



09/2016

DEVOTIONAL JOURNAL

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

EPHESIANS 6:10 (ESV)

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



# MEMORY FOCUS

FROM EPHESIANS (ESV)

2016

## JANUARY

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

**EPHESIANS 1:3**

## FEBRUARY

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

**EPHESIANS 1:4**

## MARCH

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

**EPHESIANS 1:5**

## APRIL

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

**EPHESIANS 2:8-9**

## MAY

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

**EPHESIANS 3:20-21**

## JUNE

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

**EPHESIANS 4:1**

## JULY

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

**EPHESIANS 4:2**

## AUGUST

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

**EPHESIANS 4:3**

## SEPTEMBER

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

**EPHESIANS 6:10**

## OCTOBER

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

**EPHESIANS 6:11**

## NOVEMBER

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

**EPHESIANS 6:12**

## DECEMBER

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

**EPHESIANS 6:18**

# FORE BY SENIOR PASTORS 2016 WORD

BACK TO THE ESSENTIALS IN 2016!



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

Spiritual Growth is a choice!

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

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

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

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

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

Rev Tony Yeo and Rev Tan Kay Kiong

# GUIDE TO USING THIS DEVOTIONAL JOURNAL

## 1 Prepare your heart in God's presence

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

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

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

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

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

### WHAT'S NEW IN 2016?

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

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



# WORSHIP SONGS

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER

## MY GREATEST LOVE IS YOU

### Chorus

Call me deeper  
 Into Your grace  
 The river that flows  
 From the Holy Place  
 Wash over me  
 Cleansing me through  
 My greatest love is You

### Verse

Every new day  
 Your glory unfolds  
 Filling my eyes  
 With Your treasures untold  
 The beauty of holiness  
 Brings worship anew  
 My greatest love is You

Russell Fragar  
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## LOVE YOU SO MUCH

### Verse 1

Hear these praises  
 From a grateful heart  
 Each time I think of You  
 The praises start

Love You so much, Jesus  
 Love You so much

### Verse 2

Lord I love You  
 My soul sings  
 In Your presence  
 Carried on Your wings

Love You so much, Jesus  
 Love You so much

### Chorus

How my soul longs for You  
 Longs to worship You forever  
 In Your power and majesty  
 Lift my hands, lift my heart  
 Lift my voice  
 Towards the heavens  
 For You are my  
 Sun and shield

Russell Fragar  
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## 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 us  
 Great are the things You've done  
 Praise is the offering we bring to You

All of our heart and soul  
 All that You are and more  
 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

## LORD YOUR GOODNESS

### Verse

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

### Pre-chorus

I will remember Your mercy  
 And Lord Your faithfulness

### Chorus

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

## ONE VOICE

### Chorus

Let us be one voice  
That glorifies Your name  
Let us be one voice  
Declaring that You reign  
Let us be one voice  
In love and harmony  
And we pray, O God, grant us unity

### Verse 1

Father we ask of You this day  
Come and heal our land  
Knit our hearts together  
That Your glory might be seen in us  
Then the world will know  
That Jesus Christ is Lord

### Verse 2

Now is the time for you and I  
To join our hearts in praise  
That the name of Jesus  
Will be lifted high above the earth  
Then the world will know  
That Jesus Christ is Lord

Robert Gay  
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## TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

### Verse

Love unfailing  
Overtaking my heart  
You take me in  
Finding peace again  
Fear is lost in all You are

### Pre-Chorus

And I would give the world  
To tell Your story  
'Cause I know that You've called me  
I know that You've called me  
I've lost myself for good  
Within Your promise  
And I won't hide it  
I won't hide it

### Chorus

Jesus I believe in You  
And I would go  
To the ends of the earth  
To the ends of the earth  
For You alone are the Son of God  
And all the world will see  
That You are God  
You are God

Joel Houston | Marty Sampson  
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## MIGHTY TO SAVE

### Verse 1

Everyone needs compassion  
 Love that's never failing  
 Let mercy fall on me  
 Everyone needs forgiveness  
 The kindness of a Saviour  
 The hope of nations

### Chorus

Saviour, He can move the mountains  
 My God is mighty to save  
 He is mighty to save  
 Forever, Author of salvation  
 He rose and conquered the grave  
 Jesus conquered the grave

### Verse 2

So take me as You find me  
 All my fears and failures  
 Fill my life again  
 I give my life to follow  
 Everything I believe in  
 Now I surrender

### Bridge

Shine your light and let the whole world see  
 We're singing for the glory of the risen King, Jesus  
 Shine your light and let the whole world see  
 We're singing for the glory of the risen King, Jesus

Ben Fielding | Reuben Morgan  
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## BE THOU MY VISION (BY ASCEND THE HILL)

### Verse 1

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

### Verse 2

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

### Verse 3

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

### Chorus

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

### Verse 4

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

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## FACING A TASK UNFINISHED

### Verse 1

Facing a task unfinished  
That drives us to our knees  
A need that undiminished  
Rebukes our slothful ease  
We who rejoice to know Thee  
Renew before Thy throne  
The solemn pledge we owe Thee  
To go and make Thee known

### Verse 2

Where other lords beside Thee  
Hold their unhindered sway  
Where forces that defied Thee  
Defy Thee still today  
With none to heed their crying  
For life, and love, and light  
Unnumbered souls are dying  
And pass into the night

### Chorus

We go to all the world  
With (His) kingdom hope unfurled  
No other name has power to save  
But Jesus Christ The Lord

### Verse 3

We bear the torch that flaming  
Fell from the hands of those  
Who gave their lives proclaiming  
That Jesus died and rose  
Ours is the same commission  
The same glad message ours  
Fired by the same ambition  
To Thee we yield our powers

### Verse 4

O Father who sustained them  
O Spirit who inspired  
Saviour, whose love constrained them  
To toil with zeal untired  
From cowardice defend us  
From lethargy awake  
Forth on Thine errands send us  
To labour for Thy sake

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# THE CHURCH BEYOND

## ARE BI-VOCATIONAL MISSIONARIES NEEDED?

**M**issionaries are conventionally viewed as full-time workers who uproot themselves from their home nations to live in another country to engage in church planting or missions work in general. These missionaries usually have to give up their secular jobs to “focus” on God’s work. However many of the missionary greats such as Hudson Taylor (who served in China), William Carey (who served in India) and David Livingstone (who served in Africa) worked among the people they served. They were not considered any less spiritual for doing so. For more than 200 years, missionaries often worked to meet the felt needs of the people while meeting their spiritual needs at the same time. The Bible mentions that the Apostle Paul, Dr Luke, Apollos and Priscilla in the Bible, also served God this way.

Another reason why we need bi-vocational missionaries is because more than 90 percent of the world’s unreached people live in restricted access nations. In such nations, it is often difficult to obtain visas in light of their “missionary” status. As a result, many missionaries use travel visa or other strategies to stay in the country. While some people may be called by the Lord to uproot themselves and live overseas, there are many others whom God has called to remain in their current jobs or stations in life and to **intentionally** contribute to cross-cultural missions. They have the God-given grace to balance their secular responsibilities with missions work. These saints are no less spiritual or less “focused” than full-time missionaries, but have differing gifts, callings, roles and time commitments. God views them as **one** team, bringing in **one** harvest to the **one** and **only true** God, who is the Lord of the Harvest!

Covenant EFC had trained **99 potential bi-vocational missionaries** in the last three years. After the training, our

*“When we depend on man, we get what man can do. When we depend on prayer, we get what God can do.”<sup>1</sup>*

desire is for **every person** to serve in missions, in the capacity that they are able to. Some will be volunteers and others will be bi-vocational missionaries, both aiding in the mission and vision that God has given Covenant EFC. About 50 percent of those trained are actively engaged in missions.

The devil is not going to be happy about bi-vocational missions work. He will release his darts of discouragement to quench our faith. That is why intentional prayer is important to help remove the mountains of doubt and pave the way for God to work. “When we depend on man, we get what man can do. When we depend on prayer, we get what God can do.”<sup>1</sup> “Our praying, however, needs to be pressed and pursued with an energy that never tires, a persistency which will not be denied and a courage which never fails.”<sup>2</sup> When we pray, we put our faith in the bigness of our God and not the bigness of the task. The great preacher D. L. Moody said, “Every great movement of God can be traced to a kneeling figure.” Let us humbly kneel before God and ask Him in faith for the following prayer items.

## » PRAY

- That the vision for bi-vocational missions will be given to the people and that they will have a godly perspective on it
- For bi-vocational missionaries who have the vision to go to the nations and work there to meet the felt needs and spiritual needs of the people.
- That our trained bi-vocational missionaries will grow and mature to be Authentic Disciples and Intentional Disciplemakers (A.D.I.D.)
- That at least 10 bi-vocational missionaries will be trained and placed by the end of 2017
- For those who have been trained but are not yet serving, to find the right fit for them in Covenant EFC’s missions work
- For wisdom to integrate bi-vocational missionaries with Covenant EFC’s missions work
- That the people who are posted overseas will be able to function effectively as bi-vocational missionaries in their respective countries

<sup>1</sup> A.C. Dixon

<sup>2</sup> Edward M. Bounds, *The Necessity of Prayer*, 31.



THURSDAY, 1 SEPTEMBER 2016

## My Sacrifice for God's Harvest

### ■ SCRIPTURE

John 12:20-33

### ■ OBSERVATION

Jesus mentioned “much fruit” in verse 24. What was He referring to?  
(See vv.32-33)

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### DEEPER REFLECTION

Much fruit can only come through sacrifice. A harvest of souls can only come through the once-for-all sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus for sinners. Conversions of men, women and children take place as a result of the sacrificial work of the Lord's servants in telling people of all nations about the Good News of salvation in Christ. The sacrifices of Christ's disciples enable the gospel to reach the minorities, the marginalised, the broken and the captive, who would otherwise be unreached. **“Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit (v.24).”** Jesus set us the example. The Lord calls us as His disciples to self-denial and sacrifice in the present as we sow the seeds of the Gospel, so that we will rejoice fully with Him in the future harvest. How are you carrying out God's purpose? “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.”<sup>1</sup> Are you willing to sacrifice time, energy, money, leisure, comfort, possessions, position and status, in order to carry out God's purpose? When we make personal sacrifices to follow and serve the Lord Jesus, we will enable others to see Him. **“Sir, we wish to see Jesus.”**

### ■ APPLICATION

What are the fears, insecurities and idols in your life that keep you from sacrificing for God's harvest? Ask God in His love and grace to remove them.

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### ■ PRAYER

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

### PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

<sup>1</sup> This is an extract from the journal of Jim Elliot, a Christian missionary who died 60 years ago. He was killed by the tribesmen of the Waodoni people of Ecuador whom he was seeking to evangelise.



FRIDAY, 2 SEPTEMBER 2016

## God Gives the Fruits

### ■ SCRIPTURE

1 Corinthians 3:1-15

### ■ OBSERVATION

What are the respective roles played by God's fellow workers and God Himself in building the church (vv.5-15)?

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### DEEPER REFLECTION

Where there are fruits in ministry, two dangers can emerge: **jealousy** and **complacency**. The former stems from the tendency to take personal credit for good results. The latter stems from the tendency to think that good results will perpetuate for sure. The apostle Paul's teaching here addresses both dangers. Firstly, Paul reminds us that it is God who causes the growth. It is God who gives the fruits. It is not us who produce the fruits. Of course, we as God's fellow workers must do our respective parts of planting and watering. But without God doing His part in giving life and transformation, there can be no true spiritual growth. As such, we cannot claim the credit. All the glory belongs to God. As is often declared by Christians, "To God be the glory!" May our attitude and behaviour fully match our words! Secondly, Paul reminds us to keep watch over how we build to ensure that we keep building on the right foundation. The only foundation Christians are to build upon is the foundation of Jesus Christ – who He is and His finished work on the cross. No other foundation is legitimate nor secure. False foundations will be found out in times of testing, like when buildings with compromised foundations collapse upon being stressed or shaken. A ministry that started out well with initial genuine fruits may later deviate from the truth and soon end up in disaster. We must keep watch over the way we build our ministry or else our work will be burned up when tested by fire at the Lord's coming. We must always build our ministry upon the Word of God.

### ■ APPLICATION

Ask the Holy Spirit to examine you: Is there jealousy or complacency in your personal ministry? If so, confess and repent, and ask God to tutor your heart.

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### ■ PRAYER

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

### PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

To keep building Covenant EFC's ministry upon the Word of God

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:



SATURDAY, 3 SEPTEMBER 2016

## God Provides the Redemption

### ■ SCRIPTURE

Philippians 3:7-11

### ■ OBSERVATION

What does Paul mean by “to know Christ and the power of His resurrection” (v.10)?

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### DEEPER REFLECTION

Resurrection is bringing to life what was dead. Christ died on the cross, but was resurrected by the power of God on the third day. Death had no hold on Him. When we were spiritually dead in our transgressions and sins, God in His love, mercy and grace made us alive together with Christ and raised us up with Him (Eph 2:1-6). When death has no hold on us, we know that though we die, yet we will live (Jn 11:25-26). It is the same with our life situations. We may have had past experiences that we grieve about, greatly regret, are traumatised by or are shameful of. In our life and Christian ministry, there may have been the loss of loved ones, grave mistakes, grievous hurts, major setbacks or shameful sins. Although we still have to face the consequences, God is with us in the journey – He Himself is no stranger to suffering – and in His time He redeems our painful past. Estranged relationships are mended. Wounds are healed. Warring factions are reconciled. Failures are overcome. New opportunities are given. Sins are forgiven. Shame is erased. God gives us new life and new hope for the future! In other words, that which was dead – our hearts, our hopes and our dreams – are somehow, in some way, raised to life! Resurrection has taken place by God’s grace and power! The New Living Translation renders verses 10 to 11 clearly: **“I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead. I want to suffer with him, sharing in his death, so that one way or another I will experience the resurrection from the dead!”**

### ■ APPLICATION

Are there painful past experiences in your life and ministry? Bring each one of them to the God of resurrection power who will turn your sorrows into joy.

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### ■ PRAYER

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

### PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:



SUNDAY, 4 SEPTEMBER 2016

■ SCRIPTURE

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■ OBSERVATION

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■ APPLICATION

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■ PRAYER

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THE PAST WEEK

REVIEW

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

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What gave me life and what drained me?

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How was the Spirit of God at work?

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**REFLECT**

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

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**RESPOND**

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

**COMMIT IN PRAYER**


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**FAMILY DEVOTIONAL**

September 2016 – Week 1

**MUSIC FROM THE HEART**

**Make music from your heart to God.**

*Scripture: Ephesians 5:19*

**ACTIVITY BITE**

Hum a song and get others to guess its title. Take turns to hum and guess the names of the songs.

**CHAT TIME**

Q1: What kind of music do you enjoy the most?

Q2: Do you really understand the message of these songs or do you just sing them for leisure?

Q3: Do you think God enjoys the music that you sing to Him? Why or why not?

**LEARNING POINT**

God created music as a wonderful form of communication. It can have a message of love, hope or joy. There are also many popular songs about sad feelings or about hating each other. Be aware of the kind of music you listen to or sing. God created music so that we can use it to sing worship songs to Him and songs of encouragement to one another. When we sing about how great God is and how grateful we are to Him, it pleases Him. Fill your hearts with wonderful songs of praise every day.

**ACTION POINT**

Think of one worship song that you want to sing to God. Sing it to Him now. Remind yourself to sing to Him when you wake up in the morning.

**PRAYER POWER**

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

Dear God, thank You for the wonderful songs that You give us to sing. I want to sing praises to You every day. Amen.



MONDAY, 5 SEPTEMBER 2016

## The Holy Spirit in Discipleship

### ■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 1:3, 13-14, 17; 2:18-22; 3:16-17; 4:1-3, 30; 5:18-20; 6:17-18

### ■ OBSERVATION

What do you observe about the Holy Spirit in the Church in Ephesians 1:3, 13-14, 17; 2:18-22; 3:16-17; 4:1-3, 30; 5:18-20; 6:17-18?

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### DEEPER REFLECTION

Ephesians is about the Church, and the Holy Spirit plays a vital redemptive role in the Church, with this being mentioned in every chapter of the letter. Ephesians begins with God having “blessed us with every Spiritual blessing in Christ” (v.3), part of which includes being “sealed” with the Spirit as “a pledge of our inheritance” (Eph 1:13-14), to be fully possessed by God on “the day of redemption” (Eph 4:30). “The Spirit of wisdom and revelation” enlightens us to know God better and deeper (Eph 1:17), and empowers us to live a Christ-centred life (Eph 3:16-17). In Christ, God redeems fallen humanity into “one body” (Eph 2:13-16) as God’s “holy temple”, where God dwells in us “in the Spirit” with “access in one Spirit” to God (Eph 2:17-22). The “one body” is fundamentally “the unity of the Spirit”, which we are to make every effort to keep (Eph 4:1-3). We are to be “filled with the Spirit” (Eph 5:18), and not “grieve the Holy Spirit” (Eph 4:30) in breaking “the unity of the Spirit” through unholy conduct in thought, attitude, words and deeds in our personal life and relationship with others (Eph 4:25-32). In our Spirit-filled walk with God, we war against “the devil” “in the evil day” (Eph 6:10-13) by the Word of God and in prayer to God in “the Spirit” (Eph 6:17-18).

### ■ APPLICATION

How can I be more conscious of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in my life?

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### ■ PRAYER

*Holy Spirit, Spirit of the Father<sup>2</sup> and Spirit of Christ<sup>3</sup>, O what glorious mystery, O what mysterious glory of the Holy Triune God! I thank You that You are dwelling in me and working mightily in me, whether I am conscious of it or not. Enlighten me to know Your empowering presence and empower me to keep in step with You<sup>4</sup> in my life daily. Amen.*



<sup>2</sup> Matthew 10:20

<sup>3</sup> Romans 9

<sup>4</sup> Galatians 5:25 (NIV)



TUESDAY, 6 SEPTEMBER 2016

## Be Filled with the Spirit

### ■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 5:18

### ■ OBSERVATION

What does it mean to “be filled with the Spirit” (v.18)?

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### DEEPER REFLECTION

“Be filled with **the Spirit**” (v.18) must be understood in light of the Trinitarian fullness of God in Ephesians. The Church is already “the fullness of **God**” (Eph 1:22-23) and at the same time not yet. Thus, we pray for spiritual empowerment towards being “filled with all the fullness of **God**” (Eph 3:16-19) and to grow in spiritual maturity, epitomised by “the fullness of **Christ**” (Eph 4:11-13). We are to “be filled with the Spirit” just as the temple was filled with the glory of God (Isa 6:1; Eze 43:5; 44:4).<sup>5</sup> What humble and gracious condescension of the holy and glorious transcendent One! We cannot fail to grasp and be gripped by this vision! “Be filled with the Spirit” is a command that is to be obeyed continuously, but it is God who fills us – purely a divine work. There is “no technique to learn and no formula to recite”<sup>6</sup> to “make” God fill us with His Spirit. “What is essential is such a penitent turning from what grieves the Holy Spirit and such a believing openness to Him that nothing hinders Him from filling us.”<sup>7</sup> It is “not a once-for-all experience which we can never lose, but a privilege to be renewed continuously by continuous believing and obedient appropriation”<sup>8</sup>.

### ■ APPLICATION

How do I respond to God’s desire and readiness to fill me with the Holy Spirit continually?

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### ■ PRAYER

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

#### PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

<sup>5</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Zondervan, 2010), 350

<sup>6</sup> John Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, The Bible Speaks Today (IVP, 1979), 209

<sup>7</sup> John Stott, 209

<sup>8</sup> John Stott, 209



WEDNESDAY, 7 SEPTEMBER 2016

## “Baptised” and “Filled” with the Spirit

### ■ SCRIPTURE

Acts 1:4-8; 2:1-4, 15-18, 37-39

### ■ OBSERVATION

What are some truths you can derive about the Holy Spirit and God’s people from Acts 1:4-8; 2:1-4, 15-18 and 37-39?

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### DEEPER REFLECTION

When Jesus said to His disciples, “You will be **baptised** with the Holy Spirit” (v.5), citing John the Baptist (Lk 3:16), He was talking about God fulfilling **the new covenant promise**: “I will put My Spirit within you” (Eze 36:26-27) – “the promised Holy Spirit” (Eph 1:13). This new covenant promise was fulfilled on Pentecost (Ac 2:1-4) as Peter proclaimed by citing Joel 2:28-29 (Ac 2:16-18) – and whoever believes in Jesus “will **receive** the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Ac 2:38-39). At our conversion we were “baptised with the Holy Spirit”, in which we were “born of the Spirit” (Jn 3:5), “sealed” with the Spirit (Eph 1:13-14), “baptised into one body” (1 Co 12:13) and indwelt by the Spirit (Eph 2:22; Gal 4:6). But on Pentecost when Jesus’ disciples were “**baptised** with the Holy Spirit” (Ac 1:5), they were described as being “**filled** with the Holy Spirit” (Ac 2:4). As they were “baptised”, they were also “filled” at the same time. Paul is another example (Ac 9:17-18). A believer is baptised once with the Holy Spirit, but required to be continually filled with the Spirit. We see subsequently in Acts that Jesus’ disciples were “filled with” or “full of” the Holy Spirit (Ac 4:8, 31; 6:3), and not “baptised.”

### ■ APPLICATION

Why is it crucial for me to grow in understanding the Holy Spirit theologically and experientially as revealed in Scripture?

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### ■ PRAYER

*O Holy Spirit, You dwell in my heart, in what is infinitely lower. Spirit of Holiness, You dwell in the midst of impurity and corruption. Spirit of Wisdom, You dwell in the midst of folly. Spirit of Truth, You dwell in one who is deluded in many things. Oh, Spirit of Grace, continue to dwell in me and do Your work of transformation. Amen.*

### PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:



THURSDAY, 8 SEPTEMBER 2016

## Singing of the Spirit-filled People

### ■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 5:19

### ■ OBSERVATION

Why does verse 19 mention “speaking” rather than “singing” to one another in Spirit-filled worship?

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### DEEPER REFLECTION

Being filled with the Spirit can result in singing in worship in two directions. **Horizontal direction:** “speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs”. It is “speaking” – not “singing” – to one another. Paul “has in view mutual instruction, edification and exhortation which take place in a range of songs prompted by the Spirit”<sup>9</sup>. The practical implication here is the kind of songs being written and sung, and the way we sing in worship. Passages like Philippians 2:6-11 and Colossians 1:15-20 that Paul used for his pastoral teaching were hymns of the Early Church<sup>10</sup>. And they contain solid theology! **Vertical direction:** “singing and making melody in the heart to the Lord”. “In the heart” refers not just to an emotional response, but “the centre of the person”<sup>11</sup> and “the whole of one’s being”<sup>12</sup>. It means “the entire person should be filled with songs of praise, thereby expressing the reality of life in the Spirit”<sup>13</sup>. Thus, even unmusical people who are unable to sing in tune can rest assured that their singing “in the heart” brings great delight to God. What matters most in worship is the worshiper – the Spirit-filled worshiper (cf. Jn 4:23).

### ■ APPLICATION

What changes do I need to make to be a Spirit-filled worshipper?

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### ■ PRAYER

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

#### PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

<sup>9</sup> Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Apollos, 1999), 395

<sup>10</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary (Word Books, 1990), 345

<sup>11</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, 354

<sup>12</sup> Peter T. O'Brien, 396

<sup>13</sup> Peter T. O'Brien, 396



FRIDAY, 9 SEPTEMBER 2016

## Thankful Spirit of Spirit-filled People

### ■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 5:20; Luke 17:11-19

### ■ OBSERVATION

What observations can you make about giving thanks from verse 20 and Luke 17:11-19?

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### DEEPER REFLECTION

When I was 17-years-old and just a one-year-old Christian, I faced my first major trial and felt lost. I looked at the sky and asked, “Lord, what should I do”? God immediately gave me a verse: 1 Thessalonians 5:18 – “in everything give thanks”. I went on my knees and did just that. It was a fundamental discipleship lesson I learnt at a very early stage in my Christian life. The Spirit-filled Christian gives thanks to God in and for all things and at all times – big or small, good or bad. But we cannot thank God “for” absolutely “everything” including blatant evil, because the holy and just God cannot condone evil. We give thanks to God for everything that is consistent with God’s character. However, we can give thanks to God “in” everything (1 Th 5:18), even when we suffer evil. In so doing, we are acknowledging, trusting in and submitting to God who is sovereign over all things. Thanksgiving is Christocentric – “in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ”. Thanksgiving is theocentric – “to God, even the Father”, “the Father of lights” who gives all good things and perfect gifts (Jas 1:17). Thanksgiving is “to give glory to God” (Lk 17:18).

### ■ APPLICATION

What are the things in my life that I find it hard or fail to give thanks to God for?

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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 develop a heart of constant gratitude to God

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:



SATURDAY, 10 SEPTEMBER 2016

## Be Filled with the Word

### ■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 5:18-20; Colossians 3:16-17

### ■ OBSERVATION

What observations can you make when you compare verses 18 to 20 with Colossians 3:16-17?

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### DEEPER REFLECTION

Certain similarities in content between Ephesians and Colossians have been observed which show certain parallel theological ideas. Verses 18 to 20 and Colossians 3:16-17 are one such example. In Pauline theology, “to be filled with the Spirit” (v.18) and to “let the word of Christ dwell richly within you” (Col 3:16) are two sides of the same coin, as the results of both are virtually similar (vv.19-20; Col 3:17). Biblically, “there is never any question of Word and Spirit being separately experienced”<sup>14</sup>. The new covenant promise consists of both Word and Spirit: “I will put My law within them” (Jer 31:33) and “I will put My Spirit within you” (Eze 36:27) – that we may know God and obey Him in covenant relationship with Him (Jer 31:33-34; Eze 36:27-28). Thus, “to enjoy the fullness of the Spirit, a Christian must necessarily be filled with the word of Christ”<sup>15</sup>. The word of Christ is to “dwell richly” – “to be stocked with good teaching as a palace is filled with treasures”<sup>16</sup> and “abundantly available”<sup>17</sup> – in the church and individual hearts. Out of this spiritual wealth, we are to act “in all wisdom” (cf. Col 1:9, 28; 4:5), that is, “with sufficient balance and relevance”<sup>18</sup> to counter false teaching with “the appearance of wisdom” (Col 2:23).

### ■ APPLICATION

How can I allow the Word of God to dwell richly in my heart?

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### ■ PRAYER

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

#### PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

<sup>14</sup> Dick Lucas, *The Message of Colossians & Philemon*, The Bible Speaks Today (IVP, 1980), 154

<sup>15</sup> Dick Lucas, 154

<sup>16</sup> N. T. Wright, *Colossians & Philemon*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (IVP, 1986), 148

<sup>17</sup> Dick Lucas, 154

<sup>18</sup> Dick Lucas, 154



SUNDAY, 11 SEPTEMBER 2016

■ SCRIPTURE

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■ OBSERVATION

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■ APPLICATION

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■ PRAYER

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THE PAST WEEK

REVIEW

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

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What gave me life and what drained me?

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How was the Spirit of God at work?

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**REFLECT**

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

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**RESPOND**

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

**COMMIT IN PRAYER**


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**FAMILY DEVOTIONAL**

September 2016 – Week 2

**SEEING GOD EVERYWHERE**

**God shows Himself in many ways.**

*Scripture: Colossians 1:16; Psalm 19:1-4*

**ACTIVITY BITE**

Take a walk in the park. Look at all the trees, flowers, rocks and fish in the ponds. Feel the breeze. Think about how God has made all these things.

**CHAT TIME**

Q1: There are people who say that there is no God. Why do you think they say this?

Q2: If people cannot see your brain, does it mean you do not have one? Why or why not?

Q3: How does God show Himself to us when we can't see Him?

**LEARNING POINT**

No one can see God because He is invisible. But we know He is real by looking at all the things He has created. God is the only one who is able to create something as powerful as thunder and lightning, as astounding as a tree with thousands of different leaves that are not identical or as amazing as ants that work together in a colony to protect their young. Psalm 19:1-4 is like a beautiful poem where God's creations praise the One who created them. The next time you look at nature around you, think of it as God's handicraft. The more you see it that way, the more you will be amazed.

**ACTION POINT**

Collect some leaves from a tree and paste them on a notebook. Title your work as "Made by God". Tell Him how marvellous He is for creating such amazing things.

**PRAYER POWER**

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

Lord, You have made all things marvellously and when I look at them, I am reminded of Your presence everywhere. I pray for my non-Christian friends that when they see the trees or the animals, they will also believe in You. Amen.



MONDAY, 12 SEPTEMBER 2016

## Sharpen Our Focus on Christ

### ■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 5:7 – 6:10

### ■ OBSERVATION

Where can Christ be found in the context of Ephesians 5:7 – 6:10?

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### DEEPER REFLECTION

We live in an age where technology's aggressive advancement will never cease, with machines showing more and more signs of mastery over man – or, rather, man letting themselves to be mastered by machines. The effect of this is “speedy, busy, hurry, noisy” has become so characteristic of life – outside and inside of us. And it has become so ingrained in our lives, like the air that we breathe. Perhaps, you didn't get a chance – or, you didn't give yourself a chance – to read through the 37 verses to find Christ in them. Perhaps, it is too long a passage to read, let alone to reflect upon. There is just one aim: **to find Christ**. “Christ” and “Lord” are altogether mentioned 22 times in these 37 verses, excluding references to Him in third person pronouns. And Christ the Lord is mentioned in various major arenas of life in these passages: in the world of “darkness” (Eph 5:7-14), in “the days” that “are evil” (Eph 5:15-17), in the Christian community (Eph 5:18-21), in marriage and family (Eph 5:22 – 6:4), in the workplace (Eph 6:5-9) and in spiritual warfare (Eph 6:10). It is of critical necessity to find Christ in the increasingly challenging world we live in, by consciously and conscientiously seeking Him daily, seeing Him and sharpening our focus on Him.

### ■ APPLICATION

How can I sharpen my focus on Christ in my daily life?

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### ■ PRAYER

*Lord Jesus, pardon me when I forget You and fail to follow You. Teach me to seek You and reveal Yourself to me as I look for You. For I cannot seek You unless You first teach me, nor find You unless You first reveal Yourself to me. O grant me to have You in my dominant consciousness more and more! Amen.*

### PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:



TUESDAY, 13 SEPTEMBER 2016

## Mutual Submission in a Spirit-filled Community

### ■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 5:21

### ■ OBSERVATION

How do you understand “submitting to one another” (v.21) in the context of Ephesians 5:18-21?

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### DEEPER REFLECTION

“Submitting to one another” (v.21) is evidence of a Spirit-filled life. Paul’s call here is to adopt a “countercultural attitude”<sup>19</sup>. “In general”, the verb “submit” in Greek “is widely used for the proper social ordering of people”, like “warriors giving their allegiance to their commander”, “people living in certain political jurisdiction obliged to respect the authority of their local governor” – which “carries with it the responsibility to live in an orderly manner and not be seditious or rebellious”<sup>20</sup>. Paul’s call “subverts the normal use of the term to convey the idea that all believers should defer to one another”<sup>21</sup> in the redeemed community of Christ. The verb is in the middle voice – “submit yourselves”<sup>22</sup>, which emphasises that Christians “need to actively deny themselves and focus their attention on the needs of others in the body”<sup>23</sup>. Submitting to one another requires a spirit of reciprocity undergirded by the knowledge that “we are members of one another” (Eph 4:25). When we are Spirit-filled, we will know what it means and how to submit to leaders (Heb 13:17), and for leaders to submit to members of their flock. We will have the character and wisdom to do that.

### ■ APPLICATION

What changes in perspective or posture do I need to make regarding Christian mutual submission?

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### ■ PRAYER

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

### PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

<sup>19</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, 356

<sup>20</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, 356

<sup>21</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, 356

<sup>22</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, 357

<sup>23</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, 357



WEDNESDAY, 14 SEPTEMBER 2016

## Mutual Submission under Christ's Loving Lordship

### ■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 5:21; Galatians 5:13

### ■ OBSERVATION

What is the correlation between “submitting to one another” (v.21) and “through love become slaves to one another” (Gal 5:13, NRSV)?

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### DEEPER REFLECTION

We will know how to “submit to one another” (v.21) when we consider another of Paul’s teaching together: in our “freedom” in Christ, we should “through love become slaves to one another” (Gal 5:13, NRSV). In Greek, the word for “become slaves” (“serve” in most translations) is the verb form of “slave”. “Slaves” presupposes “masters”. In the spirit of mutual servitude which focuses on “one another”, each one of us is a slave serving a lot of masters, and while being served we do not see ourselves as “masters” but always as a slave to many masters. The key is “through love”. John Calvin says, “God has so bound us to each other that no man ought to avoid subjection. And where love reigns, there is mutual servitude.”<sup>24</sup> Mutual servitude and mutual submission go together – “in the fear of Christ”. This “fear” is “a reverential fear or reverential respect”<sup>25</sup> that **Christ’s lordship authority** demands (Eph 1:10, 20-22; 4:8-10). It is not “a fear that comprises terror”<sup>26</sup>, but “a fear of disobeying Christ”<sup>27</sup> “in the context of love”<sup>28</sup>. It is “the appropriate fear” that “must be tempered with a knowledge of the incomprehensible vastness”<sup>29</sup> of **Christ’s self-giving love** (Eph 3:18-19; 5:1-2).

### ■ APPLICATION

What does it mean to me to be a slave to fellow disciples of Jesus by submitting to them?

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### ■ PRAYER

*Fill me with Your Spirit,  
Lord Jesus, that as You  
live in me, I may live like  
You. To subject myself to  
other disciples of Yours,  
just as You subject Yourself  
to Your Father<sup>30</sup>, although  
You and the Father are  
one. To be a slave to them,  
just as You, though You  
existed in the form of God,  
emptied Yourself by taking  
the form of a bondservant  
for our sake<sup>31</sup>. Amen.*

### PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

<sup>24</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, 357 – citing John Calvin

<sup>25</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Baker, 2002), 719

<sup>26</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, 719

<sup>27</sup> Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, Baker exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Baker, 2010), 375

<sup>28</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, 719

<sup>29</sup> Frank Thielman, 375

<sup>30</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:28

<sup>31</sup> Philippians 2:6-7



THURSDAY, 15 SEPTEMBER 2016

## God Has So Composed the Body

### ■ SCRIPTURE

1 Corinthians 12:14-26

### ■ OBSERVATION

What observations can you make about the way God has composed the body of Christ in verses 14 to 26?

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### DEEPER REFLECTION

It is in the larger context of keeping “the unity of the Spirit” as “one body” of diversity (Eph 4:1-7) that Paul calls for “submitting to one another” (Eph 5:21) – “an attitude of self-denial and concern for the needs of others”<sup>32</sup> in self-giving service, as Spirit-filled “members of one another” (Eph 5:18; 4:25). One helpful Pauline ecclesiological perspective for mutual submission is the way God has composed the body of Christ in the metaphor of the human body in verses 14 to 26. How do we view and value ourselves and others in the body? Don’t feel inferior, saying, “I am not a part of the body” (vv.14-17), and don’t feel superior, saying, “I have no need of you” (v.21). Members of the body that “seem to be less bestowed with power or status than others are essential”<sup>33</sup> (v.22), and “what we deem to be less honourable parts... we invest with greater honour”<sup>34</sup> (v.23), for “God has so composed the body, giving that which feels inferior greater honour”<sup>35</sup> (v.24). The “supposedly more spectacular gifts... may turn out to be less indispensable than the faithful, humble” “weaker” members “whose value may be overlooked”<sup>36</sup>. Adopt a **theocentric view and valuation** of ourselves and others, as “God has placed” each of us “just as He desired” (v.18).

### ■ APPLICATION

What changes do I need to make in how I view and value myself and others in the church as a body 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:

<sup>32</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, 355

<sup>33</sup> Anthony C. Thiselton, *1 Corinthians: A Shorter Exegetical and Pastoral Commentary* (Eerdmans, 2006), 208

<sup>34</sup> Anthony C. Thiselton, 208

<sup>35</sup> Anthony C. Thiselton, 208

<sup>36</sup> Anthony C. Thiselton, 210



FRIDAY, 16 SEPTEMBER 2016

## Knowing Jesus as the Servant God

### ■ SCRIPTURE

Philippians 2:1-8

### ■ OBSERVATION

What are the corresponding ideas found in verses 1 to 4 and verses 5 to 8?

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### DEEPER REFLECTION

The key to unity (v.2) is selflessly and humbly looking at the importance of others and looking out for the interests of others more than that of our own (vv.3-4). This is another way that Paul articulates mutual submission (Eph 5:21). To do that, we must have the “mindset”<sup>37</sup> of Christ (v.5) through knowing Him as the Servant God. How did Jesus reveal Himself as the Servant God? **Jesus “emptied Himself” of His status.** Paul uses the verb “empty” (v.7) “to set up the starkest possible contrast”<sup>38</sup> to the noun “empty glory”<sup>39</sup> (v.3). It was His very own glory “in the form of God” and “equality with God” that Christ “emptied Himself” of (vv.6-7a). Our human and earthly status, positions and titles can never be rightfully or truly ours, because we can lose them. But Christ emptied Himself of the divine status that is rightfully, truly and eternally His. **Jesus “humbled Himself” as a servant.** Emptying Himself of “the form of God”, Jesus took on “the form of a slave”, in which He “humbled Himself”, taking “the lowest place”<sup>40</sup>, being obedient to the point of the greatest humiliation – “death on a cross” (v.8). This is “divine selflessness: God is not an acquisitive being, grasping and seizing, but self-giving for the sake of others”<sup>41</sup>.

### ■ APPLICATION

What do I need to empty myself of to become a servant like my Servant God?

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### ■ PRAYER

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

#### PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

To be a servant-leader like the Servant God

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

<sup>37</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Eerdmans, 1995), 187

<sup>38</sup> Gordon D. Fee, 208

<sup>39</sup> Gordon D. Fee, 186

<sup>40</sup> Gordon D. Fee, 216

<sup>41</sup> Gordon D. Fee, 211



SATURDAY, 17 SEPTEMBER 2016

## The Kind of Leader Jesus Is

### ■ SCRIPTURE

John 13:1-5, 12-17; 20:17

### ■ OBSERVATION

What kind of leader is Jesus according to verses 1 to 5, John 13:12-17 and 20:17?

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### DEEPER REFLECTION

We can get a portrait of Christ-like leadership from the kind of leader Jesus is in the Gospel of John. Foundational to that is the central theology of John: God revealed Himself in human form in Jesus (Jn 1:1, 14), and particularly as “Jesus of Nazareth” (Jn 1:45). “Jesus of Nazareth” “reflected the self-abasement of the man from heaven”<sup>42</sup>, living in a town “considered totally insignificant”<sup>43</sup> (“Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?”, Jn 1:46). Jesus’ leadership began from the **bottom up**. Before going to the cross, Jesus washed His disciples’ feet, as “a vivid portrayal of His self-humiliation”<sup>44</sup>. We must not miss John’s slow and sharp portrayal of that picture of humble condescension: Jesus got up from supper, laid aside His garments, took a towel, girded Himself, poured water into the basin and washed His disciples’ feet – one by one, and wiped them with the towel (Jn 13:4-5). In those actions which exemplified “bottom-up” leadership, Jesus also exercised **top-down** leadership as “the Lord and the Teacher” (Jn 13:14), characterised by Him saying “I gave you an example” (Jn 13:15). In Jesus’ leadership – and Lordship – He calls His disciples “My brethren” (Jn 20:17), sharing an **equal status** with them. A Christ-like leader is able to say: “Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ” (1 Co 11:1).

### ■ APPLICATION

How can I consciously grow to become more like the kind of leader Jesus is?

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### ■ PRAYER

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

#### PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

<sup>42</sup> D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Eerdmans, 1991), 160

<sup>43</sup> Herman Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary* (Eerdmans, 1997), 88

<sup>44</sup> Charles C. Ryrie, *Ryrie Study Bible, Expanded Edition* (Moody, 1986, 1995), 1707



SUNDAY, 18 SEPTEMBER 2016

■ SCRIPTURE

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■ OBSERVATION

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■ APPLICATION

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■ PRAYER

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THE PAST WEEK

REVIEW

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

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What gave me life and what drained me?

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How was the Spirit of God at work?

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**REFLECT**

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

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**RESPOND**

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

**COMMIT IN PRAYER**


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**FAMILY DEVOTIONAL**

September 2016 – Week 3

**THE COACH**

**We need people to point us to Jesus.**

*Scripture: Proverbs 3:1-11*

**ACTIVITY BITE**

Think of a skill that you are good at (for example, playing the piano or drawing). Tell everyone how you improved your skill and who helped you with that.

**CHAT TIME**

- Q1: Is it better to get a coach to help you to improve your skill, or to do it yourself? Why?
- Q2: If you try to improve your skill by yourself, what can go right or wrong?
- Q3: Do we need someone to point us to Jesus and help us to grow in Him? Why or why not?

**LEARNING POINT**

When learning to play the piano, having a good teacher to instruct us will help us improve our skill. Trying to learn the instrument on our own can be very tiring and frustrating. Sometimes we may even play it wrongly without knowing it. Similarly, we need people who are more knowledgeable about the Bible and Jesus to guide us as we grow in Christ. They could be your parents, pastors or Sunday School teachers. They will be able to teach you how to pray, read the Bible, worship and follow God's ways. Besides this, they can also warn you if you are taking the wrong path.

**ACTION POINT**

Think of a Christian who has helped you grow in knowing Jesus more. Write a thank you card to appreciate what he or she has done for you.

**PRAYER POWER**

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

Thank You, God, for sending me good people who have taught me to know You more. I pray that You will continue to bless them so that they can help even more people to be better Christians. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.



MONDAY, 19 SEPTEMBER 2016

## A Submissive Wife in Christ (1)

### ■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 5:18, 21-24

### ■ OBSERVATION

What is the connection between verses 22 to 24 and verses 18 and 21 in the immediate context (vv.18-24)?

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### DEEPER REFLECTION

There is a close connection between wives submitting to their husbands (v.22), being filled with the Spirit (v.18) and mutual submission “in the fear of Christ” (v.21).<sup>45</sup> In the Greek text, the verb “submit” is not there in verse 22; it is taken and flows from verse 21. It means that it is in mutual submission “in the fear of Christ” that a wife submits to her husband. This does not imply mutual submission as a condition for a wife’s submission, but rather a Spirit-filled and Christ-fearing husband and wife will be able and know how to live out this kind of submission. Mutual submission in marriage means husband and wife as servants actively denying themselves and focusing their attention on their spouse’s needs. The verb “submit” is in the middle voice – “submit yourselves”, which “emphasises the voluntary character of the submission”<sup>46</sup>. It is “an appeal to free and responsible persons which can only be heeded voluntarily, never by the elimination or breaking of the human will, much less by means of a servile submissiveness”<sup>47</sup>. It means “women should not seek to assert themselves in the home in a way that could be viewed as ruling, controlling or dominating”<sup>48</sup>, but follow their husband’s leadership – be it strong or weak.

### ■ APPLICATION

What does it mean for me to practice “submitting to one another in the fear of Christ” in my marriage?

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### ■ PRAYER

*God, our Creator and Redeemer, build the marriages of Your people. Teach and help wives to have the humility of Christ to submit to their husbands as to Christ, refraining from dominating them, even when their leadership is not strong. Teach and help husbands to lead their wives humbly without suppressing or stifling them to be what they are. Amen.*

### PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

<sup>45</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, 379

<sup>46</sup> Peter T. O'Brien, 411

<sup>47</sup> Peter T. O'Brien, 411-12

<sup>48</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, 380



TUESDAY, 20 SEPTEMBER 2016

## A Submissive Wife in Christ (2)

### ■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 5:22-24

### ■ OBSERVATION

What characterises a submissive wife in Christ according to verses 22 to 24?

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### DEEPER REFLECTION

What characterises a submissive wife in Christ? **Lordship of Christ:** “as to the Lord” (v.22). A wife submits to her husband in her submission to Christ. Think submission to Christ first, then submission to the husband. Submission to the husband must be seen as submission to Christ. **Headship of husband:** “the husband is the head of the wife” (v.23). Headship is authority function, not authority position. Position-wise, men and women are created equal as fellow human beings (Ge 1:27), and redeemed “as fellow heir(s) of the grace of life” (1 Pe 3:7). In submission, the husband is not superior to his wife. A wife ought not to feel inferior and the husband ought to ensure that his wife does not feel this way. Christ is the model for headship (v.23b). Headship has “a dual notion of leadership and provision”<sup>49</sup>, modelled by Christ in giving guidance, direction and inspiration, and providing strength, help and sustenance to His body.<sup>50</sup> Husbands, be a Christ-centred head of your wife. **Submission in everything** (v.24) – except for what violates God’s commandments (cf. Ac 5:29). This means affirming, supporting and respecting the husband’s leadership, without holding back certain things to assert or maintain control over.<sup>51</sup>

### ■ APPLICATION

Wives: What changes do I need to make in being a submissive wife to my husband?

Husbands: What is my attitude towards my wife in her submission or lack of submission to me?

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### ■ PRAYER

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

### PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

<sup>49</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, 382

<sup>50</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, 382

<sup>51</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, 383



WEDNESDAY, 21 SEPTEMBER 2016

## An Excellent Wife: Her Heart

### ■ SCRIPTURE

Proverbs 31:10-31

### ■ OBSERVATION

What is the portrait of the excellent wife from verses 10, 26 and 30?

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### DEEPER REFLECTION

Verses 10 to 31 represent an acrostic<sup>52</sup> poem, expressing “the completeness of the virtues, skills and accomplishments of the ideal wife” “fully covered from A to Z”<sup>53</sup>. Such “an excellent wife, who can find?” (v.10). The answer to the question is “a relative, not an absolute, negative answer, ‘Almost no one’”<sup>54</sup>. The description of this wife “is an ideal and should not be used as a standard by which to measure and critique women”<sup>55</sup>. She “embodies no one woman, but rather the desired attributes of many”<sup>56</sup>. The poem portrays a holistic beauty of a “prudent wife [who] is from the LORD” (Pr 19:14). At the centre of the holistic beauty is the **fear of God** (v.30b), “the knowledge of the Holy One” (Pr 9:10). This contrasts with external attributes like “charm” and “beauty” that are “deceitful” and vain” (v.30a). Fear of God is an inner beauty in “the hidden person of the heart” (1 Pe 3:4) that is true and which lasts. Out of her faithful walk with God comes her **words of wisdom** (v.26a). The fact that she speaks “wisdom” means that she already possesses it, and that wisdom shapes what she says and how she says it<sup>57</sup>, which becomes her **teaching of kindness** (v.26b).

### ■ APPLICATION

Wives: What does it mean for me to be a God-fearing woman?

Husbands: How can I be an encouragement and example to my wife in being a God-fearing person?

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### ■ PRAYER

*God our Creator and Redeemer, strengthen the marriages of Your people, for it is a strong marriage that will build a strong family. Teach wives and husbands Your way, that they may walk in Your truth and unite their hearts to fear Your name<sup>58</sup>. As they do so, grant that they may grow in Spirit-filled character and wisdom. Amen.*

### PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

<sup>52</sup> Acrostic: In the poem, the initial consonant of each verse follows the order of the Hebrew alphabet.

<sup>53</sup> David A. Hubbard, *Proverbs*, The Preacher's Commentary (Nelson, 1989), 489

<sup>54</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, *Proverbs Chapters 15-31*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Eerdmans, 2005), 521

<sup>55</sup> Tremper Longman III, *Proverbs*, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament: Wisdom and Psalms (Baker, 2006), 540

<sup>56</sup> Tremper Longman, 540 – citing C. R. Yoder

<sup>57</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, 532

<sup>58</sup> Psalm 86:11



THURSDAY, 22 SEPTEMBER 2016

## An Excellent Wife: Her Husband

### ■ SCRIPTURE

Proverbs 31:11-12

### ■ OBSERVATION

What observations can you make about the excellent wife's relationship with her husband in verses 11 to 12?

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### DEEPER REFLECTION

"Her husband" is mentioned thrice in the poem (vv.11-12, Pr 31:23, 28).

**His confidence in her:** "The heart of her husband trusts in her" (v.11a). It means her husband's "well-being stands or falls on her reliability"<sup>59</sup>, which is remarkable, because Scripture condemns trust in anyone or anything apart from God (cf. Jer 17:5-8). Such exceptional trustworthiness and trust reflects the high level of God-fearing relationship and character of both husband and wife.

**Her commitment to him:** "She does him good and not evil, all the days of her life" (v.12) – a lifelong commitment. It "means that at each point along the continuum of her life with her husband she never fails. Her commitment to her husband's well-being is true, not false; constant, not temperamental; reliable, not fickle; and discerning."<sup>60</sup> What she does for her husband is "not a sporadic, temporary deed of kindness but a consistent way of life"<sup>61</sup>. She is "the stay of his declining years, the soother of his cares, the counsellor of his perplexities, the comforter of his sorrows, the sunshine of his earthly joys"<sup>62</sup>.

"An excellent wife is the **crown** of her husband" (Pr 12:4).

### ■ APPLICATION

Wives: How do I want to be the crown of my husband?

Husbands: How should I appreciate my wife's commitment to me?

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### ■ PRAYER

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

#### PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

<sup>59</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, 521

<sup>60</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, 522

<sup>61</sup> David A. Hubbard, 492

<sup>62</sup> Charles Bridges, *Proverbs*, Geneva Series of Commentaries (1846; Banner of Truth, 1968), 627



FRIDAY, 23 SEPTEMBER 2016

## An Excellent Wife: Her Household

### ■ SCRIPTURE

Proverbs 31:15, 21, 27

### ■ OBSERVATION

What can we say about the excellent wife from the way she takes care of her household in verses 15, 21 and 27?

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### DEEPER REFLECTION

“Her household” is repeated four times in the poem (vv.15, 21, 27). This excellent wife **gives the best** to her household. She feeds her household with the best food: “she brings her food from afar” (Pr 31:14) – “beyond the usual nourishment from fields or trades, she provides tasty foreign delicacies. Her bounteous table replicates in miniature that of the fabled King Solomon (cf. 1 Ki 4:21-23)”<sup>63</sup>. She clothes her household with the best clothing: “with scarlet” (v.21b). “Scarlet” refers to “costly wool”<sup>64</sup>, which is “the best material”<sup>65</sup>. She watches over her household with the best care: “she carefully watches everything in her household and suffers nothing from laziness” (v.27, NLT). The point is not that giving the best means being extravagant. The theological assumption here is: all that she does, she does so in the fear of God (Pr 31:30), and all the best things she gives are blessings from God. In caring for her household, she does not neglect in taking good care of herself: her clothing is of “quality and beauty”<sup>66</sup>, “made of the finest and expensive materials”<sup>67</sup> (Pr 31:22). Alongside giving herself the best self-care, this is accompanied by her costly self-sacrifice (v.15).

### ■ APPLICATION

Wives: What attitudes do I need to change in taking care of the household?

Husbands: How will I encourage my wife to give herself good self-care?

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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 build a strong marriage and family life

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

<sup>63</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, 524

<sup>64</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, 530

<sup>65</sup> Charles C. Ryrie, Ryrie Study Bible, Expanded Edition (Moody, 1986, 1995), 1015

<sup>66</sup> David A. Hubbard, 495

<sup>67</sup> Tremper Longman, 545



SATURDAY, 24 SEPTEMBER 2016

## An Excellent Wife: Her Honour

### ■ SCRIPTURE

Proverbs 31:10, 28-31

### ■ OBSERVATION

What is the significance of the way the poem begins (v.10) and ends (vv.28-31)?

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### DEEPER REFLECTION

The poem begins and ends with exaltation of this excellent wife. It begins with “An excellent wife, who can find? For her worth is far above jewels” (v.10), and ends with a threefold “praise” attributed to her (vv.28-31). **Givers of honour:** Her husband and her children “praise” her (vv.28-29). Her works “praise” her (v.31b). The writer of the poem honours her – “she shall be praised” (vv.30-31). All these honours are extrinsic. But her greatest honour is intrinsic – she is a God-fearing woman. **Sharing of honour:** “In the gates” is mentioned twice (Pr 31:23, 31). The “gate” is “the centre of political and judicial life in the Israelite cities”<sup>68</sup>. The excellent wife’s husband is renowned and respected “in the gates” (Pr 31:23) – because of who she is and what she does for him and their family (v.23 is sandwiched between Pr 31:11-22 and Pr 31:24-27). And her works praise her “in the gates” (v.31b). Both husband and wife are honoured “in the gates” – in the same place, but for their own distinctive roles, and because of the wife’s commitment to do all that she can to make her husband successful in what he is called to.

### ■ APPLICATION

What does it mean for me and my spouse to honour one another privately and publicly?

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### ■ PRAYER

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

#### PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

<sup>68</sup> David A. Hubbard, 495



SUNDAY, 25 SEPTEMBER 2016

■ SCRIPTURE

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■ OBSERVATION

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■ APPLICATION

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■ PRAYER

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THE PAST WEEK

REVIEW

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

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What gave me life and what drained me?

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How was the Spirit of God at work?

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**REFLECT**

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

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**RESPOND**

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

**COMMIT IN PRAYER**


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**FAMILY DEVOTIONAL**

September 2016 – Week 4

**LOVE THE CHURCH**

Let us love the church as Jesus did.

*Scripture: Ephesians 5:25-27*

**ACTIVITY BITE**

List down on a piece of paper some ideas for making your church a more exciting place for Christians and a place that will attract non-Christians.

**CHAT TIME**

- Q1: According to Ephesians 5:25, why do you think Jesus loves His church?  
Q2: Is it important for us to love what Jesus loves? Why or why not?  
Q3: What are the practical ways that you can demonstrate your love for your church?

**LEARNING POINT**

When Jesus says that He loves the church, He is not referring to the structure of the church. The church is a gathering of all Christians and this is what He loves – the people. He loves the people so much that He died on the cross to save them. He always gives what is best for His people. We must also love the church just as He loves us. We can do that by coming together to worship God every Sunday, serving as ushers to bless the people or praying for one another. When love is demonstrated in the church, non-Christians will also be attracted to come to know more about God.

**ACTION POINT**

Think of something you can do as an act of love for the church. Invite your parents to do it together as a family.

**PRAYER POWER**

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

Jesus, thank you for making us Your church. I am so happy that You love us and I want to love Your church. Show me what I can do to love Your Church. Amen.



MONDAY, 26 SEPTEMBER 2016

## Tall Sacred Order for Husbands

### ■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 5:25-33

### ■ OBSERVATION

How many times is the verb “love” repeated in verses 25 to 33, and what is the significance of the repetition?

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### DEEPER REFLECTION

Wives are to submit to their husbands as the church submits to Christ (v.24) and husbands are to love their wives as Christ loves the church (v.25). The model for wives is the imperfect church, whereas the model for husbands is the perfect Christ. Husbands may protest, “Not fair!” In Ephesians 5:22-33, Paul uses 47 words to talk about the wife’s submission and 143 words on the husband’s love<sup>69</sup>. The husband is the subject of five out of the six occurrences of the verb “love” (vv.25, 28, 33). The verb “submit” occurs only once in the text, and its subject is “the church” (Eph 5:24), not the wife, although the call for wives’ submission is unambiguous and indisputable. The verb “submit” that is applied to wives by direct implication is in the middle voice – that is, “voluntary”<sup>70</sup>; whereas the verb “love” in verses 25 and 33 is in the imperative mood, a command – that is, mandatory. “Submit” is a softer command, while “love” is a stronger imperative. It is very obvious where Paul’s bias is! And this was countercultural. For in the patriarchal society then, men only instruct, advise and control their wives, and love was only sexual love.<sup>71</sup> “Husbands, love your wives” is an inescapable and tall sacred order.

### ■ APPLICATION

Husbands: How do I respond to God’s tall sacred order to me to love my wife?

Wives: How do I respond to God’s tall sacred order to my husband to love me?

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### ■ PRAYER

*God, our Creator and Redeemer, watch over the marriages of Your people. Grant husbands and wives to know the love of Christ individually and as a couple, that they may love each other with Christ’s love – love that is patient and kind, love that will not fail to bear all things, believe all things, hope all things and endure all things towards each other.<sup>72</sup> Amen.*

### PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

<sup>69</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, 363

<sup>70</sup> Peter T. O’Brien, 411

<sup>71</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, 404

<sup>72</sup> 1 Corinthians 13:4, 7



TUESDAY, 27 SEPTEMBER 2016

## “Three Loves” in Husband’s Love

### ■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 5:25, 28-29

### ■ OBSERVATION

What does Paul say about the husband’s love for his wife in verses 25 and 28 to 29?

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### DEEPER REFLECTION

There are “three loves” in a husband’s love for his wife. “**Husbands, love your wives**” (v.25a). The husband’s response to the divine command is obedience to God and obligation to his wife. God gives such strong emphasis on the husband’s love because loving the wife is not easy. The problem is not with the wife, but the husband. There is “a besetting weakness in men as a result of the presence of sin that bends them toward self-centredness in marriage”<sup>73</sup>. And husbands tend to easily take their wives for granted. Husbands keep self-centredness away by loving their wives “**as Christ loved the church**” (v.25b). Christ’s love is church-centred; so the husband’s love ought to be wife-centred. The husband’s love is defined as such – to “give himself up for her” (v.25) like Christ. It means that in the grind of daily life, he denies himself and puts his wife first, and “demonstrate[s] love in tangible ways that may interfere with other conflicting desires of a lesser priority”<sup>74</sup>. To love is to serve. “**Love as their own bodies**” (vv.28-29). It is more than the husband loving his wife in the same way as he loves himself, but he loving his wife “because she is himself”<sup>75</sup>. When a husband loves his own wife, he is loving himself (v.28).

### ■ APPLICATION

Husbands: What are some challenges that I face in loving my wife?

Wives: What adjustments do I need to make in my expectations of my husband in loving me?

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### ■ PRAYER

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

### PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

<sup>73</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, 404

<sup>74</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, 404

<sup>75</sup> Frank Thielman, 387



WEDNESDAY, 28 SEPTEMBER 2016

## Do I Treasure My Wife?

### ■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 5:28-29

### ■ OBSERVATION

What does it mean for a husband to “nourish and cherish” his wife (vv.28-29)?

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### DEEPER REFLECTION

To love his wife, the husband “nourishes and cherishes” her, “just as Christ also does the church” (v.29). To nourish and cherish is to take care of by giving whatever is needed and doing whatever is necessary.<sup>76</sup> Former Columbia International University president Robertson McQuilkin cared for his wife for 25 years as she progressed through various stages of Alzheimer’s disease. This was his daily routine for 25 years, especially towards the end: “I would fix breakfast and then go in and turn on the lights, and she would awaken, although in the last year or two she didn’t open her eyes much. Usually in the morning she would open her eyes and then I would feed her. And then of course, after that I had to change and clean her up. If it was nice weather, I would put her in the wheelchair and take her out into the yard for her to sit out there for two or three or four hours. Then lunch. She had to be changed every four hours. In the evening we would again have supper, and after supper about 9:00 I’d start working on the bedtime routine.”<sup>77</sup> McQuilkin further reflected: “My memories were all happy memories. I’d review them to her as long as she had any consciousness. I really even chatted to her after she wasn’t aware of anything.”

### ■ APPLICATION

What does it mean for me to treasure my spouse?

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### ■ PRAYER

*God our Creator and Redeemer, glorify Yourself in the marriages of Your people. Help husbands and wives through Your grace to faithfully keep their marriage vows, their love commitment to each other, in the grind of daily life and in whatever circumstances, so that they will with one accord and with one voice glorify You<sup>78</sup>. Amen.*

### PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

<sup>76</sup> Johannes P. Louw & Eugene A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains* (United Bible Societies, 1988, 1989), Vol. 1, 35.36, 462

<sup>77</sup> “The Gradual Grief of Alzheimer’s: Robert McQuilkin Reflects on His Wife’s Death after Caring for Her for 25 Years,” *Christianity Today* (February 2004), 64-65

<sup>78</sup> Romans 15:6



THURSDAY, 29 SEPTEMBER 2016

## Husbands to Lead in Love

### ■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 5:22-25; Colossians 3:18-19; 1 Peter 3:7

### ■ OBSERVATION

How should a husband live with his wife according to verses 22 to 25, Colossians 3:18-19 and 1 Peter 3:7?

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### DEEPER REFLECTION

The husband is to love his wife as the head of his wife (vv.23, 25). That is, love and lead, and lead in love. Husbands must clearly distinguish leading from lording. The Oxford English Dictionary defines “leading” as “to guide by persuasion as contrasted with commands and threats”, which does “encapsulate a substantial part” of “Paul’s understanding of a christologically informed headship”<sup>79</sup>. The husband will not be “harsh” or “embittered” toward his wife when he leads her lovingly (Col 3:18-19). A wife can disappoint her husband’s hopes and ambitions, failing to live up to his unrealistic ideals for her, and such feelings of disappointment may find expression in harsh words or actions.<sup>80</sup> Having exhorted wives to be submissive to their husbands (1 Pe 3:1-6), Peter calls husbands to live with their wives “in an understanding way...she is a woman” (1 Pe 3:7). Men often fail to “understand” that a woman is “a woman”. Husbands, lead your wife by listening to her as “a woman”, on whom God has endowed with certain instincts that are not given to men and which defy masculine logic. This is wisdom. “What does my wife say?” has an important place in a husband’s thinking and decision-making.

### ■ APPLICATION

Husbands: What changes do I need to make in leading my wife lovingly?  
 Wives: How should I respond to my husband’s leadership regardless of whether it is strong or weak?

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### ■ PRAYER

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

### PRAYER POINTERS

Give thanks:

Pray for leaders:

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

<sup>79</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, 406

<sup>80</sup> Dick Lucas, 161



FRIDAY, 30 SEPTEMBER 2016

## Love and Submission in Christ

### ■ SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 5:22-25

### ■ OBSERVATION

How does the interplay between the wife's submission and the husband's love work within a marriage (vv.22-25)?

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### DEEPER REFLECTION

“Wives submit, husbands love” (vv.22-25) are words that are different from each another, yet “it is not easy to distinguish them”<sup>81</sup>. “To submit” is “to give oneself up to somebody”<sup>82</sup>. “To love” is “to give oneself up for somebody”<sup>83</sup>, as Christ “gave Himself up for the church” (v.25). Thus, “submission” and “love” are “two aspects of the very same thing, namely of that selfless self-giving which is the foundation of an enduring and growing marriage”<sup>84</sup>. Submission is to be an act of love, for it is “but another aspect of love”<sup>85</sup>. Selfless self-giving love can be painful. The cross of love clearly shows that. Love and pain are inseparable in a sinner married to another sinner in a fallen world, since our fallenness is not completely obliterated by our redemption and re-creation in Christ. We ought to have a more realistic rather than a romantic view of married life. The wife's submission is not contingent on her husband's love. The husband should continue to love his wife even when she fails to be submissive. Love and submission must be characterised by living “with all humility and gentleness, with patience, forbearing one another in love, making every effort to keep” the “one flesh” commitment (Eph 4:2-3; 5:31).

### ■ APPLICATION

How do I see the interplay between the wife's submission and the husband's love working out or otherwise in my marriage?

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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 practice selfless self-giving love  
in their marriages

Pray for significant people:

Pray for those in need:

Pray for self:

<sup>81</sup> John Stott, 235

<sup>82</sup> John Stott, 235

<sup>83</sup> John Stott, 235

<sup>84</sup> John Stott, 235

<sup>85</sup> John Stott, 235



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