



12/2016

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DEVOTIONAL JOURNAL

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...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 (ESV)

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*Also available online at [www.cefc.org.sg](http://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)*

**T**hese 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

## NOVEMBER/DECEMBER

### BEFORE YOU I KNEEL

#### Verse 1

Before You I kneel, my Master and Maker  
 To offer the work of my hands  
 For this is the day You've given Your servant  
 I will rejoice and be glad  
 For the strength I have to live and breathe  
 For each skill Your grace has given me  
 For the needs and opportunities  
 That will glorify Your great name

#### Verse 2

Before You I kneel and ask for Your goodness  
 To cover the work of my hands  
 For patience and peace to shape all my labour  
 Your grace for thorns in my path  
 Flow within me like a living stream  
 Wear away the stones of pride and greed  
 'Til Your ways are dwelling deep in me  
 And a harvest of life is grown

#### Verse 3

Before You we kneel our Master and Maker  
 Establish the work of our hands  
 And order our steps to seek first Your kingdom  
 In every small and great task  
 May we live the gospel of Your grace  
 Serve Your purpose in our fleeting days  
 Then our lives will bring eternal praise  
 And all glory to Your great name  
 And all glory to Your great name

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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

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## AT THE CROSS (LOVE RAN RED)

### Verse 1

There's a place  
Where mercy reigns and never dies  
There's a place  
Where streams of grace flow deep and wide  
Where all the love I've ever found  
Comes like a flood comes flowing down

### Chorus

At the cross, at the cross  
I surrender my life  
I'm in awe of You, I'm in awe of You  
Where Your love ran red and my sin washed white  
I owe all to You, I owe all to You

### Interlude

Jesus

### Verse 2

There's a place  
Where sin and shame are powerless  
Where my heart  
Has peace with God and forgiveness  
Where all the love I've ever found  
Comes like a flood, comes flowing down

### Bridge

Here my hope is found  
Here on holy ground  
Here I bow down, here I bow down  
Here arms open wide  
Here You saved my life  
Here I bow down, here I bow (down)

### Ending

Jesus

Chris Tomlin | Ed Cash | Jonas Myrin | Matt Armstrong | Matt Redman  
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## JOY TO THE WORLD (UNSPEAKABLE JOY)

### Verse 1

Joy to the world, the Lord is come  
Let earth receive her King  
Let ev'ry heart prepare Him room  
And heaven and nature sing  
And heaven and nature sing  
And heaven, and heaven and nature sing

### Verse 2

Joy to the world, the Saviour reigns  
Let all their songs employ  
While fields and floods rocks hills and plains  
Repeat the sounding joy  
Repeat the sounding joy  
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy

### Chorus

Joy, unspeakable joy  
An overflowing well  
No tongue can tell  
Joy, unspeakable joy  
It rises in my soul  
Never lets me go

### Verse 3

He rules the world with truth and grace  
And makes the nations prove  
The glories of His righteousness  
And wonders of His love  
And wonders of His love  
And wonders, wonders of His love

Chris Tomlin | Ed Cash | George Frideric Handel | Isaac Watts | Matt Gilder  
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## NOEL

### Verse 1

Love incarnate, love divine  
 Star and angels gave the sign  
 Bow to babe on bended knee  
 The Saviour of humanity  
 Unto us a Child is born  
 He shall reign forevermore

### Chorus

Noel, Noel  
 Come and see what God has done  
 Noel, Noel  
 The story of amazing love  
 The light of the world given for us  
 Noel

### Verse 2

Son of God and Son of man  
 There before the world began  
 Born to suffer, born to save  
 Born to raise us from the grave  
 Christ the everlasting Lord  
 He shall reign forevermore

Chris Tomlin | Ed Cash | Matt Redman  
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## MY SOUL FINDS REST

My soul finds rest in God alone  
 My trust is always in Him  
 Pour out your heart to Him  
 Pour out your heart to Him

My soul finds rest in God alone  
 My trust is always in Him  
 Within Your temple  
 I will remember  
 Your faithful love to me  
 Your faithful love to me

Words & Music: AGGM

## HOW GREAT THOU ART

### Verse 1

O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder  
Consider all the works Thy hand hath made  
I see the stars I hear the mighty thunder  
Thy pow'r throughout the universe displayed

### Chorus

Then sings my soul my Saviour God to Thee  
How great Thou art, how great Thou art  
Then sings my soul my Saviour God to Thee  
How great Thou art, how great Thou art

### Verse 2

When through the woods and forest glades I wander  
And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees  
When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur  
And hear the brook and feel the gentle breeze

### Verse 3

And when I think that God His Son not sparing  
Sent Him to die I scarce can take it in  
That on the Cross my burden gladly bearing  
He bled and died to take away my sin

### Verse 4

When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation  
And take me home what joy shall fill my heart  
Then shall I bow in humble adoration  
And there proclaim my God how great Thou art

Stuart Wesley Keene Hine

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## BE THOU MY VISION

### Verse 1

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

### Verse 2

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

### Verse 3

Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise  
Thou mine Inheritance, now and always  
Thou and Thou only, put first in my heart  
High King of Heaven, my Treasure Thou art

### Chorus

Oh, God, be my everything, be my delight  
Be, Jesus, my glory My soul's satisfied  
Oh, God, be my everything, be my delight  
Be, Jesus, my glory My soul's satisfied

### Verse 4

High King of Heaven, my victory won  
May I reach Heaven's joys, bright Heaven's Sun  
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall  
Still be my Vision, O Ruler of all

Eleanor Henrietta Hull | Mary Elizabeth Byrne

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## OH THE GLORY OF HIS PRESENCE

### Chorus

Oh the glory of Your presence  
 We Your temple give You rev'rence  
 Come and rise from Your rest  
 And be blessed by our praise  
 As we glory in Your embrace  
 As Your presence now fills this place

### Verse

Jesus, all-glorious  
 Create in us a temple  
 Called as living stones  
 Where You're enthroned  
 As You rose from death in pow'r  
 So rise within our worship  
 Rise upon our praise  
 And let the hand that saw You raised  
 Clothe us in Your glory  
 Draw us by Your grace

### Ending

Come and rise from Your rest  
 And be blessed by our praise  
 As we glory in Your embrace  
 As Your presence now fills this place  
 This holy place

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## COME THOU FOUNT OF EVERY BLESSING (NETTLETON)

### Verse 1

Come Thou fount of ev'ry blessing  
 Tune my heart to sing Thy grace  
 Streams of mercy never ceasing  
 Call for songs of loudest praise  
 Teach me some melodious sonnet  
 Sung by flaming tongues above  
 Praise the mount I'm fixed upon it  
 Mount of Thy redeeming love

### Verse 2

Here I raise mine Ebenezer  
 Hither by Thy help I'm come  
 And I hope by Thy good pleasure  
 Safely to arrive at home  
 Jesus sought me when a stranger  
 Wand'ring from the fold of God  
 He to rescue me from danger  
 Interposed His precious blood

### Verse 3

O to grace how great a debtor  
 Daily I'm constrained to be  
 Let Thy grace Lord like a fetter  
 Bind my wand'ring heart to Thee  
 Prone to wander, Lord I feel it  
 Prone to leave the God I love  
 Here's my heart Lord take and seal it  
 Seal it for Thy courts above

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# THE CHURCH BEYOND

## PRAYING FOR THE NATIONS

BY DR ONG SEA HING, MISSIONS PRAYER COORDINATOR

*“For as the earth brings forth its sprouts, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to sprout up, so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to sprout up before all the nations.”*  
- Isaiah 61:11 (ESV)

It has always been God! We can sow the seed and water it, but ultimately it is God who makes the seed of salvation grow. It is He who will turn the hearts of the nations to Himself, who will cause righteousness and praise to sprout up among the nations. Not just some nations, but **all** nations, including the most unreached ones — nations where it may seem humanly impossible to share the Gospel. I hope this will bring us to our knees! For we know that the power for salvation and righteousness to sprout up in these nations belongs to God. Through prayer, we tap on His power.

Praying for the nations — we are easily convinced of its necessity, yet we struggle to actually include it in our prayer life. I am the first to admit that every time there is a call to be involved in missions, the easiest option is to sign up for prayer. But oftentimes, it is the most difficult commitment to keep. Yet the Lord is gracious. He empowers us

*For we know that the power for salvation and righteousness to sprout up in these nations belongs to God.*

to grow. I have seen it in my life, and have witnessed it among the team of faithful missions intercessors who meet almost every Sunday to undergird all of Covenant EFC’s missions endeavours in prayer. We have seen God bringing increase in the number of Covenanters praying for nations through the Short Message Service (SMS) missions prayer launched during this year’s Missions Week.

My prayer for the coming year is that more Covenanters will get involved in praying for the nations. We will use this section of Devotional Journal to profile the prayer needs of various countries that God has led us to partner with in missions work, so that you may join us in this crucial work of missions intercession.

## » PRAY

- That as we make God the “Lord of **all**” in our lives, we will know His heart for the nations. And where His heart is, may our hearts be there too. Prayer and obedience to the Great Commission will then naturally follow.
- That as Covenant Groups (CGs), Mentoring Groups (MGs) and Discipleship Groups (DGs), we will grow a culture of praying together for the nations.
- For more labourers in the form of missions intercessors — a group of “prayer commandos” who are ever ready to pray and intercede for God’s work in the nations, regularly and at urgent notice.



THURSDAY, 1 DECEMBER 2016

## Salvation: We Can Get Right with God

### ■ SCRIPTURE

Romans 1:16-18; 3:24-25; 5:9

### ■ OBSERVATION

How does Paul present salvation in verses 16 to 18 and Romans 3:24-25 and 5:9?

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### DEEPER REFLECTION

We are in a perilous dilemma. We **must** get right with God because we are under “**the wrath of God**” (v.18) and yet we **cannot** get right with God because to get right with God we must have “**the righteousness of God**” (v.17).<sup>1</sup> However, we **can** get right with God in this dilemma. How so? Through “the gospel”, which is “**the power of God** for salvation to everyone who believes” (v.16). What is “salvation”? It is “having been justified” before God (Ro 5:9a): saved from the “we cannot get right with God” problem. And it is “saved from the wrath of God” (Ro 5:9b): saved from the “we must get right with God” problem. To be “justified” is having “the righteousness of God”<sup>2</sup>. “Salvation” and “righteousness” are parallel theological realities (Ro 10:10). We are justified “**through His blood**” and are saved from God’s wrath “**through Him**” (Ro 5:9). “Propitiation” – the turning away of God’s wrath on sinners – was made “in His blood” (Ro 3:25), resulting in “redemption” – the forgiveness of sins (cf. Eph 1:7) and justification (Ro 3:24). The “power of God” has made all these salvation acts and accomplishments possible. And we just receive them as God’s gracious gift through faith in Christ (vv.16, 17; Ro 3:25).

### ■ APPLICATION

How do I appreciate the way God has saved me?

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### ■ 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:

<sup>1</sup> See *November Devotional Journal*, 29 and 30 November.

<sup>2</sup> The Greek verb translated as “justify” is the verbal form of the noun “righteousness”.



FRIDAY, 2 DECEMBER 2016

## Working Out Your Salvation in Christ

### ■ SCRIPTURE

Philippians 2:12-13

### ■ OBSERVATION

What does Paul say about our salvation in Christ in verses 12 to 13?

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### DEEPER REFLECTION

Having been saved in Christ and having the righteousness of God (cf. Php 3:9), we are to “work out” that “salvation” (v.12). **We work out:** It is an individual responsibility – as “your” salvation indicates. The care and spiritual growth of the individual soul is a personal responsibility. You have to walk your discipleship journey alone by yourself, but not without the needed external support and encouragement of fellow Christians (cf. Heb 3:12-13). **God works in:** While we must walk our faith journey alone, we are not alone, “for God is at work in you” (v.13) – “you”, the individual. It is because “God is at work” in us that we “work out” our salvation – and never the reverse. God is always at work, whether we feel it or not. “We forget; He does not; we backslide, but we cannot halt, defer or deflect His work.”<sup>3</sup> God is “tirelessly active”<sup>4</sup>, and never lets His children go. And God works in us “for His good pleasure” (v.13). God does not work in us only when we show promising response or evidence of progress, or when we really desire Him to do so. God works in us because He wants to. It is God’s free divine choice. “Nothing, then, can stop the ongoing divine work.”<sup>5</sup>

### ■ APPLICATION

What does God is at work in me and I working out my salvation look like in my life?

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### ■ 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 walk in sync with God’s work in them**

**Pray for significant people:**

**Pray for those in need:**

**Pray for self:**

<sup>3</sup> Alec Motyer, *The Message of Philippians*, The Bible Speaks Today (IVR, 1984), 128-29

<sup>4</sup> Alec Motyer, 128

<sup>5</sup> Alec Motyer, 129



SATURDAY, 3 DECEMBER 2016

## In Hope We Have Been Saved

### ■ SCRIPTURE

Romans 8:16-25

### ■ OBSERVATION

What does Paul say about “hope” in verses 18 to 25?

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### DEEPER REFLECTION

“In hope we have been saved” (v.24). Salvation in Christ is eschatological in nature: We are both already saved and not yet fully saved. Thus, the vital element of hope in salvation. “Hope” is a key idea in verses 18 to 25 – repeated six times (vv.20, 24, 25). **What is the hope?** The context of this “hope” is “the sufferings of this present time” which we share with Christ (vv.17-18). It is not Christ sharing in our sufferings, but us sharing in Christ’s sufferings. These present time sufferings are those in the decaying fallen “creation” (vv.19-22), such as “tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril and sword” (Ro 8:35), from which God’s children are not exempted (v 23). The “hope” is our glorification with Christ as God’s children (vv.17b, 18, 21) with new bodies fully released from sin and sufferings (vv.21, 23). **How do we hope?** Thrice Paul emphasises that “hope” by nature is unseen (vv.24-25a) – in contrast to our present-time sufferings. What we hope for we “wait eagerly” (v.25 – also vv.19, 23) “with perseverance” (v.25). With this unseen hope, we “consider” our present-time sufferings as “not worthy to be compared with” our future glory with Christ (v.18).

### ■ APPLICATION

How does the hope in salvation play a significant role in my life?

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### ■ 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:



SUNDAY, 4 DECEMBER 2016

■ SCRIPTURE

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■ OBSERVATION

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■ APPLICATION

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■ PRAYER

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THE PAST WEEK

REVIEW

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

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What gave me life and what drained me?

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How was the Spirit of God at work?

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**REFLECT**

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

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**RESPOND**

What is one thing I need to do in light of what God is saying?

**COMMIT IN PRAYER**


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**FAMILY DEVOTIONAL**

**December 2016 – Week 1**

**SHIELD OF FAITH**

**Faith will shield us against Satan's weapons.**

*Scripture: Ephesians 6:16; Luke 4:13; John 8:44; Romans 10:17*

**ACTIVITY BITE**

Hold a paper plate and stand with your back against the wall. Get another person to crumple up pieces of paper into balls and throw them at you from a distance. Try to block the paper ball "darts" with your paper plate "shield". Once you are hit three times, you are out of the game. Try using other "shields" of different types and sizes to play this game.

**CHAT TIME**

- Q1: Does it make a difference when you use a shield that is larger than a paper plate in the game? Why or why not?  
 Q2: In Luke 4:13 and John 8:44, what are the tools that Satan uses to attack people with?  
 Q3: How can we increase the size of our "faith shield" to defend against Satan's attacks?

**LEARNING POINT**

Roman soldiers carried big shields which could protect them against arrows, spears or swords. But these are not Satan's favourite weapons. Instead, his weapons are temptation, lies and deception which cause fear, discouragement and defeat. If he can make you experience any of these, he is probably laughing in victory over you. But God has given us a shield against these weapons – it is called faith in God. This faith helps you to trust God's Word instead of Satan's lies that make you feel afraid, discouraged or defeated. Faith tells you that God is faithful and true to His promises. You can grow in faith when you believe in His Word (Ro 10:17).

**ACTION POINT**

Name a lie that you may have believed in or feelings of fear, discouragement or defeat. With the help of your parents or church leaders, find the Bible verses that will help you gain victory over these negative thoughts. Memorise them by heart.

**PRAYER POWER**

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

Dear God, thank You for giving me faith in Your Word as a shield against Satan's weapons. Help me to grow in this faith daily. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.



MONDAY, 5 DECEMBER 2016

## Sword of the Spirit

### ■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 6:17

### ■ OBSERVATION

Why is the Word of God called the sword of the Spirit in verse 17?

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### DEEPER REFLECTION

“The sword of the Spirit” – “the word of God” (v.17), refers to both the written and spoken Word of God. But the spoken word must be out of the written Word (1 Pe 4:11). The “sword” is used **defensively** in times of temptation and testing – like Jesus in the wilderness (Mt 4:1-11), and **offensively** in proclaiming the Gospel and freeing captives from Satan’s domain (Lk 4:18-19). **Word and Spirit:** Sometimes we talk about the need to emphasise both the Word and the Spirit in our Christianity as if the Word and the Spirit are separable. For Paul, to be filled with the Spirit (Eph 5:18-20) is also having the Word dwelling in our hearts (Col 3:16-17). When we seek and use the Word in truth, the Spirit is active. It is as what New Testament scholar Gordon Fee calls “Listening to the Spirit in the Text.”<sup>6</sup> **Faith and Word:** The Christian soldier holds the “shield of faith” with one hand (Eph 6:16), and “the sword of the Spirit” with the other. “The Word of God is the object of faith and cannot be applied except by faith. Likewise, faith is nothing and can do nothing without the Word...By faith we repel the attacks of the devil, and by the Word of God he is slain outright.”<sup>7</sup>

### ■ APPLICATION

How does the Word of God function as the sword of the Spirit in my discipleship journey?

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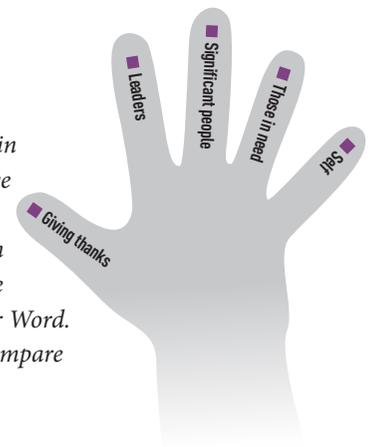
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### ■ PRAYER

*Gracious God, establish my footsteps in Your Word and do not let any sin have dominion over me. Keep me from wandering from Your Word. Establish my ways in Your Word that how I live my life would consistently reflect Your Word. Then I will not be ashamed when I compare my life with Your commands.<sup>8</sup> Amen.*



<sup>6</sup> The title of one of Gordon Fee’s books

<sup>7</sup> John Calvin, *Commentary on Ephesians*

<sup>8</sup> Psalm 119:5, 6, 10, 133



TUESDAY, 6 DECEMBER 2016

## God's Word Is Sharp

### ■ SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 4:12-13

### ■ OBSERVATION

What is the sharpness in the Word of God like according to verses 12 to 13?

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### DEEPER REFLECTION

The Word of God is “sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword”, having the sharpness to “pierce right in between soul and spirit, or joints and marrow”<sup>9</sup> (v.12). It means the Word of God has an uncanny knack of going right to the heart, to its innermost unspoken thoughts and hidden intentions (v.12), which are “open and laid bare to the eyes of God” (v.13). Don't miss the theological significance of “the Word of God” and “the eyes of God” in parallelism in close context. When we read the Word of God, we meet the eyes of God. It is through the Word of God that we know how God sees, and see as God sees. If we open our hearts to God, we will be able to detect and discern the true condition of our hearts through His Word. But if we close our hearts to God, the Word of God will find us out; it will pierce through our hearts and disclose what is really going on inside us. Regardless of what our hearts' postures are before God, the “living and active” Word of God cuts the same way. There is no escape. The context of verses 12 to 13 is: “Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts” (Heb 4:7, beginning at Heb 3:7).

### ■ APPLICATION

What is my attitude toward the sharpness of the Word of God?

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### ■ 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:

<sup>9</sup> Tom Wright, *Hebrews for Everyone* (SPCK, 2003, 2004), 38



WEDNESDAY, 7 DECEMBER 2016

## Sharp in God's Word

### ■ SCRIPTURE

Matthew 4:1-11

### ■ OBSERVATION

What is the sharpness in the Word of God like as demonstrated by Jesus in verses 3 to 10?

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### DEEPER REFLECTION

The Word of God is sharp (Heb 4:12-13), and we must be sharp in the Word of God. To be sharp in the Word of God is to be able to use specific Scriptures for specific situations. Jesus repels each of Satan's temptations with Scripture – "it is written" (vv.4, 7, 10), and with specific Scriptures. The principle demonstrated by Jesus here is: We are to apply "it is written" in every life situation, not just pertaining to temptations. To be able to use specific Scriptures for specific situations, we must grow in clear and sharp knowledge and understanding of the Scriptures. When we say we trust God in certain situations, on what specific Scriptures do we base our faith? When it is specific, it becomes dynamic. One Scripture I live by that frees me from making comparisons with others is: "A man can receive nothing unless it has been given him from heaven" (Jn 3:27). A specific Scripture for a specific situation. Do realise that Satan can also say "it is written" (vv.5-6). But how can we detect and discern when "it is written" is deceptive? There is only one way. Grow to be sharp in the Word. Sharpness in the Word develops sharpness of mind and heart.

### ■ APPLICATION

How do I go about growing to be sharp in the Word of God?

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### ■ PRAYER

*O Word of God, open  
Your Word to me when  
I open the Scriptures.  
Teach me Your Word  
through the Spirit of truth  
that I may live by it with  
all my heart to the end.  
Open my eyes to see the  
infinitely rich treasures  
in Your Word. Open my  
mind to understand the  
Scriptures that I may  
know God as God has  
revealed Himself. Amen.*

### PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:



THURSDAY, 8 DECEMBER 2016

## Living Voice of Scripture

### ■ SCRIPTURE

Matthew 22:23-33

### ■ OBSERVATION

What do the words of Jesus to the Sadducees, “Have you not read what was spoken to you by God” (v.31), followed by quoting Exodus 3:6 (v.32) show about the nature of the Scriptures?

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### DEEPER REFLECTION

The Sadducees confronted Jesus on the doctrine of resurrection, which they did not believe in (v.23), with a hypothetical scenario. Six brothers married their sister-in-law through levirate marriage, one after another, until all died, including the woman (vv.24-27). Then the question: Whose wife of the seven men will the woman be in the resurrection since they all had married her? (v.28). Jesus answered them with “the Scriptures” (vv.29-32). Jesus showed something about the nature of the Scriptures in His answer (vv.31-32). **“Have you not read what was spoken...by God”:** When we “read” the Scriptures, we “read” “what was spoken by God” in the past. When Jesus quoted Exodus 3:6 (v.32), “what was spoken by God” was spoken to Moses. But observe a significant twist here: “to you” – “what was spoken **to you** by God”. When Jesus quoted what **God had spoken** in the past, at that very moment **God was speaking** to the Sadducees. God’s past spoken Word in Scripture is God’s present speaking Word. When you read the Scriptures, you can hear in your heart “what was spoken to you by God”.

### ■ APPLICATION

How do I view the Scriptures and how does that affect my reading of the Scriptures?

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### ■ 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, 9 DECEMBER 2016

## Centrality of God's Word (1)

### ■ SCRIPTURE

Joshua 1:8

### ■ OBSERVATION

How does God show the importance of His Word in Joshua's mission of leading Israel to possess the Promised Land in verse 8?

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### DEEPER REFLECTION

In the context of Joshua, God “will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success” refers to Israel possessing the Promised Land. Being “prosperous” and having “success” is essentially being and having all that God wants for us, in which God is glorified. The key lies in “This book of the law”: the centrality of the Word of God in our lives, characterised by three commitments to the Word. **Comprehensive acquirement of God's Word** – “This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth”. For Joshua, “this book” was the Pentateuch written by Moses. But for us today, it is the whole Bible. When God gave us the revelation of who He is and His mind in the form of the whole Bible, He expects us to grasp the whole Bible as much and as well as we can. Aphrahat, “the Persian sage” of the early 4<sup>th</sup> century, said this about the Bible: “For if the days of a person should be as many as all the days of the world from Adam to the end of the ages and he should sit and meditate on the Holy Scriptures, he would not comprehend all the force of the depths of the words.”<sup>10</sup> In the Hebrew theological mindset, the “mouth” (v.8) corresponds to the “heart” (Ps 19:14; Ro 10:10).

### ■ APPLICATION

What will I do in order to grasp the whole Bible as much and as well I can?

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### ■ 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 let God's Word be central in their lives

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

<sup>10</sup> Thomas Oden, general editor, *Ancient Christian Devotional: A Year of Weekly Readings* (IVP, 2007), 7



SATURDAY, 10 DECEMBER 2016

## Centrality of God's Word (2)

### ■ SCRIPTURE

Joshua 1:7-8

### ■ OBSERVATION

What should characterise the meditation and application of the Word of God according to verses 7 to 8?

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### DEEPER REFLECTION

The Word of God ought to be central in our lives, characterised by three commitments to the Word. To have a comprehensive acquirement of God's Word, there must be a **constant assimilation of God's Word** – “meditate on it day and night” (v.8). When people asked me, “How can I get deep into the Word?” I usually give them a one word answer: “Time.” And two kinds of time: devotion of time and duration of time – time given at a point in time with consistency and over a period of time with tenacity. But heart and time go together. When we have the heart for the Word, we will give time to the Word. God's Word is compared to food (Dt 8:3); so the question is, “How hungry am I?” Let our minds be so oriented with Scripture that thinking Scripture becomes our second nature. It ought to be this way, simply because Scripture is the Word of God. **Careful alignment to God's Word** – “be careful to do according to all that is written in it” (v.8). This means asking, “What does Scripture say?” (cf. Ro 4:3) in every life situation. If this is not in your dominant consciousness, then start asking the question with disciplined consciousness.

### ■ APPLICATION

How do I show that the Word of God is of critical importance in my life?

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### ■ 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:



SUNDAY, 11 DECEMBER 2016

■ SCRIPTURE

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■ OBSERVATION

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■ APPLICATION

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■ PRAYER

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THE PAST WEEK

REVIEW

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

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What gave me life and what drained me?

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How was the Spirit of God at work?

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**REFLECT**

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

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**RESPOND**

What is one thing I need to do in light of what God is saying?

**COMMIT IN PRAYER**


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**FAMILY DEVOTIONAL**

**December 2016 – Week 2**

**HELMET OF SALVATION**

**Guard our minds to think about the wonderful hope in Him.**

*Scripture: Ephesians 6:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:8-11*

**ACTIVITY BITE**

Ask a few adults what their hopes are for the future, with regard to their lives, families and work. Get them to explain to you why these hopes are important and how they want to achieve them.

**CHAT TIME**

Q1: Do most people hope for a good future? Why or why not?

Q2: What are some things that you hope for in your future with God?

Q3: Are you sure that you will receive what you hope for in your future with God? ("I'm not sure" or "I'm sure".)

**LEARNING POINT**

A Roman soldier's helmet protects his head from getting injured. Without it, a serious blow to the head can cause him to lose the fight. Paul uses the helmet analogy to help us understand that we need to guard our minds concerning how we think about God and His good future for us. When we wear the helmet of salvation every day, we will not allow wrong thoughts to discourage and deceive us into thinking that God does not care for us. So, by knowing that God has planned good things for our future, we can rejoice and give thanks to Jesus all the time. We can serve Him with all our hearts and might. The best way to keep our minds thinking right is to keep trusting God's Word.

**ACTION POINT**

Write down all your hopes for yourself, your family, friends, school or country in your journal. Go to God in prayer and tell Him about your hopes. Tell your parents what you have hoped for in God so that they can pray along with you.

**PRAYER POWER**

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

Heavenly Father, thank You for the wonderful hope that You have given us in Jesus Christ. Please help me to trust Your good plans for my life now and in the future. In Jesus' name. Amen.



MONDAY, 12 DECEMBER 2016

## Prayer in Spiritual Warfare

### ■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 6:10-18

### ■ OBSERVATION

How is prayer in verse 18 theologically related to the content of verses 10 to 17?

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### DEEPER REFLECTION

Paul does not present prayer as a seventh weapon in the full armour of God, but as foundational and crucial to deploying all the six weapons (vv.14-17). At any time when a particular weapon is used, it has to be used prayerfully. While the six weapons are dependent on prayer, we cannot delink prayer from them. In other words, we cannot just pray and ignore or neglect truth, righteousness, the Gospel of peace, faith, salvation and the Word of God. Prayer together with the six weapons are all in one package. “Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might” (v.10) is most fundamental in spiritual warfare. It is in this position and reality that we “stand firm” against the attacks of the devil with the divine armour (vv.11-14a). It is through prayer – humble and utter dependence on God – that God empowers us to be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Prayer for divine empowerment in spiritual warfare here has theological continuity from Paul’s prayer earlier for knowledge of the surpassing greatness of God’s power towards us (Eph 1:19-21), and “to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in your inner being” (Eph 3:16).

### ■ APPLICATION

How do I show that prayer is of critical importance in my life?

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### ■ PRAYER

*Heavenly Father, hear me as I pray and seek Your face. Pay attention to my struggles, weaknesses and groaning. Listen to my cry for help, my King and my God, for I pray to no one but You. Listen to my voice in the morning, O God. Each morning I bring my requests to You and wait expectantly. For You know what I need even before I ask You. Amen.*

### PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:



TUESDAY, 13 DECEMBER 2016

## Praying in the Spirit (1)

### ■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 6:18; Romans 8:26-27

### ■ OBSERVATION

What does it mean to “pray in the Spirit” (v.18; Ro 8:26-27)?

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### DEEPER REFLECTION

Paul has a particular theological emphasis in “pray in the Spirit”: When we pray it has to be praying “in the Spirit”. That is the nature of prayer according to divine design. The Holy Spirit is the presence of God. For the psalmist, to be cast away from “Your presence” is God taking from him “Your Holy Spirit” (Ps 51:11), and to go away from “Your Spirit” is to flee from “Your presence” (Ps 139:7). In Ephesians, the “dwelling of God” in us is “in the Spirit” (Eph 2:21-22). And “our access” into the presence of God – through prayer – is “in one Spirit” (Eph 2:18). Prayer and the presence of God are inseparable, thus “pray in the Spirit”. And God’s presence in us and with us in Christ is a relational presence. In practice, we can focus on the act of praying without being consciously conscious of the person of God and His relational presence with us. And to “pray in the Spirit” also means the Holy Spirit prompting us to pray, directing us whom to pray for and what to pray, and energising us to pray. Oftentimes “we do not know how to pray as we should”, and this is where “the Spirit helps our weakness” (Ro 8:26). And praying in the Spirit does include praying in tongues (1 Co 14:14-15).

### ■ APPLICATION

What is praying in the Spirit like in my life?

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### ■ 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:



WEDNESDAY, 14 DECEMBER 2016

## Praying in the Spirit (2)

### ■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 6:17-18; 5:18

### ■ OBSERVATION

How are “filled with the Spirit” (Eph 5:18), “the sword of the Spirit” (v.17) and “pray in the Spirit” (v.18) theologically linked in Ephesians?

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### DEEPER REFLECTION

To be able to “pray in the Spirit” we need to be “filled with the Holy Spirit” (Eph 5:18), as theologically implied in the larger context of Ephesians. “The sword of the Spirit” (v.17) is followed immediately by “pray in the Spirit”. This indicates the vital place of the Word of God in praying in the Spirit. In “with all prayer and petition” (v. 18), Paul is thinking of “every conceivable form of prayer”<sup>11</sup> – with “prayer” indicating “prayer in general”<sup>12</sup> and “petition” referring to “asking God to fulfil various requests”<sup>13</sup>. Nonetheless, the two terms are “used synonymously”<sup>14</sup>. This should remind us not to emphasise certain forms of prayer or certain ways of praying as “effective prayer”. We can be so pragmatic and “productivity” oriented as to advocating certain “effective prayer” formulas. Similarly, we also cannot be dogmatic about the postures of prayer. Scripture shows examples of kneeling (Eph 3:14), standing (Ne 9:1-2), sitting (2 Sa 7:1) and even being amid human conversation (Ne 2:4-5). What is important is that we pray as the Spirit directs us and we pray from the heart. Do take heed that we can do everything right in God’s eyes and yet be wrong in the heart (2 Ch 25:2).

### ■ APPLICATION

What changes do I need make in my understanding of prayer?

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### ■ PRAYER

*Father, teach me to pray in the Spirit. According to the riches of Your glory, strengthen me with power through Your Spirit in my inner being so that Christ will dwell in my heart as Lord and King. Fill me with the Holy Spirit and make the Word of Christ dwell richly in my heart, that I may pray as the Spirit directs according to Your will. Amen.*

### PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

<sup>11</sup> Clinton. E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Zondervan, 2010), 464

<sup>12</sup> Clinton. E. Arnold, 464

<sup>13</sup> Clinton. E. Arnold, 464

<sup>14</sup> Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Apollos, 1999), 484



THURSDAY, 15 DECEMBER 2016

## Praying in the Spirit (3)

### ■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 6:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:17

### ■ OBSERVATION

What does it mean to pray “at all times” (v.18; 1 Th 5:17)?

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### DEEPER REFLECTION

To pray “at all times” or “pray without ceasing” (1 Th 5:17) certainly does not mean we do nothing else but pray. Rather, it is a spirit constantly oriented towards God, being conscious of His presence and in continual communion with Him. In such a spirit, we respond to needs and crises by immediately bringing them to God in prayer. It is as Church Father Clement of Alexandria puts it: “The spiritual man does not use wordy prayer by his mouth. For he has learned to ask of the Lord what is necessary. In every place, therefore, but not ostensibly and visibly to the multitudes, he will pray. While engaged in walking, in conversation, while in silence, while engaged in reading and in works according to reason, he prays in every situation.”<sup>15</sup> “His whole life is prayer and conversation with God.”<sup>16</sup> Perhaps, “How much time do you spend in prayer?” may be a wrong question to ask. And we are in continual communion with the Heavenly Father who “knows what you need before you ask Him” (Mt 6:8). And in times when we do not know how to pray (Ro 8:26), our prayer could be just “Lord, my sighing is not hidden from You” (Ps 38:9).

### ■ APPLICATION

How will I go about cultivating the spirit of praying at all times?

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### ■ 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:

<sup>15</sup> David W. Bercot, editor, *A Dictionary of Early Church Beliefs* (Hendrickson, 1998), 529

<sup>16</sup> David W. Bercot, 529



FRIDAY, 16 DECEMBER 2016

## Praying in the Spirit (4)

### ■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 6:18; Colossians 4:2

### ■ OBSERVATION

What does it mean to be “on the alert with all perseverance” in praying in the Spirit at all times (v.18)?

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### DEEPER REFLECTION

“Watch” and “stay alert” in praying in the Spirit at all times (v.18). “Watch” means basically “lie awake, pass sleepless nights”<sup>17</sup>. “Watch” here is an eschatological posture, as Jesus exhorts us to “be alert” (Mk 13:33; Lk 21:36). So we are to be “alert and attentive to constant prayer”<sup>18</sup> in light of the increasing difficulties in the last days (cf. 2 Ti 3:1) with an ongoing sense of expectancy of Christ returning anytime. Being attentive to prayer is one way of walking carefully and wisely, making the most of our time, in light of the present evil days (Eph 5:15).<sup>19</sup> And we are to pray with “perseverance” or persistence – that is, “be zealous in [our] devotion to prayer”<sup>20</sup>. Paul gives the similar exhortation elsewhere: be “faithful in prayer” (Ro 12:12, NIV), “continue steadfastly in prayer” (Col 4:2, ESV). Jesus teaches that we should pray “at all times” and “not lose heart” and “give up” (Lk 18:1). We are to pray “for all God’s people”. This underlines “the corporate nature of spiritual warfare”<sup>21</sup>, with Christians “arming each other through prayer”<sup>22</sup>. This means building the church in unity to maturity through ministry with spiritual gifts (Eph 4:1-16) must be undergirded by praying for and with one another.

### ■ APPLICATION

What challenges do I face in being watchful and staying alert in prayer?

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### ■ 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 grow in praying in the Spirit

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

<sup>17</sup> Frank Thielman, *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Baker, 2010), 434

<sup>18</sup> Frank Thielman, 434

<sup>19</sup> Frank Thielman, 434

<sup>20</sup> Frank Thielman, 434

<sup>21</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, 465

<sup>22</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, 465



SATURDAY, 17 DECEMBER 2016

## Praying for Kingdom Advancement

### ■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 6:19-20

### ■ OBSERVATION

What do Paul's prayer requests in verses 19 to 20 reveal about him?

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### DEEPER REFLECTION

Paul asked the Ephesians to pray for him (vv.19-20) in the context of praying in spiritual warfare. **Praying for boldness:** Boldness was quite characteristic of Paul in preaching the Gospel (Ac 9:27-28; 13:46; 14:3; 19:8). However, he had moments when he was “in weakness, in fear and in much trembling” (1 Co 2:3) when God encouraged him (“Do not fear”, Ac 18:9). Paul requested prayer for “boldness” so as to “speak boldly” (vv.19-20). As a prisoner (v.20a; cf. Eph 3:1; 4:1), Paul was about “to stand in a tribune in Rome before Emperor Nero and all of the magistrates and defend himself against the charges brought against him”<sup>23</sup>. He saw this as a great opportunity to “make known the mystery of the gospel” (v.19). But, he was “struggling somewhat with feelings of intimidation and fear”<sup>24</sup>. **Praying for utterance:** In such “a profoundly intimidating atmosphere”<sup>25</sup>, it is “understandable that he would be tempted either not to explain the gospel at all, or in explaining it to leave out critical elements that might be politically sensitive”<sup>26</sup>. Thus Paul wanted “divine leading and strength to put words together in a timely and powerful way”<sup>27</sup>.

### ■ APPLICATION

How does Paul needing God to give him boldness and utterance in preaching the Gospel encourage me?

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### ■ 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:

<sup>23</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, 467

<sup>24</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, 467

<sup>25</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, 466-67

<sup>26</sup> Frank Thielman, 435

<sup>27</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, 466



SUNDAY, 18 DECEMBER 2016

■ SCRIPTURE

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■ OBSERVATION

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■ APPLICATION

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■ PRAYER

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THE PAST WEEK

REVIEW

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

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What gave me life and what drained me?

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How was the Spirit of God at work?

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**REFLECT**

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

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**RESPOND**

What is one thing I need to do in light of what God is saying?

**COMMIT IN PRAYER**


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**FAMILY DEVOTIONAL**

**December 2016 – Week 3**

**SWORD OF THE SPIRIT**

**God's Word is the most powerful weapon against Satan.**

*Scripture: Ephesians 6:17; Matthew 4:1-11; Hebrews 4:12*

**ACTIVITY BITE**

Have everyone make an imaginary sword out of some pieces of paper. Boast to each other about your swords and say why you think yours is the most powerful sword.

**CHAT TIME**

Q1: What makes a sword a powerful weapon?

Q2: According to Matthew 4:1-11, how did Jesus counter-attack Satan?

Q3: What kind of attack we can expect from Satan and how can God's Word protect us from his attack?

**LEARNING POINT**

The Roman soldier's sword is a very important tool for attacking and defending. To keep it powerful, he needs to sharpen it and use it daily. The Word of God is the sword of the Spirit. It is a powerful weapon against all the weapons of Satan. Hebrews 4:12 says that "the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires" (NLT). It is able to cut through all the lies that we hear from the television, the Internet, magazines or the world, and reveal the truth according to God's Word. But to be able to know the difference between the truth and lies, we need to read the Bible and memorise the Scriptures regularly to keep our swords sharp.

**ACTION POINT**

Start by choosing a Bible verse. Memorise it throughout the week and recite it to your parents. Discuss with them how this verse can be applied in your life.

**PRAYER POWER**

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

Thank you, God, for giving us Your Word as the powerful weapon against Satan. Help me understand Your Word as I read it daily because I want to sharpen this sword of mine. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.



MONDAY, 19 DECEMBER 2016

## God's Faithfulness

### ■ SCRIPTURE

2 Samuel 7:15-16; 2 Kings 25:27-30

### ■ OBSERVATION

How does God express His faithfulness to His chosen people?

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### DEEPER REFLECTION

The peak of Israel's glory was displayed during the momentous reign of King Solomon, where nations which King David had conquered continued to pay tribute to Solomon. At that peak of Solomon's kingdom, Israel was magnificently filled with prosperity and wisdom that was acknowledged by the surrounding nations. Evidently, Israel's splendor was an expression of God's faithfulness to the Davidic covenant. However, who could ever imagine that Israel would stray away from God, be divided and eventually be conquered and sent into exile by King Nebuchadnezzar? Painfully, such a glorious nation ended in great shame and disgrace. Yet, it was in that lowest valley that the author of 2 Kings intentionally wanted readers to catch a glimpse of God's grace and faithfulness towards His chosen people. Indeed, even in the wilderness of that exilic period, God remained faithful to the Davidic covenant by divinely orchestrating the release of Jehoiachin from prison (the last legitimate King of Judah) through Evil-merodach, the king of Babylon. Amazingly, Evil-merodach did not merely extend grace by releasing Jehoiachin, but he also gave Jehoiachin a change in status – from living in a prison cell to dwelling in the royal court of Babylon. 2 Kings 25:27-30 clearly gives readers a sense of hope for God's promise to David that his kingdom shall be made sure forever. Truly, God is faithful to His promises.

### ■ APPLICATION

In what areas of my life do I need to trust in God's faithfulness and continually look forward with bold faith and unwavering hope?

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### ■ PRAYER

*Dear God, You are ever faithful to Your covenant promises. I confess I sometimes easily lose sight of your faithfulness when my life situations take a downturn or circumstances become unfavourable. Thank You for reminding me that You never take your eyes off Your covenant promises even for a moment, as You work out Your good purposes for Your people. O Lord, please help me to trust in Your faithfulness even when I go through tough times. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

### PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:



TUESDAY, 20 DECEMBER 2016

## God's Universal Salvation Plan

### ■ SCRIPTURE

Matthew 1:1-6

### ■ OBSERVATION

Which particular name(s) in these verses caught your attention? Why?

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### DEEPER REFLECTION

The genealogy of Jesus Christ begins with Abraham as he is the father of God's covenant people.<sup>28</sup> Judah is singled out from the rest of his brothers so as to point towards Jesus Christ who descended from Judah.<sup>29</sup> Yet, Christ did not just descend from the tribe of Judah so as to save God's covenant people, Israel. Anyone who reads this passage will probably find it strange to see four Gentile women's names – Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah – mentioned in a Jewish genealogy.<sup>30</sup> Intentionally, the Gospel writer, Matthew, is conveying to his Jewish audience that God is not only a God of the Jews (God's chosen people), but He has come to bring salvation to the whole world. Importantly, it is crucial to note these four women are not only Gentiles, but sinful women who had scandalous pasts: Tamar's incest with her father-in-law, Judah; Rahab's prostitution; Ruth's seduction of Boaz; and Bathsheba's adultery with David.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, God's ways are always gloriously redemptive and His redemption plan is extended not only to the Jews but to all humanity.

### ■ APPLICATION

Do I believe that God's salvific and redemptive plan is intended for all humanity, regardless of race, nationality and even the extent of one's sinfulness?

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### ■ 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:

<sup>28</sup> Grant R. Osborne, *Zondervan Exegetical Commentary Series, New Testament*, vol. v. 1, *Matthew* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2010), 63.

<sup>29</sup> Grant R. Osborne, *Zondervan Exegetical Commentary Series, New Testament*, vol. v. 1, *Matthew* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2010), 63.

<sup>30</sup> Grant R. Osborne, *Zondervan Exegetical Commentary Series, New Testament*, vol. v. 1, *Matthew* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2010), 63.

<sup>31</sup> Grant R. Osborne, *Zondervan Exegetical Commentary Series, New Testament*, vol. v. 1, *Matthew* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2010), 63.



WEDNESDAY, 21 DECEMBER 2016

## The Kingdom Is Here

### ■ SCRIPTURE

Genesis 12:1-3; Matthew 1:1-17

### ■ OBSERVATION

How is the main idea of verses 1 to 3 (i.e. blessed to be a blessing to the nations) revealed in Matthew 1:1-17?

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### DEEPER REFLECTION

The Intertestamental Period is the time between the last writings of the Old Testament and the appearance of Christ. During this period, the spirit of prophecy has ceased and the people of God are waiting eagerly for their Messiah. Although they have returned to the Promised Land after the exilic period, they have gone through many wars and were eventually lorded over by the Romans. Their mood is down and their anxiety is high, because the people of God believe that He would eventually send a Messiah to deliver them from Roman rule and re-establish the Davidic reign, as promised in 2 Samuel 7:11-16. Inevitably, the Jews were only interested in awaiting the restoration of their glorious Davidic Kingdom. It is so easy for the Jews to lose sight of verses 1 to 3, where Abram (including his descendants) is blessed to be a blessing to the nations. This genealogy of Jesus Christ is simply profound because even the Jews have not fully understood the concept of including the Gentiles in God's Kingdom. On that same note, it took a decade for Jesus' disciples to grasp the whole idea of bringing the salvation plan to all humanity. It was only after some Spirit-inspired encounters that the Gentile mission was finally actualised, as recorded in Acts 7-11.<sup>32</sup> Intentionally, Matthew began the genealogy of Jesus Christ with Abraham and ended his writing with the Great Commission, where Jesus commands His disciples to make disciples of all nations (Mt 28:19). In this way, all disciples of Christ are reminded that they are to be a blessing to the nations (vv.1-3).

### ■ APPLICATION

In what practical ways are you embracing and living out the principle in verses 1 to 3 that you are blessed to be a blessing to the nations?

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### ■ PRAYER

*Heavenly Father, You are worthy of praise, because You are gracious and merciful toward all peoples. From the beginning, You intended for the Gospel to be for all nations, and none is to be excluded from Your plan of salvation in Christ. Lord Jesus, I want to obey your command to carry the Gospel message to the nations. Please help me to do Your will when You send me to the people of other nations or when you bring them to me. Amen.*

### PRAYER POINTERS

**Give thanks:**

**Pray for leaders:**

**Pray for significant people:**

**Pray for those in need:**

**Pray for self:**

<sup>32</sup> Grant R. Osborne, *Zondervan Exegetical Commentary Series, New Testament, vol. v. 1, Matthew* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2010), 70.



THURSDAY, 22 DECEMBER 2016

## God's Divine Intervention

### ■ SCRIPTURE

Matthew 1:18-25

### ■ OBSERVATION

How is God's sovereign control seen in the conception of baby Jesus in the virgin Mary without Joseph deciding to divorce her?

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### DEEPER REFLECTION

Mary is discovered to be expecting during her engagement period with Joseph. Since Joseph is a righteous man, he decides to divorce Mary quietly. In the nick of time, God divinely intervenes by sending an angel to speak to Joseph in a dream. Interestingly, this divine intervention is not the only episode that showcases God's fulfillment of His plan. As stated in verse 22, "all this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet". The word, "fulfil"/"fulfilled" in reference to specific Old Testament prophecy is found in 10 other verses in the Gospel of Matthew (2:15, 17, 23; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:14, 35; 21:4; 27:9).<sup>33</sup> Indeed, God is sovereignly controlling and divinely orchestrating all events in history. Even though God seemed to be silent during the intertestamental period, He had not stopped working to fulfill His Word given through His prophets. According to some scholars, more than 300 messianic prophecies in the Old Testament have been fulfilled in the person and ministry of Jesus Christ. Indeed, as the writer of Hebrews wrote, "Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed the heir of all things, through whom also He created the world." (Heb 1:1-2).

### ■ APPLICATION

When situations are not rosy, can you trust that God is actively fulfilling His promises and divinely orchestrating the events in your life?

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### ■ 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:

<sup>33</sup> Grant R. Osborne, *Zondervan Exegetical Commentary Series, New Testament*, vol. v. 1, *Matthew* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2010), 78.



FRIDAY, 23 DECEMBER 2016

## Birth of Jesus Christ

### ■ SCRIPTURE

Luke 2:1-7

### ■ OBSERVATION

What was the political situation during the reign of Caesar Augustus when Jesus was born?

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### DEEPER REFLECTION

According to historical records, Jesus was born in Bethlehem instead of Nazareth because of a decree that was sent out by Caesar Augustus (who reigned from 31 B.C. to A.D. 14).<sup>34</sup> During that period, as recorded in verse 3, everyone was to be registered in his own town. In light of this, as Joseph came from the Davidic lineage, he had no choice but to travel with Mary, who was heavily pregnant, all the way to Judea where Bethlehem stood on a mountain 2,654 feet (809 m) high.<sup>35</sup> Just at that moment, the time came for Mary to give birth to Jesus Christ. On the surface, the political situation seemed to be determining the location of Jesus' birth to be in Bethlehem. However, it is vital to note that God was actually the divine and unseen Director who was directing the entire plot. God determined that Jesus was to be born in Bethlehem, so as to fulfil the Old Testament prophecy in Micah 5:2, quoted in Matthew 2:1-6.<sup>36</sup>

### ■ APPLICATION

As you keep abreast of current developments around the world, can you trust that God's will in the often messy, chaotic and depressing world situation is totally sovereign, gloriously redemptive, sometimes puzzling but always perfect?

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### ■ 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 keep trusting in God's perfect will despite major challenges facing the church

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

<sup>34</sup> *Esv: Study Bible*, esv text ed. (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Bibles, 2007), 1947.

<sup>35</sup> *Esv: Study Bible*, esv text ed. (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Bibles, 2007), 1947.

<sup>36</sup> *Esv: Study Bible*, esv text ed. (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Bibles, 2007), 1947.



SATURDAY, 24 DECEMBER 2016

## Let Your Light Shine

### ■ SCRIPTURE

Luke 2:22-32; Matthew 5:13-16

### ■ OBSERVATION

How is the light of Jesus revealed to all peoples and nations today?

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### DEEPER REFLECTION

The Intertestamental Period was an oppressive season for God's people. In such an intense time, the nation looks more eagerly for their Deliverer.<sup>37</sup> Inspired by the Holy Spirit, when Simeon sees Jesus, he praises God and declares that God's salvation is not only to one chosen nation but to all; Jesus is the light not merely to the Jews but also to the Gentiles.<sup>38</sup> Today, Jesus shines in and through Christians because they are called to be the light of the world (Mt 5:14). With reference to Matthew 5:15, it makes no sense to light the lamp and then put it under a basket, because the sole purpose of the lamp is to shine its light in dark surroundings. Likewise, Christians must understand and walk in their Great Commission mandate, to shine for Jesus and be a blessing wherever God sends them. The declaration of Jesus as the light of the nations should not just be on the lips of Simeon but also on every believer. The praises of Jesus as the salvation of the world should not be applauded as a mere commercial and festive highlight. Every believer must begin to shine the light of Jesus, brighter than the dazzling Christmas lights. We must go beyond our comfort zones because we are blessed to be a blessing.

### ■ APPLICATION

In the upcoming new year of 2017, how can you shine the light of Jesus more intentionally before others so that they may see your good works and give glory to God?

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### ■ 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:

<sup>37</sup> Leon Morris, *The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, [rev. ed., vol. 3, *The Gospel According to Luke: an Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2002), 97.

<sup>38</sup> Leon Morris, *The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, [rev. ed., vol. 3, *The Gospel According to Luke: an Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2002), 97.



SUNDAY, 25 DECEMBER 2016

■ SCRIPTURE

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■ OBSERVATION

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■ APPLICATION

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■ PRAYER

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THE PAST WEEK

REVIEW

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

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What gave me life and what drained me?

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How was the Spirit of God at work?

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**REFLECT**

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

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**RESPOND**

What is one thing I need to do in light of what God is saying?

**COMMIT IN PRAYER**


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**FAMILY DEVOTIONAL**

**December 2016 – Week 4**

**IMMANUEL, GOD WITH US**

**The Christmas season brings the light and hope of Jesus.**

*Scripture: Matthew 1:18-25; Ezekiel 36:24-28*

**ACTIVITY BITE**

Do this activity at night with the lights switched off or using blindfolds to cover your eyes. Try to feel your way around the room by yourself. Do you find it easy? Next, get another person to join you in the dark and hold each other's hands as you feel your way around again.

**CHAT TIME**

- Q1: How do you feel when you hold someone's hands, instead of being alone in the dark?
- Q2: According to Ezekiel 36:24-28, what did God promise to do for His people when He chose them?
- Q3: Jesus' name "Immanuel" means "God with us". What does this mean to you?

**LEARNING POINT**

Christmas is one of the most loved festive seasons around the world. But not many people understand its true meaning. Sin has separated us from God, leaving us lost without His love. Yet in His great love, God sent Jesus to make a way for us to return to His presence. The birth of Jesus fulfils God's promise of sending us a Saviour. He is the light in the darkness for man. Jesus continues to remind us of His promise to be with us always (Mt 28:20). We need Him every day because there will be many challenges and difficulties in our lifetime. The next time you celebrate Christmas, do not just think about the presents you will receive but also think of Jesus holding our hands tightly, as the greatest gift of God's promise to be with us.

**ACTION POINT**

Get a gift card and write your name on it. Put this card into a box and wrap it with wrapping paper. Present it to God as a sign of your gratitude for the best gift He has given us – Jesus Christ our Saviour.

**PRAYER POWER**

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

Lord Jesus, You are so wonderful. Thank You for staying close to me every day of my life. I want to praise You with all my life. May Your light shine brightly so that all people will see Your love this Christmas season. Amen.



MONDAY, 26 DECEMBER 2016

## Build on Firm Foundation

### ■ SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 2:9-3-6

### ■ OBSERVATION

God is the builder of a “house”. What is the “house” and what is its foundation?

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### DEEPER REFLECTION

“And we are [God’s] house if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope.” (v.6). Our confidence is not in things of this world. Our hope is not in religious observances. For people to be God’s house (i.e. God’s people), their foundation is not a mere human person like Moses, but God’s Son, Jesus Christ, who is both fully God (“for whom and by whom all things exist”, v.10) and fully human (“Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things”, v.14). The foundation of God’s house is “Jesus, crowned with glory and honour because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.” (v.9). God’s people are to hold fast our confidence in who Jesus is! God’s people are to hold fast our boasting in our hope in what Jesus has done for us! Jesus is the “merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God”, who has made “propitiation for the sins of the people” (v.17). In all that the Church does, whether in edifying the believers or in evangelising the unbelievers, the Church is to build on Jesus Christ, the sole foundation of God’s house. We believe in Christ, exalt Christ, proclaim Christ, love Christ, obey Christ, follow Christ and serve Christ! There is no other firm foundation for building God’s house. All other pseudo-foundations are sinking sand; houses built on these will collapse under stress and testing. But the house built on Jesus Christ will stand forever.

### ■ APPLICATION

What is God’s role for me in building Covenant EFC on the foundation of Jesus Christ?

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### ■ PRAYER

*Father God, thank You for giving us Your Son, Jesus Christ, as the firm foundation for Your worldwide Church. May we, Your children, chosen and adopted in Christ, hold fast our confidence and our boasting in the Lord. Please help me to do my part in building Your Church always only on Christ. In His name, I pray. Amen.*

### PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:



TUESDAY, 27 DECEMBER 2016

## Arise in Bold Faith

### ■ SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 11:1, 6-13

### ■ OBSERVATION

What is faith and how is it related to sight?

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### DEEPER REFLECTION

Our God is the Almighty Creator God who speaks and acts in time and space. In His perfect righteousness, God does not lie; He does not promise and then fail to fulfil His Word. In the course of human history, God has warned about future events, called individuals to action and promised to do even the seemingly impossible. God also promised future blessings for His people. In Hebrews 11, we are reminded of numerous Old Testament saints who were heroes of faith. On the basis of God's promises, they were convinced in their day of what would be theirs in the future. They could see the unseen. What about us? When God promises something better to come, do we have the assurance of what we hope for? Do we have the conviction regarding the things that are yet unseen? Or are our decisions and actions overwhelmingly determined by what we can see in the physical realm? When God warns us about the coming judgment, do we believe that God wants to use us for the saving of households through the Good News of Jesus Christ? When God calls us to take a certain course of action, do we order our lives and act accordingly even when onlookers consider us foolish? Do we have eyes of faith to see the unseen and to greet them from afar? A bold faith is one that trusts God to bring things to pass in accordance with His will, in His perfect timing. May we have eyes to see, faith to believe and courage to act!

### ■ APPLICATION

How are you responding to the promises that God has given to you personally and to Covenant EFC's leaders?

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### ■ 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:



WEDNESDAY, 28 DECEMBER 2016

## Sow for Great Fruitfulness

### ■ SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 11:12; Romans 4:13-25

### ■ OBSERVATION

What are the fruits of Abraham's life, and what were his and God's respective roles in bringing about that fruitfulness?

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### DEEPER REFLECTION

To believe God for many physical descendants was a huge accomplishment on Abraham's part. It took an enormous amount of faith in God's promise. "In hope he believed against hope" (Ro 4:18). Abraham's 100-year-old body was "as good as dead" (Ro 4:19; v.12). And over his many years of marriage towered "the barrenness of Sarah's womb" (Ro 4:19). Friends had reasons to regard Abraham as crazy. It was truly against all odds. But Abraham did not waver in his belief in God's promise. Through his continual praise and worship of God, Abraham "grew strong in his faith" (Ro 4:20), "fully convinced that God was able to do what He had promised" (Ro 4:21). Indeed God is the one "who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist" (Ro 4:17). The fulfillment of the promise was fully God's accomplishment. What God did was inconceivable and causes our mouths to open in awesome wonder and great amazement. It was not merely physical descendants, but spiritual descendants that God had in mind for Abraham! No wonder God said they would be "as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore" (v.12). How great is our God! So we tell others about God and what He has done, so that they can also "believe in Him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification" (Ro 4:25). Let's keep sowing the Gospel for the fruitfulness of countless men, women and children throughout the world, having their faith counted to them as righteousness.

### ■ APPLICATION

How have you been sowing the Gospel among your friends and relatives this year? Ask God to help you renew and expand your efforts in 2017.

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### ■ PRAYER

*Heavenly Father, thank You for the opportunities you have given me this year to share Christ with my friends and relatives. I confess that many times I was too self-absorbed or fearful to make the most of those opportunities. They are people I care about, Lord. In the new year, please help me to share my life and the Gospel with them and others. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

### PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:



THURSDAY, 29 DECEMBER 2016

## Impacting Our Singapore

### ■ SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 12:1-17

### ■ OBSERVATION

Why are Christians exhorted to “look to Jesus” and to “consider Him (vv.2,3)?”

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### DEEPER REFLECTION

It does not take much to predict that Christians in Singapore and elsewhere will face increasing hostility and persecution from secular activists and Islamist militants in the years to come. Those groups seek to use laws and violence as means to achieve their political ends. Other forces hostile to the Christian faith include narcissism, hedonism, materialism and nihilism. Christian Singaporeans will have to endure their attacks, opposition and challenges. As such, the Church in Singapore will have to strengthen themselves in the Lord: “Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed” (vv.12-13). As God’s children, we must pursue peace and holiness in the face of intensifying challenges by adversaries to the reality of God and the authority of God’s Word. When tempted to use violence or practise sin, we must look to Jesus and follow His example of peace as His people who are set apart from the world. When tempted to react in anger and resentment, we must look to God for the grace that He gives. Then our nation will see clearly a distinctive people of God who do not operate according to the world’s principles, nor live for the temporal, nor gratify the desires of the flesh. The righteousness of Christ will shine through Christians; their fruit of righteousness will be evident for all to see. In this way, the Church will show our nation that Jesus is “the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through [Him]” (Jn 14:6).

### ■ APPLICATION

In what ways do you think the Church in Singapore can impact our beloved nation for Christ?

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### ■ 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, 30 DECEMBER 2016

## Discipling the Nations

### ■ SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 12:18-29

### ■ OBSERVATION

What did God mean when He promised, “Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens” (v.26)?

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### DEEPER REFLECTION

In the past, Moses and the people of Israel came to Mount Sinai, which represented the law of God and the judgement of God. There was the terrifying sight of fire, darkness, gloom and thunderstorm with lightning. The sound of a trumpet and God’s voice brought fear to the hearts of the people. In contrast, Christians have now come to “Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem” (v.22), with the beautiful and glorious sight of worshipping angels and saints (from all nations and historical periods) who have died and gone to heaven. God, the judge of all, is present, but so is Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant in His own blood. Jesus’ blood speaks of God’s mercy and grace towards sinners, and God’s forgiveness of their sins. God has made His offer of total pardon to all who believe in Jesus who died on the cross as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of humankind. If people refuse God and reject His offer now, there will be no escape from the coming wrath and judgment of a holy and righteous God against sinners. When the appointed day of judgment comes, God will shake both the earth and the heavens one final time. It will be a shaking as never before, such that nothing in all creation will remain except the unshakeable kingdom of God, comprising God’s people who worship Him in reverence and awe through Jesus Christ, their Lord and Saviour. Wherever they are living on the earth, all those people who do not have faith in Jesus Christ will be removed in the fearful, terrifying and unbearable judgment of God.

### ■ APPLICATION

How can you contribute to the work of helping other Asian nationals receive “a kingdom that cannot be shaken” (v.28)?

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### ■ 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 keep seeking God’s guidance for  
Covenant EFC’s discipling ministry**

**Pray for significant people:**

**Pray for those in need:**

**Pray for self:**



SATURDAY, 31 DECEMBER 2016

## Growing Godly Generations

### ■ SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 13:1-7

### ■ OBSERVATION

What kind of Christian leaders are we to remember and imitate?

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### DEEPER REFLECTION

All Christian leaders in families and local churches have the responsibility of raising the next generation in the ways of God. Leaders like parents, pastors, CG leaders and ministry leaders have a duty to teach their family and church members the Good News of Jesus and the commands of the Lord. But teaching by telling is not enough (“those who spoke to you the word of God”, v.7a). Christian leaders must teach by modelling the Christian life (“Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith”, v.7b). Only then can the leaders grow godly generations after them. Each Christian leader has the God-given duty to live a life of authentic discipleship before the family members and/or church members whom they lead. Such a discipleship lifestyle includes loving God’s people, showing hospitality to strangers and remembering those who are in prison and those suffering physical mistreatment. Christian leaders must hold marriage in high honour, defend the meaning and sanctity of marriage, and uphold the vows of their own marriage covenant. The leader must not commit sexual immorality or adultery. This goes beyond the physical act to lustful thoughts and emotional affairs. Money must never become an idol, loved and worshipped by Christian leaders. The way they handle money and view material possessions provide clear evidence of strong contentment with what they have. They have advanced much in learning to find their ultimate satisfaction and security in their relationship with God, who has promised never to leave nor forsake them. They constantly have current testimonies to share about how the Lord has helped, strengthened and protected them. Such is the quality of their walk with God and daily dependence on Him.

### ■ APPLICATION

How can you develop as a Christian leader who effectively grows godly generations after you?

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### ■ 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:





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