

COVENANT^{EFC}

devotional journal 2014

1 - 31 october



1 John 4:12

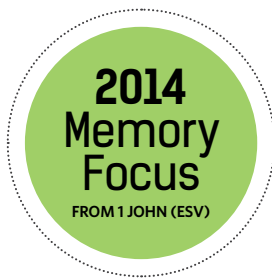
shine
righteously

shine

righteously



COVENANT EFC



JANUARY

This is the message we have heard from Him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.

1 John 1:5

february

1 JOHN 1:9

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

march

1 JOHN 2:15

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

APRIL

1 John 2:16

For all that is in the world – the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life – is not from the Father but is from the world.

may

And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

1 John 2:17

JUNE

1 JOHN 2:29

If you know that He is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of Him.

JULY

1 John 3:1

See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know Him.

AUGUST

1 JOHN 4:4

Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

SEPTEMBER

1 JOHN 4:10

In this is love, not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

OCTOBER

1 JOHN 4:12

No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and His love is perfected in us.

november

There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.

1 JOHN 4:18

december

And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

1 JOHN 5:11-12

foreword

by senior pastors

There must be something more in 2014!

There must be something more every new year!
We long for something deeper, something satisfying,
something radical, something life-changing, something
that would really make a difference every new year.
What will that "something more" be for you?

St. Augustine once said, *"To fall in love with God is the greatest of all romances; to seek Him, the greatest adventure; to find Him, the greatest human achievement."* The deepest longing of the soul is for intimacy with God. It begins with God and is rooted IN HIM! *"One thing I have asked from the Lord, that I shall seek: That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to meditate in His temple."* (Ps 27:4)

1. Intimacy as Our PURPOSE in Life:

"One thing I have asked from the Lord, that I shall seek..."

The goal of every disciple of Christ is not merely to do things for God – although these are significant parts of God's redemptive order as seen in the Great Commission. Enjoying the intimacy with God is part of the creative order as seen in the Great Commandment. The ONE thing that is the most important in 2014 is our relationship with God! Everything revolves around this one defining purpose.

2. Intimacy as Our PURSUIT in Life:

"One thing I have asked from the Lord, that I shall seek..."

Someone once said, "We do not see things as they are. We see them as we are." In other words, who we are determines what we see and what we pursue, and we become what we pursue. "I shall seek" expresses a determination to pursue intimacy with God. What are you pursuing in 2014? What are you seeking?

There must be
something more
than this!

3. Intimacy as Our PREOCCUPATION in Life:

"That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life..."

"All the days of my life" is not simply stating a period of time but a preoccupation of life! David declares "to dwell in the house of the Lord" as his prevailing desire, his grand preoccupation and his magnificent obsession. True spirituality stems not from some form of activity but from God's presence as the centre of his life. The dwelling place of God is in the quiet depths of our lives. May you experience and enjoy His presence throughout the year 2014!

4. Intimacy as Our PASSION in Life:

"To behold the beauty of the Lord and to meditate in His temple."

David made a decisive choice to not only see, but behold and be captivated by the beauty of the Lord. God is of ultimate importance in his life and God is the one who gives meaning to life. David committed himself to "meditate in His temple". A person is often defined by abilities, accomplishments, appearance, acquisitions and associations. But God defines us by our personal relationship with Him. May your passion for spiritual intimacy with God attract and fuel pre-believing friends to know God in 2014.

There Must be Something More Than This!

Psalm 27 was written in the context of fear and uncertainty. Fear is mentioned three times in two verses (vv. 1, 3). Yet, in spite of the anxieties and fears, David focused on God and saw God Almighty as his revelation, redemption and refuge (vv. 1-3).

May we like David say, *"When You said, 'Seek My face,' my heart said to You, 'Your face, O Lord, I shall seek.'" (v. 8).*

**In Christ,
Ps Tony and Ps Kay Kiong**

guide to using this journal



S.O.A.P.

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.
- Worship God with a song or hymn. (Refer to the list of worship songs provided.)
- Offer a prayer to God as you prepare to listen to His Word.

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*

Each daily devotional entry is divided into four parts:

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. Use the guiding questions provided.

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 response to God in prayer using the suggested prayer for the day.

calendar

september 2014

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
1	2	3	4 IDMC	5 IDMC	6 IDMC	7 Combined Anniversary Service
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17 Alpha Introduction Dinner	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26 Prayer & Praise	27	28
29	30					

Strongly Encouraged

october 2014

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
		1 Alpha Session	2	3	4	5 Children's Fest Hari Raya Haji
6 ACKCentre Open House	7	8 Alpha Session	9	10	11	12 Baptism Service
13	14	15 Alpha Session	16	17	18	19 GOM
20	21	22 Alpha Session Deepavali	23	24 District Leaders Touchdown	25	26
27	28	29 Alpha Session	30	31 Prayer & Praise		

Strongly Encouraged



Beware of Worshipping Religion

SCRIPTURE

Amos 5:6-7, 21-24

In Israel's worship to God, everything on the exterior is right and great (vv. 21-23). But the divine response is a sevenfold rejection: "I hate", "I reject", "I have no delight in" (v. 21), "I will not accept", "I will not even look at" (v. 22), "Take away from Me" and "I will not even listen to" (v. 23). While Israel thinks they are worshipping God, in reality, it is their religion that they are actually worshipping. Once I was a member of a church where the congregation was taught to practise a one-hour prayer discipline. One morning, I set my watch before me, noted the time and began my one-hour prayer. As I prayed, from time to time, I opened my eyes to look at my watch. Then, as I continued to pray, I heard God speaking to me, "David, stop your one-hour prayer." I knew what God was saying to me. My whole focus was on the act of praying and the one hour, but not on God Himself. This encounter with God changed the way I pray now. Our worship and prayer to God must be relational in nature, marked by consciousness of His very person and presence.

OBSERVATION

What characterises true worship to God according to Amos 5:6-7, 21-24?

APPLICATION

What change(s) do I need to make in my worship to God?

PRAYER

Worthy are You, O God,
to receive glory and honour
and praise! Teach me and
help me to be the true
worshipper that You seek,
who will worship You in
spirit and truth.¹ Deliver
me and keep me from
worshipping You merely as
a ritual and without reality.
O God, lofty and exalted,²
I want to worship You in a
way worthy of who You are.
Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:

- Pray for leaders:

- Pray for significant people:

- Pray for those in need:

- Pray for self:

¹ John 4:23-24
² Isaiah 6:1

October 2,
Thursday
2014

Idolatry of Spiritual Consumerism

SCRIPTURE

2 Timothy 4:1-5

Ajith Fernando observed that contemporary Christianity has been portrayed as “a nice religion but lacks a radical edge”. He said, “During my visits to the West, the most common response I hear to sermons I have preached is something to the effect: ‘I enjoyed that sermon.’ Sermons should disturb, convict and motivate to radical and costly obedience. I have wondered whether people’s desired result from sermons is to enjoy themselves rather than to be changed into radical disciples who will turn the world upside down. If this is so, the church has assimilated the post-modern mood that considers inner feelings more important than commitment to principles. A minor feature of worship – bringing enjoyment – has become a primary feature.”³ This is idolatry of spiritual consumerism, when in worship and hearing a sermon, it is not all about God but me. Scripture has forewarned that “a time will come when people will no longer listen to sound and wholesome teaching. They will follow their own desires and will look for teachers who will tell them whatever their itching ears want to hear” (2 Ti 4:3, NLT).

OBSERVATION

How can we guard ourselves against the spiritual consumerism that Paul warns of in 2 Timothy 4:1-5?

APPLICATION

Do I have a spirit of spiritual consumerism, and what should I do about that?

PRAYER

O God, show me my spiritual blindness and darkness of preoccupation with the self even in worship to You. Free me from such foolish and sinful contradiction and incongruence. Give me a magnificent obsession for God! That as I worship You, my dominant consciousness says, “It’s all about God.”
Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:

- Pray for leaders:

- Pray for significant people:

- Pray for those in need:

- Pray for self:

³ Ajith Fernando, *Jesus Driven Ministry* (Crossway, 2002), 23



Worship of the Self

SCRIPTURE

Luke 18:9-14

Jesus tells a parable to a group of spiritually blind people who “trusted in themselves that they were righteous” (v. 9). In the parable, Jesus is very deliberate in describing the Pharisee praying: He “was praying this to himself” (v. 11). The object of his prayer is himself, not God. The order of words in Greek shows the emphasis: “to himself these-things he-was-praying.” But his words are “God, I thank You” (v. 11) – an expression of worship. Every time we say, “God, I thank You”, it does not necessarily mean that we are worshipping God; it can be that we are, in reality, worshipping ourselves! The danger is we cannot consciously know that we are worshipping ourselves as we utter those words. When we share our testimony, “I thank God that He used me to lead 20 persons to Christ last week”, the emphasis can be “I thank GOD” or “He used ME”. If the emphasis is on “ME”, it will not be loudly verbalised, but it is loudly emphasised in the heart. The “supreme idol is self”, and the “ultimate idol about which we have to be so careful is this horrible self”⁴.

OBSERVATION

According to the parable in Luke 18:9-14, how can we guard against worshipping ourselves unknowingly?

APPLICATION

What action or attitude do I need to guard myself against worship of the self?

PRAYER

In Your holy and gracious presence, O God, I ponder upon these words, “God, be merciful to me, the sinner!”⁵ Help me to grasp its significance in a real way in my heart, that I may truly know who You are and what I am, and live prayerfully in this reality constantly. I pray that in this way, I will be kept from the worship of my “self”. Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:
- Pray for leaders:
- Pray for significant people:
- Pray for those in need:
- Pray for self:

⁴ Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Life in Christ: Studies in 1 John* (Crossway, 2002), 731

⁵ Luke 18:13



Ultimate Reality, Reality Check

SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 4:12-13

The most effective way to guard ourselves against idolatry is to “know Him who is true” (1 Jn 5:20). It is to live in ultimate reality. God is the ultimate reality, but ultimate reality is also found in us – our hearts. And the most subtle form of idolatry is idols in the heart (cf. Eze 14:3, 4). To live in ultimate reality, we must know God and our hearts. We can truly know God as He truly is only in His Word, because it is there that He has revealed Himself. And we can truly know our hearts as they truly are – good or bad – by God’s Word; for “the Word of God is...able to judge [or discern] the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Heb 4:12). The heart-knowing Word of God, “sharper than the sharpest sword”⁶, enables us through the Holy Spirit (cf. Eph 6:17) to discern our hearts sharply, as it “probes the inmost recesses of our spiritual being and brings the subconscious motives to light”⁷. And we must do a reality check on our hearts in terms of ultimate reality.

OBSERVATION

What else does Hebrews 4:12-13 say about ultimate reality?

APPLICATION

How can I consciously live by the ultimate reality and perform reality checks?

PRAYER

O God, let it be that each time I open Your Word, I want only to know You and to know my heart! It is only when I know You that I can worship You in a manner worthy of who You are. It is only when I know You that I can know my heart; for then I can see my heart as You see it. As I know my heart, grant me to have a right heart before You.

Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:

- Pray for leaders:

- Pray for significant people:

- Pray for those in need:

- Pray for self:

⁶ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Eerdmans, 1964), 81

⁷ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 82

Sermon Notes

October 5,
Sunday
2014

Topic:

Scripture:

Main Points:

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Principles to Live by:

What are the biblical principles found in this passage?

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Practical Life Applications:

What is one thing that I will do in the coming week?

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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?

RESPONSE:

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

b. Journal your prayer.

PRAYER: TALKING TO GOD

God wants us to talk to Him about anything.

Scripture - Psalm 145:18**1. ACTIVITY BITE**

Props: Smart phones, tablets or PCs with Internet connectivity
Search the Internet on how to say "hello" in different languages.

2. CHAT TIME

Q1: What is the purpose of saying "hello" when greeting people?

Q2: Why does God want to be near to those who call on Him in Psalm 145:18?

Q3: What do you think you can talk to God about? List them all down.

3. LEARNING POINT

God created us to have a relationship with Him. It means that there must always be communication between us and God. Some Christians talk to God only when they want to get something or when they are in trouble. But God wants us to talk to Him any time. He loves to hear His children talking to Him about anything. It brings us closer to Him.

4. ACTION POINT

Think of one thing you can talk to God about. It can be something crazy or it can be something very mundane. He is interested to hear from you. Close your eyes for one minute and start telling Him about that one thing.

5. PRAYER POWER

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

Dear God, thank You for being interested in what I want to say anytime and anywhere. I want to know You more. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

october one

family devotional week one



The Elderly Among God's People

SCRIPTURE

2 John 1; Titus 2:1-5

John calls himself “the elder” in 2 John 1. In Greek, the word “literally means an ‘old man’, ‘senior’ or ‘veteran’, and it is possible that John assumed, or was given, the title in his old age”⁸ besides indicating his “official position”⁹ in the church. The New Testament links “older men” and “older women”¹⁰ to godly character (Tit 2:2-3). This certainly does not mean that when a person grows old physically, he or she automatically matures spiritually, but rather, there ought to be a dynamic correspondence between the two kinds of growth. As we grow old, let us seek to grow in substance and stature, regardless of whether we will have the status of a church leader or not. Godly elderly folk in the church have much to give out of their lives to benefit others, by virtue of their maturity and life experiences, by sharing their wisdom and by being examples. In this way, they are precious gifts from God to His people. Younger folk stand to gain from them, if they seek to learn from them and listen to them. It is wisdom to do so.

OBSERVATION

What are the godly traits that should be evident in the lives of the elderly in the church according to Titus 2:1-15?

APPLICATION

How do I want to grow old? (Answer this with the end in mind.)

PRAYER

Eternal God, we pray that we will mature in Christ in such a way that when we grow old, we can say like Caleb at 85, “I followed the Lord my God fully. I am still as strong today as I was in the day Moses sent me; as my strength was then, so my strength is now, for war and for going out and coming in.”¹¹ Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:

- Pray for leaders:

- Pray for significant people:

- Pray for those in need:

- Pray for self:

⁸ John Stott, *The Letters of John*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (IVP, 1964, 1988), 43

⁹ John Stott, 203

¹⁰ In Greek, *presbyteros* - elder; *presbyteres* - older man; *presbytis* - older woman

¹¹ Joshua 14:8, 10



The First Great Priority

SCRIPTURE

2 John 1-4; Matthew 22:16

The first thing John says to his readers in 2 John is he loves them in truth (v.1). Love is the greatest commandment (Mt 22:37-40) and virtue (1 Co 13:13); but truth is “the first great priority”¹². The word “truth” is repeated four times in 2 John (vv. 1-4). Only those “who know the truth” are able to and will “love in truth” (v. 1). And it is because the truth “lives” in us that we “love in truth” (v. 2). Truth must precede love in “love in truth”. God gives us His grace, mercy and peace “in truth and love” (v. 3). Note the order – “in truth and love”. Even in 1 John, John tells us that “God is light” (1 Jn 1:5) before telling us that “God is love” (1 Jn 4:8, 16). Truth is “the main ingredient of our discipleship”¹³. “The truth of God, revealed supremely in the living Word,¹⁴ and recorded unerringly in the written Word, provides the route by which the Christian is travelling from earth to heaven.”¹⁵ The truth of God is God’s map for our journey that we must follow. We “cannot reach the north by travelling west”¹⁶.

OBSERVATION

What did Jesus’ opponents say about Him in Matthew 22:16, which was “surely His actual reputation” even though “it contains an element of flattery”¹⁷?

APPLICATION

How should I follow Jesus as a man or woman of the truth?

PRAYER

From the cowardice that shrinks from new truths, from the laziness that is content with half-truth, from the arrogance that thinks it knows all truth, from the gullibility that embraces falsehood as truth, O God of truth, deliver us.¹⁸ Spirit of truth, help and keep the church to be the pillar and support of the truth.¹⁹ Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:
- Pray for leaders:
- Pray for significant people:
- Pray for those in need:
- Pray for self:

¹² David Jackman, *The Message of John's Letters*, The Bible Speaks Today (IVP, 1988), 177

¹³ David Jackman, 177

¹⁴ John 1:1, 14

¹⁵ David Jackman, 177

¹⁶ David Jackman, 177

¹⁷ R. T. France, *Matthew*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (IVP, 1985), 314

¹⁸ Adapted from *The SPCK Book of Christian Prayer* (SPCK, 1995), 231

¹⁹ 1 Timothy 2:15

October 8,
Wednesday
2014

God's Revelation and Our Responsibility

SCRIPTURE

2 John 1-4; Luke 8:15-18

The truth of God revealed in Scripture is "the main ingredient of our discipleship"²⁰ (vv. 1-4). "God has not revealed His truth in such a way as to leave us free at our pleasure to believe or disbelieve it, to obey or disobey it. Revelation carries with it responsibility, and the clearer the revelation, the greater the responsibility to believe and obey it."²¹ We all possess at least one copy of the Bible. And there are various English translations of the Bible available for us to choose from. We are able to read and understand it. In Singapore, there are avenues and opportunities for us to learn the Scriptures. We have no excuse for biblical ignorance and illiteracy. We have to learn God's Word before we can live by it, and we must live by it when we have learned it. Once when I was in a Christian bookstore and saw the many Bibles at the "Bibles" section, I was filled with a scary feeling. Luke 12:48 immediately came to my mind: "From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more."

OBSERVATION

What does Jesus say in Luke 8:15-18 concerning our responsibility towards the Word of God given to us?

APPLICATION

How will I fulfil my responsibility towards the Word of God in my possession?

PRAYER

God, You have revealed Yourself in the written Word and as the living Word. Even as the living Word on earth,²² You have to live not by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.²³ O help me to grasp this perspective and see the utter importance of the Word of God in my life, and take the Scriptures seriously. Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:

- Pray for leaders:

- Pray for significant people:

- Pray for those in need:

- Pray for self:

²⁰ David Jackman, 177
²¹ John Stott, 208-209
²² John 1:14
²³ Matthew 4:4



The Affirmation We Need Daily

SCRIPTURE

2 John 3; Hebrews 4:14-16

2 John and 3 John “present us with the closest approximations in the New Testament to the conventional letter-form of the contemporary Graeco-Roman world”²⁴. But the greeting in New Testament letters, like 2 John 3, is distinctively different in nature – not social, but theological. 2 John 3 is “neither a prayer, nor a wish, but a confident affirmation”²⁵. “Grace” and “mercy” are “both expressions of God’s love, grace to the guilty and undeserving, mercy to the needy and helpless”²⁶. “Peace” is “the restoration of harmony with God, others and self which we call ‘salvation’”²⁷. It is theologically assumed in the context that this confident affirmation is true only when we walk in the truth (v. 4) and in love (v. 6). Sinning against God, being needy and helpless, breaking down in our relationship with God and people, and inner conflicts happen frequently in our lives. So, we need to renew this theological affirmation on a daily basis, that God’s grace, mercy and peace will continually be undergirding, overarching, encompassing and filling our lives in Christ every day.

OBSERVATION

How should we renew daily the theological affirmation of God’s grace, mercy and peace in our lives according to Hebrews 4:14-16?

APPLICATION

In what area(s) of my life do I need God’s grace, mercy and/or peace right now?

PRAYER

God my Father and Jesus my Lord, You have loved me and by Your grace gave me eternal encouragement and good hope. Encourage my heart and strengthen me in every good thing I do and say. Lord of peace, give me peace at all times and in every way. Be with me this day.²⁸ Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:
- Pray for leaders:
- Pray for significant people:
- Pray for those in need:
- Pray for self:

²⁴ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles of John* (Pickering Paperbacks, 1970), 134
²⁵ John Stott, 206
²⁶ John Stott, 206
²⁷ John Stott, 206
²⁸ 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17; 3:16

October 10,
Friday
2014

The Faithful Inner Nucleus

SCRIPTURE

2 John 4-5; 1 Thessalonians 5:14

John was “very glad” that “some” of the church members were “walking in truth” (v. 4). This implies that some were not; for “not all the church members were living consistently”²⁹. These were God’s people, as they were part of “your children” (v. 4). They chose “to walk different roads”³⁰, with “a loose attitude to obedience to the truth, which was already infecting some members of the congregation”³¹. However, they were not among the “many deceivers” who denied the incarnation of Jesus Christ, controlled by “the deceiver and the antichrist” (2 Jn 7). Those who walk in the truth form “the faithful inner nucleus”³². This is a reality in the church. How should those walking in the truth respond to those who are not? Love them (“love one another”, v. 5). “For all things John has one remedy and that is love.”³³ In love, pray for them, reach out to them, walk with them, encourage them with “great patience and instruction” (2 Ti 4:2), seek to “restore” them “in a spirit of gentleness” (Gal 6:1).

OBSERVATION

What characterises the community of God’s people according to 1 Thessalonians 5:14?

APPLICATION

How do I place myself in the community of God’s people in light of 1 Thessalonians 5:14?

PRAYER

O God, by Thy mercy
strengthen us who lie exposed
to the rough storms of
troubles and temptations.
Help us against our own
negligence and cowardice,
and defend us from the
treachery of our unfaithful
hearts. Succour us, we
beseech Thee, and bring us to
Thy safe haven of peace
and of felicity. Amen.
(St Augustine of Hippo)

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:

- Pray for leaders:

- Pray for significant people:

- Pray for those in need:

- Pray for self:

²⁹ John Stott, 208

³⁰ William Barclay, *The Letters of John and Jude*, The Daily Study Bible (Saint Andrew Press, 1976), 140

³¹ David Jackman, 178

³² John Stott, 208

³³ William Barclay, 140

October 11,
Saturday
2014

Walking in Truth and Love

SCRIPTURE

2 John 1-5; Ephesians 4:13-16

Those who are “walking in truth” (v. 4) are exhorted to “love one another” (v. 5). Truth and love are “clearly essential marks of the Christian life”³⁴. There is the divine truth and love, and the human truth and love. The human “love in truth” (v. 1) is founded and grounded on “truth and love” in which God gives us His grace, mercy and peace (v. 3). We can “love in truth” only when we live in the “truth and love” of God. The fellowship of the local church “is created by truth and exhibited in love”, and “should be marked equally by love and truth”³⁵. “Each qualifies the other.”³⁶ We must “avoid extremism which pursues either at the expense of the other. Our love grows soft if it is not strengthened by truth, and our truth [grows] hard if it is not softened by love. Scripture commands us both to love each other in the truth and to hold the truth in love (Eph 4:15).”³⁷ “So long as the truth endures in us and with us, so long shall our reciprocal love also endure.”³⁸

OBSERVATION

What does Paul say about truth, love and maturity in Ephesians 4:13-16?

APPLICATION

How am I growing in maturity characterised by truth and love?

PRAYER

Lord, give me weak eyes
for things which are of
no account and clear eyes
for all Your truth.³⁹ Grant
Lord, that I may not,
for one moment, admit
willingly into my soul any
thought contrary to Your
love.⁴⁰ Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:
- Pray for leaders:
- Pray for significant people:
- Pray for those in need:
- Pray for self:

³⁴ John Stott, 207

³⁵ John Stott, 207

³⁶ John Stott, 207

³⁷ John Stott, 207

³⁸ John Stott, 206

³⁹ Adapted from a prayer of Soren Kierkegaard, *The SPCK Book of Christian Prayer*, 231

⁴⁰ Prayer of Edward Bouverie Pusey, *The SPCK Book of Christian Prayer*, 230

Sermon Notes

October 12,
Sunday
2014

Topic:

Scripture:

Main Points:
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Principles to Live by:

What are the biblical principles found in this passage?
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Practical Life Applications:

What is one thing that I will do in the coming week?
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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?

RESPONSE:

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

b. Journal your prayer.

PRAYER: KNOWING GOD'S WILL

When we learn how to pray, we will learn more about what God really wants.

Scripture - Psalm 37:4**1. ACTIVITY BITE**

Ask your child, "Think of a good character (e.g. honesty, helpfulness or patience). Now, what do you think I will say to you if you show that trait?" Let him/her tell you his/her opinion before you share your thoughts.

2. CHAT TIME

Q1: How accurate were your guesses? How did you know what your mom/dad would say to you?

Q2: How can we know God's will?

Q3: Psalm 37:4 tells us that God will answer our prayers. How does this also help us know God's will?

3. LEARNING POINT

The reason why you can correctly guess what your parents would say to you is because you have spent a lot of time with them. This relationship helps you know what is in their hearts. In the same way, when we spend time with God in prayer, He will let us know His ways through the Word of God. We will know more of His will which will help us to be more obedient to Him.

4. ACTION POINT

Divide a piece of paper into two halves. On the left half, list down (with your parents' help) as many characters as you can think of - both good and bad (e.g. diligent, responsible and untruthful). On the right half, write down what you think God will say about each character (do this on your own). If you're not sure, take time to pray to God. Then write down what God says to you about these traits.

5. PRAYER POWER

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

God, thank You for letting me know Your will. Help me to always walk in Your ways. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

october two

October 13,
Monday
2014

Are You Tired of Reminders?

SCRIPTURE

2 John 5; Matthew 22:37-40

When John exhorts us to “love one another”, it is a reminder; it is not “a new commandment, but the one which we have had from the beginning” (v. 5). John mentions “we”, which includes himself, even though he is now old, whose life is marked by deep spiritual maturity and intimacy with God. We tend to be drawn to new things, things that are external and exciting. These can well be “Christian” things. We seek – excitement. It is possible to be excited by the Word of God, but this is only “temporary” (Mk 4:16-17). The problem is not God’s Word, but us – our hearts. Love is such a “central requirement of Christian devotion” that “it can hardly be reiterated too often.”⁴¹ “There is never a day in our lives when love does not need to be renewed and reaffirmed.”⁴² It took me about 15 years to be able to truly and consistently live out “love is patient” (1 Co 13:4) in my relationship with my son. For 15 years, I failed again and again and again as I kept reminding myself of God’s Word which I already knew by heart. Are you tired of reminders?

OBSERVATION

Which aspects of Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 22:37-40 have a renewing effect on you?

APPLICATION

How do I respond to those aspects of Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 22:37-40 that have a renewing effect on me?

PRAYER

O our Saviour, of myself
I cannot love You, cannot
follow You, cannot become
one with You. But You came
down that I might love You,
You ascended that I might
follow You, You bound me
close to You that I might be
held fast to You. Since You
have loved me, make me
love You.⁴³ Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:
- Pray for leaders:
- Pray for significant people:
- Pray for those in need:
- Pray for self:

⁴¹ David Jackman, 178

⁴² David Jackman, 178

⁴³ Adapted from Angela Ashwin, *The Book of a Thousand Prayers* (Zondervan, 1996, 2002), 52



What If I Lack the Delight?

SCRIPTURE

2 John 6; Isaiah 42:3

Obedience to God ought to be a delight: “this is love, that we walk according to His commandments” (v. 6). The ideal is we fulfill our duty with discipline out of a devotion of delight. But what if we lack the delight? What if our love is weak and faint? How do we increase our capacity to love God? There is only one way – go back to “God is love” (1 Jn 4:8, 16), for “we love, because He first loved us” (1 Jn 4:19). Go to God just as you are, opening your heart as it is before Him. Be authentic before God, who “is greater than our heart and knows all things” (1 Jn 3:20). Go to God’s Word where He has revealed Himself, and “soak ourselves in all that we see of God’s being and character there, especially His great love for us.”⁴⁴ Go back to the cross where God showed His love most clearly and remember that “the Son of God...loved me and gave Himself for me” (Gal 2:20); and be assured “that God could not possibly love us more than He does and that He will never love us less.”⁴⁵

OBSERVATION

What does God say about Jesus the Messiah in Isaiah 42:3 (cf. Mt 12:20)?

APPLICATION

How can I find encouragement in Isaiah 42:3 when I struggle in my devotion to God?

PRAYER

O what grace, O what hope that I have in You, that You will not break a bruised reed or extinguish a dimly burning candle. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God, You remain the strength of my heart, and my portion forever.⁴⁶ Heal me and help me. Revive me and restore me for the sake of Your name. Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:
- Pray for leaders:
- Pray for significant people:
- Pray for those in need:
- Pray for self:

⁴⁴ David Jackman, 179

⁴⁵ David Jackman, 179

⁴⁶ Psalm 73:26

October 15,
Wednesday
2014

Walk, Watch and Win

SCRIPTURE

2 John 4-8; Romans 16:17-20

John underscores the fundamental threefold walk with God – walk in truth (v. 4), walk in obedience (v. 6a) and walk in love (v. 6b). This is biblical discipleship. The context of John’s emphasis is the danger of false teaching (v. 7) and his readers “succumbing to it”⁴⁷. “Many deceivers” (v. 7) indicates the extent of the danger, and thus the urgency for diligent vigilance: “Watch yourselves” (v. 8). We can watch only when we are walking in truth, obedience and love. And even when we are walking with God, we must still be deliberate and conscious in watching. “Complacency is always a danger, and nowhere more so than when error is being plausibly propagated by pleasant exponents. ‘He’s such a nice man; surely his views cannot be so wrong’ is a common reaction still.”⁴⁸ Walk and watch that we may win – “that you do not lose...but that you may receive a full reward” (v. 8). Talk about finishing well. We stand to lose present blessings and future rewards from God when we deviate from the truth, “embrace error”⁴⁹ or fail “to persevere in the truth (and in right conduct)”⁵⁰.

OBSERVATION

What does Paul say about spiritual watchfulness in Romans 16:17-20?

APPLICATION

How can I sharpen my spiritual watchfulness in doctrine and discipleship?

PRAYER

Light of the world, You have redeemed me to become a child of light, having the Light of life. Help me to follow You faithfully in this world of darkness, so that I will not slumber and stumble spiritually, but be alert and clearheaded.⁵¹ Help me to walk by Your Word, which is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.⁵² Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:
- Pray for leaders:
- Pray for significant people:
- Pray for those in need:
- Pray for self:

⁴⁷ I. Howard Marshall, *The Epistles of John*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Eerdmans, 1978), 72

⁴⁸ David Jackman, 182

⁴⁹ David Jackman, 182

⁵⁰ I. Howard Marshall, 72

⁵¹ 1 Thessalonians 5:5-6

⁵² Psalm 119:105

October 16,
Thursday
2014

True Believers, Wrong Beliefs

SCRIPTURE

2 John 7-8; Psalm 119:33-36

John's attack is on the "many deceivers" (v. 7) who "strike at the heart of Christian belief"⁵³, but not those who "differ from him on theological points of lesser importance"⁵⁴. However, it does not mean that when we are sound in the fundamental doctrines of God, the Bible and salvation, we are free from deception. Many of us began our Christian life having no knowledge of Scripture. Having wrong beliefs is inevitably part of the growth journey of true believers. At 16, and very young in the faith, I strongly believed that it was a sin to go to the cinema: "Watching movies IS the 'lust of the eyes' (1 Jn 2:16)." How we understand Scripture determines how we apply it. Beliefs shape our behaviour. Wrong beliefs can be doctrinal, philosophical, cultural or moral, against the teaching of Scripture and deceptive. Deception by nature is subtle and can be insidious. One of Scripture's function is "correction" of our beliefs and behaviour (2 Ti 3:16). "Watch yourselves" (v. 8) by God's Word and with critical teachability.

OBSERVATION

What does the psalmist ask God for in Psalm 119:33-36?

APPLICATION

What are some possible wrong beliefs that I may have about God, myself or the Christian life?

PRAYER

Teach me and explain to me, O Lord, the meaning of Your Word that I may obey it at all times, and keep it with all my heart. Keep me obedient to Your Word because in it I find true happiness. Incline my heart to Your Word and not towards the perishable worldly selfish gains. Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:
- Pray for leaders:
- Pray for significant people:
- Pray for those in need:
- Pray for self:

⁵³ Those "who do acknowledge that Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh" (2 Jn 7).

⁵⁴ I. Howard Marshall, 71

October 17,
Friday
2014

True Spiritual Progress Versus Pseudo-spirituality

SCRIPTURE

2 John 9-11; Colossians 2:4-8

One characteristic of the false teachers that John is warning against is they "[go] too far" (v. 9a) or "[run] ahead too far"⁵⁵. John "refers sarcastically to their claim" of having "a superior" knowledge, which "enabled them to advance beyond the rudiments of the faith... They had advanced so far that they had left God behind them!"⁵⁶ We ought to guard against believing in and practising certain so-called "advanced" spirituality, in the form of certain spiritual knowledge, disciplines, competencies or experiences, which is really pseudo-spirituality with a false sense of triumphalism. True spiritual progress is living by, and continuing in, "the teaching of Christ" and "have God" (v. 9). The "teaching of Christ" is both the teaching from Christ and about Christ,⁵⁷ which is knowing Christ personally and to "have God" is "enjoying fellowship with Him"⁵⁸. True knowledge of and fellowship with God and Christ is transformational in nature - "to walk in the same manner as He walked" (1 Jn 2:6). Let us consciously perform a reality check on our character.

OBSERVATION

What does Paul warn the Colossian Christians about in Colossians 2:4-8 despite their spiritual progress?

APPLICATION

How should I cultivate the discipline of "grow and guard" in my spiritual life?

PRAYER

Holy Spirit, teach me and guide me into the truth of God in His Word that conforms to godliness.⁵⁹ Help me to grow in wisdom through knowledge and understanding of God's Word; that I may be able to detect and discern when Satan disguises himself as an angel of light and his servants as servants of righteousness.⁶⁰ Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:

- Pray for leaders:

- Pray for significant people:

- Pray for those in need:

- Pray for self:

⁵⁵ John Stott, 213

⁵⁶ John Stott, 213

⁵⁷ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles of John*, 141

⁵⁸ John Stott, 213

⁵⁹ 1 Timothy 6:3

⁶⁰ 2 Corinthians 11:13-15

October 18,
Saturday
2014

The Irreplaceable Human Personal Contact

SCRIPTURE

2 John 12; Matthew 26:37-40

In closing his letter, John tells his readers that though he has “many things” to communicate to them, he does not want to do so through writing, but “to come to you and speak face to face” (v. 12) – personal contact. Talking “face to face” is “a more satisfactory method of communication between persons than writing. Spoken words are less easily misunderstood than written words, because it is not only by language that the speaker conveys his meaning, but by the tone of his voice and the expression of his face.”⁶¹ But there is much more than that. God has created humans to be personal and relational beings, just like Himself. This is one fundamental meaning of being created in the image of God. God’s definitive revelation to humans and His closest presence with them was with human personal contact (Jn 1:14; Mt 1:23). Human personal contact is sacred. Communication through high speed technology today is increasingly reducing and replacing human personal contact, which is irreplaceable simply because that is how God has created it to be. We need to soberly ask this question theologically: Have we let technology make us less of the human beings that God has created us to be?

OBSERVATION

How does Immanuel, God with us in humanity (Mt 1:21), show the importance of human personal presence in Matthew 26:37-40?

APPLICATION

How much time and effort do I give to face-to-face contact with people who are important to me?

PRAYER

God, remind me that You have created humans in Your image as personal and relational beings and to reflect You. Keep me from being so busy and hurried, and so technological in my lifestyle that I become less involved in maintaining a personal touch with people, in making time to spend with them, in growing and enjoying human relationships. Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:

- Pray for leaders:

- Pray for significant people:

- Pray for those in need:

- Pray for self:

Sermon Notes



Topic:

Scripture:

Main Points:

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RESPONSE:

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

b. Journal your prayer.

PRAYER: I CAN PRAY

God can be everywhere at the same time. So I can talk to Him anywhere.

Scripture - Philippians 4:6

1. ACTIVITY BITE

Think of a simple topic to share with your parents. It can be about your favourite food or a recent trip to the Zoo. Talk freely about what you think and how you feel about the topic for two minutes.

2. CHAT TIME

Q1: Do you think it is difficult to talk to God?

Q2: Why do some children say they don't know how to pray to God?

Q3: According to Philippians 4:6, what can you bring to God in prayer?

3. LEARNING POINT

Many people think that praying to God is a difficult thing. Maybe they imagine that God is too far away to listen or only listens to more important things (instead of their personal concerns). The reality is that God is very interested in everything concerning our lives. He wants to hear about anything we want to tell Him, and in any way we want to say it. Praying is not difficult. It is as simple as talking to your friends.

4. ACTION POINT

Let's practice praying to God now. Think of another situation. It can be something that happened last week in school, or how you feel about your school teacher. Talk to God as if you are talking to your parents or friends. Try to do that every day.

5. PRAYER POWER

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

Dear God, I am glad that I can talk to You like a friend. Thank You because You are always listening to what I want to say. Thank You for making prayer easy. Amen.

october

family devotional week three

October 20,
Monday
2014

The Enemy's Favourite Target

SCRIPTURE

3 John 1-4; Genesis 3:1-4

In 1 John, John "set out doctrinal and ethical teaching...to correct unbalanced Christological views and encourage obedience to the love command" to a church where "the disintegration of the community had already begun (cf. 1 Jn 2:18-19)"⁶². In 2 John, "we find a hardening of the heretical line"⁶³ (2 Jn 7-8). When 3 John was written, "faith and unity" of the church had reached "a crisis", "with increasing division expressed by denial of friendship"⁶⁴ (3 Jn 9-10). The church is to be "the pillar and support of the truth" (1 Ti 3:15), but here in 3 John, truth as her foundation is shaken. The "doctrinal crisis in John's community was by now at its most stark"⁶⁵. Hence 3 John's emphasis on "truth", where the word is repeated six times (vv. 1, 3, 4, 8, 12). Truth is the favourite target of "the father of lies" (Jn 8:44). We cannot assume that every "Christian" thing done in the name of "God" is of the truth. There is only one place and one way to know if we are truly of the truth: "Thy word is truth" (Jn 17:17).

OBSERVATION

How does Satan attack the truth of God's Word in Genesis 3:1-4?

APPLICATION

How sensitive and discerning am I toward Satan's attack on the truth of God's Word?

PRAYER

O heavenly Father, the author and fountain of all truth, the bottomless sea of all understanding, in whom is the fullness of light and wisdom, enlighten my mind by Your Holy Spirit, and give me grace to receive Your Word with reverence and humility, without which no one can understand Your truth. Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:
- Pray for family:
- Pray for bosses:
- Pray for peers and staff:
- Pray for self:

⁶² Stephen S. Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, Word Biblical Commentary (Word, 1984), Vol. 51, 343

⁶³ Stephen Smalley, Vol. 51, 343

⁶⁴ Stephen Smalley, Vol. 51, 343

⁶⁵ Stephen Smalley, Vol. 51, 348

October 21,
Tuesday
2014

Lifestyle of the Truth

SCRIPTURE

3 John 1-4; 1 Thessalonians 2:10-12

In John's writings, truth encompasses "every sphere of life, moral, intellectual, spiritual"⁶⁶. The truth of God ought to be the bread we eat, the breath we breathe and the blood that gives us life. Then, the truth becomes our lifestyle. We love in truth. John's first words to "the chosen lady" (2 Jn 1) and to Gaius (3 Jn 1) is that he loves them in truth. Love in truth is the very spirit and heart of John. Can I say to people "I love you in truth" as words flowing from within me? We are the light of the truth. John tells Gaius something which he does not know: Fellow Christians "testified to your truth" (v. 3). Truth shines in our lives. The test is: People can see it, even though I myself can't. We live in the truth - "walking in the truth" (vv. 3, 4). Like Gaius, when we are always living and "daily advancing"⁶⁷ in the truth, the truth naturally shines in our lives. We labour for the truth as "fellow workers with the truth" (v. 8) with others. The truth "is what makes a man think and act like God"⁶⁸.

OBSERVATION

What is the truth as demonstrated by Paul's lifestyle in 1 Thessalonians 2:10-12?

APPLICATION

What change(s) do I need to make in my life to develop a lifestyle of the truth?

PRAYER

Almighty God, who has sent the Spirit of truth to us to guide us into all truth, so rule my life by Your power that I may be truthful in thought, word and deed. May no fear or hope ever make me false in act or speech; cast from me whatsoever loves or makes a lie, and bring me into the perfect freedom of Your truth⁶⁹. Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:
- Pray for family:
- Pray for bosses:
- Pray for peers and staff:
- Pray for self:

⁶⁶ Stephen Smalley, Vol. 51, 347

⁶⁷ Stephen Smalley, Vol. 51, 348

⁶⁸ William Barclay, 148

⁶⁹ Adapted from *The SPCK Book of Christian Prayer*, 232



What Do We Value?

SCRIPTURE

3 John 1, 3; Romans 16:3-15

3 John 1 is a beautiful picture of two people. We can reflect on this picture and ask this question: What do we value in life? 3 John is a letter, written as God’s Word, addressed by an individual to an individual – “the elder” to his “beloved Gaius” (v. 1). The value of an individual: Awesomely and wonderfully made by the God in His image (Ps 139:14). When we look intently at an individual, we clearly see the personhood of that individual. But much that is reported in the newspaper every day is the prevailing evil of people not being valued and treated as human beings. The value of maturity: John describes himself as “the elder”, a person marked by spiritual maturity in qualities, character and experience. The value of relationship: Being marked by “love in truth” when everyone is a “beloved” of each other. The value of spirituality: Gaius may or may not be a church leader, but what is most important and significant is that he is “walking in truth” (v. 3). When we value the personhood of individuals, maturity, relationship and spirituality, many human problems can be reduced and resolved.

OBSERVATION

How does Paul show the value of individuals to him in Romans 16:3-15?

APPLICATION

How do I look at individual human beings, both those whom I know personally and those whom I don’t?

PRAYER

Grant us, O Lord, the wisdom to know that which is worth knowing, to love that which is worth loving, to praise that which can bear with praise, to hate what in Thy sight is unworthy, to prize what to Thee is precious, and above all, to search out and to do what is well-pleasing unto Thee; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
(Thomas A Kempis)

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:

- Pray for family:

- Pray for bosses:

- Pray for peers and staff:

- Pray for self:

October 23,
Thursday
2014

Prosperity, Prayer and Perspective

SCRIPTURE

3 John 2-3; Psalm 1:1-6

John's prayerful wish ("wish or pray"⁷⁰) for Gaius is: "in every way you may prosper and be in good health" (v. 2). In Greek, "prosper" "means literally, 'to have a good journey'. Metaphorically, it signifies [as here] 'to succeed' or 'to prosper'."⁷¹ God created us as whole persons, and thus our redemption and its blessings in Christ is holistic - "in every way". However, John prays that Gaius' "bodily health and general prosperity may match the prosperity of his soul"⁷² - "just as your soul prospers" (v. 2), synonymous to "how you are walking in truth" (v. 3). Christians are "not automatically promised health and success. They are things to pray for, but they are dependent on a loving heavenly Father's perfect wisdom and sovereign rule."⁷³ God may or may not answer our prayerful wishes like John's. Spiritual health and strength can only get better and stronger; but not so in the physical realm, for when we grow older we become weaker, and then we die - but to eternity and immortality.

OBSERVATION

How do you understand Psalm 1:1-6 from the perspective of "in whatever he does, he prospers" (v. 3)?

APPLICATION

How am I prosperous and successful in the biblical sense?

PRAYER

Lord, keep me from embracing and following, knowingly or unknowingly, the perspectives, value systems and life models of the world. Grant me to delight in Your Word, and eat the Living Bread and drink the Living Water, and find spiritual nourishment to walk in Your way, and bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:
- Pray for leaders:
- Pray for significant people:
- Pray for those in need:
- Pray for self:

⁷⁰ John Stott, 222

⁷¹ Stephen Smalley, Vol. 51, 345

⁷² F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles of John*, 147

⁷³ David Jackman, 192

October 24,
Friday
2014

What is Biblical "Prosperity"?

SCRIPTURE

John 17:4

He is the most successful and prosperous person that ever existed,
 Even though he was born and raised in a very poor family;⁷⁴
 Even though there was nothing attractive about his appearance;⁷⁵
 Even though for most of his life he was just a lowly carpenter;⁷⁶
 Even though foxes had holes and birds had nests, he had nowhere to
 lay his head;⁷⁷
 Even though he was a man of sorrows and sufferings;⁷⁸
 Even though the man he loved so much turned against him for money;⁷⁹
 Even though those closest to him deserted him when he needed them
 to stand by him;⁸⁰
 Even though the most painful moment of his life was when God forsook
 him and left him to suffer and die alone;⁸¹
 Because he lived every single moment of his life according to the will
 of God;
 And everything he did, he did in truth and love.
 He is the most successful and prosperous person who ever existed.
 His name is Jesus.

OBSERVATION

How does Jesus' life define true prosperity and success in John 17:4?

APPLICATION

How would I live my life now so that it will end like Jesus' life in
 John 17:4?

PRAYER

Lord, help me to follow You,
 walking in the same manner
 as You walked;⁸² "My food
 is to do the will of Him who
 sent Me and to accomplish
 His work"⁸³; and to complete
 my life journey on earth
 and be able to pray like You,
 "Father, I glorified You on
 earth, having accomplished
 the work which You have
 given Me to do."⁸⁴ Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:
- Pray for leaders:
- Pray for significant people:
- Pray for those in need:
- Pray for self:

⁷⁴ Luke 2:21-24 (cf. Lev 12:6-8)

⁷⁵ Isaiah 53:2

⁷⁶ Mark 6:2-3

⁷⁷ Matthew 8:20

⁷⁸ Isaiah 53:3

⁷⁹ Matthew 26:14-15

⁸⁰ Matthew 26:56

⁸¹ Matthew 27:45-46

⁸² 1 John 2:6

⁸³ John 4:34

⁸⁴ John 17:4

October 25,
Saturday
2014

What's My Greatest Joy?

SCRIPTURE

3 John 3-4; Philippians 1:15-18

John says it twice, in different ways, but in one breath: "I was very glad...how you are walking in truth" (v. 3), "I have no greater joy than this...my children walking in the truth" (v. 4). What is my greatest joy? What gives me the greatest meaning and fulfilment? Is it walking in the truth - in my own life and in the lives of others? A life walking in the truth is a life "all of a piece"⁸⁵ - the things I believe, I live out." There is no greater spiritual prosperity than that."⁸⁶ Walking in the truth means we are living at the centre of God's will and God's presence, the most secure place we can ever be. Walking in the truth is never defined by temporary circumstances and exterior things. Therefore, we can "count it all joy...whenever we face trials of many kinds" (Jas 1:2); for the rejoicing is "in the Lord" (Php 4:4). When we walk in the truth, we will desire to see and help others to do the same, and we will rejoice over those who do. But our hearts will grieve with burden to see those who do not.

OBSERVATION

What does Paul say about his rejoicing in Philippians 1:15-18?

APPLICATION

What give(s) me the greatest joy?

PRAYER

Lord, renew my spirit and draw my heart to Yourself, that my greatest delight is God; that I can truly say, "Whom have I in heaven but You? And besides You I desire nothing on earth."⁸⁷ You are my Lord; I have no God besides You.⁸⁸ Then, I will be able to rejoice in the Lord always regardless of my life situation. Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:

- Pray for family:

- Pray for bosses:

- Pray for peers and staff:

- Pray for self:

⁸⁵ David Jackman, 193

⁸⁶ David Jackman, 193

⁸⁷ Psalm 73:25

⁸⁸ Psalm 16:1

Sermon Notes

October 26,
Sunday
2014

Topic:

Scripture:

Main Points:

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What are the biblical principles found in this passage?

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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?

RESPONSE:

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

b. Journal your prayer.

PRAYER: ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURES

When we pray according to God's Word, we are praying according to what God wants.

Scripture - 1 John 5:14-15**1. ACTIVITY BITE**

Think of a story from the Bible or your favourite story book. Briefly tell that story to your parents in your own words (without reading from the book or Bible).

2. CHAT TIME

Q1: Would you have been able to tell the story to your parents if you hadn't read it first?

Q2: Let's say you want to pray for your school teachers. What would you pray for?

Q3: Now read Titus 2:7-8. Do these verses help you know what to pray for your teachers?

3. LEARNING POINT

If you ask God to punish your friend for not sharing his toys, I don't think He will answer that prayer because it is not His will. 1 Peter 3:9 tells us not to repay evil with evil but to bless those who hurt us. So if you pray that God will bless your friend, He will surely answer because this is according to what He wants. This is how we can pray according to God's will - according to His Word.

4. ACTION POINT

Choose a Bible verse that describes how God wants us to treat others. Now tell God that you want to do what He says, and ask Him to help you do just that.

5. PRAYER POWER

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

Dear God, thank You for Your Word. It tells me about Your will. Now I can pray the way You want me to. Amen.

october

family devotional week four

October 27,
Monday
2014

Faithful in Whatever You Do

SCRIPTURE

3 John 5-6; Matthew 25:14-30

Gaius is a man of "truth" (v. 3) and "love" (v. 6). Truth and love in Gaius are demonstrated through action marked by faithfulness ("acting faithfully", v. 5a) as seen in his "practical ministry to strangers"⁸⁹ (v. 5b). His faithful work shows that "his love was consistent with the truth which he believed"⁹⁰. The "loyalty of Gaius to the truth was constantly demonstrated in loving service."⁹¹ Gaius is faithful in "whatever you do" (v. 5a, NRSV) and "whenever you do a work"⁹². Faithful serving grows out of faithfulness to God. To be faithful is to give one's optimal best - as best as we can. When we give our best to God, it is always within our limits. God knows that. While we may do our best as God expects, we may not be considered as having done well enough by man. It is altogether possible that man's expectation is greater than God's, because God knows our limits, but not man. God does not call us to do all things at all times, for He has not called us to be the Messiah.

OBSERVATION

What does Jesus teach concerning faithfulness in Matthew 25:14-30 (note vv. 14-15, 19-23, 29)?

APPLICATION

What area(s) in my life do I need to pay particular attention to regarding faithfulness to God?

PRAYER

Lord of my life, fill me with the knowledge of Your will, with all the wisdom and understanding that Your Spirit gives; that I may be able to live as You want and to always do what pleases You, so that my life will produce all kinds of good deeds and grow in knowing You more and more.⁹³ Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:
- Pray for family:
- Pray for bosses:
- Pray for peers and staff:
- Pray for self:

⁸⁹ John Stott, 225

⁹⁰ John Stott, 225

⁹¹ Stephen Smalley, Vol. 51, 349

⁹² *The New Greek-English Interlinear New Testament* (Tyndale House, 1990)

⁹³ Colossians 1:9-10

October 28,
Tuesday
2014

Encouraged to Keep Pressing On

SCRIPTURE

3 John 5-6; Hebrews 10:23-25

Gaius is "acting faithfully" in showing hospitality to the travelling missionaries (v. 5). But he is continually facing "the hostility of Diotrephes"⁹⁴ who "does not receive the brethren" and forbids others to do so, threatening to "put them out of the church" should they fail to do his bidding (v. 10). It must be "very discouraging for Gaius" who apparently is "in the minority in the church"⁹⁵. John seeks to encourage Gaius to keep pressing on and not give up in completing his good work until he sends off the travelling missionaries, assisting them in every way to continue their journey (v. 6). We all need affirmation and encouragement (not ego-stroking) in our walk with God and serving Him, because we do easily lose heart and grow weary in doing good (Gal 6:9). John personally affirms Gaius - "you are acting faithfully" (v. 5) and points to him others' affirmation of him - "they have testified to your love before the church" (v. 6). A two-fold encouragement. Be intentional in encouragement, even when we do not receive it. But what is worse than not giving encouragement is discouraging others.

OBSERVATION

Why is encouraging one another so important according to Hebrews 10:23-25?

APPLICATION

How do I want to be intentional in giving encouragement to others?

PRAYER

Holy Spirit, who comes alongside God's children as Comforter and Encourager, make me a channel of Your comfort and encouragement. Help me to be intentional in looking out for people who need encouragement; to encourage sensitively, wisely and appropriately, as befits the situation, and not carelessly bring discouragement instead. Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:

- Pray for family:

- Pray for bosses:

- Pray for peers and staff:

- Pray for self:

⁹⁴ David Jackman, 193

⁹⁵ David Jackman, 193

October 29,
Wednesday
2014

The Beginning of Christian Hospitality

SCRIPTURE

3 John 5-6; Matthew 25:34-40

2 John and 3 John are “concerned with Christian truth and love and with their relation to hospitality”, providing “a balanced understanding of the duties and limits of Christian hospitality”⁹⁶. There is warning not to extend hospitality to false teachers (2 Jn 10-11), commendation of hospitality to teachers of the truth (2 Jn 5-6), and rebuke for refusal to welcome them (v. 10). Christian hospitality begins with God’s hospitality towards us: “God is love” (1 Jn 4:8, 16) received and accepted us lost sinners to be His children through His Son’s atoning sacrifice for our sins. Christian hospitality is a reflection of divine hospitality: “We love, because He first loved us” (1 Jn 4:19). Christian hospitality “can be defined as the reality of divine hospitality experienced and expressed in the lives of God’s children... the reflection of God’s character in the life of each Christian and of the church. It is a lifestyle, a visible portrayal of the first commandment to love God and neighbour.”⁹⁷ It is more than mere entertainment of guests.

OBSERVATION

What does Jesus teach about hospitality in Matthew 25:34-40?

APPLICATION

How would I learn and practise hospitality in Christ?

PRAYER

Grant me grace, O Father,
not to pass by suffering
or joy without eyes to see.
Give me understanding
and sympathy, and guard
me from selfishness, that I
may enter into the joys and
sufferings of others. Use me
to gladden and strengthen
those who are weak and
suffering; that by my life I
may help others to believe
and serve You.⁹⁸ Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:

- Pray for family:

- Pray for bosses:

- Pray for peers and staff:

- Pray for self:

⁹⁶ John Stott, 220

⁹⁷ Robert Banks & R. Paul Stevens, editors, *The Complete Book of Everyday Christianity* (IVP, 1997), 505-506

⁹⁸ Adapted from *The SPCK Book of Christian Prayer*, 196

October 30,
Thursday
2014

Service That's Worthy of God

SCRIPTURE

3 John 6; Matthew 10:40-42

John exhorts Gaius to help the travelling missionaries he is hosting to continue their journey of ministry "in a manner worthy of God" (v. 6). Gaius is to serve God's servants "in a manner worthy of God" because they are themselves servants "worthy of God". When we serve God, what kind of servants are we? Are we servants "worthy of God" who "represent Him"⁹⁹? And when we represent God, do we represent Him rightly as He has revealed Himself in Scripture? Do we have such God-centeredness and God-consciousness in our service? Christian ministry at the practical level is a human-to-human act. Thus, it is all too easy for the human dimension of reality to be dominant in our consciousness. That is, God is not in our dominant consciousness. The corollary to serving "in a manner worthy of God" is the recipient of service ought also to receive the service "in a manner worthy of God". In this, many of us fail frequently. When we are being served, we want it to be served in our way. Is it in our consciousness that when we are being served, it is God Himself who is ultimately being served?

OBSERVATION

What does Jesus teach about serving Him in Matthew 10:40-42?

APPLICATION

What change(s) do I need to make in my life in the area of serving the Lord?

PRAYER

Open my eyes, O Lord, that I may see You in all that I do. Let it be always in my dominant consciousness that it is You whom I serve. For even in serving someone a cup of cold water, it brings delight to Your heart; and it is significant enough in Your eyes to give a reward, because it is You who receives that simple service. Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:

- Pray for leaders:

- Pray for significant people:

- Pray for those in need:

- Pray for self:

October 31,
Friday
2014

It's All About the Name

SCRIPTURE

3 John 7; Isaiah 42:8

The travelling missionaries to whom Gaius shows hospitality “went out” (“a deliberate setting out on a mission”¹⁰⁰) “for the sake of the Name” (v. 7). John does not need to specify “the Name”, for there is only one Name, exalted above all others – “Jesus” (Php 2:9). It is interesting to note that in the Old Testament, “the Name” is the surrogate for Yahweh, “the Lord” (Lev 24:11; Dt 28:58). The “Name” of Jesus “is the revelation of His divine-human person and saving work”¹⁰¹. To serve “worthy of God” (3 Jn 6) has to do with the manner of service. To serve “for the sake of the Name” has to do with the motive of service. Jealousy for the name of Jesus (“zeal that it should receive the honour due to it”¹⁰²) is “the most compelling of all missionary motives (cf. Ro 1:5)”¹⁰³ If we truly live and serve “for the sake of the Name”, we will not seek human approval or applause, and we are fine being unnoticed or unappreciated. What a grand life motto, “Worthy of God, for the sake of the Name”!

OBSERVATION

How is “My name”, “My glory”, and “My praise” connected to each other in Isaiah 42:8?

APPLICATION

What does it mean for me to live my life in terms of the name, the glory and the praise of God?

PRAYER

Honour the Lord, you heavenly beings. Honour the Lord for His glory and power. Honour the Lord for the glory of His name. Worship the Lord in the splendour of His holiness. The voice of the Lord echoes above the sea. The God of glory thunders. The Lord thunders over the mighty sea. In His temple, everything says, “Glory!”¹⁰⁴

Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks:

- Pray for leaders:

- Pray for significant people:

- Pray for those in need:

- Pray for self:

¹⁰⁰ John Stott, 226

¹⁰¹ John Stott, 226

¹⁰² John Stott, 226

¹⁰³ John Stott, 226

¹⁰⁴ Psalm 29:1-3, 9b

Missions Prayer

FOCUS OF THE MONTH

Malaysia

MALAYSIA IS A PREDOMINANTLY MUSLIM NATION. CHRISTIANS

make up only 9.2% of its population which comprises more than 29 million people. 66% of these Christians are Malay-speaking and are mostly the indigenous people of Sabah and Sarawak. Today, the only Christian majority state in Malaysia is Sarawak but the numbers are declining. The church in Sarawak is facing pressures from within and without. Nominal Christianity is rising and the church is at risk of losing its next generation due to a lack of discipleship. External influences are turning those from Christian families away from the faith. The church not only needs to open its front door to welcome more into the Kingdom of God, but it needs to close its back door by discipling believers within the church.

In 2013, CEFC initiated a tripartite partnership with the missions organisation, Reach Global, and the leadership of the Borneo Evangelical Mission (BEM) denomination representing over 600 churches in Sarawak. The aim is to strengthen discipleship among pre-school children, youths and also church leaders to eventually plant disciple-making churches.

PRAYER POINTERS

- 1) Pray that the Church in Sarawak will grow in discipleship particularly among the next generation, that they will not be lost to the world or other religions.
- 2) Pray for the Pre-school Vision within BEM to start a pre-school within every church in order to win the next generation for Christ. Pray for more teachers, their training process, resources and for the city churches to help support the poorer rural churches.
- 3) Pray that the pastors and leaders of BEM churches will see the critical need for discipleship and champion this within their own churches.
- 4) Pray for more labourers from CEFC to serve in this partnership and for more Covenanters who will commit to intercede for Malaysia.

"If My people, who are called by My name, will humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land."

2 CHRONICLES 7:14

worship songs

BE WITH YOU

Verse 1

Saviour of my soul
I confide in You
Through all my darkest moments

In You I find my peace
My comfort when I'm weak
I trust in You
Through storm and raging sea

Verse 2

Faithful, You're my God
You're the glory and lifter of my head
Your light it fills my days
It leads me in Your ways
Forever I surrender all to You

Chorus

And I live to worship You
My Jesus You're the only one for me
Nothing will ever take Your place
My precious Saviour
Who can stand between my Lord and me

Lord I live to honour You
And I long to bring my life an offering
Take me higher
Draw me deeper
I give all to be with You

Words & Music: Sindy Stepvina
Year & Publisher: 2013 City Harvest Cover

BE THOU MY VISION

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

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

Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise
Thou mine inheritance, now and always
Thou and Thou only, first in my heart
High King of heaven, my treasure Thou art

Chorus

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

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

Words & Music: Eleanor Henrietta Hull | Mary Elizabeth Byrne
Year & Publisher: © Words: Public Domain
CCLI Song # 30639

COME AS YOU ARE

Verse 1

Come out of sadness from wherever you've been
 Come broken-hearted let rescue begin
 Come find your mercy, O sinner come kneel
 Earth has no sorrow that Heaven can't heal
 Earth has no sorrow that Heaven can't heal

Chorus 1

(So) Lay down your burdens, lay down your shame
 All who are broken lift up your face
 O wanderer come home
 You're not too far
 So lay down your hurt lay down your heart
 Come as you are

Verse 2

There's hope for the hopeless
 And all those who've strayed
 Come sit at the table, come taste the grace
 There's rest for the weary
 Rest that endures
 Earth has no sorrow that Heaven can't cure

Bridge

Come as you are
 Fall in His arms
 Come as you are

Verse 3

There's joy for the morning, O sinner be still
 Earth has no sorrow that Heaven can't heal
 Earth has no sorrow that Heaven can't heal

COME AS YOU ARE (CONT'D)

Ending

Come as you are
 Come as you are
 Come as you are

Ben Glover | David Crowder | Matt Maher
 Year & Publisher: © 2014 9t One Songs (Admin. by Crossroad Distributors Pty. Ltd.); Ariose Music (Admin. by Crossroad Distributors Pty. Ltd.); sixsteps Music (Admin. by Crossroad Distributors Pty. Ltd.); worshiptogether.com songs (Admin. by Crossroad Distributors Pty. Ltd.); Sony/ATV Tree Publishing (Admin. by Sony/ATV Music Publishing)
 CCLI Song # 7017790

THE SOLID ROCK

Verse 1

My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness
I dare not trust the sweetest frame
But wholly lean on Jesus' name

Chorus 1

On Christ the solid Rock I stand
All other ground is sinking sand
All other ground is sinking sand

Verse 2

When darkness seems to hide His face
I rest on His unchanging grace
In ev'ry high and stormy gale
My anchor holds within the veil

Verse 3

His oath, His covenant, His blood
Support me in the whelming flood
When all around my soul gives way
He then is all my hope and stay

Verse 4

When He shall come with trumpet sound
O may I then in Him be found
Dressed in His righteousness alone
Faultless to stand before the throne

Words & Music: Charlie Hall | Edward Mote | Kendall Combes | Trent Austin |
William Batchelder Bradbury

Year & Publisher: © Words: Public Domain ; Music: 2004 sixsteps Music
(Admin. by Crossroad Distributors Pty. Ltd.); worshiptogether.com songs
(Admin. by Crossroad Distributors Pty. Ltd.)
CCLI Song # 4255633

PRAISE IS THE OFFERING

Verse 1

Come and let us sing for joy
Let us praise and shout aloud
To the lifter of our heads
To the Rock we're standing on
Your salvation is our song
Now we can't stay silent
We will sing how

Chorus

Great is Your love for me
And great are the things You've done for me
And praise is the offering we bring to You

All of our heart and soul
And all that You are and more
And praise is the offering we bring to You

Verse 2

Lord we come to worship You
Lord we bow our hearts in awe
By Your love we are redeemed
We are Yours and You're our God
Your salvation is our song
Now we can't stay silent
We will sing how

Verse 3

Lord we come to worship You
Lord we bow our hearts in awe
By Your love we are redeemed
We are Yours and You're our God
We are Yours and You're our God
We are Yours and You're our God

Author: Glenn Packiam
Year & Publisher: © 2010 GWC Publishing
Song #: 5783647

GOD OF AGES

God of ages bringing glory here
 You are good
 You are good
 Son of righteousness
 You are all I seek
 With all my heart

Pre-chorus

Giver of life
 Hope for the lost is in You
 All of the earth shines with Your light
 Your glory

Chorus

You are the God who lives
 You are the God who heals
 You are my hope, my everything
 You brought salvation to us
 Offered Your peace to the world
 You are my Lord my everything

Verse 2

In Your promise and Your faithfulness
 I will trust all my days
 King forever, reign in majesty
 Be glorified

Words & Music : Ben Fielding
 Year & Publisher : © 2007 Hillsong Music Publishing
 CCLI Song # 4869933

PSALM 23

The Lord's my Shepherd, I'll not want
 He makes me lie in pastures green
 He leads me by the still, still waters
 His goodness restores my soul

And I will trust in You alone
 And I will trust in You alone
 For Your endless mercy follows me
 Your goodness will lead me home

He guides my ways in righteousness
 And He anoints my head with oil
 And my cup, it overflows with joy
 I feast on His pure delights

And I will trust in You alone
 And I will trust in You alone
 For Your endless mercy follows me
 Your goodness will lead me home

And though I walk the darkest path
 I will not fear the evil one
 For You are with me, and Your rod and staff
 Are the comfort I need to know

And I will trust in You alone
 And I will trust in You alone
 For Your endless mercy follows me
 Your goodness will lead me home

For Your endless mercy follows me
 Your goodness will lead me home

Words & Music: Stuart Townend
 Year & Publisher: © 1996 Thankyou Music (Admin. by EMI Christian Music
 Publishing)
 Song Number: #1585970

WONDERFUL GOD

Verse 1

There is no other God like You
 Who made the heavens and the earth
 And fills my heart with joy unending
 All I can do is give my life
 Offer to You a sacrifice
 Here is my heart for You unending

Bridge

All of my life, belongs to You alone
 With every breath, my song will rise to You

Chorus

You are the joy of every nation
 The giver of salvation
 Wonderful God
 You are God throughout the ages
 Enthroned upon our praises
 Wonderful God

Verse 2

Every morning when I rise
 It is Your presence I desire
 To see Your faithfulness unending

Mercy and goodness follow me
 For in Your presence I am free
 I put my trust in You unending

Author: Denis Campos
 Year & Publisher: © 2009 CFN Music
 CCLI Number: # # 5427037

SHINE JESUS SHINE

Chorus 1

Shine Jesus shine
 Fill this land
 With the Father's glory
 Blaze Spirit blaze
 Set our hearts on fire

Flow river flow
 Flood the nations
 With grace and mercy
 Send forth Your word Lord
 And let there be light

Verse 1

Lord the light of Your love is shining
 In the midst of the darkness shining
 Jesus Light of the world shine upon us
 Set us free by the truth You now bring us
 Shine on me, shine on me

Verse 2

Lord I come to Your awesome presence
 From the shadows into Your radiance
 By the blood I may enter Your brightness
 Search me try me consume all my darkness
 Shine on me, shine on me

Verse 3

As we gaze on Your kingly brightness
 So our faces display Your likeness
 Ever changing from glory to glory
 Mirrored here may our lives tell Your story
 Shine on me, shine on me

Words & Music: Graham Kendrick
 Year & Publisher: © 1987 Make Way Music
 CCLI Song # 30426

THE LOVE OF GOD

Verse 1

The love of God is greater far
 Than tongue or pen can ever tell
 It goes beyond the highest star
 And reaches to the lowest hell
 The guilty pair bowed down with care
 God gave His Son to win
 His erring child He reconciled
 And pardoned from his sin

Could we with ink the ocean fill
 And were the skies of parchment made
 Were every stalk on earth a quill
 And every man a scribe by trade
 To write the love of God above
 Would drain the ocean dry
 Nor could the scroll contain the whole
 Though stretched from sky to sky

Interlude

Hallelujah Hallelujah
 Hallelujah

O love of God how rich and pure
 How measureless and strong
 It shall forever more endure
 The saints and angels' song

Verse 2

When years of time shall pass away
 And earthly thrones and Kingdoms fall
 When men who here refuse to pray
 On rocks and hills and mountains call

God's love so sure shall still endure
 All measureless and strong
 Redeeming grace to Adam's race
 The saints' and angels' song

O love of God how rich and pure
 How measureless and strong
 It shall forever more endure
 The saints and angels' song

Words & Music: Frederick Martin Lehman | Meir Ben Isaac Nehorai
 Year & Publisher: © Words: 1917. Renewed 1945 Nazarene Publishing
 House (Admin. by Music Services, Inc.); Music: 1917. Renewed 1945
 Nazarene Publishing House (Admin. by Music Services, Inc.)
 CCLI Song # 18448

notes

A large green rectangular area with horizontal dashed lines for writing notes. The area is bounded by a solid black line on the left and a solid black line on the top. The rest of the area is filled with light green and contains 20 horizontal dashed lines.

notes

A large green rectangular area with horizontal dashed lines for writing notes. The area is bounded by a solid black line on the left and a solid black line on the top. The rest of the area is filled with light green and contains 20 horizontal dashed lines.

notes

A large green rectangular area with horizontal dashed lines, intended for writing notes. The area is bounded by a solid black line on the left and a solid black line on the top. The dashed lines are evenly spaced and run horizontally across the green area.

COVENANT EFC

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