ PRAYER

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

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Grow in godliness and good works

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

¹ Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Apollos, 1999), 180

² Peter T. O'Brien, 180

³ Sparta was a byword for unadorned simplicity as in the phrase “Spartan accommodation”.

⁴ *Reformation Commentary on Scripture: New Testament Vol. 10, Galatians, Ephesians* (IVP, 2011), Gerald L. Bray, editor; 288 – citing Martin Bucer



SATURDAY, 2 APRIL 2016

In the Audience of One

■ SCRIPTURE

Matthew 6:1-8, 16-18

■ OBSERVATION

What are the recurring ideas when Jesus teaches about “practicing your righteousness” in verses 1 to 8 and 16 to 18?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

DEEPER REFLECTION

Ephesians 2:1-10 begins and ends with “walk” – two contrasting walks: how we “walked” in sin in the past (Eph 2:2), and how we should “walk in” “good works” as God’s new creation in Christ (Eph 2:10). To “walk” (not “do”) in “good works” is “to live in godly ways” in “attitudes and behaviour” of a “changed lifestyle”⁵. Jesus calls it “practising your righteousness” (v. 1) in relation to God (vv. 5-8, 16-18 – prayer and fasting) and to man (vv. 2-4 – almsgiving). Jesus solemnly warns (“Beware”, v. 1) against this common dangerous pitfall: our desires, concerns or motives to be “noticed by men” (v. 1, 5, 18) and “honoured by men” (v. 2) in our spirituality and ministry. When this is true of us, Jesus says we “have” our “reward in full” (vv. 2, 5, 16). Don’t miss the divine sarcasm and the tragic irony. The tragic irony is we have rewarded ourselves fully on earth, and so God does not have to reward us in heaven! And the “reward” is in the wrong desire, concern or motive itself – whether in reality man honours us or not. Live by what “your Father sees” (vv. 4, 6, 18) and what “your Father knows” (v. 8). Then, it doesn’t matter whether or not humans see or honour us.

■ APPLICATION

How can I keep my heart from seeking for my spirituality and ministry to be seen and honoured by humans?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

■ PRAYER

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

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

⁵ Peter T. O'Brien, 181



SUNDAY, 3 APRIL 2016

■ 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?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

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

April 2016 – Week 1

**CREATED TO DO GOOD WORKS**

God has created us to do good works on earth.

Scripture: Ephesians 2:10

ACTIVITY BITE

Name three good things you can do at home, in church or for society that you know will make someone happy.

CHAT TIME

Q1: How do you feel when you see that someone is happy because of the good things you have done?

Q2: Why do you think God created us to do good works?

Q3: How can others know who God is through our good works?

LEARNING POINT

God has shown His great kindness to us by forgiving all our sins. In return, God wants us to show kindness to others by doing good works. It is about being a blessing to others as we receive God's wonderful blessings. Through our good works, people will be able to see the love of God as it is released through us. The result will be that God's name is praised and others will be drawn to believe in Jesus too.

ACTION POINT

From the list of good things you have written down, pick some that everyone can do together as a family in the coming weeks.

PRAYER POWER

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

Dear God, thank You for Your kindness and all the blessings that You have given us. Teach us how to do good works to others so that Your name will be praised. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.



TUESDAY, 5 APRIL 2016

Remember Your Spiritual Past

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 2:11-13

■ OBSERVATION

Why does Paul urge his readers to remember their spiritual past (vv. 11-13, Eph 2:1-10)?

.....

.....

.....

.....

DEEPER REFLECTION

Paul urges us to remember our spiritual past: “Therefore remember that formerly you...” (v. 11). “Therefore” “draws an inference from all that Paul has said in Ephesians 2:1-10”⁶: God has graciously saved us in Christ. “Remember” in the present tense means to “continue to remember”⁷ – as a way of appreciating the magnitude of God’s grace and power in His redemptive work in our lives. While our spiritual past in this context refers to the time before we came to know Christ, our spiritual past is also our spiritual pilgrimage since the day we became children of God, inasmuch as God’s redemptive work in us is ongoing. To “remember” is to recall reflectively before God like how God has met us at different points of our lives; the particular processes, circumstances, people and adversities through which God moulded our lives to maturity and to know Him deeper; how when we fell into our lowest pit, God graciously and faithfully picked us up. Such remembrance gives us reassurance in God “who is and who was and who is to come” (Rev 1:8), that He will deepen His transformative work in us. As to what, how and when, He alone knows, and we can only trust in Him, the loving and only wise God (Ro 16:27).

■ APPLICATION

What are some significant points in my spiritual past that give me reassurance that God is continually at work in my life?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

■ PRAYER

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

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

⁶ Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Baker, 2010), 152

⁷ Frank Thielman, 152



WEDNESDAY, 6 APRIL 2016

Beware of Spiritual Pride

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 2:11

■ OBSERVATION

What do the Jews imply when they called themselves “circumcision” and the Gentiles “uncircumcision” in verse 11?

.....

.....

.....

.....

DEEPER REFLECTION

In Paul’s days, the Jews “called” themselves “circumcision”, and in contrast to themselves, they “called” the Gentiles “uncircumcision” (v. 11). This is spiritual labelling. We Christians do that too. When we put certain spiritual labels on ourselves, the implication is we are, or we have something that others are not or do not have. A sense of spiritual superiority, and thus, spiritual pride. The implication is subtly there, even when it is not our intention. What is most dangerous is that we don’t see it. Theologian Henry I. Lederle said this about true sanctification: “Only God knows our hearts, and since humility is central to the gospel, the most advanced in sanctification seldom realise that they are more advanced and seldom evaluate themselves accurately in this regard.” When Jesus teaches that we must first remove the log in our eyes before we can “see clearly” to remove the speck in another’s eye, being a subversive rabbi, His emphasis is that we “see clearly” our log (Mt 7:5). And when we “see clearly”, we will discover that each time we look at our log, it has only grown bigger! Perhaps this was what Paul meant when he said “among sinners, I am foremost of all” (1 Ti 1:15). Notice that Paul said “I am” – not “I was”.

■ APPLICATION

What spiritual pride do I see in my heart and how will I deal with it?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

■ PRAYER

God who opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble⁸, open my eyes to see my pride deep inside my heart! O how my pride blinds my eyes from seeing my pride! Open my eyes to see Your majestic humility that my heart may be so gripped by that vision. Fill me with the Spirit of Jesus of Nazareth that I may follow Him in His steps. Amen.

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

⁸ 1 Peter 5:5



THURSDAY, 7 APRIL 2016

God's Wisdom in Redemption

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 2:12; Genesis 12:1-3

■ OBSERVATION

What do we learn about God when He lets the Gentiles be “without Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise” (v. 12) at a time in salvation history?

.....

.....

.....

DEEPER REFLECTION

God made a covenant with Abraham to make him “a great nation” through which He may bless the nations redemptively (Ge 12:1-3). Then for a long time, God “permitted all the nations to go their own ways” – but not without leaving Himself witness through His common grace upon humankind (Ac 14:16-17) and His general revelation in His creation (Ro 1:19-20) and human conscience (Ro 2:14-15). The result was that the Gentiles “were without Christ” (v. 12): having “no national hope of the Messiah as did Israel”⁹ (Ps 2, 110; Jn 1:41, 45), to whom God promised that “a deliverer would come and rescue them from their enemies”¹⁰ (Lk 1:68-71). And accordingly, the Gentiles were “excluded from the commonwealth of Israel” as God’s special people, and “strangers to the covenants of promise” (special privileges bestowed by God) (v. 12). In our human reasoning, we may ask: Why didn’t God simply save the nations right from the start? Was God being fair to the Gentiles in favouring Israel first? It is the divine mystery of the only wise God (Ro 11:33; 16:27) “who desires all men to be saved” (1 Ti 2:4). Let’s put this in perspective: The salvation of both Jews and Gentiles began with God’s gracious election in pre-creation eternity (Eph 1:4-5).

■ APPLICATION

In what ways do I sense that God is working in my life according to His wisdom?

.....

.....

.....

.....

■ PRAYER

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

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

⁹ Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Baker, 2002), 355

¹⁰ Harold W. Hoehner, 355



FRIDAY, 8 APRIL 2016

Without Hope, Without God

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 2:12; Romans 5:5, 8

■ OBSERVATION

What does it mean for the Gentiles to be “without hope and without God in the world” (v. 12, NIV)?

.....

.....

.....

.....

DEEPER REFLECTION

The Gentiles were “without hope” because they “did not have God’s revelation”¹¹, and thus “they had nothing to look forward to. They had no expectation that God would work in their lives. They had no knowledge of salvation that would include a future resurrection and life eternal. They had no idea of future messianic deliverance and blessings”¹². “Without God” means that although the Gentiles “believed in many gods, they neither believed in nor desired the one true God (Ro 1:18-23)”¹³; they were “impious or ungodly in their conduct because they did not know God’s revelation [Scripture]”¹⁴; they had “a disdain towards” God and His laws;¹⁵ and they were “abandoned by”¹⁶ God (cf. Ro 1:24, 26, 28). While this was our spiritual condition before we were saved in Christ, it is altogether possible that as Christians we live “in the world” as though we are “without hope and without God”. Hope is “an eager expectation of the future as we trust in the outworking of God’s plan”, “based on the promises of God”¹⁷. In our worst of times of “against all hope” (Ro 4:18, NIV) in the world, our hope is only in God, for God is our only hope – hope that “does not disappoint” and is assured by God’s love demonstrated on the cross (Ro 5:5, 8).

■ APPLICATION

In what ways do I live in this world as though it is without God and without hope, and what change(s) 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:

Pray for leaders:

Grow deep in the God of hope

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

¹¹ Harold W. Hoehner, 360

¹² Harold W. Hoehner, 360

¹³ Harold W. Hoehner, 360

¹⁴ Harold W. Hoehner, 361

¹⁵ Harold W. Hoehner, 360

¹⁶ Harold W. Hoehner, 360

¹⁷ Harold W. Hoehner, 360



SATURDAY, 9 APRIL 2016

Brought Near to God

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 2:13

■ OBSERVATION

What do you observe about God in verse 13?

DEEPER REFLECTION

We were once “far away from God” (v. 13, NLT) as “sons of disobedience” living under the righteous wrath of the holy God (Eph 2:2-3). Our sinfulness was such that we did not and would not seek God: “There is none who seeks for God” (Ro 3:11). And even if we wanted to, we were not able to. Our only hope was to be “brought near” to God by God Himself. God must take His sovereign gracious initiative toward us. We are near to God “in Christ” and “through His blood” (v. 13). “The ‘nearness to God’ which all Christians enjoy through Christ is a privilege we too frequently take for granted. Our God does not keep His distance or stand on His dignity, like some oriental potentate, nor does He insist on any complicated ritual or protocol.”¹⁸ The God of mercy and grace wants us to “draw near” to Him “with confidence”, despite our “weaknesses” and our propensity to fall into temptation and sin (Heb 4:15-16). Our confidence lies not on any human merit or effort, but only “in Christ” and “through His blood” – and nothing else. Everything that we offer to God in devotion to Him is “acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Pe 2:5).

■ APPLICATION

How is my walk with God affected by the way He has brought me near to Himself?

■ PRAYER

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

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

¹⁸ John Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, The Bible Speaks Today (IVP, 1979), 97



SUNDAY, 10 APRIL 2016

■ 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?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

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

April 2016 – Week 2

**SPENDING TIME WITH JESUS**

Spending more time with Jesus will help us walk closer to Him.

Scripture: Acts 4:3-13

ACTIVITY BITE

Name one or two common toys that have been around for many years but have suddenly become popular again. Are they your favourites too?

CHAT TIME

Q1: Why do some toys suddenly become popular again?

Q2: Who influences you to play with popular toys?

Q3: Name some reasons why Jesus is a good influence on everyone.

LEARNING POINT

People that we spend much time with can influence us in our thinking and preferences. In verses 3 to 13, Peter and John were not afraid to speak about the true teaching of God's ways because they had spent lots of time with Jesus. In the same way, if we spend lots of time with Jesus by reading the Bible and praying, our relationship with Him will grow stronger. We will desire to want to live according to His ways even more and this will show in the way we think or say things as well as in our attitude.

ACTION POINT

Start spending more time with Jesus through reading the Bible and prayer. Ask Jesus to give you a deeper desire to live according to His ways every day.

PRAYER POWER

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

Dear Jesus, I want to be closer to You. Please help me walk in Your ways every day. In Your name I pray. Amen.



MONDAY, 11 APRIL 2016

The Compassionate Nature of God

■ SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 54:10

■ OBSERVATION

What do you observe about the Lord's compassion for us in the light of His "unfailing love" (v. 10, NIV)?

.....

.....

.....

.....

DEEPER REFLECTION

The context for this verse is the passage in Isaiah 54 about the deep restoration that is to come for the people of Israel who have transgressed against the Lord. Despite the waywardness of His people, the Lord reminds them that His love is steadfast and unfailing, and the expression of His steadfast love is to have compassion upon them. The Hebrew word for compassion is "râcham". It appears in Isaiah 54:7, 8 and 10, expressing God's compassion on us in spite of His anger over our sinful ways. The meaning of the word suggests an extended intense overflow of mercy. Such is the nature of compassion and mercy – where God knows the extent of our inclination to sin, and the pain and suffering it consequently causes. He knows we are helpless to help ourselves. It is the compassion of God that moves His hand to lift us out of the pit we often find ourselves in. God's goodness and unfailing love drive His compassion, and His compassion drives His acts of mercy towards us. In understanding and experiencing the compassionate heart of God for ourselves, we can better demonstrate God's compassion for the distressed and downtrodden around us who are in need of help and in desperate need of God.

■ APPLICATION

What hinders you from seeing and receiving God's compassion?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

■ PRAYER

Lord, open my eyes to the compassion I have received from You, and consequently, to the people around me who are in desperate need of You. Help me to see them as You see them, with eyes of love and compassion. Amen.

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:



TUESDAY, 12 APRIL 2016

The God Who Comes Near to Touch

■ SCRIPTURE

Mark 1:41

■ OBSERVATION

What do you observe about Jesus' actions in healing the leper? What is the significance of His actions?

.....

.....

.....

.....

DEEPER REFLECTION

Lepers were outcasts in Jesus' day. "Sufferers were regarded as living corpses and condemned to lonely isolation from community."¹⁹ Not only did they suffer from a contagious physical ailment which kept them away from their families, they also suffered the pain of emotional and spiritual exile. Touching a leper immediately made one ceremonially unclean. In verse 40, it tells us of the leper going on his knees to beg for healing. It is a picture of deep desperation to exit the pain of exile. When Jesus met him in this state, He was moved with pity. "The Greek word which is used for moved with compassion, 'splangchnistheis', is the strongest word for pity in the Greek language. It is formed from the word 'splangchna', which means the bowels, and it describes the compassion which moves a man to the deepest depths of his being. In the Gospels, apart from its use in some of the parables, it is used only of Jesus."²⁰ For Jesus to physically extend a hand and touch him is an incredible act of reaching out. In one act of touch, Jesus crossed medical, cultural and religious barriers. Jesus did not drive away a leper who broke the religious law – the leper had no right to even talk to Jesus – but instead, Jesus reached out with a compassionate touch and healed him.

■ APPLICATION

Out of desperate humility, the leper asked for healing from Jesus. In what areas of your life do you need a healing touch from God today?

.....

.....

.....

.....

■ PRAYER

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

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

¹⁹ NIV Zondervan Study Bible, General Editor, D.A. Carson

²⁰ Gospel of Matthew, Daily Study Bible, William Barclay



WEDNESDAY, 13 APRIL 2016

The God Who Comes Near to Care

■ SCRIPTURE

Matthew 9:35,36

■ OBSERVATION

What do you observe about the condition of the crowds whom Jesus had compassion for? What does that tell you about God's heart for people?

.....

.....

.....

.....

DEEPER REFLECTION

Jesus showed His compassion when He saw the crowds of people. These were the people to whom He was teaching, proclaiming and doing the work of healing. In ministering to the crowds, Jesus was not just focused on the work He was doing; He also felt a deep compassion for the people. The Greek word used when Jesus "saw" the crowds is "horáo". It connotes a certain discernment – to be able to perceive clearly. The crowds were "harassed and helpless" but Jesus was not referring to physical trouble and distress. The phrase "like sheep without a shepherd" alludes to their lostness as people not knowing where they are going. "The common people were desperately longing for God; and the Scribes and the Pharisees, the priests and the Sadducees, the pillars of orthodox religion of His day, had nothing to offer them. The orthodox teachers had neither guidance, nor comfort, nor strength to give."²¹ Jesus saw their spiritual condition clearly, the troubled and distressed state of their lives, and it moved the heart of Jesus deeply. Jesus cared not just for their physical and emotional needs but He was moved to deep compassion by their ultimate spiritual need – a need for God.

■ APPLICATION

How does understanding the compassionate heart of Jesus affect the way I see others around me today?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

■ PRAYER

Lord, may my heart be moved to compassion like Yours. Help me see the depth of people's lostness where they are without guidance, comfort or strength when they do not know You. Grant me the heart to minister to people's physical and emotional needs, and ultimately lead them to their deepest spiritual need of You. Amen.

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

²¹ Gospel of Matthew, Daily Study Bible, William Barclay



THURSDAY, 14 APRIL 2016

The God Who Comes Near to Give Hope

■ SCRIPTURE

Luke 7:11-17

■ OBSERVATION

What do you observe about Jesus' response when He witnessed the grief of the widow?

DEEPER REFLECTION

Losing her son was not the first tragedy in the widow's life. First, she was a widow. Culturally, widows were often seen as a curse and would have to put on special garb that specifically identified them as widows. In having lost her husband, she lost the security of a provider and a protector. A widow would typically depend on her sons to provide for her and when this widow's one and only son died, the tragedy was not only having him die at a young age, but also the bleakness of her future ahead. It is with this background of sheer hopelessness that the widow first encounters the compassion of Jesus. Jesus was moved by her sorrow, and beyond that, a desolation of heart and spirit. Yet, compassion alone would not have overcome her hopelessness. It was the power and authority accompanying the compassionate heart of Jesus – the touch of the Lord's hand upon the funeral bier and word "Arise" – that gave the hope of new life to the widow. Jesus offers more than just compassion to a sorrowful and grieving world; He possesses the power and authority over death itself, and it is this that gives us a true and living hope in the midst of man's anguish and grief.

■ APPLICATION

How can I translate the living hope that I have in Jesus to the ones who are hurting and sorrowful around me?

■ PRAYER

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

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:



FRIDAY, 15 APRIL 2016

God with Us

■ SCRIPTURE

Matthew 1:21-23; Philippians 2:5-8

■ OBSERVATION

What can you observe in verses 21 to 23 and Philippians 2:5-8 about God who came to share in our life with us?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

DEEPER REFLECTION

God's compassion did not come as a mere abstract idea, but "a concrete, specific gesture in which God reaches out to us. In Jesus Christ, we see the fullness of God's compassion."²² Our God who could "order armies and empires about like pawns on a chessboard, came to earth not in a raging whirlwind nor in a devouring fire"²³. Defying imagination, He emptied Himself and came to identify with humanity – not as a sinner, but as our sin-bearer. He came in the freedom of His love to "share our lives in solidarity. It does not mean that God solves our problems, shows us the way out of our confusion or offers answers for our many questions. God might do all of that, but the solidarity of God consists in the fact that God is willing to enter with us into our problems, confusions and questions."²⁴ Apostle Paul exhorts us to have this attitude of compassion and togetherness too (Php 2:5) in our identity in Christ. Otherwise, our human nature will cause us to serve out of earthly superiority and abundance, rather than brokenness and compassion with those in need.

■ APPLICATION

What is the renewed attitude I must have to serve out of compassion in Christ rather than comparison of earthly abundance?

.....

.....

.....

.....

■ PRAYER

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

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

To have the mind of Christ in service

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

²² H.J.M. Nouwen, D.P. McNeill and D.A. Morrison, *Compassion* (Doubleday, 1982), p21

²³ Philip Yancey, *The Jesus I Never Knew* (Harper Collins & Zondervan, 1996), p36

²⁴ H.J.M. Nouwen, D.P. McNeill and D.A. Morrison, *Compassion* (Doubleday, 1982), p12



SATURDAY, 16 APRIL 2016

Serving as God's Lights in the World

■ SCRIPTURE

Philippians 2:1-18

■ OBSERVATION

We are to be God's lights in the world (v. 15) and be united in Christian community and work. From verses 1 to 4, what are the causes of disunity and its remedies?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

DEEPER REFLECTION

When people are sincere and passionate about their convictions, there is potential for disharmony with one another. "The greater their enthusiasm, the greater the danger that they may collide."²⁵ Disunity may be caused by: firstly, selfish ambition – an attempt to advance oneself rather than the work; secondly, the pursuit of personal prestige – a desire to be admired and respected; and thirdly, competitiveness – the perception of life as a win-lose competition. Apostle Paul sets down five considerations which serve as a cure for disunity: the disciples' oneness in Christ – no one walks in disunity with his brethren while in unity with Christ; the power of Christian love – intentionally seeking the good of others; sharing in the Holy Spirit who binds man to God and man to man; the presence of human compassion within the community; and the Apostle Paul's personal appeal of love to the Church to complete his joy. Living our life in Christ and growing in community call us once again to the words of John the Baptist (Jn 3:30), that "He must increase, but I must decrease".

■ APPLICATION

From verses 1 to 4, what is one significant area that the Holy Spirit is prompting you to decrease or increase in?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

■ PRAYER

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

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

²⁵ William Barclay, Daily Study Bible



SUNDAY, 17 APRIL 2016

■ 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?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

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

April 2016 – Week 3

**NEW LIFE IN JESUS**

We have a new life in Jesus because God has made all things new.

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 5:16-23

ACTIVITY BITE

What are some of your belongings that you want to replace with new ones?

CHAT TIME

Q1: Why do you want to replace the old things with new ones?

Q2: The Bible talks about the old life before we believed in Jesus.

What was this old life like? Refer to Galatians 5:16-23.

Q3: How does this new life look like?

LEARNING POINT

Our old lives are made bad because of sin; we may do bad things that hurt others when we seek to satisfy our own desires. This is not God's way. That is why He comes to make all lives new under His power.

This new life is able to love with the love of Christ and do good works to bless others. With Jesus in our hearts, we will no longer want to do bad things but do those that will bring joy to God and others as well as ourselves. And this new life will not get old as long as we believe in Him.

ACTION POINT

Ask Jesus to be your Lord if you haven't done so. Believe that you have a new life in Him and ask Him to help you live out this new life according to His Word.

PRAYER POWER

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

Dear God, thank You for giving me a new life in Jesus. I can now love others with Your love. Help me to walk in Your ways all the time. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.



MONDAY, 18 APRIL 2016

Redeemed Relationships: Enmity

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 2:14-18

■ OBSERVATION

What is the “enmity” in verses 14 and 16?

DEEPER REFLECTION

Verses 14 to 18 shows that the central problem of fallen humanity is the “enmity” in their relationship with God (“enmity” in v. 16) and with fellow humans, represented by Jews and Gentiles (“enmity” in v. 14). The “twofold enmity”²⁶ was caused by “the entire Mosaic law” (v. 15)²⁷ and comprise moral and ceremonial rules. The ceremonial law of “circumcision...the material sacrifices, the dietary regulations and the rules about ritual ‘cleanness’ and ‘uncleanness’ governed social relationships”²⁸, creating “the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility” between Jews and Gentiles. Humanity’s “disobedience” to God and God’s “wrath” in response (Eph 2:2-3) creates the enmity in the vertical relationship. This enmity has something to do with the Law (v. 15) – the moral law.²⁹ The Law shows that humans are hopelessly sinful – unable to obey the Law perfectly to be righteous before God (Ro 3:20); and thus, accordingly, “the Law brings wrath” (Ro 4:15). But through the cross, Christ has destroyed the “twofold enmity” created by the Law (v. 15). However, enmity can creep back into our lives when we love the world and become God’s enemy (Jas 4:4), or when we are angry, unforgiving, bitter, unkind and slanderous towards others (Eph 4:31-32).

■ APPLICATION

How can I keep the “enmity” that God has destroyed in Christ from creeping back into my relationship with God and people around me?

■ PRAYER

God, save me and keep me from all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words and slander.³⁰ Fill my heart with the Spirit of tender-hearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience, to make allowance for others' faults, and to forgive anyone who offends me, just as You forgive me.³¹ Amen.

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

²⁶ Peter T. O'Brien, 205

²⁷ Frank Thielman, 169, 173: “Paul clearly intends the phrase [‘the law of commandments in ordinances’] to refer to the entire Mosaic Law.”

²⁸ John Stott, 100

²⁹ John Stott, 100

³⁰ Ephesians 4:31

³¹ Colossians 3:12-13



TUESDAY, 19 APRIL 2016

Redeemed Relationships: Christ-centredness

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 2:14-18

■ OBSERVATION

What do you observe about Christ in verses 14 to 18?

DEEPER REFLECTION

The relationship that God's people have with one another is called a redeemed relationship. Christ who is "our peace", "made one new humanity" "in Himself" by destroying "the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility" "through the cross" (vv. 14-16). The product is Christian relationship – relationship in Christ, marked by oneness and peace. "One" (vv. 14, 15, 16, 18) and "peace" (vv. 14-15, 17) are key words in verses 14 to 18 – "the fundamental theological undergirding of the whole letter"³². But relationship conflicts still happen among God's people. And unresolved conflicts can result in barriers, divisions and hostility, expressed either outwardly or buried inwardly – which may lead to us regressing to the point at which we were redeemed. Will learning and knowing conflict resolution skills help? Yes, but only when we return to what is foundational and fundamental, and rebuild on it: **Christ**. In verses 14 to 18 – "the centrepiece" of the "comprehensive reconciliation"³³ in both the vertical and horizontal relationships – the focus is Christ. Christ is the subject of 10 out of the 11 verbs in these five verses. And virtually all these acts of Christ were done on the cross. Christ must be central in resolving conflicts. "Apart from Me you can do nothing" (Jn 15:5).

■ APPLICATION

What does it mean for me to be Christ-centred in my relationship with people?

■ PRAYER

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

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

³² Peter T. O'Brien, 182

³³ Peter T. O'Brien, 182



WEDNESDAY, 20 APRIL 2016

Redeemed Relationships: Peace

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 2:14-18

■ OBSERVATION

What observations can you make about “peace” in verses 14 to 18?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

DEEPER REFLECTION

“Peace” (the antonym of “enmity”) is repeated four times in verses 14 to 18 (vv. 14, 15, 17), and they are all used with Christ as the subject. “The biblical concept of peace has to do with wholeness, particularly with reference to personal relationships.”³⁴ “**Christ Himself is our peace**” (v. 14) stands “like a title to the whole passage” and introduces “the vital theme of peace”³⁵. “Christ Himself is” indicates that “peace is a person”³⁶. “Christ is the embodiment of peace”³⁷. It is not that Christ is “peace,” but that He is “our peace”. So, if we are in this Christ, and this Christ is in us, we are also the embodiment of the Christ-peace – both individually and as a church. Christ, in His very person as peace, is **peacemaker** (v. 15) and **preaches peace** (v. 17). As God’s children, we are to be “peacemakers” (Mt 5:9). Jesus’ emphasis is on what we are. Christ’s achievement of peace on the cross is followed by “His proclamation of the gospel of peace to the world through the apostles and through subsequent generations of Christians [v. 17]”³⁸. “Whenever we proclaim peace, it is Christ who proclaims it through us.”³⁹ And we cannot preach peace with authenticity, both inside and outside the church, without fundamentally being persons of peace.

■ APPLICATION

How does “Christ Himself is our peace” affect how I relate with people?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

■ PRAYER

Heavenly Father, help me to be a peacemaker in Christ – to be more ready to call people friends than enemies, to love than to hate, to respect than to despise, to serve than to be served, to absorb evil than to pass it on. Help me to be more like Christ who Himself is our peace and has made peace possible through His blood. Amen.

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

³⁴ Peter T. O'Brien, 193

³⁵ Peter T. O'Brien, 193

³⁶ Peter T. O'Brien, 193, footnote 151

³⁷ Peter T. O'Brien, 194

³⁸ John Stott, 103

³⁹ John Stott, 103



THURSDAY, 21 APRIL 2016

Redeemed Relationships: Oneness

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 2:14-18

■ OBSERVATION

What do you observe about the word “one” in verses 14 to 18?

.....

.....

.....

.....

DEEPER REFLECTION

Christ “made both” Jews and Gentiles who were hostile to each other “into **one**” (v. 14), creating “**one new humanity**” (v. 15, NIV), reconciling “both groups in **one body** to God through the cross” (v. 16) that “both have access in **one Spirit** to the Father” (v. 18). “Christ crucified has thus brought into being nothing less than a new, united human race, united in itself and united to its Creator.”⁴⁰ John Chrysostom⁴¹ said that this new oneness in Christ “is as if one should melt down a statue of silver and a statue of lead, and the two should come out gold”⁴². In this new oneness in Christ “it doesn’t matter if you are a Jew or a Gentile, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbaric, uncivilised, slave or free”, or “male or female”; “Christ is all that matters, and He lives in all of us” and “you are all one in Christ” (Gal 3:28; Col 3:11, NLT). Living in this new oneness in Christ is a constant challenge. The Azusa Street revival in Los Angeles in 1906 that gave birth to the Pentecostal movement brought white and African Americans to worship God together amid long-time racism: “Glory to God! Makes me feel good to see White and Coloured praisin’ God together.”⁴³ But this began to end in 1924 until a national reconciliation of both groups of Pentecostal Christians took place in 1994.

■ APPLICATION

In my relationship with God’s people, what is my greatest challenge in living in the new oneness in Christ?

.....

.....

.....

.....

■ PRAYER

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

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

⁴⁰ John Stott, 102

⁴¹ An Early Church Father (c. 349 – 407)

⁴² William Barclay, *The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians*, The Daily Study Bible (TPI, 1976), 116

⁴³ Archie Robertson, *That Old Time Religion* – quoted in Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement in the United States* (Eerdmans, 1971), 182



FRIDAY, 22 APRIL 2016

Redeemed Relationships: Reconciliation

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 2:14-18

■ OBSERVATION

What is the nature of reconciliation like according to verses 14 to 18 (note the word “reconcile” in v. 16)?

.....

.....

.....

.....

DEEPER REFLECTION

“Christ Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one” (v. 14). Peace and oneness go hand-in-hand together. Paul later on exhorts us to diligently keep “the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph 4:3). Christ “made” both oneness and peace (vv. 14, 15) by reconciling “both in one body to God through the cross” (v. 16). It is one reconciliation with two inseparable dimensions: in the vertical relationship – “to God”, and in the horizontal relationship – “in one body”. The condition of one relationship – good or bad – affects the other. Reconciliation is needed when there is a breakdown in peace and oneness – which often happens to us in the already-and-not-yet redemption in Christ. God will not accept our worship when we have unresolved conflicts against each other – until there is reconciliation (Mt 5:23-24). Reconciliation is a two-way thing. But if one party is unwilling to reconcile, God will accept the worship of the willing party. What is central in reconciliation is “the cross” of redemption and forgiveness (Eph 1:7). Reconciliation presupposes forgiveness: God forgiving us and we forgiving one another; and God will not forgive us when we are unforgiving (Mt 6:14-15).

■ APPLICATION

How do I deal with the obstacles to reconciliation in my relationships that experience conflict?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

■ PRAYER

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

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

**Pray for leaders:
Reconciliation in relationships
that have conflicts**

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:



SATURDAY, 23 APRIL 2016

Redeemed Relationships: Access

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 2:14-18

■ OBSERVATION

What are the parallel ideas in verses 16 and 18?

DEEPER REFLECTION

Note carefully the four parallel ideas in verses 16 and 18 – “reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross” (v. 16) and “through Him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father” (v. 18): “reconcile” and “access”, “in one body” and “in one Spirit”, “to God” and “to the Father” and “through the cross” and “through Him.” The divine goal of reconciliation to God is access to God. Paul’s idea of “access” to God “derives from an Old Testament cultic context of bringing offerings in order to come into God’s presence (cf. Lev 1:3; 3:3; 4:14). This word [‘access’] with its cultic association pointed to a free entry into the sanctuary as the place of God’s presence.”⁴⁴ Our present “access” to God is none other than “the holy of holies” in the tabernacle where the high priest alone was allowed to enter, and only once a year on the Day of Atonement (Heb 9:7; 10:19). Where the high priest was commanded “he shall not enter at any time into the holy place inside the veil” (Lev 16:2), we can now do so “at any time” – but only “through Him”. This vital living theology must always be in our dominant consciousness: whenever we enter God’s presence it is “**through Him**” – lest we take this “access” for granted presumptuously or flippantly.

■ APPLICATION

How do I view my access to God in both theology and practice?

■ PRAYER

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

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

⁴⁴ Peter O’ Brien, 209



SUNDAY, 24 APRIL 2016

■ 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?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

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

April 2016 – Week 4



CONFIDENCE IN APPROACHING JESUS

God gives us the confidence to talk to Him without fear.

Scripture: 1 John 5:14

ACTIVITY BITE

Name one or two school teachers whom a lot of your classmates are afraid of.

CHAT TIME

Q1: Why do you think the students are so afraid of the teachers you mentioned?

Q2: Why are some people afraid of God?

Q3: Why do you think God says we can approach Him with confidence to ask Him about anything?

LEARNING POINT

Although God hates sin and will judge anyone who continues to sin when Jesus returns, He is also great in love and compassion, and will forgive anyone who confesses their sins to Him. He is gentle and caring to those who are hurting. He receives us into His kingdom because of what Jesus has done for us. He understands our struggle with sin and will help us when we are weak. He opens the door wide for us to approach Him any time and anywhere. This is the confidence that we should have when we approach Jesus because God is our loving heavenly Father.

ACTION POINT

Since God gives us the confidence to ask Him about anything, go ahead and talk to God like you would a friend. Ask your parents to help you along.

PRAYER POWER

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

Dear Jesus, thank You for not being quick to judge and giving me the confidence to ask You about anything freely. I am so blessed. Amen.



MONDAY, 25 APRIL 2016

Holy Household of God

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 2:19-22

■ OBSERVATION

What does it mean to be a Christian according to verse 19?

DEEPER REFLECTION

In verses 19 to 22, Paul “shows exactly how near all Christians are to one another and to God”⁴⁵ through two metaphors: God’s household (v. 19) and God’s temple (vv. 20-22). We are God’s household as we “have access to the Father” (v. 18). God’s household emphasises on Christian brotherhood/sisterhood, and God’s temple on God’s fatherhood. “In the Roman world of the day ‘to be a member of a household meant refuge and protection, at least as much as the master was able to provide. It also meant identity and gave the security that comes with a sense of belonging.’”⁴⁶ In God’s household, we have “this assurance” from God our Father and we are to give “this assurance”⁴⁷ to fellow members of God’s family. Christians are “no longer strangers and aliens” but full members of God’s family. However, Christians can feel like “strangers and aliens” in the church: being part of the home, but not feeling at home. It could be because we choose it (cf. Heb 10:24-25), or when Christians ignore, neglect, exclude or hurt fellow members of God’s family, either intentionally or carelessly. God never wants us to feel like “strangers and aliens” with Him. If we do, it is we who have caused it.

■ APPLICATION

Who do I know who does not feel at home in the church, and how will I respond to that?

■ PRAYER

Lord, look in Your mercy on Your Church, lest we, Your people who know You well, should shut the doors against others whom You love from drawing near to You; because they are too different, too difficult or too demanding.⁴⁸ Amen.

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

⁴⁵ Frank Thielman, 177

⁴⁶ Peter T. O’Brien, 212 – citing P. H. Towner

⁴⁷ Peter T. O’Brien, 212

⁴⁸ Angela Ashwin, *The Book of a Thousand Prayers* (Zondervan, 1996, 2002), 221



TUESDAY, 26 APRIL 2016

Holy Temple: The Foundation

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 2:20

■ OBSERVATION

What is the “foundation” of the prophets and apostles in verse 20?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

DEEPER REFLECTION

In Ephesians 2:20-22, “Paul elaborates on his vision of the new temple more fully than anywhere else”⁴⁹. As he develops the metaphor, he speaks of “the foundation and cornerstone of the building, the structure as a whole and its individual stones, its cohesion and growth, its present function and (at least implicitly) its future destiny”⁵⁰. The Church is built on “the foundation of the apostles and prophets” (v. 20a). Here (and also in Eph 3:5) “prophets are linked with apostles and enjoy a role with them not found elsewhere in the Pauline letters...together with the apostles, prophets were the first authoritative recipients and proclaimers of God’s revelation in Christ”⁵¹. The primary ministry of the apostles and prophets was the ministry of the Word of God (cf. Ac 6:2, 4). Their teaching was “the normative teaching that arises from divine revelation”⁵² – preserved in Holy Scripture. “Nothing is more important to any edifice than a solid, stable foundation.”⁵³ The church and individual Christians “stand or fall” by our “loyal dependence on the foundation truths of God”⁵⁴ in Holy Scripture. It means we are to constantly and consciously live by “what does the Scripture say?” (Ro 4:3a).

■ APPLICATION

What does it mean for me personally to have the Word of God as the foundation of my life?

.....

.....

.....

■ PRAYER

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

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

⁴⁹ Peter T. O’Brien, 212

⁵⁰ John Stott, 106

⁵¹ Peter T. O’Brien, 216

⁵² Peter T. O’Brien, 216

⁵³ John Stott, 106

⁵⁴ John Stott, 107



WEDNESDAY, 27 APRIL 2016

Holy Temple: The Cornerstone

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 2:20-21

■ OBSERVATION

What is the significance of Christ being “the cornerstone” of God’s temple – the Church (vv. 20 to 21)?

.....

.....

.....

.....

DEEPER REFLECTION

Christ Himself is “the cornerstone” (v. 20b) of God’s holy temple – the Church. Paul has in mind the cornerstone at the base of a building in the building practice of that time “in which the laying of the cornerstone marked the beginning of the foundation”⁵⁵. Christ “is the vital cornerstone on whom the building is constructed. The foundation and position of all other stones in the superstructure were determined by Him. He is ‘the one from whom the rest of the foundation is built outwards along the line of the proposed walls’. Accordingly, the temple is built out and up from **the revelation given in Christ**, with the apostles and prophets elaborating and explaining the mystery, which had been made known to them by the Holy Spirit (Eph 3:4-11, especially v. 5). ‘But all is built on Christ, supported by Christ, and the lie and the shape of the continuing building is determined by Christ – the cornerstone.’”⁵⁶ **Christ is indispensable** (“in whom”) for both the cohesion (“the whole building fitted together”) and development (“growing”) of the Church in terms of individual Christians and the whole community. It means “in Christ, with Christ, through Christ and for Christ” is a conscious living reality in all that we do.

■ APPLICATION

What does it mean for me in practical terms in knowing that Christ is the cornerstone of my life and of the church?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

■ PRAYER

*Father of grace and glory,
it was in Christ that
You have chosen and
predestined me to be Your
child, that You have made
me alive when I was dead
in my sins, that You have
redeemed me, forgiven my
sins and brought me near
to Yourself through His
blood. Truly, apart from
Christ I can do nothing.
Help me to make Christ
the centre of my life daily.
Amen.*

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

⁵⁵ Peter T. O'Brien, 217

⁵⁶ Peter T. O'Brien, 217-18



THURSDAY, 28 APRIL 2016

Holy Temple: Fitted Together

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 2:21-22

■ OBSERVATION

What are some implications of every believer in Christ “being fitted together” in the “whole building” of God’s holy temple – the Church (v. 21)?

.....

.....

.....

DEEPER REFLECTION

The Church is “a holy temple in the Lord” (v. 21) and “a dwelling of God in the Spirit” (v. 22) with all believers in Christ as “living stones” (1 Pe 2:5) “being fitted together” as a “whole building”. “Being fitted together” must be viewed from two inseparable perspectives. Firstly, Christ the cornerstone unites the building “because it is organically as well as structurally bound to”⁵⁷ Him. Thus, the building “being fitted together” “refers not simply to the union of one stone to another, but also to the union of the whole structure with (and in) the cornerstone.”⁵⁸ Secondly, every single “living stone” is fitted in by God Himself – not by ourselves or by the church, when He purposefully chose us individually in Christ to be His child in pre-creation eternity (Eph 1:4-5). Therein lies our God-given significance and importance. It is God who has fitted us in, and we are fitted “in Christ” (“in whom”). We cannot think of this just as individuals, but rather it should be in relation to the “whole building” – “fitted together”. In this state of “being fitted together”, we must not have any sense of inferiority – “I am not needed”, or of superiority, “I don’t need you” (1 Co 12:14-16, 20-21). “Being fitted together” (v. 21) we are “being built together” (v. 22). Both go together.

■ APPLICATION

How do I see myself “being fitted together” with other living stones in the church?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

■ PRAYER

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

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

⁵⁷ Peter T. O'Brien, 219

⁵⁸ Peter T. O'Brien, 219



FRIDAY, 29 APRIL 2016

Holy Temple: Divine Builder

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 2:21-22

■ OBSERVATION

What is the significance of the two phrases “being fitted together” and “being built together” in the passive voice in verses 21 to 22?

.....

.....

.....

.....

DEEPER REFLECTION

The Church “is growing into a holy temple in the Lord” (v. 21). **Character:** “The character of the new building is derived from God who inhabits it [v. 22b], that is, it is holy”⁵⁹ – “a holy temple.” And accordingly, “the new community of God is growing and progressing to its ultimate goal of holiness”⁶⁰, individually and corporately. And God will destroy anyone who destroys His temple, because His temple is “holy” (1 Co 3:16-17). **Construction:** The Church “is growing” – it is “still under construction”⁶¹. It is theologically significant that the phrases “having been built on” (v. 20), “being fitted together” (v. 21) and “being built together” (v. 22) are in the passive voice, underscoring the divine passive. The whole passage on the Church as God’s holy temple and dwelling place (Eph 2:19-22) is about God Himself building His own building in Christ (“in whom,” vv. 21, 22). And the “growing” of the church is divine activity and achievement. Building God’s holy temple is both divine and human work, albeit primarily and ultimately divine. Paul will talk about the human part later on in Ephesians 4:1 to 16. Christ Himself will “present to Himself the church in all her glory... holy and blameless” (Eph 5:27). “I will build My church” (Mt 16:18) is Christ’s commitment to Himself.

■ APPLICATION

What does it mean to me to recognise that the church is still under construction in the hands of the Divine Builder?

.....

.....

.....

.....

■ PRAYER

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

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Grow in holiness passively and actively

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

⁵⁹ Peter T. O'Brien, 219

⁶⁰ Peter T. O'Brien, 219

⁶¹ Peter T. O'Brien, 219



SATURDAY, 30 APRIL 2016

Holy Temple: God's Presence

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 2:21-22

■ OBSERVATION

What does the metaphor of the temple in verses 21 to 22 tell us about God and His people – the Church?

.....

.....

.....

.....

DEEPER REFLECTION

The Church is “a holy temple in the Lord” (v. 21) and “a dwelling of God in the Spirit” (v. 22). When the first humans fell into sin, they “hid themselves from the presence of God” (Ge 3:8), and were subsequently driven out of God’s presence (Ge 3:23-24). In redemption, God seeks to restore fallen humans to His full presence. The tabernacle (Ex 25-31, 40), which was subsequently replaced by Solomon’s temple (1 Ki 6-9), became a location for God’s presence with His redeemed people: “Construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them” (Ex 25:8). Then came God’s most definitive revelation – self-disclosure in person: “Immanuel”, “God with us” (Mt 1:23). “The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us” (Jn 1:14), who was Himself the temple of God (Jn 2:19-21). After Jesus’ ascension, He sent the Holy Spirit (Jn 16:7) “to mediate Christ’s presence to believers”⁶². A believer’s body is God’s temple in whose heart the Holy Spirit dwells (1 Co 6:19; Gal 4:6). We are waiting for Christ’s Second Coming – the return of the full presence of God, when we will see God face to face (Rev 22:4). Until then, Christ has promised, “I am with you always” (Mt 28:20). But are we with Him always?

■ APPLICATION

How do I respond to the biblical theology of the presence of the Triune God?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

■ PRAYER

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

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

⁶² J. I. Packer, *Keep in Step with the Spirit: Finding Fullness in Our Walk with God*, New Expanded Edition (IVP, 1984, 2005), 43

COVENANT EFC

© 2016 COVENANT EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH

Tel: (65) 6892 6811 • Email: mail@cefc.org.sg • Website: www.cefc.org.sg