



01/2016

DEVOTIONAL JOURNAL

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of our Lord Jesus Christ, who
has blessed us in Christ with
every spiritual blessing in the
heavenly places...

EPHESIANS 1:3 (ESV)



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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.

- **O**bservation – 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.*
- **A**pplication – 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.
- **P**ray – 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

JANUARY/FEBRUARY

BEAUTIFUL SAVIOUR

Verse

Jesus beautiful Saviour
 God of all majesty, risen King
 Lamb of God, holy and righteous
 Blessed Redeemer, bright morning star

Pre-chorus

All the heavens shout Your praise
 All creation bows to worship You

Chorus

How wonderful how beautiful
 Name above ev'ry name exalted high
 How wonderful how beautiful
 Jesus Your name name above ev'ry name Jesus

Bridge

I will sing forever
 Jesus I love You
 Jesus I love You

Ending

Jesus beautiful Saviour
 (Repeat)

Words & Music: Henry Seeley
 Year & Publisher: © 2006 Planetshakers Ministries Int. Inc.
 (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing (IMI))
 For use solely with the SongSelect Terms of Use.
 All rights reserved. www.ccli.com
 CCLI License #324618

YOUR GRACE IS SUFFICIENT

Chorus

Your grace is sufficient for me
 Your strength is made perfect when I am weak
 All that I cling to I lay at Your feet
 Your grace is sufficient for me

Verse 1

I'm no longer striving to merit Your love
 I rest in Your promise to me
 That all of my sins have been washed in Your blood
 Your mercy is all that I need

Verse 2

You see me as righteous
 Because of the blood
 That made the atonement for me
 Your mercy has triumphed
 Where I should be judged
 So now, by Your grace, I am free

Words & Music: Martin Nystrom
 Year & Publisher: © 1991 Integrity's Hosanna! Music
 (Admin. by EMI Christian Music Publishing)
 CCLI License #324618

SCANDAL OF GRACE

Verse 1

Grace, what have you done?
Murdered for me on that cross
Accused in absence of wrong
My sin washed away in your blood

Too much to make sense of it all
I know that your love breaks my fall
The scandal of grace, you died in my place
So my soul will live

Chorus

Oh to be like you
(To) Give all I have just to know you
Jesus, there's no one besides you
Forever the hope in my heart

Verse 2

Death, where is your sting?
Your power is as dead as my sin
The cross has taught me to live
In mercy, my heart now to sing

The day and its trouble shall come
I know that your strength is enough
The scandal of grace, you died in my place
So my soul will live

Bridge

And it's all because of you, Jesus
It's all because of you, Jesus
It's all because of your love
And my soul will live

Words & Music: Joel Houston | Matt Crocker
Year & Publisher: © 2012 Hillsong Music Publishing
CCLI Song #324618

JUST AS I AM

Verse 1

Just as I am without one plea
But that Thy blood was shed for me
And that Thou bidst me come to Thee
O Lamb of God, I come, I come

Verse 2

Just as I am and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot
To Thee whose blood can cleanse each spot
O Lamb of God, I come, I come

Chorus

I come broken to be mended
I come wounded to be healed
I come desperate to be rescued
I come empty to be filled

I come guilty to be pardoned
By the blood of Christ the Lamb
And I'm welcomed with open arms, praise God
Just as I am

Verse 3

Just as I am I would be lost
But mercy and grace my freedom bought
And now to glory in Your cross
O Lamb of God, I come, I come

Ending

Praise God just as I am
Just as I am

Words & Music: Charlotte Elliott | David Moffitt | Sue C. Smith | Travis Cottrell |
William Batchelder Bradbury
Year & Publisher: © 2009 CCTB Music (Admin. by Universal Music Publishing
MGB Australia Pty Limited); First Hand Revelation Music (Admin. by Universal
Music Publishing MGB Australia Pty Limited); Universal Music - Brentwood Benson
Publishing (Admin. by Universal Music Publishing MGB Australia Pty Limited)
CCLI License #324618

YOU ALONE

Verse

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

Chorus

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

Words & Music: Don Harris
 Year & Publisher: © 1990 Integrity's Hosanna! Music
 (Admin. by CopyCare Asia Ltd (Singapore Branch))
 CCLI License #324618

KNOWING YOU

Verse 1

All I once held dear, built my life upon
 All this world reveres and wars to own
 All I once thought gain I have counted loss
 Spent and worthless now compared to this

Chorus

Knowing You, Jesus, knowing You
 There is no greater thing
 You're my all, You're the best
 You're my joy, my righteousness
 And I love You, Lord

Verse 2

Now my heart's desire is to know You more
 To be found in You and known as Yours
 To possess by faith what I could not earn
 All surpassing gift of righteousness

Verse 3

O to know the power of Your risen life
 And to know You in Your sufferings
 To become like You in Your death, my Lord
 So with You to live and never die

Words & Music: Graham Kendrick
 Year & Publisher: © 1993 Make Way Music
 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
CCLI License # 324618

NO OTHER NAME

Verse 1

One Name
 Holds weight above them all
 His fame
 Outlasts the earth He formed
 His praise
 Resounds beyond the stars
 And echoes in our hearts
 The greatest One of all

Verse 2

His face
 Shines brighter than the sun
 His grace
 As boundless as His love
 He reigns
 With healing in His wings
 The King above all kings
 The greatest One of all

Chorus

Lift up our eyes, see the King has come
 Light of the world
 Reaching out for us

There is no other Name
 There is no other Name
 Jesus Christ our God oh

Seated on high the undefeated One
 Mountains bow down as we lift Him up

There is no other Name
 There is no other Name
 Jesus Christ our God oh

Verse 3

Find hope
 When all the world seems lost
 Behold
 The triumph of the cross

His power has trampled death and grave
 Our life found in His Name
 The greatest Name of all

Interlude

Jesus

Bridge

The earth will shake
 And tremble before Him
 Chains will break
 As heaven and earth sing
 Holy is the Name
 Holy is the Name of Jesus, Jesus, Jesus

Ending

There is no other Name
 There is no other Name
 Jesus

Words & Music: Joel Houston | Jonas Myrin
 Year & Publisher: © 2014 Hillsong Music
 CCLI License #324618

MAN OF SORROWS

Verse 1

Man of sorrows, Lamb of God
By His own betrayed
The sin of man and wrath of God
Has been on Jesus laid

Silent as He stood accused
Beaten mocked and scorned
Bowing to the Father's will
He took a crown of thorns

Chorus

Oh that rugged cross
My salvation
Where Your love poured out over me
Now my soul cries out
Hallelujah
Praise and honour unto Thee

Verse 2

Sent of heaven God's own Son
To purchase and redeem
And reconcile the very ones
Who nailed Him to that tree

Bridge

Now my debt is paid
It is paid in full
By the precious blood
That my Jesus spilled
Now the curse of sin
Has no hold on me
Whom the Son sets free
Oh is free indeed

Verse 3

See the stone is rolled away
Behold the empty tomb
Hallelujah God be praised
He's risen from the grave

Words & Music: Brooke Ligertwood | Matt Crocker
Year & Publisher: © 2012 Hillsong Music
CCLI License #324618

GIVE THANKS

Verse 1

Give thanks with a grateful heart
Give thanks to the Holy One
Give thanks because He's given
Jesus Christ His Son

Chorus

And now let the weak say I am strong
Let the poor say I am rich
Because of what the Lord has done for us
And now let the weak say I am strong
Let the poor say I am rich
Because of what the Lord has done for us

Ending

Give thanks

Words & Music: Henry Smith
Year & Publisher: © 1978 Integrity's Hosanna! Music
CCLI License #324618

YOUR GRACE IS ENOUGH

Verse 1

Great is your faithfulness O God
 You wrestle with the sinner's heart
 You lead us by still waters into mercy
 And nothing can keep us apart

Pre-chorus 1

So remember your people
 Remember your children
 Remember your promise, O God

Chorus 1

Your grace is enough
 Your grace is enough
 Your grace is enough for me

Verse 2

Great is your love and justice, God
 You use the weak to lead the strong
 You lead us in the song of your salvation
 And all your people sing along

Pre-chorus 2

So remember your people
 Remember your children
 Remember your promise, O God

Chorus 2

Your Grace is enough
 Heaven reaching down to us
 Your Grace is enough for me

God, I see your grace is enough
 I'm covered in your love
 Your grace is enough for me

Words & Music: Matt Maher
 Year & Publisher: © 2003 Thankyou Music CCLI License #324618

FOREVER

Verse 1

Give thanks to the Lord, our God and King,
 His love endures forever
 For He is good, He is above all things,
 His love endures forever
 Sing praise, sing praise

Verse 2

With a mighty hand and an outstretched arm
 His love endures forever
 For a life that's been reborn
 His love endures forever

Pre-chorus

Sing praise, sing praise
 Sing praise, sing praise

Chorus

Forever God is faithful
 Forever God is strong
 Forever God is with us
 Forever and ever

Verse 3

From the rising to the setting sun
 His love endures forever
 And by the grace of God we will carry on
 His love endures forever
 Sing praise, sing praise
 Sing praise, sing praise

Bridge

His love endures forever
 His love endures forever
 His love endures forever
 Forever

Words & Music: Chris Tomlin
 Year & Publisher: © 2001 sixsteps Music
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THE CHURCH BEYOND

LIVING IT OUT AND PASSING IT ON

BY REV EDMUND CHAN

LEADERSHIP MENTOR AND FOUNDER, GLOBAL ALLIANCE OF
INTENTIONAL DISCIPLE MAKING CHURCHES

*To Jesus and the Apostle Paul,
disciplemaking is the core mission of the church.*

Jesus said, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations” (Mt 28:18-20). Paul reiterated this disciplemaking mandate: “And the things you have heard of me in the presence of many witnesses, the same commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” (2 Ti 2:2)

The early disciples understood Jesus’ call to follow Him in a very specific way. It wasn’t merely following Him to a particular destination but towards a particular destiny. It was towards a Kingdom calling. It was to embrace His Kingdom values and vision.

That’s the heart of disciplemaking. It is a way of life.

This is what the Global Alliance of Intentional Disciple Making Churches is calling the church back to:

Following Jesus. And Passing It On!

Join me at the 2016 Global Discipleship Congress (GDC) Asia in Manila from 27 to 30 January 2016 for a time of learning from renowned speakers as well as inspiring and encouraging one another on what really matters.

My burden for the Church is that many Christians don’t pass on to faithful people the things they learn. Or worse,

“My burden for the Church is that many Christians don’t pass on to faithful people the things they learn. Or worse, they try to “pass it on” without “living it out!””

they try to “pass it on” without “living it out”! Often times, we live a life of inconsistency that compromises discipleship and truncates disciplemaking. GDC Asia 2016 seeks to address this need for the Asian Church.

Make time for it. God is on the move! Especially in Asia! It’s time for the Asian Church to arise in her disciplemaking mandate! Join us. A global discipleship movement is well on its way!

» PRAY

Pray for unprecedented outpouring of God’s Spirit to revive His people. (Ps 85:6, Isa 64:1-3)

Pray for unprecedented unity among God’s people in churches in Asia. (Ps 133, Mt 12:25)

Pray for deep conviction of sin and compromise when the Church in Asia practices cultural rather than biblical Christianity. (2 Co 7:10)

Pray for a holy fear of God to descend upon His Church and the Word of God to have its rightful place in the formation of values and behaviour. (Ac 5:11, 9:31)

Pray for leaders to be men and women of humility, integrity, authenticity and authority to be in places of national and regional influence. (1 Ti 4:11-16)

Pray for the work of darkness over the lives of leaders (e.g. disease, disunity, danger and disturbances) to be nullified and pushed back. (Eph 6:12-13)

Pray for the Church in Asia where Christianity is opposed – that God’s work will be unhindered in the midst of persecution and opposition and bear fruit. (Eph 6:18-20, Col 4:3-4)

“And the things you have heard of me in the presence of many witnesses, the same commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”

2 TIMOTHY 2:2



FRIDAY, 1 JANUARY 2016

Keep Watch (1): Challenges and Calling

NEW YEAR MESSAGE

■ SCRIPTURE

Acts 20:17-35

■ OBSERVATION

Why did Paul exhort the leaders of the church of Ephesus to pay attention to themselves, and to the flock just as he had done (vv. 26-31)?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

The Apostle Paul sets himself as a leadership example in facing challenges and walking in God's calling. He exhorted them neither merely as men, to care for their personal and families' well-being; nor merely as believers. Rather, they are ministers of the Gospel of grace, to take heed of their calling to care for others. How may we pay attention as believers or leaders? Regarding **time**, we should spend it rightly. Regarding **temperament**, we should be governed by His Spirit, not the flesh. Regarding **talents**, we should use and grow them for Kingdom service. Regarding **treasures**, we should be contented and not covet (v. 33). Regarding **teachings**, we should follow the Scriptures, the doctrines of Christ, which are sound and pure, and not be overtaken by heresies. All these are to direct ourselves and the flock unto grace, growth and godliness. Overt opposition and persecution are obvious, but distorted theology is harder to discern. The Apostle Paul discerned that false teachers will secretly enter the church, to harm the flock with twisted thinking and lead them away. Yet, let us search both within and without. A great enemy is our own deceptive hearts (Jer 17:9). We must pay attention to our inner lives, growth and maturity to become authentic disciples and intentional disciplemakers of *A Certain Kind*. The family is considered part of the self to pay attention to, because no one else can take our place in our families.

■ APPLICATION

What is an area I need to pay attention to in (a) my life and (b) my family; and what specific steps must I take?

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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:

Pay attention to growth of self, family and flock

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:



SATURDAY, 2 JANUARY 2016

Keep Watch (2): Confidence and Consecration

NEW YEAR MESSAGE

■ SCRIPTURE

Acts 20:28, Ephesians 1:7-14

■ OBSERVATION

What is the significance of Ephesians 1:7-10 which was written several years later by Paul in the light of his exhortation to their leaders in Acts 20:28?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

Our confidence as believers is in the love, redemption and salvation of Christ, who bought us by His blood. Yet we often forget how our sins have been cleansed and forgiven. We need reminders! The redemption was not by an ordinary man, but through the life and blood of Christ, who is truly God as well as man. For Christ alone is adequate as the price to redeem us from sin and condemnation. The price was not paid to Satan, who sees humanity as prey to destroy. But this price was paid to God, from whom we all “like sheep had gone astray” (Isa 53:6). Years later, when Apostle Paul penned his epistle to the Ephesian church, he reiterated the spiritual blessings which the believers have in Christ. “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace” (Eph 1:7). We are God’s treasured possession (Eph 1:14)! We are not masters of our own lives; instead our lives are to be mastered by Jesus. Christ our Lord and Redeemer is calling us to surrender and consecrate our all to follow Him in authentic discipleship and intentional discipling. Let our allegiance be unto Jesus. Don’t hold back!

■ APPLICATION

What does it mean for me personally in my daily walk with God, in the light of such a great and precious redemption?

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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:



■ 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?

RESPOND

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

COMMIT IN PRAYER

FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

January 2016 – Week 1

**PARABLE: SALT OF THE EARTH**

Bringing the flavour of God to the earth.

Scripture: Matthew 5:13

ACTIVITY BITE

Show everyone some salt. Name some foods that taste better with salt. Which one is your favourite?

CHAT TIME

Q1: Why is salt so special? What does it do to the flavour of some food?

Q2: In Matthew 5:13, would you agree that “God’s love” is the flavour we can bring to the world? Why does the world need this flavour?

Q3: What can we do to be the flavour of God’s love to our friends?

LEARNING POINT

Salt is also used to preserve meat, especially in the olden days when there were no refrigerators. Without salt, the meat would rot and smell horrible. Sin has made the world a terrible place because it has spoiled the beautiful things that God made. He has chosen us to be the “salt of the earth”, not to make things salty but so that we can bring the “flavour” of God’s love to the world. By this, people can “taste and see that the Lord is good” (Ps 34:8). We can show God’s love by loving others through our words and actions.

ACTION POINT

Read Colossians 4:6 about speech seasoned with salt. If you have been saying unkind words to someone, you should stop doing so. Instead, think of some kind words you can say to the person.

PRAYER POWER

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

God, thank You, for choosing me to be the salt of the earth. Help me bring Your flavour of love to my friends. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.



TUESDAY, 5 JANUARY 2016

The Grace of Holy Living

VISIBLE CORE VALUES

■ SCRIPTURE

1 Peter 1:13-25

■ OBSERVATION

Why should we live holy lives according to verses 13 to 25?

DEEPER REFLECTION

Peter teaches us to prepare mentally, live soberly and to set our hope on “the grace” that will be ours at the revelation of Jesus Christ, that is, His Second Coming (v. 13). This involves living obediently as God’s children and radically breaking with our pre-believing past. The life of holiness is not trying in our human effort to live in conformity to a set of ethics, nor observing religious rituals to win God’s favour. Holiness is a work of grace extended to us through His calling, and God’s adoption of us as His children (vv. 15-16). We are to live out our lives as God’s children, and to be holy as He is holy. Our motivation for holy living is not to live in conformity to what others or even what the church expects of us. We seek to live holy lives because this is our birthright as children of God. We want to be holy, as God our heavenly Father is holy. When children become like their parents, this invariably pleases them and brings them joy. So holiness is not conformity to external standards, but something that emanates from within our hearts. The greatest motivation for holy living is the **love of God**. When we remember what Christ has done, having redeemed us with His “precious blood” (vv. 18-19), ought we not respond to Him in obedience? It is often said: “While God’s grace is radically free, it is never cheap!” How true! Now that’s motivation to live holy lives!

■ APPLICATION

How have I experienced God? What have I learnt about **who** God is and **what** He is like these past few months? Is there one aspect of holy living that I particularly need God’s help 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:



WEDNESDAY, 6 JANUARY 2016

The Grace of Witness

VISIBLE CORE VALUES

■ SCRIPTURE

1 Peter 2:1-12

■ OBSERVATION

Peter switches the metaphor of **spiritual** milk (v. 2), to **spiritual** house offering **spiritual** sacrifices (v. 5). What is the significance of these metaphors for the church?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

Peter speaks of the church as “living stones” used as building blocks for the spiritual house. This implies that the church needs to be infused with life and vitality, cleansed and acceptable in the presence of a holy God to offer sacrifices to Him (v. 5). On our own, we cannot do this; it’s only through Jesus Christ, the “cornerstone” that we can. Christ as the “cornerstone” is an apt description of how pivotal He is in the church – He is like a huge, uncut stone anchoring the corner of the building and securing the building firmly to its foundation. Christ is not only the focal point of the church (as Head of the church; cf. Eph 5:23) but becomes for those who reject Him a stone of stumbling (v. 8). On the other hand, through Christ, Christians have become a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession. The purpose of our new identity in Christ: that we “may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (v. 9). Christians need God’s grace to be God’s witnesses. Often, it is not only the words that we proclaim; it is the life that we live that matters. The non-believing world is often not interested in how much we know, how convincing we are in presenting the Gospel. Instead they are more interested in how we relate to them and how we live our lives. Now, that takes grace! Peter thus reminds the Christians: “Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honourable so that...they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation” (v. 12). Peter also exhorts the believers to be “prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet to do it with gentleness and respect” (1 Pe 3:15). Now that is for us to heed as well.

■ APPLICATION

Am I a good Christian witness at home and in my place of work or school? Does my behaviour honour God? What is one area that I particularly need God’s help to grow in?

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■ PRAYER

Dear Lord, thank You for choosing me and making me who I am in Christ. Help me to live in a way that is worthy of that calling, that I may testify of the deep work of grace that You have done in my life. Give me the joy of being a winsome witness and to lead others to Christ through my life and deeds. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:



THURSDAY, 7 JANUARY 2016

The Grace of Submission

VISIBLE CORE VALUES

■ SCRIPTURE

1 Peter 2:13-3:12

■ OBSERVATION

We are to submit ourselves to all governing authorities in every arena of life: in government (vv. 13-14), in employment (v. 18), in the home (v. 1) and in the church (1 Pe 5:5). Why?

DEEPER REFLECTION

Peter teaches that believers are to submit to rulers even when they are not benign¹, or masters who are unjust, or husbands who disobey the Word (unbelievers). This is not easy, and we need the grace of God to submit to these people whom the Lord has placed over us in authority. Why does God place us in such situations? Firstly, this is God's will for believers – to live as God-fearing servants and to persist in doing good in the face of evil (vv. 15-17). Secondly, we are to emulate the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, who did not retaliate in the face of injustice, but entrusted Himself to the Father who judges righteously (vv. 21-23). Thirdly, we are to submit to an unbelieving spouse for redemptive purposes (that “they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives”, vv.1-2). When speaking of slaves with unjust masters, Peter admonishes them to persist in doing good and to endure suffering even when they have been ill-treated; in so doing they reflect the grace of God. Twice the phrase “it is a gracious thing” appears (vv. 19-20; ESV), which probably means that God looks favourably on the behaviour of these slaves (thus the NIV translates this as “it is commendable”). Although such instruction is tough to follow, we must recognise that it is God's favour that we ultimately seek. We must remember that what matters most is that we obey God no matter how we're treated by all who are in authority over us. To help us, we have this promise: “For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His eyes are open to their prayer” (v.12).

■ APPLICATION

Who are those whom I have difficulty submitting to? Following the example of Jesus in verses 21 to 23, how can I respond to them?

■ 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:

¹ There is no evidence that 1 Peter was written during empire-wide persecution under the Romans (see ESV Study Bible, pp.2402-03). There was certainly some form of persecution, and the Roman authorities were not always favourable to newly established religious groups like the Christians.



FRIDAY, 8 JANUARY 2016

The Grace of Stewardship

VISIBLE CORE VALUES

■ SCRIPTURE

1 Peter 3:13-4:11

■ OBSERVATION

Peter teaches that believers are to be “good stewards of God’s varied grace” (v.10). What might these be?

DEEPER REFLECTION

Peter speaks of the imminence of the End of the Age (v. 7) and judgment for all (v. 5). Believers should live temperate and sober lives, readying themselves with prayer (v. 7). But of supreme importance (“above all”) is the encouragement to “love one another sincerely”, a point he had earlier pointed out (1 Pe 1:22). The adjective “sincere” has the sense of being “at full stretch”.² Loving one another needs to “go the full distance” of forgiving others when they sin against you, of extending hospitality without grumbling, of serving one another with the spiritual gifts that God has given to each believer (vv. 8-10). The church is given the whole spectrum of **speaking** and **serving** gifts, which Peter refers to as the “manifold grace of God”. Inherent in the word “gift” is grace, giving the idea that these are given by God, and are to be shared with others in the Christian community. Believers are only stewards of these gifts, given by God to use on His behalf. We thus need the help and strength of God to serve one another, and it is God who will receive the glory through Christ Jesus (v. 11).

■ APPLICATION

Am I intentionally using my spiritual gifts to bless others? In reality, what is my primary motivation in possessing and exercising spiritual gifts?

■ 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 be good stewards of their gifts and responsibilities

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

² I.H. Marshall, *1 Peter* (IVP New Testament Commentary Series), p.143



SATURDAY, 9 JANUARY 2016

Grace in Adversity

VISIBLE CORE VALUES

■ SCRIPTURE

1 Peter 4:12-5:14

■ OBSERVATION

Suffering is a major theme in 1 Peter. According to verses 14 to 16, what is the nature of the suffering of the believers in this letter?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

Suffering is unavoidable, as it is unpredictable! Yet many in the Church today feel reticent about speaking of suffering as part and parcel of the Christian life. Peter reminds the early believers not to be “surprised” at the fiery trials facing them, as though something strange were happening to them (1 Pe 4:12). We will see our fair share of adversities, disappointments, failures and sufferings. Suffering for Christians may not always be due to persecution for our faith, although most would experience some form of it. The existence and extent of evil in this world and the fallen state of our sinful nature all point to the inevitability of human suffering and pain. Pastor Tim Keller puts it this way: “Human life is fatally fragile and subject to forces beyond our power to manage. Life is tragic.”³ Curiously, pain and suffering are often the instruments God uses to help us see that we are not in control of our own lives. Rather, it is God who is in control. Whatever the source of our pain and suffering, whether human or spiritual, God remains the “God of all grace” who will “restore, confirm, strengthen and establish” His people (v. 10). Adversities push us toward our gracious heavenly Father, and are key instruments of growth in our discipleship journey. The onslaught of suffering and pain often redirects our attention to God, deepens our faith and enables us to experience the inexplicable joy from God. Jerry Sittser, who tragically lost his wife, his young daughter and his mother (three generations) in an instant through an accident with a drunk driver, has this to say: It is not “the **experience** of loss” that defines us, it is “how we **respond** to loss that matters”⁴. In times of suffering and pain, let’s respond by coming to the **God of all grace**.

■ APPLICATION

When was the last time I experienced the truth: “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Co 12:9)? What am I going through right now that I need to bring to the **God of all grace**?

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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:

³ Tim Keller, *Walking with God through Pain and Suffering*, p.3

⁴ Jerry Sittser, *A Grace Disguised*, p.17



SUNDAY, 10 JANUARY 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?

RESPOND

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

COMMIT IN PRAYER

FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

January 2016 – Week 2



PARABLE: THE WISE AND THE FOOLISH BUILDER

Making choices based on God's Word alone.

Scripture: Matthew 7:24-27

ACTIVITY BITE

Get some toy building blocks or a pack of cards. Stack them as high as possible on the floor. Now, on a table, stack them to the same height. Shake the table until they fall down.

CHAT TIME

Q1: Why did the stack on the table collapse so easily while the one on the floor didn't?

Q2: In verse 24, what does the rock symbolise?

Q3: Give an example of what could happen to us if we hear God's Word but don't practise it.

LEARNING POINT

We make decisions and choices every day. We choose the type of people we mix with, what to say and how we treat others. If we follow God's Word, we will always do according to what He says, which is the right way. When others try to tempt us into doing wrong things, we will not follow them because we will also know what is right and wrong. This is like building a house on a rock which cannot be shaken. But if we don't follow what God says, we will end up getting into trouble. God's Word is truth that we can stand upon without being shaken.

ACTION POINT

Are there choices you have made that are not according to God's Word? Start to make the right choices and do what God's Word says.

PRAYER POWER

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

Dear God, help me to make the right choices according to Your Word so that I can always stand on solid rock. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.



MONDAY, 11 JANUARY 2016

Watch Out but Grow

VISIBLE CORE VALUES

■ SCRIPTURE

2 Peter 1:1-4; 3:17-18

■ OBSERVATION

What are the similarities in how the Apostle Peter started and ended his farewell letter before his impending martyrdom?

DEEPER REFLECTION

Peter's second letter was written shortly before his martyrdom (2 Pe 1:14). He sought to warn the believers to watch out for false teachers and scoffers within, even as persecutions heightened outside the church. In his parting words, the aged apostle prayed for and commanded the disciples to grow in the grace and peace they pined for. The key to grace and peace is found in growing to know God personally and experiencing Him in the arenas of daily living. Knowing God surpasses all that is needed for living, as seen in Peter's use of *epignosis* (1:2), meaning "super knowledge"⁵ or "master-science of life"⁶. Knowing God intimately is not restricted to a few, but to all believers, for we have "obtained equal standing" to know Him! By His Holy Spirit who transforms and empowers us, we become partakers of God's divine nature that cleanses the corruption of sin inside us, as we battle the moral pollution outside us. God has granted us everything we need to live godly lives. Yet we must personally decide to receive them, because what was granted may not be received. And what you have obtained today may not continue into the future, unless you apply all diligence to keep on growing. Choose to grow, or else you decay.

■ APPLICATION

What are a few specific actions I must take to grow in knowing God and experiencing Him in my daily living?

■ PRAYER

Dear God, all I once held dear, built my life upon; all this world reveres and wars to own; all I once thought gain, I have counted loss, spent and worthless now compared to this: knowing You Jesus, there is no greater thing; You're my All, the Best, my Joy, my righteousness. I love You Lord. Thank You Jesus. Amen.⁷

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

⁵ J Vernon McGee, *2 Peter* (Thomas Nelson, 1991), p. 18

⁶ William Barclay, *Daily Study Bible*

⁷ Adapted from song *Knowing You*, words and music by Graham Kendrick



TUESDAY, 12 JANUARY 2016

The Qualities to Grow

VISIBLE CORE VALUES

■ SCRIPTURE

2 Peter 1:5-8

■ OBSERVATION

What do you observe about the way these spiritual graces or qualities build on one another?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

“Faith” is having conviction that what Jesus has promised is true, giving us our divine nature (1 Pe 1:3-4), forgiveness of sins and righteousness in Christ. Upon faith, we add virtue. To the first century Roman, virtue “characterised the very finest of Roman manhood: strength, valour, courage and excellence”⁸: qualities of a good citizen and friend, an expert at living well. To virtue, we add knowledge (Greek: *gnosis*): the practical wisdom “to decide rightly and act honourably and efficiently in the day-to-day circumstances of life”⁹. Upon knowledge, we grow self-control: passion guided by reason and self-mastery. Upon self-control, we grow steadfastness: having hope and endurance in trials. Upon steadfastness, we grow godliness: living in deference and reference to God and relating aright with people. With godly living, we express brotherly affection for fellow believers. Finally, we are to love sinners as God loves them in our care and Gospel-sharing. Contrasting the list against our own lives, we might feel like giving up. But remember that divine enablement will meet our diligence, causing the growth of these qualities. The question to ask is not, “Do I possess all of these qualities in my life”, but rather “Are all of these qualities present and growing in my life?”¹⁰

■ APPLICATION

Are these qualities present in my life? How can I grow them?

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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:

⁸ J Vernon McGee, *2 Peter* (Thomas Nelson, 1991)

⁹ William Barclay, *Daily Study Bible*

¹⁰ Lou Barbieri, *Everyman's Bible Commentary*, First and Second Peter



WEDNESDAY, 13 JANUARY 2016

Be Lavishly Dilligent to Grow!

VISIBLE CORE VALUES

■ SCRIPTURE

2 Peter 1:3-15

■ OBSERVATION

What are the benefits that Peter put forth to urge the believers to be diligent in growing? What will result if they failed to do so?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

God wants us to grow. Growth is the development and the maturing of our character. It takes diligence to grow. Peter calls us believers to lavishly “make every effort” to grow these Christian qualities. The Greek word that Peter used for “supplement” (v. 5) is *epichoregein*, which has as its root the picture of those who voluntarily undertake financial duties to supply choruses to the Grecian plays. The word has the connotation of lavishness, pouring out everything that is needed “for a noble performance”¹¹. The use of this word grew to refer to the generous equipping of an army with necessary provisions, or wholehearted equipping of the soul with virtues for life. It brings to mind the account of the lavish outpouring of the ointment of pure nard upon our Lord by a woman at Bethany (Mk 14:3-9). Increasing these qualities in us will render our lives useful and fruitful in truly knowing God and loving Him. Conversely, our failure to grow will result in spiritual myopia and amnesia (v. 9), indications that we have forgotten why and how Christ died for us. This will lead us to fall into deeper misery. Being diligent to grow in the graces make our calling and salvation sure (v. 10). Then we shall enter His eternal kingdom (v. 11) richly provided for (*epichoregein*), victorious and joyful.

■ APPLICATION

What is the Holy Spirit prompting me to do in being diligent to grow spiritually? What is hindering me?

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■ PRAYER

Dear God, please transform me so that my love is genuine, that I abhor what is evil and hold fast to what is good, and that I love others with brotherly affection, outdoing one another in showing honour. Tutor me to be diligent, not slothful in zeal but be fervent in spirit, serving You Lord; rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation and constantly in prayer. Amen.¹²

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

¹¹ William Barclay, *Daily Study Bible*

¹² Adapted from Romans 12:9-12



THURSDAY, 14 JANUARY 2016

Building Deep: His Word, Our Sure Foundation!

VISIBLE CORE VALUES

■ SCRIPTURE

2 Peter 1:16-21; Mark 9:2-8

■ OBSERVATION

How does the Apostle Peter describe the Word of Truth and the revelation of Christ?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

In verses 16 to 21, the aged apostle recounted his experience of being an eyewitness of God's Majestic Glory (Mk 9:2-8). It gave him deep convictions of the truth of the old prophecies, and their fulfilment in our Lord Jesus Christ. These prophecies have been made "more sure" by their fulfilment in Jesus. Before Jesus came, one could only hope that these prophecies were really from God. Now with their fulfilment, our faith is further strengthened in Christ, who is the subject of these prophecies. Our faith in the divine origin of the prophecies themselves is also strengthened – for none of these has come "from the prophet's own understanding, or from human initiative. No, those prophets were moved by the Holy Spirit, and they spoke from God" (vv. 20-21 NIV). Fulfilled prophecies serve to strengthen our faith too in the Scripture. Therefore, we do well to pay attention to the Scripture. "For it shall be as a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts" (v. 19). Our time-scarce modern living often means that the time needed to grow in God's Word gets pushed out. Yet, let's remember that heaven and earth will pass away (Mt 24:35), "the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the Word of our God endures forever" (Isa 40:8). May we grow deep in knowing God in His Word and do as He says (Mt 7:24-27)!

■ APPLICATION

What can I do to grow deeper in knowing God in His Word, and do as He says personally and through the empowering faith community?

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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, 15 JANUARY 2016

Building Deep: Discernment Against False Teachings

VISIBLE CORE VALUES

■ SCRIPTURE

2 Peter 2:1-22

■ OBSERVATION

How does the Apostle Peter describe the nature and fate of the false teachers amongst the believers in his days?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

It has often been said that the Church today is a mile-wide and inch-deep. We face the crises of Biblical illiteracy and theological shallowness. Hence our need to return the Church to its disciplinarian roots and go for depth in the Word and godliness. Our shallowness makes us powerless in standing strong against heresies within the Church, and the tide of secular worldviews that undermine the dignity and sanctity of life and godly living. The Apostle Peter anticipated the challenges which the young Church had to face. The Greek word that Peter used for “false teacher” (2:1) is *pseudodidaskalos*, meaning “a spurious teacher, a propagator of erroneous Christian doctrine”. He described the false teachers as **destructive** (vv. 1-3), **doomed** (vv. 4-9), **depraved** (vv. 10-17) and **deceiving** (vv. 18-22). These are like “waterless springs and mists driven by a storm (v. 17). Peter’s extensive use of the term here and his description of these “false teachers” strongly suggests that he meant more than simply someone who taught error out of ignorance of the truth, or who was sincerely mistaken. Rather, the false teachers knew what they were doing and intentionally tried to deceive and mislead the believers. The only way to discern counterfeits is to be familiar with the authentic and true. Let us take time to anchor deep in the whole counsel of God’s Word, pure and true. Half-truths are not truths at all!

■ APPLICATION

What must I do to make time to grow in God’s Word to avoid a busy but barren 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 teach the whole counsel
of God’s Word faithfully

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:



SATURDAY, 16 JANUARY 2016

Growing Deep: in Brotherly Affection and Love

VISIBLE CORE VALUES

■ SCRIPTURE

2 Peter 3:1-18; Galatians 2:11-14

■ OBSERVATION

What is the significance of Peter addressing his readers repeatedly in verses 1 to 18 and also brother Paul as “beloved”, in the light of Galatians 2:11-14?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

Peter who has earlier (2 Pe 1:5-7) exhorted his readers to grow in the spiritual graces is seen here exhibiting the qualities of brotherly affection and love, even in his final words. In the letter to the Galatians, the Apostle Paul wrote about how he opposed Peter (also called Cephas) to his face. Yet in Peter’s note, the aged apostle showed his regard and esteem for his fellow brother Paul (v. 15) and his ministry. Peter acknowledged the wisdom bestowed upon Paul; and Paul’s writing were also considered Scripture (v. 16). Such a display of brotherly affection and love. Such maturity in character and calling! When we are challenged, even to the face, will we surrender the rejection and our pride, and ask of His divine enablement to exhibit brotherly affection and to love as God loves? Are we able to disagree but not disengage, and judge but not be judgmental, so as to keep justice as well as the bond of brotherly affection and unconditional love in our hearts? In ourselves, it will be extremely hard. But we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us (Php 4:13).

■ APPLICATION

Are you aware of fellow brothers and sisters who are on difficult terms with one another? Or maybe with yourself? Take it to the Lord 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:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:



SUNDAY, 17 JANUARY 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?

RESPOND

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

COMMIT IN PRAYER

FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

January 2016 – Week 3



PARABLE: THE SOWER AND THE SOIL

The condition of our hearts will determine how much God's Word can change us.

Scripture: Matthew 13:3-23

ACTIVITY BITE

Take a walk outside and look for a dirt path that has been worn down after being stepped on for too long. Does it feel hard or soft? Find other types of bare ground (like places with rocks or mud).

CHAT TIME

Q1: Why doesn't the grass grow on these places?

Q2: What kind of soil is suitable for grass or plants to grow on?

Q3: Learning from verses 3 to 23, what kind of heart must we have to receive God's Word?

LEARNING POINT

The good soil represents people with hearts that want to hear and believe God's Word, people who will allow God to change them to be more like Jesus. They love God very much and will spend time reading the Bible as well as praying. They want to know more about God's character so they can have that kind of character too. But the other type of soils represent people who will not receive God's Word or are quick to doubt God when faced with difficulty. They enjoy living life as it pleases them. Soon they will suffer the consequences of their actions.

ACTION POINT

Which type of soil do you think you are now? Are there things you are not believing God for? Pray that God will help you believe in His Word fully.

PRAYER POWER

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

God, I want my heart to be like the good soil. Please help me believe in Your Word and do what it says. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.



MONDAY, 18 JANUARY 2016

Truth as Foundation of Godliness

VISIBLE CORE VALUES

■ SCRIPTURE

Titus 1:1-9

■ OBSERVATION

Paul refers to himself as a “servant or slave of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ” (v. 1). What was he specifically called to do for God’s people in verses 1 to 3?

DEEPER REFLECTION

Paul indicates that the goal of his apostolic ministry is for the faith of God’s elected people, to build up their knowledge of the truth (v. 1). Such knowledge of the truth is the sort that leads to, or is in accordance with, godliness (v. 1).¹³ In other words, a person’s godliness derives from, or is a reflection of a genuine grasp and application of God’s Word, the depository of truth. What is godliness? Pastor Edmund Chan defines “godliness” as “putting God in the equation of life, having a God-ward orientation in every sphere of life”¹⁴; it is “living life with reference to God and in deference to him”. Godliness has an inner dimension (God-centric devotion) and an external dimension (character fruit). In a study on “godliness”, I.H. Marshall speaks of a godliness that possesses knowledge of God expressed in righteous living.¹⁵ An example of godliness in the Old Testament is Daniel. He resolved that he would faithfully keep his dietary obligations as a pious Jew (Da 1:8), and continued with his habit to seek God on his knees in prayer three times daily in defiance of his scheming opponents (Da 6:1-13). It came as no surprise that Daniel distinguished himself above all the other officials (Da 6:3; cf. 1:20). It is often said that “we can be so heavenly minded that we are of no earthly good”. But in the complexities and hectic pace of modern living, it is probably more correct to say that we need more “heavenly minded meditation” anchored on the foundation of God’s Truth.¹⁶ Only then can godliness be more evident in our lives.

■ APPLICATION

Am I putting God in the equation of my daily life? How can I better live my everyday life “with reference to God and in deference to Him”?

■ PRAYER

Dear God, grant me a love for Your Word so that I might clearly see who You are, that I may worship You more fully. Enable me to discern what you want me to be and do, that I may follow You. I just want to be more and more like Christ, that I may glorify You. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

¹³ This same thought is found in 1 Timothy 6:3.

¹⁴ Edmund Chan, *Mentoring Paradigms*, p.50

¹⁵ I.H. Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, pp.135-144

¹⁶ The expression “heavenly minded meditation” is borrowed from James Houston, *Joyful Exiles*, p.140.



TUESDAY, 19 JANUARY 2016

Godliness in Character and Conduct

VISIBLE CORE VALUES

■ SCRIPTURE

Titus 1:5-16

■ OBSERVATION

In the list of qualifications of leadership in verses 6 to 9, what are the ones that are most needed in the Church today?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

Godliness has a face. It is not something nebulous and abstract. It has traits that are recognisable. When Paul departed from Crete, he left Titus there to organise the church. This includes countering the false teachers and appointing elders in every town. Paul included an extensive list of character traits concerning the kind of overseer of the church Titus was to appoint (vv. 6-9). An overarching trait is that these spiritual leaders are to be “above reproach” (vv. 6-7). This is vital in view of the challenge posed by the false teachers. They were going about “upsetting whole families” by teaching what they ought not to teach for “shameful gain”. Thus not only were the false teachers deceiving the believers, peddling erroneous teachings and causing harm to the believing communities, they were also enriching themselves in the process (vv. 10-16). In short, there was a character problem. This text not only warns us to choose leaders in the church with care, it has much to teach us about authentic discipleship. Indeed, the true marker of a life of “grace” and “growth” is “godliness”. Let’s not simply pay lip service to these core values of our church. Let’s personify them.

■ APPLICATION

In view of the high standards expected of leaders, how can I better encourage and support the leaders of our church?

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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, 20 JANUARY 2016

Train for Godliness

VISIBLE CORE VALUES

■ SCRIPTURE

Titus 2:1-14

■ OBSERVATION

Titus was to be a role model of exemplary behaviour and good deeds as he taught (vv. 7-8). Why is this important?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

Titus was instructed to teach all in the church what accords or corresponds with sound doctrine (v. 1). Older men were to live dignified, godly lives (v. 2); the older women were to be reverential, teaching and training younger women to live in such a way that God's Word is not dishonoured (vv. 3-5). Godliness is not the inevitable consequence of conversion. It needs to be pursued (cf. 1 Ti 6:11). It takes effort, perseverance and hard work. This is most clearly seen in Paul's instruction to Timothy: "...train yourself for godliness" (1 Ti 4:7). The word "train" comes from a Greek word from which we get the English word "gymnasium". It suggests hard, disciplined training. This corresponds neatly with our philosophy in Covenant EFC for our two-year Intentional Discipleship Training (IDT). Our trainees are reminded that "we do not try to be disciples, we train to be disciples." Similarly, we do not try to be godly, we train to be godly. For a godly orientation ("living life with reference to God and in deference to him") to become integral in our everyday lives, and certainly for godly character to take root in us, we need both patience and perseverance. Patience because godliness-formation in believers takes time and perseverance is certainly needed in this process. Note also that godly character traits and behaviour are grounded in "sound doctrine" (v. 1). We can never over-emphasise the need to spend regular time with God in prayerful reflection on His Word.

■ APPLICATION

As we begin 2016, would this be an opportune time to review my IDT notes and reflect on my journey of growth? For those who have not attended IDT, would 2016 be a good time to sign up?

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■ PRAYER

Lord, thank You that it is my destiny to become like Christ. Please grant me the grace to persevere in my pursuit of godliness. I often do not have the strength or resolve to be a disciple, to follow Christ and take up the cross daily. Please help me to spend time with You in worship, and in meditation of Your Word so that I can live out its truths. In Jesus' name. Amen.

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:



THURSDAY, 21 JANUARY 2016

Salvation and Godliness

VISIBLE CORE VALUES

■ SCRIPTURE

Titus 2:11-14

■ OBSERVATION

Titus 2:1-10, 15 instructs different groups in the Cretan church on how they should live, while verses 11 to 14 undergirds such instruction and serves as its theological anchor. Why is this crucial?

DEEPER REFLECTION

Verses 11 to 14 is a loaded theological statement. It personifies “God’s grace” as having “appeared”, bringing about the redemptive salvation “for all people” (v. 11). God’s grace here is not merely the unmerited favour lavished by God to undeserving sinners. It is a reference to the whole historical event of Christ’s death and resurrection. This one event opened the way of salvation to “all people”, a reference to the universal access of all people to the redemptive work of God. Furthermore, this salvation is progressive, moving from conversion to sanctification (growing in Christ-likeness). Such training involves radical discipleship: renouncing **ungodliness** and worldly passions, and living self-controlled, upright, and **godly** lives (v. 12). In other words, initial salvation (conversion) launches us on a journey of progressive salvation to becoming more and more like our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul elaborates: “we live godly lives in the present age, waiting for the blessed hope of the appearing of glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ” (vv. 12-13). This is the hope and destiny of every believer – to be fully like Christ when He comes again. The Apostle John puts it this way: “Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared, but we know that when He appears we shall be **like Him**, because we shall see Him as He is.” (1 Jn 3:2) Praise God that by His grace He wants us not only to be saved, but to be **like Him**!

■ APPLICATION

When was the last time I paused to reflect on the grace of God in my life, especially with regard to salvation? Let’s take a moment to thank God for what He has done for us through Christ – for salvation and all we will be when we meet Him face-to-face.

■ 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, 22 JANUARY 2016

Godliness and Good Deeds

VISIBLE CORE VALUES

■ SCRIPTURE

Titus 3:1-15

■ OBSERVATION

According to verses 3 to 8, why should we be involved in “good deeds”?

DEEPER REFLECTION

“Good deeds or good work” is a key theme in Titus. While false teachers are unfit for any good work (Tit 1:16), believers are to be “ready for every good work” (v. 1). Readiness speaks of having a mindset of preparedness and intentionality. Additionally, believers are to be “a model of good works” (Tit 2:7), be “zealous for good works” (Tit 2:14) and be careful to “devote themselves to good works” (vv. 9, 14). Being a role model, being zealous and being devoted to good works suggest that one is wholehearted in doing good deeds. What constitutes “good deeds”? In the Pastoral Epistles, “good deeds” is a reference to the activities or a life of service that results from the experience of conversion, and the believer’s growth or transformation.¹⁷ No doubt “good deeds” is linked to godliness. The yardstick of certain activities being good must be that these are ordained or approved by God. In evangelical churches, good deeds are now increasingly expressed in social concerns, both towards the poor and needy in the community, and increasingly so in the missions field. This is certainly the sense in Titus 3:13-14. Covenant EFC is certainly involved in such work, as seen in the endeavours of New Life Community Services, our Community Blessings ministry, and our Urban Missions thrust (which focuses on working with the poor in urban centres in Asia). As individuals and as a church, let’s not tire of being ready for every good work (v. 1)!

■ APPLICATION

Who is the one person I can B.L.E.S.S. this week in view of what I have learnt 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:

To be godly, exemplary leaders in good deeds

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

¹⁷ I.H. Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, p.228-229



SATURDAY, 23 JANUARY 2016

Godliness and the Holy Spirit

VISIBLE CORE VALUES

■ SCRIPTURE

Titus 3:3-7

■ OBSERVATION

How are God and Jesus Christ described in verses 4 and 6? Why are they depicted this way?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

Titus 3:1-11 gives instruction on how Christians should live in society. Embedded within this section is a doctrinal motivation for such conduct (vv. 3-7). The central idea of verses 3 to 7 is that whereas we once were enslaved to sin, God has now saved us. This act of grace came entirely out of His goodness, love and mercy; it is not because of any righteous work done by us. All three persons of the Godhead are involved in this redemptive work: God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. The Fatherhood of God is not mentioned here; instead it is God as Saviour that is emphasised. Similarly, Jesus Christ as “our Saviour” is highlighted. But the role of the Holy Spirit is given much air time here: this third person of the Godhead is said to be “richly poured out on us” (v. 6) and performs His redemptive work through “the washing of regeneration and renewal” (v. 5). God has lavishly given believers the Holy Spirit in full measure and effected not only our conversion, regeneration and renewal through Him. Indeed all our growth into godliness and Christ-likeness is effected through the Holy Spirit. Paul, in another letter, puts it this way: “And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into **His likeness** with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the **Spirit** (2 Co 3:18 NIV). How then shall we live? In full dependence and direction of the Holy Spirit (Eph 5:18).

■ APPLICATION

Am I living a Spirit-filled life on a daily basis? Am I growing in godliness as evidenced by the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23)?

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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, 24 JANUARY 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?

RESPOND

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

COMMIT IN PRAYER

FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

January 2016 – Week 4

**PARABLE: THE UNMERCIFUL SERVANT**

As God forgives us, we must also forgive others.

Scripture: Matthew 18:21-35

ACTIVITY BITE

On a piece of paper, draw a straight line across and write the numbers 1 to 10 on the line, spacing them out equally. This is the “scale of forgiveness”, with 1 being the least forgiven and 10 being the most forgiven. Think of an incident where you did something wrong and felt sorry about it. Tell everyone which level of forgiveness you would like to receive.

CHAT TIME

- Q1: Would you like to be forgiven fully for the wrong you have committed? Why?
- Q2: In all honesty, have you ever forgiven someone “halfway” for a wrong that was done to you?
- Q3: Referring to Matthew 5:16, why do you think God wants us to fully forgive those who wrong us?

LEARNING POINT

We get hurt when someone does something wrong against us. We feel that we are not respected or are being treated unkindly. The normal response would usually be to get revenge and not forgive. But that is not God’s way. We have been forgiven by God for our sins that separated us from God. Jesus took our sins upon Himself so that we can be forgiven and have a close relationship with God. So if God has fully forgiven us, we must also learn to fully forgive those who have wronged us.

ACTION POINT

Talk to your parents about some of the hurts you may have. Ask them to pray for you so that you can forgive. Tell God yourself of how you wish to forgive fully those who have hurt you.

PRAYER POWER

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

Jesus, You have forgiven me of all the wrong things I have done and I thank You for it. Now please help me to forgive fully those who have hurt me. In Your name I pray. Amen



MONDAY, 25 JANUARY 2016

Reminder and Realignment to the Gospel

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 2:11-22; 3:2-6; 4:1-6

■ OBSERVATION

What is one particular emphasis in Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus (vv. 11-22; Eph 3:2-6; Eph 4:1-6)?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

Paul spent three years in Ephesus teaching the church “the whole of God’s plan of salvation (Ac 20:27; cf. Eph 1:11).”¹⁸ He wrote Ephesians at the end of his Roman imprisonment (cf. Ac 28:17-19, 30-31), having been absent from Ephesus for “more than seven years”¹⁹. He learned about “a certain weariness” in the church’s “commitment to the gospel”²⁰, and that they “were disunified and tempted to assimilate to the culture they had left behind at their conversion”²¹. Paul wrote Ephesians, which “contains a clear summary of the entire gospel”²², as a “reminder”²³ and for realignment to the gospel, particularly in **remaining in unity** (vv. 11-22; Eph 3:2-6; Eph 4:1-6). “Worship of the emperor and his family, particularly of Augustus, was a prominent feature of life at all societal levels in Asia during the latter half of the first century. Ephesus was an especially important centre of the imperial cult.”²⁴ The imperial cult asserted that “Caesar Augustus had ended a period of deterioration and suffering for the world and ‘restored the form of all things to ‘usefulness’”²⁵, and “the rule of the imperial household was ‘eternal’”²⁶. Challenging and conquering that in Ephesians is: Christ is the true **ruler of the universe** – now and forever (Eph 1:9-10, 19b-23; Eph 4:8-10).

■ APPLICATION

What does Christ being the ruler of the universe – now and forever – mean to me as I live in today’s world?

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■ PRAYER

Lord of the universe, You existed before anything was created, and You are supreme over all creation; for God created everything in heaven and on earth through You and You hold all creation together. You rule over all thrones, kingdoms, rulers and authorities in the unseen world.²⁷ In You, I find my true significance and security as You hold first place in my life. Amen.

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

¹⁸ I. Howard Marshall, *Acts*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (IVP, 2001), 333

¹⁹ Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Baker, 2010), 28

²⁰ Frank Thielman, 20

²¹ Frank Thielman, 28

²² *Galatians, Ephesians*, Reformation Commentary on Scripture Vol. X (IVP, 2011), Editors: Gerald L. Bray, Timothy George, Scott M. Manetsch, 231

²³ Frank Thielman, 28

²⁴ Frank Thielman, 21

²⁵ Frank Thielman, 21

²⁶ Frank Thielman, 22

²⁷ Colossians 1:16-17



TUESDAY, 26 JANUARY 2016

Wealth of God's Calling: Worship (1)

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 1:7, 18; 2:4, 7; 3:8

■ OBSERVATION

What is the recurring key word in verses 7 and 18; Ephesians 2:4, 7; and Ephesians 3:8, and what is its significance?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

Ephesians “contains a clear summary of the entire gospel”²⁸ – like Paul’s Epistle to the Romans. “The understanding of the gospel in Ephesians challenges and redefines the superficial understanding of the gospel prevalent in our day.”²⁹ Ephesians is divided into two parts: doctrine (Eph 1-3) and discipleship (Eph. 4-6). Ephesians presents the two sides of biblical faith: the theological and the practical. Being theological without the practical is **hollow faith**, and being practical without the theological is **shallow faith**. The practical is based and built on the theological. We must be fervent and diligent in both. Ephesians can be outlined as: wealth of God’s calling – worship (Eph 1-3); worthy of God’s calling – walk (Eph 4:1 – 6:9); and warfare in God’s calling – withstand (Eph 6:10-24). The word “**riches**” in Ephesians 1 to 3 highlights the immense wealth of God’s calling of us in Christ. The Gospel is “the boundless riches of Christ” (Eph 3:8, NIV). God, “being rich in mercy” (Eph 2:4), redeemed us and forgives our sins through Christ’s death “according to the riches of His grace” (v. 7; Eph 2:7). Thus, we are to pray to know “the riches of His glorious inheritance in His holy people” (v. 18, NIV).

■ APPLICATION

How can I be fervent and diligent in both the theological and the practical in my Christian faith?

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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:

²⁸ *Galatians, Ephesians, Reformation Commentary on Scripture* Vol. X (IVP, 2011), 231

²⁹ Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, *The Pillar New Testament Commentaries* (Apollos, 1999), 2 – citing Klyne Snodgrass



WEDNESDAY, 27 JANUARY 2016

Wealth of God's Calling: Worship (2)

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 1:3-14 and 3:20-21

■ OBSERVATION

How does Paul begin and end in writing Ephesians 1 to 3 (note Eph 1:3-14 and Eph 3:20-21)?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

We must capture Paul's spirit of praise and prayer in Ephesians 1 to 3. Paul begins with worship (Eph 1:3-14) – “Blessed be the God and Father” (v. 3), interspersed with three “to the praise of His glory” (vv. 6, 12, 14), and ends with worship – “Now to Him... be the glory... forever and ever” (Eph 3:20-21). Paul's first doxology is followed by prayer for the Church (Eph 1:15-23), and his second doxology is preceded by prayer (Eph 3:1, 14-19). Praise and prayer frame the theological vision of the immense wealth of God's calling of us to be His holy people – the Church (Eph 2:1-22; 3:1-13). Some consider the theme of the Church as “the primary motif of the letter”³⁰. The words “church” and “body” as a metaphor of the Church are each repeated nine times.³¹ In Ephesians, the Church is “the universal church... the Christian community in its totality.”³² In Ephesians, God calls us to look at His Church as He looks at her, and live as one holy people with that divine vision. God exalted Christ as “head over everything **for the church**” (Eph 1:22-23, NIV). God intends to make known His “manifold wisdom” “**through the church**” (Eph 3:10), so that “to Him be the glory **in the church** and in Christ Jesus” (Eph 3:21). No wonder, Paul is so overwhelmed in worship!

■ APPLICATION

What does it mean for me personally to look at the Church as God looks at her in Ephesians?

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■ PRAYER

Lord Jesus, You loved the Church and gave Yourself up for her.³³ You are totally committed to building Your Church,³⁴ because she is Your Church and the Church of God.³⁵ Thus, Your Church will never die! Teach me and help me to look at Your Church and love her as You do, despite her many flaws and failures, of which I am part of. Amen.

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

³⁰ Peter T. O'Brien, 25

³¹ Church (Eph 1:22; 3:10, 21; 5:23, 24, 25, 27, 29, 32); body (Eph 1:23; 2:16; 4:4, 12, 16; 5:23, 28, 30)

³² Peter T. O'Brien, 25

³³ Ephesians 5:25

³⁴ Matthew 16:18

³⁵ 1 Corinthians 1:2



THURSDAY, 28 JANUARY 2016

Worthy of God's Calling: Walk (1)

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 2:2, 10; 4:1, 17; 5:2, 7, 15

■ OBSERVATION

What is the recurring key word in verses 2 and 10; Ephesians 4:1, 17; and Ephesians 5:2, 7, 15, and what is its significance?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

Ephesians 4:1 is the pivotal verse of Ephesians – connecting the progression from the theological (Eph 1-3) to the practical (Eph 4-6). Paul strongly urges us to “walk in a manner worthy of” our “calling”. “Walk” is a key word in Ephesians, repeated eight times. Paul reminds us how we formerly “walked” in sin and under Satan’s dominance (Eph 2:1-3), but God in His mercy, love and grace has saved us (Eph 2:4-9) to “walk” in “good works, which God prepared beforehand” (Eph 2:10). “The elaboration” of this redemptive “walk” “is seen in the exhortation to walk worthy of one’s calling”³⁶, particularised as: “walk” in unity (Eph 4:1-16), “walk” in holiness and not as the world (Eph 4:17-32), “walk” in love by imitating God and abstaining from evil practices (Eph 5:1-6), “walk” in the light by not becoming involved with evildoers and their deeds (Eph 5:7-14), and “walk” in wisdom by being controlled by the Holy Spirit in our private and public lives (Eph 5:15 – 6:9). In God’s redemptive relationship with us, He never begins with what He wants us to do, but always with who He is and what He has done for us. Before talking about our behaviour (Eph 4-6), God first tells us the basis for the behaviour (Eph 1-3).

■ APPLICATION

What is one “walk” in Ephesians that I need to pay attention to 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:

³⁶ Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians, An Exegetical Commentary* (Baker, 2002), 62



FRIDAY, 29 JANUARY 2016

Worthy of God's Calling: Walk (2)

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 4:1-16 and 5:23 – 6:9

■ OBSERVATION

What is the connection between verses 1 to 16 and Ephesians 5:23 – 6:9?

DEEPER REFLECTION

We must look at Ephesians 4:1 to 6:9 as a whole: total discipleship. If so, what then is the connection between the equipping of “all God’s people for the work of Christian service, in order to build up the body of Christ” (Eph 4:12, GNB) and the instructions for marriage, family and workplace (Eph 5:23 – 6:9)? We must first ask: Why does Paul begin his exhortation for the fivefold “walk” with life in the Church, “the body of Christ” (Eph 4:1-16; note “body” in vv. 4, 12, 16)? The Church is of vital importance. God has redeemed us to be one people, the Church (Eph 2:11-21). Christ “loved the church and gave Himself up for her” (Eph 5:25). The “one Church founded by Jesus Christ” is “inseparably bound to Him”³⁷ – “the church, which is His body” (Eph 1:22-23; 4:12; 5:29-30), and God is glorified “in the church and in Christ Jesus” (Eph 3:21). The Church as one people of God matures in Christ-likeness – in character and relationship (Eph 4:2-6), through gifting (Eph 4:7-11), equipping, serving and building (Eph 4:12-16). God intends for the maturing Christ-like Church to then be seen in our personal discipleship in the world (Eph 4:17 – 5:21), in our marriage, family and workplace (Eph 5:22 – 6:9).

■ APPLICATION

How do I see myself as significant to the Church and the Church as significant to 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:

To walk faithfully in total discipleship

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

³⁷ Harold W. Hoehner, 101 – citing Rudolf Schnackenburg



SATURDAY, 30 JANUARY 2016

Warfare in God's Calling: Withstand

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 1:3 and 6:10-12

■ OBSERVATION

What is the significance of Ephesians beginning with Spiritual blessings “in the heavenly realms” (v. 3) and ending with spiritual battle “in the heavenly realms” (Eph 6:10-12)?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

At the end of Ephesians, Paul shows us another dimension of the fivefold “walk” (Eph 4:1 – 6:9): warfare (6:10-20). They are the two sides of God’s redemptive calling. Ephesians begins with Spiritual blessings in “the heavenly realms” (Eph 1:3-14) and ends with spiritual battle in “the heavenly realms” (Eph 6:10-12). We receive the Spiritual blessings through God’s redemption of us in Christ and the fivefold “walk”. Blessings and battle go together. We cannot have blessings without battle. But the battle is still there, even if we do not want the blessings. **Where we are in battle:** In Christ, we share with Him “in the heavenly realms” His position of “far above all rule and authority and power and dominion” to which God “raised Him from the dead and seated Him” (Eph 1:20-23), which God also did for us in Christ (Eph 2:4-6). It is in the same “heavenly realms” that we face the enemy in battle (Eph 3:10; 6:12). **What we do in battle:** “Be strong” (Eph 6:10), “put on” (Eph 6:11) and “stand firm” (6:13-14) – in that order. In Ephesians 1:3 to 6:9, Paul has already talked about the vital parts of “the full armour of God”, but here it is mentioned in warfare terms. To “put on the full armour of God” is essentially the fivefold “walk” with God in Christ by the Spirit.

■ APPLICATION

How do I see in reality the connection between Spiritual blessings and spiritual battle in my Christian 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, 31 JANUARY 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?

RESPOND

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

COMMIT IN PRAYER

FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

January 2016 – Week 5

**PARABLE: THE 10 VIRGINS**

We must not be found living carelessly when Jesus comes back.

Scripture: Matthew 25:1-13

ACTIVITY BITE

Play a hand game. Choose someone to be the “slapper”. Have someone put his left palm on the table while the others place theirs on top such that everyone’s left hands are piled on top of each other’s, except for the slapper. The person with his hand at the bottom will say any number randomly from 1 to 10. The moment he says “3” the slapper will slap the hands while the others try to avoid being slapped. Play this a few times.

CHAT TIME

- Q1: Will you get slapped often if you don’t listen carefully to the numbers spoken?
- Q2: How does being prepared or watchful help you? For example, what will the consequences be if you are not prepared for your school’s examination?
- Q3: In verses 1 to 13, what is one thing the Bible asks us to be prepared in when Jesus comes back?

LEARNING POINT

God gives us the Bible to help us know more about Him and know how to live our lives according to His ways while on earth. We grow each day to be better followers of Jesus. We begin to stop using wrong words and stop doing wrong things as our hearts are changed by Him. It would be sad if He finds us still being careless in our behaviour and attitudes after so many years of being taught by our parents and church leaders of God’s Word. Let us not be caught unprepared when Jesus comes back again because we would have to answer to Him for every word we say and every action we do.

ACTION POINT

Let your parents tell you how you have been living as a Christian in behaviour and attitude. Ask them to show you how you can better live according to God’s Word.

PRAYER POWER

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

Dear God, thank You for telling me that I must not be careless in the way I live my life as a Christian. Help me grow in all my ways to please You always. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen

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