

# Daily Reflections



Daily Bible reflections by  
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# About Daily Reflections

Daily Reflections is a collection of thoughts from my daily blog at [www.passionaustralia.org/blog](http://www.passionaustralia.org/blog).

They are quick thoughts that have grown out of my morning devotions and my prayerful reading of the Bible.

They are not meant to be deeply theological but to provide a connection between faith, life and the Bible.

I hope you enjoy these short devotions or “blog posts”. For longer articles and sermons please visit my main website.

God Bless,



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## **A special utensil**

The Bible says in 2 Timothy 2:20-21 “In a wealthy home some utensils are made of gold and silver, and some are made of wood and clay. The expensive utensils are used for special occasions, and the cheap ones are for everyday use. If you keep yourself pure, you will be a special utensil for honourable use. Your life will be clean, and you will be ready for the Master to use you for every good work.”

In these verses the Apostle Paul urges Timothy to be the kind of person God could use for his best and most noble purposes. He tells Timothy not to settle for less than God’s highest and best.

As Christians we need to allow God to use us as an instrument of His will. How do we do this? We do this by staying close to him and keeping ourselves pure, so that sin and its consequences does not get in the way of what God wants to do in our lives.

Of course God can forgive us when we stumble and repent, but how much better it is to stay close to Him and ready to be used by him at a moment’s notice.

Let’s all purpose in our hearts to keep ourselves pure so we can be special utensils for God’s will and good purposes today. Let’s be ready for every good work.

## How do I know I am saved?

Last night my wife, kids and I were talking about being assured of our salvation. We talked about verses from the Bible that assure us we are saved and going to spend eternity with God.

Here are the verses we looked at.....

John 3:16 – For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life

John 1:12 – Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God

1 John 5:13 – I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.

Romans 10:13 – Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Hebrews 9:28 – Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

These verses tell us that because of my faith and trust in Jesus that we are saved. We are adopted into God's eternal family because of what Jesus has done for us.

It was a good discussion and a good reminder to have verses memorised about this subject.

# Friendship and fearing God

The Bible says in Psalm 24:15 “The LORD is a friend to those who fear him. He teaches them his covenant.”

I love the thought behind this verse – being friends with God. “The LORD is a friend to those who fear him.”

God offers intimate and lasting friendship to those who fear (revere and have deep respect for) Him, to those who hold Him in highest honour and put Him above all things.

If we stop and think about it for a moment, what relationship could ever compare with having the Lord of all creation for a friend?

I love my wife and kids with all of my heart, but having God as a friend is a relationship at a whole new level. It is on an eternal level.

As believers our everlasting friendship with God will grow as we respect and honour Him more and more. It is a promise found in Psalm 24:15!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to revere and honour You in the right way. Help me to put You above all things in my life. I pray that as I do this, our friendship will grow and grow. Amen.

# Meditating on the Shepherd

Psalms 63:6-8 says, “On my bed I remember you; I think of you through the watches of the night. Because you are my help, I sing in the shadow of your wings. I cling to you; your right hand upholds me.”

King David said these words when he was hiding in a desert cave from his enemies. I could imagine him lying awake at night wondering what would happen to him.

During sleepless, uncomfortable nights, David thought about God. Instead of counting sheep, he meditated on his Shepherd!

He reviewed all the ways God had already helped him, and he greeted the next day with songs of praise.

In my wakeful nights when I am churning over things, I try to make it a point to reflect on the times of God’s faithfulness to us as a family.

I find this helps me to have an eternal perspective and puts things in their right place. It reminds me that God is in control and He is with me.

I find doing this gives me far more rest than any of the other things I might count. Meditating on the Shepherd is far better than counting sheep!

## **Fear of man is a snare**

The Bible says in Proverbs 29:25? "Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is kept safe."

Fear of people can hamper everything you try to do. In extreme forms, it can make you afraid to leave your home, to speak in front of other people or to do the things we know God want us to do.

By contrast, the fear of God - which is not so much being afraid, it is having a deep respect, reverence, and trust - is very liberating.

Why would we fear people who can do us no eternal harm? Luke 12:4 reminds us of this, "I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more."

Instead, as Christians we should trust the eternal God who can turn the harm intended by others into good for those who look to Him.

If you have a fear of man that is a snare to you at times, I would encourage you to look to God today. Trust Him with today and trust Him with your future. He promises to keep you safe.

# Paul's Prayer for the Philippians

Philippians 1:9-11 says, “I pray that your love will overflow more and more, and that you will keep on growing in knowledge and understanding. For I want you to understand what really matters, so that you may live pure and blameless lives until the day of Christ’s return. May you always be filled with the fruit of your salvation—the righteous character produced in your life by Jesus Christ—for this will bring much glory and praise to God.”

Paul’s prayer contained some great things for the Philippians.....

1. That their love will overflow more and more.
2. That they would keep growing in knowledge and understanding of God.
3. That they would really understand what really matters in life
4. That they would live pure and blameless lives until Jesus comes back
5. That they would be filled with righteous character

What would the result of all these things be? Bring much glory and praise to God.

A great prayer which would bring a great result!

## **God's promise to keep working on you**

I was reading Philippians 1:1-11 just now. It is the introduction to Paul's letter to the Philippians church. This section is titled "Thanksgiving and prayer".

I have read this a number of times over the years, but today verse 6 jumped out at me.

It says, "Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."

I really love the promise of God to keep working in us until He is finished.

It is normal to sometimes feel as though we aren't making progress in our spiritual life? But we can be assured that when God starts a project, He completes it!

As with the Philippians, God will help you grow in grace until he has completed his work in your life.

When you are discouraged, remember that God won't give up on you. He promises to finish the work he has begun.

It is a great promise from the King of the universe. It has a warranty that will never run out as it is eternal. Be encouraged by this today!



## Living water from Jesus

This morning my wife and I were reading the story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well. It is found in John 4:1-14.

As we read the story we see that Jesus asks the lady to draw some water for Him. As the conversation progresses they end up talking about living water.

What did Jesus mean by “living water”? In the Old Testament, many verses speak of thirsting after God as one thirsts for water (Psalm 42:1; Isaiah 55:1; Jeremiah 2:13; Zechariah 13:1).

God is also called the fountain of life (Psalm 36:9) and the fountain of living water (Jeremiah 17:13). The Book of Revelation also has a number of references to living water (Revelation 21:6, 22:17)

In saying he would bring living water that could forever quench a person's thirst for God, Jesus was claiming to be the Messiah. Only the Messiah could give this gift that satisfies the soul's desire.

If you are thirsty for God I would encourage you to turn to Jesus today. He will satisfy your soul like He did for me.

## Who was Saul attacking?

I was reading Acts chapter 9 this morning. This talks about the Apostle Paul's conversion. The thing I found interesting is Paul's question to Jesus and His response.

Here is a snippet.....

3 As he was approaching Damascus on this mission, a light from heaven suddenly shone down around him. 4 He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul! Saul! Why are you persecuting me?"

5 "Who are you, lord?" Saul asked.

And the voice replied, "I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting! 6 Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

7 The men with Saul stood speechless, for they heard the sound of someone's voice but saw no one! 8 Saul picked himself up off the ground, but when he opened his eyes he was blind. So his companions led him by the hand to Damascus. 9 He remained there blind for three days and did not eat or drink.

As we can see Paul was blinded and a loud voice spoke. Immediately Saul knew that he had had an encounter with God from his response. "Who are you, lord?"

Jesus' response grabbed my attention today. Jesus said that Saul was persecuting Him when he was attacking the Christians of the region. He was not attacking the "people of the Way", but Jesus Himself.

Saul thought he was pursuing heretics, but he was persecuting Jesus himself. Anyone who persecutes believers today is also guilty of persecuting Jesus (see Matthew 25:40, 45) because believers are the body of Christ on earth.

As Christians we need to remember that if we are facing persecution because of our faith it is ultimately Jesus whom people are attacking. And in the Bible Jesus promises never to leave us and to never forsake us. He is always with us until the end of this age.

# **There is power in the Word**

I was just thinking about God's Word and the power that is contained in it. As I did a few things came to mind.....

## 1. There is power to save

From cover to cover the Bible is all about God's grand plan for the salvation of mankind. It is all about God's grand love story between mankind and Himself.

## 2. There is power to renew

As we read God's Word our minds and thinking is renewed. It lines our thoughts up with God's thoughts. Our attitudes are changed and renewed for the better.

## 3. There is the power of hope

God's Word contains hope for the future. That this life will be better with God and also the future hope of heaven and eternity spent with Him in glory.

I love God's Word. I love the salvation, the renewal and the hope that is found within its covers and on every page.

## **Come follow Me: a continuing call**

I was reading John 21 just now and was reminded of Jesus' call to Peter (Simon Peter) to "Follow Him".

Peter was called three and a half years before and followed Jesus wherever He went. He saw and was involved in most of what Jesus did.

But after Peter denied Him three times before Jesus' crucifixion, Jesus chose to reinstate Peter. Jesus asked Peter to take care of His lambs and feed His lambs and sheep (John 21:15-19).

As I read I was reminded that the call to follow Jesus is not just a one time thing. It is a daily call and a daily choice to respond.

Like Peter we may deny Christ, we might chose to go our own way or we may get caught up in other things. This is why Jesus said to take up our cross daily and follow Him (Luke 9:23).

Today, I would encourage you to answer the ongoing call to follow Jesus. Take up your cross, deny yourself and follow Him.

## In awe of Jesus

I was just reading and listening to John chapter 13. This is where Jesus washes the disciples feet.

I am in awe of Jesus even more. Not only did He humbly wash the disciples feet, but I was reminded that He washed the feet of the betrayer Judas Iscariot!

In verse 2 we see that “The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. ”

In verse 4-5 “Jesus got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.”

Then is verse 27..... “As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him. So Jesus told him, “What you are about to do, do quickly.”

Reading about Jesus washing His disciples feet gives me a clear picture of being a humble servant. It inspires me to do the same.

Jesus served Judas knowing He would betray Him unto death. Knowing that Jesus sent His betrayer away with clean feet leaves me in awe.

Our natural thought is if we know someone was going to betray us is to keep our distance, to stay away from them or not talk to them. But Jesus washed Judas’ feet!

This is why I love Jesus. This is why I serve Jesus. This is why I live for Jesus. I am in total and complete awe of Him and how He showed us to live.

## Another view of Thomas

Often when we think of the Disciple Thomas we think of when he doubted if Jesus was really raised back to life. His words from John 20:24-25 come to mind.....

“Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!”

But he said to them, “**Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.**”

Thomas wanted to see for himself that Jesus was alive. In verse 28 we read that when he sees Jesus he says, “My Lord and my God”.

In John 11 we see that when Lazarus had died Jesus told the disciples that they needed to go back to Judea. The disciples were worried as the Jews had tried to kill Jesus and warned Him against returning.

Then in verse 16 we get a different view of doubting Thomas. It says, “**Then Thomas (also known as Didymus) said to the rest of the disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.”**”

Thomas was not just the doubter who wanted more proof, he was totally committed to following Jesus even to the point of death.

This gives me another view of Thomas..... how about you?

# Transformed - metamorphoo

All day I have been thinking about Romans 12:2. It says, “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be **transformed** by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

As I dwelt upon this verse I kept on getting the word “transformed”. When I got home to my computer I decided to look up the New Testament Greek word for transformed.

It is **metamorphoo**. It means to **change, transform or metamorphise**.

As I thought about this it reminded me of the process a butterfly goes through – a metamorphise. It starts as a caterpillar, builds its cocoon and then transforms in to a butterfly.

The caterpillar’s destiny was always to become a butterfly. It began as one thing and then intentionally prepared a cocoon to bring the change about. To fulfil its destiny and purpose.

This is how it is for us a Christians too. We are destined to be like Christ. As we intentionally prepare our cocoon of prayer and Bible reading, God transforms us by His Word and His Spirit to be like Christ.

But, like the caterpillar we have to be intentional. We can’t just sit back and expect it to happen. Building our cocoon takes time, effort and energy..... but the results of being “metamorphoo’d” into Christ is well worth it!

Let’s all keep preparing our cocoons today!

# Do you want to be made well?

I was reading the story of the man who was healed by Jesus by the pool yesterday. It is found in John 5:1-15.

Verse 6 grabbed my attention. It says, “When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, **“Do you want to get well?”**”

Jesus approached this man and asked if he wanted to be healed. This is very different from the Leper in Matthew 8:2 who approached Jesus or the lady just wanted to touch His cloak to be healed (Matthew 9:20).

I find it interesting that most times in the Bible people approached Jesus for healing, but this time He approached the man.

But why the question “Do you want to get well?”

As someone who suffered for many years of my life with Rheumatoid Arthritis I know that sometimes people lose hope. We know God heals, but when it doesn't happen, we can get frustrated and start to wonder if it ever will.

But like the man by the pool, I received my healing too. It didn't take 38 years to come but it did take a long time. And yes at times I was frustrated, but I never stopped believing God could heal me.

Today I want to join my faith with yours if you are in need of healing. It might just be words on a screen, but know I am praying for you and I believe God can heal you right now.....

Heaven Father, I pray today that You will bring healing to people who are reading this. Right now we join our faith together. We know that You are Almighty God and You can do all things. Nothing is impossible to You God. Please heal peoples bodies now in the name of Jesus. Heal cancer. Heal Arthritis. Heal Diabetes. Heal Depression. Restore sight to the blind. Open ears to hear. Heal the lame. Bring Your miraculous healing power to pass. Touch Your children with healing now Lord, we ask in Jesus name, Amen.



Some people feel may feel an incredible peace after they pray. Others might feel warmth or tingling on the part of the body they prayed for. This is some of the ways God touches us when He heals us.

As a result of this prayer I believe I will receive emails from people telling me of a mighty work that God has done.

# Set your mind right

The verse of the day today on my website is Philippians 4:8. It says, “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. ”

As I saw this verse this morning I started to think and pray about our minds and how important our mind is to the choices we make and the directions we go.

Here are a few verses from the Bible about our minds and some things we should do.....

1. Our minds need to be made new

Romans 12:2 – Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the **renewing of your mind**. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

2. We must set them on things above

Colossians 3:2-3 **Set your minds on things above**, not on earthly things. 3 For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

3. We must prepare them to serve God effectively

1 Peter 1:13 – Therefore, **prepare your minds for action**; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed.

4. We must love God will all our minds

Matthew 22:37 - Jesus replied: “**Love the Lord your God with all** your heart and with all your soul and with all **your mind**.‘

## 5. We must be of one mind as Christians

2 Corinthians 13:11 – Finally, brothers, good-bye. Aim for perfection, listen to my appeal, **be of one mind**, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.

Our minds are so important to our Christian walk. They determine many of the things we do and many of the things we don't do.

Let's all make sure we set our minds right today. Let's set them on "things above, not on the earth below".

## Three criticisms Jesus faced

This morning I have been reflecting on the criticisms that Jesus faced from the Pharisees as He went about His daily life and ministry. Here are three.....

1. He Blasphemed – Jesus often said to people that their sins were forgiven. The Pharisees could not stand this as only God alone could forgive sins (Mark 2:6-7). And they did not believe Jesus was God in human form.
2. He kept bad company – Jesus spent a lot of time with people who the ruling Jews would not be seen dead with. He dined with them, taught them, healed them and befriended them. He even spent time in their homes.
3. He went against traditions – Jesus did things on the Sabbath that a normal Jew or Pharisee would not do. He was mindful of doing things the right way, but always focussed on helping people too.

The people who could not see Jesus for who He was, struggled and criticised Him and His ways. They didn't understand what He was trying to do.

# **Elijah's prayer that changed his nation**

I am still reflecting on Elijah and his impact on his nation. Today I want to look at the prayer he prayed in 1 Kings 18:36-37. It says.....

“36 At the time of sacrifice, the prophet Elijah stepped forward and prayed: “Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command. 37 Answer me, Lord, answer me, so these people will know that you, Lord, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again.”

What was the result of this prayer? Fire fell from heaven and consumed the offerings that was soaked in water. This was something that over 850 false prophets of Baal and Asherah could not do by praying to their false gods.

What I love about this prayer is that it was simple and it was aimed at showing God is the true God and turning the hearts of the people back to God.

Perhaps we could pray along these lines when conducting a public meeting aimed at glorifying God and turning people’s hearts back to Him.

## **Elijah knew the maths**

I was thinking about Elijah and his great ability for Maths this morning. It must have been his favourite subject at school.

Think about these sums that Elijah knew.....

450 prophets of Baal + 400 prophets of Asherah + false gods = no miracle

Compare this to.....

One Prophet who trusted God + An all powerful God = miraculous event + people turning back to God.

Elijah knew that God plus one faithful person equals a huge majority! Let's remember this today.

# Elijah was a man like us

This week a verse from the New Testament book of James has been rolling around in my Spirit. It has been my constant companion and I have been meditating on it.

James 5:17 is the verse. It says, “**Elijah was a man just like us**. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years.” Verse 18 goes on to say that again he prayed and it began to rain and the earth began to produce crops.

The highlighted part about Elijah being a man like us (NIV1984) or Elijah was a human being, just as we are (NIV2011) has been speaking to me over and over.

Elijah, one of the greatest prophets of the Old Testament..... Elijah who had an extraordinary close relationship with God..... Elijah who defeated over 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah (1 King 18:16-45)..... is a man just like us!

These are amazing words to me. A mighty man of God who did so many amazing things, is a man (or human being) just like us. I really think that as Christians we grasp this and really believe it deep down inside us, then we will truly make a huge impact for God in this world.

Elijah was no superhero. He was a human being made of flesh and blood. However, the Bible tells us that he was a righteous man who “prayed earnestly” (James 5:17).

The challenge to me from this verse is to live as a righteous man and pray earnestly, and then carry the Elijah spirit with me..... after all, he was a man like me.

# Opposition is not always opposition

Sometimes when we are making changes or stepping out in to new things we face opposition. It might come from authorities, people we know or the Devil.

Opposition to any changes we are making can be very frustrating, especially when we think we are moving forward in God's will for our lives or our ministry.

One easy trap to fall into is that all opposition or delays are actually the Devil trying to thwart our plans. This is part of his job description, but he might not always be the one behind the delays or problems.

It is wise to pray and ask God what is happening in the situation. We need to remember that we make our plans, but the Lord is the one who orders our steps (Proverbs 16:9, 20:24).

When stepping out in faith we must not give the Devil too much credit or assume it is always him, it may actually be God placing our feet in the footsteps He prepared for us beforehand.

In our own life my wife and I have experienced many situations where we thought it was opposition from the Devil trying to derail our plans, only to find out a few months later it was God ordering our steps.

Sometimes God was growing our faith in Him, we needed to be stretched or other things needed to be done before our next step could take place. Often hindsight was the only way to see things more clearly.

Remember: God's timing is always perfect, He is always with us working on our behalf and don't give the Devil too much credit. Opposition is not always opposition!



# Fools and foolishness

I have been reflecting on Psalm 14:1 this week. It says, “A fool says in their heart there is no God.....”. As I have been thinking about this I have also been thinking about some other foolish behaviours.

Here are a few of the ones I have been thinking about. If you hover over the Bible reference (on my website) you will be able to read the verse.....

1. A fool denies God’s existence – Psalm 14:1
2. A fool trusts in themselves only – Proverbs 28:26
3. A fool has no desire to get wisdom – Proverbs 1:7
4. A fool does not like discipline or correction – Proverbs 15:5
5. A fool finds pleasure in doing evil things – Proverbs 10:23
6. A fool is a rebellious person – Psalm 107:17
7. A fool loves to quarrel and argue with others – Proverbs 20:3
8. A fool does not keep his temper under control – Proverbs 29:11

These are only a few of the Bible verses that describe foolish behaviour, there are many more.

As I have reflected on this topic it is easy to see that being wise is about believing God exists, trusting in Him, following His ways, and being controlled in all we do.

Let’s purpose in our hearts today to be wise and honour God and His ways in all we do.

## **Quick to listen, slow to speak**

I was talking with some friends yesterday about areas we have grown in over the last five years. One of the key areas that jumped out at me personally is that I have slowed down and learned to listen to people more intently.

I have found that when we listen, really listen we pick up a lot more of the visual cues that people send as they speak. It might be body language, tone changes in their voice or it might be emotions when they talk about something particular. When we really listen we pick up on these a lot easier.

My bad habit was to think about what I wanted to say to the person as we talked. Rather than focussed listening, it was more about saying my piece. Often it would be to share my experience in their situation, offer wonderful counsel/advice, or amaze people with my amazing Bible wisdom. In short it was about me and my pride. It was not about helping them

One of the keys for correcting this bad listening was to read in the Bible about how much God speaks about listening. There are so many verses that talk about being quick to listen and slow to speak, bringing a right word in season, and where there are many words sin is not absent. It even says those who hold their tongue are wise!

Listening really is something we have to practice and get better at. If we start by slowing down and not thinking about what we are going to say in return, we are on the right track. We don't always have to answer straight away and it is ok to leave silence in a conversation. Sometimes this space gives people time to process their thoughts and really share what they are needing to share.

## Safe in the Shepherds hands

The last few days I have been reflecting on John 10:28-29. It says, “I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand.”

Earlier in chapter 10 Jesus is referred to as the Great Shepherd and Jesus also talks to the Jews about His sheep knowing Him and listening to His voice. This picture helps us to understand the above verses.

Jesus is the Great Shepherd who lovingly cares for His sheep – His followers. He provides safe pasture, protection and good food in the form of Kingdom teaching. As we walk with Jesus we can be assured that we are eternally safe in the palm of His hands. We can have peace in knowing He is the most powerful One in the universe.

In saying this we know as Christians that there are times in this life where we face all types of trials. We may have financial issues, relationship problems or serious health issues. This is because we live in a fallen world where Satan is always looking for someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8).

However our souls are eternal and Jesus is eternal too. He holds us in the palm of His eternal hands. In our trials He lovingly cradles us like a parent holds a new born baby. In many ways it is like the image of Jesus holding a lamb above.

I love being a Christian and knowing I am kept in the eternal arms and hands of Jesus. I also love that no matter happens to me in this life it can not separate me from the love of God (Romans 8:38-39) and it all works for good because I love Him and am called according to His eternal purposes (Romans 8:28).

Today I want to encourage you that no matter what ever you face, that you are safely kept in the eternal arms and hands of the Great Shepherd.

# Images of God and mankind

Just now I was reflecting on how as humans we have been created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26). This means we have God imprinted into our DNA.

As I reflected on this I began to think about Christ and what image He took on when He lived amongst us. Let us have a look at what Philippians chapter two says.....

Philippians 2:5-8

5 Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:

6 **Who, being in very nature God**, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,

7 **but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.**

8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death— even death on a cross!

I find this incredibly amazing that when God created us it was in His image. And when Jesus came to earth He took on our image.

There is something profound in this Divine and Human circle. The Creator made the created, then became like His creation to save us and bring us back to the Divine.

It makes me feel loved and it makes me feel special. And it makes me love God even more.

# He is Risen!

One of the key tenants of the Christian faith is that Jesus died on the cross for our sin. Another key aspect is that on the third day He rose to life.

Matthew 28:5-7 says, “5The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified.6He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay.7Then go quickly and tell his disciples: ‘He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.’ Now I have told you.”

Jesus’ rising from the dead gives me hope. It gives me hope in knowing that Jesus has conquered death. It also gives me hope and assurance that when I die, I will rise to life too.

It is a great feeling to know that this life is not all there is. If we trust Christ for our salvation we know without doubt that we will spend eternity with Him.

To me that is the great hope of the Easter message. That Jesus died and rose again so we could be with Him forever.

# The compassion of Jesus

The Bible tells us in numerous places that Jesus was full of compassion. Psalm 103:8 tells us that “The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love”.

As I dwelt on this compassion I came to realise that compassion needs to have action attached to it. It can't just be a noun or describing word, it needs to be a verb or a doing word.

As I looked through Scripture I found four ways in which Jesus showed compassion to those He came in contact with. Here they are.....

1. He became people's teacher – Mark 6:35 says, “When Jesus got out of the boat, he saw the large crowd that was like sheep without a shepherd. He felt sorry for the people and started teaching them many things”.
2. He fed people – In Mark 8:2 Jesus said, “I feel sorry for these people. They have been with me for three days, and they don't have anything to eat.” He then multiplied the fishes and the loaves.
3. He raised people to life – In Luke 7:13-15 we see that Jesus had compassion on a widow who had just lost her only son. He walked up to the young man, raised Him to life and gave him back to his mother.
4. He healed the sick – Matthew 14:14 says, “When Jesus got out of the boat, he saw the large crowd. He felt sorry for them and healed everyone who was sick”.

Jesus had compassion in all of these examples. His compassion was not just in thought, but in deed. He was moved to action.

It is my hope and prayer that I will not only have Jesus' compassion in my life, but it will be a compassion that moves me to action.

# Redemption is an important word

Redemption is an important word in the Christian faith. The Bible tells us that as Christians we are redeemed from the curse of the law (Galatians 3:13).

Redemption is about being set free because a price has been paid to free us. For the Christian that is Christ's death on the cross for us.

In the New Testament there are three main Greek words used to describe redemption.

1. Agorazo – means to “purchase in the market”. This is like a slave bought and sold in the slave market. They are always a slave and can be re-sold at any time.
2. Exagorazo – means to “purchase out of the market”. This is like someone buying a slave and it never being sold again. They keep the slave to serve them as their own property.
3. Lutroo – means “to loose” or to “set free by paying a price”. The slave is permanently purchased out of the market and set free from the market forever. This is what we have in Christ as believers and disciples.

This last word Lutroo gives us a clear picture of what we have in Christ. True freedom. We are no longer a slave to sin.

I really love being a Christian. I love the freedom I feel because I know Christ. I am not bound up by the world's standard or rules or a slave to sin. I am free because Jesus paid a price for me and then He set me free.

As John 8:36 says, “So if the Son sets you free, you are free indeed”. That is great news!

## Praying with honesty and faith

I was reading Psalm 6:1-10 this morning. In it I noticed some interesting points about the way David prayed in the midst of turmoil.

1. David prayed for mercy – In verse 2 David asks God to be merciful to him. He says he is faint, his bones are in agony, his soul is in anguish and he asks for mercy.

2. David prayed for deliverance - In verses 4-5 David asks for deliverance because of God's unfailing love. He asked God to bring relief because of His love for David.

3. David prayed with honesty – In verses 6-7 he tells God exactly how he feels. He says he is worn out from groaning and all night he floods his bed with tears. He poured out his heart.

4. David prayed with faith – David finishes this Psalm with faith and the knowledge that God has heard his prayers. He knew God had heard and accepted his prayers. He knew He would act.

I love the way David prayed with honesty. He told God how he was feeling. He didn't pretend. He didn't try to put a good spin on it. He said it how it was to him.

Then in faith he trusted God had heard him and he knew that as a loving God that He would act in a righteous and loving way towards him.

David trusted God and he prayed with honesty and faith. It is a great example for us to follow today.



## When all seems against us

I was reading Psalm 3.1-8 this morning. We see the words of Psalm 3 are basically King David's cry out to God to protect him from his enemies and to vindicate him.

The background to the story is David's son Absalom wanted to take over the throne and he had secretly been turning people against his father (2 Samuel 15).

I really like the way David looked to God in this situation. On the surface David could have taken his army and defeated those who rose up against him, but he chose to look to God as his protection and deliverer.

We can learn a lot from David. When all seems to be against us today – people and situations – we can sometimes fall into the trap of thinking God is against us and we have done wrong.

However, if we know we are right with God, we need to stay in faith and trust God will sort it out in time. Pray, trust, keep positive and wait on God for the outcome.

We know God is a good God and "we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28).

If you are going through a hard time today and it seems like everything is against you, remember that God is for you and in time He will sort things out as you stay in faith and trust in Him.

## Great words from Psalm 92

I was reading Psalm 92 this morning in the New King James Version. It contained some great words and a great promise. Here is the part that really jumped out at me...

“The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree, he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those who are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bear fruit in old age; they shall be fresh and flourishing” (vv.12-14).

Palm trees in Biblical times were seen as tall and majestic, while the cedars of Lebanon were regarded as strong and powerful. The example above shows just how big they are.

I really like the imagery of this passage and how it says that if we are planted in the house of the Lord we will be like them. We will be fresh and flourishing and fruitful in our old age.

It is a really great thought for today.

# Four marks of a disciple of Christ

The life of a disciple or follower of Christ should include four main things.

1. Faith – faith is about trust. We follow Jesus because we believe and trust what He says is true.
2. Prayer – prayer is that two way connection and conversation between the disciple and the Master.
3. Belonging – the journey of a disciple is not a solo one, but one taken with others. We are part of His church.
4. Service – those who call Jesus their Lord serve Him and serve others. There are no spectators when it comes to service.

As Christ's disciples we need to remember that the Christians journey is not meant to be an aimless stroll, but a pilgrimage with a God given purpose.

# The Parable of the Talents and Ability

Over the last few days I have been reflecting on the parable from Matthew 25:14-30. It is commonly known as the Parable of the Talents. Here's a snippet of the bit I have been reflecting on.....

14 "Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. 15 To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent,**each according to his ability**. Then he went on his journey. 16 The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. 17 So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. 18 But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money."

The story continues with the master being happy with the first two servants who used their talents wisely. He says, "Well done good and faithful servant". To the one who buried his talents in the ground he scolded him and called him a lazy servant.

The part that really jumped out at me this time around was the phrase tucked away in verse 15. It says, ".....**each according to his ability**.....". Often as disciples of Christ we miss this part. We often compare ourselves to others and their talents, or we feel guilty that we should be doing more things like those around us. **We miss the according to our own ability message.**

My ability is to share God's Word with others. This is done mainly via the internet, and to a lesser degree in person. This is someone I am passionate about and I am drawn to do. I have an ability in this area and it brings fruit.

This doesn't mean everyone should have a website or a blog to share God's Word with others. But we should try to find and develop our own abilities and use our God given talents that way.

I think the key for us to use our gifts for the good of others (1 Peter 4:10). We need to use our gifts with passion, use our gifts with love and most importantly use our gifts to bring glory to God.

When we do this **according to our own ability**, we will bring joy to the heart of God. In the future we will also hear those wonderful words, “Well done good and faithful servant” when the Master returns for us too.

# Contrasting the humanity & deity of Jesus

One of the key tenants of the Christian faith is that Jesus was both fully God and fully man. He left the glories of His heavenly home and was born into this world as a child.

One of the things I really noticed this week in my Bible reading is the contrast of Jesus' humanity and His deity in some of the gospel stories. Here are a few examples.....

## 1. During the storm on the lake (Mark 4:35-41)

After spending the day preaching to the multitudes we read that Jesus was tired and fatigued. He fell asleep on the boat. Then the storm blew up and the disciples cried out for help. He stood and calmed the storm. In His humanity he slept, but in His divinity He controlled the forces of nature.

## 2. At the death of Lazarus (John 11:1-44)

Jesus' friend Lazarus had died and he had been placed in a tomb for four days. Jesus arrived, spoke to the sisters and wept at his friends death (v35). He then prayed, called Lazarus to come out and he was raised to life. We see Jesus' humanity in His pain, but His divinity in raising Lazarus to life.

## 3. In the Garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:29-51)

In the Garden Jesus was extremely distressed at the thought of going to the cross. We see His human emotion and stress at what He faced. Then as He is about to be arrested one of His followers cuts off the ear of one of the guards. Jesus then stands and heals his ear (v51). His power and divinity again shine through.

In these three great stories from the gospels we see the contrast of Jesus' humanity and His deity. He was truly man in that He experienced all the pain, fatigue and anguish we suffer, but He was truly divine in that He showed God's power to control nature, raised people from the dead and heal those in need.

## Living to please God more and more

Several years ago I shared some reflections on 1 Thessalonians 4:1-18 in a post titled, “Living to please God”. In this post I focussed on the following four thoughts...

1. Live in purity (v3-8)
2. Show brotherly love (v9-10)
3. Be a good testimony (v11-12)
4. Have hope in Christ’s return (v13-18)

This week I have been reflecting on this again. At first I wasn’t sure if I had posted about it before. I found it interesting that I came up with the same four points, but another thought really jumped out at me too.

The phrases found in verses 1 and 10 spoke to me. Verse 1 says, “Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this **more and more**.” In verse 10 it says, “we urge you, brothers and sisters, to do so **more and more**”.

The Greek word “Mallon” is used here in both verses for “more”. It means “more, much more, to a greater degree, better or in a greater way”. It is about growing and improving at living right and living to please God.

I just found this really interesting. Paul didn’t want the Thessalonians to be content and feel like they have made it, but he wanted them to keep striving to grow and improve in love and living right.

I think this is a good point for us today too.

# Vines and branches part 1

Several weeks ago I started reading and reflecting on John 15:1-17. This is the section where it talks about Jesus being the true vine and we are His branches.

After I read it the first time I went outside to see how my tomato bushes were going. As I looked at them I still had the imagery of John 15 in my mind.

I soon realised that the bushes were overgrown and even though they had produced a good crop of tomatoes, I decided to get out my clippers and give them a trim.

As I trimmed I remembered what the garden experts said to do. They suggest you trim off the low branches as tomatoes don't like it when the soil splashes up from watering. Apparently it can cause fungus and leave them open to infections.

Once the low branches were cut off the bushes started to look better. I then decided to re-stake them and train the remaining branches along the wire I had set up.

When I had finished I stood back and just looked at my work. It looked much better and they looked ready to produce the next crop of tomatoes.

The funny thing is that when I was packing up my tools I had a profound feeling of being like the Great Gardener (v1). I had cared for and trimmed my tomato bushes so they would be healthier and produce more fruit.

Just as I was the gardener for my fruit, God is the Gardener for us as Christians. He trims off our dead branches that will not produce fruit. He trims off the low branches that may be infected and He trains along the right path.

This simple illustration helped me to further understand John 15 and the vine and the branches metaphor. In the coming days I will have some more reflections I have had on John 15.



## **Vines and branches part 2**

Today I want to share another reflection on John 15:1-17 – the true vine and the branches. As I reflected on this passage I came up with three thoughts.

### **1. We need to remain under the Gardener's care (v1-4)**

Verses one and two talk about the Father being the gardener that trims and prunes the branches of the vine. As Christians we are the branches that are connected to the Great Vine of Jesus. Our job is to bear fruit that brings glory to God. We need to remain under the Gardener's care and allow Him to trim and prune our areas that don't bring forth fruit.

### **2. We need to remain attached to the vine (v5-8)**

Just as a branch that is cut off from a tree or vine quickly withers and dies in hot sun, so do we as Christians if we lose our connection to Jesus. We remain connected to the vine by believing that Jesus is God's Son (1 John 4:15), by remembering we are part of His eternal family (John 1:12) and by doing what God says (1 John 3:24).

### **3. We need to remain in God's love (v9-17)**

As Christians it is vital to stay in God's love. How do we do this? We keep loving God with all our hearts, minds and strength (Deuteronomy 6:5, Matthew 22:37), we keep obeying His commandments in the Bible (John 15:10) and we keep loving one another as He has loved us (John 15:12). When we make these things a priority, we remain in God's love.

### **The Results of Doing this?**

The results of remaining under the gardeners care, remaining attached to the vine and remaining in God's love are that we will bear much fruit (v5), we will walk with God as friends (v14) and our joy may be complete (v11).

## **Don't make judgements from the outside**

One of the things it is easy to do is make assessments or judgements about people, churches or ministries from a distance without actually speaking to them or knowing the full details.

In Acts 10:1-48 we read about Peter and Cornelius. Peter went to Cornelius' home and ministered to him, his workers and family. As he was a non Jew, Cornelius would have been considered unclean and to go to his home and eat there would be not right for a practising Jew.

In Acts 11 we see that some of the Christians who were converted from Jews in Jerusalem were upset with Peter that he would do this. When he returned they asked him about it. In Acts 11:1-18 we see that Peter explains his actions. He told about his vision and how that when he preached God poured out the Holy Spirit on the Gentiles.

When the believers in Jerusalem heard Peter's explanation they accepted it was of God. In Acts 11:18 says, "When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, "So then, even to Gentiles God has granted repentance that leads to life."

The important thing about this situation is they actually spoke to Peter in person. They had a problem with what he did and they spoke to him about it. When he told them what happened they accepted his explanation and praised God. They didn't just make their judgements from the outside and talk to everybody about it. They got the story straight from the horses mouth.

I think this is a good example for us to follow as Christians. It is too easy to make our assessments from a distance. We need to speak to those involved and get the full story of what actually happened.

## Paul, Timothy and stumbling blocks

We were reading Acts 16:1-5 yesterday. This is the section where Paul and Timothy are preparing to go on Paul's second missionary journey.

An interesting thing in this section is that Paul had Timothy circumcised before they left. In earlier readings we see that Timothy's mother and grandmother were Jewish converts to Christianity and they had passed their faith on to Timothy.

Timothy however had not grown up as a Jew and not been circumcised because his father was Greek. This means he would have not followed Jewish customs and rituals for his son Timothy, one being circumcision at eight days old.

Paul and Timothy realised this would have been a stumbling block to the people where they were going to travel to as most of the new Christians from Jewish backgrounds. So he was circumcised.

At first I thought why was this an issue? Because the Council of Believers in Jerusalem had decided that it was not necessary for new believers to follow old Jewish traditions like circumcision to be a Christian and right with God (Acts 15:19-29).

Then I realised that often as Christians we take some time to come on board with decisions made by others who are not with us. We might read a letter from our "Jerusalem" or our head office which makes a ruling, but we might not initially agree with it or we might chose to hold on to our long term belief on an issue.

Paul and Timothy realised this and did not want Timothy's Greek background and non-circumcision to be a stumbling block for people coming to Jesus. In fact I think it would have been a compelling testimony of how committed Timothy was to the salvation of the people he was visiting.

Sometimes as Christians we need to go the extra mile to show our commitment to Jesus and the message we preach. We don't need to just do the

minimum to get by, sometimes going the extra mile is what is required to bring people to Christ.

# Lessons from Philip & sharing your faith

In Acts 8:26-40 we read the story of Philip and the Ethiopian. We see that Ethiopian was returning home from visiting Jerusalem to worship.

From Philip we can learn several things about sharing our faith with others.

1. Philip was obedient to God's prompting – He was ministering in Samaria and was prompted to travel down the south road or the desert road. He did as he was asked.
2. Philip remained open to the Holy Spirit while travelling – Philip was told to go and be near the chariot that the Ethiopian Eunuch was travelling in. He did.
3. Philip listened to what the man was reading – Philip found out where the man was at. He realised he was reading Isaiah and asked if he needed help.
4. Philip told the man about Jesus – He explained that the prophecy from Isaiah was about Jesus and began to tell him all about Jesus.
5. Philip assisted the Ethiopian to be baptised – Philip assisted him to make this important step for new believers.
6. Philip continued his work elsewhere – we see that the Spirit took Philip away and he continued preaching the Gospel in all the surrounding towns.

One thing I like about this story is that Philip responded to God's promptings all the way through. He was obedient to what he was asked to do.

I also like that he assessed where the man was at personally and assisted him with his queries about the Book of Isaiah. He then pointed him to Jesus and the way of salvation.

Sometimes as Christians we just need to listen to the Spirit's promptings and start where the other person is at.

# The stoning of Stephen & the effects

One of the Bible stories that really grabbed hold of me as a new Christian was the stoning of Stephen. I can remember reading it and being amazed at his faith and commitment to Jesus even while being threatened by death.

As a new Christian it really brought home the reality that bad things can happen to good people. And just because you commit to follow Jesus it doesn't mean things will always be smooth sailing.

Over the years I have read and re-read the story of Stephen's death and I came to realise that his death was not only a testimony of commitment to Christ, but it also opened the doors for a number of things to happen.

As a result of Stephen's death and further persecution the church spread and grew and more people were impacted. Here are a few examples.....

1. Philip went down to Samaria and preached the Gospel and performed signs, wonders and miracles. People were converted, set free from demon possession and healed (Acts 8:4-40)
2. Paul (Saul) was converted and became a follower of Jesus and a great missionary. Previously he persecuted Christians (Acts 9:1-30)
3. Peter went on a missionary journey to Samaria, Lydda and Ceserea with great effect. It says that he taught the new believers about the Holy Spirit and strengthen their faith (Acts 9:32-11:18)
4. The church in Antioch was founded. This was a pivotal church was in time was used as a base to further spread the message of Jesus to the region (Acts 11:19-21)

The stoning of Stephen really taught me some great lessons early on as a new Christian. I learned that bad things can happen to us as we follow Jesus and that often persecution can build faith and lead to growth in the church.

## Physical & spiritual fitness

One of the things I was just pondering is how most Christians would like to be more active physically and spiritually. They would like to be “fitter” in both areas.

Most people I talk to on my journey would like to get a bit fitter and lose a few kilograms. For some not exercising is a time issue, for others it is due to illness or others it is just about motivation.

In many ways this is like being spiritually fit. Most Christians would like to read their Bible or pray more because they know that it will help them to be spiritually fit too.

One thing I have been blessed with is discipline. I am very disciplined in both fitness areas. I regularly read my Bible and pray and I also have a regular fitness program.

I started my current exercise fitness program in 1985 and my spiritual fitness program in 1989. They are both things that are set patterns in my life.

So what is my advice for people who have not set up disciplined patterns? What would I suggest for people who are doing no exercise and no Bible reading?

My best advice would be to start at five minutes of each per day. Walk for five minutes at a comfortable pace five or six days per week. Then each week add an extra minute until you get to 30 minutes.

The same goes for Bible reading and prayer. Read your Bible for two and a half minutes and then pray for two and a half minutes and add a minute each week until you hit the 30 minute mark in total.

You might think that five minutes of each is not much, but at first it is about establishing a habit of doing it and of developing the discipline. Before long you will be doing ten minutes of each and so on.

Establishing a healthy fitness routine will make a big difference for you both physically and spiritually. It is just about getting started and establishing a routine.



## Peter preaches Jesus and the crowd responds

I was reading Acts chapter 2 this morning. This is where the Apostle Peter preached his first sermon to the crowd that were in Jerusalem.

I love the way he simply told the story of what had happened. He didn't try to make it sound cool or dress it up, he just preached the message. Here is a snippet.....

“Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.” (Acts 2:22-24)

Peter spoke the truth boldly and in the power of the Holy Spirit and it impacted the audience. What was their response to his preaching of Jesus? Verse 37 tells us..... ”When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”

To that question Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call” (v38-39).

Peter kept the message of salvation simple. He kept it to the story of Jesus and the people responded. In fact thousands of people responded!

Two cool things happened in this story. The first is that 3000 were added to the believers group. Secondly many of these people were from the surrounding regions and were in Jerusalem for Pentecost celebrations and would take the message back to their own region. Peter preached the truth about Jesus and the crowd responded.

## Why tongues of fire at Pentecost?

I was reading Acts 2:1-4 this morning where it talks about the Holy Spirit coming to the new believers at Pentecost with tongues of fire. In the footnotes is asked the question “Why tongues of fire?” I thought I would share the answer it gave.....

“Tongues symbolises speech and the communication of the Gospel. Fire symbolises God’s purifying presence, which burns away the undesirable elements of our lives and sets our hearts aflame to ignite the lives of others.

On Mt Sinai, God confirmed the validity of the Old Testament law with fire from heaven (Exodus 19:16-18). At Pentecost, God confirmed the validity of the Holy Spirit’s ministry by sending fire.

At Mt Sinai, fire came down in one place; at Pentecost, fire came down on many believers, symbolising God’s presence is available to all who believe in Him.”

Two things really jumped at me in this reading and the footnotes.

1. God is acting the same as He always has by using fire and bringing confirmation.
2. The Spirit is available to all people who have faith in Jesus as Lord and Saviour. We don’t have to live this life without God’s presence and we don’t have to minister in our own strength.

This is great news!

# The death of Jesus

I was reading about the death of Jesus from Matthew 27:45-56 this morning. It is interesting how four amazing things took place when Jesus gave up His Spirit (Matthew 27:50).

1. The whole earth went dark from noon until 3.00pm (v45)
2. The veil in the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom (v51)
3. There was an earthquake (v51)
4. Graves broke open and many holy people were raised to life (v52)

Anyone who was there would have been amazed and in awe. No wonder the Roman Centurion exclaimed “Surely he was the Son of God!” (v54).

Two of these things really amaze me. The tearing of the veil to God’s presence and how it was torn from top to bottom. In other words it was torn by God Himself!

The second is that many holy people were raised to life and made their way to the Holy City. Imagine seeing people you knew had died walking around alive!

The death of Jesus was truly an amazing event. It would have to be one of the most amazing events of all time.

# How does the Bible describe prayer?

I was looking up my Bible software this morning to see how the Bible described prayer. Here are some of the examples and the verses.

1. Calling on the name of the Lord (Genesis 4:26, 12:8, Zephaniah 3:9)
2. Calling to God (Psalm 4:1,3, 17:6)
3. Seeking God's face (Psalm 27:8, 2 Chronicles 7:14)
4. Seeking the Lord (Psalm 34:4, Isaiah 55:6)
5. Crying out to God (Psalm 3:4, 66:1)
6. Lifting up the soul to God (Psalm 25:1, 86:4)
7. Lifting one's hands up to God (Psalm 28:2, 141:2)
8. Approaching God's throne of grace (Hebrews 4:16)
9. Drawing near to God (Hebrews 10:22)

I really like how the above verses describe prayer. It is more than bringing a list to God. It is about bringing ourselves, calling to Him and really seeking Him with all of who we are.

# **The Bible was written by men wasn't it?**

One of the questions I often get from people about the Bible is “The Bible was written by men wasn't it?” Often they then follow up with the statement “men (mankind) are corrupt aren't they?”

The answer to both of these questions are yes.

However we must look at the lives of the people who wrote most parts of the Bible. They were deeply spiritual people who genuinely walked with God and served Him.

People like Moses who spent 40 days on a mountain top with God. David who was described by God as a man after God's own heart. Luke who was a physician and wanted to write an orderly account of what took place. The Apostle Paul who spent his life planting churches.

These people and the many others are not ordinary people. They weren't perfect for all of their lives, but they were people who served God faithfully and wrote the things down that God wanted recorded.

If we were to compare them to people who have lived in the last few hundred years they would be like John Wesley, Billy Graham or Mother Theresa. Quality people who lived their lives for God and His Kingdom.

So yes the Bible was written by men. But they were not ordinary corrupt people. They were people who chased hard after God, loved Him with all of their hearts and spent their lives serving Him.

God prompted them to record what He wanted recorded. Just like He prompts people every day to make a difference in this world today.

# Jesus and Barabbas

I was reading Matthew 27 again this morning. This time I noticed something interesting in the section that talks about Barabbas being released and Jesus being sentenced to death.

The thing I found interesting is that the Chief Priests knew that Pilate would not condemn Jesus to death for Blasphemy (saying He was God in this case). Blasphemy was a Jewish charge that meant nothing to Roman authority.

So the chief priests made other claims about Jesus causing an uprising, tearing down the Temple, saying He was King and not paying taxes to Caesar. They did this to convince Pilate that Jesus was a threat to Rome.

Another interesting thing is the person who was released was actually guilty of the crimes Jesus was accused of. Barabbas was arrested and charged with insurrection and causing an uprising” (Mark 15:7).

In this story of Jesus and Barabbas we see the true meaning of substitution. Barabbas was sentenced to death and Jesus was exchanged for him. He went free and Jesus was crucified on the cross.

This is what it is like for us today. We were guilty of our personal sins, but Jesus stepped in and took our punishment. He died on the cross in our place. He took our punishment that we deserved.

I never thought I had a lot in common with Barabbas, but it seems I have. Jesus was substitute for both of us. We were both sinners and Jesus took both of our deserved punishments. The same goes for you too!

## Judas and the chief priests

I have been reading Matthew chapters 26 and 27 the last few days. This talks about Jesus being betrayed, arrested and going on trial.

This time I found two interesting things jump out at me that involved Judas and the chief priests. Judas agreed to betray Jesus and received 30 pieces of silver as a “reward”. He then lead the priests to Jesus at night time.

The first thing I find interesting is the chief priests were Jews waiting for their Messiah to come. When He came in Jesus they wanted to kill Him. He was a threat to their power and was not like what they were expecting. So the leaders had their Messiah crucified.

The second thing was their response to Judas when he realised that he had done wrong. He wanted to repent and give back the money. Their response is found in Matthew 27:4. “What is that to us?” they replied. “That’s your responsibility.”

The priests who were supposed to be God’s representatives and help people get right with God by offering sacrifices on their behalf. When Judas came to them for help, they refused and said it was his responsibility and nothing to do with them.

Not only did the chief priest have Jesus brought on trial and ultimately killed, they gave up their right as God’s representatives to the people. They did not help Judas get right with God and they were not right themselves. It was a very bad place to be as a chief priest.

## Philip, successful ministry & moving on

It is interesting at times when we are following Jesus that we are asked to do things often that don't make sense at first. We might be in a position that is very successful and He asks us to move on to something seemingly smaller.

One Biblical example of this is Philip in Acts 8. He was in Samaria preaching up a storm. People were being saved, being healed, and evil spirits were being cast out. Verse 8 tells us there was great joy in the city. It was a very successful ministry.

If we skip down to verse 26 we see that an angel of the Lord told Philip to leave and go down to a desert road to meet a man riding alone in a chariot. The story tells us that he was an Ethiopian eunuch who was travelling to Jerusalem to worship. Philip left the crowds for the one person.

In the story we see that Philip helped the one man understand the Scriptures, then he led him to Jesus and he was baptised. After the man was baptised we see that the Spirit whisked Philip away to another place to continue ministry there.

On the surface it wouldn't make sense to leave a successful ministry for one person. However when we look back from our vantage point we see that the Ethiopian Eunuch was an important official in the Ethiopian government. He would have had influence and power being in charge of the Treasury. His new found faith in Christ opened doors for the Gospel in that region. In light of this, Philip's "demotion" to smaller things makes sense.

Often this is how it is when we follow Jesus and His call on our lives. In a worldly sense going from preaching to big crowds, to a desert road talking to one person might seem like a demotion, but in God's Kingdom there is always a bigger picture.

The key thing for us to remember as Jesus followers is that God has a grand plan of salvation for all mankind. Sometimes he needs us in different roles to bring His plans to pass. Our part is to respond to the next prompting and do what He asks as best as we can. Then when He issues orders to stop, we stop,



and await the next orders.

Like Philip we need to be open to the Spirit and move on to the next things.

# Conformed to Christ's image

Since before the creation of the world it has been God's desire to conform us in the image of Jesus Christ. This means becoming like Christ in our attitudes, beliefs, behaviours, character and lives.

There are three main passages in the Bible that talk about this. There is past, present and future context to this transformation and God's plan for it.

The first verse is Romans 8:29. It says, "For those **God foreknew** he also **predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son**, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters." This verse has a past context. God always wanted us to be like His Son.

The second passage is 2 Corinthians 3:18. This verse says, "**And we all**, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, **are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory**, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit." We see there is a current transformation or sanctification process as we walk with the Lord.

The last verse in 1 John 3:2 says, "Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. **But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.**" This is completion of the transformation that takes place when Jesus comes back. We shall be like Him.

God wants us all as disciples and followers of Jesus to be conformed to His image and likeness. What was lost in the fall of man has been made new in Christ. It is a process that God has always wanted to take place and it is a process that He is constantly working towards right up when Jesus returns.

God's will is that we come to know Him, that we will walk in His ways and that we are transformed in the image of likeness of His Son Jesus.

# Spiritual blessings in Christ

As believers and disciples we have all the benefits of knowing God. We are blessed with every spiritual blessing as it tells us in Ephesians 1:3-14.

We see that we are chosen for salvation, adopted as His children, completely forgiven and set free from sin, we have spiritual insight in His will, we have the gifts of the Spirit, fruit of the Spirit, power to do God's will, the hope of eternal life.

If we look at the above text we see some of these things mentioned.....

- v3 – we are blessed in Christ
- v4 – chosen by Himv5 – adopted by Himv6 – given grace in Christ
- v7 – redeemed and forgiven
- v8 – wisdom and understanding
- v9 – knowledge of His will
- v11 – chosen and predestined
- v12 – hope in Christ
- v13 – marked with the seal of the Holy Spirit
- v14 – guaranteed our inheritance in Christ

These are things we have in Christ. All the blessings of knowing Him personally. These are things that all religions want and strive for, but as believers we are freely given them in Christ.

Knowing and walking with Jesus is the most amazing experience. It allows us to live our best life and the life God intended for us all before the creation of the world.

# Woe to you Scribes and Pharisees

My wife and I were reading Matthew 23 yesterday. We were up to verses 13-36 which talks about Jesus and His attack on the Scribes and Pharisees. It is a pretty full on and blunt assessment of where they are at as religious leaders.

Seven times in this passage Jesus uses the term “Woe to you.....” So what was Jesus expressing these thoughts about? In this passage there are seven woes He mentions.

1. Not letting others enter the Kingdom or heaven or entering themselves (v13)
2. Converting people away from God and to following themselves or their own way of doing things (v15)
3. Blindly leading people to follow man made traditions rather than God’s Word (v16-22)
4. Following the law in detail but forgetting mercy, justice and faith (v23-24)
5. Keeping up appearances while inside your private world is corrupt (v25-26)
6. Acting spiritual on the outside to cover up personal or hidden sin (v27-28)
7. Pretending to have learned from history but repeating the past (v28-29)

In saying these things Jesus showed God was very displeased with the religious “leaders” of the day. They were very strong statements to them. He finishes with the words “You brood of vipers”. Pretty heavy stuff!

For us today we need to be careful that we keep God first place in our hearts and lives. We can get caught up in serving God, studying and reading His

Word that we forget that God wants real love, mercy and forgiveness to flow from us.

God wants us to live from a place where our internal lives are right with Him. He doesn't want us to pretend to be religious on the outside only. He wants to transform our hearts by the power of His Word and His Holy Spirit.

God wants streams of living water to flow from us out of our love and relationship with Him. He doesn't want religious people, He wants transformed disciples..... from the inside out.

# Running the race

I have been reflecting on the Bible verses that talk about our journey with Christ as a race. In particular about running the race before us. As I have pondered this two, passages have come to mind – 1 Corinthians 9:24-25 and Hebrews 12:1-3. They say.....

1 Corinthians 9:24-25 – 24 Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. 25 Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.

Hebrews 12:1-3 – 1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

Running the race that Jesus has entered us in involves discipline, training, throwing off things that entangle us, perseverance, running the right way and shunning sin, not growing weary or losing heart and focussing on Jesus.

There is also the element of running the race before us. As I think about this I think of the 400m hurdles. For me to compete correctly I need to stay in my lane and focussing ahead on each hurdle. If I look to the left or right, I might wander out of my lane or not see a hurdle in front of me. Then I would fall.

As disciples of Christ we are in a race. Not against each other, but our own race. It is a race that Jesus has set before us. He marked out the lanes. Let's focus on doing the things that help us to run our best and be successful in receiving the crown He has waiting for us when we finish line.

# Be still

I am thinking about and meditating on the first part of Psalm 46:10 today. It says, “Be still and know that I am God”.

It is a great verse that calls us to stop and focus on God and who He is. It is especially good when you read it as part of the [whole chapter](#).

I love some of the imagery of God being our fortress in the midst of chaotic world events like nations in uproar, kingdoms falling and of mountains falling into the sea.

In the midst of this God tells us to be still and know that He is God. He has an eternal plan. He shelters those who love Him. He is an ever present help in times of need. He has it all under control. Be still.

He tells us that He WILL be exalted among the nations and on the earth. He tells us that He IS will us.

If you are struggling today with chaotic events in your life. Take time to be still and reflect on an awesome God who holds the world and all its events in the palm of His hands.

He is the Alpha and the Omega – the beginning and the end. He is also the God of the in between too.

## The believers prayed for courage

My wife and I were just reading Acts chapter 4 where the Apostles were told by the Jewish High Council to stop talking about Jesus. We see they went back and told the other believers the news and then they prayed.

I loved the way they prayed and what they prayed for..... especially the section in bold below.....

23 As soon as they were freed, Peter and John returned to the other believers and told them what the leading priests and elders had said. 24 When they heard the report, all the believers lifted their voices together in prayer to God: “O Sovereign Lord, Creator of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them—25 you spoke long ago by the Holy Spirit through our ancestor David, your servant, saying, ‘Why were the nations so angry? Why did they waste their time with futile plans? 26 The kings of the earth prepared for battle; the rulers gathered together against the Lord and against his Messiah.’

27 “In fact, this has happened here in this very city! For Herod Antipas, Pontius Pilate the governor, the Gentiles, and the people of Israel were all united against Jesus, your holy servant, whom you anointed. 28 But everything they did was determined beforehand according to your will. 29 **And now, O Lord, hear their threats, and give us, your servants, great boldness in preaching your word. 30 Stretch out your hand with healing power; may miraculous signs and wonders be done through the name of your holy servant Jesus.**”

31 After this prayer, the meeting place shook, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. Then they preached the word of God with boldness.

I love it. They prayed and asked for boldness in preaching the Word and asked for signs and wonders to be done in Jesus’ name. The result? The building shook, they were filled with Holy Spirit and they preached the Word with great boldness.

I wonder what would happen if we all prayed like that tomorrow in our churches?



## Mustard seeds and yeast

The last few days I have been reflecting on two parables that my wife and I read in our morning Bible readings. In the NLT they are titled, “The parable of the mustard seed” and “The parable of the yeast”.

The first one is found in Matthew 13:31-32 NLT and says, “The Kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed planted in a field. It is the smallest of all seeds, but it becomes the largest of garden plants; it grows into a tree, and birds come and make nests in its branches.”

Jesus uses this parable to say that in its initial phase the Kingdom of Heaven [on earth] was relatively small, but in time it will grow into a huge Kingdom that God intends it to be. It is about small beginnings compared to spectacular future glory.

The second parable is found a few verses later in Matthew 13:33-35 NLT. It says, “The Kingdom of Heaven is like the yeast a woman used in making bread. Even though she put only a little yeast in three measures of flour, it permeated every part of the dough.”

Jesus further illustrates the point using the ratio between yeast and flour in making bread. You use a small amount of yeast by comparison, but rather than growing, the yeast permeates the rest of the mixture. Again we see that while the Kingdom is small in its initial phase on earth, eventually it spreads all through the earth and effects everything.

As I read and reflect on these parables I am greatly encouraged. I like that what I see around me Kingdom wise (in the natural) seems small at the moment, but in time it will grow into something very very substantial. Like the yeast it will permeate all parts of this world that we live in.

As I type it gives me hope for our region and it gives me hope for our new fellowship that we have planted recently. Out of small things do big things grow and out of small things are many things effected!

# The longer I follow Him the simpler it gets

This week I have really been reflecting on my journey of following Jesus. It has been more than 22 years now.

The overriding feeling I have had is the longer I follow Jesus, the easier it becomes to follow Him. As I grow and learn more about Him, the more it makes more sense to follow and following is natural.

In the same way I find the key overriding principles of my faith are easier and simpler too. I have three principles that govern all I do as a Jesus follower and a Pastor of a new church plant.

These principles are found in the verses are Mark 12:30, Mark 12:31 and Matthew 28:18-20.

Mark 12:30 says, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’

Mark 12:31 says, “The second is this: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.”

Matthew 28:18-20 says, “Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

As a Jesus follower and a Pastor I find that if I am loving God with all my heart, loving my neighbour as myself, and helping people to become disciples of Jesus, then I am doing what God calls me to do.

It really is as simple as that

## Sermon on the Mount bookends

My wife and I finished reading the Sermon on the Mount from Matthew chapters 5-7 this morning. We really enjoyed reading one heading per day over the last few weeks.

An interesting thing we noticed to today was how Jesus started and ended His teaching. It was like it had “bookends”.

Jesus started with this.....

Matthew 5:3 NLT says, “God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs”.

Jesus ended with this.....

Matthew 7:24-27 “Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock.<sup>25</sup> Though the rain comes in torrents and the floodwaters rise and the winds beat against that house, it won’t collapse because it is built on bedrock.<sup>26</sup> But anyone who hears my teaching and doesn’t obey it is foolish, like a person who builds a house on sand.<sup>27</sup> When the rains and floods come and the winds beat against that house, it will collapse with a mighty crash.”

Jesus started with the idea that we need to realise our need for Him and He ended with the thought of building our lives on the solid foundation of His teachings.

I had never noticed that before. Today it really jumped out at me. It was a nice reminder.

# Jesus performed 7 miracles on the Sabbath

Recently I was reflecting on the idea of the Sabbath and how it is a day that God has set apart as a rest day for man where we stop work and focus our thoughts on God.

For the Jewish people in Jesus' time this was a hard and fast rule because it was one of the Commandments given in Exodus 20:8-11. They refrained from any work at all and set the day apart as holy and for God.

The problem was they took it a bit too far. They even said that it was not right to heal on the Sabbath as it was a form of work.

Jesus challenged this when He performed seven miracles on the Sabbath....

1. Jesus delivered a man from demon possession (Mark 1.21-28)
2. Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law (Mark 1.29-31)
3. Jesus healed the lame man by the pool of Bethesda (John 5.1-18)
4. Jesus healed a man with a deformed hand (Mark 3.1-6)
5. Jesus restores a woman who was crippled (Luke 13.10-17)
6. Jesus healed a man with leg and arm problems (Luke 14.1-6)
7. Jesus healed a man born blind (John 9.1-16)

The thing I really like about this is Jesus did what was right on the Sabbath. Yes the Sabbath was holy, set apart for God and a day of rest for man, but Jesus still helped those in need.

Jesus saw the need and He did His Father's work and made people whole again.

## Four types of speaking in Proverbs

As I have been reading through the Book of Proverbs this month I have really noticed how much it talks about using our tongues and the way we use our words.

In today's post I thought I would share four ways I have noticed. As you will see, two are good and two are bad.....

1. A controlled tongue – In people with a controlled tongue we see that they think before they speak. They seem to know when silence is best or when the right time is to give good advice.
2. A caring tongue – People with a caring tongue speak openly and honestly, but their goal in speaking is to encourage and bring life to those around them. In short, they care.
3. A conniving tongue – Those with a conniving tongue speak with wrong motives. They gossip, speak badly about others, they lie and twist the truth. They use words to get their own way or bring others down.
4. A careless tongue – A person with a careless tongue speaks before considering their words and their potential impact. They often blurt out words that cut or tear people down without realising.

As you can see the first two of these types of tongues are good, desirable and helpful. The second two are not good and should be avoided.

Let's purpose in our hearts today to be people who consider our words and use them wisely. Let's use words that build up and encourage and are aimed at bringing about the purposes of God.

## Repentance and help from others

I have been thinking a lot about repentance lately. It was initially started by an assignment for college, but the reflection has lingered on for a few weeks.

The Doctrine of Repentance refers to the attitude of having godly sorrow for personal sin and the turning away from it towards a new life. In the Bible to repent means showing sorrow for wrongdoing, to stop doing the wrong action and to start doing what God says is right.

Henrietta Mears in her book *What the Bible is all about* takes it a bit further when she says that “Repentance always involves making a conscience decision to make a change away from sin and a focus towards God”.

As I have thought about this I have realised that repentance is about being sorry and it is also about turning away from the sinful behaviour towards God, but I think in some cases it should involve the help of others to overcome a long term ongoing problem.

Imagine if I was someone who got drunk every night and when I came home I was angry at the world and I took it out on my wife and kids by beating them. It wouldn't be enough to say I am sorry to them, go to confession and be right. In a sense I would be “right” with God, but there is more I would need to do to be right with my family and truly right with God.

I might need to get some counselling and work through why I am getting drunk, why I am angry with the world and why I am beating my family. As James 5:16 says, “Confess your sins to one another so you may be healed”. Bringing someone else in to help may be required to sort out once and for all the issues that are lingering.

Ultimately I think real repentance is about confessing our sin to God, turning towards God for help, apologising to those we have hurt and working through the problem with the help from others. When we do these things we grow in our character and become more Christlike in the way we are living. After all that is what God really wants.

## What should we boast in?

Dictionary.com says that boasting is “to speak with exaggeration and excessive pride, especially about oneself” and “imply vocal self-praise or claims to superiority over others”.

Jeremiah 9:23-24 reads, “This is what the LORD says: “Let not the wise boast of their wisdom or the strong boast of their strength or the rich boast of their riches, but let those who boast boast about this: that they understand and know me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight,” declares the LORD.”

You can see from these verses that we should not boast in our own wisdom, our own strength, or our own riches. God says that if we boast, we should only boast of our understanding of and our relationship with Him.

Our boasting should be about knowing that He is the God of the universe who shows love, kindness, compassion, justice and righteousness on the earth.

In short, if we do boast, it should be about Him and not ourselves.

## But when you...

Matthew 6:1 says “Be careful not to do your ‘acts of righteousness’ before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven”.

We can see by this verse that we need to be careful of how we do things and check our motives for doing them. The questions to ask is are we doing them because they are the right thing to do or are we doing them to get some sort of recognition from those around us?

Further on in the passage Jesus talks about three things we can do that get us public praise. I can them the “but when you” statements.

1. Verse 4 says “But when you give to the needy.....” This can be something we can do privately or we can do publicly and make a big show of it. Jesus said not to let our left hand know what our right hand is doing.

2. Verse 6 says “But when you pray.....” Again when we pray we can make a big show of it or we can do most of it privately. Jesus told us not to be like the hypocrites who grandstand with our prayers in the church or on street corners.

3. Verse 17 says “But when you fast.....” Fasting is about giving up things for God and pressing in to Him for breakthrough in some area. Jesus tells us to keep it quiet and not seek praise from others for doing it. Fasting is about you and God.

Of course these verses are not saying that we should never let anyone know what we are doing. There are times when we should tell people what we have done because it will encourage them on to greater things in their own life.

But most of the time these things should be done in secret with no show or expecting praise from others. It is about the heart attitude we have and our motives for doing it.



# What God requires of you part 1

Many Christians wonder what God wants them to do with their lives. While God does not give us all a definite road map for us to follow in the Bible, He does give us a number of general principles that He has given to His people in a few places.

In this series of posts I will share a few passages. The first one is Deuteronomy 10.12-13. It says.....

12 And now, O Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, 13 and to observe the LORD's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good?

In these verses we see five things that God required from the people of Israel that we can draw from today.

1. Fear God – this means to have a deep respect and reverence for Him. A holy fear.
2. Live in a way that pleases Him
3. Love Him
4. Serve Him with all of your heart and soul
5. Always obey His commands and decrees

As we can see from the above five points, there are some general points God wants us all to put in to practice. They are a good place to start if we want to please God.

Stay tuned for part 2!

## What God requires of you part 2

The second passage that gives us some pointers as to what God wants from us comes from the Old Testament Book of Micah.

Micah 6:8 says “He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”

Again there are some general principles that God requires of us. This time there is three of them.....

1. To act justly – this means to be fair and honest in the way we do things.
2. To love mercy – loving mercy is about making sure we show mercy and work to bring mercy to situations where it is lacking.
3. Walk humbly with God – God wants us to walk with Him in a way that lifts Him up and placing ourselves under His authority.

These three points are about being in relationship with God and it making a difference how we live out lives and interact in the situations we find ourselves in.

Stay tuned for part 3!

## What God requires of you part 3

The third verse in the series of what God requires of us comes from Luke chapter 10. It is often called the Great Commandment. It came from a Teacher of the Law who asked Jesus what one must do to receive eternal life.

Luke 10.27 says..... He answered: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’; and, ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’”

This verse has two points that Jesus commended the man for saying in verse 28. Again they give us an idea of what God requires.....

1. Love God – We see loving God is about loving Him with all of our being. To really love God our hearts, souls, strength and minds must be involved.
2. Loving our neighbour – God wants us to love our neighbour as we love ourselves. This means to want what is best for them, support them and see that they are not lacking and in need.

It is interesting that after these verses Jesus explains to the listeners what it is to be a good neighbour. It is commonly known as the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 15.30-37).

Stay tuned for part 4!

## What God requires of you part 4

The second last passage in this series comes from Proverbs 3:5-6. It says.....

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.”

This is a great short passage. It was one of my very first memory verses and I can see why. At the heart of it is two things.

1. Trust God – it asks us to trust God with all of our hearts. We can do this because He is a good God who cares for us, wants what is best and He holds the world in His hands.

2. Lean on His understanding – as humans we always try to work things out ourselves. I know I do. But God wants us to lean on His understanding and wisdom. It makes sense because He knows the beginning and the end of all things.

God wants us to trust Him, to put Him first and seek Him in all we do. When we do this we will receive His guidance and direction.

Stay tuned for part 6!

## What God requires of you part 5

This post is the fifth in the series of What God requires of you. It looks at Ecclesiastes 8:15 NLT. It says.....

“So I recommend having fun, because there is nothing better for people in this world than to eat, drink, and enjoy life. That way they will experience some happiness along with all the hard work God gives them under the sun.”

I have finished with this verse on purpose because it is about enjoying life. Often as Christians we can get so caught up in the mission we are “doing” for God that we forget to enjoy ourselves.

Solomon, who was the wisest man to ever live (1 Kings 3:1-12), wrote this verse. He had great wealth, great power and all the things a man could want? Still realised that it was important to enjoy life.

As Christians we have to include things in our lives that give us fun and enjoyment. We need downtime because life can get hectic and hard sometimes.

## Living for Jesus

The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 “For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.”

As I read these verses I think about the change that overtook Paul after his conversion. He was no longer driven by selfish ambition, he was a changed man.

Paul was convinced that Jesus died on the cross to pay the price for our sin. This is the message he took everywhere. As a result of knowing this, he couldn’t live his life for himself any more.

Paul lived for Jesus Christ because he believed that he has died with Christ (Romans 6:6, 11). He believed that dying with Christ meant that he should live for Jesus (Galatians 2:20).

His heart was changed. He had a new focus. It was all about living for Jesus and pouring himself out for others (2 Timothy 4:5-7).

How about you? Has your life changed since you came to Christ? Have you got a new reason to live? Are you living for Jesus today?

## **Search me, O God**

Psalms 139:23-24 says “Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

David knew what it was to talk and pray to God. He prayed and praised God when things were going well. He prayed and cried out to God when his enemies were all around him.

In the above verses we see that David also wanted God to search his heart and his thoughts. He wanted to be right with God and asked if there was anything that he needed to sort out.

Most of us, if we are honest have things hidden away in our hearts and in our thoughts that are not quite right. Things that we wouldn't want anyone else to know or hear out loud. I know I have at times.

I think the key is to be like David in these times. We need to ask God to search our hearts and our thoughts. Ask Him to reveal any offensive ways. When He does we then need to confess them and ask for help to overcome.

When we do this we walk in the way of the everlasting. The way God intends us to walk.....closely with Him each and every day.

# The Resurrection shows Jesus is the Way

The Bible says in John 14:6 “Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me”. In this verse Jesus is telling us He is the way to the Father, which is also the way to salvation.

Just imagine there is a road with a fork in it. As you walk down the road you see there are two directions you can go. As you get closer you see there are two men sitting at the fork. You stop to ask directions and you notice one is dead and the other is alive. Which one do you ask directions from? Of course you would ask directions from the man who is alive.

This is what it is like for those seeking spiritual direction too. If you want to know the way or find answers to your questions you need to ask someone who is alive. Of all of the religious leaders in history, Jesus is the only one who died and then rose to life again.

I believe His resurrection validates all that Jesus said and all that He taught. He didn't just teach worldly truths or good ideas, He taught about life, death and eternal life too. He then backed up the concept of rising to eternal life by being raised to life Himself.

If you have spiritual questions or you are seeking for more in this Easter season I would encourage you to read about Jesus in the Bible. If you don't have a Bible you can find a [free online version here](#).



# Disciples, Believer & Christian

I was doing some reading about discipleship the other day for an assignment. In one of the books I came across this thought about the way the New Testament describes followers of Jesus.

It said that the New Testament calls followers as Jesus disciples 282 times, where it calls them believers 26 times and Christians only 3 times. I decided to check it out on my Bible software and I found similar results. This got me thinking about the terms disciple, believer and Christian.

In New Testament times a disciple was someone who wanted to learn from another person. It could be a Rabbi, a Craftsman or a Philosopher. They would attached themselves to them and learn the particular skill. They would watch, learn, practice and eventually do it by themselves. When the skill was fully transefered they would go on their way.

Being a disciple was about connecting with someone else to learn their ways. This is how it was for the 12 disciples that Jesus called at the beginning of His public ministry. They stayed with Him for three and a half years. The watched, learnt and were sent out to do things themselves.

When you think about being a disciple, believer or christian you can see why the term “disciple” was used much more. It talks more about committing to a way of life and of learning and growth. It goes past just believing in something, it is more about learning to follow and to heading in a new direction full steam ahead.

# The Cost of Discipleship

Over the last few days I have been looking at the passage from Luke 14:25-35. In the NIV it is titled “The Cost of Being a Disciple”.

In verse 25 we see that large crowds were travelling with Jesus. They had started to follow Him. You could imagine that after the miracles He performed and the teaching He had been doing.

Then it seems out of nowhere Jesus says this.....”If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple.” (v26)

On the surface this statement seems quite heavy. Jesus is talking about hating family members or our own lives to be His disciple. You could imagine that stopped a few people in their tracks!

However, when you look a bit deeper you see the Greek word (the language the New Testament was originally written in) was the word *miseo* (pronounced *mis-eh-o*). It means to “love less”.

If you read the passage again with “love less” there it makes more sense to us today.

“If anyone comes to me and does not “*miseo*” or “love less” [than] his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple”.

Jesus is saying that to be His disciple or follower we need to love Him more than our families or our lives. For some that might seem hard, but for people who has been following Jesus for years it makes sense.

When we love our families, or money, or possessions, more than we love Jesus there will always be competing priorities. Jesus wants first place in our hearts and first place in our lives.

This is one of the “costs” of being a disciple.

## Greater than John

I was talking with some friends about Luke the other day and Luke 7.28 came up in the conversation.

It says, “I tell you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.”

On the surface it can be a strange verse to understand. When you reading it in light on verse 27 it makes a little more sense.

“This is the one about whom it is written: “I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.” (v27).

Jesus was talking about John coming to announce the Kingdom of God which Jesus talked about ie Repent and believe for the Kingdom of God is near.

As Christians when we accept Christ, God’s Kingdom comes to us. We then become greater than John was at the time, because we actually live in it daily.

The Expositor’s Bible Commentary echoes these thoughts when it says, “Jesus now puts John into historical perspective. John came in advance of the kingdom, which has now become a reality (16:16). Great as John was (v.28), it is greater to participate in the kingdom than to announce it.

I thought I would share this on my blog just in case there are others who have struggled with this verse too.

## Constantly amazed by Jesus

As a Christian I am constantly amazed at the life and teachings of Jesus. This morning I was reading Luke chapter 22 where Jesus is talking about being a servant. In the NLT it verses 24-27 says.....

24 Then they began to argue among themselves about who would be the greatest among them. 25 Jesus told them, "In this world the kings and great men lord it over their people, yet they are called 'friends of the people.' 26 But among you it will be different. Those who are the greatest among you should take the lowest rank, and the leader should be like a servant. 27 Who is more important, the one who sits at the table or the one who serves? The one who sits at the table, of course. But not here! **For I am among you as one who serves.**

The thing that really jumped out to me today was Jesus' words, "For I am among you as one who serves".

Although I already knew this and have read it many times, the thought that the Creator and King of the Universe came to be a servant. It really grabbed my heart afresh and brought tears to my eyes.

As I type I am reminded that the Creator and King also washed peoples feet (John 13:1-5) and the Creator and King also gave His life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45).

Even though I have been following Jesus for more than 20 years, I am constantly amazed by Him and the things He did and said.

# Hidden Treasure and Expensive Pearls

I have been thinking about the parables of the Hidden Treasure and the Expensive Pearls from Matthew 13:44-46 the last few days.

I have reflected on this before [here](#). On that occasion I was focussing on the aspect of the Kingdom (hidden treasure&pearl) being so precious to the that the finder was prepared to sell all to obtain it.

This time as I was reading I was really drawn to the fact that the man found the hidden treasure by accident. He wasn't looking, but he found it and it was precious to him.

The merchant was already in the industry of pearls so he knew what he was looking for. When he found the pearl, he was prepared to sell all because he was already looking for precious pearls.

These two examples are like people finding God's Kingdom by finding faith in Jesus Christ today. One may find it by accident while doing life and realise the preciousness of it. All else might pale in significance as a result and it becomes life changing. Someone else might already be a church attendee for years and then realise the preciousness of Jesus and accept Him and their Lord and Saviour.

I really find this short passage very interesting. It is only short but it has so many layers to it.

# The persistent widow

I was reading and reflecting on the parable of the Persistent Widow from Luke 18:1-8 yesterday. I found it interesting.

In verse one it says that Jesus told the parable “to show them that they should always pray and not give up.” It then goes on to describe the poor widow who had been harshly treated and repeatedly went back to the judge to receive justice.

We see that even though the judge was not a God-fearing man and was described as not caring, he granted her request. It sounds like she was driving him crazy with her constant requests (v5)!

In verse 7 Jesus moves this story to God and asks the questions “And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off?”

Because God is a good God, and not like the evil judge, we know He will. Jesus promises He will bring justice quickly.

The thing I find interesting in this parable is found right at the end. In the second part of verse 8 Jesus says, “However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?”

While this parable is a parable to encourage us to continue in prayer and not give up, I believe Jesus’ question at the end is the more important one.

I believe Jesus is asking how many people will be found faithful when He returns? How many people will persist to the end and hold firm in their faith and trust in God?

So today I would encourage you to be persistent in prayer, keep trusting God and purpose in your heart to be found faithful when Jesus returns.

# Blessings for obedience

One chapter of the Bible that has really been rolling around in my Spirit over the last few months is that of [Deuteronomy 28](#). It has the titles “Blessings for obedience” and “Curses for disobedience”.

This chapter is spoken to the people not long before they move into the promised land. God is giving them some instructions about how He expects them to live in response to His loving actions towards them.

The first section starts in verses 1-14 with “If you fully obey the LORD your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations on earth. All these blessings will come on you and accompany you if you obey the LORD your God”.

God then lists many blessings that will follow obedience. These include blessings on their families, land, crops, food supplies, herds and victory against enemies that rise up against them. He even says He will establish them as a holy people above the other nations on earth.

Then the passage turns to the curses for disobedience. Verse 15 starts a section that is the mirror of the previous verses. It says, “However, if you do not obey the LORD your God and do not carefully follow all his commands and decrees I am giving you today, all these curses will come on you and overtake you”.

God gives the people, His people, a choice. Obedience with blessings or disobedience with the associated curses.

Ultimately, God wanted the people to live under the umbrella of His love and care. He set some rules in place that He expected them to live by in response to His great love and blessings. He placed the ball in the court of the people to follow. The choice was theirs.

I find this passage interesting. It really speaks to me about following God commands and decrees and living under the umbrella of His love and blessing.

Although this was written to the people thousands of years ago in a different

circumstance, and as Christians we are found in Christ, I still believe we can draw much from it.

God wants us to put off the world and all of its alluring attractions that would draw us away from Him. He wants us to love Him wholeheartedly and follow Him completely. He wants us to live our lives by His eternal principles that are for our good.

When we do this we respond in the right way to all He has done for us in Christ Jesus and we remain firmly under the umbrella of His amazing love and blessings.

How are you going with your walk with God today? If you are off track I would encourage you to take a few moments and come back to Him today.



## **Finding 30 and growing in your faith**

One of the things I love to do is keep fit. Currently I ride three days per week for 30 minutes and I do a full body weight routine on the other three days. On Sunday I rest.

I have found this routine works really well for me. It gives me variety in my fitness training and keeps me fit and toned. It also keeps my heart strong and my joints healthy and strong too.

As I was thinking about this routine today, I thought that it would be good to alternate what we do as Christians in our devotion times.

On three days per week we could pray for 30 minutes (Monday, Wednesday&Friday) and on three days per week (Tuesday, Thursday&Saturday) we could read the Bible for 30 minutes. On Sunday we could go to church.

Like I find with my fitness training it would give us variety in our devotion times. It would also help us to keep spiritually fit and strong too!

## Peter's reminders to the people

One of the key things I believe we should do as Christians is remind each other of the great things the Lord has done for us and to encourage each other to keep growing in our faith. I believe it should pervade all of our teaching, preaching and general conversations.

In 2 Peter 1:12-15 the Apostle Peter says, “So I will always **remind you of these things**, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have. I think it is right to **refresh your memory** as long as I live in the tent of this body, because I know that I will soon put it aside, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to **remember these things**“.

In this short passage of Scripture we see that Peter used words like “remind you of these things”, “refresh your memory” and “remember these things” several times.

So what was it that Peter was reminding the people of? In the previous verses (v3-11) we see that he was reminding them that Christ has saved them and to add goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness and love to their faith (v5-7). In short he says: remember what Jesus has done and keep growing.

What is the result of this? Verse 8 gives us a clue. It says, “For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ”. That is good reason.....to keep being effective for the Lord.

So let us remember that when we get together as Christians to remind each other of the great thing the Lord has done in saving us and to encourage each other to keep growing in our faith.

# Appointing a king

I was reading Deuteronomy 17:14-20 this morning. This passage talks about Israel appointing a king. As I read I found three things really interesting.

1. It was a future appointment – In verse 14 we see that it is talking about a future time when the people have entered the promised land. God knew they would ask for a king to be like the nations around them. We see this actually happens in 1 Samuel 8:4-9. It was no surprise to God that the people would demand that Samuel would appoint a king.

2. The king had restrictions – In verses 16-17 we see that the king was to have restrictions. This goes against the norm of society. The king could not own too many horses because it was a sign on wealth and power and could cause him to rely on his own strength. He could not have too many wives either. This would mean his loyalties could become divided. God wanted the king to rely on Him and keep his focus on Him.

3. He needed to have his own copy of the Law – Verses 18-20 talks about the importance of the king having his own copy of the Law (Bible) to read and reflect on. Having his own personal copy would mean that he could learn about God, learn to keep His commands and keep his perspective of himself correct. Verse 20 finishes with a promise for a long reign for him and his descendants if he honours God's word.

In this passage we see that God knew Israel would ask for a king. And when they did He wanted to ensure that the king relied on Him and not wealth, and that he led the people correctly because he revered the Lord and followed His ways.

# 15 truths about Jesus

Many years ago when I was searching for more to this life I began to read the Bible. As I did I began to find out about Jesus. Discovering who He is changed my life forever.

Here are 15 truths I learned about Jesus – who He is and what He has done for us.

1. Jesus forgives sins (Mark 2:10)
2. Jesus is one with the Father (John 10:30)
3. Jesus performed miracles (John 10:32)
4. Jesus came from the Father (John 16:28)
5. Jesus is the Christ (Mark 14:61-62)
6. Jesus is the Messiah (John 4:25-26)
7. Jesus came to give spiritual life (John 10:10)
8. Jesus gives us the right to become God's children (John 1:12)
9. Jesus bestows eternal life (John 10:28)
10. Jesus keeps us in eternal life (John 10:28)
11. Jesus is fully God (Philippians 2:5-11)
12. Jesus became fully man (Philippians 2:5-11)
13. Jesus' death was a ransom for our sins (Matthew 20:28)
14. Jesus died for us while we were still sinners (Romans 5:8)
15. Jesus rose from the dead (Acts 2:24)

As I said these truths changed my life forever. Since Saturday the 21st of July 1989 at 7.10pm things have not been the same.....and they continue to get better and better each day. All because of who Jesus is and what He has done for us.....what He has done for me.

If you would like to experience the same life changing moment that I did in 1989, you can visit my [salvation page here](#).

# The churches in Revelation part 1

This week I started reading the Book of Revelation for my morning devotions. In chapters two and three we see some messages to the churches. They are the churches in Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodecia.

As we read through these chapters we can get a glimpse of what God thinks are good about the churches and what needs some work. In other words the good news and the bad news. Today I want to look at the first of them – Ephesus.

The good points are in verses 2-3. “I have seen your hard work and your patient endurance. I know you don’t tolerate evil people. You have examined the claims of those who say they are apostles but are not. You have discovered they are liars. You have patiently suffered for me without quitting“.

The bad news is found in verse 4. God says, “You don’t love me or each other as you did at first!”. In verse 5 He calls them to “Turn back to me and do the works you did at first”.

In Ephesus we see something that can happen to us as individual Christians or churches alike. We can get caught up in the work of the Lord and forget about loving God and loving our neighbour (Mark 12:30-31). For me it is a timely reminder.

In the next few days I will look at the church in Smyrna.

## The churches in Revelation part 2

Previously I looked at the first church mentioned in Revelation which was Ephesus. We saw some of their good points and something God wanted them to work on and remember. Today I want to look at the second one – Smyrna.

In chapter 2 verse 9 it says to the church in Smyrna, “I know about your suffering and your poverty—but you are rich! I know the blasphemy of those opposing you. They say they are Jews, but they are not, because their synagogue belongs to Satan”.

In this God lets them know He sees all the troubles they are facing. Knowing that God is aware of our sufferings can be of great comfort. It lets us know we are not alone.

Then in the first part of verse 10 God tells them more suffering is coming. It says, “Don’t be afraid of what you are about to suffer. The devil will throw some of you into prison to test you. You will suffer for ten days”.

In the midst of all their suffering, God tells them more is on the way. However, the good news is that it will not last forever. That would give the church hope knowing that it would only be for a short time.

Finally in the end part of verse 10 it gives a great promise. “But if you remain faithful even when facing death, I will give you the crown of life”.

If you as a church or an individual are going through a time of suffering at the moment. Please know that God knows your suffering and that it will not last forever. Purpose to remain faithful to God and He will also give you the crown of life too!

In the next few days I will look at the church in Pergamum.

## The churches in Revelation part 3

The next church mentioned in Revelation chapter 2 is Pergamum. Like the church in Ephesus it has good news and bad news.

In verse 13 it says, “I know that you live in the city where Satan has his throne, yet you have remained loyal to me. You refused to deny me even when Antipas, my faithful witness, was martyred among you there in Satan’s city“.

This is very positive. They remained faithful under persecution, even when some from their own people were being martyred.

Then the bad news or the things they need to work on. Verse 14 says, “But I have a few complaints against you. You tolerate some among you whose teaching is like that of Balaam, who showed Balak how to trip up the people of Israel. He taught them to sin by eating food offered to idols and by committing sexual sin“.

In verse 15 it goes on to talk about tolerating the Nicolaitans who were also very corrupt in what they taught and how they lived.

What can we learn from the church in Pergamum? We learn how important it is to remain faithful under persecution and how important it is not to tolerate wrong teaching that leads people astray.

Neither of these are easy to do, but it is something that God expects of us as Christians. When we are faithful and we do these things it not only honours God, but it is for our long term best too.

In the next few days I will look at the church in Thyatira.



## The churches in Revelation part 4

In today's post I want to look at the church in Thyatira. Like the other churches there are some good points and some bad points.

In verse 19 of chapter two it says, “I know all the things you do. I have seen your love, your faith, your service, and your patient endurance. And I can see your constant improvement in all these things“.

That is a very positive and encouraging statement. It is a great report. I don't know a church that would not be happy with a statement like that! Then the bad news.....

Verse 20 tells us the bad news, “But I have this complaint against you. You are permitting that woman—that Jezebel who calls herself a prophet—to lead my servants astray. She teaches them to commit sexual sin and to eat food offered to idols“.

Thyatira was like the church at Pergamum where it had permitted people to come in and lead the people astray. Rather than focusing their love and attention on God and living lives free of sexual immorality, they were lead astray to do things that God never intended for his followers.

It is just another reminder of the importance of good solid teaching in our churches and to filter those who come in to and have influence over God's people.

In my next post on the churches in Revelation I will look at the church in Sardis.

## The churches in Revelation part 5

The next church mentioned in the Book of Revelation is Sardis. In chapter three we see that it sounds like a church that is in decline.

In chapter three verse one it says, “I know all the things you do, and that you have a reputation for being alive—but you are dead“. From this description it sounds like it was once an alive and vibrant church that “burned” brightly. Now it sounds like a former shadow of itself.

In verses 2-3 they receive some advice from the Lord. It says, “Wake up! Strengthen what little remains, for even what is left is almost dead. I find that your actions do not meet the requirements of my God. Go back to what you heard and believed at first; hold to it firmly. Repent and turn to me again“.

This is a clear call to awake from their slumber. To go back to the things they once did and to return to God. In many ways it sounds like they were in auto-pilot or perhaps they were resting on previous achievements.

In the midst of this though, we see that there are some who have “not soiled their clothes with evil” and that this is important as they “will walk with me in white, for they are worthy” (v4). If they endure until the end they will receive their eternal reward.

For me this passage is not only a clear call to check ourselves and how we are going as churches, but a call to make sure we don’t rest on our laurels and simply go through the motions of “doing church”. We need to be alive and active and constantly loving and seeking the Lord in all we do and say.

## The churches in Revelation part 6

The next church mentioned in the Book of Revelation is the church at Philadelphia. This church has some good news delivered and a reminder.

In chapter 3 verse 8 it says, “I know all the things you do, and I have opened a door for you that no one can close. You have little strength, yet you obeyed my word and did not deny me“.

Verse 10 goes on to say that because of their faithfulness under duress God will “protect you from the great time of testing that will come upon the whole world to test those who belong to this world“.

This would be great news to hear that, even though bad things are coming, God will shield you from them. It sounds very much like the passover in Egypt!

This section then finishes with a reminder to stay true to God. Verses 11-12 tell of the reward for those who stay faithful until the end.....

“I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take away your crown. All who are victorious will become pillars in the Temple of my God, and they will never have to leave it. And I will write on them the name of my God, and they will be citizens in the city of my God—the new Jerusalem that comes down from heaven from my God“.

What a great promise. If they stay faithful to God until the end, they will become pillars of God’s Temple and they will never leave it! They will become citizens in the City of God!

I don’t know about you, but that makes me want to stay true to God and live my life in a way that honours and serves Him always.

## The churches in Revelation part 7

The final church mentioned in Revelation chapters two and three is the church in Laodicea. This church receives a blunt assessment and an invitation.

The blunt assessment is found in verses 15 and 16. It says, “I know all the things you do, that you are neither hot nor cold. I wish that you were one or the other! But since you are like lukewarm water, neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth!”

The interesting thing about Laodicea is that it was located between two other cities – Colosse and Heropolis. It had no fresh drinking water of its own and water was piped from the two other towns. Heropolis had therapeutic hot springs and Colosse had cold refreshing mountain water, so the water that arrived there was lukewarm and undrinkable.

Lukewarm as it describes in this passage is talking about being indifferent to the things of God. They are not really committed to follow God or are they against Him. They are apathetically sitting in the middle. Bible scholars tell us that they had become this way because of the wealth the Roman Empire had brought them and they felt they had it all and lacked nothing.

But in verses in 18 and 19 we see that they are being rebuked or corrected because of the Lord’s love for them. In verse 20 we see it is not too late for them to turn from their indifference and truly return to Him. The invitation says, “Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends”.

So what can we learn from the church at Laodicea? Well I think for us as Christians we can all get comfortable and become apathetic to the things of God. Maybe we have a great job, a nice house, two cars in the garage, food in the fridge, a large screen TV and a nice family. We can feel like we have it all and as a result our hearts can grow cold or indifferent to God. We can become lukewarm!

The key for us is to remember the invitation that the Lord gave to the church at Laodicea out of his love for them. He wanted to return to the intimate

friendship they once had. I believe this call is to us today too if we have become lukewarm or indifferent. We just need to simply pray and open the door of our hearts back to God and invite Him in. God is always ready to welcome us home, just like the father welcomed the prodigal son home in Luke 15.

It is my hope and prayer that if you have grown cold to God, that you will ask Him back into your life today. I pray that you will be on fire for God and live each and every day for Him.

## It was by faith

Hebrews chapter 11 is a great passage from the Bible that talks about faith. Hebrews 11:1 says, “Faith is the confidence that what we hope for will actually happen; it gives us assurance about things we cannot see” .

Verse 2 tells us that “Through their faith, the people in days of old earned a good reputation”. It then goes on to list some great examples of faith from the Old Testament. Here are a few....v5 – It was by faith that Enoch was taken up to heaven without dying—“he disappeared, because God took him.v7 – It was by faith that Noah built a large boat to save his family from the flood.v8 – It was by faith that Abraham obeyed when God called him to leave home and go to another land that God would give him as his inheritance.v11- It was by faith that even Sarah was able to have a child, though she was barren and was too old.v22 -It was by faith that Joseph, when he was about to die, said confidently that the people of Israel would leave Egypt.v23 – It was by faith that Moses’ parents hid him for three months when he was born.v24 – It was by faith that Moses, when he grew up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter.25He chose to share the oppression of God’s people instead of enjoying the fleeting pleasures of sin.v29 – It was by faith that the people of Israel went right through the Red Sea as though they were on dry ground.v30 – It was by faith that the people of Israel marched around Jericho for seven days, and the walls came crashing down.

Hebrews chapter 11 not only tells us what faith is in verse 1, it also shows us some great examples of people who lived their lives by faith and trust in God. They refused to go with the flow and stood firm and trusted God. They had confidence that what they hoped for would actually happen; they were assured about the things they could not see.

How about you? What things can you look to God for today in faith? What things can look to the future for with hope and a confident assurance will happen because God has spoken to you about? I think that is worth reflecting on today.

## **Obedience when it doesn't make sense**

In Luke 5:4-7 there is an interesting section of the Bible that touches on obedience when the request doesn't make sense.

In this passage we see that Jesus asked Simon (Peter) to take his boat out into the deep water to catch some fish (V4). In verse five we see Simon's response.....

Simon answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets."

The thing I like about Simon's response is that even though the request didn't make sense to him at the time, he still chose to be obedient to Jesus' request.

What was the result? He caught so many fish that he had to call other boats over to help. His boat was so full that it nearly sunk! (v7)

Often for us as Christians we can be in the same position. God can ask us to do something, but it really doesn't make sense at the time.

Then after we have been obedient and done what God has asked, we get to see why He made the request and how important it was that we were obedient.

If God has asked you to do something that doesn't make sense at the moment, I would encourage you to be obedient because it might just be one of those Simon and the fish moments for you!

## Obedience when it doesn't make sense 2

Earlier in the year I did a post titled, “ [Obedience when it doesn't make sense](#) “. It touched on doing what God says when you don't really understand why. It used Peter's example from Luke 5:4-7.

As I have reflected more on this idea I thought of some other occasions in the Bible where people followed when not knowing the full story or the outcome of their obedience. Here are a few more examples.....

1. Abraham and Isaac – Imagine how Abraham felt when God asked him to sacrifice his son who was a child of promise. Time showed the Lord provided a ram instead (Genesis 22:1-14)
2. The walls of Jericho – God asked the people to march around the city once a day for six days and then all shout. That is not the usual way to storm a city, but the walls fell down! (Joshua 6:1-20)
3. Noah and the Ark – God asked Noah to build an ark to save him, his family and the animals from the flooding rains. Up until that time rain had never fallen from the sky. Noah build the ark and it saved them all from the flooding rains (Genesis 6:1-22)
4. Moses before Pharaoh – Imagine how Moses felt when God asked him to go to the most powerful ruler on earth and demand he lets God's people go. History shows it worked out ok! (Exodus 5:1-5)
5. Gideon's army of 300 – Imagine how Gideon felt when God told him to reduce his army to 300 men to fight and defeat a huge Midianite army. Again we see God knew what He was doing and 300 men was enough (Judges 7:2-8)

As we can see from all of these occasions – obedience to God's requests makes sense. God's knows the end from the beginning and even though He doesn't let us know all the details, it makes sense to follow Him, even when it doesn't make sense to us.

Trust God, be obedient and follow His promptings today.



## Lord I believe, help my unbelief

In Mark chapter nine there is an interesting passage about a man who brings his demon possessed son to Jesus for healing. He had previously taken him to the Disciples but they were unable to help (v18).

In verse 22 the man says to Jesus, “.....But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us.” To this Jesus responds, “Everything is possible for him who believes” (v23).

I really love the father's honest answer. He says, “Lord I believe, help my unbelief”. You can almost hear him saying, “I believe, but I am, well, umh, not really sure if You will heal him. After all I took him to the Disciples and they couldn't help”.

The father's faith was far from perfect, but he still asked Jesus for help. His faith was still mixed with unbelief, to which he asked Jesus to help him with that too.

I find this a good thing to ask Jesus for – helping us in our unbelief. All of us have times when we are 100% rock solid in our faith and belief that Jesus can do anything. However, at times and through life's circumstances we sometimes lose sight of this.

In these times we need to hold firm and ask Jesus for what we need and also ask Him to help us in our unbelief. I know from experience that when I waiver or I am fearful that this type of prayer really helps. It is not long before my faith is 100% rock solid again.

If you are trusting Jesus for help in your current situation at the moment, why not tell Jesus that you believe and ask for help with your unbelief too.

## Psalm 23 and Psalm 24 together

This morning my wife and I were reading Psalm 24 together. It is a great passage of Scripture. Many people would have heard Psalm 23 – the Lord is my Shepherd passage. It is common at funerals and when people are going through hard times.

Today we read both Psalm 23 and Psalm 24 together. It was a great reminder that not only is the Lord God our shepherd who is with us in hard times, but He is the one who created all things, owns all things, rules all things and we can experience His presence with us.

Here are both passages. Please enjoy them together.....

### Psalm 23:1-6

The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

### Psalm 24:1-10

The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; for he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters. Who may ascend the hill of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false. He will receive blessing from the LORD and vindication from God his Savior. Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek your face, O God of Jacob.

Selah Lift up your heads, O you gates; be lifted up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and

mighty, the LORD mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O you gates; lift them up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. Who is he, this King of glory? The LORD Almighty— he is the King of glory.

# Death and LIFE

I read a great quote from Rheinhard Bonnke on Facebook recently. It said, “For the born-again Christian, death is not a full stop at the end of the last chapter. It is only a comma after the first paragraph”.

This has been rolling around inside me for the last few days. I really believe that if we can get our heads around the fact, that we will spend way more time in eternity than we will living this life, then our lives will be irrevocably changed for the good.

Today’s Bible verse of the day on BibleGateway.com echoes these thoughts. It comes from John 11:25 and says, “Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die;”

Faith in Jesus Christ gives us so much. It gives us abundant life now (John 10:10) and it gives us eternal life (John 3:16) when our “first chapter” is finished.

Let’s walk in abundant life today and look forward with hope to the eternal life that awaits all who [trust Jesus as their Lord and Saviour](#). Amen!

# The call of Jesus

In Mark 1:16-20 we see Jesus calls the first disciples or followers. It was when He was about to start His public ministry. As I read through this passage, I found three interesting points that are worth reflecting on.

## **1. They were ordinary people**

We see from the passage above that the first followers of Jesus were fisherman. They were not pious or religious scholars or known to all of the chief priests. They were just ordinary men trying to make a living. They were labourers who knew how to work hard.

## **2. They answered straight away**

The men knew straight away this was a compelling call and they had to follow. They didn't have a big prayer session, they didn't discuss it, or they didn't phone a friend like on Millionaire! They just dropped their nets and followed. There was no hesitation.

## **3. They didn't look back**

The men were totally committed to Jesus and followed Him day and night for three and a half years. They didn't ask to go and tie up the boat or sell the business. As a result they saw many of the things Jesus did and put some of it into practice themselves. It was the ultimate apprenticeship!

One of the great things I love about Jesus is that He calls ordinary people to partner in His work. Let's purpose to be like the disciples when Jesus called. Let's answer straight away and not look back.

## **95% of God's will for our lives**

When I was a brand new Christian I used to pray and ask God's will for my life. I would stress and strain and seek and seek and seek. Of course this is not a bad thing to seek God in regard to His will.

However, as time has gone on I have come to realise that 95% of God's will for my life is that I come to know Him personally. For me this happened when I asked Jesus into my life in 1989.

The rest of God's will, I believe, is that we grow in our faith and we walk in His ways. God wants us to keep moving forward in our learning about Him and His ways. This comes by prayerfully reading and reflecting on the Bible.

When we prayerfully read the Bible, God's will seems to just come to pass. Our thoughts slowly get more in tune with God and we see things around us that God is involved in. As a result we want to get involved.

God's ultimate will is that we come to know Him personally. He wants to be a part of our life and He wants us to be a part of His life. He wants us to spend this life walking with Him and then eternity with Him.

If you don't know Jesus Christ personally I would encourage you to visit my [Finding Salvation page here](#). Then you will know 95% of God's will for your life too.

## Don't let Jesus pass you by

I was reading Mark 6:45-56 this morning. This is the passage that the NIV Bible heads up as “Jesus walking on the water”.

This passage talks about Jesus sending the disciples ahead Him across the lake to Bethsaida. While they went He went up the hill to pray. As they journeyed a huge storm blew in and they feared for their lives.

I have read this passage many times before, but today as I read it I noticed verse 48 and saw something I have never seen before. It says.....

“He saw the disciples straining at the oars, because the wind was against them. About the fourth watch of the night he went out to them, walking on the lake.**He was about to pass by them.....**”

As I said I have read this passage many times before but have never really noticed that Jesus was about to pass them by. The reason why Jesus stopped was that they “cried out” (v49).

I can't help but wonder what would have happened if they had not of cried out to Jesus. Would He have stopped? Would He have saved them?

I think the same thing can happen to us today. We can be going through a difficult time and we don't call out to Jesus for help. He is always ready and willing to answer our cry for help.

If you are going through a hard time today, I would encourage you to not let Jesus pass you by. Cry out to Him for help today.

# The Humility of Jesus

One of the things I love about Jesus is the humility He showed in coming to earth and how He lived while He was here. This is stark contrast to how many famous people or people in positions of power live their lives.

Today I thought I would share some of the passages of Scripture that look at Jesus' humility.....

1. His coming to earth – In 2 Corinthians 8:9 we see that though Jesus was rich, He became poor. He gave up the glories of heaven to live amongst us.
2. His servant life – Luke 22:27 talks about Jesus being the one who served us. Mark 10:45 echoes this thought in that Jesus came to serve and not be served.
3. He did the Father's will – Jesus tells us in John 6:38 that He didn't come to do His own will, but the will of His heavenly Father.
4. He washed feet – John 13:4-5 says that Jesus got up during the passover meal and washed His disciples feet. The King of universe bent down to wash dirty feet.
5. He rode a donkey – Matthew 21:5, 7 looks at how Jesus rode into Jerusalem. He could have chosen a golden chariot, but He chose a donkey.
6. He died on a cross – Philippians 2:8 tells us that Jesus humbled Himself by dying on a Roman cross.

Jesus was and is the King of the universe. But in humility He came to earth, lived a servant lifestyle and died on the cross. Jesus humility is a great lesson for us all.



## **Three essentials of being a good servant**

As a committed Christian my heart is to be a servant of God. I want to follow Jesus' example of servant-hood (Mark 10:45, Matthew 12:18, Philippians 2:7).

I really want to use my life to serve God and to serve others. As I have been reflecting on this idea of servant-hood, three things have come to mind.....

1. A servant should have only one Master – as Christians our sole Master must be God Himself. We can't have divided attentions or divided loyalties.
2. A servant should be submissive to the Master's will – a true servant must have a desire to do the Master's will. Like Jesus did on the Garden, He surrendered His will to the Father.
3. A servant must be faithful to the Master – 1 Corinthians 4:2 talks about if we have been given a trust, it is important that we are found to be faithful.

Let's purpose in our hearts today to be God's devoted servants. Let's have Him as our sole Master, be surrendered to His will and be faithful to Him in all we do.

# Christ is supreme to all things

One of my favourite passages of Scripture is found in Colossians 1:15-23. In this passage the Apostle Paul talks about the Supremacy of Christ.

He does this because the church at Colosse had been infected by some false teaching that Christ was only one of the “spiritual beings” that acts as intermediary between God and mankind. Rather than the only one.

In this passage Paul says three great statements about Jesus.

1. Jesus is the visible image of the invisible God (Col 1:15) – In saying this Paul says that Jesus is part of the Godhead – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This makes Him supreme to all other created creatures including angels.

2. Jesus was the Creator (Col 1:16) – Verse 16 says, “For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him”.

3. Jesus is the head of the church (Col 1:18) – Verse 18 tells us that Christ is the head of the body – the Church. This means He is the supreme ruler of the church.

In this short passage we see that Jesus is God, that all things were created by and for Him and that He is head over all of the Church. Jesus is supreme to all things that this world has to offer.

Paul states these things to set the church at Colosse straight. Rather than attack the false teaching, he simply states the truth about Jesus and who He really is.

Let us pause and remember today that Christ is supreme to all things.

# Written in the Book

Having your name recorded in a book can make a huge difference to your life. Just think about it for a moment. Having your name on the book at the Department of Transport means you are allowed to drive a car and having your name on the election roles means you can vote.

No matter what we do in life it is important to be recorded in a book somewhere as it means you can get an education, receive health care when needed and even enables us to purchase a home for our families.

In the Bible it talks about an important book. It is called the Lamb's Book of Life. The Bible tells us that this Book records all the names of the people who receive Jesus as their Lord and Saviour.

In Revelations chapter 21 it talks about this Book being vital if you want to enter heaven. It says, "Nothing evil will be allowed to enter, nor anyone who practices shameful idolatry and dishonesty—but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life" (Revelation 21:27).

The Bible also says that those whose names are not written in the Lamb's Book of Life will miss out on heaven. Revelation 20:15 makes it pretty clear – "And anyone whose name was not found recorded in the Book of Life was thrown into the lake of fire".

Today I want to ask you some questions. Is your name written in the Lamb's Book of Life? Have you received Jesus as your Lord and Saviour? My hope is that you will be able to say yes to these questions.

If you are not sure or you would like to make sure your name is written in this Book and you want to be assured you will enter heaven one day. Please visit [this page](#).

# Keeping a healthy spirit

The Bible says in Proverbs 18:14, “A man’s spirit sustains him in sickness, but a crushed spirit who can bear?”

This proverb contrasts a healthy spirit with a “crushed spirit”. The figure of a “crushed” spirit in this verse suggests a broken will, loss of vitality, despair, and emotional pain.

When a person’s spirit is healthy they are positive, alive, vibrant and are able to cope with most things that come their way. Even when facing major illness they seem to have the will to face it and overcome.

So what are some of the things we can do to maintain a healthy spirit? Here are a few that I have found helpful.

1. Prayer – keeping connected with God by prayer keeps up spiritually in tune with Him.
2. Bible reading – reading the Word of God regularly feeds our souls. It is our daily bread.
3. Confession – none of us are perfect and we all sin at times. Confession helps to lift the load when we sin.
4. Fellowship – spending time with positive faith filled people charges up our faith and lifts our spirit.
5. Rest – getting enough rest is vital to keeping a healthy spirit. We can’t just keep going and expect to be healthy.
6. Recreation – if we want a healthy spirit we need to do things we enjoy and take us away from our everyday routines.
7. Service – serving others takes our focus of ourselves. Get involved in serving God by serving others to keep a healthy spirit.

These are some of the things that help me to maintain a healthy spirit. When my spirit is healthy, I am more resilient and I am able to cope when the issues of life come my way.

## Philip's miracles drew attention

I was reading through Acts chapter eight this morning about Philip the evangelist. It is the passage that talks about Philip preaching in Samaria.

Acts 8:4-7 says, “Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Christ there. When the crowds heard Philip and saw the miraculous signs he did, they all paid close attention to what he said. With shrieks, evil spirits came out of many, and many paralytics and cripples were healed”.

It is interesting that because of Philip’s preaching and miracles the people there paid close attention. The original Greek word used in this verse (Prosecho) means they really paid attention and it held on to their minds. They stopped what they were doing and focussed.

As we read on we see that once Philip had their attention he preached about the Kingdom of God and Jesus Christ and performed miracles. He didn’t just do the miracles in a stand alone format. The miracles got peoples attention and Philip was able to share the Good News of God’s salvation.

Let’s read on to verse 13 to see what happened. “But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women”.

So what can we see from all of this? One thing is for sure that the miracles performed got peoples attention. They stopped what they were doing and listened intently. When they were listening, Philip preached the message of God’s Kingdom and people came to Jesus as a result. Even Simon the Sorcerer!

God performs miracles through us out of His compassion and mercy. However, there are a number of times in the Bible we see the miracles are done to open doors to preach about the Kingdom of God and salvation through Jesus Christ.

# Being transformed and renewed

The Bible tells us in Romans 12:2 that we should be transformed by the renewing of our minds. Recently I was thinking about different areas of my life and how God has transformed me during this renewing process.

Here are a few of the ways I have and am being transformed.

1. Self image – my self image has changed from how the world saw me to how God sees me according to the Bible. I now know that I am made in God's image (Genesis 1:26), that He lovingly knit me together in my mothers womb (Psalm 139:13) and has made me for a purpose (Ephesians 2:10).

2. More considerate of others – before I came to Christ and the transformation process began, I was only really interested in myself and how life effected me. Now God has changed my heart to more of an outward focus and more concern for those around me (Philippians 2:3-4).

3. Worrying about the future – before Christ I was always worried about the future and what bad things it would bring. Now I know that God holds my future in the palm of His hand. I trust that He will care for me and supply my needs as I serve Him (Matthew 6:25-34).

4. My speech has changed – for most of my life (and the first few years of being a Christian) I had a foul mouth. Every fourth word that left it was a swear word. God slowly transformed this speech pattern. Now the words I use are designed to encourage and build others up (1 Thessalonians 5:11, Proverbs 16:24).

So there you have it, four ways God has transformed and is transforming my life. It is amazing when you look back and see how far you have come. In saying this though, I am also very conscious of how far I still need to be transformed. Like every Christian I am still a work in progress!

## **All of our days are numbered**

Several years ago my wife and I were watching some moles I have had on my back for a number of years to see if any of them change colour or shape. This is what we have been told to do as changes in moles can be a sign of skin cancer.

We noticed a couple of them had become darker in colour and had possibly changed in shape and size too. We decided that I should go off to the doctors just to be sure nothing is wrong. The doctor said that I should have them removed just to be sure and have them tested. I was booked in to have this procedure done.

For most of us the natural tendency is to worry and wonder if you have cancer and if you will require extensive treatment. I have to admit that this had crossed my mind momentarily. I wouldn't be human if it didn't! But in the midst of these thoughts I quickly realised that God is with me and all of my days are numbered by Him.

None of us can add a day to our lives by worry or by doing anything else. Psalm 139:16 says, "You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed".

For me this thought is a great comfort and allows me to trust God. I know that no matter what happens to me in this life, that my life and all of my days are in God's hands and I won't go home until He calls me there.



# Training our kids in the way to go

The Bible says in Proverbs 22:6 that we should, “Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it”.

This verse gives us great encouragement to really nurture and teach our kids the things of God. It makes the promise that if we do, they will continue on in their faith.

Here are a few ways we are trying to train our kids in the things of God.

1. Modelling – we try our best to model the right way to follow Jesus in front of our kids so they can learn how to do it themselves.
2. Teaching – we show our kids what the Bible teaches on different subjects in a practical way so it is easy to live it out.
3. Encouragement – whenever our kids do something well we try to encourage and positively reinforce what they are doing.
4. Correction – we give them constructive criticism to correct the behaviour in they are doing something wrong.
5. Benefits – we show the benefits of living the way God wants us to live and that it makes sense to do so.
6. Love – we let our kids know how much we as parents we love them and just how much God really loves them.
7. Purpose – we show our kids that God has made them a certain way to do certain things in this life and that we should seek out God’s will for our lives.
8. Developing – we are helping our kids to develop their own faith and relationship with God. We want them to have their own personal faith and to relate to God in a way that is meaningful to them.

At the heart of this training is a desire to pass our faith on to our kids. As

parents we want to be faithful to God and His Word and to prepare them to be the best they can be and to make a positive impact of the world around them.

# The Beatitudes or be-attitudes

In Matthew 5:3-10 Jesus opens the Sermon on the Mount with The Beatitudes or the be-attitudes as I have heard them called. It says.....

3“God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him,  
for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

4God blesses those who mourn,  
for they will be comforted.

5God blesses those who are humble,  
for they will inherit the whole earth.

6God blesses those who hunger and thirst for justice,  
for they will be satisfied.

7God blesses those who are merciful,  
for they will be shown mercy.

8God blesses those whose hearts are pure,  
for they will see God.

9God blesses those who work for peace,  
for they will be called the children of God.

10God blesses those who are persecuted for doing right,  
for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

It is interesting to note that the Greek work used for “blesses” is Makareeos (Mak-ar-ee-os). This word can be translated as supremely blessed, fortunate, well off, or happy. This helps us to further understand what this passage means.

When I first read this passage years ago I thought it was talking about different groups of people. However, over time I have come to see that these are the attitudes we should all display as Christians.

In much the same way we should display the Fruits of the Spirit that Galatians 5:22-23 talks about, as Christians we should display these qualities that Jesus opened His most famous sermon with.

God wants us to realise our need for Him, He wants us to want to see justice done, He wants us to be merciful, He wants us to be pure of heart. He also promises to comfort us when we mourn and when we are persecuted for our faith.

Let's all purpose today to really live with pure hearts, to be humble, to work for peace, to show justice and realise our complete and total dependence on God.

# Transformation by Word and Spirit

In my morning devotions this morning I was reflecting on the way that God changes our lives over time. Our old habits and attitudes slowly fall away and good deeds start to flow.

As I was thinking about this I was thinking of two ways this process happens.

1. The Word of God – the Bible has a way of transforming our thinking. As Hebrews 4:12 says it cuts to the heart of things and shows us where we are wrong. But it doesn't leave us all condemned, it gives hope and forgiveness and shows us the right way to think and live. Time spent reflectively in God's Word brings godly change.

2. The Spirit of God – God's Holy Spirit helps to transform us inwardly. When we come to Christ the Holy Spirit resides in us (Romans 8:11) and He helps us to change. Day by day we are transformed inwardly (2 Corinthians 4:16) and we are changed into the likeness of Christ.

So the Word of God and the Spirit of God work hand in hand. As we spend time in God's Word, the Holy Spirit teaches, changes and strengthens us to become the people God intended us to be all along.

Let's purpose to spend time in God's Word and allow the Holy Spirit to bring change to our hearts and minds today. Let's be a transformed people!

## Seek Him by prayer and worship

I was reading Deuteronomy chapter 4 the other morning. When I got to verse 29 I had to pause and reflect.

It says, “But if from there you seek the LORD your God, you will find him if you look for him with all your heart and with all your soul”.

As I reflected I really wanted to understand what God meant by seek. How did He want me to seek Him? This caused me to look at the Hebrew word for seek that was used in the passage. It was “baqash” (baw-kash).

When you look up the meaning it says to search out by any method; but specifically in worship or prayer. It also has implications of striving after or to ask, beg, beseech, desire, enquire, get, make inquisition, procure.

I found it interesting to note that the same word “baqash” was used in Jeremiah 29:11-13 where it says to seek Him and we will find Him when we seek with all of our hearts.

If you want to find God today. Seek Him by prayer and worship and seek Him with all of you heart. He promises to be found by you.

## **Jesus' words are eternal**

The Bible says in Matthew 24:35, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away”.

Jesus said these words at the end of a section the NIV titles “Sings of the End of the Age”. He talks about things happening before He returns.

He talks about things like wars and rumours of wars, people falling away from faith, Christians being deceived, people claiming to be Christ and more.

In other places the Bible also tells us that our world is going to be destroyed by fire (2 Peter 3:7-13) and a new heaven and earth will replace it (Revelation 21:1).

The thing I find interesting in this verse is the thought that even though this world will pass away, Christ’s words ARE eternal! They are forever words!

I find it comforting to know that even though Jesus spoke them 2000 years ago.....He backs them up eternally.

## **Just plans and wicked advice**

Proverbs 12:5 says, “The plans of the righteous are just, but the advice of the wicked is deceitful”.

Righteous people or people who try to live right before God have plans that are good and just. Their thoughts and intentions are fair and honest. They desire to do what is right by God and for those around them.

Contrast this to the plans of a wicked person. They are only interested in getting what they want and do not care how they go about it. Their moral choices and decisions are questionable and often cause others pain or loss.

So how do we know if the person we are dealing with is righteous? The best way is to look for someone with demonstrated character and integrity over a long period of time. Someone who has concern for not only themselves but those around them too.

Of course this doesn't always guarantee good or successful advice. But these things say a lot about who they are as a person and their motivations behind the advice they are offering.



# Why do we need the Holy Spirit?

I recently got asked the question “Why do we need the Holy Spirit, when I already have Jesus?” It was by someone who was a new Christian.

It was a good question and one that I asked myself a number of years ago. I decided to pull out some Scriptures and see what the Bible said in my answer.

The verses paint a broad picture and give us a number of reasons why we need the Holy Spirit in our lives.

1. Jesus promised to send another Comforter to help us (John 14:26)
2. He dwells in us as Christians (Romans 8:11)
3. He shows us when we are not living right (John 16:8-11)
4. He give us a new life in Christ (Titus 3:5)
5. He empowers us to tell others about Jesus’ love and salvation (Acts 1:8)
6. He helps us to pray and connect with God (Romans 8:26)
7. He makes us more Christ-like in the way we live (Romans 8:5-9)
8. He gives us gifts to serve God and serve others (1 Corinthians 12:4-11)
9. He encourages us in our faith (Acts 9:31)
10. He reveals the secret things of God to us (1 Corinthians 2:10-16)

These are only 10 of the reasons why we need the Holy Spirit in our lives. There are a lot more when you search through the Bible.

## **Not keeping up appearances**

The Bible says in Proverbs 12:9, “Better to be a nobody and yet have a servant than pretend to be somebody and have no food”.

This verse touches on the idea of keeping up appearances or pretending to be something that we are not. Often as humans we will try to impress others with what we own or how we live, and to keep up our “image” we will live beyond our means.

Proverbs 12:9 tells us that it is better to be humble and live within our means, rather than put on a fake show to big note how successful we are. It is about being content with yourself and your circumstances versus being flashy for the sake of others.

So how do we avoid the urge to keep up appearances? There are a few things we can do....Pray and ask God to help you to be content with your circumstances and to help you to live within your means. Give thanks to Him for all of the good things in your life. Tell Him how much you appreciate His blessings. Ask Him to see yourself through His eyes. Once you do that then the need to impress others with what you have will slowly fall away.

# The Golden Rule

Many people believe that the Bible is full of complex rules that we need to know and follow. However there is one verse that sums up all of the relational teachings very simply.

This verse is found in Matthew 7:12 and is called the Golden Rule. It says, “Do to others whatever you would like them to do to you. This is the essence of all that is taught in the law and the prophets”.

Treat people how you would like to be treated. It doesn't get more simple than that!

I don't know about you, but I like to be loved, encouraged, supported, respected, spoken well to, cared for, spoken well of, befriended and included.

I don't like to be beaten up, yelled at, excluded, stolen from, spoken about negatively, discouraged and hated.

Let's all purpose in our hearts today to treat people how we would like to be treated. And if we accidentally do the wrong thing, let's go back and apologise straight away.

# The right type of wisdom

James 3:17 says, “But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere”.

Let’s break down the words from this verse to help us to understand the wisdom that comes from heaven. I have looked the words up in my kids school dictionary.

Pure – pure means not mixed with anything else, clean and free from harmful substances, containing nothing sinful.

Peace-loving – peace is a state of calm and quiet when there is no disturbance, no war.

Considerate – someone who pays attention to the needs and feelings of others.

Submissive – behaving in a quiet and obedient way.

Full of Mercy – showing mercy means showing kindness and forgiveness and do not punish someone as severely as you could.

Full of good fruit – good fruit is the good things for others, especially being kind to them.

Impartial – having a view of something which is fair and un-biased.

Sincere – if you are sincere you say and do things that you really mean, you are honest and genuine.

As we have seen in a previous post, wisdom is about having knowledge and then putting that knowledge in to practice in the right way.

This verse shows that we should use our wisdom in a caring and considerate way that shows shows no favouritism. If we are doing these things, we will know our wisdom is the wisdom that comes from heaven.

## **Peter's mother in law healed**

In Matthew 8:14-15 we see an interesting healing that involved the Apostle Peter's mother-in-law. It says.....

“When Jesus arrived at Peter's house, Peter's mother-in-law was sick in bed with a high fever. But when Jesus touched her hand, the fever left her. Then she got up and prepared a meal for him”.

This healing was just after the Sermon on the Mount and Jesus healing a number of people of leprosy and the healing of the slave of the Roman Soldier.

The thing I like about this healing is that it was not a public healing to show that God's power was with Jesus. It was a private healing to restore Peter's mother-in-law to health. Jesus saw she was sick and brought healing.

This simple healing can give us confidence to pray for our own families in times of illness. The healing power of God is not just available to crusade type events to bring people salvation. It is also personal and for the ones closest to us.

## **A kind word cheers him up**

One of the great things I love about the Bible is that it prompts me and reminds me of certain things as I read it.

Today I read Proverbs 12:25. It says, “An anxious heart weighs a man down, but a kind word cheers him up”. It is a short and simple verse, but it has a great reminder.

If someone is anxious about something or not feeling the best, a kind word can cheer them up. It is simple, practical advice that can make a difference to someone’s day!

How about you? Who can you cheer up today? Why not look around as you go about your day and see if someone needs a kind word. Let them know you appreciate them or something good they do. It might just make the world of difference.

## Money and possessions

In Matthew 6:19-34 there is a section titled, “Teaching about money and possessions”. This is part of Jesus’ sermon on the mount. In it Jesus shares four key things about our money and our possessions.

1. Store your treasures in heaven – verses 19-21 talk about earthly treasures versus heavenly treasures. We see that earthly treasure can be damaged or stolen, but heavenly treasures are safely locked away with God. We need to build “eternal superannuation” by supporting God’s work with our finances.

2. Let God be your only Master – verse 24 says “No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other”. As Christians we need to let God be our sole master, we can’t focus on building wealth and possessions to the detriment of our relationship with God. God must always come first in our hearts and in the way we live.

3. Don’t worry about daily needs – verses 25-32 looks at our daily needs of life like food and clothing. These things can cause us great worry if we allow them to. However the text tells us that God supplies our needs like He supplies the needs of the animals and birds. It says that we are of far more value to Him than they are (v26). We can trust Him to supply our daily needs because He loves and cares for us deeply.

4. Seek first the Kingdom – in verse 33 it says, “Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need”. As Christians our primary focus needs to be on God’s Kingdom and what He wants us to do with our daily lives. God promises that if we seek His Kingdom first and live right, that He will give us everything we need to live both now and into the future.

We can see from this passage that we don’t need to worry about money and possessions. God wants us to focus first and foremost on His Kingdom. When we do that He promises to take care of our daily needs as we trust and follow Him. God loves you and I very deeply and He knows what we need daily to live. He will supply all.

# A good servant of Jesus Christ

In 1 Timothy 4:6-16 we find some good advice on how to be a good servant of Jesus Christ. In this passage we see four things that will help us in service to God.

1. Be spiritually fit – Verses 7-8 tell us to spend out time and energy in training yourself for spiritual fitness. It goes on to say that while physical exercise has benefits, spiritual fitness lasts into the next life. So read and study your Bible, pray continuously and interact with others who share your faith.

2. Be an example to others – Verse 12 tells us to be an “example to all believers in what you say, in the way you live, in your love, your faith, and your purity”. Other people see that our faith is genuine by our words, our love and our actions. We need to ensure our lives match our words.

3. Use your spiritual gifts – Verse 14 says that we should not neglect our spiritual gifts, especially the ones recognised by our church. It goes on to say that we should throw ourselves completely into our tasks so everyone will see our progress. Finding and using our God given gifts is vital to be good servants.

4. Monitor your progress – The passage closes in verse 16 with a reminder to monitor ourselves and keep a check on how we are going. It warns us to watch our teaching and to stay true to what is right. It gives us a great promise that if we do the people who hear will be saved.

In this short passage of Scripture we can draw some simple things to help stay on track spiritually and to help us be good servants of Jesus Christ.



# Four ways God reveals Himself to us

Many people search for God at some time in their lives. They ask and question if God is real. Many ask God to reveal Himself to them, especially during the hard times that life brings. Here are four ways God has revealed Himself to us all.

## 1. God has revealed Himself through creation

The Bible tells us in Psalm 19:1-2, “The heavens proclaim the glory of God. The skies display his craftsmanship. Day after day they continue to speak; night after night they make him known”. This magnificent world that we live in point to a God who created all things. As the above verse says, His creation reveals God to us.

## 2. God reveals Himself in mankind

The Bible tells us that we are all made in God’s image (Genesis 1:26-27). This means God has imprinted His DNA into ours. When we live in loving relationships, or when use our God given gifts to work, or we creatively make a masterpiece, or when we make choices for good, we are reflecting God’s image and making Him known.

## 3. God reveals Himself by intervening in our world

In the Book of Exodus we see that God intervened in the life of the people of Israel (Exodus 14:1-29). The people were up against the Red Sea with Pharaohs army approaching. There was no hope until God intervened and parted the Red Sea. God is a God who loves us and is interested in intervening in our lives. He is not a far off and distant God as some people think.

## 4. God revealed Himself in Jesus Christ

The Bible tells us that God has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ. Colossians 1:15 says, “Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation”. If you have ever wondered what God is like, then look at the life and person of Jesus Christ.

So there you have it, four ways that God has revealed Himself to us all. From these things we see that He is not a distant God that is far removed from His creation. He reveals Himself in His creation, He reveals Himself in us, by His intervention in the world and in the life and person of Jesus Christ.

## Real love

When we watch TV or go to the movies we get all sorts of images thrown at us telling us what real love is. Some see it as attraction, lust, sex or other things. The Bible tells us what real love is.

In 1 John 4:9-10 it says, “God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him. This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins”.

Real love is not so much a feeling or an attraction, but something that sacrifices and longs for a true and deep relationship. It is something that looks to the long term best of the other.

Just like what God did for us in sending Jesus to die to take away our sins. It was sacrificial, for our long term eternal best and all about relationship with you and I. To me that is real love!

I pray that you will know the love God has for you today.

# Whom did Jesus appear to after He was raised?

One of the key foundations of the Christian faith is that Jesus died and rose again. As Christians we believe in the Bible's account that Jesus rose bodily. He wasn't some sort of ghost or spirit, but flesh and blood.

One of the reasons we believe this is because of the many eye witness accounts of seeing Him after He was raised. Here are a few.....

1. To Mary Magdalene at the Tomb (Mark 16:9-11, John 20:11-18)
2. To Mary and the other Mary (Matthew 28:9-10)
3. To Peter (Luke 24:34, 1 Corinthians 15:5)
4. To the Disciples on the road to Emmaus (Mark 16:12-13, Luke 24:13-35)
5. To the Apostles in the Upper Room (Mark 16:14-18, John 20:24-29)
6. To the Disciples at the Sea of Galilee (John 21:1-22)
7. On the Mount of Olives (Luke 24:50-51, Acts 1:6-11)
8. To more than 500 people (1 Corinthians 15:6)
9. Many times in the 40 days after His resurrection (Acts 1:3)
10. To James (1 Corinthians 15:7)

As you can see Jesus appeared many times to His followers in public and in private. Both the Bible and other historical writers at the time mention the resurrection of Jesus.

I believe that there is too much evidence to show Jesus was raised in bodily form before He returned to heaven.

## Understanding saving faith

A lot of people I speak to as I go about my daily life tell me they have a belief in God. They say that they believe there is a God who is in control of things.

However when you go a bit deeper you find that it is a very vague understanding and “faith” that there is a God somewhere out there. As we talk I try to explain to them that to have a saving faith in God, you need to have more than a vague belief that God exists.

The Bible tells us that faith it is about having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, understanding who He is and what He has done for us.

Here are some of the things we need to understand about saving faith. If you read the dot points and then hover over the Bible verses you will be able to read what the Bible says. We need to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (John 20:30-31). We need to accept that we have sinned and fallen short of God’s standards (Romans 3:23). We need to believe that He came to earth to die on the cross for our sin that separated us from God (1 Peter 3:18, Romans 5:8). We need to believe that God raised Jesus back to life (Romans 10:9-10). We need to confess our sin to God and ask for His forgiveness (1 John 1:9). We need to ask Jesus into our lives and accept Him as our Lord and Saviour (John 1:12, Revelation 3:20).

Saving faith is not about what we do to save ourselves. It is about believing in Jesus Christ and what He has done for us. Our part is to receive Him into our lives and then live our lives for Him.

If you would like to receive Jesus into your life today and find peace with God (Romans 5:1), you can pray this prayer right now.

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe that You are the Son of God. I believe that You came to earth to die on the cross for my sin and that God raised You back to life. I apologise for all the wrong things I have done in my life and I ask for Your forgiveness. Please come into my life and be my Lord and Saviour. I pray that from this day forward I will be able to live for You. Amen.

If you prayed this prayer it means that Jesus is now in your life. Your sins are forgiven and you will spend eternity with God! I would encourage you to visit this page on my website to find out what to do next – [What next!](#)

# The Roman Soldiers faith

In Matthew 8:5-13 there is an interesting passage that looks at the faith displayed by a Roman soldier or the centurion as he is sometimes known.

I find there are two things really interesting in this passage.

1. The Centurion understands the authority of Jesus – as a soldier under command we see that he knew and understood authority and the power of the order. He knew that just as a General doesn't have to be present for the order to be accepted, Jesus didn't have to be present for his servant to be healed. He knew Jesus had the power to heal his servant and that he would be made well by Jesus' command from a distance.

2. Jesus included him in the Kingdom because of his faith – up until this point in time the Jewish nation of people (or Israelites) thought they were the only ones who would eat at the great feast in heaven. However Jesus says that many will come from all ends of the earth who are Gentiles (non Jews) and eat. He goes on to say that some in the House of Israel will miss out. No longer is the issue about birth or race, it becomes about faith in Christ and believing in who He is.

In this passage Jesus opens it up for all to come in to Him in faith. It doesn't matter where you were born, it doesn't matter who you are, it doesn't matter if your family is a family of faith. You can come to Him, find salvation and eat at the great feast in heaven that is promised to all those who believe.

## Listen to Him

I was re-reading the story of the Transfiguration from Matthew 17 recently. The Transfiguration is where Jesus went up the mountain with Peter, James and John and He was changed before them.

Verse two tells us that “His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light”. And verse three says that the great Old Testament characters Moses and Elijah appeared.

As I read though, one verse really jumped out at me. Verse five says, “While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!”

This is God the Father approving of His Son Jesus. Just like He did in Matthew 3:17 after Jesus had been baptised by John. Only this time the Father added the words “Listen to Him” at the end.

It is interesting to note that in the following chapters after this Jesus gave another block of teaching. He touched on things like paying taxes, divorce, being merciful, the parable of the lost sheep, the conversation with the rich young man, the Kingdom of Heaven and more.

I had never noticed the extra words “Listen to Him” before. It makes me want to re-read the following chapters and see what pearls of wisdom from God are in there. From the headings you can see they are some of the big issues of life that we need wisdom for!

Perhaps you could do it too? You can find it here on [BibleGateway.com](http://BibleGateway.com).



# The power of the tongue

I have been reflecting on the power the tongue has in our lives lately. It can build up and encourage or it can tear down and destroy. Just a few rightly or wrongly placed words can make a huge difference.

The Bible talks about the power of the tongue in James 3:9. It says, “Sometimes it praises our Lord and Father, and sometimes it curses those who have been made in the image of God”. From this we can see the words we speak can go either way. They can be used for good or evil.

As I have reflected on the power of the tongue I have thought of some positive things I can use my words for. ....I can speak blessing into someone's lifeI can speak encouragement to a troubled friends situationI can teach my children something from the BibleI can preach a sermon in churchI can teach a Sunday School classI can sing praises to my GodI can share God's love and saving message with a friendI can bring peace to a hostile situationI can tell my wife and kids how much I love them

When you think of these positive things it makes me want to only speak good and not evil. The world already has too many people who are quick to cut others down with their words.

Let's realise the power of our tongues and chose our words wisely. Let's purpose in our hearts today to speak only words that will build up and bring life to others.

# What the Bible says about gossip

I have been thinking a lot about gossip lately. This has been because of the endless media reports about Tiger Woods, Michael Clarke and other “celebrities”. It seems as a society we are addicted to gossip and it fuels so much of our media.

So what is gossip? My kids dictionary described it very simply.....Gossip is informal conversation, often about people’s private affairs. Someone who is a gossip enjoys talking about other people’s private affairs. If you gossip, you talk informally with someone, especially about other people

From this we can see it about talking about other people’s private business to a third person or group of people.

But what does the Bible say about gossip? I looked through my concordance to find some verses. They paint a picture of what God says about gossip.

Gossip can betray confidences (Proverbs 11:13)Gossip can separate friends (Proverbs 16:28)Gossip makes quarrels last longer (Proverbs 26:20)When we gossip we can slander others (Leviticus 19:16)People who gossip are wicked (Romans 1:29)Christians should not gossip, but should take care of their own homes (1 Timothy 5:13)

Now these are only a few verses, but you can see they paint a very negative picture. They do not help the situation or build others up. In fact they are quite destructive.

So how do we know if we are gossiping? I remember hearing a sermon about it many years ago that has always stayed with me.

The preacher said, “If you are not part of the problem or part of the solution, then it might just be gossip”.

I think in our gossip obsessed society, this is a good place to start. Let’s not involve ourselves in other people’s private business today, unless we are part of the problem or part of the solution.

## **Paul advice to a young Pastor**

I was just reading through 1 Timothy 4:13. It is where Paul is encouraging Timothy on what to do in the church until he returns to be with him.

Paul says, “Until I get there, focus on reading the Scriptures to the church, encouraging the believers, and teaching them”.

This is a good place to start and a timely reminder of what Paul thought was important for this young Pastor to do. Read the Bible to the church, encourage them in their faith and teach them how to live.

With some many things that seem pressing in our churches I think Paul’s advice is spot on. Feeding and encouraging God’s sheep is a great thing to focus on for a young Pastor.

## **We all need forgiveness**

The Bible says in 1 John 1:9, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness”.

That is a great verse. It says that if we confess our wrongs to God then He WILL forgive us. It is a guarantee no matter what we have done or how bad we may have been.

But one thing I find interesting about this verse is the verses just before and just after.

Verse 8 says, “If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us”. Wow that is pretty heavy. If we say we haven’t sinned (or we self-justify our lives) there is no truth in us.

Verse 10 goes on to say that, “If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives”. That is a huge thought, we make a liar out of God if we say we haven’t sinned!

An important thing to remember in all of this is that we all need forgiveness. If we have never made our connection with God, asking forgiveness is part of that process. If we already a Christian, we still need to confess our sins.

The truth is that none of us are perfect. Ninety per cent of the time we might have the right attitudes, we might do the right things and we might love and serve God, but sin has a way of creeping in and we get led astray.

The key thing to remember is that confession is an important part of a healthy life. Not only does it keep us right with God, but it frees us up from holding on to unnecessary guilt that weighs us down and stops us being all we can be.

# Clothe yourselves right

The Bible says Colossians 3:12 says, “Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.”

I love this verse. It is another Bible verse that is simple and straight forward. But to make sure we understand it’s meaning, let’s have a look at some of the definitions of the words.

Compassion – a feeling of deep sympathy and sorrow for another who is stricken by misfortune, accompanied by a strong desire to alleviate the suffering.

Kindness – the state or quality of being kind

Humility – the quality or condition of being humble; modest opinion or estimate of one’s own importance or rank

Gentleness – not severe, rough, or violent; mild

Patience – the quality of being patient, as the bearing of provocation, annoyance, misfortune, or pain, without complaint, loss of temper, irritation, or the like.

Looking up the words in the dictionary help us to gain further understanding of what the verse is telling us and how God wants us to live.

The other thing I like about this verse is that it says to “clothe ourselves”. As I read I imagine putting on these things like I put on my favourite warm jumper in winter.

Let’s all clothe ourselves with the right things today.

## Philemon the man

I was just reading one of the shortest books in the Bible – Philemon. It is only one chapter that contains 25 verses.

While the main theme of the book is Paul's request to Philemon to receive back the runaway slave Onesimus, I enjoyed the section that talked about Philemon the person. In verses 1-7 we find out what type of person he is. He is a much loved co-worker (v1) He has a house church meet in his home (v2) He has a strong faith and trust in Jesus (v5) He has a great love for all of God's people (v5) He is generous because of his faith (v6) Paul has gained much joy and comfort from his love (v7) His kindness has often refreshed the hearts of God's people (v7)

While it is only a short chapter, I think it speaks volumes about Philemon and who he is. He really sounds like his faith made a real difference to the way he lived and interacted with those around him.

Philemon sounds like a great example to us today. He had a great love for God and His people, he opened his home and he was a real encouragement and comfort to those around him.

## **Jesus touched people**

One of the things I have been reflecting on lately is that Jesus often touched people. It didn't matter if they had Leprosy or other diseases he still touched them with compassion.

This is particularly interesting because in Jesus' times if you touched someone who had leprosy you instantly made yourself ritually unclean. You then had to go through an intense washing process to be "right" again. Because of this many Rabbis and Teachers of the Law avoided touching people, it was a social and spiritual taboo.

This is one of the great things about Jesus. He could have come and sat on a throne and issued teachings from afar, but instead He chose to live amongst the people. He walked, talked, healed, taught, touched and ate with people every day.

If you have a perception that God is a far off and distant God who is removed from His creation, I would encourage you to look at the life of Jesus and see what God is really like. I think you will find, like I have, that He truly was and is a man of the people.

## **A prudent person overlooks an insult**

Proverbs 12:16 says, “A fool shows his annoyance at once, but a prudent man overlooks an insult”.

We have all had situations where we have been insulted on purpose or when someone who has said some to us that caused us angst. It is a part of life and living with others.

In today’s verse it talks about showing annoyance straight away or overlooking it. It even goes as far as saying a prudent person overlooks an insult.

Is this verse telling us to repress our feelings or when we are hurt to not speak up? No. I think it is telling us to filter what comes our way, take our time and then respond accordingly.

Our goal should not be to respond instinctively or irrationally. Many friendships have been damaged forever as a result of a quick or angry response. After all we may have misheard what was said!

As the Bible tells us in this verse, “A prudent person overlooks an insult”.



## **Working hard versus chasing fantasies**

Proverbs 12:11 says, “He who works his land will have abundant food, but he who chases fantasies lacks judgement”.

One of the best ways to ensure income in this life is to be a hard worker. I have found out over the years that if I work hard and do my best to make my employer prosperous, then I will always have a job when I need it.

Compare this to a friend of mine I once worked with. He had a great job, but always dreamed about retiring early. He always chased after the latest investment scheme and spent most of his time and energy trying get rich quick schemes.

In the end they all led nowhere and he had had little energy or enjoyment in his well paid job. He also spent most of his money on trying them.

The Bible tells us in this verse to work hard at what we do. Although it says “works his land” in this verse, we can apply it to wherever we are employed. It is about the principle here. Working hard means you will have food and the things you need to live.

Let’s all to commit to working hard and serving our employers today. It is so much better and more prosperous than chasing the fantasy of get rich quick schemes.

## Bring your problem to Jesus

Recently I have been reading and re-reading the New Testament book of Matthew. As I have been working my way through it I have come across a few interesting things. One that I want to share today comes from Matthew chapters 8&9.

One thing that really stood out to me was that when someone had a problem they took it to Jesus. It didn't matter what it was, if they took it to Him, He dealt with it. Here are a few examples.....

The man with leprosy (Matthew 8:1-4) – He knelt before Jesus and said if you are willing I will be healed. Jesus was willing and healed him.

The Centurion's slave (Matthew 8:5-13) – He asked Jesus to “say the word” and his servant would be healed from a distance. Jesus said the word and he was healed.

The calming of the storm (Matthew 8:23-27) – The disciples were terrified as the storm on the lake threatened their lives. They called to Jesus and He stilled the storm.

The Paralytic man – (Matthew 9:1-8) – Some friends brought the paralytic man to Jesus in faith that He could heal him. Jesus told him to pick up his mat and go home. He got up and walked.

The Dead Girl (Matthew 9:18-26) – A man came to Jesus and told of his dead daughter. He said if you touch her, she will live. Jesus touched her and she lived.

The Sick Woman (Matthew 9:20-22) – The woman who had been bleeding non stop for 12 years came to Jesus. She knew if she could touch His cloak she would be healed. She did and she was healed.

The Two Blind Men (Matthew 9:27-31) – Two blind men came asked Jesus to have mercy on them. He asked if they believed He could heal them. They said yes and they were healed.

The Mute Man (Matthew 9:32-33) – A man was brought to Jesus who was demon possessed and could not speak as a result. The demon was driven out and he was healed.

In all of these cases the people brought their problem to Jesus. They came in faith or their friends brought them in faith, and Jesus dealt with their problem and restored the situation. Nothing was too big or too small. Jesus handled it all.

## **Wisdom brings praise**

Proverbs 12:8 says, “A man is praised according to his wisdom, but men with warped minds are despised”.

Dictionary.com says wisdom is “the quality or state of being wise; knowledge of what is true or right coupled with just judgment as to action; sagacity, discernment, or insight”.

We can see from this wisdom is about knowledge and then putting that knowledge in to practice in the right way. Wisdom therefore is something that should be sort after and something that should be admired.

Compare this to a warped mind that is despised. Dictionary.com’s definition says, “to bend or turn from the natural or true direction or course....to distort or cause to distort from the truth, fact, true meaning”.

A person with a warped mind does not think straight. Their mind has become skewed by wrong thinking and meditating on wrongs things. Because of their thinking the things they desire are not good for themselves or others.

So what is the cure for a warped mind? The best one I know is reading the Bible. The Bible helps us to renew our minds and helps us to think straight (Romans 12:2). It also helps us to line up our thinking with God’s will.

If you want wisdom that brings praise – read the Bible everyday.

# The character of a noble wife

Proverbs 12:4 says, “A wife of noble character is her husband’s crown, but a disgraceful wife is like decay in his bones”.

Dictionary.com describes disgraceful as “Bringing or warranting disgrace; shameful”. It also uses words like “shameful, shocking and scandalous” in its description. It gives us a nice picture of what the verse is saying.

As we can imagine the moral character of a man’s wife effects her husbands enjoyment of life. If a woman is out gossiping, lying, stealing, cares only for herself, constantly nags him or speaks badly of her husband in public, it can really wear on him and make him feel like his bones are decaying.

Compare this to the wife who is her husbands crown. If she loves and supports him, cares for her family and others, acts with integrity and chooses never to speak negatively about her husband in public, he will feel blessed and loved.

I am a blessed man to say my wife fits into the “crown” category. My wife loves and supports me in all I do, loves and cares for our kids, she looks after our home wonderfully well and is always supportive of me publicly. My wife is such a blessing to me and I thank God for the day we met.

Let’s all commit to being supportive of our spouses regardless of if we are husbands or wives. Let’s all try to be our partners crown today.

## Living right brings stability

[Proverbs 12:3](#) says, “A man cannot be established through wickedness, but the righteous cannot be uprooted”.

This verse tells us that we need build our lives on righteousness or living right before God. It says we cannot truly establish a good life if we are doing it the wrong way.

Some people think that the means justify the ends. They will do anything to achieve their goals or to make money. They will sell drugs, steal, murder or rule with fear to get what they want.

Solomon (the one who wrote most of the Proverbs) tells us that their lives will not be established through their wickedness. In the end they will be found out and they will not stand on the day of judgement.

Alternately, we see that someone who builds their lives on righteousness or right living cannot be uprooted. When the storms of pressures of life come their way, they are able to stand and are not crushed.

Let's all purpose in our hearts today to build our lives on righteousness. Let's all decide to follow God and keep His commands ([Ecclesiastes 12:13](#)) and build lives that cannot be uprooted.

# Obtaining God's favour

[Proverbs 12:2](#) says, “A good man obtains favor from the LORD, but the LORD condemns a crafty man”.

Dictionary.com defines favour in a number of ways.....something done or granted out of goodwill, rather than from justice or for remuneration; a kind act: to ask a favour.friendly or well-disposed regard; goodwill: to win the favor of the king.the state of being approved or held in regard: to be in favor at court; styles that are now in favour.excessive kindness or unfair partiality; preferential treatment: to treat some people with favor and others with neglect.a gift bestowed as a token of goodwill, kind regard, love, etc., as formerly upon a knight by his lady.

These definitions give us a good understanding of what favour is. It is about having a good standing with someone and receiving positive benefits as a result.

Today’s verse talks about having favour with God. How do we obtain it? The first part tells us that we obtain God’s favour by being a good person.

How does the Bible define a good person? Generally speaking it is someone who loves and is in relationship with God, a person who follows His decrees and someone who treats others well.

Compare this to a crafty person on Dictionary.com – “skillful in underhand or evil schemes; cunning; deceitful; sly”. When you read that definition you can see why the Lord condemns a crafty person.

So if you want favour with God, live your life in the way God intends. Love Him, follow His decrees and treat others well.

## Receiving correction and discipline

I have decided to look at one verse per day from Proverbs chapter 12\_for my private reflections over the next few weeks. As I work my way through them I will share some of these reflections here.

Today I looked at verse one of chapter 12. It says, “Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates correction is stupid”.

I believe one of the keys for our personal growth is the ability to receive advice or correction when we need it. If we want to learn and grow, we need to be open to the advice and correction from those around us.

Of course it depends who the correction comes from and how it is delivered. That is why it is important to have a core group of people around you whom you trust and you know that their advice/correction is for your absolute best.

How we receive correction and discipline says a lot about us as people. Like a stubborn horse refuses to be led by the bit in its mouth and goes it own way, we can have that same attitude and not listen to those around us.

All of us have to realise that we don't know it all and we need the help of others at times. We were never meant to live this life alone and God has placed certain people in our lives for our own good. Giving correction is part of their role at times.

Let's all purpose in our hearts to be open to the advice and correction from those around us whom we trust. Remember “Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates correction is stupid”.



# What is Jesus doing now?

Someone recently asked the question “What is Jesus doing now?” We were talking about His return to heaven after He gave the Great Commission ([Matthew 28:18-20](#)) to His followers.

Two things came to mind off the top of my head. I thought I would share them today.

1. He is interceding for us – Romans 8:34 tells us that Jesus is before the Father praying on our behalf. Like a lawyer pleads to the judge for his client, Jesus is pleading and praying for us before the Father. He is our heavenly representative!
2. He is preparing a place for us – John 14:1-3 says that Jesus is preparing a place for us. He tells us that there “are many rooms in His Father’s mansion” and that He is “coming back for us one”. He wants us to be where He is.

So what is Jesus doing now? He is praying for us and preparing the place we will spend eternity. That is great news.....in fact I think that is awesome news!

## Paul's contrasts and living by the Spirit

I love the way Paul was easy to understand when talking about the way we should live as Christians. He often described how not to live and then described how we should desire to live. Galatians chapter five is a classic example of this. Paul talks about living by the sinful nature and contrasts this to someone living by the Spirit.

Paul says in verses 19-21, “The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like”.

Then in verses 22-23 he then describes the fruit of the Spirit. “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law”.

From these two examples we can see very easily the right way to live. It is very plain and simple to understand. So how do we live by the Spirit if we have been struggling with our sinful nature? There are two things we can introduce into our lives that will slowly change us.

1. Read about Jesus – I have found that when I read about Jesus in the Gospels (The Books of [Matthew](#), [Mark](#), [Luke](#) and [John](#)) I am inspired by His life. Something happens to my heart when I read and reflect on His life. It softens and I start to see the world through His eyes and not my own. I see my life in light of eternity and not just the here and now. And I see people as God’s children whom He loves dearly. My life becomes more outward focused.

2. Pray – when I pray and make my connection with God I become more in tune with the Holy Spirit. As I become more in tune with the Spirit good fruit starts to flow in my life. Things like selfish ambition, rage, jealousy, envy and hatred are slowly replaced by love, kindness, gentleness and self control. A transformation happens to me from inside out. Streams of living water pour out as it talks about in John 7:38.

Of course none of us are perfect and we all have times where we display the

bad habits that Paul talked about in the first passage. But if we are growing closer to God and living by the Spirit over time, these should be slowly replaced and rear their ugly heads a lot less often.

# Never stop praying

The Bible says in 1 Thessalonians 5:17 to “never stop praying” in the NLT or to “pray continually” as the NIV puts it. Both of these translations give us a clear thought of being in constant conversation with God. For me this works out in a couple of ways.

1. Set times – Each day I have a time set aside to pray to God. This is where I sit with my prayer journal and write the things down that are on my heart or people have asked me to pray about. Once the list is written out, I then pray my way through them. It is formal and structured, but there is still room to hear from God or add extra things in.

2. On the journey – This is simply praying as I go about my daily life. I try to think of it as having an open telephone line to God. At any time of the day or night, no matter where I am, I can call on Him. I might be asking for wisdom or guidance, help in what I am doing, asking what He wants me to do next, praying for a friend or family member, or asking for protection. They are the things that come up as I go about my day.

So am I saying that I pray at every minute of the day? No, of course not! I just want to have an attitude of prayer where I am trying to be connected to God as much as I can. My heart is to be in tune with the Creator of the universe so I can call on Him when I need help or guidance.....or where He can call on me when He wants me to do something for Him.

## Jesus: The narrow gate

In Matthew 7:13-14 the Bible says, “You can enter God’s Kingdom only through the narrow gate. The highway to hell is broad, and its gate is wide for the many who choose that way. But the gateway to life is very narrow and the road is difficult, and only a few ever find it”.

This verse is referring to how a person gets into God’s Kingdom. In this passage Jesus is referring to Himself as the Gate or the way we find salvation.

As I reflect on this narrow gate I am reminded of sheep coming in to be shorn by the shearers. They come from a large paddock and then the fencing gradually narrows until there is only room for one sheep at a time to pass through. It passes through with not much room on either side.

For us when we enter God’s Kingdom through the narrow gate, there is not much room on either side for us either. We can’t bring our achievements to impress God, we can’t bring our wealth or riches to buy our way in, we can’t bring our pride.

When we come to this narrow gate, that many don’t find because of the things above, we simply come humbly seeking to enter God’s Kingdom. We come in faith and hope and looking to Jesus as the Gate. We come not knowing all the answers, but we come seeking Jesus.

Jesus tells us in the Bible that He is the way to the Father, the truth and the life (John 14:6) and that He is the only way we can find salvation and rest for our weary souls (Acts 4:12, Matthew 11:28). Will you come to Jesus today? Will you enter through the narrow gate of Jesus?

I would encourage you to visit my “Finding salvation” page now to enter into God’s Kingdom. Enter through the narrow gate that is Jesus and begin a whole new journey of faith and life today. You can do this here <http://www.passionaustralia.org/salvation.html>.

## Using your God given gift

I was reading [Romans 12:6-8](#) just now. It talks about using our God given gifts. It says...

6 In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you. 7 If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. 8 If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly.

It gives me confidence to know God has given us certain gifts to do things well. He didn't give them to us to stumble and be a failure. He gave them so we can build up, encourage, serve, teach, be kind, lead, give well.

I like the simplicity of the passage. If you have a certain gift, do it well. Don't stress or worry, just do it well.

If we have a gift from God, it is His gift with His enabling. All we have to do is step out in faith. Like it says in verse 6, "So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you."

Let's purpose in our hearts to run with God's gifts today. Let us not hide them under a bushel, but use them in accordance with the faith God has given us.

## **Believing what God says about you**

I was just thinking about how my life began to change when I started to believe what God said about me in the Bible.

When I started to believe that I was made in God's image, knit together by God, made with gifts and a purpose, fully accepted by God, and God's child, it changed me from the inside out.

I no longer felt fearful. I no longer felt alone. I no longer felt powerless. I no longer felt like a waste of space.

Believing what God said about me changed everything. I felt loved, valued and truly free. It was like I suddenly came alive.

I was free to be myself. I was free to serve God naturally. I was free to fully accept God's love and believe He loved me unconditionally.

Dear God, I pray that You will help me to see myself through Your eyes. I pray that I will believe what You say about me in the Bible. I pray these truths will sink deep into my heart and change me from the inside out. In Jesus' name, Amen.

## Remembering back and seeing fingerprints

My wife and I were talking this morning about how God was active in our lives as kids. We didn't know Him or go to church as kids, but looking back we can see His fingerprints.

I can remember in grade 3 colouring in a cross in Scripture class. I was captivated by the cross and the thought that someone would die for me. It spoke to me in a way that I didn't fully understand.

Likewise, my wife was fascinated by a book in the library that had Bible stories in it with colour pictures. She loaned the book so often that the librarian commented to her about it. She said she liked the book so much but she didn't know why.

There are many other memories of how God entered our lives and gently nudged us in His direction. He brought people and situations to us to be links in the chain to find Him. It really is amazing when you reflect on it.

How about you? Can you see the fingerprints of God when you look back? I think that is worth reflecting on today.



## **We ARE new in Christ**

One of the first memory verses I remember is [2 Corinthians 5:17](#). It says, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”

As a new Christian back in 1989, and even today, I love the fact that we are completely changed on the inside the moment we come to Christ.

The Bible tells us in [Titus 3:5](#) that, “...He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit.” We are washed internally and have been born again.

We are completely new. We are not reformed, we are not rehabilitated, we are not re-educated – we ARE re-created in Christ. The old really IS swept away!

I really love facing life knowing that I am completely new on the inside. I love knowing that the creator of the universe re-made me. I love that He turned me back to His original blueprints for me.

I also love that it was a work that He has done. It is not done by human effort, it is ALL His work. It is done completely and perfectly. It is finished.

If you are in Christ, you ARE a new creation!

## The walls of self-control

The Bible says in [Proverbs 25:28 NLT](#) “ A person without self-control is like a city with broken-down walls.”

Walls for a city control the flow of traffic and they also provide protection by keeping the enemy out. They are restrictive, but it is a good type of restriction.

Having walls around a city gives a sense of freedom and safety. You know you can move around freely within them and be safe from outside attack.

The same goes for the walls of self-control in our lives. We need the discipline of self-control to keep us safe too. It provides boundaries to live within.

Just like a city without walls is open to attack from the enemy at any time, so is a person who has no walls of self-control or boundaries in their life.

Self-control is an important part of life. For the Christian it is a fruit of the Spirit ([Galatians 5:22-23](#)). It allows us to say no when tempted and yes when God asks us to do something.

If we are living by the Spirit then the walls of self-control will be a natural out-flowing in our lives.

Heavenly Father, I pray that I will be a person who has strong and fortified walls around me. I pray self-control will be evident in my life. Help me to live by Your Spirit every day. Amen.

## Take delight in honouring each other

The Bible says in [Romans 12:10](#) to “Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honouring each other.” I have been thinking about the second part of the verse today – the honouring.

The dictionary tells us to honour someone is to show great respect, regard, or esteem in an outward way towards them. It also talks about giving credit to them for something they have done.

Likewise, the Greek word used here in this verse is  $\mu$ . It is pronounced tee-may'. This means to highly value or highly esteem something or someone. It is to put a great price on them.

This got me thinking about the people in my life. Do I highly value or esteem them? Do I go out of my way to honour or show great respect outwardly towards them?

I really hope I do. Just in case, in the next few days I am intentionally going to go out of my way to show the people in my life how much I do honour and respect them.

How about you? Is there anyone in your life you could “take delight in honouring” today?

# Be strong and very courageous

I was just reading Joshua chapter one. This is where God charges Joshua with taking over from Moses as the leader of the people and taking them into the promised land. Today four things jumped out at me from verses Joshua 1:6-8.

Here is the text...

6 Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their ancestors to give them. 7 “Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the laws my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. 8 Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

Here are the four points for reflection...

## 1. Courageous

God tells Joshua to be strong and courageous three times in these verses. The task God was giving Joshua was not going to be easy. He was to lead the armies of Israel to take the Promised Land. Joshua needed to be strong and courageous and know God would always be with him (v9).

## 2. Remember

God tells Joshua to remember all that Moses had told him. He said it was very important to obey all of the instructions Moses had given him (v7). God spoke face to face with Moses and he would have passed a lot of this on to Joshua. Joshua needed to remember Moses' leadership lessons and God's instructions to Moses.

## 3. Meditate

God tells Joshua to constantly read and meditate on God's Word – “The Book of Instruction”. God tells Joshua to do this and to be careful to obey everything in it. He promised that if he does, Joshua will prosper

and be successful in all he does. Reading God's Word keeps us in tune with God.

#### **4. Promises**

In this passage we also see that God uses people to fulfil the promises He has made to others. In verse 6 God says, "Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their ancestors to give them." God used Joshua to bring His vow to pass. Today God uses you and I to bring His promises to pass.

#### **Conclusion**

So today we need to learn from God's encouragement to Joshua if we are taking on something very big. We need to remember to be courageous and God is with us, remember what our leaders have taught us, read and meditate on God's Word and remember God uses ordinary people to bring about His plans.

## **Read, meditate, obey, be strong**

Today I want to share another reflection from Joshua 1:7-9. It says...

7 Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the instructions Moses gave you. Do not deviate from them, turning either to the right or to the left. Then you will be successful in everything you do. 8 Study this Book of Instruction continually. Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do. 9 This is my command—be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”

I love the way God told Joshua to read and meditate on the Word before He told him to be strong and courageous.

As a result his courage would be built on God’s Word and who God is, not just being strong and courageous mentally or trusting in his own skills.

We should get things in the right order too...

Read the Word, meditate on it, obey it... then you are in a good position to be strong and courageous in God’s strength.

## **A BIG God**

I have been thinking about this today... The more you read the Bible, the bigger God becomes to you.

It is not that God's size or strength or ability changes, but our perception of Him does. The more we read and try to understand God, His creation and His plan of salvation, the more in awe of Him we become.

I think we all need a bigger view of God. We need to be constantly reminded of His greatness, His power and His eternal love for us.

If you have found that your view of God is not what it once was, try re-reading the creation stories and the passages that talk about God setting the sun, moon and stars in place.

You should also try re-reading about a God who made man from the dust and came and died for him.

God is a big God. The more you read the Bible each day, the bigger He will become in your eyes.

## **Carrying passages for longer**

One thing I have found that I do since I finished my Bible studies is that I tend to pause for a longer time on Bible passages.

Rather than read a new one each day, I might read one and it might stay with me for a few days. Sometimes I might read the same passage for a week.

I find that by doing this I allow it to percolate inside me and sink deep into my spirit. It allows God to speak to me via His Holy Spirit too.

As I pause for a time on a passage I am able also to read commentaries or other books I have on the passage too or look over any Bible college notes that come to mind.

I have found that it gives me a much fuller picture of what God may be wanting to say to me or to those around me... or for this blog!

In saying this though, I still do have times where I read one chapter or a passage a day as a part of a reading plan.

But now I am not afraid to pause the reading plan to get the fuller meaning of the reading. I don't worry about getting "behind", it is more about getting "into" the passage.

Carrying passages for longer is like having a three course meal, rather than drive through takeaway. You feel way more satisfied.