



06/2016

DEVOTIONAL JOURNAL

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 (ESV)



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Also available online at www.cefc.org.sg



MEMORY FOCUS

FROM EPHESIANS (ESV)

2016

JANUARY

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

EPHESIANS 1:3

FEBRUARY

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

EPHESIANS 1:4

MARCH

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

EPHESIANS 1:5

APRIL

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

EPHESIANS 2:8-9

MAY

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

EPHESIANS 3:20-21

JUNE

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

EPHESIANS 4:1

JULY

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

EPHESIANS 4:2

AUGUST

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

EPHESIANS 4:3

SEPTEMBER

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

EPHESIANS 6:10

OCTOBER

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

EPHESIANS 6:11

NOVEMBER

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

EPHESIANS 6:12

DECEMBER

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

EPHESIANS 6:18

FORE BY SENIOR PASTORS 2016 WORD

BACK TO THE ESSENTIALS IN 2016!



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

Spiritual Growth is a choice!

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

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

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

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

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

Rev Tony Yeo and Rev Tan Kay Kiong

GUIDE TO USING THIS DEVOTIONAL JOURNAL

1 Prepare your heart in God's presence

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

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

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

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

- **Observation** – Jot down significant insights and reflections from the passage you have read. You could use the guiding questions provided. *The “Deeper Reflection” section is to aid your contemplation of the Scripture. It is not to replace your own observation, for the Holy Spirit illuminates the Scripture to you as you seek Him earnestly.*
- **Application** – Note down a specific and practical commitment to God's Word for you. Is there a command to obey, a sin to avoid, an example to follow, or a principle to live out? Where appropriate, share your devotional entry with someone.
- **Prayer** – Bring your heartfelt response to God in prayer.

WHAT'S NEW IN 2016?

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

Examining your life is essential in your faith journey. Your redeemed life as a disciple of Christ deserves careful examining. May you take root and bear fruit in Him!



WORSHIP SONGS

MAY/JUNE

THANK YOU FOR THE CROSS

Verse

Thank You for the cross, the mighty cross
 That God Himself should die for such as us
 And every day we're changed into
 Your image more and more
 Yes, by the cross we've truly been transformed

Chorus

And we're so amazed
 And we give You praise
 That You would save us at such a cost
 We're so amazed
 And we give you praise
 For the power of the cross

Mark Altrogge
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WORTHY IS THE LAMB

Verse

Thank You for the cross, Lord
 Thank You for the price You paid
 Bearing all my sin and shame
 In love You came
 And gave amazing grace

Thank You for this love, Lord
 Thank You for the nail pierced hands
 Wash me in Your cleansing flow
 Now all I know
 Your forgiveness and embrace

Chorus

Worthy is the Lamb, seated on the throne
 Crown You now with many crowns
 You reign victorious!
 High and lifted up, Jesus Son of God
 The Darling of heaven crucified
 Worthy is the Lamb!
 Worthy is the Lamb!

Darlene Zschech
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HOLY SPIRIT

Verse 1

There's nothing worth more that will ever come close
 Nothing can compare
 You're our Living Hope
 Your Presence

Verse 2

I've tasted and seen of the sweetest of loves
 Where my heart becomes free
 And my shame is undone
 In Your Presence, Lord

Chorus

Holy Spirit You are welcome here
 Come flood this place and fill the atmosphere
 Your glory God is what our hearts long for
 To be overcome by Your Presence, Lord

Bryan Torwalt | Katie Torwalt

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Jesus Culture Music (Admin. by CopyCare Asia Ltd (Singapore Branch))

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SPIRIT TOUCH YOUR CHURCH

Verse 1

Lord we need Your grace and mercy
 We need to pray like never before
 We need the power of Your Holy Spirit
 To open Heaven's door

Chorus

Spirit touch Your church
 Stir the hearts of men
 Revive us Lord
 With Your passion once again
 I want to care for others
 Like Jesus cares for me
 Let Your rain fall upon me
 Let Your rain fall upon me

Verse 2

Lord we humbly come before You
 We don't deserve of You what we ask
 But we yearn to see Your glory
 Restore this dying land

Kim Bollinger

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DIVINE EXCHANGE

Verse

My heart is captivated Lord by You alone
 Captured by the awesomeness of You alone
 Melted by the grace and mercy
 You have shown
 I stand in wonder

I reach to You, the One Who makes the blind eyes see
 Who breaks the chains of sickness with authority
 Restoring what was broken
 So we may fly again

Chorus

I live to worship You
 I breathe to worship You
 All of my days
 Your face I'll seek

For as I worship You
 You lead me to that place
 To that place
 Of divine exchange

Lara Martin

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DEEPER IN LOVE

Verse 1

There is a longing only You can fill
 A raging tempest only You can still
 My soul is thirsty Lord
 To know You as I'm known
 Drink from the river
 That flows before Your throne

Chorus

Take me deeper
 Deeper in love with You
 Jesus hold me close in Your embrace
 Take me deeper
 Deeper than I've ever been before
 I just want to love You more and more
 How I long to be deeper in love

Verse 2

Sunrise to sunrise
 I will seek Your face
 Drawn by the Spirit
 To the promise of Your grace
 My heart has found in You
 A hope that will abide
 Here in Your presence
 Forever satisfied

Ed Kerr | Geoffrey Cuellar | Paul Baloche | Samuel Hoffman

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THE POWER OF THE CROSS

Verse 1

Oh to see the dawn of the darkest day
 Christ on the road to Calvary
 Tried by sinful men
 Torn and beaten then
 Nailed to a cross of wood

Verse 2

Oh to see the pain written on Your face
 Bearing the awesome weight of sin
 Ev'ry bitter thought, ev'ry evil deed
 Crowning Your bloodstained brow

Chorus 1

This the power of the cross
 Christ became sin for us
 Took the blame, bore the wrath
 We stand forgiven at the cross

Verse 3

Now the daylight flees
 Now the ground beneath
 Quakes as its Maker bows His head
 Curtain torn in two, dead are raised to life
 Finished the vict'ry cry

Verse 4

Oh, to see my name written in the wounds
 For through Your suffering I am free
 Death is crushed to death, life is mine to live
 Won through Your selfless love

Chorus 2

This the power, of the cross
 Son of God, slain for us
 What a love, what a cost
 We stand forgiven at the cross

Keith Getty | Stuart Townend

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THIS IS AMAZING GRACE

Verse 1

Who breaks the power of sin and darkness
 Whose love is mighty and so much stronger
 The King of Glory, the King above all kings

Verse 2

Who shakes the whole earth with holy thunder
 Who leaves us breathless in awe and wonder
 The King of Glory, the King above all kings

Chorus

This is amazing grace
 This is unfailing love
 That You would take my place
 That You would bear my cross
 You would lay down Your life
 That I would be set free
 Oh Jesus I sing for all that You've done for me

Verse 3

Who brings our chaos back into order
 Who makes the orphan a son and daughter
 The King of Glory, the King of kings

Verse 4

Who rules the nations with truth and justice
 Shines like the sun in all of its brilliance
 The King of Glory, the King above all kings

Bridge

Worthy is the Lamb who was slain
 Worthy is the King who conquered the grave
 Worthy is the Lamb who was slain
 Worthy is the King who conquered the grave

Jeremy Riddle | Josh Farro | Phil Wickham

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HEART OF A SERVANT

Standing in awe of your grace
 Setting my feet in your ways
 Entering into your presence
 To behold you face to face

God of all heaven and earth
 Holding me in your embrace
 Unfailing love that surrounds me
 Oh God I stand amazed

My Jesus my lord
 You're the love of my life
 Wherever you go
 Wanna' be by your side
 No longer I
 But Christ living in me
 Serving you for all eternity

My eyes set on you
 In this race that I run
 No longer my ways
 Let your will be done

Make me a servant
 My heart's ever true
 Clinging to the cross
 I'll follow you
 I'll follow you

© City Harvest Church

OPEN THE SKY

Verse 1

Father to all the fatherless
 Anchor to all the anchorless
 In You we are unshakeable
 You know exactly where we stand
 You will refresh the weary land
 You are the spring of hopefulness

Pre-chorus

No love compares to the love that You have
 No one compares to You Lord

Chorus 1

Open the sky
 The heavens shining
 Light up Your fire upon our city
 Break every chain
 You are our freedom
 Reign over us as we come
 (And touch our spirits now)

Verse 2

Shelter to all the shelterless
 Armour to all the armourless
 You are our tower of defence
 You see the depths of all our hearts
 You will restore the missing parts
 You are the One who makes things new

Chorus 2

Open the sky
 Forgiveness flowing
 Rescue our souls from sin and darkness
 We stand in awe
 Reveal Your glory
 Reign over us as we come
 (And touch our spirits now)

Adi Winardi | Andre Hermanto | Andriyanto | Billy Simpson | Daniel Sigarlaki | Kevaz Lucky | Sidney Mohede
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THE CHURCH BEYOND

E-MISSIONS

“For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews.”
– 1 Corinthians 9:19-20a

E-missions is one of the strategic thrusts employed by Covenant EFC in accomplishing missions.

Have Others Done It Before?

At the forefront of E-missions are missions agencies like Cru ministries and churches like Life.tv, who leverage on various digital strategies and platforms to engage in discipleship through the principles of winning, discipling and sending.

One of the ministries under Cru is Jesus Film Media (<http://jesusfilmmedia.org/>), where there is a film on the true story of Yantu¹, a West African university student who was given a tablet with the *Jesus* film. He and five of his friends took turns to show the film to others. Tragically, terrorists attacked his university and burnt it down. As Yantu fled for his life, the only possession he grabbed was the tablet. While hiding out in the bush, he continued to use it to show others the film. Eventually he made his way safely to another city.

What About Us?

For many months, the E-missions Core Team has been meeting to seek the

We are entering new ground and foresee many challenges ahead. We can only trust the Lord for His wisdom and strength to complete it!

Lord for direction on how best to embark on a project that will reach and empower The Next Generation (TNG).

The night we decided on the project was a memorable one. We had nailed down four key criteria for the project—namely Fun, Ownership, Sustainability and Purpose—and as we applied these, the idea for a multi-path video was born. That was the shortest core team meeting we ever had and the resonance in the team was amazing! We were even more delighted when the idea resonated with our TNG Director. Indeed, it is God’s timing, not ours. It is His ministry, not ours. It is His strength, not ours.

We are entering new ground and foresee many challenges ahead. We can only trust the Lord for His wisdom and strength to complete it!

What About You?

In this day and age, the virtual and the real worlds are seamless. If and when you go overseas, consider downloading snippets of the *Jesus* film in the language of your destination and pray for an opportune time to use it.

» PRAY

- Wisdom for churches and Christian organisations to leverage on digital strategies to extend the Kingdom in breadth and depth
- That the experience of our multi-path video project will be life-transforming for both Christians and pre-believing youths
- For God to show the E-missions Core Team strategies that are transcultural and that we will learn and grow for future projects

¹ Name has been changed for security reasons



WEDNESDAY, 1 JUNE 2016

Walking in Gentleness

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 4:1-3; Matthew 11:28-30

■ OBSERVATION

What is “gentleness” like (v.2; Mt 11:28-30)?

DEEPER REFLECTION

Paul urges us to cultivate “four graces”¹ in order to “walk in a manner worthy” of God’s calling: humility, gentleness, patience and loving forbearance (vv.1-2). The second grace is “gentleness” or “meekness”. The Greek word for “gentleness” is used to describe “an animal which has been trained and domesticated until it is completely under control”². Thus a gentle person “has every instinct and every passion under perfect control”³. A gentle person is “always angry at the right time and never angry at the wrong time” – that is, “kindled by indignation at the wrongs and the sufferings of others [like Jesus in Mark 3:5 – anger with grief], but is never moved to anger by the wrongs and the insults he himself has to bear”⁴. A gentle person is always forgiving. Gentleness is “the quality of not being overly impressed by a sense of one’s importance”⁵, and “has to do with consideration for others and a willingness to waive one’s rights”⁶. Humility and gentleness go as a pair together as seen in Jesus Himself: “I am gentle and humble in heart” (Mt 11:29). “The meek man thinks as little of his personal claims, as the humble man of his personal merits.”⁷

■ APPLICATION

In what areas of my life do I need to learn and grow to be humble and gentle in heart?

■ PRAYER

*Lord Jesus, fill me with
Your Spirit that Your
gentle and humble heart
will be my heart, so
that I will be angry only
when others are being
unjustly hurt and not
when I suffer wrongs or
bear insults, and that I
will show consideration
to others, and be willing
to waive my rights.
Amen.*

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

¹ Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Apollos, 1999), 273

² William Barclay, *The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians*, The Daily Study Bible (Saint Andrew Press, 1976; TPI, 2004), 138

³ William Barclay, 138

⁴ William Barclay, 137

⁵ Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Baker, 2010), 253

⁶ Peter T. O'Brien, 278

⁷ John Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, The Bible Speaks Today (IVP, 1979), 149



THURSDAY, 2 JUNE 2016

Walking in Patience

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 4:1-3; 1 Timothy 1:15-16

■ OBSERVATION

What is “patience” like (v.2; 1 Ti 1:15-16)?

DEEPER REFLECTION

Patience is undergirded by humility and gentleness (v.2). Patience is “longsuffering towards aggravating people”⁸, such as God has shown towards sinners (Ro 2:4; 1 Ti 1:15-16). Patience “refers to a persistence in one’s convictions, even when circumstances make this difficult”⁹. Patience “is that long-suffering which makes allowance for other’s shortcomings and endures wrong rather than flying into a rage or desiring vengeance”¹⁰. It “connotes being able to bear up under provocation”¹¹. It is “the spirit which has the power to take revenge but never does so”¹² and “refuses to retaliate”¹³. It is “the spirit which bears insult and injury without bitterness and without complaint...which can suffer unpleasant people with graciousness and fools without irritation”¹⁴. Patience is something we grow in. How do we grow in patience? Through people we find difficulty to relate with and people who make life difficult for us – to the point where our patience reaches its limits. I have discovered in my own growth journey that being able to be patient with certain people does not mean I can be so with all kinds of people. Oftentimes, I have to learn patience again in new settings. We all have to grow from patience to patience.

■ APPLICATION

In what areas of my life do I need to learn and grow in patience?

■ 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 John Stott, 149

⁹ Frank Thielman, 254

¹⁰ Peter T. O'Brien, 278

¹¹ Frank Thielman, 254

¹² William Barclay, 138

¹³ William Barclay, 139

¹⁴ William Barclay, 139



FRIDAY, 3 JUNE 2016

Walking in Forbearance

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 4:1-3; Colossians 3:13

■ OBSERVATION

What is “loving forbearance” like (v.2; Col 3:13)?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

Like humility and gentleness, patience and loving forbearance “also form a natural pair”¹⁵. Only with patience can there be forbearance. To “forbear” means “to put up with something annoying or harmful”¹⁶ and make “allowance for each other’s faults” (v.2, NLT). Thus, forbearance and forgiveness go together (Col 3:13). It is possible for us to put up with people that we resent or dislike. But this grudging tolerance (“Just bear with it!”) is not what Paul has in mind. Paul urges us to forbear “in love”. In loving forbearance, there is an absence of negative thought or feeling towards the person we are forbearing; there is only a prevailing positive attitude and disposition. Loving forbearance includes both bearing with something negative and giving something positive. Love is giving in nature which “always seeks the highest good of every man no matter what he may be”¹⁷. Relationships, even among God’s redeemed people, are not easy for they require so much: humility, gentleness, patience and loving forbearance. These four required graces tell us that we are to relate with one another redemptively. In growing in these four graces, we have to guard against their direct opposites: pride, harshness, impatience and unloving intolerance.

■ APPLICATION

In what areas of my life do I need to learn and grow in loving forbearance?

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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 be kept from pride, harshness, impatience and unloving intolerance

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

¹⁵ John Stott, 149

¹⁶ Frank Thielman, 254

¹⁷ William Barclay, 140



SATURDAY, 4 JUNE 2016

Keeping the Unity

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 4:1-3

■ OBSERVATION

How do verses 1 to 3 show that keeping the unity of the Spirit is very important in God's eyes?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

God's ideal for human relationships is this: They are fundamentally marked by oneness "in the bond of peace" (v.3). For this God has redeemed fallen humanity in Christ, who is "our peace", to be "one new person" as "one body" in "one Spirit" (Eph 2:14-18). We are to "keep the unity of the Spirit" with humility, gentleness, patience and loving forbearance (vv.2-3), without which we "have no hope of maintaining"¹⁸ it. "Make every effort" means "not only haste and passion, but a full effort of the whole man is meant, involving his will, sentiment, reason, physical strength and total attitude"¹⁹. "To keep this unity means to maintain it visibly. If the unity of the Spirit is real, it must be transparently evident, and believers have a responsibility before God to make sure that this is so. To live in a manner that mars the unity of the Spirit is to do so despite the gracious reconciling work of Christ. It is tantamount to saying that His sacrificial death by which relationships with God and others have been restored, along with the resulting freedom of access to the Father, are of no real consequence to us!"²⁰ Keeping the unity of the Spirit is a sacred and thus solemn matter before God that we cannot take lightly.

■ APPLICATION

In what areas of my life do I need to "make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"?

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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:

¹⁸ Peter T. O'Brien, 279

¹⁹ John Stott, 153-54 – citing Markus Barth

²⁰ Peter T. O'Brien, 280



SUNDAY, 5 JUNE 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

June 2016 – Week 1

**JOINED AS ONE**

Sticking together by God's love.

Scripture: Ephesians 4:1-3

ACTIVITY BITE

Draw a picture of your family and talk about the different roles that each member plays. Name one activity that everyone does together and one thing that everyone disagrees on.

CHAT TIME

Q1: Does being together in a family mean that everyone must do the same thing all the time?

Q2: Why does God want us to stay together in unity?

Q3: In Ephesians 4:1-3, how does being humble and patient help us to stay together in unity?

LEARNING POINT

Being together in unity doesn't mean we have to do or like the same things. One person may prefer sports while the other prefers reading. Or one may prefer Chinese food while the other favours Indian cuisine. What keeps us in unity is the One whom we believe in our hearts, who is none other than Jesus. He loves everybody in the world regardless of their colour or language. We should learn to love one another as Jesus taught us. We may have lots of disagreements but we choose to stick together by God's love.

ACTION POINT

Write down all the things you disagree on in your family on a piece of paper. Fold it and write the word "LOVE" as big as you can. Pray and tell God how the whole family wishes to stay together in unity through His love.

PRAYER POWER

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

Lord Jesus, there are many things that can divide us but we want to stay together in Your love. So please help us through Your love. In Your name I pray. Amen.



MONDAY, 6 JUNE 2016

One Body and One Spirit

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 4:4

■ OBSERVATION

What is the significance of “one body and one Spirit” (v.4a) in relation to Paul’s exhortation in Ephesians 4:1-3?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

In Ephesians 4:4-6, Paul mentions seven “fundamental unities”²¹ with the word “one” repeated seven times. Three of them allude to the three Persons of the Trinity: “one Spirit” (v.4), “one Lord” (Eph 4:5), “one God and Father” (Eph 4:6), while the remaining four “allude to our Christian experience in relation to the Three Persons of the Trinity”²². There is “one body” because there is only “one Spirit” (v.4a) to which “one hope” is linked; “one faith” and “one baptism” because there is only “one Lord” (Eph 4:4b-5); “one Christian family, embracing us all”²³ because there is “one God and Father” (Eph 4:6). The theological point is this: “Christian unity arises from the unity of our God.”²⁴ It means “the unity of the church is as indestructible as the unity of God Himself. It is no more possible to split the church than it is possible to split the Godhead”²⁵. And this remains so despite the sad reality of divisions in the Church throughout her history. The “one Spirit” who brings unity and cohesion to the Church by His indwelling (Eph 2:21-22) continues to be the “vitalising breath”²⁶ of the “one body” amidst human failure to keep the unity. No matter what, the Church will always be “the Church of God” (1 Co 1:2).

■ APPLICATION

What are some practical implications for me in being part of the “one body” in “one Spirit”?

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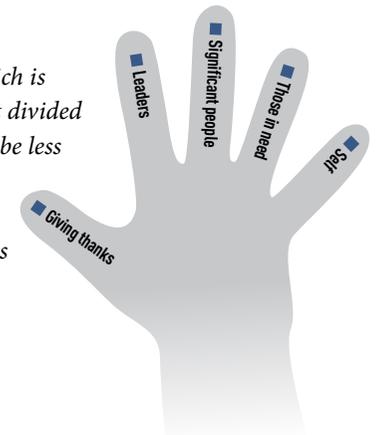
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■ PRAYER

*We pray, O Lord, for the Church which is one in the greatness of Your love, but divided by the littleness of our own. May we be less occupied with the things that divide us, and more with those we hold in common, and the love that enfolds us all. Amen.*²⁷



²¹ Peter T. O'Brien, 280

²² John Stott, 150

²³ John Stott, 150

²⁴ John Stott, 150

²⁵ John Stott, 151

²⁶ William Barclay, 141

²⁷ USPG “Network” Winter 1978 in Angela Ashwin, *The Book of a Thousand Prayers* (Zondervan, 1996, 2002), 221



TUESDAY, 7 JUNE 2016

United in One Hope

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 4:4

■ OBSERVATION

How is the “one hope of your calling” linked to “one body” and “one Spirit” as indicated by the connective “just as also” (v.4)?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

The “one hope of your calling” is linked to “one body” and “one Spirit” by the connective “just as also” (v.4). What is the connection? The world is becoming increasingly fractured and fragmented in every way. Is there any hope of peace, harmony and order? History has shown that every attempt by the world to achieve this by itself has failed. And even when it did “succeed”, it did not last. There is only “one hope”: God will “bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth” under the lordship of Christ at His Second Coming (Eph 1:9-10).²⁸ This “one hope” is “the hope of the gospel” (Col 1:23). When the Church preaches this “one hope” to the chaotic world through “the gospel of peace” (Eph 6:15), the world may ask: “How can I know this for sure?” God intends His Church to answer: “Just look at the unity of the Church!” The “existence of the Church”²⁹ as one new humanity redeemed in Christ as “one body” in “one Spirit” (Eph 2:13-18) “is the pledge that the one hope in its full cosmic scope will be brought into being”³⁰. At a basic level, unity in Christian marriage and family is living testimony of this “one hope” to the disintegrating world.

■ APPLICATION

What are some practical implications for me in sharing in the “one hope” of God’s calling?

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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 Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary (Word Books, 1990), 239; Peter T. O’Brien, 282

²⁹ Andrew T. Lincoln, 239

³⁰ Andrew T. Lincoln, 239



WEDNESDAY, 8 JUNE 2016

United in One Lord

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 4:5

■ OBSERVATION

What is the significance of “one Lord” (v.5) in relation to Paul’s exhortation in Ephesians 4:1-3?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

The “one Lord” (v.5) refers to Jesus Christ. Paul’s particular usage of “Lord” emphasises the lordship of Christ. We need to look at the various ways Paul describes the uncontested supreme lordship of Christ in Ephesians to appreciate the significance of the “one Lord” in relation to unity. There are some 20 references to Jesus as “Lord” in Ephesians. The “one Lord” Jesus “stands at the centre of God’s purpose for the universe”³¹ (Eph 1:9-10; 3:11). He is “enthroned at God’s right hand with every ‘lordship’ beneath His feet (Eph 1:21). These ‘lordships’ include that of ‘Nero, the lord of all universe’³², as one contemporary inscription describes him”³³. Jesus “is the Lord who fills the universe with His sovereign rule”³⁴ (Eph 1:22-23). “Jesus Christ is Lord” (Php 2:11) objectively, and therefore, He must be “Christ Jesus my Lord” (Php 3:8) subjectively. The lordship of Christ in our individual lives is the controlling factor to our commitment to “keep the unity of the Spirit”. The personal “Christ Jesus **my Lord**” leads to the communal “**our Lord** Jesus Christ” (Eph 1:3, 17; 3:11; 5:20; 6:24). When we are not Christ-centred, we become self-centred. And disunity is caused by arrogant and indifferent self-centred people who are disruptive and destructive.

■ APPLICATION

What are some practical implications for me in being under the “one Lord”?

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■ PRAYER

Lord, we pray for the unity of the Church. Help us to see ourselves as rays from the one sun, branches of the one tree and streams flowing from one river. May we be united to You and to each other, because You are our common source of life as our one Lord.³⁵ Amen.

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

³¹ Frank Thielman, 257

³² Nero was the Roman emperor at this time.

³³ Frank Thielman, 258

³⁴ Frank Thielman, 257

³⁵ Adapted from St Cyprian of Carthage (c. 200-258) in Angela Ashwin, 221



THURSDAY, 9 JUNE 2016

United in One Faith

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 4:5; 1 Timothy 4:6

■ OBSERVATION

What is the significance of “one faith” (v.5) in relation to Paul’s exhortation in Ephesians 4:1-3?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

The “one faith” (v.5) as one of the seven foundational keys to “the unity of the Spirit” could refer to objective faith or subjective faith³⁶. As **objective faith**, the “one faith” refers to “the substance of one’s faith”³⁷, “the body of doctrine that all Christians believe”³⁸ – “the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine” (1 Ti 4:6). When Paul later talks about maturing towards “the unity of the faith” (Eph 4:13), “the faith” is “clearly referring to the content of the faith that the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers (Eph 4:11) have handed on in their teaching”³⁹ and “echoing”⁴⁰ the “one faith” in verse 5. As **subjective faith**, the “one faith” refers to “the act or attitude of believing in Christ”⁴¹ and “the complete commitment of the Christian to Jesus Christ”⁴². We can theologically take the “one faith” as both objective and subjective, since the subjective is based and built on the objective, and the objective calls for the subjective response. “All Christians are bound together” by “a common act of complete surrender to the love of Jesus Christ” – “one faith”, even though “they may describe the act of surrender in different terms”⁴³.

■ APPLICATION

What are some practical implications for me in being part of the “one 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:

³⁶ Peter T. O'Brien, 283; Frank Thielman, 258

³⁷ Peter T. O'Brien, 283

³⁸ Frank Thielman, 258

³⁹ Frank Thielman, 258

⁴⁰ Frank Thielman, 258

⁴¹ Peter T. O'Brien, 283

⁴² William Barclay, 142

⁴³ William Barclay, 142



FRIDAY, 10 JUNE 2016

United in One Baptism

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 4:5; Galatians 3:26-28

■ OBSERVATION

What is the significance of “one baptism” (v.5) in relation to Paul’s exhortation in Ephesians 4:1-3?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

While Paul says there is “one baptism” (v.5), the New Testament seems to show a few different baptisms. When we became Christians, we were “**baptised into Christ**” as “sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:26-27). What happened when we were “baptised into Christ”? When we were “baptised into Christ Jesus” we were “baptised into His death” and “buried with Him through baptism into death” (Ro 6:3-4), and were raised with Him (“For if we have been united with Him in a death like His, we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His”, Ro 6:5, ESV). Here, Paul is talking about baptism as a spiritual reality which is symbolised by water baptism. And when we were “baptised into Christ” we “are all one in Christ” (Gal 3:27-28), because “in one Spirit we were all **baptised into one body**” (1 Co 12:13). All these happened to us the moment we became Christians. The “one baptism” is “a shorthand expression for the whole process of conversion, summarised by reference to the visible ritual”⁴⁴ of water baptism. The “one baptism” is to be lived out. How? By living in righteousness with God—the result of “baptised into Christ” (Ro 6:10-13), and keeping “the unity of the Spirit” as “one body”.

■ APPLICATION

What are some practical implications for me in sharing in the “one baptism”?

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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 have strong, loving unity in their marriage and family

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

⁴⁴ Frank Thielman, 259



SATURDAY, 11 JUNE 2016

One God and Father of All

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 4:6

■ OBSERVATION

What is the significance of the acclamation about God (v.6) in relation to Paul's exhortation in Ephesians 4:1-3?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

Verse 6 declares God's transcendent universal rule and "sovereign fatherhood"⁴⁵ over "all" things. This God will sum up "all things" in Christ (Eph 1:10), works "all things" to accomplish His will (Eph 1:11), has subjected "all things" to Christ (Eph 1:22). God is God "of all": **Sovereign Possessor** of everything because He "created all things" (Eph 3:9), so that when we give to God in worship we say, "from Your hand we have given You" (1 Ch 29:14). God is God "over all": **Sovereign Power**. No matter what things may look like, God is in total sovereign control. God is God "through all": **Sovereign Providence**. "God did not create the world and set it going as a man might wind up a clockwork toy and leave it to run down. God is all through His world, guiding, sustaining, loving."⁴⁶ God is God "in all": **Sovereign Presence**. In everything, good or bad, God is there. We live "in a God-created, God-controlled, God-sustained, God-filled world"⁴⁷. The seven "fundamental unities"⁴⁸ (Eph 4:4-6) climax with this magnificent theological vision and reality. Why? To show that the unity of the Spirit that the Church must maintain (Eph 4:1-3) is under the universal rule of God, who is fulfilling His ultimate purpose of unifying all things in Christ (Eph 1:9-10), for which we wait with confidence.

■ APPLICATION

What does God's transcendent universal rule and sovereign fatherhood mean to me personally?

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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:

⁴⁵ Peter T. O'Brien, 259

⁴⁶ William Barclay, 142

⁴⁷ William Barclay, 143

⁴⁸ Peter T. O'Brien, 280



SUNDAY, 12 JUNE 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

June 2016 – Week 2

**NO LONE RANGERS**

We are not to be alone in God's Kingdom; we need each other.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 3:6-9

ACTIVITY BITE

Look around your house, from your bedroom to the living room to the storeroom. What are the things that need to be cleaned and tidied?

CHAT TIME

- Q1: If you had to do all the household chores alone, how long would it take you to complete them?
- Q2: How would things be different if everyone in the family chipped in to do the chores together?
- Q3: What did Jesus' 12 disciples do to help Him in His work before He died and after He went to heaven?

LEARNING POINT

Even though Jesus has the power to do all things by Himself, He called his 12 disciples to help Him spread the Gospel. Jesus wants us to be actively involved in the work of His kingdom while we wait to go to heaven. Partnering Jesus in doing God's work is the best thing a Christian can do. His Kingdom works are not necessarily big things like major church projects. It could just be the usual household chores or small acts of kindness, as long as we do it with thankfulness and with the aim of helping others. This is the act of love that Jesus desires.

ACTION POINT

Think of one or two household chores you can do to help your parents or siblings. Let them know of your intention to help.

PRAYER POWER

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

Thank You, God, for giving us families and friends who will help us and walk alongside us so that we will not be alone. Help me to help others. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.



MONDAY, 13 JUNE 2016

Family Identity

■ SCRIPTURE

Joshua 24:15

■ OBSERVATION

As Joshua challenged the Israelites to make a decision for themselves, who did he include in his commitment to serve God? What is the significance of this?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

Joshua was commissioned to “lead these people to inherit the land” (Jos 1:6), which he fulfilled with the favour of God bestowed on him. He testified in Joshua 23:9, “The Lord has driven out before you great and powerful nations; to this day no one has been able to withstand you”. And before he dies, he intentionally summarised the exodus journey and challenged the descendants of Israel to choose for themselves whom they should serve thereafter. As recorded, Joshua faithfully served the Almighty God. Only two old guards who came out of Egypt were granted entry into the Promised Land. One of them was Caleb, the veteran warrior who occupied Hebron (Jos 14:10-12), and the other was Joshua, who led Israel courageously into conquests. As Joshua did so, he also led his household strongly to serve the Lord. He recognised that the commandments of the Lord were to be upon his heart and he was to impress them upon his household (Dt 6:6-7); together with his family, he challenged the nation to serve only God. It is not just an individual’s identity but a family’s identity influencing a nation’s identity.

■ APPLICATION

What is one activity I want my family to do together at least once a week? (Consider: praying, Bible-reading, family worship, memorising Scripture, hosting a meal for friends or relatives, visiting the sick, going on family outings, and others.)

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■ PRAYER

Lord Jesus, help me build a family who loves You and serves You during both good and difficult times. Amen.

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:



TUESDAY, 14 JUNE 2016

Head of the Household

■ SCRIPTURE

Job 1:1-5

■ OBSERVATION

From verses 1 to 5, we see a picture of a good father. What are the positive traits of Job as a parent?

DEEPER REFLECTION

Being a wealthy man, Job did not allow his possessions nor his family to get in the way of serving God and men. He is described as “blameless and upright, one who feared God and shunned evil” (v.1). Anyone would have called him “godly”. Verse 3 says that he is “the greatest man among all people”. Definitely, this phrase shows him as being popular and well accepted in the community. He is a man of standing. Yet, all the fame and status did not cause him to abdicate his role as a family man. He faithfully prayed for his children and dutifully reminded them of their conduct before God. It demonstrates his concern for them to be found acceptable to God. As head of the household, Job sets a godly example in public places, and being consistent, he models for his children love and concern in the family too. He shows grace, growth and godliness.

■ APPLICATION

As a member of your family, what is one thing you can do to build harmony at home?

■ 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, 15 JUNE 2016

Failure and Forgiveness

■ SCRIPTURE

John 8:1-11

■ OBSERVATION

Adultery is definitely a sin! Why didn't anyone throw a stone at the adulteress? If you were in the crowd, would you have stoned her?

Why or why not?

DEEPER REFLECTION

Putting ourselves in the shoes of the one caught red-handed and facing legitimate accusations, deep inside we cringe and feel remorseful. It is an awful and helpless feeling, possibly one that causes deep hurt and a feeling of condemnation. The slightest demonstration of concern or a request for clarification would bring some hope of forgiveness. We long for such grace and mercy. To see the crowd leaving without stoning her, there must have been such overwhelming relief. And to hear Jesus say, "Neither do I condemn you; go now and leave your life of sin" would have brought out the deepest gratitude. We feel so much when we are in such predicaments. It is the same for the children who are under our care. Let us handle our children's failures or sins without casting the first stone at them. When they transgress, they will cringe and feel remorseful like we do. As we journey with them with regard to failure, we are to extend forgiveness and acceptance.

■ APPLICATION

How will you respond to the failures of your children? What are the possible ways to respond to them?

■ PRAYER

Lord, bestow on me patience to respond to my children appropriately. Help me empathise with them and hear them out before I speak. Give me the grace to extend forgiveness just as I have been forgiven by You. Amen

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:



THURSDAY, 16 JUNE 2016

Setting the Tone at Home

■ SCRIPTURE

John 13:34-35

■ OBSERVATION

As we apply this “new commandment” in our Christian community, let us consider our own home front too. How will your home look like when family members “love one another”?

DEEPER REFLECTION

Love is a hallmark of a disciple of Christ. The Bible tells us that God is love (1 Jn 4:8), and those who are born of God will love one another. Just as God loves us, we are exhorted to love others. There is no other alternative; for it is said, “whoever does not love (others) does not love God”. Genuine love and acceptance strengthen the bond among people, and others in the community will get to know about it. As much as love is supposed to be found in the Christian community, it is also to be found in our homes. As we love and accept other people, we ought to love and accept our family members too. As much as it depends on us, we set the tone in the family—to love one another in our households. There are times when family members may act up. Still, we choose to love as Christ loved us.

■ APPLICATION

In what practical way will you demonstrate your love to your spouse, children, parents and siblings in light of 1 John 3:18?

■ 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, 17 JUNE 2016

The Giver Who Gives Good Gifts

■ SCRIPTURE

Matthew 7:9-12

■ OBSERVATION

Jesus draws a parallel between the heavenly Father and earthly parents in responding to their children's requests. What are the similarities? What is highlighted in verses 9 to 12 about the heavenly Father?

DEEPER REFLECTION

When a child asks for a legitimate gift, every parent in their right minds would respond positively. But when a child asks for an inappropriate gift, parents and caregivers will have to highlight the pitfalls of such items to their children. (A point to remember is to NOT lecture your children in moments like this.) When this happens, you may select an alternative gift to bless your child with. Do come from the angle of encouraging your child to appreciate the blessings from God through you. You may be the earthly giver of your children, but you need to help them see that you are but a "channel of blessings" to them. The Ultimate Giver is God who has blessed you with the ability to bless them. As much as you enjoy the smiles on your children's faces when they receive gifts from you, do seize the opportunity to point them to the Giver of all good gifts. At the same time, be grateful and thankful to God for His blessings in your life!

■ APPLICATION

Give thanks to God for the many blessings in your life. When is it a good opportunity to bless your children with good gifts? How can you use it to lead your children to appreciate God, the Ultimate Giver?

■ 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 point family and church members
to God the Ultimate Giver

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:



SATURDAY, 18 JUNE 2016

Discipleship Begins at Home

■ SCRIPTURE

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

■ OBSERVATION

In verses 6 to 9, who is responsible for teaching the commandments of God to our children? What are some things we can do to help them know God more?

DEEPER REFLECTION

As believers of God, we are exhorted to love God with all our heart, soul and strength. Embrace this command as a true disciple of Christ Jesus. As we do so, being parents and caregivers, we are to champion this in our own homes. To those who are closest to us by family connection, we are instructed to talk to them about loving God in their lives. Verse 7 shows four platforms to engage family members: one, “when you sit at home” – in your conversations and discussions, do refer to your Sovereign God; two, “when you walk along” – when travelling from place to place, do consider your Creator God; three, “when you lie down”—before you sleep, reflect on the day’s activities and give thanks to your Merciful God; and four, “when you get up” – when you rise in the morning, testify of your Faithful God. Do these with your children and family members; lead them to love God with all their heart, soul and strength.

■ APPLICATION

Of the four platforms, what is one area you want to discuss with your family and to intentionally engage them in today? “Think Big, start Small, build Deep.” – Pastor Edmund Chan.

■ 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

June 2016 – Week 3

**BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CHRIST**

We are one in the family even though we are different.

Scripture: Romans 12:4-5; Galatians 3:26

ACTIVITY BITE

Prepare a pack of multi-coloured jellybeans. Each bean represents one of your Christian friends. Name one of them, then pick a jellybean and put it into a bowl. Call out as many names as you can while you continue to fill the bowl with jellybeans.

CHAT TIME

Q1: What are the similarities and differences between the jellybeans in the bowl?

Q2: Why do you think God wants to put us in the same family?

Q3: How should we treat each other if we are in the same family?

LEARNING POINT

Like the jellybeans in the bowl, all Christians belong to the same family even though we have differences in appearance and personality. We can say that because God says in Galatians 3:26 that we are all His children. And if we are His children, we are brothers and sisters in Christ. As a family, we worship the same God and follow the same teachings of the Bible. Being brothers and sisters also requires us to respect, love and be kind to each other as Jesus would want us to. If we are angry with another brother or sister in Christ, then we must forgive and be good to each other again.

ACTION POINT

Divide the jellybeans into small separate packs. Give each of your Christian friends a small pack the next time you see them and say, "This is a gift for you, my brother (or sister) in Christ."

PRAYER POWER

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

Thank You, God, for making us part of Your big family. Help me to love my brothers and sisters and treat them well. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.



MONDAY, 20 JUNE 2016

To Each One of Us

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 4:7-10

■ OBSERVATION

What do verses 7 to 8 tell us about Christ and us?

DEEPER REFLECTION

Christ “ascended to the heights...and gave gifts to His people” (v.8, NLT). “Having achieved dominion over all the powers through His victorious ascent [cf. Eph 1:20-22], He sovereignly distributes gifts” to every believer for the building of His Church, which is “inextricably linked to His intention of filling the universe with His rule [v.10; cf. Eph 1:23], since the church is His instrument in carrying out His purposes for the cosmos [cf. Eph 1:9-10]”⁴⁹. Paul now shifts from corporate unity (Eph 4:1-6) to individual responsibility: “to each one... grace has been given” (not “will be given”), “as Christ apportioned it” (v.7). We have to ask ourselves: “What is the grace that God has given to me?” What God has given to us He holds us responsible and accountable as “good stewards of the manifold grace of God” (1 Pe 4:10). Gifts are for “serving one another” (1 Pe 4:10). Don’t start by finding out what our gifts are; start by serving faithfully in whatever area we can. Gifts are for edifying the body (1 Co 14:26). When the body is edified, it will bear witness to our gifts—the surest way of knowing our gifts. Our gifts surface through serving.

■ APPLICATION

How am I doing in serving God and people?

■ PRAYER

O God, fill me with the Spirit of the Servant of the Lord that I may be like Him, to seek not to be served, but to serve by giving my life to others. Help me to, in humility, value others above myself, not looking to my own interests but to the interests of others.⁵⁰ Amen.

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

⁴⁹ Peter T. O'Brien, 297

⁵⁰ Mark 10:45; Philippians 2:3-4



TUESDAY, 21 JUNE 2016

An Exhaustive List of Gifts?

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 4:7, 11; Romans 12:6-8; 1 Peter 4:10-11

■ OBSERVATION

What do you observe about gifts in verses 7 and 11, Romans 12:6-8 and 1 Peter 4:10-11?

DEEPER REFLECTION

The New Testament contains five lists of gifts (Ro 12:6-8; 1 Co 12:8-10, 28-30; Eph 4:11-12; 1 Pe 4:10-11). Do all these together compile an exhaustive list of gifts? If they do, it means that gifts are confined to and defined by this exhaustive list. If they don't, it implies that God in His "manifold grace" has also given us gifts not mentioned in the list. "Each list diverges widely from the others, and gives its selection of gifts in apparently haphazard fashion."⁵¹ "None is complete, but each is selective and illustrative, with no effort to force the various gifts into a neat scheme."⁵² Even all the five gifts in verse 11 "do not represent an exhaustive catalogue"⁵³. "Doubtless there are many more which are unlisted."⁵⁴ 1 Peter 4:11 broadly categorises God's "manifold grace" into two groups: speaking gifts and serving gifts. Together with this, we may also view gifts broadly as people-oriented and task-oriented types. There are people in the body of Christ who are particularly and passionately committed to ministering among children, youths, elderly folks, unwed mothers, the handicapped, people suffering from HIV and so forth. Personal passion, interests and desires towards particular people or tasks may indicate our God-given gifts.

■ APPLICATION

Where do I sense God placing me in the Church to make my contribution to the building of the body?

■ 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:

⁵¹ John Stott, 159

⁵² Peter T. O'Brien, 298

⁵³ John Stott, 159; also Peter T. O'Brien, 298

⁵⁴ John Stott, 159



WEDNESDAY, 22 JUNE 2016

He Gave Some for Equipping

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 4:11-12; 2 Timothy 3:16-17

■ OBSERVATION

What is God's design for His Church according to verses 11 to 12?

DEEPER REFLECTION

Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors⁵⁵ and teachers may be viewed as equipping gifts – “for the equipping of the saints” (vv.11-12a). Apostles and prophets played the “foundational role as the authoritative recipients and proclaimers of the mystery of Christ”⁵⁶ in salvation history (Eph 2:20; 3:5). However, there are today “people with apostolic ministries of a different kind”⁵⁷, but without apostolic authority like Paul’s. Pioneers of historic Christian movements like John Wesley, Hudson Taylor and Dawson Trotman, can be considered as apostles of this kind. Prophets can also be those with “a gift of insight into the biblical text or the contemporary situation, or both, namely a powerful combination of accurate exposition and pertinent application”⁵⁸ of the Word of God. Evangelists are gifted in “evangelistic preaching”⁵⁹ and/or “effective personal witnessing”⁶⁰. Pastors and teachers feed and take care of God’s flock (cf. Jn 21:15-17). The equipping gifts are fundamentally Word-gifts. Their central ministry is the ministry of the Word (cf. Ac 6:2, 4). They equip God’s people with “all Scripture” to become men and women of God who are “adequate” and “thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Ti 3:16-17).

■ APPLICATION

How will I get myself moving towards being “thoroughly equipped” by the Word of God?

■ PRAYER

Lord, we pray for our pastors that they will be faithful in devoting themselves to the ministry of the Word⁶¹. Anoint and empower them with the Holy Spirit to proclaim Christ⁶² in their preaching and teaching, in such a way that they are speaking in Christ and Christ speaking in them⁶³, according to the mighty working of Your power within them⁶⁴. Amen.

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

⁵⁵ Literally, shepherds

⁵⁶ Peter T. O'Brien, 298

⁵⁷ John Stott, 161

⁵⁸ John Stott, 162

⁵⁹ John Stott, 163

⁶⁰ John Stott, 163

⁶¹ Acts 6:4

⁶² Colossians 1:28

⁶³ 2 Corinthians 12:19 and 13:3

⁶⁴ Colossians 1:29



THURSDAY, 23 JUNE 2016

For the Work of Service

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 4:11-12; Hebrews 5:11-14

■ OBSERVATION

What does God expect of every disciple of Christ according to verses 11 to 12 and Hebrews 5:11-14?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

God has provided us with equipping gifts (v.11) to equip us with the Word of God to do “the work of service” (v.12) with the “grace given to each one of us” (Eph 4:7). Thus, God expects all of us to serve. “Work” “describes an ongoing activity”⁶⁵ – that is, never stop serving God (cf. 1 Co 15:58). We are to serve with the God-given purpose clearly in mind: “the building up of the body of Christ”. Every disciple of Christ is called to “make disciples”, which includes the critical component of “teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you” (Mt 28:19-20). Hebrews 5:12 tells us that we are to grow spiritually to such a time (“by this time”) that we “ought to be teachers” of the Word. Teaching the Word of God is a basic ministry of every growing disciple of Christ (cf. Col 3:16). As long as we are learning God’s Word, living by it and growing in it, we can teach others, formally or informally, when we are a few steps ahead of them in spiritual growth. The least we can do is to teach a new believer. We may fear teaching the wrong things. That is why we need to be equipped in the Word. In fact, teaching the Word can help us to grow in the Word.

■ APPLICATION

What does “by this time you ought to be teachers” (Heb 5:12) mean to me personally?

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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:

⁶⁵ Peter T. O'Brien, 303



FRIDAY, 24 JUNE 2016

To the Fullness of Christ (1)

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 4:13

■ OBSERVATION

What does it mean to “attain to the unity of the faith” (v.13)?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

Gifted (Eph 4:7-8) and equipping for serving to “the building up of the body of Christ” (Eph 4:11-12) is the Church’s growth journey towards the “full level of maturity”⁶⁶ in the “union with Christ in all His fullness”⁶⁷ (v.13). In this growth journey, we should pay attention to two key actions upon a vital threefold unity: “maintain the unity of the Spirit” (Eph 4:3) and “attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God” (v.13). We are to “maintain” what is already there, and to “attain” what is not yet there (“until”). Two great interrelated challenges are confronting the Church in her growth journey: spiritual immaturity and doctrinal instability (Eph 4:14). Church history is a witness to that. Thus, “we all” – as a total people of God in “the unity of the Spirit,” must grow “to achieve a unified understanding” of “all of the core convictions of the faith”⁶⁸, and be characterised by “purity from false teaching”⁶⁹. It is significant to note that even the Spirit-filled apostles themselves, despite having been trained by Jesus for three years, had to engage in “much” theological “debate” at the Jerusalem Council as part of the Church growing to “attain to the unity of the faith” (Ac 15:1-2, 4-7a).

■ APPLICATION

How am I participating in the body of Christ collectively in “attaining to the unity of the 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:

To mature in Christ-like character

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

⁶⁶ Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Zondervan, 2010), 264

⁶⁷ Frank Thielman, 280

⁶⁸ Clinton E. Arnold, 264

⁶⁹ Frank Thielman, 281



SATURDAY, 25 JUNE 2016

To the Fullness of Christ (2)

■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 4:13

■ OBSERVATION

What does it mean to “attain to the unity of the knowledge of the Son of God” (v.13)?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

“We all” are to attain to “the unity...of the knowledge of the Son of God” (v.13). That is, we “share a common set of convictions in what we believe to be true of Christ”⁷⁰ – the “one unified proper and comprehensive understanding of Christ and His work and its relevance to our lives”⁷¹. What is known of Christ is “marvellously variegated”⁷², for in Christ “are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col 2:2-3). This unified knowledge of Christ is theological, spiritual and experiential in nature. “We all” attain to it collectively through sharing with and learning from each other in all the history of God’s people, as we “learn Christ” (Eph 4:20) in our growing relationship with Him. Learning, unlearning and relearning with integrity, humility and charity take place in this journey towards the unified faith and knowledge of Christ – “until we all” reach full “maturity, wholeness and unity”⁷³, which is “the fullness of Christ”. The Church is already the fullness of Christ (Eph 1:22-23) – and also not yet. Thus, through gifting, equipping, serving, building (Eph 4:7, 11-13), praying (Eph 3:16-19) and constantly being filled with the Holy Spirit (Eph 5:18), we grow towards the Trinitarian fullness, which will finally occur at Christ’s Second Coming.

■ APPLICATION

How am I participating in the body of Christ collectively in “attaining to the unity of the knowledge of Christ”?

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■ PRAYER

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

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

⁷⁰ Clinton E. Arnold, 264

⁷¹ Clinton E. Arnold, 265

⁷² Peter T. O'Brien, 307

⁷³ Peter T. O'Brien, 298



■ 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

June 2016 – Week 4

**BUILD UP THE CHURCH**

God gave us leaders to build up His church.

Scripture: Ephesians 4:11-13; Matthew 16:18

ACTIVITY BITE

Imagine you are the Senior Pastor of your church. Share with everyone what you would do as a Senior Pastor.

CHAT TIME

- Q1: Who are the church leaders that help you learn more about God?
Q2: In Ephesians 4:11-13, what does building up the Church mean?
Q3: In what areas do you want to be equipped to be a part of God's work in building up the Church?

LEARNING POINT

God says in Matthew 16:18 that He will build His Church but He uses people like you and me to do His work. This is a wonderful privilege given to us to serve Him. He gave us pastors to care for the people, leaders to lead and direct us where to go, teachers to teach us about God's Word, evangelists to preach the Gospel and prophets to tell the church what God is saying. They are to train us in the things they are doing, and when everyone does their part, God's Church can be strengthened and built up.

ACTION POINT

Think of some things you can do to help the Children's Ministry leaders. It could be helping to pass around the offering bags or keeping the children's room clean. Let your leaders know that you wish to help.

PRAYER POWER

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

God, I thank You for giving us church leaders who help us know more about You. I want to do my part in the church too. Show me what I can do. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.



SNAKE & LADDERS

27 – 30 JUNE 2016



This week we take a detour from Ephesians to meditate on verses that relate more directly to the next generation and our generation. As we approach TNG (The Next Generations) Sunday as a church, let's take some time to consider the challenges and the aspirations of the children and youth so that we can be aware of the issues and pray accordingly.

Satan was first described as a snake, a crafty creature. Satan's aim is to poison humanity with his lies. He disguises sin to be good, and good to be evil. He is a master of deception, drawing us from the presence of God. In this week's devotions, we will address some of these lies and pray for victory.

There are also ladders that the next generation wants to climb. These are their hopes, aspirations and desires. Our prayer is that they will climb the ladders that lead to righteous living in worship to God.

Even if you are not a youth, a parent, a professional or a lay minister who works among the next generation, you can still take this week's devotions as your personal word from the Lord.

But if you are, may this week's devotions speak to you and your family, and give new meaning to your vocation or ministry.

May God bless you in your pilgrimage!



MONDAY, 27 JUNE 2016

Snake and Ladders: Victim or Victor?

■ SCRIPTURE

Genesis 3:1-24

■ OBSERVATION

In what ways, if any, were Adam and Eve victims of the serpent?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

Unfair! It would seem Adam and Eve falling prey to the crafty serpent was unfair, victims of an injustice planned by God. For centuries, many perceived themselves as victims, blaming God for their plight in life. Others saw themselves as “survivors”, believing they did not need God and could make it through life on their own. Today’s children and teenagers, raised in a post 9/11 world, are more realistic than idealistic. Being so connected through the Internet, they witness a harsh world full of disasters, wars and tough economic times.⁷⁴ Influential movies depict youth being slaughtered by those in authority such as *Hunger Games* and *Divergent*. Social issues that interest them relate to inclusion such as gender equality and equal access to education.⁷⁵ They see an unfair world, and have the desire to make real change to those who are victims so that, together, people can survive. However, God does not want us to merely survive but thrive and experience victory over the darkness in this world. In John 16:33, Jesus warns that in the world there will be trouble. Yet He gives hope and a promise that He has overcome the world! He is the Ultimate Victor! There is hope in the Gospel, and every generation needs to experience victory in Jesus’ name!

■ APPLICATION

Are you a victim, a survivor or a victor? How will you live in relation to God given your current life situation?

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■ PRAYER

Lord Jesus, You are the victor over sin and death! You are the Ultimate Overcomer! As I face this world, remind me continuously that You are alive and that You give hope. Teach me to express Your Gospel in my interactions and responsibilities, so that people around me may experience Your victory. Amen.

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

⁷⁴ <http://growingleaders.com/blog/six-defining-characteristics-of-generation-z/>

⁷⁵ <http://www.inc.com/hayley-peterson/heres-what-you-need-to-know-about-generation-z.html>



TUESDAY, 28 JUNE 2016

Snake and Ladders: Desensitised

■ SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 5:20; 1 Corinthians 16:13-14

■ OBSERVATION

What is of concern or even scary about calling evil good and good evil?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

The Straits Times published an article entitled “Teenagers starting to have sex at a younger age, say social workers”. The explanation was “because they are exposed to sex and sexuality issues online earlier.”⁷⁶ Indeed, many of them have viewed violence and porn on the Internet. Children and youth have become desensitised. Further, the world has become more grey. The next generation have been taught to be more tolerant with the campaign by secularist activists making the Church out to be hateful and fearful of the social minorities. They are desensitised to immorality, and can even embrace the perspective that if we call certain behaviour “sin”, it is being insensitive and judgemental. Mass media has been successful in dragging an impressionable generation far down the slippery slope until they have become desensitised, not realising how deep in darkness they have plunged. Satan is the father of lies (Jn 8:44), and can deceive people that a sin is harmless and laudable, and that a stand for righteousness is intolerant and evil. Every generation needs to take a stand in the Lord. Like a soldier going into battle, Christians need to be on their guard, stand firm, exercise courage and be strong. In this world we will have trouble, but our Lord has overcome the world! Let us stand in His strength and power!

■ APPLICATION

What is one area of darkness you are concerned about for the next generation? State your reasons.

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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:

⁷⁶ <http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/teenagers-starting-to-have-sex-at-a-younger-age-say-social-workers-0>



WEDNESDAY, 29 JUNE 2016

Snake and Ladders: Holiness

■ SCRIPTURE

Psalm 119:9-11

■ OBSERVATION

What does the Scripture tell us about walking in holiness?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

We live in a highly sensualised and sexualised world. An article in *The Straits Times* tells of a growing trend of teenage boys aged between 16 and 19 paying for sex.⁷⁷ This problem is also very real in the Church where studies have shown that 36% of 18-to-30-year-old men struggle with pornography on a daily basis.⁷⁸ The Psalmist gives us a key to living in holiness. Young people can keep their way pure, by **guarding** it according to God's Word. The key is to **guard**. In Hebrew, this word means "to preserve", "to keep", "to beware" and "to defend".⁷⁹ One particular translation of this word is **bodyguard**.⁸⁰ The picture here is this: The Word of God is like a **bodyguard** that keeps us, guards us and preserves us from sin. When we equip ourselves with the Word of God, this will be our defence against the allure of sin. The Word of God is able to do this by "directing us in the paths of righteousness... God's Word **works** to bring us into the will of God".⁸¹ This passage highlights that coupled with a desire for purity, accountability, confession and self control, is a saturation in the Word of God. To fill the mind with the Word of God, to ruminate and meditate on His Word is crucial for purity, as "the mind that stores up Scriptures has its taste and judgment educated by God".⁸²

■ APPLICATION

What do I need to do in order to guard myself with the Scripture?

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■ PRAYER

Lord God, I ask You to help me have a deeper hunger for Your Word. Help me to get into the habit of meditating on and trusting in Your Word, for I believe that to live in holiness is to have Your Word guard my way. In Jesus' name. Amen.

PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

⁷⁷ <http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/more-teenage-boys-paying-for-sex-study>

⁷⁸ <http://www.provenmen.org/press-releases/2014-pornography-survey-of-christian-men-shocking-new-national-survey-reveals-high-levels-of-pornography-use-and-rampant-extramarital-affairs-among-christian-men/>

⁷⁹ James Strong, *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990), 118.

⁸⁰ <http://biblehub.com/hebrew/8104.htm>

⁸¹ Donald Williams, *Mastering the Old Testament (Psalms 73-150)* (Word Publishing, 1987), 357.

⁸² Derek Kidner, *Old Testament Commentaries*, Tyndale (IVP, 1975), 424.



THURSDAY, 30 JUNE 2016

Snake and Ladders: Unity

■ SCRIPTURE

Philippians 1:27-30

■ OBSERVATION

What does it mean to conduct ourselves in ways that are worthy of the Gospel of Christ?

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DEEPER REFLECTION

“May the Lamb that was slain receive the reward of his suffering!” the two young Moravian Brethren from Herrnhut cried out as they boarded the ship, selling themselves to slavery in order to reach the African slaves on the Caribbean Island.⁸³ For most of us, we find stories like this deeply inspiring, but a far cry from our daily reality. In Philippians, Paul encourages believers to live worthy of the Gospel. Philippi was a Roman Colony and Paul appealed to their understanding of the coveted Roman citizenship. Literally he said “exercise your citizenship worthily of the gospel of Christ.”⁸⁴ In Greek, the word “worthy” has the sense of “balancing out the scales”⁸⁵. It is where we get the word “axiom”⁸⁶ from, which has the notion of an idea being self-evidently true. Paul then urges believers to be evidently and clearly Christian. What ought to be evidently expressed by our Christian life? **Standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel.** Sometimes, our picture of living worthy of the Gospel is limited to one like the two young Moravians who gave up their lives for Christ. Paul here shows us that to live worthy of the Gospel is also to stand firm in our faith and to strive towards living in unity. Maintaining the cords of peace by which the Holy Spirit has knitted us together is one way that we live worthily as citizens of His Kingdom.

■ APPLICATION

How can I use my words in ways that encourage and build unity in the 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:

⁸³ <http://emancipationofthefreed.blogspot.sg/2007/01/john-leonard-dober-and-david-nitschman.html>

⁸⁴ Alex Motyer, *The Message of Philippians*, The Bible Speaks Today Commentary (IVP, 1984), 92.

⁸⁵ Howard W. Hoehner, *Ephesians – An Exegetical Summary* (Baker Academics, 2002).

⁸⁶ R. Kent Hughes, *Ephesians – The Mystery of the Body of Christ* (Crossway, 1990), 119.

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