



03/2016

DEVOTIONAL JOURNAL

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

EPHESIANS 1:5 (ESV)



03/2016
DEVOTIONAL JOURNAL

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

EPHESIANS 1:5 (ESV)

Also available online at www.cefc.org.sg



MEMORY FOCUS

FROM EPHESIANS (ESV)

2016

JANUARY

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

EPHESIANS 1:3

FEBRUARY

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

EPHESIANS 1:4

MARCH

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

EPHESIANS 1:5

APRIL

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

EPHESIANS 2:8-9

MAY

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

EPHESIANS 3:20-21

JUNE

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

EPHESIANS 4:1

JULY

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

EPHESIANS 4:2

AUGUST

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

EPHESIANS 4:3

SEPTEMBER

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

EPHESIANS 6:10

OCTOBER

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

EPHESIANS 6:11

NOVEMBER

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

EPHESIANS 6:12

DECEMBER

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

EPHESIANS 6:18

FORE BY SENIOR PASTORS 2016 WORD

BACK TO THE ESSENTIALS IN 2016!



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

Spiritual Growth is a choice!

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

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

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

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

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

Rev Tony Yeo and Rev Tan Kay Kiong

GUIDE TO USING THIS DEVOTIONAL JOURNAL

1 Prepare your heart in God's presence

- Select a fixed time (preferably in the morning before you begin your day) and a quiet place where you can be alone and undisturbed.
- Observe a moment of silence as you acknowledge God's presence. Centre down.
- Begin with a song of worship. Meditate on the lyrics even if you are unfamiliar with the tune. (Refer to the list of worship songs provided.)
- Ask God to open your heart to hear Him.

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

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

- Scripture – Take your time to meditate on the Scripture passage for the day. Pause and mull over words and phrases that stand out to you.

- **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

MARCH/APRIL

BEFORE THE THRONE OF GOD (HOUR OF PRAYER)

Verse 1

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

Verse 2

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

Verse 3

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

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

I NEED THEE

Verse 1

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

Chorus

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

Verse 2

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

Verse 3

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

Verse 4

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

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

HOLY SPIRIT (LIVING BREATH OF GOD)

Verse 1

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

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

Verse 2

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

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

Verse 3

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

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

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

KEEP ON PRAYING

Chorus

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

Verse

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

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

OCEANS (WHERE FEET MAY FAIL)

Verse 1

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

Chorus 1

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

Verse 2

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

Chorus 2

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

Interlude 1

Oh and You are mine oh

Bridge

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

Interlude 2

Yeah yeah yeah yeah
Oh Jesus yeah my God

Chorus 3

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

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

GIVE ME JESUS

Verse 1

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

Chorus 1

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

Verse 2

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

Verse 3

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

Chorus 2

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

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

MY HEART IS FILLED WITH THANKFULNESS

Verse 1

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

Verse 2

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

Verse 3

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

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

LORD YOUR GOODNESS

Verse

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

Pre-chorus

I will remember Your mercy
 And Lord Your faithfulness

Chorus

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

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

OUR GOD

Verse 1

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

Verse 2

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

Chorus

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

Bridge

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

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



THE CHURCH BEYOND

WOMEN'S BREAKTHROUGH WEEKEND
IN SARAWAK, MALAYSIA

BY MINA BIAN, WOMEN'S MINISTRY BORNEO EVANGELICAL MISSION (BEM)

*For while we were still weak, at the right time
Christ died for the ungodly. (Romans 5:6)*

“M”ake a certain breakthrough, make it today”, the theme song of the Women’s Breakthrough Weekend (WBTW) echoed in my mind, and it became my humble and personal prayer to God from the very first day of my first WBTW. I thank God, for He heard my cry and broke through into my life right there and then as I knelt to surrender the dark areas of my life to Him. The shame and guilt of my hidden past that I had carried for such a long time was suddenly taken away from me, and I knew that I had been set free from sin. I knew God had forgiven me. He loves me just as I am (Ro 5:6, 8-9) and I committed to walk in obedience to His Word and live a purposeful and fulfilled life in Him. Thus began my redemptive journey with the Lord.

I was among a team of women from the Borneo Evangelical Mission State Committee in Sarawak who were invited and sponsored by Covenant EFC to attend the WBTW in Johor Bahru in December 2014 and again in March 2015, as we wanted to run a similar WBTW in Miri, Sarawak.

Our desire became a reality in 2015 and I was entrusted with the role of Camp Commandant. Initially I was reluctant to take on the position because of my own limitations, but with much encouragement from my team of local leaders as well as assurance and guidance from Pastor Valerie and the Covenant EFC team, I began to put my trust in God. Indeed, He has proven to be true to His Word. He met all our needs in every aspect, right down to the details – from the preparation to the running

*“The shame and guilt
of my hidden past
that I had carried
for such a long time
was suddenly taken
away from me...”*

of the actual event. For me, there were also humbling learning moments as I worked alongside and picked up pointers from sisters who were much younger than me. Over and over again, I witnessed the faithfulness of God and it urged me to press on to become one with Him.

130 women attended the first WBTW in Sarawak and everyone had a powerful testimony of breakthrough to share. As I reflect, this event was intentionally organised for the sole purpose of allowing God to achieve His desired breakthrough among us. The safe environment also facilitated open sharing with one another and helped prepare our hearts to connect with God through the messages and worship. All this was only possible through the intercessory prayers of His faithful saints and total reliance on the leading of the Holy Spirit.

We at BEM Sarawak will be hosting our second WBTW in Miri in September 2016. This time we will be opening it to the women pastors and the pastors’ wives, and are expecting 200 participants. Just as the Lord has blessed us in the previous WBTW, we pray that He will continue to bless our partnership with Covenant EFC, and that the participants, facilitators, speakers and working committee members will allow God to speak into our lives and bring us to an ever deeper understanding of His love for us, our people and land!

» PRAY

That the participants in the overseas BTWs in Vietnam, Thailand, Nepal, Indonesia, Malaysia and China this year will encounter God.

For God’s empowerment upon the Covenant EFC pastors, ministry staff and members who will be serving in the BTWs. For journey mercies and team unity.

That God will use the overseas BTWs to build authentic and intentional disciples in our partner churches. That BTWs will not be seen as a stand-alone programme but a redemptive step towards a discipleship movement.



DAYS OF PASSION

FAST.PRAY.BLESS

17 FEBRUARY – 27 MARCH 2016

This year's 40 days of prayer is intentionally designed to coincide with the period of Lent¹.

Lent is a season of prayer and fasting as we walk with Jesus to the cross and the empty tomb. The theme of this year's 40-day prayer season is **40 Days of Passion**. We desire to have our spiritual passion for God renewed as we contemplate the Passion of the Christ, which culminated in His crucifixion on Good Friday and resurrection on Easter Sunday. Are you ready to have your spiritual passion reignited?

There are three things we will focus on:

Fasting

As a church, we will fast every Wednesday and spend this time in prayer. A weekly prayer guide will be provided in the preceding Sunday's bulletin. You can participate by doing a full fast, partial fast or liquid fast. You can also fast from potentially distracting and time-consuming things like TV, gaming or Facebook!

Praying

We will engage in prayer at three main levels. At a personal level, we will synchronise our prayer time at 10pm daily. The Devotional Journal entries during this period will provide a daily 10pm prayer point for us to focus our prayers, based on the book of Ephesians. As a Covenant Group (CG), we will gather for extended prayer and to learn about fasting, praying and blessing. As a church, we will gather for corporate prayer at our 26 February Prayer and Praise, and 21-24 March revival prayer meetings.

B.L.E.S.S.-ing

As we sincerely draw near to God, we trust Him to lead us to different people through the B.L.E.S.S. initiative, and so reach them for Christ towards this coming Good Friday Service and other outreach opportunities.

We would love to hear about your experience of this 40-day prayer journey. Email us at prayer@cefc.org.sg. May you meet Jesus afresh and have your spiritual passion for Him reignited!

¹ Lent in 2016 is from 10 February (Wednesday) to 26 March (Saturday), for a total of 46 days. Six Sundays are traditionally excluded from the count of 40 days. However, 10 February is also the second day of Chinese New Year, which is a period of feasting. Thus we are beginning our 40 days a week later on 17 February, which is exactly 40 days from 27 March (Easter).



TUESDAY, 1 MARCH 2016

I Thank God for You

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 1:15-18

■ OBSERVATION

What does it mean for Paul to unceasingly give thanks to God for the Ephesian believers (vv. 15-16)?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

DEEPER REFLECTION

Paul frequently began his letters with thanksgiving to God for his readers (Ro 1:8; 1 Co 1:4; Php 1:3; Col 1:3; 1 Th 1:2; 2 Th 1:3; 2 Ti 1:3; Phm 1:4). He thanked God unceasingly for the Ephesians for “their sound commitment to the gospel”¹ (vv. 15-16). “Unceasingly” does not mean Paul did it uninterrupted 24/7, but rather, he “regularly gave thanks for them in his times of prayer”² and whenever he thought of them. Within the community of God’s redeemed people, we do have fellow believers whom we honestly find difficult to relate to, whose attitudes and actions are just one of a kind and whom we try to avoid interacting with. But there can also be pride and prejudice on our part. We must graciously love such people, nonetheless. A good way to begin is by giving thanks to God for them. The immature “church of God at Corinth” was perhaps the most challenging church Paul ever pastored, but he still said to them, “I always thank my God for you” (1 Co 1:4). Giving thanks to God for such difficult people helps us to look at them through God’s eyes. It does something good to our own soul. Above all, God delights in such thanksgiving to Him.

■ APPLICATION

Who are the difficult people I need to learn to thank God for?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

■ 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:



PRAY@10:00 PM

Pray that God will give us grace and wisdom to relate patiently with the difficult pre-believers we have contact with.



¹ Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Baker, 2010), 101

² Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Apollos, 1999), 128



WEDNESDAY, 2 MARCH 2016

Fuller Personal Knowledge of God

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 1:15-18

■ OBSERVATION

What do you observe about knowing God in verse 17 in relation to Ephesians 1:3 to 14?

DEEPER REFLECTION

Verses 15 to 23 teaches us to keep praising God as well as to keep praying that we may know the fullness of every Spiritual blessing in Christ that God has blessed us with (Eph 1:3-14). The key to this is a fuller personal knowledge of God (v. 17). To know God “means to be in close relationship with Him”³ – a knowledge “linked with His demands (cf. 1 Jn 2:3-4), and is often described as knowing His will”⁴ (cf. Col 1:9-10). But we cannot know God unless God makes Himself known to us. God has revealed Himself and His heart in Holy Scripture. And it is up to us to want to seek to know God in Scripture. Read the Scripture with the conscious intent to know God, asking the most important question: “What I can learn about God in this text?” True knowledge of God affects the way we look at reality and how we live our lives. In order to know God in Scripture, we need “the Spirit of wisdom and revelation”. We need the Lord to open the Scripture to us and open our spiritual eyes to see Him (Lk 24:27, 31-32). Knowledge of God “is not a fixed quantum but rather something that develops in the life of people as they are obedient”⁵. Am I knowing God at a deeper level?

■ APPLICATION

Why do I seek to or lack the desire to want to know God more?

■ PRAYER

God, grant me through Your grace the desire to know You and to know You more. Help me to know You as You have revealed Yourself in Scripture through the Spirit of wisdom and revelation. Bring to my attention any ideas of who You are that I believe in that are untrue, that are worldly and that are mere human conceptions. Amen.

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:



PRAY@10:00 PM

Pray that God will open the eyes of pre-believers to see His reality through His creation (Ro 1:19-20).



³ Peter T. O'Brien, 132

⁴ Peter T. O'Brien, 133

⁵ Peter T. O'Brien, 133



THURSDAY, 3 MARCH 2016

Growing in Knowledge Is Vital

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 1:15-18

■ OBSERVATION

What do you observe about knowledge in verses 17 to 18a?

DEEPER REFLECTION

Paul's purpose in his prayer is "knowledge" (v. 17) and "so that you will know" (v. 18) – knowledge of God and the things of God. "Growth in knowledge is indispensable to growth in holiness. Indeed, knowledge and holiness are even more intimately linked than as means and end."⁶ Christians often make a false dichotomy between the heart and the mind. Hebrews 8:10 and 10:16 (both quoting Jer 31:33) show that "minds" and "hearts" are parallel ideas. The two words in Hebrews 8:10 are reversed in the parallelism in Hebrews 10:16. The writer of Hebrews uses "minds" and "hearts" interchangeably. We need to guard against having an anti-intellectual Christian faith to our own detriment. Paul's prayer of "with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know" (v. 18a, NRSV) shows that biblically, knowledge has spiritual, intellectual and experiential dimensions. Divine transformation of our lives takes place through a day-by-day renewal of our mind (Ro 12:2) and our inner being (2 Co 4:16). It is a spiritual-intellectual reality. Biblical application of the Word of God isn't just about what we do, but equally important is also what and how we think. How we behave is shaped by what we believe.

■ APPLICATION

What perspective and/or attitude do I need to change with regard to the biblical importance of knowledge in my spiritual life?

■ PRAYER

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

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:



PRAY@10:00 PM

Pray that God will help us to grow in knowledge and give us wisdom to engage with pre-believers intellectually as we reach out to them with the Gospel.



⁶ John Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, The Bible Speaks Today (IVP, 1979), 54



FRIDAY, 4 MARCH 2016

Do I See the Hope?

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 1:15-18

■ OBSERVATION

What is “the hope of His calling” that we are to know in verse 18 (also Eph 4:4)?

.....

.....

.....

.....

DEEPER REFLECTION

As we grow in personal knowledge of God through “the Spirit of wisdom and revelation” (v. 17) and “with the eyes of your heart enlightened” (v. 18a, NRSV), we grow to know three theological truths and realities: hope, glory and power (Eph 1: 18b-19). Revelation, wisdom, enlightenment and knowledge from the Holy Spirit are vitally necessary in our relationship with God, which God invites us to keep asking from Him. “Know what the hope of His calling is” (v. 18; Eph 4:4). God’s redemptive call is described in Ephesians 1:3-14. We must be **gripped by God’s call** – an act of God’s gracious initiative and sovereign choice. When we look at that, we are humbled in our unworthiness and ask, “Who am I, O Lord God?” (1 Ch 17:16). **Grasp the hope** of God’s call. God’s call is highly eschatological in nature; thus its emphasis on “hope”. Hope has to do with what is unseen in the future, which requires us to wait eagerly for with perseverance (Ro 8:24-25). However, we tend to emphasise more on faith than on hope in the Christian setting. In Revelation, John calls us to see the hope of God’s call in terms of living “in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance in Jesus” (Rev 1:9) anchored in “Come, Lord Jesus” (Rev 22:20).

■ APPLICATION

What does it mean for me personally to live by the eschatological hope in God?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

■ PRAYER

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

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

To wait eagerly in hope with perseverance

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:



PRAY@10:00 PM
Pray for pre-believers to see hope in God through the Gospel in this world of insecurity and uncertainty.





SATURDAY, 5 MARCH 2016

Do I See the Glory?

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 1:15-18

■ OBSERVATION

What does “the riches of His glorious inheritance in His holy people” (v. 18, NIV) tell us about God and His people?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

DEEPER REFLECTION

“With the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know” (v. 18a, NRSV): to know and to see are synonymous. “Know the riches of His glorious inheritance in His holy people” (v. 18). God has redeemed us with the greatest price – the blood of His Beloved Son (Eph 1:7), that we may be His own special people and His glorious possession. Mark the word “glory”: “The Father of glory” (v. 17) has made us to be His glorious possession “to the praise of His glory” (Eph 1: 6, 12, 14). When you look at the mirror, what do you see? God’s glory? “We all” – with no exception – “beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory” (2 Co 3:18). Nothing can be more glorious than being God’s glorious possession. Why then do we seek glory from humans and the world, which is inferior and perishable? It is incredible that God should place such an extraordinary value on us sinners, rescued from perdition and still bearing too many traces of our former sinful state.⁷ But this is true because we are **in Christ**. How then do we view and value ourselves and others in Christ?

■ APPLICATION

How does being God’s glorious possession change the way I think of myself?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

■ 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:



PRAY@10:00 PM

Pray for pre-believers to be able to see God as their Creator who cares for them through His common grace (Ac 14:17).



⁷ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Colossians, to Philemon and to the Ephesians* (Eerdmans, 1984), 270



SUNDAY, 6 MARCH 2016

■ SCRIPTURE

.....

■ OBSERVATION

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

■ APPLICATION

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

■ PRAYER

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

THE PAST WEEK

REVIEW

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

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

What gave me life and what drained me?

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

How was the Spirit of God at work?

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

REFLECT

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

RESPOND

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

COMMIT IN PRAYER

FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

March 2016 – Week 1

**KNOWING GOD BETTER**

Pray that you will know God better.

Scripture: Ephesians 1:18

ACTIVITY BITE

How much do you really know about your parents? Ask them to share with you 10 things about themselves that you may not know. You may want to guess what these are before they tell you. For example, your parents may ask you to guess what their childhood favourite toy was, or the primary school they attended.

CHAT TIME

Q1: How do you feel now that you know more about your parents?

Q2: How does it help your relationship with someone when you get to know him or her better?

Q3: What can you do to know God better?

LEARNING POINT

Unlike the characters in your favourite story books, God is not a just character in the Bible. He is a real person with real thoughts and feelings. You can't see Him because He is invisible, but He is real. And He wants you to know Him better. He wants you to know that He cares for you more than you could ever imagine. He wants to help you when you are in need. He wants to laugh with you when you are happy and be there with you when you feel sad. Prayer helps you to know Him better, because that is when He can speak to you even as you talk to Him.

ACTION POINT

Make it a habit to pray to Him every day. Start now by telling Him how you are feeling and what you are thinking about.

PRAYER POWER

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

Dear God, thank You very much for caring so much for me. I really want to know You more. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.



MONDAY, 7 MARCH 2016

Do I See the Power?

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 1:18-23

■ OBSERVATION

What do you observe about the power of God in verse 19?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

DEEPER REFLECTION

In Paul's prayer for knowledge of the hope, the glory (v. 18) and the power in Christ (v. 19), his emphasis is on power, as shown in his extensive elaboration on it (vv. 19-23 – five verses!). Take note of every word Paul uses to describe the **greatness of God's power** (v. 19): in terms of attributes – “surpassing”, “immeasurable” (ESV) and “exceeding all bounds”⁸; and in terms of activity – “the working of the strength of His might”. Take time to ponder over this, to grasp in your mind and heart, and with faith, “the vast magnitude of God's power”⁹ – which is **for us who believe**. The focus here is “us” – for our benefit. The word “believe” is a present participle in the Greek language, and it “emphasises the need for the continuing exercise of faith in the apprehension of God's power”¹⁰. True faith is active faith – “the work of faith” (1 Th 1:3). Intensive divine power does not exclude intensive human action. In making disciples, Paul “toils, struggling with all His energy that He powerfully works within me” (Col 1:28-29, ESV). What is true here in serving God is equally true in walking with God. Both require divine power, continuing faith and intensive action.

■ APPLICATION

In what ways have I experienced the surpassing greatness of God's power in my life?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

■ PRAYER

God, fill me with the knowledge of Your will in all Spiritual wisdom and understanding so that I may walk in a manner worthy of You. Strengthen me with Your power, according to Your glorious might, for the attainment of steadfastness and patience, joyfully giving thanks to You in all things and at all times.¹¹

Amen.



PRAY@10:00 PM

Pray that God will fill the Church with the Holy Spirit and His power to be bold in her witness to the world (Ac 4:31).



⁸ Frank Thielman, 100

⁹ Frank Thielman, 100

¹⁰ John Stott, 67

¹¹ Colossians 1:9-11



TUESDAY, 8 MARCH 2016

How to See God's Power

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 1:19-23

■ OBSERVATION

What is the significance of Jesus' resurrection and exaltation in our knowing of the surpassing greatness of God's power for us who believe (vv. 19-20)?

.....

.....

.....

.....

DEEPER REFLECTION

The resurrection and exaltation of Jesus were "a decisive demonstration of divine power"¹² (vv. 19-20). We are to know and see God's power for us and in us through Jesus' resurrection and exaltation. Death and evil are two powers which humans cannot control and which hold humans in bondage. Humans are mortal, and thus cannot avoid death. Humans are fallen, and thus cannot overcome evil. God has conquered both death and evil through Christ's resurrection and exaltation. Through advanced medical technology, we may succeed in postponing death, but we cannot escape it. And after death nothing can stop the process of decay and decomposition. We are dust, and to dust we shall inevitably return (Ge 3:19). No human power can prevent this, let alone bring a dead person back to life. But God alone can, and He did it. God reversed the natural process of decomposition by refusing to let Jesus' dead body undergo decay (Ac 2:27). And transcending that, God restored life to Jesus with a new glorious body (cf. Php 3:21). In Christ, we share in His resurrection and the power of His resurrection. So, we fear not when our bodies are weakened through aging or death, whatever the causes may be. Think resurrection.

■ APPLICATION

What effect(s) do the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus have on my life?

.....

.....

.....

.....

■ PRAYER

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

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:



PRAY@10:00 PM
Pray that pre-believers will come to see that the Jesus Christians worship is alive and present in the midst of God's people.



¹² John Stott, 58



WEDNESDAY, 9 MARCH 2016

Christ's Reign in Today's World (1)

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 1:19-23

■ OBSERVATION

What do you observe about the exalted Christ in verses 20 to 22?

DEEPER REFLECTION

Observe carefully the way and the words Paul uses to present “the all-embracing dominion of Christ”¹³ and “the comprehensive scope of Christ’s supremacy”¹⁴ (vv. 20-22). **What does Christ reign over?** Take note of the words “all/every”. “All rule and authority and power and dominion” (v. 21a): “every conceivable power”¹⁵, particularly “spiritual agencies ‘in the heavenly realms’ which stand behind earthly and human institutions and structures (cf. Eph 6:12)”¹⁶. Paul “uses terms that in the religious environment of his readers typically referred to the gods who were thought to control the fate of human beings and the destiny of nations”¹⁷. “Every name” (v. 21): “name” “here implies not so much the conventional label of personal identity as the designation of rank or honour”¹⁸. “All things” (v. 22 – repeated twice): Christ’s reign is total and absolute. Nothing is not under His reign. **How does Christ reign?** “Far above” all things (v. 21), with “all things under His feet” and as “head over all things” (v. 22). “Head” and “feet” “could be used together to mean ‘completely everything’”¹⁹. **When does Christ reign?** In the present (“in this age”, v. 21b) and in the future and forever (“in the age to come”, v. 21b). Paul’s pastoral emphasis is that we see Christ’s present reign in today’s world.

■ APPLICATION

Which aspect of the exalted Christ has an immediate relevance to my life?

■ PRAYER

*I bow in worship to You,
King of kings and Lord
of lords, who reigns
far above all rule and
authority and power and
dominion, and every
name that is named, not
only in this age but also
in the one to come. Help
me to look at the corrupt
and chaotic world and
live in it with You, from
the position where God
has seated me with You.
Amen.*

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:



PRAY@10:00 PM

Pray that the Church will find confidence in the exalted reigning Christ in facing the challenges in the world as His witness.



¹³ Peter T. O'Brien, 142

¹⁴ Peter T. O'Brien, 142

¹⁵ Peter T. O'Brien, 142

¹⁶ Peter T. O'Brien, 144

¹⁷ Frank Thielman, 106

¹⁸ F. F. Bruce, 273

¹⁹ Frank Thielman, 111; Peter T. O'Brien, 142



THURSDAY, 10 MARCH 2016

Christ's Reign in Today's World (2)

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 1:19-23

■ OBSERVATION

How are verses 20 to 22 relevant to God's people in today's world?

DEEPER REFLECTION

Gideon Rachman of the Financial Times wrote: "...recent political history suggests that the events that define a year tend to be the big surprises and sudden discontinuities...At the beginning of 2014, no pundit that I know of was predicting that Russia would annex Crimea or that a militant group called ISIS (Islamic State in Iraq and Syria) would capture Mosul, Iraq's second-largest city. And, at the start of 2015, I cannot remember many people predicting that more than one million refugees would arrive in Germany that year...All this suggests that the most important geopolitical events of 2016 will also be something that the pundits and politicians are not yet talking about"²⁰. We live in a world of unknown unknowns, unpredictable and uncontrollable. But in such a world we must see Christ reigning "far above" all powers – human and supra-human, and "every name", as "head over all things" with "all things under His feet" – now and forever (vv. 20-22). Nothing is not under His powerful and watchful reign. This is an unshakable truth and the ultimate reality. This is what the Word of God says. And we must believe in God's reliable Word and live by it in an unpredictable world.

■ APPLICATION

How do I see the exalted Christ in today's world?

■ 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:



PRAY@10:00 PM

Pray that the Church will find courage in the exalted reigning Christ as she faces opposition from the hostile world.



²⁰ The Political Shocks That Will Define 2016 (Straits Times, January 7, 2016)



FRIDAY, 11 MARCH 2016

The Church as God Sees

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 1:19-23

■ OBSERVATION

How does God see the Church according to verses 22 to 23?

DEEPER REFLECTION

Paul's prayer for the Church (Eph 1:15-23) climaxes in verses 22 to 23. **What God gave His Church:** God "gave Him [Christ]... to the church" (v. 22b). "Christ is the head over all things, and God has given Him this role for the benefit of the church."²¹ Since the Church is the "body" of Christ (v. 23) who is "head over all things", "the church, then, is also in some sense head over all inimical powers, and they lied conquered beneath its feet, just as they lie conquered beneath Christ's feet"²². The **power** of the Church! **How God sees His Church:** The "church" here, mentioned for the first time in Ephesians, refers to the universal Church, the "heavenly gathering around Christ in which believers already participate"²³ (cf. Heb 12:22-24). "Local congregations, as well as house groups that meet in particular homes [Ro 16:5; Col 4:15], are concrete, visible expressions... earthly manifestations of the heavenly gathering around Christ."²⁴ As Christ's "body" the Church is "the fullness of Christ" (v. 23). Just as God's glory filled His temple (Ex 40:35; 1 Ki 8:10-11), Christ, the glory of God, fills the Church by His Spirit. The **glory** of the Church! The Church so flawed? Yes! But God's ideal is that Christ is Church-centred and the Church is Christ-centred. Let us grow on!

■ APPLICATION

What changes do I need to make in the way I look at the Church of God?

■ PRAYER

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

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:
Lead the Church as God intends

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:



PRAY@10:00 PM

Pray that uncommitted members of the Church
will be able to see the Church as God sees.



²¹ Frank Thielman, 113
²² Frank Thielman, 113
²³ Peter T. O'Brien, 146-47
²⁴ Peter T. O'Brien, 147



SATURDAY, 12 MARCH 2016

Knowledge and Faith Are Inseparable

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 1:18-23

■ OBSERVATION

What is the relationship between the two verbs “know” and “believe” which Paul brings together in his prayer for the Ephesians in verses 18 to 19?

.....

.....

.....

DEEPER REFLECTION

Paul prays for his readers to “know... His incomparably great power for us who believe” (vv. 18-19, NIV). When Paul brings together the two verbs “know” and “believe” in his writing, it shows that while the knowledge is Spiritual enlightenment through prayer (v. 18a), “we are not to solely pray and wait for illumination, and not to think at all”²⁵. “Divine illumination and human thought belong together. All our thinking is unproductive without the Spirit of truth [Jn 16:13]; yet His enlightenment is not intended to save us the trouble of using our minds. “It is precisely as we ponder what God has done in Christ that the Spirit will open our eyes to grasp its implications.”²⁶ Faith and reason “are never contrasted in Scripture” as “incompatible”²⁷. “Faith goes beyond reason, but rests on it. Knowledge is the ladder by which faith climbs higher, the springboard from which it leaps.” “Faith cannot grow without a firm basis of knowledge; knowledge is sterile if it does not bring forth faith.”²⁸ In knowing God’s incomparably great power, we lay hold of it experientially by “the continuing exercising of faith”²⁹. Paul who calls us to “walk by faith” (2 Co 5:7) and also calls us to be “mature” in our thinking (1 Co 14:20).

■ APPLICATION

How do I relate knowledge and faith in my life?

.....

.....

.....

■ PRAYER

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

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:



PRAY@10:00 PM
Pray that the Church will grow strong
in faith and mature in thinking.



²⁵ John Stott, 66
²⁶ John Stott, 67
²⁷ John Stott, 67
²⁸ John Stott, 67
²⁹ John Stott, 67



SUNDAY, 13 MARCH 2016

■ SCRIPTURE

.....
.....

■ OBSERVATION

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

■ APPLICATION

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

■ PRAYER

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

THE PAST WEEK

REVIEW

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

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

What gave me life and what drained me?

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

How was the Spirit of God at work?

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

REFLECT

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

RESPOND

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

COMMIT IN PRAYER

FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

March 2016 – Week 2



SEEING WHAT GOD WANTS US TO DO

God wants you to see clearly what He wants you to do.

Scripture: Ephesians 1:18

ACTIVITY BITE

Blindfold yourself so that you can't see. With a marker, draw a picture of a cat or an object on a piece of paper. See who can draw as accurately as possible.

CHAT TIME

- Q1: Why is it so important that you are able to see what you are doing?
- Q2: In verse 18, why is it so important that you must see clearly what God wants us to do?
- Q3: In the same verse, what else do you think God wants you to see clearly?

LEARNING POINT

If we can't see the truth, we are just believing and walking in a lie. Walking in the wrong path will lead you into trouble and far away from God. God is the light and He has great and marvellous things prepared for His children, only if we can see it. He wants you to see the great blessing and future He has for you. He wants you to see His works and be a blessing to others too. To be able to see what God wants clearly, you must read and believe in what the Bible says, which is the truth.

ACTION POINT

Start reading the Bible daily, if you haven't been doing so. You can begin with just a chapter from the New Testament book each day. Ask your parents to read with you too.

PRAYER POWER

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

God, I want to see clearly the wonderful things You have for me. I want to start by reading the Bible regularly. Help me know the truth. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.



MONDAY, 14 MARCH 2016

Apart from God: Total Darkness

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 2:1-3

■ OBSERVATION

What is the full picture of the state of a human life and humanity that is spent apart from God like, according to verses 1 to 3?

DEEPER REFLECTION

Every day the news worldwide consists of more evil news than good news (the biblical contrast of “good” is “evil”, cf. Ge 3:5). The “media enables us to grasp the worldwide extent of contemporary evil” as seen in “the escalating economic problems (population growth, the spoliation of natural resources, inflation, unemployment, hunger)... the spread of social conflict (racism, tribalism, the class struggle, disintegrating family life)...the absence of accepted moral guidelines (leading to violence, dishonesty and sexual promiscuity)”³⁰. “Man seems incapable of managing his own affairs or creating a just, free, humane and tranquil society.”³¹ Humankind is such because it is “dead in trespasses and sins” (v. 1), under the influence and control of “the world” (v. 2a), the devil (v. 2b) and “the flesh” (v. 3), – characterised by disobedience to God. We who have been saved by God’s grace (Eph 1:3-14; 2:4-10) were all “formerly” like that. We wonder at God’s incredible grace with gratitude. But does this mean we don’t have to think about our redemptive discipleship in terms of verses 1 to 3? No, we must. We need, indeed, to guard with watchfulness against falling short of God’s grace (2 Co 6:1; Gal 5:4; Heb 12:14-15).

■ APPLICATION

What implication does the full picture of the state of fallen humans in verses 1 to 3 have on my personal discipleship?

■ PRAYER

Holy Spirit, bring to my awareness immediately when I sin against God, and to confess it to Him without delay for His gracious forgiveness. Empower me that I may be strong in the Lord to discern and flee or resist temptations in victory. Teach me and guide me, Spirit of truth, to grasp God’s Word and to live by it, so that I may grow to know God more and more. Amen.

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

DAYS OF PASSION
FASTPRAYBLESS

PRAY@10:00 PM

Pray that the Holy Spirit will show pre-believers the desperate condition of their lives and that they will be drawn to the Saviour.

DAYS OF PASSION
FASTPRAYBLESS

³⁰ John Stott, 69

³¹ John Stott, 69



TUESDAY, 15 MARCH 2016

Apart from God: Living Death

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 2:1-3; Revelation 3:1-2

■ OBSERVATION

What does it mean to be “dead in your trespasses and sins” (v. 1)?

DEEPER REFLECTION

Verses 1 to 3, a condensation of Romans 1:18 – 3:20, describes the human condition apart from God, with “dead” as its fundamental state (v. 1). “Deadness” of unsaved people does not seem to square with the facts of everyday experience. They, including those who openly repudiate Christ, appear to be very much alive: “One has a vigorous body of an athlete, another the lively mind of a scholar, a third the vivacious personality of a film star”³². But they are dead in “the sphere that matters most”³³ – not body, mind or personality, but the soul: – “dead in trespasses and sins”. “Trespass” is a “deviation from the right path”³⁴ as rebels, and “sin” is “falling short of a standard”³⁵ as failures. Sin separates us from God (Isa 59:2), and the wages of sin is death (Ro 6:23). So, death is essentially separation from God – no fellowship with God, blind to the reality of God, deaf to God’s voice and without sensitive awareness of one’s personal reality. “You are alive, but you are dead” – living death (Rev 3:1-2; 1 Ti 5:6) – can be true of Christians as well, when we become spiritually complacent, taking biblical discipleship lightly and falling into spiritual slumber. Beware!

■ APPLICATION

How does the possibility of being “...alive, but...dead” (Rev 3:1-2) challenge me in my personal discipleship?

■ 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:



PRAY@10:00 PM

Pray that the Holy Spirit will show pre-believers their plight of having no God in their lives.



³² John Stott, 72

³³ John Stott, 72

³⁴ John Stott, 71

³⁵ John Stott, 71



WEDNESDAY, 16 MARCH 2016

Apart from God: Worldly Influence

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 2:1-3; Isaiah 2:6-8

■ OBSERVATION

What is following the ways of the world like (v. 2a; Isa 2:6-8)?

DEEPER REFLECTION

We who are now saved in Christ “formerly walked according to the course [literally, ‘the age’] of this world” (v. 2a), and we “drifted along the streams of this world’s ideas of living” (v. 2a, JBP³⁶). The “age of this world” “brings together the two concepts” of “this present age of evil” (Gal 1:4) – in contrast to “the age to come” introduced by Jesus (Mk 10:30; Eph 1:21), and “this world” – “society organised without reference to God”, or “secularism” – in contrast to God’s kingdom, His new society under His rule.³⁷ Both concepts of “age” and “world” “express a whole social value-system which is alien to God”, permeating and dominating society with “sub-human values”, where “human beings are dehumanised by political oppression or bureaucratic tyranny, by an outlook that is secular (repudiating God), amoral (repudiating absolutes) or materialistic (glorifying the consumer market)...by any form of injustice”³⁸. History has shown how individual Christians and the church are vulnerable to becoming secular, materialistic, consumeristic or holding sub-human values. So we have been warned, “Do not be conformed to this world” (Ro 12:2). For example, Demas, Paul’s fellow worker (Phm 1:24), later left the ministry, “having loved this present world” (2 Ti 4:10).

■ APPLICATION

What form of worldliness am I particularly vulnerable to that I need to guard against?

■ PRAYER

O God of love, true light and radiance of the world, shine into my heart like the rising sun, and banish the darkness of sin and the mists of error. Help me, this day and all my life, to walk without stumbling along the way which You have set before me; through Jesus Christ my Lord.³⁹ Amen.

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:



PRAY@10:00 PM

Pray that God will bring upon pre-believers a profound sense of spiritual emptiness in living by the values of the world that are alien to God.



³⁶ *The New Testament in Modern English* by J. B. Phillips (Collins, 1958)

³⁷ John Stott, 73

³⁸ John Stott, 73

³⁹ Adapted from Erasmus (1466-1536), Angela Ashwin, *The Book of A Thousand Prayers* (Zondervan, 1996, 2002), 275



THURSDAY, 17 MARCH 2016

Apart from God: Demonic Control

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 2:1-3; 2 Corinthians 4:3-4

■ OBSERVATION

What is the theological relationship between Satan and disobedience (v. 2b)?

.....

.....

.....

.....

DEEPER REFLECTION

Life apart from God is “inspired and empowered by personal evil forces”⁴⁰ with Satan – “the ruler of the kingdom of the air” (NIV), as the ultimate authority behind them (v. 2b). “The air” refers to “the dwelling place of evil spirits”⁴¹. Satan is “the ruler of the demons” (Mt 9:34; 12:24), “the prince of this world” (Jn 12:31; 14:30; 16:11), “the god of this age” (2 Co 4:4), “the personal centre of the power of evil”⁴² and the spirit working powerfully “in the sons of disobedience”. But, this does not exclude personal responsibility for disobedience. “Disobedience” is not merely disobedience to God’s command, but also unbelief, a heartfelt refusal to place one’s confidence in God.⁴³ Humanity apart from God lives as if they are God (cf. Ge 3:5-6), with a self-exalted ego (Isa 53:6a). They define reality by human reason, develop society and culture by human values, and determine their destiny by human power. But the truth is, all that they think they are and can do is shaped by sin, the world, the devil and the flesh. Thinking they are in control, when in reality they are being controlled. Let us be careful not to move backward to live like Godless humans, but move forward (Jer 7:24) as new humans in Christ (Eph 2:15; 4:24).

■ APPLICATION

How can I guard against living like “the sons of disobedience” in terms of independence from God?

.....

.....

.....

■ PRAYER

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

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:



PRAY@10:00 PM

Pray that the Holy Spirit will convict pre-believers concerning sin, righteousness and judgment through the Gospel (Jn 16:8).



⁴⁰ Peter T. O'Brien, 159

⁴¹ Peter T. O'Brien, 159

⁴² Peter T. O'Brien, 159

⁴³ Frank Thielman, 124



FRIDAY, 18 MARCH 2016

Apart from God: Lustful Living

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 2:1-3; Galatians 5:19-21

■ OBSERVATION

What does it mean to indulge “in the desires of the flesh and of the mind” (v. 2)?

DEEPER REFLECTION

Living death (v. 1) is the result of living according to the world, the devil (v. 2) and the flesh (v. 3a), under their control. **Wrong desires of the flesh:** “Flesh” here (v. 3a) refers not to the human body, but “our fallen, self-centred human nature”⁴⁴. But note that “there is nothing wrong with natural bodily desires, whether for food, sleep or sex. For God has made the human body that way. It is only when appetite for food becomes gluttony, for sleep sloth and for sex lust, that natural desires have been perverted into sinful desires”⁴⁵. The flesh also “covers all forms of self-confidence, even pride of ancestry, parentage, race, religion and righteousness [Php 3:3-6]. Wherever ‘self’ rears its head against God or man, there is ‘the flesh’”⁴⁶. The flesh “can manifest itself in respectable forms as well as in the disreputable pursuits of first century paganism”⁴⁷. **Wrong desires of the mind:** These include sins like “intellectual pride, false ambition, rejection of known truth and malicious or vengeful thoughts”⁴⁸. They are “mental decisions that run counter to what God desires”⁴⁹. The world, the devil and the flesh, all work in complementary coordination,⁵⁰ for while “one part may play a leading role, all parts need to be considered”⁵¹.

■ APPLICATION

What are the wrong desires of the flesh and of the mind that I need to change in my life?

■ PRAYER

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

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Be holy in their desires and mind.

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:



PRAY@10:00 PM

Pray that God will empower His Church to follow in step with the Holy Spirit so as not to carry out the desires of the flesh (Gal 5:16).



⁴⁴ John Stott, 74

⁴⁵ John Stott, 74

⁴⁶ John Stott, 74

⁴⁷ John Stott, 75 – citing F. F. Bruce

⁴⁸ John Stott, 74

⁴⁹ Frank Thielman, 126

⁵⁰ Peter T. O'Brien, 164

⁵¹ Peter O'Brien, 164 – citing Clinton E. Arnold



SATURDAY, 19 MARCH 2016

Apart from God: Divine Condemnation

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 2:1-3; Romans 1:18-20

■ OBSERVATION

How do you understand the wrath of God within the context of verses 1 to 3?

.....

.....

.....

.....

DEEPER REFLECTION

We were born in sin (Ps 51:5; 58:3), because we sinned in Adam by corporate solidarity, and incurred the same guilt and death (Ro 5:12-14); and thus “were by nature children of wrath” (v. 3b) – under divine condemnation. God’s wrath is “God’s personal, righteous, constant hostility to evil, His settled refusal to compromise with it and His resolve instead to condemn it”⁵². God’s wrath “is never arbitrary, since it is the divine reaction to only one situation, namely evil”⁵³. One expression of divine wrath is God giving sinners over “in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurities for the degrading of their bodies with one another” – sinners who reject and oppose God, and insist and persist in immoral lifestyle (Ro 1:18, 24, 26-27). The immoral lifestyle itself is a manifestation of God’s wrath. This is the worst state of fallen humans. God is “a jealous and avenging God” who “takes vengeance” and “vents His wrath” on the Assyrians for their “endless cruelty” (Na 1:1-3; 3:19) – and also that of today’s “endless” terrorism. But God who “is filled with wrath” is also “slow to anger” (Na 1:3). God “will not leave the guilty unpunished” (Na 1:3), and His wrath is “entirely predictable”⁵⁴. So, rest in this good God in our troubled times (Na 1:7).

■ APPLICATION

How do I live in light of the theological reality of the wrath of God?

.....

.....

.....

.....

■ PRAYER

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

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:



PRAY@10:00 PM

Pray that God will stir up a fear of God’s judgment on sin in pre-believers’ hearts that will cause them turn to Him for His salvation.



⁵² John Stott, 76

⁵³ John Stott, 76

⁵⁴ John Stott, 76



SUNDAY, 20 MARCH 2016

■ SCRIPTURE

.....

■ OBSERVATION

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

■ APPLICATION

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

■ PRAYER

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

THE PAST WEEK

REVIEW

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

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

What gave me life and what drained me?

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

How was the Spirit of God at work?

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

REFLECT

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

RESPOND

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

COMMIT IN PRAYER

FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

March 2016 – Week 3

**WE ARE PART OF THE CHURCH**

The church is not a building but a gathering of the followers of Jesus.

Scripture: Ephesians 1:22

ACTIVITY BITE

Think of the objects you can find in a church and write down as many as you can.

CHAT TIME

Q1: If Christians in very poor countries do not have all the things you have listed above, can they still gather and worship as a church?

Q2: What does verse 22 say about what a church is?

Q3: So if you are part of the church, what are some things you should be doing as a member of the church?

LEARNING POINT

Verse 22 clearly tells us that a church is not a building but a gathering of the followers of Jesus. It means we are not tied down to one place to have a church service to worship God. We can do it anywhere – at the park, in school, at a restaurant or in somebody's house. God wants His people to love Him and others, not the building. He accepts worship that comes from the heart. So the next time you come to church service, you are actually coming to join other Christians to worship God.

ACTION POINT

Serving one another is part of our responsibilities as a church. Together with your parents discuss the things you can do to serve the church. Then do it together as a family.

PRAYER POWER

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

Dear God, thank You for making us the church that worships You. I belong to this church and I want to serve others. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.



MONDAY, 21 MARCH 2016

“But God”: Our Redemptive Hope

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 2:1-6

■ OBSERVATION

What is the significance of “But God” (v. 4) in the context of verses 1 to 6?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

DEEPER REFLECTION

Verses 1 to 3 present the hopeless condition of fallen humanity – how the evil influences of the world, the devil and the flesh coordinated to lead individuals into sin, transgressions and disobedience, resulting in separation from God (“dead”) and under divine condemnation (“wrath”). To be freed from our hopeless condition, what we have to deal with is not the world, the devil and the flesh, but the holy God of wrath. But what can we fallen humans do before such a God? Nothing. Our only hope is **“But God”** (v. 4). “But God”: The God of wrath is also a God of mercy and love. “But God” points to God’s gracious initiative and sovereign action to save and free us from our hopeless plight. We were dead, “but God” has made us alive with Christ (v. 5). We were in bondage to evil powers, “but God” has seated us with Christ in the heavenly realms, where evil powers operate (v. 6). “But God”: “A completely new situation has arisen because God has taken every necessary step to reverse our condition in sin”⁵⁵. When we fall into sin in our three-steps-forward-two-steps-back discipleship journey, we always have this “But God” redemptive hope.

■ APPLICATION

How is the redemptive “But God” relevant to my life now?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

■ PRAYER

Holy God, I have sinned against You. And I can only cry, “God, have mercy on me, a sinner!” A sinner has nothing and can do nothing to gain divine acceptance. A sinner needs only one thing: mercy. And Righteous God, only You, You alone, can show me that mercy. I thank You that I am assured of Your mercy through the blood of Your Beloved Son. Amen.

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:



PRAY@10:00 PM

Pray that the Christians’ redemptive hope in God will be witnessed by pre-believers and that they will be drawn to it.



⁵⁵ Peter T. O’Brien, 164



TUESDAY, 22 MARCH 2016

“But God”: Rich in Mercy

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 2:4-6; Psalm 103:8-10

■ OBSERVATION

How does God show the riches of His mercy (v. 4; vv. 8-10)?

DEEPER REFLECTION

The holy God of wrath who saves us from our hopeless plight is “rich in mercy” (v. 4). God’s “mercy” in Greek often represents God’s “steadfast covenant love” in Hebrew, as seen in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament.⁵⁶ Paul emphatically describes God’s mercy as “rich” – the equivalent of “abounding in steadfast love” (Ex 34:6; Ps 103:8; Jnh 4:2, ESV), of which God is frequently characterised in the Old Testament. Oftentimes in the Old Testament, God’s steadfast love is expressed in a context of Israel’s unfaithfulness to God and “where God might justifiably pour out His wrath upon His people”⁵⁷ (see Ne 9:16-17, 30-32). God’s steadfast love is “an expression of love and generosity which is unexpected”⁵⁸. “It does not fall within the domain of duty and obligation, though the promise to show mercy leads to a commitment on Yahweh’s part to His people...His mercy is often spontaneous. It is shown to a recipient in a desperate, helpless situation, and it is regularly associated with His love, grace and compassion.”⁵⁹ God faithfully meets the exiles in Babylon every morning with His new unceasing steadfast love and compassion (La 3:21-23).

■ APPLICATION

What does it mean for me to belong to a God who is rich in mercy and steadfast in covenant love?

■ 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:



PRAY@10:00 PM

Pray that God will work upon the hearts of pre-believers that they will cry to Him,
“God, be merciful to me, a sinner!” (Lk 18:13)



⁵⁶ The Septuagint was the Bible of the New Testament Church.

⁵⁷ Frank Thielman, 132

⁵⁸ Peter T. O'Brien, 165 – citing F. I. Anderson

⁵⁹ Peter T. O'Brien, 165



WEDNESDAY, 23 MARCH 2016

“But God”: Great in Love

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 2:4-6; 5:2, 25

■ OBSERVATION

How does God show the greatness of His love (v. 4, Eph 5:2, 25)?

DEEPER REFLECTION

The holy God of wrath saves us from our hopeless plight because of His overwhelmingly merciful and loving character. Paul describes God’s love with intensity to show the intensity of God’s love (v. 4). God’s love is a “great” love – intended to parallel with “rich in mercy” as two sides of a coin. There is a double emphasis on “love”: divine attribute (“His great love”) in divine action (“with which He loved us”). And “us” refers to the object of His great love, making us most special and valuable in His sight. God “began” to love us even before we came into existence (Eph 1:4). This means God always loves us – since pre-creation eternity “until” endless eternity (cf. Jn 13:1)! God’s love is “a love that seeks the highest good in the one loved”⁶⁰. God expressed His great love in the greatest way by giving Himself to us: “Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us” (Eph 5:2), “Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her” (Eph 5:25), “the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me” (Gal 2:20) and “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son” (Jn 3:16). Nothing can be greater than what God has already given to us – Himself. This shows that “God is love” (1 Jn 4:8, 16).

■ APPLICATION

What is of particular significance to me when I ponder upon the great love of God with which He loves me?

■ PRAYER

*O Living Flame of Love,
that wounds my soul so
tenderly in its deepest
centre; since, by Your
grace, I can endure Your
touch, perfect Your work in
me according to Your will.
(St John of the Cross)*

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:



40
DAYS OF PASSION
FAST PRAY BLESS

PRAY@10:00 PM

Pray that pre-believers can see the love of God in the Christians around them and be drawn to God’s love.



40
DAYS OF PASSION
FAST PRAY BLESS

⁶⁰ Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Baker, 2002), 327



THURSDAY, 24 MARCH 2016

“But God”: Together with Christ (1)

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 2:4-6

■ OBSERVATION

What is a Christian according to verses 4 to 6?

DEEPER REFLECTION

What is a Christian? The question can be answered biblically in various ways. Verses 4 to 6 is one way. **Before we became Christians**, “we were dead in our transgressions” (v. 5) – spiritually dead, with no relationship with God. What happened **when we became Christians**? The most fundamental aspect about Christians is our union with Christ: “in Christ” and “with Christ”. God had raised Christ from the dead and exalted Him to a position of supreme lordship (Eph 1:20-21). When we entered into a union with Christ, God made us share with Christ in His resurrection, ascension and exaltation in the heavenly realm (vv. 5-6). The divine actions “raised” and “seated” which were done toward Christ (Eph 1:20) are also applied exactly to us who are in Christ (v. 6). This is no abstract concept, but a spiritual reality that is already in us that we must see. Our position with Christ in the heavenly realm is both a present and future reality. While living on earth, we “live a resurrected life in connection with the resurrected Christ”⁶¹, looking at things and living our lives from above where we are (Col 3:1-2), and towards the future when “we fully bond with our Saviour, with new bodies and without sin”⁶².

■ APPLICATION

What practical significance does sharing in Christ’s resurrection, ascension and exaltation in the heavenly realm have on my life?

■ PRAYER

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

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:



40
DAYS OF PASSION
FASTPRAYBLESS

PRAY@10:00 PM

Pray that the Church will truly know, experience and live by the power of God that was demonstrated in raising and exalting Jesus.



40
DAYS OF PASSION
FASTPRAYBLESS

⁶¹ Harold W. Hoehner, 335

⁶² Harold W. Hoehner, 336



FRIDAY, 25 MARCH 2016

“But God”: Together with Christ (2)

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 2:4-6; Romans 8:16-21

■ OBSERVATION

What do you observe about Paul’s “together with Christ” theology in verses 5 to 6 and Romans 8:16-18?

DEEPER REFLECTION

In describing Christians sharing in Christ’s resurrection, ascension and exaltation, Paul uses the Greek preposition, *sun* (with), as a prefix to three verbs, forming compound verbs that look something like “made-alive-together-with” (v. 5), “raised-up-together-with” and “seated-together-with” (v. 6), underscoring the Christians’ togetherness with Christ. Paul does the same in Romans 8:17: Christians as joint-heirs with Christ “suffer-together-with” Christ, that they may be “glorified-together-with” Him. Of particular interest in Paul’s “together with Christ” theology is our suffering with Christ. Resurrection, ascension, exaltation and glorification with Christ are all positive and permanent – in contrast to suffering. The suffering refers to suffering in the decaying creation (Ro 8:18, 20, 21), consisting of trouble, hardship, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger and sword (Ro 8:35). But we are to look at these sufferings with a Christ-centred perspective – suffering together with Christ. In this suffering is the communion with Christ – we suffer with Christ and Christ suffers with us. And in this suffering with Christ will be the glorification with Him. The “sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with” this glory with Christ (Ro 8:18).

■ APPLICATION

What does it mean for me to live my life with the theological reality of suffering together with Christ and future glorification together with Christ?

■ PRAYER

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

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Grow in the together-with-Christ reality

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:



PRAY@10:00 PM

Pray that the world can see something significant and unusual in Christians suffering with Christ and for Christ.





SATURDAY, 26 MARCH 2016

“But God”: Overwhelmed by Grace

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 2:4-6; Romans 3:23-24

■ OBSERVATION

Why does Paul interject these words “by grace you have been saved” in parenthesis abruptly in verse 5?

DEEPER REFLECTION

When Paul is writing on how God in His rich mercy and great love “made us alive together with Christ”, he rather abruptly makes an “unusual”⁶³ “parenthetical exclamation”⁶⁴: “(by grace you have been saved)” (v. 5). Paul will write on this theme shortly (Eph 2:7-10), but why the parenthetical exclamation here? Remember that Paul is writing in a spirit of worship – “to the praise of His glory” (Ephesians 1-3 is framed by doxology, 1:3-14 and 3:20-21). Paul is “overwhelmed by the grace of God”⁶⁵ at this point. What causes Paul to be overwhelmed by God’s grace? God’s grace is exhibited to us who deserve nothing but the wrath of God. Paul “draws a deliberate contrast between what we were ‘by nature’ – ‘children of wrath’ (Eph 2:3) ‘and what we have become ‘by grace’⁶⁶ – ‘we have been saved’ (v. 5). We were once “dead in our transgressions” (Eph 1:1, 5) – separated from God, with the potential danger of eternal separation from God (2 Th 1:9-10). There is no hope of deliverance from God’s wrath and eternal death outside God’s grace. How often do I worshipfully ponder on God’s grace, and being overwhelmed by it, live my life consciously by it?

■ APPLICATION

How do I respond to the incredible grace of God towards me?

■ PRAYER

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

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:



PRAY@10:00 PM

Pray that pre-believers will taste the grace of God through the graciousness of God’s people.



⁶³ Harold W. Hoehner, 331, footnote 3

⁶⁴ Harold W. Hoehner, 333

⁶⁵ Harold W. Hoehner, 331, footnote 3

⁶⁶ John Stott, 77



SUNDAY, 27 MARCH 2016

■ SCRIPTURE

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

■ OBSERVATION

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

■ APPLICATION

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

■ PRAYER

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

THE PAST WEEK

REVIEW

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

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

What gave me life and what drained me?

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

How was the Spirit of God at work?

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

REFLECT

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

RESPOND

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

COMMIT IN PRAYER

FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

March 2016 – Week 4



DOING WHAT WE WANT OR WHAT GOD WANTS

We tend to do what we want instead of fully obeying God.

Scripture: Ephesians 2:1-3

ACTIVITY BITE

Imagine there weren't any laws in the country and you have the freedom to do anything you want, regardless of whether it's right or wrong. What would you do?

CHAT TIME

Q1: What are the terrible things that people may do if there are no laws in the land?

Q2: Why do people still do terrible things even though there are laws in place?

Q3: What must we do to keep our hearts and actions pure?

LEARNING POINT

When sin enters man's heart, it controls every thought and action. It means man tends to do what he selfishly wants. He chooses to be his own master to control everything he can, without thinking of the welfare of others. But Jesus died to take our sins away so that God's power will help us do what is right according to His ways. It doesn't mean that we will automatically become 100% pure and perfect. We will still struggle at times to do what is right, but God will always be there to help us. Our thoughts and actions will improve when we walk close to God daily.

ACTION POINT

List down some thoughts and actions that you want God to help you get better in. Commit them to God and ask your parents to help watch over you in these areas.

PRAYER POWER

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

Dear Jesus, thank You for helping me walk according to Your ways because it is difficult to do so by myself. Help me to do what is right every day. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen



MONDAY, 28 MARCH 2016

Salvation: God's Overwhelming Grace

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 2:4-7

■ OBSERVATION

What do you observe about God in relation to us in verses 4 to 7?

DEEPER REFLECTION

Note the references to “us” and “God” in verses 4 to 7. The text presents a magnificent theological picture of us “who were dead in our transgressions” (v. 4), overwhelmed by God and “drowned” in God. In the theocentric picture, **what God has done** for us in Christ (vv. 5-6) is framed by **who God is** – the riches of God’s mercy, the greatness of God’s love (v. 4) and the surpassing riches of God’s grace in kindness (v. 6). “We were dead, and so helpless to save ourselves: **only ‘mercy’** could reach the helpless, for ‘mercy’ is love for the down and out. We were under God’s wrath: **only ‘love’** could triumph over wrath. We deserved nothing at God’s hand but judgment, on account of our trespasses and sins: **only ‘grace’** could rescue us from our deserts, for grace is undeserved favour. Why then did God act? Out of sheer mercy, love, grace and kindness.”⁶⁷ God’s purpose is that He might demonstrate and display in us “the overwhelmingly gracious nature of His character”⁶⁸ in “the future succeeding ages, beginning in the first century and continuing into the future after the Parousia”⁶⁹ and “for all eternity”⁷⁰ (v. 7). Then our lives will always be “to the praise of His glorious grace” (Eph 1:6).

■ APPLICATION

In what ways have I been overwhelmed by God’s grace?

■ PRAYER

Let all that I am praise the Lord! With my whole heart, I will praise His holy name. Let all that I am praise the Lord! I will never forget the good things He does for me. He forgives all my sins and heals all my diseases. He redeems me from death and crowns me with love and tender mercies.⁷¹

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

⁶⁷ John Stott, 82

⁶⁸ Frank Thielman, 140

⁶⁹ Harold W. Hoehner, 338; “Parousia” is Greek for “coming”, a theological term referring to Christ’s Second Coming

⁷⁰ Frank Thielman, 138

⁷¹ Psalm 103:1-4 (NLT)



TUESDAY, 29 MARCH 2016

Salvation: God's Gracious Gift

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 2:1-9

■ OBSERVATION

How do verses 8 and 9 relate to verses 1 to 7?

DEEPER REFLECTION

God saved us by His grace through our faith in Him (v. 8). “We must never think of salvation as a kind of transaction between God and us in which He contributes grace and we contribute faith. For we were dead, and had to be quickened before we could believe.”⁷² Saving faith is also God’s gracious gift. We could believe because we “believed through grace” (Ac 18:27), and “it has been granted” to us “to believe in Him” (Php 1:29). Salvation is not something we could achieve, but a divine gift to be received. And faith is the humble trust in God with which we receive His gracious gift. Salvation is redemption and forgiveness (Eph 1:7), deliverance from death, slavery and wrath (vv. 1-3), and “the totality of our new life in Christ, together with whom we have been made alive, exalted and seated in the heavenly realm”⁷³ (vv. 4-6). Salvation includes the whole Christian life God has called us to live, for we are not just saved from hell but also to holiness – for which we were chosen in pre-creation eternity (Eph 1:4). Holy living is also “the gift of God” and “not of yourselves”, and “by grace through faith”.

■ APPLICATION

How do I want to respond to God in a fresh way for His gracious gift of salvation?

■ 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:

⁷² John Stott, 83

⁷³ John Stott, 83



WEDNESDAY, 30 MARCH 2016

Salvation: Not of Ourselves

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 2:8-9

■ OBSERVATION

Since salvation includes the whole Christian life, how are verses 8 and 9 applicable to Christian living?

.....

.....

.....

.....

DEEPER REFLECTION

Within Paul's soteriology⁷⁴ in Ephesians, holy living is the purpose and part of "by grace you have been saved" and "it is the gift of God" (v. 8). But oftentimes, the way we live our Christian life is not by God's grace, but in terms of our own effort and merits. This happens when we measure our spiritual life and our relationship with God in terms of achievements in prayer, reading the Bible, evangelism, giving to the church, getting involved in ministry and so forth. Theologians called such Christian activities "means of grace"⁷⁵. They are means to an end – namely, "holy and blameless" before God (Eph 1:4; 5:26-27), maturing into Christ-likeness (Eph 4:13), and not the end in itself. They are called means of "grace" because they are "given according to the measure of Christ's gift" (Eph 4:7). To live by grace is to realise and recognise that all that we are, all that we have and all that we do, except for our sins, are God's gifts. Then, we have nothing to boast about. When we are proud or boast (it can be quietly inside our heart!) of our activities and achievements, we are not living by grace and we do not quite know what it means to live "in Christ."

■ APPLICATION

In what ways have I been living my Christian life by my own effort and merits that I need to change?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

■ PRAYER

Lord Jesus, I heed Your gracious invitation to come to You, as one who is weary and carrying heavy burdens, to receive the rest You want to give me. I take Your yoke upon myself and let You teach me, because You are humble and gentle at heart, and You promised that I will find rest for my soul. For Your yoke is easy to bear, and the burden You give me is light.⁷⁶

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

⁷⁴ Soteriology is the doctrine of salvation.

⁷⁵ See Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (IVP, 1994), 950-65

⁷⁶ Matthew 11:28-30



THURSDAY, 31 MARCH 2016

God's New Creation Masterwork

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 2:10

■ OBSERVATION

What does it mean that we are God's workmanship (v. 10)?

.....

.....

.....

.....

DEEPER REFLECTION

God's salvation, described in terms of resurrection from the dead, liberation from slavery and rescue from condemnation (Eph 2:1-6), is now spoken of as a new creation: "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus" (v. 10). This new creation in Christ is "the spiritual recreation of God in the individual believers' life"⁷⁷. In Ephesians, Paul talks about this new creation in terms of God creating one new humanity in Christ (Eph 2:15) which consists of individuals as a "new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness" (Eph 4:24, NIV). "The new heaven and the new earth spoken in Isaiah 65:17 and 66:22, have already come into existence in this new order that is created in Christ"⁷⁸ – "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation" (2 Co 5:17, ESV). We live as God's new creation in the old creation that is corrupting geologically, morally and sociologically. Every one of us is "God's masterwork", the "crafted work of God"⁷⁹, which manifests His goodness, His grace, His greatness and His glory; in spite of us struggling and stumbling into sin so often, and physically deteriorating and dying. Indeed, as God's masterpiece we are special to God and significant before God.

■ APPLICATION

What does it mean for me to live as God's masterwork created in Christ?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

■ PRAYER

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

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

⁷⁷ Harold W. Hoehner, 347

⁷⁸ Peter T. O'Brien, 179

⁷⁹ Harold W. Hoehner, 347

COVENANT EFC

© 2016 COVENANT EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH

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