



# **LAUNCH OUT INTO THE DEEP!**

**DISCIPLESHIP  
TRAINING FOR  
LOCAL HOUSES  
OF PRAYER**

# Launch Out Into the Deep

Discipleship training for local houses of prayer

Andrew J Taylor

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# Introduction

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On 31 October 1517 Martin Luther, a German monk and a teacher at the University of Wittenberg, published ‘Ninety-five Theses upon Indulgences’<sup>1</sup> As he spoke up against the corrupt practices of the Catholic Church, ‘by faith alone’ became the watchword of the Reformation. This was the conviction that it is by faith alone in the finished work of Jesus Christ (and not by paying money for indulgences) that we receive forgiveness for our sins. Over the decades and centuries that followed, the Good News of the personal salvation we receive through Jesus Christ would be preached in local churches across the nations of Europe. However, in emphasising the truth that we are saved by faith alone in the finished work of Jesus, Luther moved away from his monastic roots. One of these was a key tenet of monasticism—the idea that ‘conversion of character takes place together ... in community.’<sup>2</sup>

Five hundred years Luther published his Ninety-five Theses, the individualism of the West and the desire to accommodate the Enlightenment thinking of rationalist philosophers has resulted in a stagnated local church. Local churches have largely become privatised religious clubs. In the prevailing consumer culture, there are a number of varieties to suit different tastes, but the vast majority of churches in the Western world are a pale imitation of the vibrant body of believers we read about in the book of Acts.

In the UK, attempts by the local church to become more missional and to develop a ‘mission-shape’ have produced some wonderful innovations, such as café church and Messy Church, but this manual has been written with the understanding that a new emphasis on mission without a corresponding emphasis on discipleship will not go deep enough. Bishop Graham Cray, one of the authors of the *Mission-shaped Church*<sup>3</sup>

report has said that ‘we need a process of retrieval, retrieving ancient and monastic practices for contemporary mission.’<sup>4</sup> There is a growing realisation of the need for a fresh new emphasis on ‘conversion of character’, or discipleship, in community today.

This discipleship manual is inspired by Benedict’s *Rule*<sup>5</sup>, which was written just under 1,500 years ago for disciples following Christ in a prayerful community. Benedict was born in AD480, and life was not easy in the fifth century AD. Esther de Waal writes: ‘The world into which St Benedict was born was a troubled, torn apart uncertain world ... The fall of Rome seventy years before the birth of Benedict had been a traumatic shock to the entire civilized world ... successive barbarians begun to dismember the empire and the church too was torn apart.’<sup>6</sup> Benedict wrote a *Rule* in AD540 for monastic living, which helped chart many through these stormy waters.

Benedict’s small group of monks in his lonely outpost in Monte Cassino, ‘may have seemed irrelevant to the troubling social and political realities of the day. It soon became a major attraction to those seeking spiritual renewal, wholeness and stability. Even barbarian kings came to witness the distinctive life of the monastery.’<sup>7</sup>

Obedience is a strong theme in the *Rule*: following this *Rule* was not for the faint-hearted! This was a call to a deep and challenging life focused on prayer and laying down one’s life, following biblical Christian principles living in community with a committed body of believers. It wasn’t explicitly evangelistic, but these small groups of believers became like a beacon set on a hill. Many were drawn to the light and culture of the Western European nations and were transformed by the biblical Christian worldview.

In Luke 5 we read how some Galilean

fishermen were washing their nets after a hard night's unsuccessful fishing. Jesus said to Peter, 'Launch out into the deep and let down your nets' (King James Version). Peter obeyed, saying "Because you say so, I will let down the nets." When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break.' Benedict may not have expected to have 'cast a net' like a fisherman that ended up evangelising the whole of Europe, but this is what he did. He took care of the depth and the Lord took care of the breadth! As we respond to the Lord Jesus Christ and His call to follow Him into a deeper devotional life with a small group of disciples, He will make us into fishers of men.

If the vast mission field that Europe has now become is to be successfully re-evangelised, then there needs to be a retrieval of the monastic practices that recognised that 'conversion of character requires Christian community'. For members of Benedict's community, the daily rhythm of activities, including regular devotion to the Psalms, formed an alternative culture. They came into a deeper knowledge of their relationship with God and each other by entering into a daily experience of prayer together.<sup>8</sup>

Today, the church in the West is at another pivotal moment. We face a different sort of 'indulgence' today—an indulgence in the consumerist, leisure-orientated lifestyle of the prevailing culture. Consumerism has infected the Church: we need the prototyping of an alternative culture once again so

that members of the Christian community can come to a deeper knowledge of their relationship with God and each other. We have laboured without doing this all night and not caught very much at all. Maybe now it is time to retrieve some of the monastic practices of Benedict for contemporary mission that were lost when Luther left his monastery. This manual is designed primarily as an accessible way to put into practice Christian discipleship in community, drawing from Benedict's *Rule* for inspiration. But let's put these principles into practice wherever we are—in our local churches, in our house groups, and wherever we are gathering as prayerful followers of Christ.

Five hundred years after Luther published his Ninety-five Theses, The Lord is calling out again! This time He is calling us to launch out into the deep, to follow Him in discipling communities. He will make us into fishers of men! It is time to hear and obey!

## Acknowledgements

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<sup>1</sup> Reeves, M. *The Unquenchable Flame: Introducing the Reformation*. IVP: 36.

<sup>2</sup> Moynagh, M. *A Church for Every Context*. SCM Press: 35, 36

<sup>3</sup> Cray, G *et al.* *Mission-shaped Church*. Church House Publishing.

<sup>4</sup> Cray, G, Mobsby, I, and Kennedy, A. *New Monasticism as Fresh Expression of Church*. Canterbury Press: 10

<sup>5</sup> Benedict. *The Rule*. Chapter 8: 9.

<sup>6</sup> De Waal, E. *Seeking God: The Way of St Benedict*. Liturgical Press: 1.

<sup>7</sup> Moynagh, M. *A Church for Every Context*. SCM Press: 35–36.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, 35.

# How to use this manual

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The first manual in this series, a devotional prayer manual called *Light the Fire Again*<sup>1</sup>, was written to facilitate the daily reading and praying of all 150 Psalms over one month. Two hundred and seventy-five years ago, John Wesley, an 18th-century Anglican clergyman, was used powerfully in a national awakening. This first manual consists of inspirational devotionals based on his life, to be read alongside the corporate reading and praying of the Psalms, contending for another national awakening. This is ideally to be used by praying spouses or households on a daily basis. Christianity is to be primarily worked out in community. The reading and praying of the Psalms is a basic corporate spiritual discipline.

This is the second manual in the series, a devotional discipleship manual called *Launch Out Into the Deep*. Its main purpose is to be a resource for a discipleship community. This may be a local church, a 'house of prayer', a house group or a fresh expression of church. There are 30 units providing material for 30 discipleship groups (of 8–12 people—which may be a subgroup of the discipleship community). This material could be used by university students with three 10-week terms a year, or by churches that use school terms, to structure their calendar.

On page 69 is a 3-2-1 Bible reading plan, which suggests the daily reading corporately of the Psalms (with spouses or in households) three times, the reading corporately of the New Testament (NT) twice and the Old Testament (OT) once over a 30-week period. The aim is to provide a context for mutual discipleship, openness and accountability in a small group of committed Christians. The reason for covering the Psalms three times,

the NT twice and the OT once is that this is understood to be the relative devotional priority given by the Early Church Fathers to these sections of the Bible. If this is unrealistic as a regular pattern, just reading NT and Psalms or even just reading and praying the Psalms for the day may be a more sensible goal. Suggested discipleship group material is included in each unit, which can be used according to the discretion of the group leader.

## What are the values of a discipleship community?

The inspiration for a discipleship community is St Benedict's *Rule*. The term 'discipleship community' is used in this manual for a group of Christians who are committed to one another and to praying together, who embrace the Benedictine values of stability, *conversatio morum* and obedience.<sup>2</sup> Stability means 'being committed to work out one's faith with a specific group of Christians indefinitely', *conversatio morum* means 'conversion of morals (or character)<sup>3</sup> and obedience<sup>4</sup> means renouncing one's own will and doing God's will. In the past, a Benedictine monk would have made a vow of stability to a community of people rather than to a place, to bind himself to the members of that monastic family for life.

Re-contextualised for today, this manual has been written specifically focusing on practical areas for growth as a disciple for any local group of Christians who are committed to one another and to praying together. Jesus says that where there is a small group of Christians gathered, there He is in the midst of them. 'For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.' (Matthew 18:20)

<sup>1</sup> Taylor, A. *Light the Fire Again*.

<sup>2</sup> Benedict. *The Rule*. Chapter: 58, 86.

<sup>3</sup> Benedict. *The Rule*. Chapter 8: 9.

<sup>4</sup> Benedict. *The Rule*. Chapter 58: 86.

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*This material could be used by university students with three 10-week terms a year, or by churches that use school terms, to structure their calendar.*

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# The Prologue of Benedict's *Rule*<sup>1</sup>

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**L**isten my son, to the master's instructions and take them to heart. These are the instructions of a loving father: receive them gladly and carry them out to good effect so that by the efforts of obedience you may return to him from whom you have withdrawn through the laziness of disobedience. It is to you that my words are now addressed, if you are ready to take up the powerful and glorious weapons of obedience, renouncing your own will with the intention of fighting for the true king, Christ the Lord.

First of all, every time you begin a good work you should pray to him with total commitment to bring it to perfection, so that he who has already been kind enough to count us as his sons will never be disappointed by our doing wrong. We must always obey him with the good things he has given us, so that he never disinherits his children like an angry father or becomes exasperated by our bad behaviour and hands us over to everlasting punishment as a terrifying master does with his delinquent servants, for refusing to follow him to glory. Now at last we must wake up, as Scripture rouses us to do when it says, 'Now is the time for us to rise from sleep' (Romans 13:11). Let us open our eyes to the divine light and listen carefully to what the divine voice tells us to do when it cries out each day, 'If you hear his voice today, do not harden your hearts.' (Psalm 95:7–8), and also, 'he who has ears to hear let him listen to what the Spirit says to the churches.' (Revelation 2:7; Matthew 11:15). And what does he say? 'Come to me, my children and listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord.' (Psalm 34:11)

'Run while you have the light of life, so that the darkness of death does not overtake you' (John 12:35). The Lord looks for his workman among the crowds of people, and repeatedly calls to him, 'Who is the man who desires life and who wishes to see good days? (Psalm

34:12) If you hear him and answer, 'I do', God will say to you, 'if you wish to have true and everlasting life, keep your tongue from speaking evil and do good. Seek after peace and pursue it' (Psalm 34:13–14). And when you have done this, my eyes will be upon you and I will listen to your prayers. Even before you call on me, I will say to you, 'Here I am' (Isaiah 58:9). What can be sweeter to us, dear brothers, than the Lord's voice when he invites us with these words? Look how the Lord in his loving kindness shows us the way of life. And so, clothed in faith and the performance of good works, let us set off along his path using the Gospel as our guide, so that we may deserve to see him who has called us 'into his kingdom' (1 Thessalonians 2:12). If we wish to love in the tabernacle of his kingdom, we will certainly only reach it if we run there by means of good work. But let us question the Lord in the words of the prophet, saying to him, 'Lord who will live in your tabernacle, or will rest on your holy mountain?' (Psalm 15:1) After putting this question, brothers we must listen to the Lord's reply for he points out to us the way to this tabernacle. He says, 'He who walks without blemish and who acts justly; he who speaks the truth in his heart and does not use his tongue to deceive; who does not harm his fellow man and does not listen to slander said about him' (Psalm 15:2–3).

This person has thwarted the Devil in his wickedness by casting him and his suggestion away from the sight of his heart when the Devil tries to persuade him to do something he takes hold of the Devil's plans before they have time to mature and dashes them against Christ. Those who fear the Lord and do not allow themselves to become proud because of their good works realise that the God that is in them does not come from their own abilities but from the Lord. They praise the Lord working within them, repeating the words of the prophet, 'Not to us Lord, not to



us, but to your name give the glory' (Psalm 115:1). In the same way the Apostle Paul refused to claim any credit for the success of his preaching, saying 'By the grace of God I am what I am' (1 Corinthians 15:10) and 'The person who boasts should boast in the Lord.' (2 Corinthians 10:17) This is why the Lord too says in the Gospel, 'He who hears these words of mine and acts in accordance with them is like a man who built his house on the rock; the floods came, the winds blew and beat upon that house but it did not collapse for it was founded upon the rock' (Matthew 7:24–25). Having made this pronouncement, the Lord every day expects that we should make our lives conform to this holy advice of his.

And so the days of this life are lengthened and we are granted a truce during which to amend our bad ways, as the Apostle says, 'Do you know that God's patience is leading you to penitence?' (Romans 2:4). For the Lord in his kindness says, 'I do not want the death of a sinner but that he be converted and live' (Ezekiel 33:11). Brothers, we have questioned the Lord about the person who lives in his tabernacle, and we have heard his instructions about living there but it is for us to fulfil the obligations of those who live there. And so we must prepare our hearts and

bodies to fight by means of holy obedience to his instructions. If our natural abilities do not allow us to do something, we must ask the Lord to grant his grace to assist us. If we wish to escape the punishments of hell and reach eternal life, we must hasten to do now what will profit us for ever, while we still have time and while we are in this body and have the opportunity to fulfil all these things by the light of this life.

And so we intend to establish a school for the Lord's service. In doing so we intend to demand nothing that is harsh, nothing oppressive. Even if, in order to maintain a balance, there are some slight restrictions aimed at the correction of errors and the preservation of love, you should not for that reason be frightened off and run away from the path of salvation, which has to be narrow at the beginning. As we make progress in our way of life and in faith, as our heart expands with the inexpressible sweetness of love, we shall run along the path of God's commandments, never abandoning his guidance but persevering in his teaching within the monastery until death, so that we may have a share, through patience, of the sufferings of Christ and thereby also a share in his kingdom, Amen.'



## Hearing God's voice

## READINGS

Day 1 Matt 1–3, Gen 1–5, *Ps 1–5*Day 2 Matt 4–6, Gen 6–10, *Ps 6–8*Day 3 Matt 7–9, Gen 11–15, *Ps 9–11*Day 4 Matt 10–12, Gen 16–20, *Ps 12–14*Day 5 Matt 13–16, Gen 21–25, *Ps 15–17*Sunday *Ps 18*

'O Lord, who shall sojourn in your tent? Who shall dwell on your holy hill? He who walks blamelessly and does what is right and speaks truth in his heart;'

*Psalms 15:1–2 ESV*

'Lord, who will live in your tabernacle or rest on your holy mountain.'<sup>1</sup> *Psalms 15*

'Climb every mountain/Search high and low/Follow every byway/Every path you know/Climb every mountain,/Ford every stream/Follow every rainbow/Till you find your dream,'<sup>2</sup> are the lyrics of the song sung by the Mother Abbess in the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical, *The Sound of Music*. From time immemorial, beautiful peaked mountains have been illustrative of those dreams and desires of a better world and a future hope that we all entertain. What are your dreams, hopes and desires?

Benedict's *Rule* starts with an invitation to find a place of sanctuary on God's holy hill. The picture of the mountain of the Lord or the holy hill in Isaiah 2:3 and Micah 4:1–4 were favourite texts for the Early Church Fathers,<sup>3</sup> in catechising new believers. The mountain of the Lord to the Early Church Fathers was a picture of the Gentiles coming to Christ, to a place of restoration of relationship and peace between God and man—a place of *shalom* (peace). Finding that place of rest on God's holy mountain as described in Psalm 15 is a central focus of the Prologue in Benedict's *Rule*, and it is at that place of rest that we hear God's voice and obey.

That place of rest can be found as we make Jesus Lord of our lives. What is the way to that holy mountain, to the place of rest, the tabernacle, that place of sanctuary? It begins with responding to the Gospel and all its demands. Benedict confronts his reader in the Prologue with an urgent call to hear and obey.

'The word obedience is derived from the Latin *obediere*, which shares its roots with *audire*, to hear. So to obey really means to hear and then act upon what we have heard, or, in other words, to see that the listening achieves its aim. We are not being truly attentive unless we are prepared to act upon what we hear.' There is a calling going out to the whole world, inviting all to come to Christ, and it is an invitation to hear and to obey. *Lectio Divina*<sup>4</sup> was a practice used by monks and literally means a 'divine reading'. It was a way of reading the Bible practised by monks to cultivate their relationship with God. We are not just passive listeners to what God has said and done in the past. The words are addressed to us and we are expected to do something. Although it is not mentioned in Benedict's *Rule*, it is the way of reading that would have been expected by individual monks as they engaged in private Bible reading and prayer. At this time reading was not a silent mental activity; people tended to read aloud, even to themselves.

Jesus says in John 10:27: 'My sheep hear my voice, I know them and they follow me.' In learning to recognise God's voice, it is helpful to realise that the word of God should be a lot more than a textbook to us. Hebrews 4:12 says, 'The word of God is living and active ... Sharper than any double-edged sword'. Jeremiah 5:14 says that the words of God are like a fire. Although the audible voice of the Lord is rare, we read about it a number of

times in the Scriptures, eg 1 Samuel 3, Moses and the burning bush, and Jesus and the watching crowd at His baptism.

There are numerous other ways that the Lord speaks in the Bible,<sup>5</sup> such as an inaudible voice, the peace of God, dreams, visions, angels, gifts of the Spirit, godly counsel, putting out fleeces and casting lots. There are a number of voices we can hear:

- First, Self: independent desires and reasoning (John 5:30).
- Second, Satan: deception through pride (James 4:7—‘Submit yourselves to God. Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you.’).
- Third, God (Psalm 32:8–9—‘I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go.’).

There are a number of conditions for hearing God’s voice: a desire to know and do all the revealed will of God (1 Samuel; Joshua 9:4,5,12–13 where he did not enquire of the Lord), a willingness to obey even if counted a fool, a clean conscience from the past, the

confessing of unconfessed sin (the prime hindrance), and regular time in prayer and in the Bible.

Do you desire a deeper relationship with God? We can know Him and we can hear His voice! Six practical steps to hearing God’s voice:

- 1 Submit to the Lord.
- 2 Confess known sin.
- 3 Take thoughts captive.
- 4 Resist the devil.
- 5 Welcome the Holy Spirit.
- 6 Expect an answer.

There are a number of ways of cultivating a listening environment where we can hear God more clearly. We could draw apart for times of silence and solitude. We could also redeem the time when, for instance, commuting alone to work by car. We could keep a journal.

Do you long to hear God’s voice more clearly? Dream big! Dream of a more intimate relationship with God and decide today on some practical steps to hear the Lord’s voice more clearly.

## DISCIPLESHIP GROUP

In this first meeting of your discipleship group, introduce yourselves to one another. Where were you born? Where have you lived all your life from birth? Where did your parents come from? How many brothers and sisters do you have? What strikes you as unique or special that you appreciate about your family? Are you married/single? Do you have children? What are your children’s names? Share with one another how you have experienced hearing God’s voice before, and tell one another examples from your own lives.

Before next week’s meeting, start writing a journal. Write prayers to God or any personal insights that come from your reading of the Bible. As you write, be aware that you may be writing what God actually wants to tell you, personally. Be prepared to share with your discipleship group next week how you have found journal writing to help you to hear from God.

<sup>1</sup> Benedict. *The Rule*. The Prologue: 8.

<sup>2</sup> [www.metrolyrics.com/climb-every-mountain-lyrics-the-sound-of-music.html](http://www.metrolyrics.com/climb-every-mountain-lyrics-the-sound-of-music.html)

<sup>3</sup> Kreider, A. *The Change of Conversion and the Origin of*

*Christendom*. Wipf & Stock: 15 (Origen, Epistle to Julius Africanus).

<sup>4</sup> Foster, D. *Reading with God: Lectio Divina*. Continuum: 1.

<sup>5</sup> Cunningham, L. *Is that really You, Lord?* YWAM: 200.

## Being a disciple

## READINGS

Day 6 Matt 17–19, Gen 26–30, *Ps 19–21*Day 7 Matt 20–22, Gen 31–35, *Ps 22–23*Day 8 Matt 23–25, Gen 36–40, *Ps 24–26*Day 9 Matt 26–28, Gen 41–45, *Ps 27–28*Day 10 Mark 1–3, Gen 46–50, *Ps 29–31*Sunday *Ps 32–34*

‘Go therefore 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 observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’

*Matthew 28:19 ESV*

‘A school for the Lord’s service.’<sup>1</sup>

What is the Great Omission? We may have heard about the Great Commission. We may know that Jesus in Matthew 28 commanded His disciples to ‘go into all the world’, but Dallas Willard wrote a book with the title *The Great Omission*. What was this Great Omission? What was it that Willard felt had been omitted? Was it our failure to complete the Great Commission and to go into all the world? No. In Matthew 28:19, the only imperative verb in the original Greek, the only command, in other words, is not ‘Go’ but ‘make disciples’. Literally it reads, ‘Having gone therefore, (*past perfect*) make disciples (*past participle imperative*), baptising them (*present participle*) and teaching them (*present participle*).’ Or more simply, ‘having gone then, make disciples, as you are baptising, and as you are teaching.’ Willard says that this emphasis on discipleship has not been implemented by the Church over the centuries and we have been guilty of what he calls ‘The Great Omission’.

This truth that we have often neglected is that discipleship is a biblically normal concept. The word ‘Christian’ appears in the New Testament three times. The word ‘disciple’ appears in the New Testament 264 times as a noun and 25 times as a verb. Jesus commanded us to make disciples, and Benedict sought to put this truth into practice.

Written about AD530, Benedict’s *Rule* is

a call to discipleship. Esther de Waal writes: ‘Fifteen hundred years on, Benedict’s rule has lost nothing of its freshness and its immediacy. Benedict’s rule begins with an urgent call to his monks to awake, to listen, to take action. Benedict addresses his listeners at one moment as recruits for the army, and the next as workmen in God’s workshop and then as pilgrims on the road, then as disciples at school. Living the radical Christian life as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ in the midst of the mundane was the overarching theme of Benedictine spirituality and it had a key hallmark—the three Benedictine vows were stability and *conversatio morum*<sup>2</sup> and obedience.’<sup>3</sup> These three vows were particularly relevant in the chaotic times after the fall of the Roman Empire.’

The vow of stability refers to the promise that the monk makes to a community of people. For those of us today who want to grow in Christian discipleship, and want to put into practice this commitment to stability, it would be helpful to be a member of a small discipleship group that is committed to growth through openness and accountability. This group would be a place where the aim is to cultivate the sharing of lives with one another. Asking a commitment from the group members to confidentiality within the group would encourage an atmosphere of sharing of personal issues.

There has been considerable debate on the

meaning of the vow of *conversatio morum*. Esther de Waal states that '*conversatio*' means 'continual conversion'<sup>4</sup>. Others have said that 'conversation' means 'conversion of morals'. Whatever the exact meaning, the principle is clear, a local group of Christians who are committed to growing together is an ideal context for growth in Christian character.

The vow of obedience in Benedict's day referred to a radical surrender to the will of God, in place of one's own will.

Re-contextualised for today, 'discussion in discipleship groups' provides the opportunity to hear what the Lord is saying and to put it into practice. Colossians 3:16 says, 'Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another in all wisdom.' If discipleship group leaders are careful to facilitate and not dominate discussion, more can be learnt from discussing questions and arriving at conclusions in a guided discussion than by being told all the answers.

## DISCIPLESHIP GROUP

Before you start this session, take time on your own to consecrate yourself to Jesus as your personal Lord and Saviour and surrender to Him as a follower and disciple.

Which practical areas of discipleship in the list below do you find a particular strength and which are a weakness at the moment? Share with your discipleship group.

A list of practical areas for growth as a disciple:<sup>5</sup>

- A disciplined life; an example to others—eg punctuality, quiet times, 'weight', thought life, attitude to work, tidiness, courtesy, use of time, dress, faithfulness in assignments.
- Growth in faith demonstrated by active participation in meetings, in prayer, praise and spiritual gifts.
- Growth in humility evidenced by willingness to open your life to others; growth in ability to share other people's problems with compassion and faith.
- Being positive in attitude and speech—restraint and wisdom in speech.
- Growing desire and ability to share your faith with non-Christians.
- Willingness to act on counsel and to receive correction with humility.
- Shows initiative together with being a good follower.
- Growth in confidence in ability to help others, becoming free from feelings of inferiority and inadequacy.
- Freedom from resentment and anger, and able to quickly forgive those who have hurt you.
- Growth in faith and responsibility with money, ie you are a cheerful giver to God's work. Also, you are quick to pay your bills.
- Good relationships in marriage and with children, if married.
- Maintaining good relationships with others in and outside the church.

<sup>1</sup> Benedict. *The Rule*. The Prologue: 8.

<sup>2</sup> Benedict. *The Rule*. The Prologue: 8.

<sup>3</sup> Benedict. *The Rule*. Chapter 58: 86.

<sup>4</sup> De Waal, E. *Seeking God: The Way of St Benedict*. Liturgical Press: 53

<sup>5</sup> Austin, B. *Basic Leadership Training School*. YWAM

## READINGS

**Day 11** Mark 4–6, Ex 1–5, *Ps 35–36***Day 12** Mark 7–9, Ex 6–10 *Ps 37***Day 13** Mark 10–12, Ex 11–15 *Ps 38–40***Day 14** Mark 13–15, Ex 16–20 *Ps 41–43***Day 15** Mark 16–Luke 1, Ex 21–25 *Ps 44–46***Sunday** *Ps 47–49*

‘God said to Moses, “I am who I am.” And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel, ‘I am has sent me to you.’”

*Exodus 3:14 ESV*

‘First of all, “Love the Lord with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your strength.”’<sup>1</sup>

**I**s ‘Knowing God’ really about mental assent to a set of salvation truths? Or is it about the personal revelation of the burning heart of the loving God? Early on in the book of Exodus, God reveals Himself to Moses in the burning bush. This dramatic encounter that begins the salvation story of the children of Israel from slavery to the Egyptians declares that our God is knowable and He loves with a burning heart.

Do you believe that God has a burning heart of love and compassion for you? Or do you think that He is a hard taskmaster and that you can never please Him? Does He seem to you like a Frankenstein figure in other words? Maybe you believe that He is some kind of benevolent but distant Father Christmas and when ‘the blessings stop coming through’ you feel you must be ‘out of the will of God’. If you have either of these two images of God in your heart then you have a distorted view. The picture we are given in the Bible is that God is a Father who passionately loves us. He has power and wisdom, but the essence of God is a burning love.

Mike Bickle of the International House of Prayer refers to John 15:9: ‘As the Father has loved me so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.’<sup>2</sup> Bickle says that ‘He says that God loves us the way that “God loves God” (the way that the Father loves the Son) and — we get to participate in that reality — one of

the great truths in scripture is — “God is love” — in other words, the very being of God is wholehearted love — it is not a passive, docile love — it is a volcanic desire in the heart of God. As the Father loves us — with that same intensity, we are to love Him. He says “that that’s the way I feel about you”. It is the fellowship of the burning heart — we are called to enter into that. This is the essence of what salvation is all about. Salvation is so much more than escaping hell, and it is so much more than a ministry mandate — we are called to the fellowship of the burning heart.’

Can we really know Him? Knowing God is not the same as knowing about Him. I may know a whole lot about the Queen or Prime Minister through the media, without having met them or really knowing them. Is the idea of knowing God presumptuous? No, God wants to be known. (See Jeremiah 9:24, Ephesians 1:17, John 17:3.)

John 15:9 goes on to say: ‘Now remain in my love.’ ‘This is the number one exhortation in the whole Bible,’ says Mike Bickle. ‘Don’t ever move on from this subject; share it everywhere. Never graduate from this. Abide in it. Go deep in it. Write a new worship song on it! God calls us to be students of the emotions of God. This is the way that God loves — he can’t love partially — he only loves wholeheartedly. He only lives in fullness.

David in the Psalms was a student of the emotions of God. Make this your primary life goal, to remain in God's love—this is an intentional life goal. Abide in love NOW. Don't wait for revival. John 17:3 says “the essence of eternal life is that you know me—that you participate in the family dynamics.” The Father, the Son and the Spirit beckon us to participate. We are called by the God of the burning heart to participate in that burning heart for ever.<sup>3</sup>

How practically do we get to know God and his burning heart? First, we cultivate desire, which will then lead to discipline, which leads to delight. As we grow in desire and discipline, then delight will follow. Cultivate your desire for the Lord by making passionate prayer and worship a focus of your life, and

by participating in that burning heart of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Then add to this a disciplined pursuit of Him through spending time with Him in His word, and then desire and discipline will lead to delight.

We need to cultivate that desire for Him. Devotion to the Lord through developing a lifestyle of worship will be important. Our relationship with God should be joyful relaxed obedience and not legalism. If we are going to get to know God we need to relate to Him as a special friend, spending time with Him. In other words, two keys to getting to know the Lord, as with any relationship, are time and commitment. It is going to cost something—time, sleep, early bed, your own desires, your own comfort, your fellowship with others.

## DISCIPLESHIP GROUP

**Are you willing to make your time with the Lord a non-negotiable? Have you been able to commit to read the Bible on a daily basis? Decide today on a time that you will get up tomorrow and for the rest of the week, and share with next week's discipleship group how you did. How are you doing following the Bible reading plan for this week? Relationship with God is not about accumulating academic knowledge about God. Before you read your Bible next week, invite Jesus to be with you to reveal Himself to you through the Bible, so you might get to know Him better. Knowing God is a progressive revelation, it is a pilgrimage. God wants us to trust Him so we can follow Him.<sup>4</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Benedict. *The Rule*. Chapter 4: 17.

<sup>2</sup> Bickle, M. *Growing in Prayer: A Real-life Guide to Talking to God*. Charisma House: 14.

<sup>3</sup> Bickle, M. *Growing in Prayer: A Real-life Guide to Talking to God*. Charisma House: 13.

<sup>4</sup> See Psalm 84:5, Philippians 3:10, Deuteronomy 4:29.

## READINGS

**Day 16** Luke 2–3, Ex 26–30 *Ps 50–52*

**Day 17** Luke 4–5, Ex 31–35 *Ps 53–55*

**Day 18** Luke 6–7, Ex 36–40 *Ps 56–58*

**Day 19** Luke 8–9, Lev 1–5 *Ps 59–61*

**Day 20** Luke 10–12, Lev 6–10 *Ps 62–64*

**Sunday** *Ps 65–67*

‘Fire shall be kept burning on the altar continually; it shall not go out.’

*Leviticus 6:13 ESV*

‘There is a beneficial fervour which separates us from sin and leads to God and eternal life.’<sup>1</sup>

**W**hy pray? If God does answer prayer, even, apparently, prayers for parking spaces and the curing of colds, but doesn’t prevent Auschwitz and Hiroshima then surely some might say He is morally repugnant? Why pray? The truth is that God is a loving God who loves us passionately and He hears our prayer. ‘For whatever reason,’ says Philip Yancey, ‘God now tolerates a world in which fathers abuse their physically disabled sons ... and distressed young people commit suicide.’<sup>2</sup> Even Jesus struggled in prayer with the Father when He said ‘take this cup from me’ on that dark night when He faced the cross. Yancey says, ‘although Jesus offered no metaphysical proofs of the effectiveness of prayer the very fact that he did it establishes its worth.’

There are many approaches to cultivating a ‘prayer life’. Esther de Waal says, ‘Prayer lies at the heart of the Benedictine life; it holds everything together, it sustains every other activity ... prayer can never be set apart from life, it is the life itself. Prayer is *opus dei*, the work of God and nothing whatsoever is to be preferred to it.’<sup>3</sup> Little direction, however, is given in the *Rule* to private prayer. Private prayer is expected to flow out of *Lectio divina*. *Lectio divina* is clearly as much study as it is prayer. David Foster in *Reading with God* says, ‘*Lectio divina* is an “active” kind of reading ... *Lectio divina* is a way of praying, but a prayer

where we let God start a conversation, rather than where we are constantly bombarding God with our agenda and preoccupations.’<sup>4</sup>

Clearly, the prayer that Benedict describes was passionate as well as contemplative. Three times in the *Rule*, Benedict refers to tears: ‘tears of compunction’,<sup>5</sup> ‘prayer with tears’<sup>6</sup> and ‘tears and spiritual concentration’.<sup>7</sup> Andrew Murray said, ‘If there is one thing I think the church needs to learn, it is that God means prayer to have an answer, and that it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive what God will do for His child who gives himself to believe that his prayer will be heard. God hears prayer; this is a truth universally admitted, but of which very few understand the meaning, or experience the power.’<sup>8</sup>

If God loves us with a burning heart and we are commanded to remain (or abide) in that love, then making it an intentional life-goal to remain in God’s love, His love that He loves us with as with a burning heart of compassion, will affect how we pray. Andrew Murray says, ‘of all the promises connected with the command “Abide in me”, there is none higher and none that sooner brings the confession, “Not that I have already attained or already made perfect,” than this, “if you abide in me ask whatever you will and it shall be done to you.”’<sup>9</sup>

He goes on to say that of all the traits of a life like Christ there is none higher and more



glorious than conformity to Him in the work that now engages Him without ceasing in the Father's presence—His all-prevailing intercession. The more we abide in Him, and grow unto His likeness, the more His priestly role will work in us mightily and our life become what His is, a life that ever pleads and prevails for men.<sup>10</sup> 'There is a priestly role to intercession and we are ALL called to it. In his book *The Lost Art of Intercession*, James Goll says that Leviticus 6:3 was the verse that inspired Count von Zinzendorf.<sup>11</sup> Leviticus 6:3 reads 'fire shall be kept burning continually on the altar; it must not go out'. Zinzendorf and the Moravians started a prayer meeting that continued non-stop for over 100 years. Many believe that this non-stop prayer was hugely significant in precipitating the 18th-century Methodist awakening of Wesley and Whitfield.

James Goll says that Zinzendorf realised that this verse referred to the altar of sacrifice as it related to the Old Testament priestly function but that it carried a much greater and abiding significance on this side of the cross.<sup>12</sup>

He knew that the fire of the altar signified the prayers of the saints, and he viewed this word as a literal command to restore unceasing prayer before the Lord. We live in a day when houses of prayer are springing up all over the earth and there is a call going out for continual prayer and worship to ascend to heaven. James Goll says it is time to restore the Moravian fire, to restore the fire on the altar, to restore the priestly role of intercession, to restore the art of pleading your case, to restore the 'watch of the Lord', to restore the path from Prayer to His Presence, to restore the House of Prayer for all Nations. As we present ourselves on God's altar, we can offer up a continual sacrifice of praise and the incense of praise, until the Lord responds by sending forth the fire and God's glory fills His house again!<sup>13</sup> Let's respond to this call to pray. God loves us with a burning heart. We can abide in His love and become more conformed into the image of Christ as we enter into His priestly work, His all-prevailing intercession. Let's respond to Him, let's respond to this call and pray!

## DISCIPLESHIP GROUP

To strengthen your spiritual muscles to pray as a group, divide your group into pairs and read alternately verse by verse a Psalm, eg Psalm 23 or Psalm 63. After reading the Psalm through a couple of times in pairs take phrases randomly in the text and vocalise them into personal prayers and pray them *extempore* alternately, in those same pairs.

Take time as a whole group to share any struggles you have with prayer. Do you find it difficult to pray out loud? If so share this with the group. If it is difficult for some people to pray 'out loud' in an *extempore* fashion, agree to pray round in a circle holding hands and squeeze the hand of person on your right when you have finished your *extempore* prayer, prompting them to continue.

<sup>1</sup> Benedict. *The Rule*. Chapter 72: 103.

<sup>2</sup> Yancey, P. *Prayer: Does it Make any Difference?* Hodder & Stoughton: 63,64,68.

<sup>3</sup> De Waal, E. *Seeking God: The Way of St Benedict*. Liturgical Press: 129.

<sup>4</sup> Foster, D. *Reading with God: Lectio Divina*. Continuum: 1.

<sup>5</sup> Benedict. *The Rule*. Chapter 20: 41.

<sup>6</sup> Benedict. *The Rule*. Chapter 4: 18

<sup>7</sup> Benedict. *The Rule*. Chapter 52: 77.

<sup>8</sup> Murray, A. *With Christ in the School of Prayer*. Merchant Books: 10.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* 9.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* 9.

<sup>11</sup> Goll, J. *The Lost Art of Intercession*. Destiny Image: 14.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* 14.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* 14.

## READINGS

**Day 21** Luke 13–15, Lev 11–15 *Ps 68***Day 22** Luke 16–18, Lev 16–20 *Ps 69–70***Day 23** Luke 19–20, Lev 21–25 *Ps 71–72***Day 24** Luke 21–22, Lev 26–Num 3 *Ps 73–74***Day 25** Luke 23–24, Num 4–8 *Ps 75–77***Sunday** *Ps 78*

‘And he said to him, “Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.”’

*Luke 15:31–32 ESV*

‘Listen, my son to the master’s instructions, and take them to heart. They are the instructions of a loving father ...’<sup>1</sup>

Recently, there was a story in the newspapers of a man who had been a drug addict and who had inherited one of the finest stately homes in the land from his father.<sup>2</sup> This son had a string of criminal convictions, but he had changed his lifestyle and his relationship to his father was restored just before his father died. This story reminded me of the parable of the prodigal son, where we have a deeply moving picture of the heart of our heavenly Father. He embraces His lost sons and daughters as they turn towards Him and make their way home. In Luke 15 we read, ‘But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.’ Many of us need our eyes to be opened to how great our heavenly Father’s love is for us, if we are to be rightly postured in prayer and worship. John 15:9 says, ‘As the Father has loved me so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.’ This is not a passive, docile love—it is a volcanic desire in the burning heart of God.

Mike Bickle of the International House of Prayer says, ‘It’s the call of God throughout the whole human race to encounter the Father heart of God in intimacy. It is the call of God to go deep with God. It is incomprehensible! We really do not grasp the magnitude, the implication of the God of Genesis 1, before whom the angels tremble, God Himself,

opening wide His heart. Jesus said when you come before him, call him “Father”. The angels cannot call him Father. Only born-again believers can call him “Father”, only the saints. The angels close their eyes with veiled faces. Our Father is trustworthy, he is the tender one, who has your interests at heart. He has a dream that has yet to be manifest for every single person who will respond to him in Jesus Christ.<sup>3</sup>

The Holy Spirit empowers us to love God wholeheartedly. There is nothing more exhilarating to the human spirit than to experience the Father’s heart. We are commanded to love the Lord our God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength ... but it takes God to love God, not only to experience His love but to return it. Sometimes people think of pursuing Him without connecting with the Holy Spirit. They may have an image of a God who is King and Almighty, but He is more than King and He is more than Almighty. Apart from a revelation of the Father’s heart, the commandment to love the Lord our God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength is a burden. It is not enough to have a vision of being a lover of God—we ALSO need a revelation of God as a wholehearted lover who burns with desire—and we ALSO need to have a growing relationship with the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Andrew Murray says, ‘The Father seeks worshippers. The worship of the Father is

only possible to those to whom the Spirit of the Son has been given ... The best gift a good and wise father can bestow on a child on earth is his own spirit, this is the great object of a father in education—to reproduce in his own child his own disposition and character ... And so it is impossible to conceive of God bestowing any higher gift on his child than this, His own Spirit. Our Father in heaven desires to educate us as His children for the holy, heavenly life in which he dwells, and for this he gives us from the depths of His heart, His own Spirit.<sup>4</sup>

Heavenly Father, 'Open our eyes to see the full extent of your passionate love for us, and that you have given us from the depths of Your heart ... Your Spirit, the Spirit of Your Son'.

*Many of us need our eyes to be opened to how great our heavenly Father's love is for us,*

## DISCIPLESHIP GROUP

The picture we are given in the Bible is that God is a loving Father who desires intimacy with us, yet He is also the most powerful being in the universe. Some of us have a distorted image of God, as a kind of Frankenstein figure. We think that He is a hard taskmaster and that we can never please Him. Conversely, you may believe that He is some kind of benevolent but distant Father Christmas and when 'the blessings stop coming through', you feel you must be out of the will of God. Maybe you felt rejected from your earthly father or he was absent for some of your childhood, or he felt distant. If you struggle with the biblical picture of God as a deeply passionate father with a burning heart of love, and you see God as a Frankenstein figure, a Father Christmas, or an absentee authority figure, share with your discipleship group and pray for one another.

<sup>1</sup> Benedict. *The Rule*. The Prologue: 8.

<sup>2</sup> [www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2014/oct/16/duke-of-marlborough-dies-at-88](http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2014/oct/16/duke-of-marlborough-dies-at-88); [www.telegraph.co.uk/news/111167007/Duke-of-Marlborough-dies-aged-88.html](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/111167007/Duke-of-Marlborough-dies-aged-88.html)

<sup>3</sup> Bickle, M. *Encountering the Father Heart of God*. Talk given on 27 April 2007. Available at [www.mikebickle.org](http://www.mikebickle.org)

<sup>4</sup> Murray, A. *With Christ in the School of Prayer*. Merchant Books: 24, 56, 57.

## READINGS

**Day 26** John 1–3, Num 9–13 *Ps 79–81*

**Day 27** John 4–6, Num 14–18 *Ps 82–85*

**Day 28** John 7–9, Num 19–23 *Ps 86–88*

**Day 29** John 10–12, Num 24–28 *Ps 89*

**Day 30** John 13–15, Num 29–33 *Ps 90–92*

**Sunday** *Ps 93–94*

‘The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”’

*John 1:29 ESV*

‘Let us set off along his path using the Gospel as our guide.’<sup>1</sup>

**D**o you have a spirit of sonship or are you a narcissistic orphan at heart? Mankind was spiritually orphaned in the garden of Eden and separated from the Father ... but Jesus came to show us the way to the Father. Have you had the revelation that through Christ you are a son of God?

The Father loves us deeply. The Son loves the Father and went to the cross on our behalf so that we might be restored to relationship with the Father. How deep is this love for you and me? It is a love so deep that it deals with our root problem of sin, which started way back in the Garden of Eden. Jesus went to death on the cross on our behalf. Jesus is the Lamb of God who came to take away the sin of the world. Through the death of Jesus on the cross our sin is dealt with.

However, we live in a day when the cross is offensive, as Billy Graham reminds us in the DVD *The Cross*.<sup>2</sup> The cross is offensive. There is an increasing tendency for many Western Christians who are attempting to re-contextualise Christianity for the postmodern world, to reframe discipleship without the cross. This implies that life is not as black and white as the Bible says, or as men and women of God of previous generations have thought. We must remember that, ‘For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God’ (2 Corinthians 5:21). We are righteous by faith in Jesus Christ and the finished work of Jesus on the cross.

We need to pray for a fresh revelation of the

finished work of Jesus on the cross, the very same cross that was offensive in the past and is still offensive today. We also need to pray for a fresh revelation of Jesus Himself and of His call for us to follow Him.

Following Christ and becoming like Him is our mandate as disciples of Jesus Christ. It is said that *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis<sup>3</sup> has probably been the most widely read and most influential spiritual work (other than the Bible)<sup>4</sup> ever written. Since it was written early in the 15th century, thousands of editions and translations have appeared. It describes the way of the follower of Christ as he learns to mould his life in conformity with the pattern set by Christ.

Jesus is the Son of God and He calls us to follow Him. Jesus said that there are two ways—a broad way and a narrow way. One leads to life and one leads to destruction. In one of the oldest Christian documents, the *Didache* (the teaching of the 12), there is a clear summary of these ‘two ways’, the way of life and the way of death.

Any temptation to re-frame discipleship that avoids following Jesus as the ONLY way should be avoided, at all costs. The cross and the way of the cross are offensive and particularly offensive to many in the rich Christian world looking for an opt-out for following Jesus. Jesus provides the way to the Father. We are self-loving narcissistic orphans, and sin and sinfulness are still our problem but they are unfashionable words. We need the blood of Jesus for forgiveness of

sins and the cross for deliverance from sin. Through Jesus Christ we can be restored to the heart of the Father, and through Him we can have a spirit of sonship. John 14:18 says we are 'no longer orphans', Romans 3:26 'you are all sons of God through faith in Jesus Christ', and Romans 8:15 'you received a spirit of sonship. And by Him we cry Abba, Father.'

Jesus Christ came to show us the way to the Father. The nearest thing to revival that

England has experienced in recent years took place when Billy Graham preached in Haringgay Arena over 60 years ago in 1954. Let's take the opportunity to tell people about Jesus using resources such as the Billy Graham DVD (see below) and Gospel Bracelets<sup>5</sup> (see below). Let's pray as we do so that many will be reconciled to their Father in heaven again. Lord, send revival to our land once again.

## DISCIPLESHIP GROUP

In your discipleship group practise sharing the Good News with one another in pairs using multicoloured Gospel Bracelets. If possible, make or purchase some Good News bracelets before you meet together. Take it in turns, in pairs, to tell one another the simple Gospel story. See 'Good News Bracelet presentation' below.<sup>5</sup>

- 1 Green Bead: God's Creation (Genesis 1:1–2:3)—God created everything and everything He made was good, beautiful, and perfect, including man and woman.
- 2 Black Bead: Sin (Genesis 3 and Romans 3:23)—Something went very wrong! Mankind disobeyed God, which is sin. Darkness entered the world and things weren't perfect anymore.
- 3 Red Bead: Jesus Died (John 3:16 and Romans 5:6–20)—God's love fixes the problem. Jesus died on the cross to take away our sin.
- 4 White Bead: God Forgives (Ephesians 2:8–9 and 1 John 1:9)—God forgives all who trust in His Son, Jesus.
- 5 Blue Bead: The Holy Spirit (John 14:6 and Galatians 5:16–26)—Jesus sends the Holy Spirit, who enables us to trust in Jesus as our Saviour, and the Holy Spirit lives in us, enabling us to do God's will.
- 6 Yellow (Gold) Bead: Heaven (John 14:1–6 and Revelation 21:4)—God prepares a place in heaven for His people to live with Him forever.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Benedict. *The Rule*. The Prologue: 8.

<sup>2</sup> [www.myhopewithbillygraham.org.uk/programs/the-cross](http://www.myhopewithbillygraham.org.uk/programs/the-cross)

<sup>3</sup> A Kempis, T (trs: Benham, W). *The Imitation of Christ*. Echo Library.

<sup>4</sup> [www.amazon.com/The-Imitation-Christ-Thomas-Kempis/dp/1613820364](http://www.amazon.com/The-Imitation-Christ-Thomas-Kempis/dp/1613820364)

<sup>5</sup> [www.youtube.com/watch?v=WY9CgBzw-U4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WY9CgBzw-U4).

<sup>6</sup> [www.goandmake.ca/a-simple-witnessing-tool-the-good-news-bracelet-4/](http://www.goandmake.ca/a-simple-witnessing-tool-the-good-news-bracelet-4/)

## READINGS

Day 31 John 16–18, Num 34–Deut 2 Ps 95–97

Day 32 John 19–21, Deut 3–7 Ps 98–101

Day 33 Acts 1–3, Deut 8–12 Ps 102–103

Day 34 Acts 4–6, Deut 13–17 Ps 104

Day 35 Acts 7–9, Deut 18–22 Ps 105

Sunday Ps 106

‘When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.’  
*Acts 2:1–2 ESV*

‘As our heart expands with the inexpressible sweetness of love.’<sup>2</sup>

**H**ow did Jesus turn the whole world upside down? As we read about Jesus in the New Testament, it becomes clear. He was an obedient son, a good Jew, a ‘nice guy’, but what happened so that He turned the whole world upside down — or should we say right side up? — so that He became a great preacher, a deliverer of the demon-oppressed and a healer of the sick?

What happened? We know He was born in Bethlehem and dedicated at eight days, that as a 12-year-old He went to the Temple, and that He grew in wisdom and stature. But what happened when He was 30? He met John the Baptist. John had been called by God to go out into the wilderness and baptise people until he found the man ‘on whom you see the Holy Spirit come down’. We know that the Holy Spirit came down on Jesus as He was baptised in water and that Jesus was introduced to the world by John the Baptist, as ‘the one who will baptise with the Holy Spirit.’

But what happened next? In Luke 4:1, Jesus was led and empowered by the Holy Spirit in preparation for ministry. Luke 4:17–19 records that Jesus began his ministry with the Spirit of the Lord on Him. After the 72 returned Jesus was full of joy through the Holy Spirit (Luke 10:21). After Jesus died and was resurrected the disciples received the Holy Spirit and were commissioned to do the works of the kingdom (John 21:22, Matthew 28:19). They were commanded to wait until

they were clothed with the power of the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49, Acts 1:4–5). ‘But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses.’ (Acts 1:8) The Holy Spirit was poured out at 9am at Pentecost, as promised in Joel (Acts 2:1–16). Peter then preached repentance from sin, baptism in water, forgiveness from sin and the receiving of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38–39). He preached with authority, when filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 4:8–10).

How did Jesus turn the world upside down? His ministry in the power of the Holy Spirit and the whole book of Acts begins to make sense if we see the Holy Spirit as the power of God for evangelism. The word for power in Greek is *dunamis*, from which we get the word ‘dynamite’. God poured out His Holy Spirit on Jesus and His disciples, and God wants to pour dynamite on us because people’s hearts are hard and resistant to the Good News about Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is God’s power for us to be witnesses. Jesus had told the disciples to wait until they got the ‘I can’t help it’s’. Peter and John said, ‘we can’t help speaking about what we have seen and heard.’ (Acts 4:20) Jesus said, ‘You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you’ (Acts 1:8). We need that power or *dunamis*.

Nothing was going to be the same when the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples. How were things different? After Peter preached, the people were cut to the heart, and their

response was, 'What must we do to be saved?' Peter's answer was 'Repent and be baptised, every one of you.' About 3,000 were added to their number that day. We need that power if we are to share our faith, if we are to have a similar result to Peter.

Jesus says to us, 'Just as the Father sent me I am sending you'. We may feel afraid but He said to the disciples, 'Wait in Jerusalem until you receive what my Father promised, that you may be clothed with power from on high.' So how do we receive this promise of the Father? How can we be clothed with power from on high to be baptised in the Holy Spirit?

**First, we need to believe that this promise is for us so that we can be clothed with power.** It's not for an elite few, or the wacky or superstar Christian, but for anyone who wants to do the works of the kingdom in the power of the Holy Spirit. Mark 16 says that these signs will accompany 'those who believe in my name'.

**Second we need to be thirsty.** The Lord responds to our desire. We need to desire and long for all that the Lord has, to be poured out on us. Jesus said in John 7:37: 'If anyone is thirsty let him come to me and drink, for he who believes out of his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.' If we are thirsty,

and if we believe, then we need to come to Jesus for Him to fill us to overflowing with His river of living water.

**Third and finally, we need to ask.** In Luke 11:9–13, Jesus said, 'Ask and you will receive ... for everyone who asks receives.' He went on to say that 'if you, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?' He has received the promise of the Father and wants to pour out His Holy Spirit on you so you can be clothed with His power and do the works of the kingdom.

What might stop us receiving from the Holy Spirit? Some people are afraid because they don't know what will happen ... but perfect love drives out all fear (1 John 4:18). The Holy Spirit comes to reveal the love God has for us, for God is love. Some struggle to believe that it will happen, but the Father gives good gifts — and especially the Holy Spirit — to those who ask.

Jesus said, 'If anyone is thirsty, let him come and drink.' Jesus is the baptiser in the Holy Spirit and fire, so why don't you surrender your life afresh to Him as Lord, and ask Him to clothe you with His power and fill you to overflowing with His Spirit.

## DISCIPLESHIP GROUP

As we follow Jesus long enough we will love what He loves and do what He does. Are you thirsty for the promised Holy Spirit so that He can empower you to be a fisher of men? Luke 11:9–13 says, 'Ask and it will be given to you for everyone who asks receives'. If you have a piano player or guitar player in the group, then ask him/her to lead your discipleship group in some corporate worship. Then pray for those who are thirsty to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Before you do so, take time to make sure your hearts are right before the Lord, allowing Him the opportunity to reveal if there is anything that might be hindering you from receiving, eg unconfessed sin, unforgiveness, fear, unbelief, past involvement in the occult or wrong doctrine. Bring these to the cross in repentance and let His blood cleanse you. Then by faith receive the promised Holy Spirit.

<sup>1</sup> Summary of message preached by Connie Taylor, at The Round Church, Cambridge on 6/11/2014.

<sup>2</sup> Benedict. *The Rule*. The Prologue: 8.



## The Fear of the Lord

## READINGS

**Day 36** Acts 10–12, Deut 23–27 *Ps 107*

**Day 37** Acts 13–15, Deut 28–32 *Ps 108–109*

**Day 38** Acts 16–18, Deut 33–Josh 3  
*Ps 110–113*

**Day 39** Acts 19–21, Josh 4–8 *Ps 114–115*

**Day 40** Acts 22–24, Josh 9–14 *Ps 116–118*

**Sunday** *Ps 119:1–32*

‘The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practise it have a good understanding. His praise endures forever!’ *Psalms 111:10 ESV*

‘And what does he say? Come to me, my children and listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord.’ *Psalms 34:11<sup>1</sup>*

In her book *Intimate Friendship with God*,<sup>2</sup> Joy Dawson says, ‘If there was a pile of cow manure on the carpet in your church in the front of your pulpit, what would you do? You’d want to get it out of the church quickly! Why? Because it stinks! If I said that I had a secret sin, a love for cow manure, and I needed prayer otherwise I might be tempted to get in it, you might think I was crazy!

‘But this is exactly what it is like when people ask for prayer regarding their sins. They don’t hate their sin for what it is. They need the fear of the Lord, which is the hatred of evil.<sup>3</sup> When we see sin the way God sees sin we see it as a sugar-coated cow pat!’

Friendship with the Lord is for those that fear him. Intimacy with God without obedience is like prostitution. Jesus clearly said, ‘If you love me you will obey what I command.’<sup>4</sup> But what is obedience? It is doing what we are told, when we are told and with the right attitude. When we know what it is right to do and we don’t do it, it is sin.<sup>5</sup> Partial obedience is NOT obedience. How do we stay close to the Lord, in a consumer society that is so indulgent, hedonistic and narcissistic? How do we stay on the narrow path and keep close to the Lord? We keep close to Him, to the degree that we fear God and obey him and repent of our sin. The level of our repentance of sin will depend upon the extent to which we see sin as God sees it and hate it as He hates

it.<sup>6</sup> As we take time to study the character of God in the Bible, the more He will reveal Himself to us. The deeper the understanding that we have of His justice, knowledge, wisdom, faithfulness and love, the easier it will be for us to obey Him.<sup>7</sup>

We also have the fear of God upon us, to the degree we are free from idolatry. An idol is that thing we go to for comfort before we go to God. In a consumer society it is so easy for us to make our own will into an idol, as we satisfy our desires and way. Anything that takes priority in our lives over the Lord Jesus Christ in our thinking, in our time, in our affection, in our loyalty, and in our obedience, can become an idol. Even our own ministry responsibilities can become a focus of our attention, and the centre of our priorities, along with our possessions, our money, our food, our sexual gratification.<sup>8</sup>

A strong call to obedience in ‘the fear of the Lord’ is the theme in the Prologue to Benedict’s *Rule*. The fear of the Lord was stressed by Benedict, because he recognised that without the fear of the Lord individuals will become proud because of their own works, and begin to love their own will rather than God’s.<sup>9</sup> Humility, which is the central monastic virtue, begins in ‘the fear of the Lord’, which simply means acknowledging the divine omnipresence and acting accordingly.<sup>10</sup> Columba Stewart says that ‘awareness of

the presence of God pervades the *Rule* ... Humility, the central monastic virtue, begins in “the fear of the Lord.”<sup>11</sup>

In *Intimate Friendship with God*, Joy Dawson says that there are a number of blessings for those who fear the Lord<sup>12</sup>: fruitfulness (Exodus 1:17); it deters us from sinning (Exodus 20:20); blessings on us and our children (Deuteronomy 5:29); prolonged days (Proverbs 9:10–11); preservation of life (Proverbs 19:23); success (Ecclesiastes 8:12); deliverance (2 Kings 17:39); respect earned (Nehemiah 5:9); given authority (Nehemiah 5:2); taught of the Lord (Psalm 25:12); friendship with God (Psalm 25:14); revelation of truth (Psalm 25:14); abundant goodness (Psalm 31:19); God’s attention assured (Psalm 33:18); angelic protection and deliverance (Psalm 34:7); provision for all needs (Psalm 34:9); given a heritage (Psalm 61:5); God’s steadfast love (Psalm 103:11); God’s compassion (Psalm 103:13); provision of food (Psalm 111:5); wisdom (Psalm 111:10);

blessings from God (Psalm 112:1); increased blessings upon us and our children (Psalm 115:13); special blessings related to family life (Psalm 128); protection (Psalm 115:11); companionship of others who fear God (Psalm 119:63); fulfilled desires (Psalm 145:19); God takes pleasure in us (Psalm 147:11); healing and refreshment (Proverbs 3:7–8); confidence in God (Proverbs 14:26); ability to avoid evil (Proverbs 16:6); satisfaction (Proverbs 19:23); riches, honour and life (Proverbs 22:4); honour for women (Proverbs 31:30); advancement (Ecclesiastes 7:18); steadfastness (Jeremiah 32:40); names recorded in God’s book of remembrance (Malachi 3:16); God’s mercy (Luke 1:50); acceptable to God (Acts 10:35).

Do we long for a more intimate friendship with the Lord? Then let’s ask the Lord for more ‘fear of the Lord’, for it is the hatred of evil! Let’s see sin for what it is, just like a sugar-coated cow pat. Let’s believe the promises in the Bible. We can know a fulfilling life in intimate friendship with God, if we fear Him.

## DISCIPLESHIP GROUP

How much time do you spend thinking about your possessions, your money, your food or your sexual gratification? Do you spend time thinking about your own works, your ministry, your spiritual responsibilities? What are your idols? Share in your discipleship group, which of these idols are the biggest hindrances to you fearing God. In your discipleship group, each take a few of the Scriptures above and read them out loud and then start praying for more fear of the Lord for yourselves and for one another.

<sup>1</sup> Benedict. *The Rule*. The Prologue: 8.

<sup>2</sup> Dawson, J. *Intimate Friendship with God*. Chosen Books: 54.

<sup>3</sup> Proverbs 8:13.

<sup>4</sup> John 14:15.

<sup>5</sup> Dawson, J. *Intimate Friendship with God*. Chosen Books: 57.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, 23.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, 116.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, 117.

<sup>9</sup> Benedict. *The Rule*. Chapter 7: 22,24.

<sup>10</sup> Stewart, C. *Prayer and Community*. Orbis Books: 28.

<sup>11</sup> Dawson, J. *Intimate Friendship with God*. Chosen Books: 139.

# Confess your sins

## READINGS

**Day 41** Acts 25–27, Josh 15–19 *Ps 119:33–72*

**Day 42** Acts 28–Rom 3, Josh 20–24

*Ps 119:73–104*

**Day 43** Rom 4–7, Judges 1–5 *Ps 119:105–144*

**Day 44** Rom 8–11, Judges 6–10

*Ps 119:145–176*

**Day 45** Rom 12–15, Judges 11–15 *Ps 120–125*

**Sunday** *Ps 126–131*

‘For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.’

*Romans 6:23 ESV*

‘Confess your sins with tears’<sup>1</sup>

**A**re we all utopians now? Many of our politicians and economists today seem to be holding onto a false belief in some kind of utopianism. They maintain that by the manipulation of the right social or economic factors we can create social harmony and progress when, actually, we are beginning to create instead a nightmarish dystopia, something like Aldous Huxley describes in *Brave New World*.<sup>2</sup>

The truth is that we are living in unreality when we depart from the biblical worldview in Genesis that man is sinful. In Genesis 6:5–6 it is clear that sin is a reality and breaks God’s heart. Avoiding this is a big problem. ‘The Lord saw how great man’s wickedness on the earth had become and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. The Lord was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain.’ We know from the Bible that God desires an intimate relationship with us. Just as a father cannot get close emotionally to his child when the child is deliberately doing things that are the opposite to his father’s will, so it is similar with God the Father.

Do we really see sin the way God sees it? When we became Christians we repented of our sin and submitted to the Lordship of Christ. We asked God to forgive us our sin and were forgiven our sins and we started our relationship with God. How much do we desire to know God? If we really desire to grow closer to the Lord, it may be helpful to allow the Lord to shine a spotlight on your life

so that you and He can deal with specific sins that have grieved Him, that as yet are undealt with. First it is necessary to define what is sin and what it is not, and what is repentance and what is not.

### What is sin?

*Webster’s Dictionary* defines sin as ‘Transgression of the law of God: disobedience to the divine will.’<sup>3</sup> Sin is not natural, sin is not human weakness, sin is not something you can’t help, sin is not temptation. Sin is a choice. Every choice has consequences. Sow a thought, reap an action. Sow an action, reap a habit. Sow a habit, reap a character. Sow a character, reap a destiny.

### What is repentance?

Repentance is not an invitation, it is a command. God commands all men to repent (Acts 17:30–31). Repentance is not just ‘feeling sorry’. It is not enough to be sorry about how sin affects you. It is necessary to be sorry for how sin affects God. Repentance is not confession of sin only. Repentance is forsaking all known sin.

### What about confession and restitution? Are they really necessary?

Confession is humbling yourself and admitting that you are wrong. Restitution is the willingness to pay back or restore wherever possible.

If you are now forgiven before the Lord, are you ready to ask Him for the courage to

confess and make restitution to others you have wronged? The circle of confession should only go as far as the circle of committal. Those sins against God alone you have left with His loving forgetfulness; those against others must be put right with the persons wronged. This will require wisdom. It may cause more

harm than good to raise some matters with people you have wronged in the past. In some cases letters may need to be written asking for forgiveness. Ask the Lord for wisdom and if necessary consult your discipleship group leader for some advice.

## SPIRITUAL CHECK-UP ASSIGNMENT<sup>4</sup>

On your own this week try to take one hour alone with the Lord and a blank sheet of paper and allow the Lord to search and uncover areas of your life where there is any unconfessed sin. As sins come to mind confess them to the Lord one by one. Remember:

'For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.' (Romans 6:23)

'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' (1 John 1:9)

- Stealing—Can I remember taking money or property that was not mine? Did I steal from neighbours, relatives, shops, school or home?
- Cheating—Have I got anything from anyone unfairly?
- Lying—Any designed form of deception for selfish reasons. Planning to make an impression contrary to the naked truth is lying. Have I been deceitful?
- Slander—Speaking evil of someone. Have I talked about someone behind their back in a way I would not be willing before their face? Am I critical?
- Criticism—Have I spoken about others without love? Have I judged, thought or said the worst thing about a person in a situation I knew?
- Envy—Have I gossiped and boasted to exalt myself at another's expense? Does it hurt to hear certain people praised? Am I guilty of pretending in thought or life to be more or less than I really am? Am I more concerned about what others think of me than what God thinks of me?
- Ingratitude—Have others gone out of their way for me and then I took it for granted? My spouse? My family? The secretary? The cook?
- Anger—Am I bad-tempered? Have I lost patience or gentleness with someone?
- Hardness—Have I fought back, murmured or returned evil for evil? Have I responded in an un-Christ-like way when I was wronged or hurt by someone?
- Habits—Have I over-indulged natural appetites until they are beyond normal?
- Half-heartedness—Have I deliberately shirked my share of responsibility? Have I skipped times of secret or public prayer to please myself when I should have been meeting with God? Have I been flippant or light with Him?
- Hypocrisy—Have I said one thing and done another?
- Broken vows—Is there a vow I've made to God that I have not kept? Have I promised something that I've since forgotten or gone back on? (If it was an unwise vow, you need to ask God for forgiveness and release.)

At the end of the hour, destroy the piece of paper and give thanks to the Lord for His cleansing and forgiveness.

<sup>1</sup> Benedict. *The Rule*. Chapter 4: 18.

<sup>2</sup> Huxley, A. *Brave New World*. Vintage Classics.

<sup>3</sup> [www.webstersdictionary1828.com](http://www.webstersdictionary1828.com)

<sup>4</sup> Pratney, W. [www.moh.org/PDF\\_Files/ASpiritualCheckup.pdf](http://www.moh.org/PDF_Files/ASpiritualCheckup.pdf)

## READINGS

**Day 46** Rom 16–1 Cor 3, Judges 16–21  
*Ps 132–135*

**Day 47** 1 Cor 4–7, Ruth 1–4, 1 Sam 1  
*Ps 136–138*

**Day 48** 1 Cor 8–11, 1 Sam 2–6 *Ps 139–140*

**Day 49** 1 Cor 12–15, 1 Sam 7–11 *Ps 141–143*

**Day 50** 1 Cor 16–2 Cor 3, 1 Sam 12–16  
*Ps 144–146*

**Sunday** *Ps 147–150*

‘Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone.’

*1 Corinthians 12:4–6 ESV*

‘Each person has his own gift from God—one person has one kind of gift and the next person has a different one.’

*1 Corinthians 7:7*

**D**o we really want to grow up? Are we ready to take our place in the body of Christ? Or are we content to be infants, tossed back and forth by every wind of doctrine (Ephesians 4:14)? In his book on Ephesians, *Practice Resurrection*, Eugene Peterson shows how the Apostle Paul, to make his point that God is calling us to grow up, seems to misquote Psalm 68 in Ephesians 4:8, and suggests that Paul did this very deliberately. What do you think?

Psalm 68 reads, ‘you ascended the high mount leading captives in your train and receiving gifts from people.’ Paul quotes this in Ephesians as, ‘When he ascended on high he made captivity captive; he gave gifts to his people.’ Why does he change ‘received gifts’ to ‘gave gifts’? In Psalm 68 God the King rides in triumphant procession and is showered with gifts from those who worship Him. Paul seems to be saying that when Jesus ascended to sit at the right hand of the Father, the very opposite happened. Peterson says that Paul wants us to see in Ephesians that Jesus ascended to the Father, and if we are to grow up ‘to the full measure of the stature of Christ’ and not to be children, one condition of us exercising our responsibilities in Christ is that we receive the Spirit of Christ. He emphasises this by making a startling misquotation of a Psalm that was very familiar to his hearers.

Peterson says, ‘The ascended Jesus, the Jesus at the right hand of the Father, Christ the King, launched his rule by giving gifts, gifts that turn out to be ways in which we participate in his kingly, gospel rule.’<sup>2</sup> He says that we should ‘understand this gift language well enough. ‘We begin as a gift. We don’t make ourselves. We don’t birth ourselves. We find our fundamental identity as a gift ... Adolescence is the critical transition from childhood to adulthood ... we have been given much. Now we begin exercising these gifts in community. We gradually learn to live what we have been given, wisely and well. We grow up.’<sup>3</sup>

In this passage in Ephesians, ‘Paul enumerates five gifts: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. Each gift is an invitation and provides the means to participate in the work of Jesus. These are not gifts to be placed on a mantle as flowers. These are not gifts to be used for our convenience like say a cell phone. These are not gifts to divert or entertain us, like a gift of tickets to the symphony. These are not gifts of appreciation like an anniversary ruby necklace or a retirement Rolex. These gifts that equip us to work alongside of, in company with Jesus, the work of ministry, are for building up the body of Christ. We are being invited into a working relationship in the

operation of the Trinity.<sup>4</sup>

Do we want to grow up? There are a number of sets of gifts in the New Testament, in Romans 12:6–8, Ephesians 4:11 and 1 Corinthians 12:8–10. In 1 Corinthians 14:1 we are challenged by Paul to make love our aim and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy. Do we earnestly desire to grow up, to grow into the full measure of Christ? Then stepping out in faith (without which it is impossible to please God) is an important part of growing up. Let's get a right perspective; let's get a God-perspective.

When making 'love your aim' and 'earnestly desiring the spiritual gifts', and asking for the Lord to use you with a prophetic word in prayer for another person, it can be helpful to identify with that person, lay on your hands and listen both to the Lord and to the person you are praying for, asking him/her for direction for prayer. Sometimes the

Lord may remind you of a verse of scripture or give you a mental picture or impression, to share with another person. As you begin to 'step out' with the gift of prophecy it is helpful to recognise that you may be inclined to hold back from bringing a verse of scripture or a picture because you may think that it was 'just you' and the Lord was not speaking at all, because of fear of what others are thinking, or because of fear of making mistakes. The Lord does not lack the power or ability to speak to us, but He does lack channels who are willing and available to be used.

Earlier in 1 Corinthians, Paul says that infants in Christ are given milk not solid food. We have been living off milk for long enough. We have been tossed about by winds of doctrine for long enough. It is time to use the gifts that God has given us, to step out in faith and use them for building up of the body of Christ. It's time to grow up!

## DISCIPLESHIP GROUP

**Have a spiritual gifts workshop. Read 1 Corinthians 14:1 together: 'Follow the way of love and eagerly desire the spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy.' Thank the Lord for His Holy Spirit and the spiritual gifts and seek Him for a release of the prophetic gift in your group. Then form a circle and take it in turns one-by-one to pray for the next person on your right. Then all changes places. Ask the Lord for a scripture for the person on your right, share it, and then turn it into a prayer for that person. Then all change places. Ask the Lord for an encouraging mental 'picture' for the person on your right, share it, then turn it into prayer for that person. Move into a time of worship and thanksgiving to the Lord.**

<sup>1</sup> Benedict. *The Rule*. Chapter 40: 63.

<sup>2</sup> Peterson, E. *Practice Resurrection*. Eerdmans: 46.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, 46.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, 47.

## READINGS

**Day 51** 2 Cor 4–7, 1 Sam 17–21 *Ps 1–5*

**Day 52** 2 Cor 8–11, 1 Sam 22–26 *Ps 6–8*

**Day 53** 2 Cor 12–Gal 2, 1 Sam 27–31 *Ps 9–11*

**Day 54** Gal 3–6, 2 Sam 1–5 *Ps 12–14*

**Day 55** Eph 1–4, 2 Sam 6–15 *Ps 15–17*

**Sunday** *Ps 18*

‘Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.’ *2 Corinthians 5:20 ESV*

‘We must hasten to do now, what will profit us forever’<sup>1</sup>

Should we drop the word ‘evangelism’ from our vocabulary? If evangelism is just the bigoted imposition of our truth on another free-thinking individual, does it have any place at all today? If, as some say, discipleship needs reframing, and traditional insider language like ‘sin’ and ‘salvation’ need re-interpretation for the postmodern youth today, then what place does evangelism have today? It seems to have become almost a taboo subject. Should we drop it from our vocabulary altogether?

Lesslie Newbigin says that today in our pluralist society the gospel ‘simply disappears into the undifferentiated ocean of information. It represents one opinion among millions of others. It cannot be “the truth”, since from a post-modern perspective, in a pluralist society, truth is not one but many. It may be “true for you” but it cannot be true for everyone.’<sup>2</sup> Newbigin says that this is the challenge facing the communicating of the Gospel today. The suspicion of the motives of anyone seeking to communicate the Gospel is that they are seeking to impose their Christian wills on unbelievers, and this means that any attempt to hold proclamatory missionary activities of any kind could be dismissed out of hand. Any and every attempt at mission or preaching of any kind can be seen as a disgusting desire for control and mastery and domination through truth claims. In this

hostile environment do we dare proclaim the gospel? Do we fear man or do we fear the Lord? Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5: ‘Since we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade man, for Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that he died for all ... we are Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God.’ Do we fear man, or do we fear the Lord? What would Paul do today if he was living in pluralist Britain? Would he reframe discipleship, would he drop the word ‘evangelism’ from his vocabulary?

Andrew Walker argues that ultimately there is no alternative to incarnating the Christian message. He describes the gospel as ‘a story to die for’.<sup>3</sup> In a world in which the gospel has been ‘trivialized beyond recognition’,<sup>4</sup> he concludes that it’s the willingness of the preacher to die for that story that ultimately will communicate the message with the only authority that the world will respect.<sup>5</sup> He laments that ‘the tragedy of the story in our culture is that it no longer rings with the conviction of absolute truth, because it is not presented as a matter of life or death, hope or despair, heaven or hell’.<sup>6</sup> He says that if we are to effectively communicate the gospel to our pagan society (which Newbigin says is more resistant than pre-Christian paganism<sup>7</sup>), then the world



may need to see messengers incarnating the message, willing to pay the ultimate sacrifice like the martyrs of the first millennium.<sup>8</sup> Maybe we need reminding that this ‘one short tale we feel to be true’<sup>9</sup> is a ‘story to die for’.<sup>10</sup>

If we have a ‘story to die for,’ do we dare tell others about the Lord Jesus Christ? Let us turn from our fear of man. Let us ask for more fear of the Lord and implore our family and friends and our workmates on Christ’s behalf—be reconciled to God.

Evangelism ... dare we do it? Dare we do otherwise?

*It’s the willingness of the preacher to die for that story that ultimately will communicate the message with the only authority that the world will respect.*

## DISCIPLESHIP GROUP

Mike Breen says that one way that was used in the New Testament for doing evangelism was to identify a ‘Person of Peace’.<sup>11</sup> He says this ‘is simply someone that God has prepared ahead of time to hear the message of the gospel through you. We recognize “People of Peace” as those who welcome us, like to be with us, are open to receiving from us, and attempt to serve us in some way ... The specific key we’ve discovered to recognizing “People of Peace” is basically this: the willingness to risk meeting “People of Unpeace.” When Jesus sent them out he told them that they would experience welcome and rejection. He gave them instructions on what to do when they were welcomed and when they were not welcomed. He made it clear that to go out on this mission was to “out” yourself as a follower of Jesus, and see how people responded. Some will receive you. Others will reject you. Or worse. And until we’re ready to face that, we won’t find a “Person of Peace.”’

If you believe the gospel to be true, then is fear of man and the fear of rejection the main hindrance that prevents you from doing evangelism? If so confess it to one another in your discipleship group and pray for one another.

In your discipleship group, identify who are the ‘People of Peace’ in your life who at the moment are not Christians but are open to you, receive from you or attempt to serve you in some way. Pray for one another, that you will have an opportunity to talk about Jesus to this ‘Person of Peace’ you have identified, before you meet next week. Pray for an opportunity to give a multicoloured ‘Gospel Bracelet’ (see unit 6) and for the courage to share the meaning of each colour to your ‘Person of Peace’.

<sup>1</sup> Benedict. *The Rule*. The Prologue: 8.

<sup>2</sup> Newbigin, L. *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*. Eerdmans: 242.

<sup>3</sup> Walker, A. *Telling the Story*. Wipf & Stock: 203.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, 203.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, 203.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, 203.

<sup>7</sup> Newbigin, L. *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture*. Eerdmans: 20.

<sup>8</sup> Walker, A. *Telling the Story*. Wipf & Stock: 203.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, 203.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, 203.

<sup>11</sup> [www.weare3dm.com/mikebreen/we-are-3dm/recognizing-the-person-of-peace](http://www.weare3dm.com/mikebreen/we-are-3dm/recognizing-the-person-of-peace)

## READINGS

Day 56 Eph 5–Phil 2, 2 Sam 16–20 Ps 19–21

Day 57 Phil 3–Col 2, 2 Sam 21–24 Ps 22–23

Day 58 Col 3–1 Thess 2, 1 Kings 1–5 Ps 24–26

Day 59 1 Thess 3–2 Thess 3, 1 Kings 6–11  
Ps 27–28

Day 60 1 Tim 1–5, 1 Kings 12–16 Ps 29–31

Sunday Ps 32–34

‘And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us.’ *Ephesians 5:2 ESV*

‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ *Matthew 22:37,39; Mark 12:30–31; Luke 10:27<sup>1</sup>*

**A**re you part of the problem or part of the answer?<sup>2</sup> Dean Sherman says that every problem in this world is a relationship problem and if you do nothing else in life you need to be a good relator. If every problem in this world is a relationship problem and you are not a good relator, then you are part of the problem and not part of the answer. What are you?

How good are you at relating to other people? Maybe there wasn’t much heart-to-heart communication in your family when you were growing up and you don’t find it very easy now. John 13:35 says, ‘By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.’ Making relationships with other people and keeping them should be a top priority for us. Whether or not it has been a top priority in the past, why not turn over a new leaf today and determine in your heart, ‘I want to be a good relator.’

Sherman also says: ‘The big issue in poor relating is pride, and pride is “Thinking more highly of yourself than you ought” or “Thinking more lowly of yourself than you ought” (inverted pride). If you walk in humility and I walk in humility, it is impossible for the two of us to not get along. Humility is the willingness to be known for who you are. Unity is nothing less than corporate humility.’

He says, ‘The major problem in the world is selfishness born out of pride. One of the

reasons we have difficulty relating to people is that we want them to be like us. There are no weird people on this planet. There are just different people. A major hindrance to relationships is the inability to appreciate the differences between different people.’

Romans 12:18 says, ‘If it is possible, as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.’

You will never relate well unless you are devoted to relationship. Good relationship is based on truth. If you are living the truth you are easier to relate to because you are honest, open and transparent.

Three building blocks for relationships are:

- 1 Commitment.** The strength of the relationship between two lovers is not how romantic they feel towards one another. It is their commitment—the choice of the highest good of the other person.
- 2 Communication.** The number of minutes per week of deliberate heart-to-heart communication in most families is low. If you recognise you need to improve in your communication skills, try making an effort to take an interest in others rather than trying to be an interesting person. A first step to being a good communicator is being a good listener.
- 3 Consistency.** When things go wrong in a relationship the temptation is to go into old habit patterns. It is important to obey God’s word consistently and not our emotions.

Tom Marshall says that there are four key elements of relationships:<sup>3</sup>

- **First, ‘love’**, which is the most enduring. Greater love has no man, said Jesus, than that a man will lay down his life for a friend. The love of a true friend has qualities of endurance almost beyond belief.
- **Second, ‘Trust’**, which is the most fragile.
- **Third, ‘respect’ or ‘honour’**, which is the most neglected. Respect or honour is the recognition of the other person’s worth or value.

- **Fourth, ‘Understanding’ or ‘Knowledge’**, which takes longest. Cultivating relationships and relationship skills is vitally important in the kingdom of God.

Let’s determine that regardless of the level of heart-to-heart communication there has been in our families in the past or even is currently, that we are going to be good relators. Consider committing yourself before the Lord, even to the extent that you are willing to deliberately make friends with people who are different from you. Determine in your heart that you are going to be a good relator. Be part of the answer and not part of the problem.

## DISCIPLESHIP GROUP

Read 1 John 3:16–24. Are you a good relator? Do you have consistent friendships going back years and years or do you find distance growing between you and your friends? What stops you from keeping your friendships and from them becoming deep friendships of the ‘David and Jonathan’ type? Talk through the three building blocks of relationships and the importance of being a good listener.

How do we love one another? Discuss practical ‘ways of loving one another’ better.

Maybe there are some who have had a difficult week. Make time for them to share, and then one by one put each individual in a chair in the middle of the room and gather around them and pray for them. Encourage as many of the discipleship group as possible to pray and encourage everyone to pray short prayers. Make space for individuals to receive a scripture or a prophetic picture for the person on the chair in the middle of the room.

<sup>1</sup> Benedict. *The Rule*. Chapter 4: 17.

<sup>2</sup> Sherman, D. *Relationships*. YWAM.

<sup>3</sup> Marshall, T. *Right Relationships*. Sovereign World.

READINGS

**Day 61** 1 Tim 6–2 Tim 4, 1 Kings 17–22  
*Ps 35–36*

**Day 62** Titus–Philemon, 2 Kings 1–5 *Ps 37*

**Day 63** Heb 1–4, 2 Kings 6–10 *Ps 38–40*

**Day 64** Heb 5–8, 2 Kings 11–15 *Ps 41–43*

**Day 65** Heb 9–13, 2 Kings 16–20 *Ps 44–46*

**Sunday** *Ps 47–49*

‘Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.’ *2 Timothy 2:15 ESV*

‘As we make progress in our way of life and in faith, as our heart expands with the inexpressible sweetness of love, we shall run along the path of God’s commandments ...’<sup>1</sup>

**M**aturity is mastering the basics. We have already noted the importance of earnestly desiring the spiritual gifts in order to grow up spiritually, but is this all that is necessary to be a mature Christian? A Christian isn’t necessarily more mature just because he or she is more gifted. Being a Christian for a long time doesn’t make someone more mature either. Yes, it is good to grow in the spiritual gifts but this is not enough alone. You may have heard the following:

Too much spirit and not enough word, and you blow up. Too much word and not enough spirit, and you dry up. A good balance of word and spirit and you grow up.

If we are to grow into mature Christians we need a good balance of the word and of the spirit. Maturity is about ‘mastering the basics’ of the Christian life: one basic discipline for Christians is regular devotion to the Bible. How are you doing with this basic discipline? Maybe it would be helpful to be reminded of the uniqueness of the Bible, and why and how we should read it.

What is so unique about the Bible?<sup>2</sup> It is unique in its circulation. It continues to be the most read and the most sold book in the world. In the past 50 years 3,900 million copies were sold. It is also unique in its

continuity. It was written over a 1,500-year span by over 40 authors from every walk of life—kings, peasants, philosophers, fishermen, poets and statesmen. It was written in a variety of places—wilderness, dungeon, palace and military campaign. It was written during times of war and peace, during moods of heights of joy and depths of sorrow. It was written on three continents (Asia, Africa and Europe) and in three languages (Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek). It brings together hundreds of controversial subjects in harmony and continuity.

It is also unique in its translation. The Bible to date has been translated in part or in whole into more than 1,500 languages and is now available in the languages of 95% of the people in the world.

It is also unique in its survival. How do the writings of antiquity compare to the Bible? Homer’s *Iliad* comes closest, with 643 surviving manuscripts. The New Testament alone has 24,633 surviving manuscripts. Why is it unique? It is unlike any other book—the living, inspired word of God.

It may be unique, but why should I read it?<sup>3</sup>

- It is our spiritual food. ‘Man does not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.’ (Deuteronomy 8:3)
- It prevents us from sinning. ‘I have hidden

your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.' (Psalm 119:11)

- Putting it into practice is a wise thing to do. 'Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.' (Matthew 7:24)
- It produces faith. '... faith comes through hearing the message and the message is heard through the word of Christ.' (Romans 10:17)

How should I read the Bible? If I should hide God's word (Psalm 119:11) in my heart, then how should I do this? Five ways:

- By reading it '... he is to read it all the days of his life ...' (Deuteronomy 17:19) Try not to lose sight of getting 'the big picture', the 'whole counsel of God'.
- By studying it. 'Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be

ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.' (2 Timothy 2:15)

- By hearing it. 'He who has ears to hear, let him hear.' (Mark 4:9) If you are bored with sermons, there is a good chance that your spiritual ears have gone deaf. Cultivate a hearing ear.
- By meditating on it. 'Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; 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.' (Joshua 1:8) This is not a mystical or Eastern practice—it is thoroughly biblical. Meditate on God's character, God's creation, God's Word and God's works.
- By memorising it. 'I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.' (Psalm 119:11) Two helpful practices for meditation on the Bible are repetition and review. Keep repeating scripture until it is lodged in your spirit and review what you have learned on a regular basis.

## DISCIPLESHIP GROUP

What has the Lord said to you through your Bible reading this week? Give time for each person to share in the group, and to share one by one. Are you reading the Bible regularly? If so, how often, for how long and what are you reading at present? Let everyone share one by one with the group. Make yourself accountable to one another to grow in your Bible reading this week. If possible choose a method of hiding the Bible in your heart that is not your current practice and commit to try it next week and share how you did with the group when you next meet. Encourage one another with ways you have each found that make Bible reading and Bible study a priority. If there is anyone who is finding their times alone with God to be stale and a drudgery, ask them to share with the group and pray for them.

<sup>1</sup> Benedict. *The Rule*. The Prologue: 9.

<sup>2</sup> McDowell, J. The following three paragraphs are drawn from the seminar '6 hours with Josh McDowell'.

<sup>3</sup> Lehmann, D. *Stoked: Firing up Your Passion for God*. YWAM.

# Forgiveness and the tongue

## READINGS

**Day 66** James 1–4, 2 Kings 21–25 *Ps 50–52*

**Day 67** James 5–1 Pet 2, 1 Chron 1–5 *Ps 53–55*

**Day 68** 1 Pet 3–2 Pet 3, 1 Chron 6–10  
*Ps 56–58*

**Day 69** 1 John 1–5, 1 Chron 11–16 *Ps 59–61*

**Day 70** 2 John 1–Jude, 1 Chron 17–21  
*Ps 62–64*

**Sunday** *Ps 65–67*

‘And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell’

*James 3:6 ESV*

‘Let us do as the prophet says: I will keep a watch over my ways so that I do not offend with my tongue ...’<sup>1</sup>

**D**o you ever have the right to be mad! Jesus was crucified yet He forgave those crucifying Him. The Apostle Paul said, ‘Be kind to one another, tenderhearted and forgiving, just as Christ forgave you.’ (Ephesians 4:32) Being forgiving and not allowing ourselves to get offended is important for us as followers of Jesus Christ.

In Matthew 18:21, when the disciples said to Jesus, ‘Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?’, Jesus answered, ‘I tell you not seven times but seventy times seven.’ To forgive literally means to loose from a debt, to remit a debt, to cancel a debt, to say that you do not owe anything anymore. It includes the giving up of two rights, the right to get mad and the right to get even.

In the parable of the unmerciful servant, the kingdom of heaven is likened to a king settling accounts with his servants. When the king forgave his servant but found out that this same servant was not cancelling the account of someone who owed him money, he was furious. He turned him over to the torturers until he paid his debt. In Matthew 18 we read, ‘This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart.’

When you do not forgive and you still bear a grudge it is as if you have not let that person off the hook and you are trying to exact

payment. It is like the unmerciful servant in Jesus’ parable saying ‘pay me what you owe me’. It is like children in the playground saying, ‘I am going to make you pay for what you did.’ The picture given here is of being tortured. It illustrates what it is like when you don’t forgive. It is as if you are locked into the same prison emotionally as the one you want to lock the person you have not forgiven. The bitterness and unforgiveness begins to warp and twist your choices, personality and every other relationship. You are tormented.

The key in Matthew 18:35 is ‘unless we forgive from our hearts ...’ You need to forgive not coldly in your mind and your will, but when you are in touch with the pain and the hurt in your emotions. Jesus forgave when he was very much in touch with the pain of being crucified. ‘Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.’

Having a forgiving and an unoffendable heart means that we will not be saying offensive things to others.

At the start of his *Rule* Benedict quotes from Psalm 15, in the Prologue ‘reminding the reader of the importance of restrained and godly speech’. Later he writes, ‘Let us do as the prophet says: I will keep a watch over my ways so that I do not offend with my tongue.’ Watching our tongues is far more important than having the freedom to say what we want about anyone. That is not a value in the

kingdom of God.

Godly speech and an unoffendable heart are important. You may ask, How can I have a forgiving heart? Here are a few key principles:<sup>2</sup>

- **Don't 'curse it'**—don't allow yourself to get into a negative pattern of thinking.
- **Don't 'nurse it'**—don't wallow in self-pity.
- **Don't 'rehearse it'** to other people. Ask friends' forgiveness for telling them things that they didn't need to know.
- **But 'disperse it'**. Take your hurt to the Lord and ask Him to heal it.

What can I do practically if someone sins against me? Jesus tell us in Matthew 18:15–17: 'If your brother sins against you, go show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. If he will not listen then take one or two others along so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church, and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.'

## DISCIPLESHIP GROUP

Have you talked about someone behind their back in a way that you would not be willing to before their face? Do you grumble? Are you critical? Identify that main way that your speech is unrestrained and share with your discipleship group.

Do you find that some people seem to 'press your button' and cause anger to flare up in you when they say or do something. If your response is totally out of proportion to what they have said or done to you, maybe at root there is some bitterness, resentment or unforgiveness (Hebrews 12:11).

After reading through this week's devotional, individuals may feel that there is an area of unforgiveness that the Lord is putting His finger on. Share this in pairs in your discipleship group. Ask for the Lord's help to release forgiveness to the person who has hurt or offended you. Remember it is particularly important to forgive from the heart (in other words when you are in touch with your pain).

<sup>1</sup> Benedict. *The Rule*. Chapter 6: 21.

<sup>2</sup> Smith, R. Forgiveness. (Audio tapes, 1989).



## READINGS

Day 71 Rev 1–4, 1 Chron 22–26 Ps 68

Day 72 Rev 5–8, 1 Chron 27–2 Chron 2  
Ps 69–70

Day 73 Rev 9–12, 2 Chron 3–7 Ps 71–72

Day 74 Rev 13–17, 3 Chron 8–12 Ps 73–74

Day 75 Rev 18–22, 2 Chron 13–17 Ps 75–77

Sunday Ps 78

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

2 Chronicles 7:14 ESV

‘Who is the man who desires life? If you wish to have everlasting life, keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceitfully. Turn away from evil and do good. Seek after peace and pursue it. And when you have done this, my eyes will be upon you and I will listen to your prayers.’<sup>1</sup>

How much do you desire the dry bones in England to live? Wesley Duewel, who wrote *Mighty Prevailing Prayer*, challenges us to pray with a holy desire. He says, ‘The deeper your desire to see God’s answers, the deeper your hunger to see God at work, and the more urgent your heart-cry to see Christ triumph, the more powerfully the Holy Spirit can pray through you. Holy desire is a holy power that energizes prayer. It is a dynamic of the Spirit. Fenelon wrote, “He who desires not from the depths of his heart makes a deceptive prayer.” Heaven wants sincerity not beautiful polite words. Heaven wants depth of soul not luke-warm mouthings. Repetition is sweet in the ears of God when it is the heart-cry of the soul.’<sup>2</sup>

Desire and fervency are closely related. Desire has more to do with hunger and urgency. Fervency has more to do with passion and zeal. Desire is born in need, fervency is born in love. Richard Watson, a theologian a couple of hundred years ago, said, ‘Prayer without fervency is no prayer; it is speaking, not praying. Lifeless prayer is no more prayer than a picture of a man is a man.’<sup>3</sup> Acker adds, ‘incense can neither smell nor ascend without fire; no more does prayer unless it arises from spiritual warmth and

fervency ... cold, lifeless, and idle prayers are like birds without wings ... mere lip prayers are lost prayers.’<sup>4</sup> EM Bounds wrote, ‘heaven is too busy to listen to half-hearted prayers.’<sup>5</sup>

Samuel Chadwick wrote, ‘It is always the same: Abraham pleading for Sodom, Jacob wrestling in the stillness of the night, Moses standing in the breach, Hannah intoxicated with sorrow, David heartbroken with remorse and grief—Jesus in a sweat of blood. Add to that the list from the records of the church, personal observation and experience, and always there is the cost of passion until blood. It prevails. It turns ordinary mortals into men of power. It brings power. It brings fire. It brings rain. It brings life. It brings God. There is no power like that of prevailing prayer.’<sup>6</sup>

Chadwick also wrote, ‘Intensity is a law of prayer ... wrestling prayer prevails. The fervent, effectual prayer of the righteous is of great force. God hates strange fire. We must never try to work up an emotion of intensity. If the spirit groans in intercession, do not be afraid of the agony of prayer. There are blessings of the kingdom that are only yielded to the violence of a vehement soul.’<sup>7</sup> James’ description of Elijah, ‘he prayed earnestly’ (James 5:17) is, in the Greek, ‘with prayer he prayed’, an idiom that means he prayed with

intensity or passion.

How much do you desire the dry bones in England to live? Let's cry out to the Lord to send the fire today!<sup>8</sup> Lord, we fervently call out to you the words of that Old Salvation Army hymn, 'It's fire we want, it's fire we need, send the fire ...'<sup>9</sup> Lord, send another Pentecost. Let there be a fresh outpouring of your Spirit on this generation in England. Breathe across the valley of dry bones, raise up an army of young people ablaze with love for you and your kingdom, and fan them into a flame and let that flame blaze and burn brightly and may it be unto a youth awakening that becomes a global mission movement that completes the Great Commission. Lord, send the fire, today.

*How much do you desire  
the dry bones in England  
to live? Let's cry out to  
the Lord to send the fire  
today!*

## DISCIPLESHIP GROUP

Spend some time soaking in the presence of the Lord with some worship music. Divide into pairs. Let each of the pairs take a devotional Psalm, eg Psalm 84. Use the *Light the Fire Again* prayer manual. Then take each verse alternately and after finishing reading the Psalm, encourage each person to take a phrase or verse and turn each phrase or verse into a prayer. Let each person have a go at 'praying through' each verse, making the prayers personal and meaningful to you.

Identify three friends/family members who don't know the Lord yet, and pray for them.

<sup>1</sup> Benedict, *The Rule*. The Prologue: 8.

<sup>2</sup> Duewel, W. *Mighty Prevailing Prayer*. Zondervan: 73–77.

<sup>3</sup> Watson, R, quoted in Duewel, W. *Mighty Prevailing Prayer*. Zondervan: 74.

<sup>4</sup> Acker, JW. *Teach Us to Pray*. Concordia: 31,33.

<sup>5</sup> Bounds, EM. *Purpose in Prayer*. Whitaker House: 59.

<sup>6</sup> Chadwick, S. *Path of Prayer*. CLC: 81–82.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, 68.

<sup>8</sup> Taylor, A. *Mission Heroes*. 18.

<sup>9</sup> [www.hymnary.org/text/thou\\_christ\\_of\\_burning\\_cleansing\\_flame?extended=true](http://www.hymnary.org/text/thou_christ_of_burning_cleansing_flame?extended=true)

## READINGS

**Day 76** Matt 1–3, 2 Chron 18–22, *Ps 79–81*

**Day 77** Matt 4–6, 2 Chron 23–27, *Ps 82–85*

**Day 78** Matt 7–9, 2 Chron 28–32, *Ps 86–88*

**Day 79** Matt 10–12, 2 Chron 33–36, Ezra 1–2, *Ps 89*

**Day 80** Matt 13–16, Ezra 3–8, *Ps 90–92*

**Sunday** *Ps 93–94*

‘You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive.’

*Matthew 13:14 ESV*

‘And so we intend to establish a school for the Lord’s service’<sup>1</sup>

Sometimes it seems that the world is better at disciplining the Church than the Church is at disciplining the world. In recent years there has been much debate about the need for the Church to be more ‘missional’. Historically, however, the Church has been both a ‘community of obedience’ and a ‘missional community’. Should we not be advocating with just as much vigour that the Church needs to be a ‘community of obedience’ as much as it needs to be a ‘missional community’? Mission and discipleship are inextricably linked. Chris Wright, in his *Mission of God*, writes that Jesus ‘commissions his disciples to go out and replicate themselves by creating communities of obedience among the nations.’<sup>2</sup> If your local church was first and foremost a community of obedience would you want to join it?

Another way of phrasing this question could be, ‘Do you have a teachable heart?’ When Jesus said in John 6:35, ‘I am the bread of life’, He went on to say, ‘Eat my flesh, drink my blood.’ (John 6:56) Was He purposely making it difficult for His disciples to understand? To any Jew, the idea of drinking blood would have been totally abhorrent. We read that many left Jesus after He said this. When Jesus said these difficult words, in fact whenever He spoke in parables, was He really testing whether His listeners had teachable hearts? The parable of the sower (Matthew

13) speaks of a number of different types of hearts, and three out of the four types of soil in this parable are pictures of hearts that are resistant to the truths of the gospel. Do we have teachable and fertile hearts, responsive to the seed of God’s word?

From the beginning to the end, the Bible is full of stories of the Lord testing people, looking for teachable hearts. In the Garden of Eden the Lord tested Adam and Eve with the tree of knowledge of good and evil. At Mount Moriah, the Lord tested Abraham. Would he sacrifice his son? Joseph was gifted with dreams and the ability to interpret them, but his heart was severely tested as a young man by being thrown into a pit, the advances of Potiphar’s wife, and his time in jail. Moses, after many years of testing in the desert, became the meekest man in all the earth. We read in Deuteronomy 8:2: ‘Remember how the Lord led you in the desert ... to test your heart.’ David was persecuted by Saul and then his kingship was contested by Absalom, his very own son. David’s heart was tested. Daniel was tested. Would he remain true to the Lord in Babylon? In the New Testament we read that the old and wise Nicodemus was given the invitation to be ‘born again’. The rich young ruler was challenged to give away all his possessions.

When Benedict wrote his *Rule* just under 1,500 years ago, he wrote: ‘And so we

intend to establish a school for the Lord's service.<sup>3</sup> He was seeking to establish a 'community of obedience'. One of the main goals of monasticism was 'to substitute the will of God for the self-will of sinful man'. Benedict's *Rule* was a source of inspiration for Thomas Cranmer when he made Benedictine monasticism accessible for the ordinary person and wrote *The Book of Common Prayer*. In 1549 the writing of *The Book of Common Prayer* and the adoption of morning and evening prayer by the Church in England was the 'fresh' expression of Benedictine monasticism. What was the goal of this 'fresh expression' of monasticism, if it was not that the hearts of those who gathered to read and pray the Psalms and to hear the Scriptures read in their local churches would be trained in 'communities of obedience'?

As we seek to grow as disciples today in our local churches and as we seek to grow as disciples in praying evangelistic 'communities of obedience' it might be helpful to ask ourselves a few heart-searching questions as we seek to be more teachable.<sup>4</sup> Are you willing to be taught by those who are younger and less experienced than you? Are you only open to correction from certain people—only those

you respect or you feel are more mature than you? Are you flexible? God has exciting plans for us but they require change. Are we willing to give up old ways for the new? The good is the enemy of the best. Blessed are the flexible for they will not be broken. Flexibility can mean a willingness to wait for God's time. Are you yielded to God? Are we the kind of people who insist on our own way? Love does not insist on its own way. We don't have rights, we have privileges. Are you free from tradition? A tradition is a principle that becomes a prison. Are you willing to be a channel for leadership? Every new act of the Lord needs someone to start it. God can use you to be a channel for his creativity. Every new move of God needs someone to step back and let God do it. Do you have a desire for more truth? Is it challenging you to a new level of commitment?

Every new step with God requires greater commitment. Jesus learned obedience through what He suffered (Hebrews 5:8). The cross was a final step of obedience. New heights are built on new depths. To be a channel for the new thing that God wants to do through you, you need to receive the new thing God wants to do in you.

## DISCIPLESHIP GROUP

**In what areas of your life are you inflexible? In what areas of your life do you insist on your own way? What particular biblical truth is exciting you at present? Is it challenging you to a new level of commitment? If not, when was the last time you were challenged by the Lord to a new level of commitment? Share your answers to these questions with your discipleship group.**

<sup>1</sup> Benedict. *The Rule*. The Prologue: 8.

<sup>2</sup> Wright, C. *Mission of God*. IVP Academic.

<sup>3</sup> Benedict. *The Rule*. The Prologue: 9.

<sup>4</sup> Taylor, J. 'A teachable heart'. (Teaching delivered at YWAM Holmsted Manor, Sussex, 1987). John Taylor's teaching is summarised in the following two paragraphs.

## READINGS

**Day 81** Matt 17–19, Ezra 9–10, Neh 1–3,  
*Ps 95–97*

**Day 82** Matt 20–22, Neh 4–8, *Ps 98–101*

**Day 83** Matt 23–25, Neh 9–13, *Ps 102–103*

**Day 84** Matt 26–28, Esther 1–5, *Ps 104*

**Day 85** Mark 1–3, Esther 6–10, *Ps 105*

**Sunday** *Ps 106*

‘Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa, and hold a fast on my behalf, and do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my young women will also fast as you do. Then I will go to the king, though it is against the law, and if I perish, I perish.’

*Esther 4:16 ESV*

‘Is it not all the more important for us to pray to the Lord with the utmost humility and purity of devotion.’<sup>1</sup>

**M**any crises are sweeping the earth at present. How desperate are we for the Lord to intervene? In the book of Esther we read the exciting story of how an orphaned Jewish slave girl became queen of Persia, and how God used her to see His people rescued. The Lord dramatically intervened in the lives of His people. The Lord used Esther as she and her maids fasted and prayed for three days, and the Jewish people were saved from annihilation. At a desperate place, Esther cried out to the Lord and He intervened.

James Goll says that crisis events around the globe, whether they are from natural disasters or human blunders, represent God’s zeal to release His judgment on everything that hinders His love, and in His sovereignty God’s judgments are always redemptive. It is always in times of crisis that God’s glory will come. When desperate people seek more of God, His glory will ‘fill the temple’. Crisis intercession is so important because it is in times of crisis, he says, that people become more desperate and as they cry out to God, His glory will come.<sup>2</sup>

There are many examples of crisis intercession in the Old Testament: Abraham’s bartering, Rachel’s desperate cry, Moses’ intercessory acts, Gideon’s 300 men, Hannah’s cry for a son, David’s victory over Goliath,

Elijah’s travail, Nehemiah’s burden for restoration, Esther’s divine appointment, Isaiah’s persistent petitioning, Jeremiah’s warnings and pleas, Joel’s trumpet sound. We find frequent examples of crisis intercession in the New Testament too, as Jesus calms the storm, Peter is released from prison and the dungeon was rocked while Paul and Silas worshipped in prison.

How do we begin to pray at a time of crisis? If we are to grow in authority in intercession, we first need to grow in our ability to hear the Lord’s voice so that we can pray according to His will. Before this can happen we need to develop the habit of approaching Him with clean hands and a pure heart. Some experienced intercessory prayer ministries (eg Lydia Fellowship<sup>3</sup>), when praying corporately, have learned the importance of diligently using a few simple steps (first used by Joy Dawson<sup>4</sup>) which they follow deliberately when seeking the Holy Spirit’s leading in prayer:

- 1 Praise God for the privilege of engaging in the same wonderful ministry (intercession) as the Lord Jesus (Hebrews 7:25).
- 2 Make sure your heart is clean before God, by having given the Holy Spirit time to convict, should there be any unconfessed sin (Psalm 66:18; Psalm 139:23–24).
- 3 Acknowledge that you cannot really pray

- without the direction and energy of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:26).
- 4 Die to your own imaginations, desires, and burdens for what you feel you should pray (Proverbs 3:5–6; 28:26; Isaiah 55:8).
  - 5 Deal aggressively with the enemy (James 4:7).
  - 6 Praise God now in faith for the remarkable prayer meeting you're going to have.
  - 7 Wait before God in silent expectancy, listening for His direction (Psalm 62:5; Micah 7:7; Psalm 81:11–13).
  - 8 In obedience and faith, utter what God brings to your mind, believing (John 10:27).
  - 9 If possible have your Bible with you, should God want to give you direction or confirmation from it (Psalm 119:105).

Why not try following these steps. After waiting in silence for the Lord to speak for a few minutes, each person then shares with the group any sense of direction from the Lord (Scriptures or pictures, etc). Then go on to pray together and follow the leading of the Holy Spirit.

If we going to respond to the crises that are facing us today, then let's turn to prayer. Let's prepare our hearts together, and as we hear the Lord's voice, let's cry out to Him for His deliverance. For it is as we become more desperate and as we cry out to God that we will see His deliverance and His glory come.

## DISCIPLESHIP GROUP

Take a recent item from the world news—a crisis or a natural disaster that has concerned you – and make it the focus for intercession for your discipleship group.

Deliberately go through the steps of intercession and ask for the Holy Spirit's leading, and wait in silence for Him to speak. As He leads through scripture and 'pictures' then pray specifically into the direction that you are given by the Holy Spirit. If there is still not much clarity after all the members of the group have shared, continue to pray for that part of the world that is your focus and ask the Lord to give you and your group His heart for that situation.

<sup>1</sup> Benedict. *The Rule*. Chapter 19: 40.

<sup>2</sup> Goll, JW. *Prayer Storm*. Destiny Image: 92, 93.

<sup>3</sup> [www.prayerforallpeople.com/p4ei.html#entry-content](http://www.prayerforallpeople.com/p4ei.html#entry-content)

<sup>4</sup> Dawson, J. 'Some principles for effective intercession'. [www.prayerforallpeople.com/p4ei.html](http://www.prayerforallpeople.com/p4ei.html)

## READINGS

Day 86 Mark 4–6, Job 1–5, *Ps 107*Day 87 Mark 7–9, Job 6–10, *Ps 108–109*Day 88 Mark 10–12, Job 11–20, *Ps 110–113*Day 89 Mark 13–15, Job 21–25, *Ps 114–115*Day 90 Mark 16–Luke 1, Job 26–30,  
*Ps 116–118*Sunday *Ps 119:1–32*

‘I will run in the way of your commandments.’

*Psalm 119:32 ESV*‘We shall run along the path of God’s commandments’<sup>1</sup>

With Benedict, there was a sense of urgency as he wrote his *Rule* in about AD540. ‘We must hasten to do now what will profit us forever, while we still have time and while we are in this body and have the opportunity to fulfil all these things by the light of this life.’<sup>2</sup> He also quoted Psalm 119:32 when he said, ‘As we make progress in our way of life and faith, as our heart expands with the inexpressible sweetness of love, we shall run along the path of God’s commandments, never abandoning his guidance but persevering in his teaching.’ Paul said in Hebrews 12:1 that we are to ‘Run with perseverance the race marked out for us.’ In your prayer life are you running in your lane with a holy passion and urgency to follow Jesus?

AW Tozer said, ‘we pursue God because, and only because, He has first put an urge within us that spurs to the pursuit. “No man can come to me,” said our Lord, “except the Father which has sent me draws him” (John 6:44). The impulse to pursue God originates with God, but the outworking of that impulse is our following hard after Him.’<sup>3</sup> How passionate are you to follow hard after the Lord, to do His will and to do the works He has prepared in advance for you to do, to be His workmanship? The word for ‘workmanship’ in Ephesians 2:10 is the Greek word *poemia*. As you pursue the Lord, He is writing His

poem in your life, taking the highs and lows of your life and making them into ‘something beautiful for God.’<sup>4</sup>

In his book *Passion for Jesus*, Mike Bickle says that in our pursuit of God, human zeal is not enough.<sup>5</sup> Our pursuit of God is not about a perfectionist performance mentality. He says that we can catch a glimpse of the powerful passionate Church that Jesus is building in His words in John 17:26: ‘And I have declared to them your name, and will declare it that the love with which you loved me may be in them, and I in them.’ The quality of love that God the Father has for the Son will be in the Church.

Mike Bickle goes on to say that our passivity will be solved as the Lord allows us to gaze upon Him with deeper insight into His beauty and glory.<sup>6</sup> The body of Christ will discover Christ’s personhood and majesty. When we do so we will give ourselves to Him with unparalleled affection and obedience. Our relationship with the Lord is not a matter of earning brownie points to get into heaven. It is an overflow of the ‘inexpressible sweetness of His love’. It is our response to revelation of His love for us. This revelation ignites a holy passion for Jesus in us.

In Benedict’s passionate pursuit of God was there a place for emotion? The Western Christian tradition was not as experiential as the Eastern Christian tradition, but Cassian, who was a bridge between the East and the



West, taught on the interplay of the Bible, prayer and experience, and he had a huge influence on Benedict. Three times in *The Rule*, Benedict refers to prayer with tears: ‘tears of compunction’,<sup>7</sup> ‘prayer with tears’<sup>8</sup> and ‘tears and spiritual concentration’.<sup>9</sup> Cassian had said: ‘It is one thing for the tears to run down when our heart stirred by the thorn of our sins overflows. (Psalm 6:7) ... it is another thing when the shedding of tears springs from ... the longing of coming glory ... it is another thing when tears overflow because of our fear of Hell and its coming judgement ... it is another kind of tears ... stirred by ... the hardheartedness and sins of others.’

We should also remember that we read in Hebrews concerning Jesus our Great High Priest: ‘during the days of Jesus’ life on earth

he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears.’ It is not of course helpful to ‘work up’ emotions, but let’s not exclude the possibility or be surprised when it happens, in our passionate pursuit of God, that tears begin to flow.

Let’s passionately press on to lay hold of that for which Christ first laid hold of us. In reality maybe our relationship with the Lord at present is better described in pedestrian terms as a ‘leisurely stroll’, or maybe we are just ‘going through the motions’, ‘marking time’ and not really taking any ground at all. Let’s make a decision to run the race marked out for us while we have time, while we are in this body and have the opportunity. Let us run in the path of His commands for He has set our hearts free.

Let’s run in the fast lane!

## DISCIPLESHIP GROUP

Two weeks ago you shared with your group your answers to the following questions: ‘What particular biblical truth is exciting you at present? Is it challenging you to a new level of commitment?’ How are things going two weeks later with that commitment?

Are you continuing to ‘hear God’s voice’? Share with the group how your personal times with the Lord have been going. What has the Lord been saying to you recently from the Bible? Share one by one with the group.

How are you passionately following hard after the Lord at present? In what areas of your life is this not happening? To what extent are you merely ‘going through the motions’? Share with one another and pray for each other.

<sup>1</sup> Benedict. *The Rule*. The Prologue: 9.

<sup>2</sup> Benedict. *The Rule*. The Prologue: 9.

<sup>3</sup> Tozer, AW. *The Pursuit of God*. Tate: 1.

<sup>4</sup> Muggeridge, M. *Something Beautiful for God: Mother Teresa of Calcutta*. Lion Publishing.

<sup>5</sup> Bickle, M. *Passion for Jesus*. Charisma House: 57.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, 57.

<sup>7</sup> Benedict. *The Rule*. Chapter 20: 41.

<sup>8</sup> Benedict. *The Rule*. Chapter 4: 18.

<sup>9</sup> Benedict. *The Rule*. Chapter 52: 77.

## READINGS

Day 91 Luke 2–3, Job 31–36, *Ps 119:33–72*Day 92 Luke 4–5, Job 37–42, *Ps 119:73–104*Day 93 Luke 6–7, Prov 1–5, *Ps 119:105–144*Day 94 Luke 8–9, Prov 6–10, *Ps 119:145–176*Day 95 Luke 10–12, Prov 11–15, *Ps 120–125*Sunday *Ps 126–131*

‘Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labour in vain.’

*Psalms 127:1 ESV*

‘The work of God must take precedence over everything else.’<sup>1</sup>

According to the Gospels, Jesus Christ is passionate that the Father’s house will be a house of prayer. In Luke 19:45, when Jesus cleared the Temple of the money-changers, we read that He said, ‘My house will be a house of prayer.’ In John 2:16b–17 we read that He said, ‘How dare you turn my Father’s house into a market?’ [and that] His disciples remembered that it is written, “zeal for your house will consume me.”

Last week we noted that we can catch a glimpse of the powerful passionate Church that Jesus is building in His words in John 17:26: ‘And I have declared to them your name, and will declare it that the love with which you loved me may be in them, and I in them.’ Not only has God declared that He is building His Church and the gates of hell will not prevail over it, but we see in these verses that the quality of love that God the Father has for the Son will be in the Church.

We have an opportunity to abide in the same love that the Father has for the Son as we let the Lord’s words abide in us. John 15:7 says, ‘If you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done to you.’ Are we abiding in that love?

Andrew Murray said, ‘If there is one thing that the Church needs to learn it is that God means prayer to have an answer, and that it has not entered into the heart of man to conceive what God will do for his child who

gives himself to believe that his prayer will be heard. God hears prayer: this is a truth universally admitted, but of which very few understand the meaning, or experience the power.’<sup>2</sup>

EM Bounds says, ‘Prayer is not a duty which must be performed, to ease obligation and to quiet conscience. Prayer is the child’s request not to the winds, not to the world, but to the Father. Prayer is the outstretched arms of the child for the Father’s help. Prayer is the child’s cry calling to the Father’s ear, the Father’s heart, and to the Father’s ability, which the Father is to hear, the Father is to feel, and which the Father is to relieve. Prayer is the seeking of God’s great good, which will not come if we do not pray.’<sup>3</sup>

God wants to answer our prayers. He wants us to come and respond. But will we abide in Christ, will we approach Him as a child approaches a father? God is calling us to pray. He longs for us to enter into life with Him, but are we abiding in the Son?

It is Christ whom the Father always hears. God is in Christ, and can only be reached by being in Him. To be in Him is the way to have our prayer heard. When we are fully and wholly abiding in Him, we have the right to ask whatsoever we will, and the promise that it shall be given unto us.

God’s will, will be done to us, according to our asking, as we abide in Christ, as we

abide in the Son, as we approach our Father in heaven as a child approaches his/her father.

Centuries ago, substituting the will of God for the self-will of sinful man was the very purpose of ancient monastic life. Today, a new monastic movement is emerging with Houses of Prayer mushrooming up all over the world. There is a huge grassroots prayer movement developing across the globe. As we seek the Lord together as the people of God praying for personal revival, let us yield our wills, submit our self-wills to Christ and abide in Him, as an

obedient son does before a loving father.

Today, the idea of the Church being a missional community without focusing on church as an obedient community has the potential of falling short of God's highest. Today, as the people of God, as the Church of God, let's call out to God with the passionate, yielded cry of a child's request to his/her father ... and may His kingdom come in us first and then may His kingdom come through us as we pray.

## DISCIPLESHIP GROUP

Jesus said, 'Ask it shall be done for you, seek and you shall find, knock and the door shall be opened to you.' If asking is petition, seeking is devotion and knocking is intercession, how are these different aspects of your prayer life doing at present? What personal or family needs are you asking the Lord to meet at present? How are you seeking God? What are you interceding for at present?

Remind each other of your current 'Person of Peace.' Pray again for one another that you will have an opportunity to talk about Jesus to this 'Person of Peace' you have identified before you meet next week.

<sup>1</sup> Benedict. *The Rule*. Chapter 43: 66.

<sup>2</sup> Murray, A. *With Christ in the School of Prayer*. Merchant Books: 10,11.

<sup>3</sup> Bounds, EM. *The Complete Works of EM Bounds*. Important Books: 230–233.

## READINGS

Day 96 Luke 13–15, Prov 16–20, Ps 132–135

Day 97 Luke 16–18, Prov 21–25, Ps 136–138

Day 98 Luke 19–20, Prov 26–31, Ps 139–140

Day 99 Luke 21–22, Eccles 1–5, Ps 141–143

Day 100 Luke 23–24, Eccles 6–10, Ps 144–146

Sunday Ps 147–150

‘And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them?’

*Luke 18:7 ESV*

‘If we refrain from sin and put all our effort into prayer accompanied by tears,’<sup>1</sup>

**H**ow is the building project going? Is it nearly finished? Maybe there is a short list of snagging issues left or there are still some huge structural matters that still need to be addressed? The Lord is making you and me into a house of prayer; how is He doing? We know that He will accomplish His purposes and the building He has designed will be fit for purpose. Is there still a lot more to do?

How effective is your prayer life? How earnest are your prayers? In James 5 we read that 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. The Lord is taking us all on a journey as we grow in prayer that ‘availeth much’. Growing in prayer that is in earnest is an important part of that journey.

One way that we might grow in our prayer lives might be to yield any area of bitterness, anguish or disappointment to the Lord and cry out to Him from that place of desolation. Hannah was a barren woman, and the widow in Luke 18 was a victim of injustice. They both cried out in desperation and their cries were answered. Hannah gave birth to a child and the widow received justice in regard to her adversary.

Mike Bickle says that there are two aspects of earnest prayer.<sup>2</sup> First, earnest prayer comes from a heart that is engaged with God. To

be earnest implies that we are not praying ‘by rote’ or going through the motions. ‘Being earnest’ is the opposite of speaking our prayers mindlessly into the air.

Earnestness is not measured by the volume of our prayers. Some of us who do not speak our prayers with intense emotion and volume in public need to know that our prayers are not ineffectual or second class. Quiet prayers can be passionate and earnest. Clearly Hannah in 1 Samuel 13:27 was weeping and speaking softly from her heart, so softly that Eli the priest could not hear her, and the Lord answered her prayer.

Earnestness does NOT depend on how we feel. Some draw back in their prayer because they do not feel God’s presence. We don’t have to be happy and energetic for our prayers to be effective and avail much. Weak people can pray earnestly. James 5 makes the point that Elijah was a man just like us and God used Elijah. God uses weak people to accomplish much in their prayers when they are in agreement with God.

Second, earnest prayer is prayer that is **persistent or persevering**. Wesley Duewel says: ‘How long must you persevere? How long were the disciples to tarry in Jerusalem? “Until you have been clothed with power from on high” (Luke 24:49). How long did Moses keep his hands raised to God in prayer? Until Amalek was totally defeated (Exodus 17:13).

How long did Joshua hold out his javelin toward Ai while the army attacked? Until Jericho was destroyed (Joshua 8:26). How long did Elijah stay on his knees in prevailing prayer after the three years' drought? Until rain clouds formed in the sky (1 Kings 18:44). How long did Jesus pray in Gethsemane? Until Satan was defeated. How long did the disciples continue in prayer in the Upper Room? Until the Holy Spirit came upon them.<sup>3</sup>

Earnest prayer is persevering prayer and it 'availeth' (or accomplishes) much. No matter what our prayer request, if God has led us to pray for a need that we believe is the will

of God, how long should we pray? Until the answer comes! Samuel Chadwick said, 'To pray as God would have us pray is the greatest achievement of earth. Such a life costs. It takes time.'<sup>4</sup>

The Lord is building His house. The dwelling of the Lord will be with man. There will be a time when there is no more pain or crying. Yield your pain and anguish to the Lord and join Hannah and the persevering widow in earnestly crying out for deliverance. As we yield to the Lord and align with His will, it may take time. Persevere! The answer will come!

## DISCIPLESHIP GROUP

**Is there an area of desperation in your life that has been the crucible for the Lord to grow character and perseverance in your life? Share in your discipleship group. Pray for one another. Are there any unsaved members of your family or friends who you have prayed for and who have not come to Christ? Share with one another and pray for these unsaved friends and family.**

<sup>1</sup> Benedict. *The Rule*. Chapter 49: 74.

<sup>2</sup> Bickle, M. *Growing in Prayer*. Merchant Books: 24–27.

<sup>3</sup> Duesel, W. *Mighty Prevailing Prayer*. Zondervan: 157.

<sup>4</sup> Sanders, JO. *Prayer Power Unlimited*. Discovery House: 108.

## READINGS

**Day 101** John 1–3, Eccles 11–12, SofS 1–2,  
*Ps 1–5*

**Day 101** John 4–6, SofS 3–8, *Ps 6–8*

**Day 103** John 7–9, Is 1–5, *Ps 9–11*

**Day 104** John 10–12, Is 6–10, *Ps 12–14*

**Day 105** John 13–15, Is 11–15, *Ps 15–17*

**Sunday** *Ps 18*

‘God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.’

*John 4:24 ESV*

‘Seven times a day I have praised you’<sup>1</sup>

**A**re you a connoisseur of contemporary Christian worship, or are you thirsty for and yielded to Jesus in your very life? Richard Foster, in his modern-day classic *Celebration of Discipline*, said that we should be aware of the danger of worship becoming an opiate.<sup>2</sup> He said, ‘If worship does not propel us into greater obedience, it has not been worship ... worship begins in holy expectancy, it ends in holy obedience. Holy obedience saves worship from becoming an opiate, an escape from the pressing needs of modern life.’

Is there a danger that our Western indulgent, consumerist, leisure-orientated lifestyle is infecting our worship? We live in a land that has known revivals and centuries of history of sacrificial Christian worship. As we pray for an opening up of the ‘wells of revival’ in our land let’s hunger and thirst for the life of Jesus in our midst. How do you open up a well? You place a halter around the neck of an ox and tie it to a rope and around the huge rock blocking the well, and the ox takes the strain and heaves. There is a job to be done. Jesus said that His food was to do the will of the Father and to finish His work. A work was begun in our nation in centuries past by men and women of God and we need to engage in it again and finish the job that was started. Numbers 21:17 says, ‘Sing up, O well, Sing about it, about the well that the princes dug that the nobles of the people sank.’ Have you hit a wall in praying for an unblocking of those wells of revival in your city? Then

why not start singing as well as praying night and day over those blocked wells ... wells of revival and wells of mission.

The monastic movement over the ages and the current global ‘House of Prayer’ movement focusing on day-and-night prayer both at root have an understanding that as we pray God’s kingdom to come on earth as Jesus commanded us to, we engage in this work (root of the word ‘liturgy’) and this work includes asking God to establish continual worship on earth as it is in heaven. Benedict wrote his *Rule* in about AD540 as an aid to a sustainable pursuit of continual prayer and worship. Benedict says in the Prologue that ‘In drawing up its regulations we hope to set out nothing harsh, nothing burdensome’.<sup>3</sup> He says later in chapter 18, ‘after all, we read that our holy predecessors had the energy to perform in a single day what we with our lukewarm faith aspire to carry out in the course of a week.’<sup>4</sup> Where Benedict’s *Rule* enabled monks to read the whole psalter in a week, some of the Desert Fathers read all 150 Psalms in a day.

An uncompromising devotion to continual prayer in a sustainable way was clearly very important to Benedict, and it was implemented by praying at fixed hours in the day. Psalm 119:164 says, ‘Seven times a day I praise you, because of your righteous judgments.’ This was the biblical basis for the Benedictine rule of the seven fixed hours of prayer—Matins, Lauds, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers, and Compline.<sup>5</sup> In constructing

his rule on these seven prayer times, he was providing a way for monks living in community to live a devoted life in the fear and presence of the Lord, living in a school for spirituality, but in a way that was more practical and attainable, particularly for ordinary people who were not called to the even more intense life of a hermit. In church history there have been a number of times of strong expressions of day-and-night prayer and worship in local Christian communities: in AD555 in Bangor in Ireland; in AD1120 in Clairvaux in France; in 1727 in Herrnhut, Germany under the leadership of Count Zinzendorf; and more recently under the leadership of Yonggi Cho in Seoul, Korea.

Mike Bickle, of the International House of Prayer in Kansas City, says the Lord used David to establish a new worship order in Israel and in this order He was expressing on earth some of the worship principles that exist in heaven around God's throne.<sup>6</sup> Bickle

says that today, around the world, the Lord is restoring worship like the tabernacle of David.<sup>7</sup> He calls it 'harp and bowl', worship and intercession. There is a new prayer and worship movement rising up! Jesus is worthy of it all! Night and day and day and night let incense arise! The Lord is establishing the tabernacle of David once again, with day-and-night prayer springing up all over the earth. Throughout history there have been powerful movements of continual prayer and worship that have precipitated advances of the kingdom of God on earth.

Across the face of the earth the Lord is raising up a grassroots movement of prayer and worship—this is no time for connoisseurs of charismatic Christian worship songs. Let's engage in the work of God and sing over those blocked wells of revival, for you Jesus are our very life and we seek after you as a deer pants for streams of water. Come, Lord Jesus, Come!

## DISCIPLESHIP GROUP

Pray for the leading of the Holy Spirit and then spend an extended time with your group, worshipping the Lord together with some prepared songs, experimenting with 'harp and bowl' worship and intercession, in a similar way to the International House of Prayer in Kansas City. If you have a worship leader, a prayer leader and three singers, start with 20 minutes of worship, led on the keyboard or guitar and then have a 20-minute 'set' of prayers launched by the prayer leader using an apostolic prayer from the New Testament,<sup>8</sup> with a specific prayer focus on 'mission' or your city. Then let each of the three singers in turn spontaneously turn that prayer into song, and eventually come up with a simple chorus that the wider group can join in with, before returning to the prayer leader, who leads out in prayer once again. Finally, have a 20-minute 'set' with other individuals from the discipleship group praying consecutively short 'rapid-fire' prayers. Allow this first hour of antiphonal prayer and worship to lead you into a time of prayer in twos and threes for specific issues that you sense the Holy Spirit is highlighting.

As you sing over the blocked wells of salvation in your city, praying for revival and for mission from your city to the nations of the world, start to ask the Lord for any practical steps you could be taking. Some individuals in the discipleship group might feel prompted to pray for an opportunity to take a short-term missionary trip to another nation. If so, make time to pray for this over the next few weeks.

<sup>1</sup> Benedict. *The Rule*. Chapter 16: 36.

<sup>2</sup> Foster, R. *Celebration of Discipline*. Hodder & Stoughton: 138,148.

<sup>3</sup> Benedict. *The Rule*. The Prologue: 9.

<sup>4</sup> Benedict. *The Rule*. Chapter 18: 39.

<sup>5</sup> De Waal, *Seeking God: The Way of St Benedict*. Liturgical Press: 5.

<sup>6</sup> Bickle, M. *Growing in Prayer*. Merchant Books: 211,223,243.

<sup>7</sup> Bickle, M. *Harp and Bowl Handbook 1*.

<sup>8</sup> [www.mikebickle.org.edgesuite.net/MikeBickleVOD/2008/Key\\_Apostolic\\_Prayers\\_and\\_Intercessory\\_Promises.pdf](http://www.mikebickle.org.edgesuite.net/MikeBickleVOD/2008/Key_Apostolic_Prayers_and_Intercessory_Promises.pdf)



## READINGS

Day 106 John 16–18, Is 16–20, Ps 19–21

Day 107 John 19–21, Is 21–25, Ps 22–23

Day 108 Acts 1–3, Is 26–30, Ps 24–26

Day 109 Acts 4–6, Is 31–35, Ps 27–28

Day 110 Acts 7–9, Is 36–40, Ps 29–31

Sunday Ps 32–34

‘But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.’

*Isaiah 40:31 ESV*

‘... poverty of a single verse.’<sup>1</sup>

Everyone is waiting for something or someone; the teenage girl for Mr Right, the busy man waiting for retirement and the mortgage to be paid off, the hopeful purchaser of a lottery ticket waiting for a huge win of millions of pounds. How about you? Who or what are you waiting for?

Recently I was encouraged by a friend to spend some time regularly ‘waiting on the Lord’. Why would I want to do that? Waiting is a very difficult concept to embrace in our fast-paced world. I find that I can get really frustrated if I have to wait just a few extra seconds for my computer to go online! Waiting can seem so pointless, such a waste of time. How do we make sense of ‘waiting on the Lord’? Is that a waste of time too? When Mary ‘wasted’ some expensive ointment washing Jesus’ feet, ‘Jesus chided his host for his failure to provide the customary hospitalities of the day ... but that was beside the point ... Jesus wanted Simeon to understand that the issue was not the presence or absence of outward actions or traditions, but the inward condition of the heart.’<sup>2</sup> Jim Goll says, ‘A key to living a life wasted on God is to enter into a place of quietness before God ... The road to true intimacy with God is an inward journey, proceeding into His presence through the quietness of the soul.’<sup>3</sup>

But Goll, says that in the Bible ‘waiting on the Lord’ refers to the way we ‘tap into the

Lord’ as our source of inner life and peace, strength and confidence by quieting ourselves in His presence.<sup>4</sup> In Isaiah 12:3 we read, ‘With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.’ In John 7:38 Jesus prophesied that rivers of living water would flow from the hearts of those who believe in Him. Goll says that the well is a picture of contemplative prayer. ‘I lower my ‘bucket’ into the depths of my inner being where He fills it with His living water. Then I raise my bucket so His water can nourish my spirit and overflow to others as well. I have to go inward in order to go outward. Jesus is calling us to go deeper with him ... to launch out into the deep.’

We are all, each one of us, like wells. Deep inside us is a room — a springhouse — that contains a never-ending supply of living water. Its source is God Himself. When we ‘wait on the Lord’ we draw water up from the depths of our soul. When we fill our bucket it renews, refreshes and revitalises not only us, but everyone with whom we share it.

The Charismatic global ‘House of Prayer’ movement is, I believe, a response to the call that Lord Jesus is making to His Church worldwide, to go deeper with Him. This call resonates with the contemplative monastic tradition, which uses meditation on scripture as a tool for quieting oneself and going deeper with the Lord. Psalm 46:10 says, ‘Be still and know that I am God’. To achieve this aim,

the monastic tradition uses a very simple device. It is one that Benedict drew his monks' attention to as long ago as the sixth century, by directing them to read the *Conferences* of John Cassian.<sup>5</sup> Cassian recommended anyone who wanted to pray, and to pray continually, to be restricted to the 'poverty' of a single verse and just repeat this verse over and over again.<sup>6</sup>

But ultimately waiting on the Lord is not about devices or techniques: it is about pursuing intimacy with Jesus. We 'waste time' in the Lord's presence in corporate times of praise and worship. We also 'waste time' as we lavish our devotion more personally on Jesus, just as Mary did in John 11, who

wasted so much perfume when washing Jesus' feet. Waiting may seem pointless, but this kind of waiting is not empty and soul-destroying, neither is it mundane and mind-numbingly boring. As we wait on the Lord and as we waste ourselves on Him in His presence 'we will discover a source of peace, strength and stability that the world knows nothing about.'

As we wait on the Lord we shall 'renew our strength and we shall soar on wings like eagles, we will run and not grow weary, we will walk and not be faint.'

Get wasted on Jesus. Wait on Him, the Lover of your soul. Be still and know that He is your God.

## DISCIPLESHIP GROUP

**What are you waiting for? Do you have hopes or dreams that compete with Jesus for first place in your life? What is the difference between Christian contemplative prayer and New Age practices? How can you maintain your peace in the midst of the storms of life?<sup>7</sup> Take time as a group for an extended period of waiting on the Lord, asking the Lord to speak in the silence. Alternatively make time for *lectio divina* together this week (see week 1).**

<sup>1</sup> Cassian, J. *The Conferences*. Paulist Press: 10.

<sup>2</sup> Goll, J. *Wasted on Jesus: Reaching for the Lover of Your Soul*. Destiny Image: 8.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, 12.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, 1–12, 71–73.

<sup>5</sup> Benedict. *The Rule*. Chapter 42: 6, 13; Chapter 73: 14.

<sup>6</sup> Cassian, J. *The Conferences*. Paulist Press: 101–140.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, 95.

## READINGS

Day 111 Acts 10–12, Is 41–45, Ps 35–36

Day 112 Acts 13–15, Is 46–50, Ps 37

Day 113 Acts 16–18, Is 51–60, Ps 38–40

Day 114 Acts 19–21, Is 61–66, Ps 41–43

Day 115 Acts 22–24, Jer 1–5, Ps 44–46

Sunday Ps 47–49

‘Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations.’ *Isaiah 42:1 ESV*

‘The first step to humility is unhesitating obedience’<sup>1</sup>

Let’s go barefoot!<sup>2</sup> ‘In Scripture, “taking off your shoes” has a very special meaning. When Moses had his first confrontation with God at the burning bush, God told him to take off his shoes because he was standing on holy ground. Boaz’ relative took his shoe off while negotiating with him over the right to marry Ruth. David, after being defeated in Absalom’s rebellion, left Jerusalem walking barefoot. Jesus walked barefoot to Calvary. What was the significance? In the culture of that time, being unshod was the sign that you were a slave. Moses knew exactly what was meant when God told him to take off his shoes, at the burning bush. He had grown up in Pharaoh’s palace where there were lots of slaves. A slave had no rights. A slave didn’t wear shoes. In the burning presence of God, Moses was asked to give up his rights, become God’s servant and accept the assignment God was giving him to go and deliver His people.’

‘We read in Philippians that Jesus submitted His will. He did not count equality with God as something to be grasped but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant—a slave. Slaves have no rights and Jesus became a slave for our sakes.’<sup>3</sup>

The idea of ‘Substituting the will of God for the self-will of sinful man’<sup>4</sup> was foundational to any understanding of ancient monasticism, including Benedictine monasticism. It is at

the heart of the Lord’s Prayer: ‘Thy kingdom come thy will be done.’ Benedict’s response to the world that was rapidly descending into chaos around him, following the collapse of the Roman Empire, was this urgent call to obedience, to surrender to God’s will.<sup>5</sup> Surrender to the will of God and the demands of the Gospel was of paramount concern for him.

As we seek to follow Jesus and to go deeper in our relationship with Him, are we willing to give up our rights and our entitlements and to go barefoot? Loren Cunningham reminds us that Jesus ‘gave up his rights ... to be God, to have a normal birth ... to be with his earthly family ... to marriage and the right to a home ... to money ... to reputation ... even to life itself and became obedient to death on a cross. The ultimate slur to His reputation came when He, the Son of God, was called a devil by the religious experts of His time ... But he went even further. Jesus gave up the right to life itself and became obedient to death on the cross. Not just a normal death, but the death reserved for the worst criminals of the day. He was buried in a borrowed tomb. Then he tore away His very last right by descending to the depths of Hell itself.’<sup>6</sup>

Jesus wants us to follow Him, going barefoot, losing our rights and gaining the world. Only by taking Jesus’ example into every part of our lives will we be able to win

in life, ruling and reigning with Him.

Mark 8:34–35 says, ‘If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it.’

If we are to grow in Christian character, according to Benedict ‘obedience’ is absolutely essential. We live in increasingly chaotic times today, not dissimilar to the times that Benedict lived through. If the Lord is calling His people to pray and is establishing houses of prayer over the earth today, as he did 1,500 years ago, it will be necessary for those He is calling to give up their rights and obey. Benedict says in the Prologue to *The Rule*, ‘the path of salvation ... has to be narrow at the beginning.’<sup>7</sup> Obedience is not a very popular word today. ‘The word obedience is derived from the Latin *obediere*, which shares its roots with *audire*, to hear. So to obey really means to hear and then act upon what we have heard, or in other words to see that the

listening achieves its aim.’<sup>8</sup>

Our obedient response to God’s call is not the result of wanting to obey to be accepted. As mentioned previously, God the Father desires that the quality of love that He has for the Son would be in the Church. He says that when the body of Christ discovers Christ’s personhood and majesty, we will give ourselves to Him with unparalleled affection and obedience. Our relationship with the Lord is not a matter of doing enough deeds, and living enough of a sacrificial lifestyle of service to get into heaven. Obedience is our response to the ‘inexpressible sweetness of His love’. It is our response to the revelation of His love for us. This revelation ignites a holy passion for Jesus in us.

Jesus is calling us today. What’s stopping us from obeying? Maybe we don’t want to give up our rights, or maybe we don’t want to give up our entitlements. Let’s follow Him today; let’s respond to His love and to His call.

Let’s go barefoot.

## DISCIPLESHIP GROUP

**What are some of the rights that Jesus gave up during His life on earth? Are you willing to surrender your reputation, your money, your desire for marriage and family, your future career to Jesus? Is there anything that is un-surrendered in your life today? Share with your discipleship group anything that the Lord is bringing to your attention, anything that He is asking you to yield to Him, and pray for one another.**

<sup>1</sup> Benedict. *The Rule*. Chapter 5: 19.

<sup>2</sup> Cunningham, L. *Winning God’s Way*. YWAM: 17.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>4</sup> Eberle, L. *The Rule of the Master*. Liturgical Press: 17.

<sup>5</sup> Benedict. *The Rule*. Chapter 7: 23.

<sup>6</sup> Cunningham, L. *Winning God’s Way*. YWAM.

<sup>7</sup> Benedict. *The Rule*. The Prologue: 8.

<sup>8</sup> De Waal, E. *Seeking God: The Way of St Benedict*. Liturgical Press.

## READINGS

Day 116 Acts 25–27, Jer 6–10, Ps 50–52

Day 117 Acts 28–Rom 3, Jer 11–15, Ps 53–55

Day 118 Rom 4–7, Jer 16–20, Ps 56–58

Day 119 Rom 8–11, Jer 21–25, Ps 59–61

Day 120 Rom 12–15, Jer 26–30, Ps 62–64

Sunday Ps 65–67

‘Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.’

*Romans 12:1–2 ESV*

‘The one who is to be received ... must promise stability, conversion of his way of life and obedience before God and his saints’<sup>1</sup>

**C**inderella has Amnesia<sup>2</sup> was the title of a book written in 1975, restating the biblical doctrine of the Church, arguing that she had forgotten who she was. Michael Griffiths stressed the importance of telling other people about Jesus, helping each other grow, building each other up, encouraging each other’s gifts, and generally being an extended family. All these things were being ignored back in the 1970s.

But does Cinderella still have amnesia today? The numbers of church members in Europe have been nose-diving for decades. There has been a lot of emphasis on the need for church to be more missional as a result. Also recently there has been a realisation that the Church needs to be more relational and of the importance of providing for the postmodern generation’s desire to ‘belong’. But has Cinderella still forgotten who she is? Our current malaise could be ascribed to the way we have forgotten the methods originally employed in converting people in Europe. The word for ‘repentance’ in Greek is *metanoia*, which I have understood to mean a ‘change of mind that leads to a change of action.’ Alan Kreider has noted that pre-Christendom conversion involved a change in belief, belonging and behaviour.<sup>3</sup>

A biblical truth that we need to re-appropriate for today is the importance of conversion, a change of belief, a change of

belonging and a change in behaviour.

Romans 12:1–2 says:

‘Therefore, I urge you in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — which is your spiritual worship. 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.’

We need our minds to be renewed<sup>4</sup> because we are in a war and the mind is a battlefield. The mind is the main communication centre of the personality. Proverbs 23:7 says, ‘For as he thinks within himself, so he is.’ What we think determines what we do, and what we do determines what we become.

Where does the raw material of our thought-life come from? It comes from the world: daily we are exposed to its pressures through radio, television, books, conversation, newspapers. It comes from the flesh: in the New Testament, ‘the flesh’ is the sum of all desires, appetites, needs, drives that make for self-gratification. It comes from the devil: the devil has access to the mind of man. Whether we like it or not, it is part of the situation into which we have been born: ‘But I am afraid, lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to

Christ.' (2 Corinthians 11:3)

It comes from the human spirit: man has a human spirit that is described in Ephesians 2:1 as 'dead in your trespasses and sins'. This dead human spirit comes alive when we become Christians. It comes from the voice of God—sometimes through awakened conscience, sometimes through a direct intuitive impression. It comes from memories of the past. Some we try to recall, others come unbidden and unwelcomed. Past failures may accuse us and old griefs pain us. We may be tantalised by long-lost joys or haunted by dreams and ambitions that have never materialised.

These are all influences over our minds, to the extent we have submitted to them and given them authority.

'Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one you obey.' (Romans 6:16)

The real problem is that by obedience to temptations we give them authority over our minds. We are slaves to what we obey. In the renewal of the mind, it is the cross that breaks the power of the authorities that once ruled there; it is the Holy Spirit who renews our mind. As we consciously and deliberately yield our mind to the presence of the Holy

Spirit, He will wash out the old habitual thought-patterns and compulsive thoughts. The renewing of the mind is both a crisis and a process. The *crisis* is breaking the padlock of a habit or way of thinking that you have submitted to. You may be helped by prayer from another believer, joining with you in breaking the authority of a pattern of thinking over your life. The *process* is the renewing of the mind, a continuous transformation as you deliberately determine to live under God's authority in your life, and as you 'put on the new self' (Colossians 3:10).

In the past, one of the vows of Benedictine monks was *conversatio morum*, which is sometimes translated as 'continual conversion'<sup>5</sup>, or conversion to a monastic manner of life. If we are committed to growing together as disciples in a local house of prayer today, we can also help one another in this process of being continually converted, by praying for one another and committing to being regularly open and accountable.

Does Cinderella still have amnesia? Have we forgotten who we are? We have been converted from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light and we are being continually changed in belief, belonging and behaviour. We are new creations in Christ! That is who we are!

## DISCIPLESHIP GROUP

**Share with your prayer partner an area of your life where your mind is at present un-renewed and receive a 'crisis' prayer from one another, with a view towards 'breaking the padlock' of a particular way of thinking. After praying for one another share how you are going to 'walk this out'. If accountability is necessary for you to have a transformed lifestyle, discuss and implement how you are going to change your behaviour. Commit to being open and accountable about this matter.**

<sup>1</sup> Benedict. *The Rule*. Chapter 58: 86.

<sup>2</sup> Griffiths, M. *Cinderella with Amnesia*. Inter-Varsity Press.

<sup>3</sup> Kreider, A. *The Change of Conversion and the Origin of Christendom*. Wipf & Stock.

<sup>4</sup> Marshall, T. *Free Indeed*. Sovereign World.

<sup>5</sup> De Waal, E. *The Benedictine Tradition and the Family*. Liturgical Press.

## READINGS

Day 121 Rom 16–1 Cor 3, Jer 31–35, Ps 68

Day 122 1 Cor 4–7, Jer 36–40, Ps 69–70

Day 123 1 Cor 8–11, Jer 41–45, Ps 71–72

Day 124 1 Cor 12–15, Jer 46–52, Ps 73–74

Day 125 1 Cor 16–2 Cor 3, Ezek 1–5, Ps 75–77

Sunday Ps 78

‘Gaius, who is host to me and to the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer, and our brother Quartus, greet you.’ *Romans 16:23 ESV*

‘All guests who arrive should be received as if they were Christ.’<sup>1</sup>

**A**re you kind to strangers? You have probably heard the joke about the pastor and the evangelist going on a bear hunt. Once they have arrived at their log cabin hunting lodge, the pastor starts to unpack their supplies for the week, but the evangelist announces that he’s going out to explore the surrounding area. Barely 20 minutes have passed before the pastor is somewhat alarmed to see the evangelist racing down the path back towards the cabin at breakneck speed. His alarm turns to terror when he catches sight of a large grizzly bear in hot pursuit. The pastor backs defensively into the cabin, leaving the door wide open for the evangelist to reach safety. With relief he sees that the evangelist is going to get there just in time, but at the last moment his friend steps deftly to one side. The bear charges headlong into the cabin, at which point the evangelist slams the door shut and shouts to his friend: ‘You deal with that one, I’ll go and get another!’

This joke highlights the difference between the evangelist and the pastor, but ‘practising hospitality’ and ‘kindness to strangers’ is not just something for the evangelist. Luke 14 describes the kingdom of God as a great banquet, and our job as a result is to go out to the highways and byways, to the roads and country lanes and to ‘compel them come in’ (KJV). This exhortation ‘to compel them

to come in’ was misread in the past and was used as a basis for the Spanish Inquisition. The emphasis in the verb in this parable is now understood to be a strong entreaty to be hospitable, to invite the prodigals to come home.

Hospitality is a foundational value in our Christian heritage.<sup>2</sup> Why is London the most cosmopolitan city in the world, with over 300 languages spoken? I believe it is because hospitality was central to Benedictine monasticism, which was so important in the past. For centuries we have been a welcoming nation, welcoming the stranger.

Hospitality is a Christian virtue, tolerance is not. Hospitality draws on the metaphors of feasting and celebration, on generous grace and confidence in who we are, and who we are in Christ. In John 1, when asked where He is staying, Jesus says, ‘Come and see.’ He was hospitable, hanging out with the prostitutes and the publicans. Tolerance allows wrong to take place in the name of liberalism and freedom. Hospitality has space for acceptance, but encourages enough self-respect lovingly to challenge, and to stand against both assimilation and outright conflict. Tolerance is a parody of love, which is all modern society can offer without the fruits of grace: it results in licence and licentiousness. However, we have ended up in a society where tolerance is elevated as the supreme virtue.



As Justin Welby said, shortly before taking up his post as Archbishop of Canterbury, 'Benedict evangelised Europe by accident'.<sup>3</sup> It is my belief that it wasn't just a commitment to 24/7 prayer that did it. It was also the Benedictine commitment to hospitality. In his book *After Virtue*, Alasdair MacIntyre wrote an incisive commentary on the state of contemporary moral philosophy today—a lot of words that could be summarised as saying that the state of contemporary moral theology today is that it is 'not doing very well'.<sup>4</sup> Four hundred years ago, 'The Enlightenment' was a source of many of our problems today, it seems. The Christian virtues are not cherished as foundational to our society today, as they were before The Enlightenment. MacIntyre's last sentence in his *magnum opus* was 'We are waiting not for a "Godot", but for a doubtless very different St Benedict.' Samuel Beckett's absurd play *Waiting for Godot*<sup>5</sup> derides any sense of meaning or value or purpose in life, but Benedict placed meaning and purpose in the heart of Christian

community. He devoted a lifetime to sacrificial prayer and radical hospitality with a small group of Christian brothers. That was his legacy to us. As MacIntyre says, we need another Benedict today.

Benedict wrote, 'Any guest who happens to arrive at the monastery should be received just as we would receive Christ himself.'<sup>6</sup> Grimley and Wooding say that the common idea that connects all monastic expressions is the idea that 'Christ is in the stranger.'<sup>7</sup> They say that the two main vehicles for communicating monastic hospitality are the sayings of the Early Desert Christians of the Near East and *The Rule of Benedict*. This Christian virtue of hospitality was right at the heart of the beginnings of our Western civilisation, and along with all the other Christian virtues it is a virtue that has been neglected over the past 400 years, and tolerance is taking its place. If it was central to Benedictine monasticism in the past, however, should it not be central to every local house of prayer today?

## DISCIPLESHIP GROUP

Plan a social evening for your discipleship group that would be appropriate for them to invite their 'People of Peace' to (see week 11 on 'Evangelism').

OR

Partner with a local missionary group for a street evangelism day, eg on a Saturday with a local Youth With A Mission team. Use the Gospel Bracelets (described in week 11) and take the opportunity to invite anyone who makes a commitment to Jesus Christ to come back to your house for lunch on (say) Sunday.

<sup>1</sup> Benedict. *The Rule*. Chapter 53: 78.

<sup>2</sup> Bretherton, L. *Hospitality as Holiness*. Ashgate.

<sup>3</sup> Interview with John Mumford, Trent Vineyard, 2013. [www.vimeo.com/58409516](http://www.vimeo.com/58409516)

<sup>4</sup> MacIntyre, A. *After Virtue*. University of Notre Dame Press: 263

<sup>5</sup> Beckett, S. *Waiting for Godot*. Grove Press.

<sup>6</sup> Benedict. *The Rule*. Chapter 53: 78.

<sup>7</sup> Grimley, A, and Wooding, J. *Living the Hours*. Canterbury Press Norwich.

## READINGS

Day 126 2 Cor 4–7, Ezek 6–10, Ps 79–81

Day 127 2 Cor 8–11, Ezek 11–15, Ps 82–85

Day 128 2 Cor 12–Gal 2, Ezek 16–20, Ps 86–88

Day 129 Gal 3–6, Ezek 21–25, Ps 89

Day 130 Eph 1–4, Ezek 26–30, Ps 90–92

Sunday Ps 93–94

‘Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful give.’ *2 Corinthians 9:7 ESV*

‘The disciples ought to offer it with a good will because “God loves a cheerful giver”<sup>1</sup>

**H**ave you learnt to fly yet? You may have seen parent birds teaching their babies to fly, pecking the baby birds feet one by one. They each end up freefalling, until they suddenly discover their capacity to fly. Occasionally there is a particularly resistant baby bird. The mother bird has to keep on pecking and practically has to pick it up and throw it out of the nest. When you and I face risks and trials, our natural response is to hold on more firmly. Our loving heavenly Father has a destiny for us to fly, but sometimes we resist Him and clutch on more tightly. Learning to be a generous giver is very similar to this. Have you stepped out into the grace of generous giving yet?

In 2 Corinthians 9:6, the Apostle Paul says, ‘Whoever sows sparingly will reap sparingly, whoever sows generously will also reap generously.’ You may wonder, what is the measure that I am using? Is it generous or stingy? As a farmer sows his seed lavishly scattering, are we sowing lavishly ... and are we sowing with faith? Sowing requires faith. If you put the seed in the ground and you bury it, you have to wait to see whether or not it is growing. If you dig it up too early, it will die.

The biblical principle of ‘giving’ is rooted in the premise that ‘the earth is the Lord’s and everything in it’ (Psalm 24:1). God made human beings responsible for the earth to ‘fill it and subdue it’ (Genesis 1:28) and ‘rule over’

all living things’ (Genesis 2:15). The biblical principle regarding the created order is not of ownership but of stewardship. The Bible has 215 verses on faith, 208 on salvation, and 2,084 on money and accountability. ‘Stewardship of money’ and ‘accountability’ are clearly important themes.

Esther de Waal comments that the biblical principle of stewardship was important to Benedict too, as he taught his disciples the biblical principles that were foundational to his ‘house of prayer’.<sup>2</sup> ‘He recognised that living as a Christian in the world without being absorbed by it, is a constant New Testament theme ... We are stewards and not slaves, what we have and what we do, belong to the life on loan from God, and it is through that life in its entirety, with all its unspectacular demands, that we shall make our way to Him.’

‘Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give’ (2 Corinthians 9:7). We can know moments when we can go upstream to the source of all grace, but a conscious decision is necessary to get caught up in that grace, and this will lead to planning our giving. It is a bit like whitewater rafting: we have to make a decision and get in the water, and when we are in that water we may feel a strong resistance at times but there is the thrill of getting caught up in God’s abundant generous grace. Proverbs 11:25 says, ‘A

generous man will prosper. He who refreshes others will himself be refreshed.' Our God is a God of abundant grace!

The Old Testament reminds the reader that God has given us the ability to get wealth. 'You shall remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth' (Deuteronomy 8:17–18), but in the Old Testament the command to give is clear too. Deuteronomy 26 describes the process of giving the tithe, who it should be given to, and the way in which it should be given. Tithes are first and offerings are on top!

In the New Testament, the rich young ruler is unwilling to recognise the Lordship of Jesus by obeying God's revealed will — 'Go sell everything you have and give to the poor'. Jesus commands the sharing of resources. The parables of the rich man and Lazarus and of the rich fool both imply that giving the surplus away would have been the right thing to do. Clear commands 'to put one's treasure in heaven' (Matthew 6:19–34) clearly spell out how important it is to 'sell your possessions' and 'give alms, provide yourselves with purses that do not grow old, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will be your heart also' (Luke 12:33–34). Sharing in the New Testament was not a rule to be followed but the result of deep spirituality of mutual love and care. When we make a conscious decision to give, we give because it is in the nature and character of God as revealed in the Old Testament and New Testament, to give. Our God is a giving God.

So we need to be obedient to the scriptural injunctions to 'give', but that is not enough. Paul also says in 2 Corinthians 9:7 that we should not give reluctantly or under compulsion. It is important to be faithful with God's resources, and the sharing of resources is an integral part of the Christian lifestyle, but it is also important to be full of faith as we give, and not to give under any sense of duress. Hebrews 11:1 says, 'Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen.' In other words, faith is believing that something will happen before it happens, that you will have what you need even if you have nothing. It is the assurance in God's character, knowing that even if you can't see the solution to your problem, God can.

Many Christians never prove God's trustworthiness in this category of their lives, and remain financially self-sufficient. They never step out on a limb, never do anything out of the ordinary. Instead it seems they ask their bank account, 'Oh bank account, will you allow me to do this for God?'<sup>3</sup>

Those who listen to God will find themselves doing things that they could not do without His help. They will take steps of obedience and then allow God to do His part. In other words, biblical faith requires that you do the possible and then let God do the impossible. Faith only operates when we have no other resource but God. Only when we realise that we have no other alternative will we begin to flap our wings. It is only then that we will learn to fly!

## DISCIPLESHIP GROUP

**Have you seen the Lord sovereignly provide financially to meet your needs? If so share with the group, and encourage one another. Do you tithe? Discuss what the Bible says about giving. Have an open discussion about faith and finances.**

<sup>1</sup> Benedict. *The Rule*. Chapter 5: 20.

<sup>2</sup> De Waal, E. *Seeking God: The Way of St Benedict*. Liturgical Press: 86, 94.

<sup>3</sup> Cunningham, L. *Daring to Live on the Edge*. YWAM.

## READINGS

Day 131 Eph 5–Phil 2, Ezek 31–35, Ps 95–97

Day 132 Phil 3–Col 2, Ezek 36–40, Ps 98–101

Day 133 Col 3–1 Thess 2, Ezek 41–45,  
Ps 102–103Day 134 1 Thess 3–2 Thess 3, Ezek 46–Dan 2,  
Ps 104

Day 135 1 Tim 1–5, Dan 3–8, Ps 105

Sunday Ps 106

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

*Ephesians 6:12 ESV*

‘Renouncing your own will with the intention of fighting for the true king, Christ our Lord’<sup>1</sup>

‘Sit, Walk, Stand’<sup>2</sup> is Watchman Nee’s summary of the Book of Ephesians and a good summary of the balanced Christian life. We are seated with Christ in the heavenly places, we are to walk out our faith in the world and we are to stand against the enemy. Standing against the enemy is a basic posture of the Christian’s life. Often in the Church there has been either an overemphasis of the devil and the demonic realm or an underemphasis. We need to take care not to neglect the fact that we are in a spiritual battle.

Benedict did not neglect this. In the first few lines of the Prologue of his *Rule* he said, ‘It is to you my words are addressed, if you are ready to take up the powerful and glorious weapons of obedience, renouncing your own will, with the intention of fighting for the true King, Christ our Lord.’<sup>3</sup> This war is like a wrestling match. Wrestling is constant. We are all in a battle always. We have no option; we are involved in spiritual warfare whether we like it or not. The devil is a totally bad devil and he has plans for you. All the devil needs is a couple of ‘down’ days to ruin your life. Christians are notoriously inconsistent. There is no substitute for daily Christian living. We must be alert.

Before he started his first monastic community, Benedict lived a solitary life as a hermit in a cave on a hillside, with a view

of the ruins of Nero’s palace, the extravagant *Domus Aurea*. Why did he live a solitary life as a hermit at the start of his ministry? We can understand why, when we read about the life of Antony, the father of monasticism. The reason for his solitary lifestyle was that it facilitated his engagement in spiritual warfare against the enemy (see Athanasius’ biography<sup>4</sup>). The second main reason for his solitary life was that solitude was recognised to be a ‘furnace of transformation’. In other words it was ‘not a private therapeutic place ... (but a) place of conversion where the old self dies and the new self is born.’<sup>5</sup> ‘Solitude is not simply a means to an end. Solitude is its own end. It is the place where Christ remodels us in his own image and frees us for the victimizing compulsions of the world.’<sup>6</sup> As a hermit how would Benedict have prayed as he looked at the ruins of Nero’s palace, that former place of selfish extravagant opulence and wild entertainment? I believe that at the very start of his life, in the wake of the collapse of the Roman Empire, Benedict was facing the two stark alternatives of selfishness and selflessness. He had to get this settled, before the Lord could build anything on his life. As you and I seek to build ‘a house of prayer’ in our nation today we cannot ignore this fundamental battle and the spiritual warfare that is raging around us either. Whether we like it or not we are in a war.

Are you aware that you have an enemy?<sup>7</sup> In the Bible we read of the origin of Satan<sup>8</sup> and his fall.<sup>9</sup> He is hostile,<sup>10</sup> he is limited in power;<sup>11</sup> he is limited in time<sup>12</sup> and in location.<sup>13</sup> He will ultimately be defeated.<sup>14</sup> There is a demonic realm. Those who inhabit this realm are living, intelligent beings, not merely indistinct forces affecting human lives: they have will,<sup>15</sup> knowledge,<sup>16</sup> emotion,<sup>17</sup> speech,<sup>18</sup> and self-awareness.<sup>19</sup> How can we fight? We can engage in spiritual warfare by putting on the armour of God<sup>20</sup> by a simple confession of faith. The name of the Lord Jesus Christ is a weapon.<sup>21</sup> Jesus responded to temptation using the word of God.<sup>22</sup> Our victory over Satan is actually Christ's victory in which we share.

Has the enemy already gained influence in your life? It is helpful to recognise that a demonic influence or access to your life can be opened up when you were in your

mother's womb during pregnancy. Access can be opened up through sin.<sup>23</sup> When we yield to sin we become slaves to sin and we give legal ground for demons to gain a measure of control in our lives in the area or areas involved. Through emotional crises, through ignorance, through parental default, through occult involvement, demons take advantage of any crisis time.

There may be some areas that you need prayer for regarding former involvement in the occult. To be delivered we must humble ourselves and be completely honest. We must confess our sins, repent, forgive and call on the name of the Lord. As we seek to grow as disciples in a praying community, let's remember that we are seated with Christ in the heavenly places, we can walk out our faith in the world and we can stand against the enemy.

Let's sit; let's walk; let's stand!

## DISCIPLESHIP GROUP

**Do you believe that there really is a supernatural realm? Discuss what the Bible says in your discipleship group. Are there any areas where the enemy has gained access in your life? Take the opportunity to pray for one another, confessing your sins, repenting, forgiving and calling on the name of the Lord. Make sure you receive help from an experienced Christian if you feel out of your depth.**

<sup>1</sup> Benedict. *The Rule*. Chapter 5: 20.

<sup>2</sup> Nee, W. *Sit, Walk, Stand*. CLC.

<sup>3</sup> Benedict. *The Rule*. The Prologue: 70.

<sup>4</sup> Athanasius. *The Life of Antony*. Paulist Press.

<sup>5</sup> Nouwen, HJM. *The Way of the Heart*. Ballantine Books: 18.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, 18,19.

<sup>7</sup> These next two paragraphs drawn from Powell, G, and Powell, S. *Christian Set Yourself Free*. New Wine Press.

<sup>8</sup> Ezekiel 28:13–15; Isaiah 14:12.

<sup>9</sup> Isaiah 14:13–14.

<sup>10</sup> Genesis 3:15; Matthew 16:18.

<sup>11</sup> Job 1:10.

<sup>12</sup> Luke 22:31–32.

<sup>13</sup> Revelation 12:12.

<sup>14</sup> Revelation 1:18; Hebrews 2:14–15.

<sup>15</sup> Matthew 12:43–44.

<sup>16</sup> Mark 1:23–24.

<sup>17</sup> James 2:19.

<sup>18</sup> Mark 3:11–12.

<sup>19</sup> Mark 5:7–9.

<sup>20</sup> Ephesians 6:10–18.

<sup>21</sup> Acts 3:12,16; 16:18.

<sup>22</sup> Luke 4:40–41; Mark 16:17–18.

<sup>23</sup> Romans 6.

## READINGS

Day 136 1 Tim 6–2 Tim 4, Dan 9–12, Ps 107

Day 137 Titus–Philemon, Hos 1–5, Ps 108–109

Day 138 Heb 1–4, Hos 6–10, Ps 110–113

Day 139 Heb 5–8, Hos 11–14, Ps 114–115

Day 140 Heb 9–13, Joel 1–Amos 2,

Ps 116–118

Sunday Ps 119:1–32

‘But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book.’

*Daniel 12:1 ESV*

‘So that we may have a share through patience in the sufferings of Christ and thereby also a share in his kingdom’<sup>1</sup>

What is the purpose of your life on this earth? Jesus said that we are to be like salt. Derek Prince reminds us at the start of his book *Shaping History through Prayer and Fasting* that we have a divine mandate as Christians to be salt, to be a godly influence in the world around us. ‘The one who enjoys this flavour is God ... Without us, there would be nothing to make the earth acceptable to God. But because we are here, God continues to deal with the earth in grace and mercy rather than in wrath and judgment. It is our presence that makes the difference.’<sup>2</sup> But not only are we to be like salt, we are to be a kingdom of priests. ‘God has vested in us as believing people on earth with the authority to determine the destinies of nations and governments. If we fail to do so we’re answerable for the consequences.’<sup>3</sup>

Benedict did not take that responsibility to be salt or to be a kingdom of priests lightly. He laid hold of his destiny and in the writing of his *Rule*, he described the practices of a salty counter-cultural community of priestly monks and in only about 10,000 words wrote a document that was, according to Mark Noll,<sup>4</sup> one of 14 key turning points in the history of Western civilisation. The pattern of prayer and discipleship that Benedict recommended was significant because the Lord used it to evangelise Europe. At the time that Benedict died, his *Rule* was one of the many rules for

monastic life, but within 200 years, Benedict ‘had become the patriarch of western monasticism and his *Rule* was the most influential in the Latin church’.<sup>5</sup>

The term ‘New Monasticism’ describes in very uncompromising terms a movement today that seeks to be salt and light, that seeks a ‘re-imagination of the church from the margins’ as an intentional community that is counter-cultural, and is inspired by ancient monasticism.

Shane Claiborne, a young Christian dissatisfied that he could not find anyone ‘living out’ New Testament Christianity today, went to work alongside Mother Teresa in India among the poor and the dying for ten weeks. He is the author of *The Irresistible Revolution*. He suggests that there has been an overemphasis on evangelism at the expense of spiritual formation in recent years.<sup>6</sup> He lists the 12 key features of New Monasticism as: locating our lives in the abandoned places of the empire, shared economics, reconciliation, celebrating singleness and marriage, submission to Christ’s body the Church, hospitality, care for creation, geographical proximity, peacemaking, contemplative prayer, formation in the way of Christ, and nurturing a common life.<sup>7</sup> Claiborne in his description of New Monasticism calls for the marrying of belief and practice, orthodoxy and orthopraxis, saying that ‘the gospel is not

just a way of believing but a way of living'.<sup>8</sup> He makes a challenging and radical call for 'another way of doing life.'<sup>9</sup>

Also in the USA, Scott Bessenecker, the director of global projects with Intervarsity Fellowship, has written in *The New Friars*<sup>10</sup> of the growth in the number of young Christians who have 'removed themselves from the status quo in order to seek justice and mercy with the poorest of the world's poor.' In the UK, Ian Adams is the founder of the MayBe community<sup>11</sup> in Oxford. He distinguishes between three different monastic practices, which he refers to symbolically as 'The cave, the refectory and the road'.<sup>12</sup> The cave symbolises a life of withdrawal and includes practices of stillness, prayer and simplicity.<sup>13</sup> The refectory or eating place symbolises stability, hospitality and presence.<sup>14</sup> The road symbolises life in the public sphere, influenced by contacts with neighbours and strangers.<sup>15</sup> Adams suggests that these three broad categories describe the different emphases of monasticism past and present.

Some 1,500 years ago Benedictine

monasteries were the basis for the evangelisation of Europe. In Europe, New Monasticism will only succeed in becoming an effective contemporary application of Benedictine spirituality and only succeed in facilitating the re-evangelisation of Europe if it intentionally retrieves this radical vision for both discipleship and mission. Are we going to reach our destiny in God? If so, being an intentionally counter-cultural, salty, praying community, like Benedict envisaged, could be part of the answer for you and for me. What's the alternative? To carry on being 'the bland following the bland?' We need to be wary of losing our flavour, as Jesus says that 'When salt has lost its saltiness it is good for nothing, and will be to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men' (Matthew 5:13).

Re-imagine the Church from the margins! Life is to be lived on the edge. So seize the day and be a history-maker! You are called to be a praying kingdom of priests that changes history through your prayer and your presence on the earth! Do not lose your flavour but be like salt!

## DISCIPLESHIP GROUP

**Are there marginalised groups in society that you have compassion for? Pray with your discipleship group for these groups of people. Do any of your discipleship group work with street pastors, the homeless, Fairtrade organisations, Stop the Traffik, or any other similar justice-orientated groups? Ask them to share with your discipleship group, then pray for them ... others may feel inspired to get involved as well!**

<sup>1</sup> Benedict. *The Rule*. The Prologue: 10.

<sup>2</sup> Prince, D. *Shaping History Through Prayer and Fasting*. Whitaker House: 15.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, 27.

<sup>4</sup> Noll, MA. *Turning Points: Decisive Moments in the History of Christianity*. Baker Academic: 6

<sup>5</sup> De Waal, E. *Seeking God: The Way of St Benedict*. Liturgical Press: 6.

<sup>6</sup> Claiborne, S. 'Marks of New Monasticism'. In: Cray, G, Mobsby, I, and Kennedy, A. *New Monasticism as a Fresh Expression of Church*. Canterbury Press: 19.

<sup>7</sup> Claiborne, S. *The Irresistible Revolution*. Zondervan: 20.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, 20.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, 115.

<sup>10</sup> Bessenecker, S. *The New Friars*. IVP.

<sup>11</sup> [www.maybe.org.uk](http://www.maybe.org.uk)

<sup>12</sup> Adam, I. *Cave, Refectory, Road*. Canterbury Press Norwich.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, 10.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, 10.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, 11.



READINGS

Day 141 James 1–4, Amos 3–9, *Ps 119:33–72*

Day 142 James 5–1 Peter 2, Jonah 1–4,  
*Ps 119:73–104*

Day 143 1 Peter 3–2 Peter 3, Micah 1–5,  
*Ps 119:105–144*

Day 144 1 John 1–1 John 5, Micah 6–Nah 3,  
*Ps 119:145–176*

Day 145 2 John 1–Jude, Hab 1–3, *Ps 120–125*  
Sunday *Ps 126–131*

‘And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?’  
*Jonah 4:11 ESV*

‘Prayer accompanied by tears, into reading, compunction of heart and abstinence’<sup>1</sup>

‘**T**his is the song that never ends/Yes it goes on and on, my friend./Some people started singing it, not knowing what it was,/and they’ll continue singing it forever just because/This is the song that never ends ...’<sup>2</sup>

According to Cassian, from whom Benedict drew much inspiration, ‘The whole purpose of the monk is total and uninterrupted dedication to prayer.’<sup>3</sup> The goal of the 24/7 houses of prayer that are mushrooming up all over the world today is also uninterrupted prayer. Why is uninterrupted prayer important? Is it as pointless as a never-ending song? Andrew Murray had part of the answer I believe when he said that ‘Of all the traits of a life like Christ there is none higher than conformity to Him in the work that now engages Him without ceasing in the Father’s presence – his all prevailing intercession.’<sup>4</sup> Uninterrupted prayer is unto prevailing prayer. The more we abide in Him and grow into His likeness, the more will His priestly life work in us mightily, and our life become what His is, a life that ever pleads and prevails for men. Can there be a higher call than this, to be conformed into the image of Christ and to the work that engages Him: prevailing prayer?

Wesley Duewel says, ‘The great need of our world, our nation and our churches is people who know how to prevail in prayer. Moments of pious wishes blandly expressed to God

once or twice a day will bring little change on earth or among the people. Kind thoughts expressed to him in five or six sentences after reading a paragraph or two of mildly religious sentiments, once a day from some devotional writing, will not bring the kingdom of God to earth or shake the gates of hell and repel the attacks of evil on our culture and our civilization.’<sup>5</sup>

Andrew Murray said, ‘He is able to save to the uttermost, because He ever liveth to make intercession. In us, His priests and kings, it is no otherwise; it is in intercession that the church is to find and wield its highest power, that each member of the Church is to prove his descent from Israel, who as a prince had power with God and with men, and prevailed.’<sup>6</sup>

Jacob’s will was strong and unsubmitted and Jonah’s will was strong and unsubmitted, but they prevailed. Jacob prevailed through the struggle at Jabbok and received a blessing from the Lord without using deceit. Jonah prevailed and saw 120,000 turn to God, as he travailed in the great deep in the belly of a whale. How do you fancy taking up the mantle of prevailing prayer? Maybe you are like Jacob, strong-willed and self-reliant, or like Jonah and you have alternative visions for your future that don’t include praying, seeking and saving the lost! It is time to launch out into the deep. It is time to prevail

in prayer! Wesley Duewel says that ‘a prayer burden begins as an inner impression that you should pray for a known or unknown need. It is a gracious work of the Holy Spirit applying spiritual pressure upon your heart. It is God’s way to call you to intercession at a time when your prayer is needed by God, who has ordained to work through the intercession of his children. It is needed and indeed demanded by a situation that cries for God’s answer. The burden is the Spirit’s personal call to you to intercede. A prayer burden is an unselfish concern for the Lord’s will in a person or situation ... it is a burden born in the heart of God which indicates it is a valid part of Christ’s intercession. When the Lord places the burden upon you heavily it literally weighs upon your heart ... prayer burden will be carried primarily before the Lord in the secret place.’<sup>7</sup>

EM Bounds said, ‘Prayer which is felt as a mighty force is the mediate or immediate product of much time spent with God. Our short prayers owe their point and efficiency to the ones that have preceded them. The short prevailing prayer cannot be prayed by one who has not prevailed in a mightier struggle of long continuance.’<sup>8</sup>

Are you available to receive a prayer

burden from the Lord? Wesley Duewel has some suggestions as to how we can prepare ourselves.<sup>9</sup> Maintain a disciplined prayer life. Be filled with the Holy Spirit. Keep a listening ear. Practice constant obedience. (Whenever God gives you a prayer assignment, be immediately and regularly faithful to it. Let nothing in your life grieve the gentle Holy Spirit.) Expose yourself to vision and need. Use prayer lists. But without desperation and importunity, it will be difficult to rise above the drudgery of religious duty. Periodic extended fasts initiated by the Lord for a specific purpose such as revival, a new missions movement or in response to a crisis can be the context that the Lord uses. Fasting and praying, with tears of contrition and compunction, were the experience of Benedict and his monks in the past. Let’s follow in their footsteps today!

Fasting, praying, working and studying in a discipleship community for decades and centuries has been and still is the lifestyle of Benedictine monks. Let’s re-contextualise their prayer and their song today. It is time to take up their mantle of uninterrupted prayer unto prevailing prayer. It is time to launch out into the deep!

## DISCIPLESHIP GROUP

**Share testimonies of answered prayer. Encourage one another with stories of how God hears and answers prayer. Ask the Lord how you might have an extended time of prayer, perhaps a half-night of prayer together. Ask the Lord and do what He says, and plan together, sharing responsibilities among yourselves.**

<sup>1</sup> Benedict. *The Rule*. Chapter 49: 74.

<sup>2</sup> [www.zutroy.com/stuffineverend](http://www.zutroy.com/stuffineverend)

<sup>3</sup> Cassian, J. *The Conferences*. Paulist Press: 37.

<sup>4</sup> Murray, A. *With Christ in the School of Prayer*. Merchant Books: 9.

<sup>5</sup> Duewel, W. *Mighty Prevailing Prayer*. Zondervan: 20.

<sup>6</sup> Murray, A. *With Christ in the School of Prayer*. Merchant Books: 9.

<sup>7</sup> Deuwel, W. *Mighty Prevailing Prayer*. Zondervan: 194–207

<sup>8</sup> Bounds, EM. *Power Through Prayer*. Merchant Books: 43–44.

<sup>9</sup> Duewel, W. *Mighty Prevailing Prayer*. Zondervan: 204,205.

## READINGS

Day 146 Rev 1–4, Zeph 1–3, Ps 132–135

Day 147 Rev 5–8, Hagg 1–Zech 3, Ps 136–138

Day 148 Rev 9–12, Zech 4–8, Ps 139–140

Day 149 Rev 13–17, Zech 9–14, Ps 141–143

Day 150 Rev 18–22, Mal 1–4, Ps 144–146

Sunday Ps 147–150

‘And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation’ *Revelation 5:9 (ESV)*

‘Whoever you are then, who are hurrying towards the heavenly country ...’<sup>1</sup>

David Bosch, a modern-day authority on missions, has said that the *Missio Dei*, ‘The Mission of God’, is ‘not primarily an activity of the church, but an attribute of God.’<sup>2</sup> What is the *Missio Dei*? It is not just the activity of discipleship (the making of followers of Christ), it is the making of sons. It is inherent in His very nature as our heavenly Father to make sons in His own image. In fact, making sons is not an activity of God the Father alone: it is an attribute of the Trinity, the community of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

GK Chesterton said, ‘Christianity has not so much been tried and found wanting as it has been found difficult and left untried.’<sup>3</sup> Have we really stepped into the call of our passionate heavenly Father to be a discipleship community? If we have not really tried being a discipleship community or a ‘community of obedience’ maybe it is time for us to launch out into the deep and to start to do so now! There are some wonderful innovations in the UK that focus on church as a ‘missional community’, and some new initiatives such as ‘café church’ and ‘Messy Church’. These new expressions of church are making excellent steps towards reaching the unchurched and de-churched, but by themselves they will not transform our secular contemporary culture. Nothing less than prototyping a counter-cultural discipleship community will do.

Benedict recognised that ‘conversion requires Christian community’. He started a house of prayer with ‘a daily rhythm of activities that formed an alternative culture. By entering into a daily experience of prayer together, members of a discipleship community can come to a deeper knowledge of their relationship to God and each other’.<sup>4</sup> Benedictine monasteries effectively prototyped that alternative culture and precipitated the evangelisation of Europe. ‘While the lonely outpost on Monte Cassino may have seemed irrelevant to the troubling social and political realities of the day, it soon became a major attraction to those seeking spiritual renewal, wholeness and stability. Even barbarian kings came to witness the distinctive life of the monastery.’<sup>5</sup> In the sixth century AD, it was a prophetic witness to live in community with a small group of Christian brothers being kind to strangers as if they were Christ himself.

Fifteen hundred years later there is a call going out again for ‘discipling communities’ ... for ‘Disciple-shaped houses of prayer.’ There is a call to make sons in a praying community in fellowship with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. For too long this has been found to be too difficult and left untried. This is the call to launch out into the deep. Europe is not going to be re-evangelised without another radical culture change. Are we open to being

stirred again by Benedict's call? Today 'houses of prayer' are multiplying both nationally and globally. Inspired by von Zinzendorf and the Moravians, Pete Greig began the 24/7 prayer movement by starting round-the-clock prayer in Chichester on 5 September 1999.<sup>6</sup> It began as round-the-clock prayer, every hour night and day for 168 hours for 40 days.<sup>7</sup> Many UK houses of prayer have also been inspired by another prayer movement, the International House of Prayer in Kansas City<sup>8</sup> led by Mike Bickle, which has been conducting non-stop worship day and night for over ten years with an emphasis on 'harp and bowl' intercession.<sup>9</sup>

This manual started with the biblical dream that captivated the Early Church, and that Benedict began his Prologue describing. It was an invitation to climb the mountain of the Lord ... to find a place of sanctuary on God's holy hill. We know from Origen<sup>10</sup> that Isaiah 2:3 and Micah 4:1-4 were favourite scriptures used by the Early Church in the catechesis of new believers. These scriptures describe the mountain of the Lord, which is a picture of the Gentiles coming to Christ, to that place of restoration of relationship and peace between

God and man and between man and his fellow man. There is a burning passionate desire in the Godhead for a global family. The major hindrance to our relationships on this earth is our inability to appreciate differences between different people, but our heavenly Father values these differences and yearns for the time when those from every tribe, language and people turn to Him. This is the heavenly country we are hurrying to (as Benedict says in the last sentence of his *Rule*). This is the mountain of the Lord we are climbing. As we pursue the heights of intimacy with the Lord, and live in love with one another, He will bring us to that place of rest.

The Lord is waking up His Church, and stirring it to launch out into the deep, to open up the Psalms, to open up the wells of salvation ... but he is also inviting us to come up higher, to come to the mountain of the Lord, to see the Gentiles coming to Christ, from every tribe, tongue, language and people, to see the beauty of Jesus and to worship Him together and to listen to His voice! Let's run along the path of God's commandments. Let's hurry to that place of rest!

## DISCIPLESHIP GROUP

**Pray that the Lord would open up the wells of salvation in your city and pray for mission from your city to the nations. Maybe some in your group have been stirred to go on a short-term missions trip. Send them out! If you have grown as a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ over the past 30 weeks, share with your discipleship group any transformational practices that you have adopted and maybe some that you have not! If you feel the Lord is leading you to start a discipleship group yourself, let your leader know. If he or she gives their blessing you may find *Lead Like a Shepherd* (the third manual in this series) to be a helpful resource.**

<sup>1</sup> Benedict. *The Rule*. Chapter 73: 104.

<sup>2</sup> Bosch, D. *Transforming Mission*. Orbis Books: 389-390.

<sup>3</sup> Willard, D. *The Spirit of the Disciplines*. HarperSanFrancisco: 1.

<sup>4</sup> Moynagh, M. *Church for Every Context*. SCM: 35-36.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, 35-36.

<sup>6</sup> Greig, P, and Roberts, D. *Red Moon Rising*. Kingsway: 81.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, 102, 110.

<sup>8</sup> www.ihop.org

<sup>9</sup> 'Harp and bowl' worship and intercession involves a worship

cycle that includes four elements — corporate worship songs, spontaneous singing, praying the Bible and warring in the Spirit. The antiphonal singing and the commitment to non-stop prayer and worship have some distinctive features that also have a striking resemblance to Benedictine spirituality.

<sup>10</sup> Kreider, A. *The Change of Conversion and the Origin of Christendom*. Wipf & Stock: 27 (Origen. *Epistle to Julius Africanus*. 15)

## *The Rule*

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### **For a local House of Prayer that is committed to being transformed into a discipling community**

This local House of Prayer is committed to knowing God the Father, making Disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ and living in the fulness of the Holy Spirit and through passionate persevering prayer, is seeking the Lord for both national revival and a new wave of missions to the ends of the earth.

In the context of building a house of prayer, this community is committed to living in the fear of the Lord, nurturing a clean conscience, maintaining healthy relationships, growing in knowledge of the Bible with renewed minds, stepping out in the spiritual gifts, and developing a heart for the lost and a passion for evangelism.

This community affirms that every believer has a destiny in Christ and in the midst of spiritual battle can live a lifestyle of forgiveness, servanthood, stewardship, generosity, hospitality, and wholesome speech with a worshipping heart. These are the character qualities that are valued and nurtured in this praying community.

# 3-2-1 Bible reading plan

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30 weeks: Psalms three times (corporate) • NT twice • OT once

## Week 1 Hearing God's voice

**Day 1** Matt 1–3, Gen 1–5, *Ps 1–5*  
**Day 2** Matt 4–6, Gen 6–10, *Ps 6–8*  
**Day 3** Matt 7–9, Gen 11–15, *Ps 9–11*  
**Day 4** Matt 10–12, Gen 16–20, *Ps 12–14*  
**Day 5** Matt 13–16, Gen 21–25, *Ps 15–17*  
**Sunday** *Ps 18*

## Week 2 Being a disciple

**Day 6** Matt 17–19, Gen 26–30, *Ps 19–21*  
**Day 7** Matt 20–22, Gen 31–35, *Ps 22–23*  
**Day 8** Matt 23–25, Gen 36–40, *Ps 24–26*  
**Day 9** Matt 26–28, Gen 41–45, *Ps 27–28*  
**Day 10** Mark 1–3, Gen 46–50, *Ps 29–31*  
**Sunday** *Ps 32–34*

## Week 3 Knowing God

**Day 11** Mark 4–6, Ex 1–5, *Ps 35–36*  
**Day 12** Mark 7–9, Ex 6–10 *Ps 37*  
**Day 13** Mark 10–12, Ex 11–15 *Ps 38–40*  
**Day 14** Mark 13–15, Ex 16–20 *Ps 41–43*  
**Day 15** Mark 16–Luke 1, Ex 21–25 *Ps 44–46*  
**Sunday** *Ps 47–49*

## Week 4 Prayer

**Day 16** Luke 2–3, Ex 26–30 *Ps 50–52*  
**Day 17** Luke 4–5, Ex 31–35 *Ps 53–55*  
**Day 18** Luke 6–7, Ex 36–40 *Ps 56–58*  
**Day 19** Luke 8–9, Lev 1–5 *Ps 59–61*  
**Day 20** Luke 10–12, Lev 6–10 *Ps 62–64*  
**Sunday** *Ps 65–67*

## Week 5 The Father Heart of God

**Day 21** Luke 13–15, Lev 11–15 *Ps 68*  
**Day 22** Luke 16–18, Lev 16–20 *Ps 69–70*  
**Day 23** Luke 19–20, Lev 21–25 *Ps 71–72*  
**Day 24** Luke 21–22, Lev 26–Num 3 *Ps 73–74*  
**Day 25** Luke 23–24, Num 4–8 *Ps 75–77*  
**Sunday** *Ps 78*

## Week 6 Jesus Christ

**Day 26** John 1–3, Num 9–13 *Ps 79–81*  
**Day 27** John 4–6, Num 14–18 *Ps 82–85*  
**Day 28** John 7–9, Num 19–23 *Ps 86–88*  
**Day 29** John 10–12, Num 24–28 *Ps 89*  
**Day 30** John 13–15, Num 29–33 *Ps 90–92*  
**Sunday** *Ps 93–94*

## Week 7 The Holy Spirit

**Day 31** John 16–18, Num 34–Deut 2 *Ps 95–97*  
**Day 32** John 19–21, Deut 3–7 *Ps 98–101*  
**Day 33** Acts 1–3, Deut 8–12 *Ps 102–103*  
**Day 34** Acts 4–6, Deut 13–17 *Ps 104*  
**Day 35** Acts 7–9, Deut 18–22 *Ps 105*  
**Sunday** *Ps 106*

## Week 8 The fear of the Lord

**Day 36** Acts 10–12, Deut 23–27 *Ps 107*  
**Day 37** Acts 13–15, Deut 28–32 *Ps 108–109*  
**Day 38** Acts 16–18, Deut 33–Josh 3  
*Ps 110–113*  
**Day 39** Acts 19–21, Josh 4–8 *Ps 114–115*  
**Day 40** Acts 22–24, Josh 9–14 *Ps 116–118*  
**Sunday** *Ps 119:1–32*

## Week 9 Confess your sins

**Day 41** Acts 25–27, Josh 15–19 *Ps 119:33–72*  
**Day 42** Acts 28–Rom 3, Josh 20–24  
*Ps 119:73–104*  
**Day 43** Rom 4–7, Judges 1–5 *Ps 119:105–144*  
**Day 44** Rom 8–11, Judges 6–10  
*Ps 119:145–176*  
**Day 45** Rom 12–15, Judges 11–15 *Ps 120–125*  
**Sunday** *Ps 126–131*

## Week 10 Spiritual gifts

**Day 46** Rom 16–1 Cor 3, Judges 16–21

*Ps 132–135*

**Day 47** 1 Cor 4–7, Ruth 1–4, 1 Sam 1

*Ps 136–138*

**Day 48** 1 Cor 8–11, 1 Sam 2–6 *Ps 139–140*

**Day 49** 1 Cor 12–15, 1 Sam 7–11 *Ps 141–143*

**Day 50** 1 Cor 16–2 Cor 3, 1 Sam 12–16

*Ps 144–146*

**Sunday** *Ps 147–150*

## Week 11 Evangelism

**Day 51** 2 Cor 4–7, 1 Sam 17–21 *Ps 1–5*

**Day 52** 2 Cor 8–11, 1 Sam 22–26 *Ps 6–8*

**Day 53** 2 Cor 12–Gal 2, 1 Sam 27–31 *Ps 9–11*

**Day 54** Gal 3–6, 2 Sam 1–5 *Ps 12–14*

**Day 55** Eph 1–4, 2 Sam 6–15 *Ps 15–17*

**Sunday** *Ps 18*

## Week 12 Relationships

**Day 56** Eph 5–Phil 2, 2 Sam 16–20 *Ps 19–21*

**Day 57** Phil 3–Col 2, 2 Sam 21–24 *Ps 22–23*

**Day 58** Col 3–1 Thess 2, 1 Kings 1–5 *Ps 24–26*

**Day 59** 1 Thess 3–2 Thess 3, 1 Kings 6–11

*Ps 27–28*

**Day 60** 1 Tim 1–5, 1 Kings 12–16 *Ps 29–31*

**Sunday** *Ps 32–34*

## Week 13 The Bible

**Day 61** 1 Tim 6–2 Tim 4, 1 Kings 17–22

*Ps 35–36*

**Day 62** Titus–Philemon, 2 Kings 1–5 *Ps 37*

**Day 63** Heb 1–4, 2 Kings 6–10 *Ps 38–40*

**Day 64** Heb 5–8, 2 Kings 11–15 *Ps 41–43*

**Day 65** Heb 9–13, 2 Kings 16–20 *Ps 44–46*

**Sunday** *Ps 47–49*

## Week 14 Forgiveness and the tongue

**Day 66** James 1–4, 2 Kings 21–25 *Ps 50–52*

**Day 67** James 5–1 Pet 2, 1 Chron 1–5 *Ps 53–55*

**Day 68** 1 Pet 3–2 Pet 3, 1 Chron 6–10

*Ps 56–58*

**Day 69** 1 John 1–5, 1 Chron 11–16 *Ps 59–61*

**Day 70** 2 John 1–Jude, 1 Chron 17–21

*Ps 62–64*

**Sunday** *Ps 65–67*

## Week 15 Prayer for revival

**Day 71** Rev 1–4, 1 Chron 22–26 *Ps 68*

**Day 72** Rev 5–8, 1 Chron 27–2 Chron 2

*Ps 69–70*

**Day 73** Rev 9–12, 2 Chron 3–7 *Ps 71–72*

**Day 74** Rev 13–17, 3 Chron 8–12 *Ps 73–74*

**Day 75** Rev 18–22, 2 Chron 13–17 *Ps 75–77*

**Sunday** *Ps 78*

## Week 16 A teachable heart

**Day 76** Matt 1–3, 2 Chron 18–22, *Ps 79–81*

**Day 77** Matt 4–6, 2 Chron 23–27, *Ps 82–85*

**Day 78** Matt 7–9, 2 Chron 28–32, *Ps 86–88*

**Day 79** Matt 10–12, 2 Chron 33–36, Ezra 1–2,

*Ps 89*

**Day 80** Matt 13–16, Ezra 3–8, *Ps 90–92*

**Sunday** *Ps 93–94*

## Week 17 Intercession

**Day 81** Matt 17–19, Ezra 9–10, Neh 1–3,

*Ps 95–97*

**Day 82** Matt 20–22, Neh 4–8, *Ps 98–101*

**Day 83** Matt 23–25, Neh 9–13, *Ps 102–103*

**Day 84** Matt 26–28, Esther 1–5, *Ps 104*

**Day 85** Mark 1–3, Esther 6–10, *Ps 105*

**Sunday** *Ps 106*

## Week 18 A passion for Jesus

**Day 86** Mark 4–6, Job 1–5, *Ps 107*

**Day 87** Mark 7–9, Job 6–10, *Ps 108–109*

**Day 88** Mark 10–12, Job 11–20, *Ps 110–113*

**Day 89** Mark 13–15, Job 21–25, *Ps 114–115*

**Day 90** Mark 16–Luke 1, Job 26–30,

*Ps 116–118*

**Sunday** *Ps 119:1–32*

## Week 19 A house of prayer

**Day 91** Luke 2–3, Job 31–36, *Ps 119:33–72*

**Day 92** Luke 4–5, Job 37–42, *Ps 119:73–104*

**Day 93** Luke 6–7, Prov 1–5, *Ps 119:105–144*

**Day 94** Luke 8–9, Prov 6–10, *Ps 119:145–176*

**Day 95** Luke 10–12, Prov 11–15, *Ps 120–125*

**Sunday** *Ps 126–131*



## **Week 20 Perseverance**

**Day 96** Luke 13–15, Prov 16–20, *Ps 132–135*  
**Day 97** Luke 16–18, Prov 21–25, *Ps 136–138*  
**Day 98** Luke 19–20, Prov 26–31, *Ps 139–140*  
**Day 99** Luke 21–22, Eccles 1–5, *Ps 141–143*  
**Day 100** Luke 23–24, Eccles 6–10, *Ps 144–146*  
**Sunday** *Ps 147–150*

## **Week 21 Worship**

**Day 101** John 1–3, Eccles 11–12, SofS 1–2,  
*Ps 1–5*  
**Day 102** John 4–6, SofS 3–8, *Ps 6–8*  
**Day 103** John 7–9, Is 1–5, *Ps 9–11*  
**Day 104** John 10–12, Is 6–10, *Ps 12–14*  
**Day 105** John 13–15, Is 11–15, *Ps 15–17*  
**Sunday** *Ps 18*

## **Week 22 Waiting on the Lord**

**Day 106** John 16–18, Is 16–20, *Ps 19–21*  
**Day 107** John 19–21, Is 21–25, *Ps 22–23*  
**Day 108** Acts 1–3, Is 26–30, *Ps 24–26*  
**Day 109** Acts 4–6, Is 31–35, *Ps 27–28*  
**Day 110** Acts 7–9, Is 36–40, *Ps 29–31*  
**Sunday** *Ps 32–34*

## **Week 23 Obedience**

**Day 111** Acts 10–12, Is 41–45, *Ps 35–36*  
**Day 112** Acts 13–15, Is 46–50, *Ps 37*  
**Day 113** Acts 16–18, Is 51–60, *Ps 38–40*  
**Day 114** Acts 19–21, Is 61–66, *Ps 41–43*  
**Day 115** Acts 22–24, Jer 1–5, *Ps 44–46*  
**Sunday** *Ps 47–49*

## **Week 24 Renewing the mind**

**Day 116** Acts 25–27, Jer 6–10, *Ps 50–52*  
**Day 117** Acts 28–Rom 3, Jer 11–15, *Ps 53–55*  
**Day 118** Rom 4–7, Jer 16–20, *Ps 56–58*  
**Day 119** Rom 8–11, Jer 21–25, *Ps 59–61*  
**Day 120** Rom 12–15, Jer 26–30, *Ps 62–64*  
**Sunday** *Ps 65–67*

## **Week 25 Hospitality**

**Day 121** Rom 16–1 Cor 3, Jer 31–35, *Ps 68*  
**Day 122** 1 Cor 4–7, Jer 36–40, *Ps 69–70*  
**Day 123** 1 Cor 8–11, Jer 41–45, *Ps 71–72*  
**Day 124** 1 Cor 12–15, Jer 46–52, *Ps 73–74*  
**Day 125** 1 Cor 16–2 Cor 3, Ezek 1–5, *Ps 75–77*  
**Sunday** *Ps 78*

## **Week 26 Generosity**

**Day 126** 2 Cor 4–7, Ezek 6–10, *Ps 79–81*  
**Day 127** 2 Cor 8–11, Ezek 11–15, *Ps 82–85*  
**Day 128** 2 Cor 12–Gal 2, Ezek 16–20, *Ps 86–88*  
**Day 129** Gal 3–6, Ezek 21–25, *Ps 89*  
**Day 130** Eph 1–4, Ezek 26–30, *Ps 90–92*  
**Sunday** *Ps 93–94*

## **Week 27 Spiritual battle**

**Day 131** Eph 5–Phil 2, Ezek 31–35, *Ps 95–97*  
**Day 132** Phil 3–Col 2, Ezek 36–40, *Ps 98–101*  
**Day 133** Col 3–1 Thess 2, Ezek 41–45,  
*Ps 102–103*  
**Day 134** 1 Thess 3–2 Thess 3, Ezek 46–Dan 2,  
*Ps 104*  
**Day 135** 1 Tim 1–5, Dan 3–8, *Ps 105*  
**Sunday** *Ps 106*

## **Week 28 Destiny**

**Day 136** 1 Tim 6–2 Tim 4, Dan 9–12, *Ps 107*  
**Day 137** Titus–Philemon, Hos 1–5, *Ps 108–109*  
**Day 138** Heb 1–4, Hos 6–10, *Ps 110–113*  
**Day 139** Heb 5–8, Hos 11–14, *Ps 114–115*  
**Day 140** Heb 9–13, Joel 1–Amos 2,  
*Ps 116–118*  
**Sunday** *Ps 119:1–32*

## **Week 29 Prevailing prayer**

**Day 141** James 1–4, Amos 3–9, *Ps 119:33–72*  
**Day 142** James 5–1 Peter 2, Jonah 1–4,  
*Ps 119:73–104*  
**Day 143** 1 Peter 3–2 Peter 3, Micah 1–5,  
*Ps 119:105–144*  
**Day 144** 1 John 1–1 John 5, Micah 6–Nah 3,  
*Ps 119:145–176*  
**Day 145** 2 John 1–Jude, Hab 1–3, *Ps 120–125*  
**Sunday** *Ps 126–131*

## **Week 30 Missio Dei**

**Day 146** Rev 1–4, Zeph 1–3, *Ps 132–135*  
**Day 147** Rev 5–8, Hagg 1–Zech 3, *Ps 136–138*  
**Day 148** Rev 9–12, Zech 4–8, *Ps 139–140*  
**Day 149** Rev 13–17, Zech 9–14, *Ps 141–143*  
**Day 150** Rev 18–22, Mal 1–4, *Ps 144–146*  
**Sunday** *Ps 147–150*

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