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TRUTHS
THAT
MAKE
US SING

2019-2020 DEVOTION

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We wrote this catechism while standing on the shoulders of saints who have gone before us. We thank God for the writers of the Heidelberg Catechism, the Westminster Shorter Catechism, and the New City Catechism, who gave us these documents to serve as the basis for our own.

We have borrowed their spirit, doctrine, language, order, and application. The Heidelberg and Westminster Catechisms are in the public domain, and we have permission to use parts of The New City Catechism.

In the same vein, we hope that this document will be a resource for others to preach, teach and write, joining in the chain of faithfulness that extends through the ages, anchored to God.

WHY USE “TRUTHS THAT MAKE US SING”?

Have you ever felt gaps in your understanding of God and the Christian faith? Are there things you read in the Bible or hear in sermons that you don't know how to connect to other aspects of the faith? Are there are parts of God's character or what he's done for us that you can't quite reconcile with other things? Have you seen other Christians being nourished by scripture and sermons in a way that you don't experience personally?

There is a foundation of truth in Christianity that undergirds everything else we see in God's word. Early believers put together succinct summaries of scripture's teachings regarding specific truths about God, synthesized in a systematic format, in order to help believers gain a solid theological foundation. When we don't understand this foundation sufficiently, all else that we read in the Bible or hear in sermons cannot be received in their correct context.

For example, if you turn on the TV and see an Formula 1 race about to start, you can no doubt enjoy watching it to some degree. But unless you follow the season, understand how each race builds upon the other, and know where the teams are placed, your enjoyment of it will be rather shallow. If you aren't familiar with Formula 1 at all, then even a simple enjoyment of it will be difficult. You would see numbers and details being flashed on the screen without knowing what they mean. To fully appreciate the race, you need a foundation of understanding about Formula 1 to give context for other aspects of the sport.

In the same way, the Christian faith contains a body of foundational truth about God, his character, his law, his Son, the world, our redemption, and how we are to live our lives. Even the gospel, which we believe to be the centre of our faith, only makes sense when understood in the context of these truths.

While we can certainly gain a solid grasp of these truths on our own, it would take years of reading the Bible and listening to good preaching to do so. Our ability to extract the most out of the experience would be severely hindered by a lack of foundational knowledge. Children and new believers in particular would benefit from having such a foundation.

This is why Truths That Make Us Sing was created. It does not replace regular Bible reading, but helps to supplement our regular devotions. The questions and answers have been adapted from some of the succinct summaries that Christians have used over the centuries, and contextualized for use in our unique place and time. It is so titled because these realities about God and his work are too wonderful to simply be understood. This knowledge should lead us to rejoice in our God!

HOW TO USE "TRUTHS THAT MAKE US SING"?

You are encouraged to read, memorize, reflect upon and pray through these truths, allowing them to lead you to worship God. This resource can be used privately, with your family, for mutual encouragement and discipleship with another believer, or even in evangelism.

To further aid the study of these materials, we have added scripture references, songs, prayers, and devotional write-ups. These supplementary elements help us engage with the material in a richer way.

The question and answer format is designed to make the information easy to remember, even for children. Supporting Biblical references are included with the answers to help direct readers back to scripture. Parents can engage children by talking about it over the dinner table, singing songs together, reciting scripture verses out loud, and encouraging children to memorize them. Doing so will help these truths to sink into their hearts.

It is our prayer that this catechism will help us as a church to build our lives on the infallible truth of Jesus' words, so that we may sing his praises forevermore.

01 What is our only comfort in life and death?

ANSWER

That we are not our own but belong, body and soul, both in life and death, to God and to our saviour Jesus Christ. He has fully paid for all our sins with his precious blood, and watches over us in such a way that not a hair of our heads can fall without the will of our Father in heaven.

REFERENCE *Romans 14:7-8*

DEVOTION

What do you want out of life? The catechism begins by asking us what can truly put our hearts at ease and give our souls rest. This is what "comfort" means. Much of our lives are driven by discomfort, and we seek those things which we believe will grant us comfort. But the catechism tells us that the comfort we seek is not found in having any earthly belongings or achievements, but in knowing that we belong to someone.

The only true and lasting comfort in both life and death is that we belong to God. The everlasting and unchanging God is the ultimate reference point. The fact that the God of this universe knows us, has purchased us for himself through his son Jesus, and that not even death is able to separate us from his love is the most reassuring fact in the world.

Ownership also defines purpose. Being God's means that we are not adrift in time and space, but meant to be directed towards fulfilling his purposes and desires. But God does not just happen to own us; he cares about us individually, and watches over even the most mundane details of our lives. Because he is sovereign, nothing can happen to us apart from his will. Because he is infinitely good, nothing can happen that won't work itself out for our ultimate

good. Because he has paid for all our sins, nothing can separate us from his love.

This is the comfort that you and I are supposed to live in every day. It is a comfort deeper than the status of our relationships, the security of our jobs, the numbers in our bank accounts, or the health in our bodies. It is a comfort given and guaranteed by God himself. And it means that we are now able to, and encouraged to, freely give ourselves to him and his purposes unreservedly.

PRAYER

Father, please open the eyes of my heart to see that my soul is restless until it finds its rest in you. May you move my mind and quicken my hands to live my life for you, your purposes and glory alone.

SONG

Rejoice
by Dustin Kensrue, Stuart Townend

02 Who is God?

ANSWER

God is the creator and sustainer of everyone and everything. He is eternal, infinite, and unchangeable in his power and perfection, goodness and glory, wisdom, justice, and truth. Nothing happens except through him and by his will.

REFERENCE *Colossians 1:16-17*

DEVOTION

A.W. Tozer famously said that what comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us. This is because our view of who God is affects how we live before him, how we trust him, how we honour him, and most importantly, how we love him. So, who do you say God is?

Three things become clear about God in this second question of the catechism. Firstly, that God is the active creator of all things. This means that both our origin and reasons for existing are found in him alone. It also means that he is the one we continuously depend upon for life. Secondly, that God is not only good, wise, just, and full of truth, but his unchanging character and power mean that he is perfectly and eternally so. God is the definition of goodness, wisdom, justice and truth. Thirdly, that God is in complete control of all things as a sovereign God. He does not answer to anyone, have to pass exams, or have his KPIs reviewed by anyone. Therefore, we need not worry that something outside of his scope of authority will come against us, for there is nothing outside of his scope of authority.

There is nothing more important than understanding and knowing who God is. But knowing God is not just important, it is glorious, because God is good. Through Jesus Christ's work we can approach him with confidence, and

look forward to an eternity of gazing upon his beauty and experiencing pleasures at his right hand. So let us rejoice and be glad in our God!

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, please open the eyes of my heart and mind to see you clearly in all your beauty, majesty, and power. Forgive me for the times I've acted as though my life were independent of your sustaining power and grace.

SONG

Behold Our God

by Jonathan Baird, Meghan Baird, Ryan Baird, Stephen Altrogge

03 How many persons are there in God?

ANSWER

There are three distinct persons in the one true and living God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Though being distinct persons, they are the same in substance, equal in power and glory.

REFERENCE *Matthew 28:19*

DEVOTION

The reality of God's nature has been viewed by many as mysterious and hard to comprehend. While the Bible does not use the word "trinity", this word captures what the it clearly teaches about God. What the scriptures teach is not a man-made idea, but rather something God has revealed to us about himself. This revelation is wonderful, and we find ourselves marveling at the nature of this God.

Christianity is a monotheistic religion, meaning that we believe that there is only one God. This one God exists as three persons (Father, Son and Holy Spirit), who relate to one another in the divine community of the Godhead. Early formulations of the doctrine of the trinity held to three clear ideas about the Godhead. Firstly, that God is one and that there is only one God. Secondly, that each person of the trinity are themselves God. Thirdly, that each person of the trinity is not another person in the trinity. They are distinct persons, yet equal in power and glory. This one God in three persons works together perfectly in all things, such as in creation and our salvation.

Why is this important? Only in a triune God can you have a God who is perfectly satisfied in himself, existing in perfect community within himself, and not needing anything or anyone outside of himself. Only in the triune God can you have a God who is not simply loving but is love him-

self (loving the other persons of the trinity within himself). Only God could have revealed himself to us in this way, as no human mind is able to conceive of the majesty of such a God. And he has revealed himself to us, and invites us to praise his name forever.

PRAYER

Dear Father, thank you for revealing yourself to me and inviting me into a loving relationship with you. May I receive your love and share this precious gift today with the people you bring into my life.

SONG

O God Of Our Salvation
by Michael Bleecker

04 Who is the Father?

ANSWER

The Father is our mighty God who is sovereign over all things as creator and sustainer. We trust him so much that we do not doubt he will provide whatever we need for body and soul and will turn to our good whatever adversity he sends in this world. He is able to do this because he is Almighty God. He desires to do this because he is a loving Father.

REFERENCE *Matthew 7:11*

DEVOTION

What makes a good father? As a child, how did your own father treat you? Fathers are often judged by how good they are at the three "P's": Protection, provision and participation. Christians are fortunate to have God almighty as his or her Father (John 1:12). As a Father, God is perfect at the three "P's".

As protector, God the Father watches over us in life (Ps 121) and defends us (Deut 32:4). He is our strength and refuge, an ever present help in times of trouble (Ps 46:1), our deliverer (Ps 18:2), our shield (Gen 15:1) and our safety. He tucks us under the shadow of his wings (Ps 91). The Father has protected us from eternal death and hell.

As provider, he makes sure that we are never in want (Ps 23:1). The children of the righteous are spared from begging bread (Ps 37:25). The Father knows what we need and provides all these things (Matt 6:30-33). A special aspect of the Father's provision occurs when we trust him in a sacrificial way (Gen 22:14).

But it is his participation in our lives that makes God extraordinary. The Father who is unseen but sees (Matt 6:4, 6, 18) is so attentive that he knows what we need before we ask him (Matt 6:8, 32). He is familiar with all our ways (Ps

139). Even difficult situations are "for our good, in order that we might share in his holiness" (Heb 12).

God is a Father who is always accessible. We can approach his throne to find mercy and help whenever we wish (Heb 4:16). We are even invited to participate in him (2Pet 1:4).

Where do you need God to protect and provide for you? And where do you need to sense his participation? As a son of daughter of God through Christ, you are given the right to ask of the Father! Ask him today for protection, provision and participation.

PRAYER

Thank you Lord for being my loving Father, who protects me, provides for my needs, and participates in my life. I want to be conscious of my own frailty and limitations, and entrust myself wholly to your loving care today.

SONG

How Deep The Father's Love For Us
by Stuart Townend

05 Who is the Son?

ANSWER

The Son is the eternal, uncreated Son of the Father, who willingly took on flesh in order that he might reveal to us the Father, live a righteous life on our behalf, redeem us from our sins through his death and resurrection, and who now sits at the Father's right hand interceding for his people.

REFERENCE *Colossians 1:15-17, Hebrews 1:1-4, 2:17*

DEVOTION

Jesus is the Son of God, but in what sense? Surely the human definition of fathers and sons does not represent this relationship in the trinity. They existed before time, neither one having created the other.

This mystery is described nowhere better than in John 1. "In the beginning was the Word; the Word was with God; and the Word was God." John goes on to add that "through him all things were made" and that "without him nothing was made that has been made". Yet, the uncreated took on flesh and came to us as a created one. He came divinely through a virgin, thus bypassing the sinful line of Adam and Original Sin. Even though he was human, he proceeded to live a sinless life.

Though he took on a finite appearance, he never stopped being infinite. He became the perfect saviour because he could pay the penalty man-for-man, and yet do this infinitely for all of mankind. He was the perfect intermediary between God and man. He was the very nature, representation, and image of God, but he appeared in the flesh. As God, he lived a perfect human life and died a perfect death. And as God, he rose from death and ascended into heaven.

Being God in every way, yet man in every way, he was able to reconcile man to God. And now, he sits in heaven as God. Yet he is the God who knows man, and he is perfectly positioned to pray for the men on earth.

He has lived for you. He has died for you. He has risen for you. He has ascended for you. What glorious things!

PRAYER

Thank you Jesus for coming to earth to live as a man and suffering for my sins. Help me to live my life today as one who is hidden in you, and who has access to the Father through what you have done for me.

SONG

Jesus, Son Of God
by Chris Tomlin, Jason Ingram, Matt Maher

06 Who is the Holy Spirit?

ANSWER

The Holy Spirit is, along with the Father and Son, equally God, who has been given to us personally so that by true faith we may share in Christ and all his blessings, as well as be sanctified and empowered to serve our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

REFERENCE *John 14:26, Romans 8:26-27*

DEVOTION

"Where is God? Why is he so far away?"

"When I get to heaven, the first thing I am going to ask God is _____".

"I wish God was right here to ask him."

"The disciples were so lucky to have had Jesus in person."

Wouldn't it be so much easier if we had Jesus in the flesh, right here, right now? Well, the Holy Spirit IS God, as much so as the Father and Jesus. And the Holy Spirit is with us now, dwelling with us.

Jesus said: "I am going to the Father... I will ask the Father and he will give you another counsellor" (John 14:12, 16). In Greek, this word "another" means "another of the same kind" (allos). Jesus could have used an alternate word which means "another of a different kind" (heteros). But he chose to describe the counsellor this way, because the Holy Spirit is God.

The Holy Spirit is with the Christian and in the Christian (Rom 8:9-10), having "gone out from" the Father himself (John 15:26), and given by the Father (John 14:16, Luke

11:12). So much so that Jesus calls him "the Spirit of your Father" (Matt 10:20). This means that we can know the Father in person when we interact with the Holy Spirit.

God is not far away in heaven. He is not unknowable, unresponsive, or absent. He has neither abandoned nor absconded from us. Rather, God the Father and God the Son are with you, through God the Holy Spirit. Therefore, you can have a direct, immediate and personable relationship with God. He is the God you can talk to, walk with, know, and be comforted and empowered by. He is the God who is near.

PRAYER

Thank you Father for the gift of the Holy Spirit. Help me to keep in step with your Spirit today, and help me grow in ways that are pleasing in your sight, so that I might bear your fruit in my life for all to see.

SONG

Holy Spirit, Living Breath Of God
by Stuart Townend, Keith Getty

07 How and why did God create us?

ANSWER

God created us male and female in his own image to know him, love him, live with him, and glorify him. And it is right that we who were created by God should live to his glory.

REFERENCE *Genesis 1:27*

DEVOTION

What is a successful life? Are you living a successful life?

Each of us has a definition of what a successful person looks like. We have a list of criteria, often shaped by our relationships, the media, the internet, office talk, dinner conversation, movies—and especially social media.

But what is God's definition of a successful life?

We are God's image. We reflect him each time we do something in his will. God is love. He is truth. He is joy. He is kindness. He is strength. He is grace. So when we have moments of being loving, truthful, joyful, kind, strong and gracious—we are his image. We can never be God, but we can reflect parts of who he is.

But there is a more profound way that we can be like God. God is a person, and has capacity for relationships. He has his own identity, personality, and character. He wants to know and be known. He wants relationships. When we know him, love him, fellowship with him, and worship him, we are being what he wants us to be. The more we relate to God, the more we become like him.

Ultimate success is knowing God and being more like God. Your life, with all its moments and decisions, is your

chance at knowing God and being the person who shows others what he is like. That is success!

PRAYER

Lord, it is such a privilege to be made in your image. Help me to hold fast to this truth: That I belong to an almighty God. Give me a heavenly perspective to extend your love, truth, joy, kindness, strength and grace to others around me, for your glory.

SONG

Glorious Christ
by Bob Kauffman

08 What does it mean to be God's image bearer?

ANSWER

To be God's image bearer means to be made in the likeness of God, and to have the responsibility to represent God. We are made in the likeness of God morally, emotionally, mentally, relationally and spiritually. We were created to represent God's joyful, just and righteous rule to all creation. In this regard mankind is distinct from all creation, and therefore called to exercise dominion over all creation for its flourishing.

REFERENCE *Genesis 1:27*

DEVOTION

The Bible tells us that "God created man in his own image. In the image of God he created him. Male and female he created them." (Gen 1:27) We are the "imago dei", made in the image of God in order to reflect and to display God to all of creation. Similar to the way a portrait is meant to draw attention to the person himself, we as the image of God are meant to draw attention to God himself.

Though we are created in God's image, sin has corrupted that image. To understand how far we have fallen from God's intention for our lives, we look to Jesus, who came as the true image of God himself (Col 1:15). As a fallen people, we decided that instead of reflecting God, we would rather image ourselves and find satisfaction in our own glory. We do this by thinking, feeling and acting in a way wholly independent from God. In contrast to this, Jesus lived in obedience to God, displaying his character and glory. Jesus showed God's loving, gracious and holy character by laying down his life for us, his enemies. It is through Christ that we can be remade into the image of God.

The implications of being God's image bearers are immense. It gives us dignity, because we carry the mark of

God upon us. It also gives our lives great significance, because every action we take can point others to the nature of God. When an accountant crunches data, he is reflecting the image of God. When human rights lawyers fights for justice in a court of law, they are reflecting the image of God. When a woman works hard in the field and causes it to bring forth flowers and vegetables, she is reflecting the image of God.

Seeing others made in the image of God should also give our evangelism urgency. If all people are made in God's image, we should feel a great necessity to proclaim the good news of the gospel so they might be restored to God. In all of life, then, let us reflect God's glory because we are made in his image.

PRAYER

Dear Lord, we so often want to be independent and turn away from who you truly are. Help us to grow in dependence through trusting in Jesus, so we reflect you rightly and bring glory to your name.

SONG

Creation Creed
by Graham Kendrick

09 What else did God create?

ANSWER

God created all things out of nothing by his powerful Word, and all his creation was very good; everything flourished under his loving rule.

REFERENCE *Genesis 1:31-2:1, Psalms 104:24-25*

DEVOTION

Do you ever have days when the world feels like it has more imperfection than perfection? Sometimes it seems like bad things outnumber the good. This can lead us to daydream about finally being in heaven one day, or perhaps wish we could go back to the Garden of Eden!

The truth is that God made creation perfectly. Under his benevolent rule, everything thrived as it should. But outside of God's rule, corruption set in. Good things outside of God's authority become bad things.

God will ultimately redeem all things with a new heavens and a new earth (2Pet 3:13, Rev 21:1). But what about now? Even though the world is fallen, God has lost none of his power. God can still give life to the dead and call things into existence (Rom 4:17). And whatever he does is good.

Are there situations in your life that carry the toxic and corrosive stains of sin? Are there injustices and conflict in the world that seem utterly hopeless? Just as God spoke life over the void and darkness at creation, he can speak life now. He can create things out of nothing by his powerful words.

Invite the creator who is all good and all powerful to speak and bring a creative solution to the imperfections in your-

self. Submit to God's rule and authority, and humble yourself. Wait and listen for God to speak. With a word, he can change anything.

Leave your brokenness in the hands of the creator. He who made you to flourish is good, and has promised to make you whole again.

PRAYER

Thank you Lord that you did not leave creation alone after it became tainted by sin, but provided a way of redemption through Jesus and his work on the cross. Help me to live in expectation of the promise that he will restore all things when he returns.

SONG

Across The Lands
by Keith Getty, Stuart Townend

10 Is God still involved in his creation?

ANSWER

Yes. God is not only the creator but also the sustainer of all things. God upholds and rules all things by his eternal counsel and ever-present power, so that all things come to us not by chance but from his fatherly hand. We can therefore be patient when things go against us, thankful when things go well, and have confidence in our Father knowing that nothing can separate us from his love.

REFERENCE *Acts 17:24-25, Romans 8:38-39*

DEVOTION

A frequent accusation against Christianity is how chaotic the world seems to be. If God exists and loves order, then why do random and painful things happen? How do you explain life's cruelties and lack of fairness? Sometimes our perception is that God is not in control.

But this is not the truth. God, the sovereign of all creation, holds the world in his hands and is in total control of everything. In Jesus, "all things hold together" (Col 1:16, 17). God is not dictated to by circumstance. On the contrary, Jesus "sustains all things by his powerful word" (Heb 1:3) and governs all the affairs of the earth with parental attentiveness.

God never condones evil, and will never orchestrate evil (Jas 1:13). Although our world is fallen, even bad things are subject to his ultimate authority. God might not explain his plans to control specific situations or why he allows certain things to happen, but he will always cover you with his love. We should always remember that his love can find us in any situation.

When we are afflicted, we often ask, Why is this happening? Or, why me? But we should also remember to ask, Lord what do you want to show me, or be for me? God is always pleased to reveal more of himself to us.

In times when chaos seems to be all around, God can provide peace and comfort. When things seem out of control, God is constantly in charge. God is to us what T.S. Eliot calls "the still point of a turning world".

C.S. Lewis once beautifully said, "I know now, Lord, why you utter no answer. You are yourself the answer. Before your face questions die away. What other answer would suffice?"

PRAYER

Father God, I am deeply comforted that you alone are sovereign, that nothing happens apart from your will and that you work all things for the good of those who love you. Please give me the faith to believe this even when difficulties arise, in order that I might turn to you and not lose heart.

SONG

It's Your Grace
by Doug Plank, Bob Kauffin

11 How can we glorify God?

ANSWER

We glorify God by enjoying him, loving him and trusting him. As we obey his will, commands and law we fulfil our calling as his image bearers to all of creation.

REFERENCE *Deuteronomy 11:1*

DEVOTION

We are made for glory. Not ours, but God's. Glory is our purpose and our destiny. A life well-lived is one that is laser-focused on fulfilling our destiny to bring glory to God. The Apostle Paul, comparing the Christian life to an athlete's life in 1 Corinthians 9, says that we must be focused on the prize, and live every aspect of our lives pushing toward that goal.

We must ask ourselves every day, with every decision, Does this bring glory to God? Take these moments with God today to sharpen your focus on God's glory through how you live your life.

How much do you enjoy God? Does the thought of him bring you joy? Do his words inspire, perfect, admonish, and direct you? Can you bask in his presence? Tell God now how much you enjoy him, and ask him to help you enjoy him even more.

Do you love him? How can you love him more? Do you express love for God in actions, in relationships, and by bringing gifts (both tangible and intangible) to him? Can others see how much you love him? Do you put your love for God on display, or hide it like a candle under a basket?

Have you trusted God like a child? Have you eagerly studied his words, his character, and his will so that you might

obey? What knowledge of him do you lack? What do you not understand about his will? Ask! It will be given to you. Seek and you will find.

Let the thought of God's glory possess you. Let it drive you and make you weep. Let it consume you and fill you. Let it make you fall to your knees. What a great destiny that we have been created to fulfil!

PRAYER

O Lord, please open my heart, my mind, and my senses to feel, to know, and to taste the goodness of your glory. Please grant me a greater appetite for your glory than my own, that I would do everything through your power to display your extravagant beauty to a watching world.

SONG

Come People Of The Risen King
by Keith Getty, Stuart Townend

12 What does God's law require of us?

ANSWER

Christ teaches us that we should love the Lord our God with our heart, soul, mind and strength, and that we should love our neighbour as ourselves. On these two commandments hang all the law and prophets.

REFERENCE *Matthew 22:37-40*

DEVOTION

What is the greatest commandment? The Bible contains 613 laws, including the Ten Commandments. The Jewish traditions contained hundreds more. The country we live in imposes even more laws upon us, including some which we might not feel comfortable obeying to the letter. Our families and social groups have their own rules, some of which are unspoken.

How do we keep track of what is right and good and lawful? How do we know what is the heart of God, represented by the spirit of his law? It is impossible to dictate every circumstance in life - how do we know how to act when we don't have any specific instructions or laws for our unique situation?

When the Pharisees tested Jesus about the law, Jesus answered them succinctly: Love God completely, and love others as ourselves. Everything else that is right and good and lawful flows from these two statements.

But as simple as they seem, these two commandments are also utterly profound. They are so broad that they govern every possible angle of our being and behaviour. They are so demanding that any honest person would realise that it would be impossible to keep even just these two laws all the time.

The Psalmist cried out "How I love your law!" Paul lamented about how the law magnified our sins. The revelation of God's amazing holiness is accompanied by the realisation of our own conduct. God's standards, as we can see from just these two laws, are too high for anyone to reach.

Praise God that the gospel brings good news to lawbreakers like us! Christ has fulfilled the law in our place, and now dwells in us by his Spirit, producing the fruit of his law within us.

PRAYER

O Lord, I thank you for your law because it shows me who you are and what is important to you: To love you and to love others as myself. Please help me to obey these two great commandments and give me the desire to live it out.

SONG

Have Your Way With Me
by Dale Bischof

13 Can anyone keep the law of God perfectly?

ANSWER

Since the fall, no mere human has been able to keep the law of God perfectly. Rather, we have a natural tendency to reject God and not love our neighbour as we ought.

REFERENCE *Romans 3:10-12*

DEVOTION

Romans 3:10-12 teaches us one of the most important truths of the gospel. Although it is a difficult truth to accept, it is one of the most glorious and freeing facts we can come to accept about ourselves.

All human beings, even though made in the image of God, are corrupted by sin. This means that all of our natural inclinations, words, actions and thoughts are tainted and deserving of God's wrath. Sin is the condition of the heart that rebels against God, the most important person in the universe.

This condition is not only found in those who society typically acknowledges as "evil people", the thieves, murderers and adulterers. It is found in those who think they are "good people", because even the so-called good things we do are marred by sin. These actions are not naturally done out of love for God (Matt 22:34) or through faith in him (Rom 14:23). This reminds us that sin has a grip over all of us, and no one is exempt. Sin is primarily a rejection of God, followed by our inability to love our neighbour as we love ourselves.

Even as we come face to face with this deadly diagnosis of our hearts, we can see that the gospel is the greatest love story and best news of all time! God says to us, "I know all

of your flaws and weaknesses and the condemning darkness of your heart. But, I love you. In my great mercy, I have given my very own son so you can be set right with me and with others."

Brothers and sisters, what comfort!

PRAYER

Dear Father, we praise your righteousness and your sober assessment of our sinful hearts. All you say about us is right and true. Thank you for loving us despite our rebellion. Though we still live in the presence of sin in this world, help us to cling tightly to the good news of the gospel which reminds us that Jesus' very own righteousness has been made our own when we are hidden in him.

SONG

We Praise Your Righteousness
by Bob Kauflin, Matt Papa

14 Did God create us unable to keep his law?

ANSWER

No, God created man good and in his own image that we might know, love and glorify our Creator, but because of the disobedience of our first parents, Adam and Eve, all of creation is fallen; we are all born in sin, corrupt in our nature and unable to keep God's law.

REFERENCE *Romans 5:12*

DEVOTION

Would it be too much to ask a man to take up wings and fly like a bird? Can you ask someone in a coma to get up and join you for a cup of coffee? Could an amputee walk on his own legs again?

Such requests are not just ambitious, they are ludicrous. By virtue of the subject's utter inability, they are impossible to fulfil. So it is with us and God's law. Where once we were made good, and able to be in a relationship with him, we became by nature his enemies, unable to obey not just in the flesh, but in the spirit as well.

We can never, by ourselves, muster enough will, hope, or power to know our lost original state; walking in the Garden of Eden with God, communing with him in the cool of the day. No amount of reasoning, begging, or wishful thinking will enable us to escape the wrath of a God who cannot abide by sin.

Yet someone did once ask a bedridden man to get up and walk. He told a dead man to rise and come forward. He also commanded, "Hear, you deaf, and look, you blind, that you may see!"

God didn't just ask for what we were unable to do, he gave us the power to do those things. Jesus healed the bedridden man and enabled him to walk. Jesus raised Lazarus

from the grave so that he could come forward and be reunited with him. God opened the ears and the eyes of his people so that they could comprehend his will and his power.

Praise the one who made us good, and who has redeemed us again, and who will make us perfect in Christ!

PRAYER

O Lord, I know how good your law is but try as I may, I cannot obey it on my own. Thank you for giving Jesus to me so that I am now free from all condemnation, and can love you and my fellow man through Jesus's righteousness and the power of the Holy Spirit.

SONG

All I Have Is Christ
by Jordan Kauffman

15 What is sin?

ANSWER

Sin is any thought, deed or state of being not rooted in faith and love toward God. It is rejecting or ignoring God in the world he created, rebelling against him by living without reference to him, and not being or doing what he intends in his law—resulting in the disintegration of all creation, and our death.

REFERENCE 1 *John 3:4*

DEVOTION

Do you think of yourself as a good person or a bad person? If we are honest, most of us probably find it easier to think of ourselves as good people who need help to do the right thing, rather than evil people who wilfully do wrong. We probably think that even if we are not perfect, we are reasonably good and not as bad as everybody else (whoever they may be).

Yet that is not what the Bible says of humankind. Instead, the Bible says “all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God”. This means that all of humankind has not met God’s standard of righteousness, and that all of us are sinners. More than that, we are “dead in our trespasses”, meaning we are spiritually dead, and cannot hope to save ourselves. We stand in desperate need of a saviour. That is why the apostle Paul wrote, “Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?”

Yet there is hope. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, Jesus Christ, to pay the price for our sins and die in our place, so that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. What good news this is! That Jesus Christ died for us while we were still sinners and was raised from the dead by God, for our justification. And he is now seated at God’s right hand in the heavenly places, interceding on our behalf.

Timothy Keller wrote, “The gospel is this: We are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe, yet at the very same time we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope.” Take a moment to reflect on the magnitude of God’s grace that has been given to you.

PRAYER

O Lord, thank you for loving me first. Even though I rebelled against you and lived my life indifferent to you and your ways, you sent your precious son Jesus to die for my sins. Help me never to lose the wonder of your amazing grace and to make every effort to war against the sin that rages within me.

SONG

The Scariest Song
by Dave Fournier

16 What is idolatry?

ANSWER

Idolatry is trusting in created things rather than the Creator for our hope and happiness, significance and security.

REFERENCE *Romans 1:21-25*

DEVOTION

The word “idolatry” typically evokes images of people bowing down to idols such as golden statues, or ones carved from wood or stone. We think of the story in Exodus 32, where the people of Israel brought down God’s judgement upon themselves when they made a golden calf and worshipped it, for delivering them out of Egypt. Perhaps we think that idolatry is a pagan sin, a sin that modern Christians would not commit.

We couldn’t be more wrong. The response to this catechism question reminds us that God, the creator of everything, is our hope and source of our happiness, significance and security. He is “our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble”. There is “fullness of joy” in his presence. He is the Father of lights from whom every good gift and every perfect gift comes (Jas 1:17).

Therefore, idolatry is an affront to God because it puts him, the creator, on the same level as created things. Idolatry robs God of the honour, praise and glory rightly due to him. It insults him, and casts doubt on his truthfulness and faithfulness.

When we trust in something else to meet our deepest needs, even if they are good things that God has blessed us with like our jobs or families or health or children, we commit idolatry. Consider this day if you have placed your

ultimate hope in God or in created things. Ask God to reveal to you if there are idols in your life.

“Let us beware lest we in our pride accept the erroneous notion that idolatry consists only in kneeling before visible objects of adoration, and that civilised peoples are therefore free from it.” A. W. Tozer

PRAYER

O Lord, my heart is so prone to wander. Will you please work in me to change the affections of my heart so that I would run away from lifeless idols to you, my creator, the only one who I was made to worship?

SONG

Our Only Hope Is You

by Kate DeGraide, Neil DeGraide

17 Will God allow our disobedience and idolatry to go unpunished?

ANSWER

No, every sin is against the sovereignty, holiness, and goodness of God, and against his righteous law, and God is righteously angry with our sins. He will punish them in his just judgement both in this life and in the life to come.

REFERENCE *Galatians 6:7-8, Revelation 21:8*

DEVOTION

What do you think would happen in a country where offences against the laws of the land were not punished? Society would break down, laws would cease to have meaning, and there would be no peace.

But this is not why the Bible says God will judge every disobedience and transgression against his law. God created everything, including man, for his glory. He created man in his image, to be his image-bearers. He also gave us moral laws, and these laws reflect his character. They reveal him as the holy, righteous, and just God who is faithful and steadfast in love. Therefore when we disobey God's law, it is no mere disobedience. It is, fundamentally, an act of rebellion against his purpose for us. And because God is just, he will judge us. "For he will render to each one according to his works" (Rom 2:6).

What is the penalty for rebellion against God? It is death, an eternal separation from God. "But God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit." (Rom 8:3-4)

On our own, we have no hope. But God, in his mercy and love, sent Jesus Christ to take the punishment for our rebellion, so that justice would be done and we would be saved. In his rich and abundant grace, God offers this to us freely. "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom 6:23)

PRAYER

Father, I often fail to remember the wages for my sins and the day when you will return and call every person to account for our deeds. Thank you for the amazing gospel. Please give me the urgency to share this with others, so that they may escape your righteous wrath.

SONG

Judge Of The Secrets
by Dave Fournier

18 Is there any way to escape punishment and be brought back into God's favour?

ANSWER

Man by himself and through any amount of good works is utterly unable to escape this punishment and be brought back into God's favour. Yet, God in his mercy has acted in order that sinners might be reconciled to himself, and declares to us this good news of salvation through Jesus.

REFERENCE *Ephesians 2:8-9*

DEVOTION

Many world religions emphasise a religion of works. In order to be saved, adherents do good works to accumulate merit and cancel out bad deeds. But this philosophy runs counter to the gospel, because it presumes that we can save ourselves through good works.

To an infinitely holy God who created man to bear his image and reflect his glory, good works are what we were created to do. But good works cannot cancel out our sin. That is why the Bible declares, "For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his [God's] sight" (Rom 3:20). As the answer in this catechism points out, we are utterly unable to escape the penalty for sin through good works. No amount of good works will justify us in God's sight.

From this darkness of hopelessness, the gospel shines through. "But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law... through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe" (Rom 3:21-22). God sent his own son Jesus Christ to bear the penalty of our sin. He lived a sinless life in our place (Heb 4:15), and was delivered up for our trespasses (Rom 4:25a) by dying on the cross. He was raised from death for our justification (Rom 4:25b), and we share in this justification through faith in Jesus

Christ (Rom 5:1). Moreover, God makes us his children through Jesus Christ (Eph 1:5).

To those who have put their faith in Jesus Christ, let us do good works because of who we are in Jesus Christ. We live out the implications of the gospel in our lives, not to earn our salvation, but because we have received it in full.

PRAYER

Jesus, thank you for saving me. Thank you for taking on the penalty of my sin, and for giving me what I could never attain on my own. I pray that my thoughts, words, and actions would flow from this grace so that others would know your gospel through me.

SONG

But God
by Michael Bleecker

19 What is this good news (gospel)?

ANSWER

The gospel is the good news that God himself, out of his mercy, delivers us from sin and from the punishment for sin, and reconciles us to himself, through a Redeemer.

REFERENCE *John 3:16-17, 1 Corinthians 15:1-8*

DEVOTION

We are all sinners, as written in Romans 3:23. We should all have an awareness of the sin that is bound in our hearts, and how helpless we are in our own strength to rid ourselves of it. Although this truth can be very daunting and disheartening, we should never lose sight of it. We should never think we are immune to sin, no matter who we are. Even Jesus himself was tempted to sin in Matthew 4.

The centre of our existence as a believer in Christ is the amazing news of the gospel. The gospel reveals to us how far we have fallen from God's standard of righteousness and what punishment is due for our sin (Rom 6:23). Yet the gospel tells us that God has provided deliverance.

If we believe in the gospel, we accept that we are sinners bound to die in our sin. But Christ has already died for our sins, and therefore paid the full price for us all. We accept God's forgiveness for our sins through Christ. Therefore, while we can be fully aware of the sin that so easily entangles us (Heb 12:1), the good news is that we are even more aware of the power of Christ working in us.

The gospel is a beautiful gift for all those who believe. Not only are we forgiven of all our sin, we are also given the gift of eternal life in heaven with our creator. Therefore, we

need to go into the world and proclaim this good news to all those who have not heard (Mark 16:15).

PRAYER

Dear Father, thank you for the good news of salvation that you have freely given us. May we always be sensitive to the Holy Spirit working in us. Help us to share the good news of the gospel with those around us with our words and actions.

SONG

Here Is Love
by William Rees

20 Who is the Redeemer?

ANSWER

The only Redeemer is the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal, sinless Son of God, in whom God became man and bore the penalty for sin himself.

REFERENCE 1 *Timothy 2:5*

DEVOTION

Imagine you were caught committing a crime and there was enough evidence to convict you. Now imagine standing in the courtroom listening to the judge hand down your punishment. What if someone suddenly stands up to say they have already paid the punishment, and you can go free?

This is exactly what Jesus has done for us. He came to redeem us from our sins. Moreover, he wants to have a relationship with us that continually challenges and reveals to us how much we need him to be in our lives.

Jesus is the Son of God who offers us friendship, forgiveness, love, and grace. We can boldly relate to him because he knows what it's like to live on earth, yet he did so without sin. We cannot redeem ourselves; we can never do enough good to set us on the path of righteousness without Christ. Ephesians 2:8 states that we are not saved by our good works or upright standing in our community. The only way to salvation is through Jesus Christ our redeemer, and no one else.

As believers in Christ, it is very encouraging to know that we are called to have an intimate relationship with our saviour. He knows all our sins and the punishment we de-

serve, and yet he chooses to not only forgive us but to have a personal, loving relationship with us.

PRAYER

Dear heavenly Father, thank you for sending your son Jesus to die for our sins so we could be redeemed and enjoy the wonderful gift of eternal life with you on earth and in heaven.

SONG

I Will Glory In My Redeemer
by Vikki Cook

21 What sort of Redeemer is needed to bring us back to God?

ANSWER

A sinless Redeemer who is truly human and also truly God.

REFERENCE *Philippians 2:5-8*

DEVOTION

John 3:16 states clearly that God sent his only beloved son to be the ultimate sacrifice for our sins so that anyone who believed in him would receive eternal salvation. The Old Testament is full of stories about physical sacrifices that the Israelites had to give to God. According to Leviticus, these sacrifices had to be without blemish or defect. The Israelites would do this as a sign of their repentance and a plea to God for his forgiveness. Although this ritual is performed repeatedly, the Israelites were not able to stop sinning.

This is actually a part of God's plan for those who believe in him. The story of redemption is woven throughout the Bible. God made promises to send a saviour to pay for our sins once and for all. Isaiah 44:14 talks about the saviour Immanuel being born of a virgin. Isaiah 53:4-5 talks about our redeemer being punished by death on a tree for our sin so that we might be healed.

God needed to send a perfect sacrifice (without blemish or defect) in order to bear his anger and fully atone for our sins once and for all. A sacrifice that was fully God, yet human like us. This sacrifice would have to die in order for the atonement to be complete.

Romans 5:6-8 says Jesus died for us while we were still living in sin before we believed in him. Hebrews 10:5-10

says the human sacrifice Jesus made only needed to happen once and that was enough for all those who choose to believe in Christ. Like the Israelites, we are still prone to sinning even after we profess our belief in Jesus, but his sacrifice has been made once and for all.

PRAYER

Father, thank you for sending your only and perfect son to die for my sins. Please help me to never take lightly the price you had to pay in order that I may live.

SONG

Totally God, Totally Man
by Sovereign Grace, The Ology

22 Why must the Redeemer be truly human?

ANSWER

That in human nature he might on our behalf perfectly obey the whole law and suffer the punishment for human sin; and also that he might sympathise with our weaknesses.

REFERENCE *Hebrews 2:17*

DEVOTION

Would it be acceptable for a top-tier university student to complete his younger brother's middle school requirements? Would we celebrate an Olympic athlete outrunning a beginner? Or an accomplished artist taking first prize in an amateur competition? Of course not. They are clearly overqualified to fulfil the task at hand.

What about the perfect and almighty God fulfilling the law he laid out for pitiful humanity? Not a big deal?

But what if he was someone just like us? What if he was someone who grew weary, got thirsty and felt pain (Mark 4:38, John 19:28, Heb 12:2)? What if he was someone who was tempted to doubt, tempted to deny, tempted to drown in the suffering that goes hand in hand with life (Matt 4:1-11, Isa 53:3)?

That changes things.

An all-powerful and holy God put on flesh (John 1:14) to do for us what we could never do for ourselves (Rom 8:3-4) and to know us as we were made to be known (John 10:14-15). God set aside his deity to fulfil our obligation (Phil 2:5-8). We are known by him not only because of his infinite wisdom (John 2:24), but also because of his personal experience (Heb 4:15). The Son of Man came to give his life for you (Mark 10:45).

PRAYER

Jesus, I am truly amazed that you became man for me. How I wish I could have been there to wipe your brow, offer you a cup of water and console you in your final hours. May the truth of your incarnation evoke gratitude towards you and confidence in you.

SONG

He Who Is Mighty

by Rebecca Elliott, Kate DeGraide

23 Why must the Redeemer be truly God?

ANSWER

That because of his divine nature his obedience and suffering would be perfect, effective and for all time; and also that he would be able to bear the righteous anger of God against sin and yet overcome death.

REFERENCE *Romans 3:23, Hebrews 9:23-28*

DEVOTION

Can you imagine trying to cut down an oak tree with a nail file? I bet the nail file would be rendered useless before the tree even showed a mark.

Can you imagine trying to fulfil the obligation of God's law every second,
of every hour,
of every day,
of every month,
of every year...for the rest of your life?

How long would it take before we utter a white lie, overindulge in food and drink, or pass judgment towards someone who was different from us? I wouldn't last an hour. It's true that I stumble in many ways (Jas 3:2).

Mere man could not fully satisfy the requirements of the law (Rom 3:20), much less redeem all of humanity (Ps 49:7). In his infinite grace and wisdom, God knew that he must be the judge and justifier (Rom 3:26). In doing so, he turned the plans of the enemy on his head (Gen 3:15), paved the way for a restored relationship with him (Rom 5:1) that no other religion can offer (Acts 4:12), and ensured our ability to enjoy that relationship for all eternity (Rev 21:3).

With a limitless capacity to give and receive love (1Jn 4:8), the exhaustive goal of God's law (Matt 22:40) Jesus Christ, full of grace and truth (John 1:14), was the right tool and the only instrument that could redeem (Eph 1:7). He was the only one who could obey, suffer, endure, and overcome perfectly (1Pet 1:19). Because Jesus was fully God, his obedience and sacrifice is eternal, as he is eternal (Heb 9:23-28).

PRAYER

Jesus, lovely and holy, you are the one and only. If it wasn't for your obedience, my sins would be unpaid, my true nature would be unknown, and my relationship with God would remain broken. Thank you that you accomplished once and for all what I could never do for myself..

SONG

Come Behold The Wondrous Mystery
by Matt Boswell

24 Why was it necessary for Christ, the Redeemer, to die?

ANSWER

Since God determined in love to save a people for himself, and death is the punishment for sin, Christ died willingly in our place to deliver us from the power and penalty of sin and bring us back to God. By his substitutionary atoning death, he alone redeems us from hell and gains us forgiveness of sin, righteousness, and everlasting life.

REFERENCE *Colossians 1:21-22, Romans 6:23*

DEVOTION

It is often difficult for modern-day Christians to understand the necessity of Christ's death as a literal sacrifice for our sins. The idea of a blood sacrifice harkens back to primitive, mythical gods worshiped by pagans. For example in *The Iliad*, King Agamemnon does not get fair winds to Troy until he sacrifices his daughter to appease the wrath of the gods.

So why doesn't a loving and all-powerful God just decree that he forgives us? Why does Christ have to die? God created us to enjoy a relationship with him, but sin caused a separation (Isa 59:2). His holiness cannot tolerate the presence of sin, and our conscience cannot withstand his holiness when sin is present (Ps 5:4, Gen 3:8).

The pagans associated the wrath of the gods with judgement or punishment. However, the wrath of God is unlike the fickle and irrational wrath of these gods because it is also coupled with the gospel, which preaches the radical love of God. Because a debt was owed, it had to be paid. A just God could not ignore the debt, and a loving God could not ignore our inability to pay the price.

Jesus himself came to receive judgement and pay our debt. It was absolutely necessary for Jesus to die in our

place, because only a perfect sacrifice could atone for this debt. The relationship God desires with us cannot occur without Christ's death. Peace in this broken world comes with a price, and Jesus paid it in full.

Timothy Keller wrote, "Love that really changes things and redeems things is always a substitutionary sacrifice." Even as flawed human beings, we understand that sacrifice is at the heart of true love and forgiveness. Jesus' death on the cross as our substitutionary sacrifice has set a pattern of love we are called to follow

PRAYER

Dear Lord, I confess I don't always understand the seriousness of sin. Help me to accept the painful reality that Christ had to die for my sins. I praise you for sacrificing so much to bring me back to you. Help me to love others like you do.

SONG

In My Place
by Michael Bleecker

25 Does Christ's death mean all our sins can be forgiven?

ANSWER

Yes, because Christ's death on the cross fully paid the penalty for our sin, God graciously imputes Christ's righteousness to us as if it were our own and will remember our sins no more.

REFERENCE *2 Corinthians 5:21*

DEVOTION

Could we ever look upon a caterpillar with homemade wings affixed to its back and say, What a beautiful butterfly? No, a total transformation would be required.

A total transformation is exactly what we get in Christ (2Cor 5:17). Our sin is not merely covered up or made to look more presentable. Our sin is completely removed from us—as far as the east from the west (Ps 103:12), crimson rags made white as snow (Isa 1:18), whether past, present or future (1Pet 2:24).

What's more, the very righteousness of Christ becomes our own (1Cor 1:30, Phil 3:9). Our truest identity changes from that of a sinner to that of a saint (Eph 2:19). We can finally live the life of love God intended—not through self-will and human determination, but through the provision of Christ (Gal 3:3).

There are challenges to accepting this marvellous truth. First is our inability to grasp certain attributes of God's character, namely his omniscience and omnipresence. As we are made in the image of God, there are many of his attributes that we ourselves exhibit (Gen 1:27). Whether compassion or creativity, holiness or helpfulness, these attributes are tethered enough in our own existence that our finite minds can understand. Not so when it comes to the qualities of being all-knowing and ever-present, which

are of vital importance when it comes to God forgiving all of our sin for all time.

Second is our inability to see ourselves as the new creation we've become in Christ. After all, we are intimately acquainted with the full measure of our former sin and current shortcomings. Add to that an ongoing contention with the flesh and we may feel just as broken as before coming to Christ. However, we must believe God beyond our emotions and embrace our core identity as a new creature. We must stop inching along as caterpillars, and spread our wings and fly!

PRAYER

Dear Lord, I am amazed at the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice. To think that Jesus took on all my sin and gave me his righteousness in exchange is beyond my full comprehension. Help me to truly live as a new creation.

SONG

Jesus, Thank You
by Pat Sczebel

26 What else does Christ's death redeem?

ANSWER

Christ's death is the beginning of the redemption and renewal of every part of fallen creation, as he powerfully directs all things for his own glory and creation's good.

REFERENCE *Colossians 1:19-20*

DEVOTION

One day, everything we see here on earth will be aligned to God and in harmony with his will. Can you imagine what kind of world that would be?

Even though we often talk about how Jesus came to save man from hell and eternal separation from him, we are not the only thing that will be saved. God promised that there will be a new heaven and a new earth in Isaiah 65:17, and it is a promise that Jesus refers to in Matthew 19:27.

This promise will finally be fulfilled after God returns to judge the earth (Rev 21), and God renews the world we know and transforms it into a place of perfection in his power and presence.

But what does that mean for us today? Even as we work out our own salvation and see the Spirit dwell in us more day by day, this does not mean that we become more and more detached from the world or from material things. On the contrary, we ought to care more about the way the world is, about other people, nature, culture, systems and consider carefully how God is working to redeem these things through Christ.

One day we will live in the glorious new heavens and new earth forever, where no child will ever have to die,

where no man will suffer, where the lion and the lamb will lie down together (Isa 11:6-9), where there will be no more tears.

This is the full reconciliation promised to us - not an alienation from the world God created in the beginning, but perfect harmony in Christ with the new world that he will recreate in the end.

PRAYER

Lord give me a vision of my place in the eternal new creation. Help me to see how the things I do today, and my obedience in Christ, not only build towards my redemption, but is also part of the redemption of all things in this world.

SONG

Creation Sings The Father's Song
by Keith and Kristyn Getty

27 Are all people, just as they were lost through Adam, saved through Christ?

ANSWER

No, only those who are elected by God and united to Christ by faith. Nevertheless God in his mercy demonstrates common grace even to those who are not elect, by restraining the full effects of sin at the present time for human well-being.

REFERENCE *Ephesians 1:3-6*

DEVOTION

What are we to make of the fact that God does not save all people? God is often accused of being unjust or unfair because he only saves some. It pains us to know that people whom we love deeply - family and friends - do not confess and believe that Christ is their saviour and lord.

Scripture leaves no doubt about this reality. Jesus says that they will "go away into eternal punishment" (Matt 25:46). Paul says that they "will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord" (2Thess 1:9). When the curtain falls on their lives, or on this earth, we will stand apart from them, as full of joy and thanks as they will be filled with anguish and suffering.

What are we to do with something so painful?

We need to remember that God feels the same pain. We ache because we love those who are lost. What more the God whose name is love? He loves the lost even more than we ever could - he knows them more intimately than we could even know them. His pain at their condemnation is even greater than ours.

God's aching heart for the lost was so great that he died for them - both us who confess him and those who have yet

to confess him. But there is time for those who still live. Precious years speed by as the lost are surrounded by the evidence of God's mercy and grace. What can we do?

Let us shine even more diligently as lights of the gospel of Christ. Let us pray and ask God continuously for his grace to fall on them, that they may turn from their unbelief. Let us stay steadfast and faithful to the end, so that they can see the power of God in us.

PRAYER

Father, make me a beacon of your mercy and grace to those around me. May those who are lost through Adam's sin see the reality of Christ in my life, and I pray that the Spirit would soften their hearts to believe and confess Jesus Christ as their lord and saviour.

SONG

Come Praise And Glorify
by Tim Chester, Bob Kauflin

28 What happens after death to those not united to Christ by faith?

ANSWER

At the day of judgement they will receive the fearful but just sentence of condemnation pronounced against them. They will be cast out from the favourable presence of God, into hell, to be justly and grievously punished, forever.

REFERENCE *John 3:16-18, 36*

DEVOTION

What is life without hope? We may have often considered what heaven is like, but what of its antithesis, hell? Hell was one of Jesus' most-mentioned topics, and for good reason - it is the current default end of man. We are all hell-bound until we are turned away from that vile hopelessness by the power of Christ's blood.

The topic of hell is uncomfortable, but our saviour never shrank from it. He called it "Gehenna" (Matt 10:28), the "outer darkness" (Matt 25:30). He described unquenchable fire (Mark 9:43), eternal torment (Luke 16:23), and endless gnashing of teeth and anguish (Matt 13:42). He warned that there would be no returning to God presence from hell (Luke 16:19-31).

Jesus talked about hell more than he talked about heaven.

The hopelessness of hell is not just about a place where bad things happen to punish people. Hell is not a limbo or an endless void. Hell is not a waiting room, or a series of gruesome tortures. It is the absolute absence of all that is good. It is endless, unrelenting, pervasive, excruciating, inescapable pain, with no hope of relief. If God is ever present in heaven, then he is never present in hell.

This is a hopelessness we have earned for ourselves. The severe punishment that awaits those who do not believe is justice for denying the offer of salvation from a God who pursued us to the ends of the earth.

PRAYER

Lord, when we have seen the depths of darkness, we recognise you as the light. Keep us in your light.

SONG

Who Can Sound The Depths Of Sorrow
by Graham Kendrick

29 How can we be saved?

ANSWER

Only by faith in Jesus Christ and in his substitutionary atoning death on the cross; so even though we are guilty of having disobeyed God, nevertheless, God, without any merit of our own but only by pure grace, imputes to us the perfect righteousness of Christ when we repent of our sins and believe in him.

REFERENCE *Ephesians 2:8-9*

DEVOTION

Salvation is so simple. Salvation is profound. It is simple enough for a child to grasp, but so profound that even the learned cannot comprehend its full extent. So simple that we need not lift a finger, but only believe by the transforming power of the Spirit; so profound that there is nothing humanly possible we can do to earn it.

It is so simple that we can be brought over from eternal death to eternal life in a mere instant. It is so profound that the best of men have spent their entire lives in pursuit of godliness, but could only reflect a glimmer of the glory of God. So simple that the door of salvation is always open to those who seek Christ, but profound that it is immovably shut to those who work the hardest to earn their salvation.

It is so simple that one man could undo the devastating effects of an existence of rebellious living. It is so profound that none other than an infinite, undying God had to perish as a mortal to complete the work of salvation for those who killed him.

Salvation is so simple that we can explain it with a single sentence. Salvation is so profound that we will spend the rest of eternity praising God for it and worshipping him because of it, and never run out of words to say how glorious, how beautiful, how immense, how deep, how wide,

how powerful, how sublime, how simple, how profound is our salvation.

PRAYER

Father, you alone have saved us. You alone have changed our hearts to believe. You alone walked the earth as a man, yet as God. You alone are the one who died to take our place and spared us from eternal condemnation. We worship you and you alone.

SONG

Nothing But The Blood
by Matt Redman

30 What is involved in genuine conversion?

ANSWER

The dying of our old sinful self through repentance, and the coming alive of our new self to God through faith in Christ.

REFERENCE *Romans 6:1-11*

DEVOTION

Do you know anybody who has gone through the process of changing their citizenship?

After submitting documents to the new country, they receive a letter approving their application with a certificate of citizenship for that country. One moment, they are citizens of their former country. And the next moment, they become citizens of the new. Their citizenship has been converted.

But genuine conversion is much more than that for Christians!

Firstly, conversion is not something that WE do. It is something that is accomplished FOR us, when we recognise that we are sinners, turn from our sins, and place our faith in the redemption that Jesus Christ accomplished for us when he died for our sins and was raised for our justification (Rom 3:23-25).

Secondly, conversion is a God-glorifying miracle. When we place our faith in Jesus and what he accomplished on the cross, God crucifies our old self so that we will no longer be enslaved to sin (Rom 6:6). He gives us new life (v.4b) so that we are "united with [Jesus Christ]" (v.5) and "live with him" (v.8).

Thirdly, conversion results in life changes. It bears spiritual fruit. Jesus said that "each tree is known by its own fruit" (Luke 6:44). We are called to live out our new identities as children of God, holy and blameless (Eph 1:4), shining as lights in this world (Phil 2:15). Hence, Romans 6:11 exhorts us to consider ourselves "dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus", to live out the new identity in Christ that God has given us.

We don't do this alone. God has saved us into a community (the church) so that we grow together in the love of God with knowledge and all discernment, so that we will not waver when doubts assail, temptations allure, and sins beset, but to stand fast in the Lord (Phil 1:9,10; Eph 6:10,11).

PRAYER

Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you that conversion is not by us nor from us. But it is initiated by you and completed by you, completely underwritten by your perfect faithfulness. Renew our minds and transform our hearts, that we may live lives worthy of the Gospel as citizens of heaven.

SONG

Jesus Paid It All
by Elvina Hall, Kristian Stanfill

31 What is repentance?

ANSWER

It is to be genuinely sorry for sin, to hate it more and more, and to forsake it in every way as one turns towards God.

REFERENCE *Ephesians 4:22-24*

DEVOTION

In the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32), the son demands his share of the inheritance and leaves his home. He squanders his money in reckless living and becomes destitute. In his plight, he sees that he has “sinned against heaven and before [his father]” (v.21a). He turns away from his sin in repentance and returns to his father, saying “I am no longer worthy to be called your son” (v.22b). In a stunning picture of the Gospel, the father extends grace to his son and restores his son’s title and place in the family. It is an amazing story of repentance, grace and reconciliation.

But what was the prodigal son’s sin? Was it squandering money? Reckless living? No, it was demanding his share of the inheritance before his father’s death. This demand dishonoured his father and broke the father-son relationship.

And so it is with all sin.

At the heart of all sin is the failure to keep the first commandment (Exo 20:3), of dishonouring God by not seeking him above all things. The central problem is the broken relationship with God. This is why repentance is about turning away from sin and turning to God to seek reconciliation with him, the one we have sinned against (Ps 51:4).

True repentance is about asking and trusting God to restore our relationship with him, to change our hearts,

thoughts, and attitudes so that we will hate the sin which gave us pleasure. True repentance changes the loves of our heart (Ps 51:10-13).

Therefore, Ephesians 4:22-24 calls each Christian to put off the old self and put on the new self, to allow God to renew us (note the passive tense in v.23) in the pattern, motivation and direction of our thinking, so that we may faithfully live out the implications of our new identity in Christ through the gospel.

PRAYER

Dear heavenly Father, thank you for initiating reconciliation with us. Like the father in the story of the prodigal son, you met us where we are, and affirmed us as your children. Renew our hearts, so that we put you first in our lives.

SONG

All I Have Is Christ
by Jordan Kauffman

32 What is faith in Jesus Christ?

ANSWER

Faith in Jesus Christ is acknowledging the truth of everything that God has revealed in his Word. It is trusting in Christ's work, receiving and resting on him alone for salvation as he is offered to us in the gospel.

REFERENCE *Galatians 2:20*

DEVOTION

Hebrews describes faith as the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen (Heb 11:1). But what exactly do we mean when we say we put our faith in Jesus Christ? Is it God's love? His grace? His power? His justice?

Romans 3:20-31 tells us in no uncertain terms that we are to place our trust in Jesus Christ and what he has accomplished for us by his death and resurrection. Scripture tells us that all humankind is in a dire predicament, for we cannot hope to be made right in God's sight by our own effort (v.20). Therefore, we will all have to face God's righteous judgement one day (Rom 2:5). But here comes the good news (or gospel): We can be right with God through faith in Jesus Christ, and this promise is open to all who believe (v.21-22, 30).

How is this possible? Jesus took our sin upon himself and died in our place (v.25), and this redemption is given to us as a gift when we receive it by faith (v.24), so that we are made right with God when we place our trust in Jesus Christ and what he accomplished (v.28a). That's good news because this justification is not something we can ever hope to earn on our own merit (v.27-28b).

But let's be clear: Placing our faith in Jesus Christ is not mere an intellectual ascent. It is putting off our old self and putting on our new self (Eph 4:22-24). It is considering

ourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus (Rom 6:11). It is living out our identity as children and heirs of God, and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him (Rom 8:17).

PRAYER

Dear heavenly Father, thank you for the gracious provision of your son Jesus Christ. Strengthen our faith so that like Abraham, we may not waver concerning the promise of God.

SONG

O Great God
by Bob Kauffman

33 What do we believe by true faith?

ANSWER

Everything taught to us in the gospel. The Apostles' Creed expresses what we believe in these words: We believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from there he will come to judge the living and the dead. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy universal church, the communion of the saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.

REFERENCE *Romans 10:17*

DEVOTION

Writing to the church at Corinth, Paul wrote that "we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1Cor 1:23,24).

The gospel inverts the natural order of this fallen world. We have only to read Jesus' Sermon on the Mount to see this (Matt 5:2-12). In a world that preaches self-determinism, self-effort, self-actualisation, it seems foolish to profess faith in a man born to a virgin 2,000 years ago who claimed to be the Son of God, performed miracles, was crucified on a cross, then reportedly rose from the dead.

Yet John writes that "these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:31). Scripture is clear that without the gospel we have no hope,

for we are spiritually dead, enslaved to sin, enemies of God, and recipients of God's wrath. The gospel changes everything, for "it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" (Rom 1:16).

Through the gospel:

- We have forgiveness of our sins
- We are no longer enslaved to sin
- We are alive to God in Christ Jesus
- We are redeemed by the blood of Christ
- We are justified by Christ's resurrection
- We have the promised Holy Spirit who assures us that we are children of God
- We are sealed with the Holy Spirit who is the guarantee of our inheritance in Christ
- We are seated with Christ in the heavenly places

- We are children of God, heirs of God and fellow-heirs with Christ
- We are God's ambassadors of reconciliation, representatives of the King

What we profess in the Apostle's Creed might seem like folly to this world. But the gospel is "folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1Cor 1:18).

PRAYER

Dear Father, thank you for the gospel. Words fail us as we consider all that you have provided in your rich grace to us through this gospel. Strengthen us with power through your Spirit so that Christ may be the Lord of our lives in every area.

SONG

We Believe (Apostle's Creed)
by Keith and Kristyn Getty

34 Why does the creed say that Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary?

ANSWER

The creed says that Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary to show the divine operation of God and miraculous nature of the Gospel. Furthermore, it was necessary that Jesus, the second Person of the Trinity take on flesh to be our sinless Redeemer.

REFERENCE *Matthew 1:18*

DEVOTION

It is a familiar story by now. A young virgin named Mary is visited by an angel who tells her she will have a child. She later gives birth to this child, named Jesus, in a manger surrounded by animals and wise men. Many of us grew up re-enacting this scene during church services each December. It is a wonderful Christmas story, told alongside those of Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer and Frosty the Snowman.

The difference is, Rudolph and Frosty are not real.

Early Christians made a deliberate reference to Jesus' origins when they stated their beliefs in the Apostle's Creed. Jesus' birth fulfilled a 700-year old prophecy from the Old Testament; "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." (Isa 7:14) This is also consistently told in accounts from Matthew and Luke.

Much more than a fantastic story, the conception and birth of Jesus is significant for many reasons. Firstly, it happened. His birth was an event that was recorded in history, not a product of mythology. Secondly, Jesus had divine origins. He was an upright man and a wise teacher, but more importantly he was the son of God. This made him solely

qualified to atone for our sins. Finally, Jesus was a human being. He had a body that felt hunger and pain, he lived amongst other people, and had the free will to choose whether he would go to the cross.

The divinity and humanity of Jesus are foundational in the Christian faith. The circumstances of his birth are tied inextricably to the reason for his death: To take on the weight of sin for those who believe. Any other man, conceived by man and full of sin, could not atone for the sins of countless souls.

PRAYER

Father, thank you for the depth of your love in sending your perfect, precious son. Thank you for his willingness to take our place and carry the weight of our guilt and shame. May you affirm this truth throughout the world.

SONG

We Believe (Apostle's Creed)
by Keith and Kristyn Getty

35 Why does the creed say Jesus suffered under Pontius Pilate?

ANSWER

The creed says that Jesus suffered under Pontius Pilate to emphasize the concrete historical circumstances of Jesus' life, trial and death. The gospel of Jesus Christ is neither myth or parable, but based up on verifiable facts that took place in history under Pontius Pilate.

REFERENCE *John 18:28-19:42*

DEVOTION

The Roman Empire was among one of the few early civilisations that recorded and archived its government transactions. It was a highly literate culture that stored its public decrees, tax records, and other legal texts, some of which has survived to this day.

According to historians, there was indeed a governor in Judea named Pontius Pilate. Records also show that the death penalty under Roman rule was at times carried out by crucifixion. This is consistent with Biblical accounts of Jesus' arrest and conviction. "So Pilate said to him, 'You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?'" (Jn 19:10).

Grounding the events of Jesus' death within historical facts is important. Jesus' death, along with his birth and resurrection, is central to our beliefs. If the circumstances of his crucifixion was a fictitious account created by early Christians to rally their supporters (as some detractors have proposed), then the significance of his death would also be meaningless.

What would be at stake if other facts about Jesus were made up? Would his life amount to anything other than the tragic story of a good man who once lived?

There is more than one way to undermine a system of belief. It is not always necessary to debate and defeat it in an official forum. By calling into question the veracity of a handful of its claims and poking holes in facts, seeds of doubt can be sown about its authenticity. Discrediting Jesus' existence, or any part of his life from conception to resurrection, would discredit other claims by the Christian faith.

We believe that God has acted decisively in history, through his son Jesus, who suffered under Pontius Pilate, died, and rose again on the third day. Because we are certain these events happened in history, we can live with a profound certainty in our hope for the future.

PRAYER

Lord, thank you for taking my place and willingly dying on the cross. I want to always remember your suffering and sacrifice, and to go and sin no more.

SONG

This I Believe (The Creed)

by Ben Fielding, Matt Crocker

36 What happens to a believer upon conversion?

ANSWER

Upon conversion a believer is united with Christ through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit who guarantees our future inheritance. Being united with Christ means that all our sins are forgiven, we have Christ's righteousness imputed to us, and we are joined with his body, the church.

REFERENCE *Ephesians 4:22-24, Ezekiel 11:19-20, 2 Corinthians 5:17*

DEVOTION

One of the stories I relate to most in "The Chronicles of Narnia" by C.S. Lewis is "The Voyage of the Dawn Treader." Eustace, stumbling upon gold and treasure, is consumed by receiving such a large fortune. Falling asleep alongside his large inheritance, he wakes up and finds himself turned into a dragon. His scaly body and the inability to recognize himself became outward manifestations of his inward heart, filled with vile thoughts of greediness, selfishness and pride. Ashamed and shocked at this change, Eustace tries to rip off his scales only to find the layers falling off with no end. He realizes that he will never be able to get rid of this skin by his own efforts. His physical change also isolates him from the other children.

Aslan, the Christ-like character in the story, appears and says: "You will have to let me undress you." Eustace describes the whole process: "The very first tear he made was so deep that I thought it had gone right into my heart. And when he began pulling the skin off, it hurt worse than anything I've ever felt."

Being united with Christ is a process of being made new, just like Eustace being transformed from a dragon back into a boy. Shedding the old skin of sin is an unfolding that cuts deep, and it begins with acknowledging the depravity of our hearts.

Sin separates us from God, but it also isolates us from others. But God, in his grace and mercy, pierces into our darkness, changes our hearts, and imputes to us Christ's righteousness (2Cor 5:21). God loves us. So despite the pain, he will not allow sin to continue in our lives. He restores us to him and also to his body, the church. Within the pain of stripping away the old self is an unmistakable healing, "The old has passed away; behold, the new has come" (2Cor 5:17).

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, you are continually making us like you through the daily transformation of our hearts and minds, a sure and faithful work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Thank you for what you did on the cross that has won us the forgiveness of sins and the restoration of our relationship with God and with others.

SONG

Made Alive
by Citizens

37 What is the church?

ANSWER

The Church is the people of God, the body of Christ, and the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. The universal Church is the sum total throughout history of all those whom God has chosen and redeemed for himself. Local churches are the visible expressions of this universal Church. The Church is made up of disciples of Christ who are united by a common faith in the gospel. It is a community that loves, follows, learns from, and worships God together. God sends out this community to proclaim the gospel and prefigure Christ's kingdom by their love for one another.

REFERENCE *Ephesians 2:19-22*

DEVOTION

What is the church? Or rather, WHO is the church?

It is not a building or a gathering on Sunday morning, it extends beyond both. The church is made up of "fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, [with] Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone" (Eph 2:19-22).

On a historical and macro level, the church refers to the total number of believers who have ever lived, to all the redeemed who look to Christ for salvation. But on a micro level, the church can also refer to a group of believers in a particular locality, a people called to life together in a geographical location.

In Ephesians 3:10, Paul tells us that "through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places." The church exists to help people see that God is real, faithful, and true. So how should the church live to help others

see that? Jesus calls us to "let your light so shine before men that they may see your good deeds and give glory to your Father in heaven" (Matt 5:16). According to Jesus, good deeds done in his name will and should move others to praise God (Eph 2:10, Titus 2:14, Matt 5:16). We, as a church, exists for God and for others.

When we leave our Sunday gatherings, we do not stop being the church. Instead, we live our lives knowing that in everything we do, we do as the blood-bought church of God with the goal of spreading the supremacy of God for the joy of all people.

PRAYER

Dear Lord, through your blood we are joined with your people through all of history. Help us to desire to do good unto our neighbours so that they may see and love you too.

SONG

The Church's One Foundation
by Samuel J. Stone

38 What does joining a local church involve?

ANSWER

We join a local church after having been baptised, the sign that identifies us as being united to Christ and, therefore, a member of his body. We covenant together with one another as members of a local church body to live for God's glory, in the fellowship of God's people.

REFERENCE *Acts 2:41-47*

DEVOTION

Have you ever wondered what it was like to live in the time of the early church? Reading through Acts, I am often challenged and encouraged by the faith demonstrated through the disciples of the early church. God gives us amazing glimpses into the way he acts through community when his people are gathered together, praying for each other and sacrificially serving one another (Acts 2:32-46).

Being part of a church is a deliberate and major part of the way we live, and not simply a weekly two-hour attendance on Sunday mornings. God meets our needs through his means of grace, and one of those means is the community we find in our local church. The early church was "of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common" (Acts 4:32). They understood what it meant to be part of a church, which involves: 1) Being united in Jesus as his bride with one heart and soul, and 2) Knowing that all that they possessed is not their own. God had given them resources to serve the brothers and sisters with whom they were in close community.

There is no part of our lives that God means for us to keep from our community of believers. We carry each other's burdens, share in the joys and sorrows of life, and consider

each others' needs as our own. Living in community means accountability (Eph 4:15), provoking others to good works (Heb 10:24), and encouraging others with the word of God (Eph 4:29).

In other words, know each other. Grow close. Stay close. Go deep. It does not mean that we have to spend 24/7 together, but it does mean that we should find creative ways to serve and love one another in the rhythms of everyday life.

PRAYER

Jesus, help us to sacrificially love the people you have placed in our lives through our church community so that we may bring glory to you as your beloved Bride, whom you came to seek and save.

SONG

O Church Arise
by Keith Getty, Stuart Townend

39 How are Christians to relate to their fellow church members?

ANSWER

Christians relate to fellow church members as their own spiritual family with fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters and children who have been given to them for this age and eternity. We relate to each other in love as family, helping one another grow in Christ.

REFERENCE *Ephesians 4:1-6, Mark 10:29-30*

DEVOTION

In a day and age that focuses more on culture than community, Jesus has called us to be community-builders and to seek love and harmony within the church (Eph 4:3). John 13:35 tells us that "by this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

What does this love entail?

Hebrews 3:12-14 is honest with us regarding the possibility of falling away from the faith, but it also tells us how we should act to prevent that: "But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called 'today,' that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." Christian fellowship and community is meant to help us persevere in the faith and defend us against sin and an unbelieving heart. It is saying to each other without ceasing, and helping each other see, that Jesus is better. He is better than the momentary pleasures of sin (Heb 11:26), his ways are wiser than our own (Isa 55:8), and he is more than enough to satisfy all of our longings (John 4:14).

Why is this love important?

Jude 1:22-23 exhorts us to "save others by snatching them from the fire". Eternity is at stake. Learning to treasure Jesus as our supreme treasure begins now. If God uses community as a way to help us persevere and grow in our faith,

then the call to love one another in the bond of Christ has massive repercussions. Every encouraging conversation, every loving rebuke, every attempt to point others to Jesus are means God will use to sanctify us completely (1Thess 5:23). There are no meaningless encounters in life and every interaction with others counts for all of eternity.

Let us speak to and serve each other in ways that cause us to have hearts of faith that increasingly values Jesus. Fighting to help each other keep the faith is a community project. It is what God is calling us to when he adopts us into his family.

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, we are prone to wander. Give us love, wisdom and patience as we persevere in the faith and help others on this journey in the fight of faith. We yearn to be more like you. You are faithful, you will keep us, we have confidence that you will surely do it.

SONG

Look What God Has Done
by Ghost Ship

40 What is baptism?

ANSWER

Baptism is the public declaration of our repentance from sin and faith in Christ. It signifies that we have been united with Christ in his death and resurrection, have been forgiven of all our sins, have received new life in Christ, and belong to the Lord and his church.

REFERENCE *Romans 6:3-4*

DEVOTION

In the great commission, Jesus said, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." Jesus expressed that one aspect of discipleship is to baptize those who believe, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Baptism is important because it is a command and ordinance given by Jesus to be followed as part of making disciples until he returns again.

While the word baptism in Greek means to dip or immerse, the physical act is an emblem of something more substantial to our faith. Baptism symbolises to the world that while our faith unites us deeply with Christ, our baptism is an outward expression of that union. The imagery of baptism, being immersed and raised, is a precious reminder of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. It is meant to strengthen our faith in him and encourage us to walk in the "newness of life" (Rom 6:4).

Baptism is not only for the Christian but also for the church. When Jesus' death and resurrection sealed the new covenant replacing the old, there was a shift of emphasis from circumcision to baptism. The shift also meant that the gospel is now available for gentiles in addition to Jews. In the

new covenant, membership in God's family does not come from ethnicity or genealogy, but through a new spiritual birth proclaimed through baptism.

In other words, baptism is not simply for the individual believer, but for the family of God and the local church, a mark of belonging to the people of God.

PRAYER

Dear heavenly Father, help us to understand what the newness of life means. Thank you for what Jesus has done to secure the new covenant of love. We are one in the family of God. Let our lives declare that beyond the outward demonstration of baptism.

SONG

There Is One Reason
by Doug Plank

41 Who should be baptised?

ANSWER

All and only those who have repented of their sins and trusted in Christ.

REFERENCE *Acts 2:38-41*

DEVOTION

In Acts 2, Peter preaches a sermon at Pentecost, challenging the Jews with the truths of the gospel. The men who were present were cut to the heart. Peter ends the sermon by encouraging those who have received the forgiveness of sins to repent and believe in the name of Jesus Christ, and to express that faith through baptism.

When those who repent of their sins and trust in Christ participate in baptism, there is true power and meaning. Baptism can only be for the Christian because of what it signifies.

Baptism portrays our death in the death of Christ (Rom 6:3-4). It proclaims a great truth about us as Christians: Our old selves have died. When Christ died, he died our deaths. By his grace, we are not the same people we once were. It also reminds us that our physical deaths will not have the final say over our eternal souls, for Christ has proclaimed his victory over death.

Baptism also signifies the start of a new life in Christ. The new believers who repented, believed and were baptized after listening to Peter's sermon then "devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers" (Acts 2:42). They turned from their old ways and walked in the light.

As Christians, we live the reality of what our baptism symbolises. Wayne Grudem writes, "Where there is genuine faith on the part of the person being baptized, and where the faith of the church that watches the baptism is stirred up and encouraged by this ceremony, then the Holy Spirit certainly does work through baptism, and it becomes a 'means of grace' through which the Holy Spirit brings blessing to the person being baptized and to the church as well".

Every time we witness a baptism, let us do so with eyes of faith. Let us wash our souls in the truths it declares--the good news of being hidden in Jesus--and allow our hearts be refreshed.

PRAYER

Dear Lord, may the truths of your gospel sink deeply within us. Refresh our hearts every time we think about the significance of our baptism, and let us rejoice!

SONG

Come Ye Sinners
by Todd Agnew

42 What is the Lord's Supper?

ANSWER

Christ commanded all Christians to eat bread and to drink from the cup in thankful remembrance of him and his death. The Lord's Supper celebrates God's presence with us. It also signifies our participation in Christ's death, our communion with God, and our unity with one another. It feeds and nourishes our souls, and anticipates the day when we will eat and drink with Christ in his Father's kingdom.

REFERENCE *1 Corinthians 11:23-26*

DEVOTION

Do you really know what it means to be "in Christ?"

Sometimes we have great "head knowledge" of what being in Christ means, without having commensurate "heart knowledge" of it. God has a special way to help our hearts better understand being in Christ.

First, as much as you are in Christ, Christ is in you (Col 1:27). If it's hard picturing being in Christ, try seeing it the other way round: Christ being in you.

Second, there's a special way to help us understand that Christ is in us: the Lord's Supper. One of Jesus' greatest claims is that he is the Bread of Life. "If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh" (Jn 6:51).

When we partake of the Lord's Supper, it is a symbol of the Bread of Life entering, filling, and living inside us. Similarly, the wine is symbolic of Jesus' precious blood. Together, they are a reminder of Christ in us. "Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him" (Jn 6:56).

The Lord's Supper is a mystical experience through which God gave us simple, everyday objects to help us understand that we are in Christ and that Christ is in us. We are in the bread and in the blood; the bread and the blood are in us.

"Taste and see that the Lord is good" (Ps 34:8a). With the Lord's Supper, we physically taste bread and wine, and are spiritually filled by his body and blood.

PRAYER

We are thankful to take communion in fellowship with our brothers and sisters in Christ, dear Lord. May these elements remind us of your presence in our midst, and the day when we will be united in your glory.

SONG

Behold The Lamb

by Keith Getty and Stuart Townend

43 Does the Lord's Supper add anything to Christ's atoning work?

ANSWER

No, Christ died once for all. The Lord's Supper is a covenant meal celebrating Christ's atoning work. It is also a means of strengthening our faith as we look to him, and a foretaste of the future feast. But those who take part with unrepentant hearts eat and drink judgment on themselves.

REFERENCE *Acts 2:38-41*

DEVOTION

There is a lot of defeat in this world. People let us down. Our plans fail. Disappointments follow. We sin, even when we know we shouldn't. But we still do. We often ask ourselves, "How did the devil make me do it? Again!"

With so much defeat all around us, it's important to look for the victories. And when we find them, they should be celebrated.

There was a famous victory in Genesis 14. Abram's nephew Lot was abducted, but Abram pursued the enemy and defeated them. Lot was saved! After this, Melchizedek the king of Salem brought out bread and wine. Melchizedek was priest of God Most High, and at this meal he blessed both Abram and God Most High.

From that moment on, the bread and the wine became celebratory symbols of God's victories over his enemies. Jesus based his own instructions for the Lord's Supper on these elements.

The greatest victory is Jesus' triumph over all our enemies—death, sin, and even ourselves. The Lord's Supper is therefore the celebration of Jesus' highest victory. Abram's bread and wine came after the victory, not before

it. The bread and the wine are a celebration of victories already won. They are not deposits that we make to ask God for future victory.

We cannot add anything to what Jesus has already done through the cross and the resurrection. The Lord's Supper itself does not add to Jesus' atoning work, and partaking of the Lord's Supper does not make us Christians. Rather, it is a celebration of the victory we already have. That's why we should never tire of celebrating Jesus' ultimate victory time and time again.

PRAYER

Lord, I am thankful that your death and resurrection atoned for my sins, wholly and completely. Will you search me with your Spirit so I may partake in communion with a heart of repentance?

SONG

Remembrance - (Communion Song)

by Matt Redman

44 How should we seek to live in the church?

ANSWER

We should not forsake the weekly gathering of God's people. God calls us to regularly assemble and to build up the body by speaking His Word to one another in love. The church is called to display God's glory to the world as we love and serve one another. Together, through personal service and financial generosity, we support the ministry of the church and work to advance the gospel to all nations.

REFERENCE *Hebrews 10:24-25, Ephesians 4:15-16*

DEVOTION

God calls each of us to not only love him, but also to love one another as Christ loves us. This is how the world will know that we are God's people (John 13:34-35). Our fellowship as a church is so necessary that the apostle John writes that those who wilfully separate themselves from the church have never received God's grace; "for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us" (1Jn 2:19).

All of us have fallen into sin. However, God showed his infinite love by sending Jesus Christ into the world to die on the cross and rise again for the salvation of the Church. When God called us from death to life, he gave us a new nature to love him and his ways (Eze 36:26-27). Therefore, let us strive to love one another zealously, knowing that we can only do so because of the immense love we have received in Jesus (1Jn 4:7-11).

We love each other through the gifts that God has freely given to us (Rom 12:4-8, 1Cor 12:4-11), and by giving out of a cheerful and generous heart within our means. For Jesus, who was rich, became poor so that we may become spiritually rich (2Cor 8:9-15). This is not done for self-exaltation, but rather "for the common good" and "to equip

the saints for the work of ministry (the preaching of the gospel), [and] for building up the body of Christ" (1Cor 12:7, Eph 4:12).

Let us also not neglect gathering together and exhorting one another by speaking the truth in love. We do this so that we may grow to become like Christ, and not become hardened by the deceitfulness of sin and eventually depart from God (Eph 4:15, Heb 3:12-14, 10:24-25). Indeed, we are like living stones being built up as the house of God, offering to him sweet spiritual sacrifices through Christ (1Pet 2:5).

PRAYER

O Lord, we thank you for the immeasurable love that you have shown to us through the death and resurrection of your son. Help us to love one another as you have loved us, that in all things you will be glorified in all the earth.

SONG

O How Good It Is
by Keith and Kristyn Getty

45 Why does God refer to Christians as saints in the Bible?

ANSWER

God views all Christians as saints because those who are in Christ have been cleansed of all their sins and clothed in his righteousness through their union with Christ, who died in their place and rose again.

REFERENCE *1 Corinthians 1:2*

DEVOTION

Writers in the New Testament frequently refer to Christians as "saints in Christ Jesus" (1Cor 1:2, Phil 1:1-2). In Biblical Greek, the word "saints" is the same word used to refer to "holy ones". What does it mean to be a saint in Christ?

As Christians, we do not live as self-determining individuals. So the word "saint" cannot be understood independent of the phrase "in Christ". When we accept Christ Jesus as Lord, God makes us holy and righteous in him. Our identity moves from being in Adam to being in Christ. We, like seeds, are taken out of Adam and replanted by being born again (1Cor 15: 22). If we are in Christ, we find our identity and status in him. When we stand before God, we do not stand alone. We stand clothed in Christ, hidden in him (Col 3:3).

In "The Freedom of the Christian", Martin Luther uses an example that also appears in Hosea. A rich and pious husband takes a needy and impious harlot as his wife and redeems her, supplying her with all good things. Christ is that husband, and we are found in the promiscuity of the wife. In being one with Christ, like in marriage, it is not possible for our sins to destroy us since they have been laid upon Christ. Luther writes, "Therefore, the sinner can consider her sins in the face of death and hell and say: If I have sinned, yet my Christ who is mine has not sinned.

And all his is mine and all mine, my sins, my death, my damnation, is his."

Union with Christ, as saints, changes the very nature of the Christian life. Salvation in Jesus is not a one-time sinner's prayer that we utter, but a lifelong journey of knowing and communing with Jesus. That journey starts now and continues for all of eternity, when we see him face to face.

PRAYER

Jesus, thank you for what you've done on the cross which cleansed us of our sin and clothed us in righteousness. We are undeserving, yet so deeply loved. Help us to grow in the knowledge of who you are.

SONG

Grace Alone
by Dustin Kensrue

46 If Christians are viewed by God as saints, is it still possible for a Christian to sin?

ANSWER

Yes. Although all Christians have been forgiven of their sins and set free from the power of sin, it is still possible for Christians to sin because in this present age the presence of sin still remains.

REFERENCE *Romans 7:22-25*

DEVOTION

As Christians, we are a combination of saint, sinner, and sufferer. We know that all who have faith in the saving work of Jesus Christ are described as saints in him (Eph 1:1; 1Cor 1:2, 6:11). As saints, we are called to strive to be holy, just like God is holy, and to emulate Jesus in our words, thoughts, and deeds (1Pet 1:16). As sinners, we are reminded of our fallibility as we are made into his likeness everyday (2Cor 3:18). As sufferers, we grasp the true cost of sin (1Pet 2:21).

The Bible reminds us that all men, even those who call upon the name of Jesus in faith and are held secure in God's salvation, are still sinners (1Jn 1:8; Rom 7:19-20). We are called to die to ourselves and to kill sin everyday. The warfare of putting sin to death is real, even though our salvation is sure. As redeemed sinners, however, we do not despair. Instead, we draw closer to Jesus by remembering that we need him every hour. The fountain of mercy and grace is sweet because we know that sin still plagues our lives. To this fountain we run daily in prayer, even several times a day.

Every time we do, we grow in the depth of knowing Jesus. We know our status as sinner, undeserving and poor. At the same time, we find comfort in what Jesus has done on

the cross. We clothe ourselves in his righteousness as the redeemed, continually putting our trust in Jesus' ability to cleanse us and make us right before the Father. It humbles us to know that we are prone to wander, allowing us to give grace to other saints who have sinned against us. Therefore, forgiveness should be something we are quick to offer to others, just as God does for us.

PRAYER

Father, help us to put sin to death in the flesh everyday. We cannot do this without the work that you're doing in our hearts. Help us to demonstrate your love and forgiveness to others as we reflect you to a watching world.

SONG

Give Us Clean Hands
by Chris Tomlin

47 How is a Christian to grow in godliness?

ANSWER

A Christian grows in godliness as they come to know both the glory and grace of God, understand their own sin in the light of this knowledge, and then respond with repentance and faith in the power of the Spirit who bears his fruit in us.

REFERENCE 2 *Peter* 1:5-7, 2 *Corinthians* 3:18

DEVOTION

The heart of the gospel is this: We receive the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus' saving work on the cross and his resurrection. We've received our salvation by faith alone, in Christ alone. Godliness is the fruit that follows this faith. We labour for virtue because God has already laboured and is at work in us.

As John Piper explains, "There is a world of difference in a marriage where the husband doubts the love of his wife and labours to earn it, and a marriage where the husband rests in the certainty of his wife's love and takes pains joyfully not to live unworthily of it." In the same way, we have confidence in the divine power of God (2Pet 1: 3-4) to transform us, and take pains not to live unworthily of his love.

We are called to press on in godliness towards virtue, knowledge, self-control, patience, godliness, brotherly affection, and love. These attributes are not merely dispensable garnish. Peter's warning is clear; whoever lacks these things is blind and short-sighted, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins (2Pet 1:9). The evidence that God's power is in us, through our faith, spurs us on to strive toward the qualities of Christ.

Therefore, let us not be lazy in our faith and risk drifting away from Christ. Let us be encouraged by the word to fight the good fight of faith, take hold on eternal life (1Tim 6:12), lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely, and run with perseverance the race set before us (Heb 12:1). For the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus (Phil 3:14) is supremely precious. As we grow to know Jesus and be conformed to his likeness, let us be assured that we are called to share in the heritage of God's glory and excellence (2Pet 1:10).

PRAYER

Father God, we long to grasp the true meaning of godliness. We desire to grow and become more like you. Help us to persevere and press on to win the prize of an inheritance that never fades.

SONG

By Faith
by Keith & Kristyn Getty

48 How does a Christian grow in their knowledge of God and understanding of their own sin?

ANSWER

God's perfect character and holy commands are revealed to us in his word, which convicts us of our sins and assures us of God's love for us in the gospel. We hear God's word as we gather for corporate worship, as we speak the truth in love to one another in the body of Christ, and as we personally draw near to God in the word and prayer.

REFERENCE *Psalm 119:11, 1 Timothy 4:13-16*

DEVOTION

If you were offered money for every verse you memorized, how many verses could you do? God says his words are "more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them thy servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward" (Ps 19:10-11). God's word is far more valuable than money. Do you believe that to be true?

God designed faith to grow as it feeds on the promises of scripture. Proverbs 22:18-19 says "It will be pleasant if you keep them within you, that they may be ready on your lips. So that your trust may be in the Lord, I have taught you today, even you." God's word was intended to convict us of our sins, increase our trust in him, and assure us of his love for us. The more we meditate on his word, the more our faith increases.

Yet having spiritual eyes to see God's glory is a gift of God. No one naturally hungers for and delights in God's word. We are to pray like the psalmist, for God to open our eyes to see the wonderful things in his word. If we ask, he will be faithful to answer our prayer. God's word is so important

that in Jesus' prayer for his disciples, he asks that we be sanctified in the truth that is his word (John 17:17).

Psalm 119:11 presents to us one of the key ways to keep from sinning: "I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you." If we treasure God's word in our hearts, we will learn ways to keep from sinning. If we taste to see that his word is sweet (Ps 119:18), we will delight in God's wisdom and find comfort for all of life

PRAYER

Dear Lord, give us eyes to see that your word is a great treasure. Increase in us the desires to meditate on it day and night, and sing of its value unto all generations.

SONG

Refiner's Fire
by Brian Doerksen

49 What is the law of God stated in the Ten Commandments?

ANSWER

You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below – you shall not bow down to them or worship them. You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God. Remember the sabbath day by keeping it holy. Honour your father and mother. You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not give false testimony. You shall not covet.

REFERENCE *Exodus 20:1-17*

DEVOTION

God gave the Ten Commandments to the Israelites because he wanted to teach them to live holy lives. For many Christians, however, we often perceive them as something negative. Though we know that holiness is a good thing because God is holy, we still think of it as withholding or denying ourselves. Indeed, eight of the commandments begin with “You shall not...”

God introduces the Ten Commandments with a call to remember who he is: “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.” It prompts the Israelites to remember that he lovingly and mercifully led them out of Egypt. He is now asking them to trust him and look to no other god for help. Likewise, the Ten Commandments are meant to remind us of God’s love and mercy in Jesus, the only man who fulfilled the law and is the perfect substitute for our sin. This is a reminder that he is trustworthy. He has done what we could not have done for ourselves.

The law of Moses shows the Israelites how they should live if they believed their security is in God. You don’t steal, lie,

or abuse others if you trust God. Disobeying the law comes from disbelieving God. The root of sin is a lack of trust that God’s ways are better. In contrast, obeying the law is not a way to earn God’s favor, but to demonstrate faith in him.

The Ten Commandments are a sign of mercy. They exist to point out how deeply sin is rooted in our hearts (Rom 7:15-18) and how serious its consequences are (Col 3:5-6), so that we understand how desperately we need our savior. When we truly see the beauty of Jesus and our inability to save ourselves, we will grow to love and obey him more.

PRAYER

O Lord, we are aware of how often we fail to keep your commandments. Forgive us and show us the beauty of your sacrifice. Help us to see you and obey.

SONG

You Stand Alone

by Neil DeGraide, George Romanacce and Dale Bischof

50 How are the Ten Commandments divided?

ANSWER

Into two tables. The first has four commandments teaching us about how we love God. The second has six commandments teaching us how we love our neighbour.

REFERENCE *Matthew 22:37-40*

DEVOTION

The Ten Commandments can be summarised into two simple yet multifaceted ideas: We are called to love God first, then to love our neighbour as ourselves.

The most loving thing we can do for others is to love God more. If we love God, we will love others better. Jesus is explicit in the order of this command. If we truly love God first, loving our neighbour will naturally follow. Jesus also tells us how we are to love God: With all our affections. There is one God who is supremely valuable and precious, and we are to love with total loyalty. This command demands wholehearted and life-encompassing commitment. In return, our love for God affects the way we love others.

Apostle John warns us that “he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen” (1Jn 4:20). Love for God and others is the outworking of authentic, saving faith. And love among Christians is the mark of Christ in them. Jesus said, “by this, all men will know that you are my disciples” (John 13:35). In other words, meeting the needs of the brethren is more important than success and owning things. God calls us to be like him toward all. He is by nature giving, caring, helping, supporting, and protecting. Our love for others affirms our faith in the one true gospel.

The Christian life is a supernatural life. It cannot be activated by human effort. There is no room for divided heart. Living a life of love is humbling. Just like Christ emptied himself for us (Phil 2:7), we are to empty ourselves for others. Left to our own devices, we cannot love. But praise be to God, he has given us a new heart so that all we do is done in love (1Cor 16:14).

PRAYER

Dear Lord, help us to grasp the depth of love we have received in Christ. Teach us to love you with all we have, then to love others like we love ourselves.

SONG

As You Go
by Mark Altrogge

51 What does God require in the first commandment?

ANSWER

That I sincerely acknowledge the only true God, trust him alone, look to him for every good thing, love him, fear him and honour him with all my heart. In short, that I give up anything rather than go against his will in any way.

REFERENCE *Deuteronomy 5:6-7*

DEVOTION

The Lord is described in the Bible as a consuming fire and a jealous God (Deut 4:24). He is a holy God who cannot stand a trace of sin and will execute vengeance upon all who oppose him (Ps 5:4-5; Nah 1:2). He will not allow his glory to be given to another (Isa 42:8). However, is not idolatry the very thing we are guilty of? Since the fall of man, mankind has robbed God of his honour and glory through sin and rebellion (Gen 6:5). This is the very essence of sin: Anything that does not render to God the honour due to him alone.

This is the problem with mankind. We have “exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things” (Rom 1:23). And like Eve, we have found sin more delightful in our sight than God himself (Gen 3:6). We were “separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world” (Eph 2:12), all because of our rebellion against God.

But out of his rich mercy and love, God sent his son Jesus Christ into the world to take on flesh, suffer, and die on the cross for all our sins against God. At the cross, the Judge himself was hung in our place. However, Jesus rose again on the third day, making our eternal salvation certain in him. This means that all of us whom God has called from

death to life can finally be fully devoted to him alone through the work of the Holy Spirit.

Let us concentrate all our thoughts, our lives, and our intellects upon the Lord, for he is our creator and saviour. Through him we are now called sons of God, and are called to worship and be wholly devoted to him. He alone is worthy of all our adoration!

PRAYER

O Lord, help us to turn away from evil and toward you as our greatest good and our source of life and peace. Lead us to ever depend on you for all things, and to worship you only.

SONG

You're Worthy Of My Praise
by David Ruis

52 What does God require in the second commandment?

ANSWER

That we in no way make any image of God, nor worship him in any other way than as he has commanded in his word.

REFERENCE *Deuteronomy 5:8-10*

DEVOTION

In Deuteronomy 4, God reminded the Israelites to take heed of themselves lest they fall into making any images of God and commit idolatry against him (Deut 4:15-19). God has revealed himself as invisible (Col 1:15; 1Tim 1:17) and as a spirit (John 4:24). Wouldn't you find it absurd if someone who has never seen your father claims to have drawn an accurate portrait of him? In a similar way, God himself is offended when we dare depict him in any form of imagery.

But this is the very thing that we do, exchanging "the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things... and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen." (Rom 1:23, 25) This is described as sin and vanity before God because he alone is God and worthy of all worship (Isa 44:6-20).

However, out of the love of God for us, he sent Christ Jesus to suffer, die, and rise again to redeem us from this present evil age into the kingdom of the Son, that we may become the sons of God (John 1:12-13; Gal 1:4; Col 1:13). In Christ, we are delivered from the vanity of false worship that is not based on his word. We can walk in his statutes, having been given new hearts and the indwelling presence of the Spirit (Eze 36:25-27).

Therefore, let us strive to present our bodies "as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship," and to be transformed by the renewal of the mind, that we may know the good, acceptable and perfect will of God (Rom 12:1-2). As this happens, we become the true worshippers whom the Father seeks, those who worship in spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24).

PRAYER

We praise you O God, in showing us who you are and what you desire of us through your word. Deliver us from idols and all forms of false worship so that we may worship you in spirit and truth.

SONG

Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise
by Walter C. Smith

53 What is God's will for us in the third commandment?

ANSWER

That we neither blaspheme nor misuse the name of God, but rather that we use the holy name of God only with reverence and awe, so that we may properly confess him, pray to him and praise him in everything we do and say.

REFERENCE *Deuteronomy 5:11*

DEVOTION

The name of God is the very expression of his nature. Although God is "infinite in being and perfection, whose essence cannot be comprehended by any but himself," he has revealed himself to us using names (Ex 3:13-14, 6:2). God is so zealous for his name that he told Moses that "Whoever curses his God shall bear his sin. Whoever blasphemes the name of the Lord shall surely be put to death" (Lev 24:15-16). This is because God is perfectly holy (Isa 6:3) and most glorious (Rom 11:36).

Taking the name of the Lord in vain in Hebrew means to empty the worth of his name. In our culture today, this is something so common that hardly anyone blinks when the name of God or Jesus is used as swear words. The third commandment is not limited to misuse of the name of God. It also includes cursing others, (Jas 3:6-12) failing to keep the promises we make, and making oaths over trivial things. Although we knew God, we did not honour him as God or give thanks to him, which led us to sin against him, including taking his name in vain (Rom 1:21, 28-31). God will not hold us guiltless for this (Ex 20:7; Mal 3:5).

But God chose to refrain his anger from us (Isa 48:9-11). Instead, he took the full weight of the wrath of God upon himself in Jesus Christ, being wounded and bruised for our offences (Isa 53:5-6) so that we may be declared right before God (Rom 4:25). This means that sinners who revile

the name of God can be changed into those who revere his name.

So let our yes be yes, and our no be no (Jas 5:12), putting off all forms of cursing and revere the name of God. May we strive to do so knowing that he is worthy of our adoration, and that he has graciously made us new creatures (Col 3:8-10)

PRAYER

Your name, O Lord, is holy and wonderful. Help us to worship with joy and trembling, to flee from anything that will lead us to defame your great name, so that we may love and honour you in all that we do.

SONG

Your Name
by Paul Baloché

54 What does God require in the fourth commandment?

ANSWER

That we daily rest in Christ and gather weekly with his people for corporate worship, and so anticipate the eternal sabbath.

REFERENCE *Deuteronomy 5:12-15*

DEVOTION

Under the old covenant, the Israelites kept the sabbath on the seventh day of the week because God created heaven and earth in six days and rested on the seventh (Ex 20:8-11), and he rescued Israel from slavery in Egypt (Deut 5:12-15). Under the new covenant, Christians no longer keep the sabbath on the seventh day, but on the first, also known as the “Lord’s Day” (Rev 1:10).

This is not merely a transfer of days, however. The fulfillment of the sabbath rest command is found in Jesus himself. The observation of sabbath points to the ultimate rest we will enjoy with him. For now, we get a glimpse of that rest through ceasing in labour one day a week and worshipping God with his people.

Because we bear the image of God, we are called to follow him by resting on the sabbath and devoting it to God. But because of our sin, we have become those who hate God and do not want to acknowledge him (Rom 1:28-30), disregarding the sabbath and caring only about our pursuits. We become restless and sorrowful because the sabbath was made for us (Mark 2:27) and we were made to rest and delight in God alone.

Despite the misery of sin that we brought upon ourselves, God has ordained to save a people who will love him and

his ways. Indeed, those who repent of their sins and trust in Christ alone for their salvation can finally be free from the restlessness, “for whoever has entered God’s rest has also rested from his works as God did from his” (Heb 4:10).

“Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience” (Heb 4:11). As we rest on the sabbath and consider what God has done through his word, let us also not neglect gathering together and looking forward to the eternal sabbath in heaven.

PRAYER

O Lord, our hearts are made to worship you. We are restless until we find rest in you. Help us to meditate upon your word daily, that we may look toward the eternal rest in you.

SONG

We Sing

by Joel Sczebel, Pat Sczebel, Todd Twining

55 What is God's will for us in the fifth commandment?

ANSWER

That we love and honour our mother and father, submitting to their authority and discipline whilst being patient with their failings.

REFERENCE *Deuteronomy 5:16*

DEVOTION

When children are born into the world, they are subject to the authority of their mothers and fathers. In the workplace, employees are subject to the authority of their employers. Citizens of a country are subject to the state. And for church members, to their elders.

God is the absolute sovereign authority over all creation and earthly powers, for they derive their authority from him (Rom 13:1-2). Even when Pontius Pilate sentenced Jesus to be crucified, Jesus declared that Pilate's authority was given to him by God (John 19:10-11).

We have a natural inclination to hate authority because humanity has rejected God. This began when Adam and Eve disobeyed his commands and sought autonomy in Genesis 3. Because of this, we have also become people who disobey parents and reject other forms of God-ordained authority (Rom 1:30; Tit 3:3). Even when we obey, we do so grudgingly and not out of genuine love for God.

Although there is nothing we can do to become right with God, he chose to intervene by taking on flesh in the person of Jesus. By doing so, we who were once haters of God now become those who love him and others joyfully. This includes honouring and submitting to those who have authority over us.

Now that we have been changed, let us strive to subject ourselves to authority. This is done "not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience" (Rom 13:5); for children to their parents, citizens to the state, employees to their employers, and so on (Tit 3:1; Eph 6:1, 5). We do this out of thankfulness for God has reconciled us to himself and with one another.

PRAYER

You alone, O Lord, are the supreme authority over all creation. Help us to honour those in authority and submit to them joyfully, knowing that you are sovereign over them, and that we live for your glory.

SONG

Jesus, There's No One Like You
by Sovereign Grace

56 What does God require in the sixth commandment?

ANSWER

That we do not belittle, insult, hate or kill our neighbour, whether by thoughts, words, look or gesture, and certainly not by actual deeds, nor be party to this in others, and to put away all desire for revenge. We are not to harm or recklessly endanger ourselves either.

REFERENCE *Deuteronomy 5:17, Matthew 5:21-22*

DEVOTION

In our times, abortions are often advocated as acceptable. Unborn babies, lives that God created, are killed in clinics around the world. We condemn the genocide of Jews that occurred during the Holocaust under the regime of Adolf Hitler. Do we feel we are better than “those people”, not having taken the life of another with our own hands? This is sadly not the case.

Jesus declares that “everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire” (Matt 5:22). The apostle John wrote that “everyone who hates his brother is a murderer” (1Jn 3:15). This means that all forms of malice and hurtful intentions against another person is tantamount to murder. Surely we are guilty of these things? “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23), and the wrath of God is revealed from heaven upon all mankind (Rom 1:18; Eph 2:1-3). The sins of the world are not perpetrated by other people, but by ourselves.

“But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ” (Eph 2:4-5). This is the wonderful news of Christianity! Sinners who by nature are filled with hatred can be reconciled to God

and to each other in love. We can finally love God and others because God first loved us (1Jn 4:19).

Let us be encouraged by the words of the apostle Paul to the church of Ephesus: “Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamour and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you” (Eph 4:31-32).

PRAYER

O Lord, you have called us from darkness to your marvellous light. Give us the grace to walk worthy of your gospel, to be filled with love towards all mankind, for the glory of your holy name.

SONG

How Marvelous
by Charles Gabriel

57 What is God's will for us in the seventh commandment?

ANSWER

That we abstain from all sexual immorality and live purely and faithfully, whether in marriage or in single life, avoiding all impure actions, looks, words, thoughts or desires and whatever might lead to them.

REFERENCE *Deuteronomy 5:18, Matthew 5:24-25*

DEVOTION

We live in a world that is very sexualised. Biblical sexual ethics are frowned upon, pornography is easily accessible, and sex trafficking is growing. But sexual immorality is not limited to outward, overt acts. It also includes the thoughts and inclinations of the heart. Jesus said that a mere gaze at a woman with lustful intentions is already counted as adultery (Matt 5:24-25).

Augustine of Hippo admitted in "Confessions" to struggling with sexual sin. "For it was my sin, that not in him [God], but in his creatures—myself and others—I sought for pleasures, sublimities, truths, and so fell headlong into sorrows, confusions, errors." Augustine speaks for all of us. We were made to find our true delight in God alone, but we have turned away from him and "sought out many inventions" (Ecc 7:29). We seek pleasure in creation, including sex, instead of the Creator himself. This results in committing God-hating sexual offences (Rom 1:24, 26-31), which will only lead to sorrow (Prov 5:4-5).

But despite our sexual brokenness, God chose to intervene through the death and resurrection of Christ. By the grace of God, we become heirs according to the hope of eternal life and are given new hearts and desires to love God (Jer 32:38-40; Tit 3:3-7). This gives us hope of restoration for sexually broken sinners to be made whole and new in Christ, and to flee from sexual immorality (1Thess 4:3, 7).

Therefore, "let us press on to know the Lord" (Hos 6:3), "for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body" (1Cor 6:20). As we do so, our lives will become shaped by the mercy of God, and we can put our sexual affections in their proper place under his authority.

PRAYER

O Lord, nothing but the blood of Jesus can wash away all our impurity and sin. Help us to see daily that our true happiness is in you alone, that we may flee sexual immorality and strive to live in purity.

SONG

Jesus Paid It All
by Elvina Hall, Kristian Stanfill

58 What does God require in the eighth commandment?

ANSWER

That we do not take without permission that which belongs to someone else, nor withhold any good from someone we might benefit.

REFERENCE *Deuteronomy 5:19*

DEVOTION

We often assume that the eighth commandment only applies to taking something that does not belong to us. But is the commandment only limited to the theft of goods? No. The commandment also applies to withholding or refusing to give what is due. We are called to love our neighbours as ourselves (Matt 22:39), so by withholding love, we display hatred towards them and ultimately to God (1Jn 3:14-17, 4:8).

We rarely need to be taught to look after our own interests. But scripture teaches us that the needs of others should be considered with equal importance. To overlook this aspect of the commandment and deny love to others is equal to breaking the commandment itself.

People are thieves by nature. Specifically, glory thieves. Whenever we sin, we claim audaciously to know better than God and rob him of the glory that he deserves. We give glory to ourselves and to creation instead of God, who alone is worthy (Rom 1:21-25). Since God has declared that he will not let his glory be given to another, the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all mankind (Isa 42:8, 48:11; Nah 1:2; Rom 1:18).

But God, for the sake of his own glory, chose to save a people for himself (Isa 43:6-7; Eph 1:4-6). He has done this by sending the Son of God. Through him, sin is defeated.

What does this mean for us? This means we can no longer live lives that rob God and one another, but rather give him the glory.

Let us no longer steal, but work diligently and not grow weary in doing good to others and promoting their good in love (Eph 4:28; 2Thess 3:13). God did not withhold his goodness in Christ from us despite our wickedness (Rom 8:32), and he will care for his people in all things (Isa 46:4; 1Pet 5:7).

PRAYER

O Lord, we are grateful for all that you have done for us in Christ. May your goodness and abundant generosity lead us to love you more, to promote the good of our neighbours, and not withhold anything good from them.

SONG

Enough
by Chris Tomlin

59 What is God's will for us in the ninth commandment?

ANSWER

That we never give false testimony against anyone, twist another's words, gossip or slander, nor join in condemning anyone without a hearing or without just cause. We should speak the truth in love, candidly and openly acknowledging it.

REFERENCE *Deuteronomy 5:20*

DEVOTION

The ninth commandment teaches us to not lie or deceive anyone for the sake of self-gain. It also demands that we speak only the truth in all things out of love. This is because God is the God of truth (Num 23:19; Isa 65:16; Tit 1:2; 1Jn 5:6). Since we are made in the image of God, we are also called to display his character, including his truthfulness.

This is something we have failed to do. Because of the fall of mankind, we have become liars by nature (Ps 116:1; Jer 9:5), filled with evil and sin (Gen 6:5; Jer 17:9). Even when we do speak the truth, it may not be out of genuine love and faith (Rom 14:23; Heb 11:6). No matter how small or large our sins are, God is holy (Ps 5:4, 92:15) and he will oppose all evildoers in judgement (Mic 5:15; Nah 1:2).

Although all of us deserve death and hell because of our sin, God showed his love for us in Jesus dying on the cross (Rom 5:8; 1Jn 4:10). All those who turn away from their sins and trust in Jesus will certainly be declared righteous before God (Rom 4:24-25) and shall escape from the wrath to come (1Thess 1:10). We have been called from darkness to light (1Pet 2:9), where we are now called to worship God in spirit and truth (John 4:23-24).

So let us no longer lie to one another and live in falsehood. Rather, let's "love truth and peace" (Zech 8:19) and speak the truth in love, knowing that God has made us new crea-

tures and has made us to be members one of another (Eph 4:15, 25; Col 3:9-10).

PRAYER

O God, who alone is truth and knows the hearts of all mankind. Deliver us from a lying tongue so that we may be faithful in speaking the truth in love amidst this passing, evil world.

SONG

To Tell The Truth
by Sovereign Grace Kids

60 What is God's will for us in the tenth commandment?

ANSWER

That we should be content, not envying anyone or resenting what God has given them or us. We should not have even the slightest thought or desire contrary to any one of God's commandments.

REFERENCE *Deuteronomy 5:21*

DEVOTION

We all long for true satisfaction and joy. We fulfil them by doing things like getting married, buying a nice house, or amassing money. But we will inevitably find ourselves becoming dissatisfied again. When we see what we do not have, our dissatisfaction intensifies, which can lead to jealousy, hatefulness, and maybe even grave offences like theft or murder.

Let's be honest: We are all guilty of these things. Why do we covet the possessions of others? Why are we dissatisfied with our own lot? It is because our hearts are not rightly ordered. We are made for God and can be satisfied by him alone. However, we have forsaken him and "sought out many inventions" (Ecc 7:29), loving the creature supremely over the Creator himself (Rom 1:25). We've become full of envy, hating God and one another, and slaves to passions and pleasures (Rom 1:29-30; Tit 3:3).

Although we deserve judgement for our sins, God chose to defer his anger from us (Isa 48:9). Instead, the Son of God bore the punishment that we deserved (Isa 53:5) so that we may be free from the bondage of sin that led us to reject God. As a result, we can worship God with joy (Ps 92:1-5) and rest satisfied in God regardless of our lot, because Christ is the true source of contentment and joy (Phil 4:11-13).

Let us strive to walk in love for one another (Eph 5:2), flee from any form of covetousness (Eph 5:3; Heb 13:5), seek heavenly things (Col 3:1-2), and rest contented in him alone. For Christ is our life, and our lives are hidden with him in God (Col 3:3-4). He has "loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" (Eph 5:2).

PRAYER

O Lord, all that we need is found in you alone. Give us the grace to be content with our lot, to fix our gaze on Christ and not on the things of this world. We do not desire anything that is contrary to your most perfect will.

SONG

Be Thou My Vision
by Eleanor H. Hull

61 Since no one can keep the law perfectly, and Christ has fulfilled it perfectly on our behalf, what is its purpose for us?

ANSWER

Firstly, the law serves to show us our sins and hence need for Christ; secondly, it shows us the perfect obedience of Christ that God imputes to us by faith; and thirdly it reveals God's holiness to us that we might walk in a manner pleasing to him by the power of his Spirit.

REFERENCE *Romans 3:19-20*

DEVOTION

Do you think annual medical check-ups are important? A Huffington Post story reported that a 44-year old woman's life was saved when a routine check-up detected early stage cervical cancer that was curable. Most of us who eat well, exercise regularly, and get enough sleep may feel we are in good health. But check-ups are important because they reveal information about our body that we cannot easily see. They give us an accurate, objective assessment of where we really stand.

Similarly, God's law reveals the spiritual assessment of our souls. It reveals to us God's character, and tells us where we stand in relation to his holiness. Ultimately, it shows us who we really are. People who naturally would not seek God or his ways and are afflicted with the spiritual cancer of sin (Rom 3:10-18). The law shows us what is wrong with us but it cannot fix it.

That is why Jesus' offer of salvation and new life is so crucial. He alone was able to completely live up to God's law. Through his death and resurrection, he offers eternal life to our dead souls if we believe in him. The law shows us death but Jesus gives us life. So if the law does not kill us anymore, what is its purpose for people who have crossed over from death to life?

Like an annual medical check-up, the law regularly reminds us of our true spiritual malaise and consistently points us to the source of life, Jesus Christ. Furthermore, it reminds us of the vastness of God's love for us to transform rebels like us into his own children. Let us sincerely thank God for what he has done and seek to please him with how we live, not by striving to the law, but through Jesus' gracious sacrifice (Rom 12:1-2).

PRAYER

Lord, would you shine a light into our souls and reveal where we are spiritually sick and in need of care? We ask that you remove any hardened sin from our hearts, and fill it with repentance and gratitude.

SONG

You Alone Can Rescue
by Matt Redman

62 How does God empower us to be able to keep his law?

ANSWER

In conversion God has taken our hearts of stone and given us hearts of flesh, writing his law upon them with his Holy Spirit who dwells within us. By this God works in us to will and to act according to his good pleasure.

REFERENCE *Galatians 5:16-18*

DEVOTION

A non-believer once asked a Christian, "So tell me, how does Christianity improve your life?" In a culture obsessed with life hacks and self-improvement content, many people operate under the assumption that life would be better if we simply knew how to improve it. Christianity, however, is wholly different.

In a way, the gospel isn't something that makes our lives "better". It doesn't transform us into more successful or popular people, nor will it provide a set of tips to make our lives run smoother. The gospel doesn't improve your life; it gives you a whole new one.

From our natural state as people who are dead to God and want nothing to do with him, the gospel gives us new birth to receive the Holy Spirit and the power to live out the implications of God's law. We begin to see life in a new light and, in turn, find ourselves compelled to live differently.

And this new life in Christ is how we fulfill God's law, which used to reveal our sins and condemn us. Many in the world seek to fill the emptiness in their lives by pursuing a different career, starting a new fitness goal, or making more money. But as Christians, Jesus takes away our emptiness by giving us himself. Because he lives in us, we experience a new power to love our neighbour and to lay down our

lives to follow God. We receive what the world longs for but cannot achieve: True life in all of its fullness (John 10:10).

PRAYER

Dear Lord, thank you for giving us a heart of flesh and your Spirit dwelling in us. Would you shape and mould us as vessels to be used according to your good pleasure?

SONG

Same Power
by Ben Cantelon

63 Who is the Holy Spirit given to?

ANSWER

All who have put their faith in Christ have been given the Holy Spirit, and have been sealed with him as a guarantee of their inheritance.

REFERENCE *Ephesians 1:13-14*

DEVOTION

Which is worse: feeling far from God or feeling that God is far from you? Most Christians will agree that at some point in their spiritual journey, they've had moments of feeling separated from God.

How are we to respond to such feelings? When faced with such struggles, Christians should focus on God's promises. As Christians, we have been promised proximity to God. We are, by definition, people who are close to God. A Christian's proximity to God is not based on our feelings, but is on the identity given to us.

The wonderful truth is that a Christian is someone who has the Holy Spirit in them. As the Holy Spirit is God himself, a Christian has God in them. The Bible says, "And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ" (Rom 8:9). Our proximity to God is based on a matter of belonging and inclusion. If you belong to Christ, then you have the Spirit of Christ.

Instead of despairing in moments when we feel far from God, let us focus on these promises. If we belong to him, then he is already in us. But God does not only promise us his proximity. He also promises permanence. We get to

have the Holy Spirit dwell in us for all eternity. Our salvation and inheritance are guaranteed!

PRAYER

Even when I feel far from you Lord, I know your Spirit lives in me. Thank you for being faithful and steadfast through my lows and struggles, I know my future is secure.

SONG

Spirit Of God
by Dave Fournier and George Romanacce

64 How does the Holy Spirit help us?

ANSWER

The Holy Spirit convicts us of our sin, comforts us, guides us into the truth of the gospel, and gives us the desire to obey God. He enables us to understand God's word, gives us words to pray, directs our lives to glorify Christ, and empowers us with spiritual gifts to build up the Church.

REFERENCE *John 16:8-11*

DEVOTION

What if Jesus came back to earth today, but in an invisible form?

Imagine if he chose to live with you and went everywhere with you. Imagine him going to work with you, having lunch with you, taking the MRT with you, and going to the movies with you. Imagine Jesus being with you while you have your daily devotion. Imagine him being there when you sin. Imagine him being there when you cry.

For Christians, the presence of Jesus is not imaginary but real. We have the Holy Spirit, who is called "the Spirit of Christ" (Rom 8:9; 1Pet 1:11) and the "Spirit of Jesus" (Acts 16:7; Phil 1:19). Jesus is on his throne in heaven (Heb 1:3; Col 3:1), but he has promised that he is with us on earth. "Surely I am with you always" (Matt 28:20) and "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you" (John 14:18). We have Jesus on earth because we have the Holy Spirit.

Having the Holy Spirit is powerful. He is the Counsellor and "will teach [us] all things and will remind [us] of everything [Jesus has] said" (John 14:26). Jesus says that the Holy Spirit "will bring glory to [Him] by taking from what is [His] and making it known to [us]" (John 16:14).

With Jesus present in our lives through the Spirit, we are comforted, guided, edified, strengthened, and kept company through all our seasons in life.

PRAYER

Dear Lord, thank you for the Holy Spirit dwelling among us, walking with me through the daily challenges of life. We desire for our lives be conformed to your will, that we may glorify you and build up the body in your name.

SONG

Our Help

by Sovereign Grace Kids

65 How does God's word command us to relate to the person of the Holy Spirit?

ANSWER

We are to have fellowship with the Holy Spirit, keeping in step with him, and seeking His continual infilling. We are to abide in Him by remaining in his word and his love, as well as the fellowship of his body, the Church. Furthermore, we are not to grieve the Spirit nor quench his fire.

REFERENCE *Galatians 5:16-17, Ephesians 4:30, 1 Thessalonians 5:19*

DEVOTION

How is your relationship with the Holy Spirit? Do you have a friendship with him?

The Bible encourages Christians to fellowship with the Holy Spirit (2Cor 13:14). This is out of God's desire to have a personal relationship with us through the Holy Spirit. Like any relationship, the relationship can be bruised. We can "grieve the Holy Spirit" (Eph 4:30), and "the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely" (Jas 4:5).

Jesus, who never grieved the Holy Spirit, saw heaven open "and the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him (Matt 3:16). Christians are instructed to walk with the Holy Spirit by keeping in step with him (Gal 5:24). When we do, we will be known by the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22).

We must not "put out the Spirit's fire" (1Thess 5:19) but instead "fan into flame" God's gifts which include the "spirit of power, of love and of a sound mind" (2Tim 1:6-7). God wants to bless each member of the church with gifts which are for the common good (1Cor 12:7).

Indeed, Christians who are on fire for God, gifted, full of good fruit, and walking with the Lord are those who closely fellowships with the Holy Spirit.

PRAYER

Lord, help us to build a close and intimate relationship with you through the Holy Spirit. We thank you for the fellowship we have, and desire to walk each day in step with you.

SONG

Speak O Lord
by Stuart Townend and Keith Getty

66 What is the fruit that the Spirit brings about in our lives?

ANSWER

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

REFERENCE *Galatians 5:22-23*

DEVOTION

Have you ever thought of the Holy Spirit as a person? What is he like? How does he act? What sort of character does he have? But we know exactly what he is like: Just think about the fruit of the Spirit. He's someone you want to be around!

He's always loving, ever joyful, calmly peaceful, tirelessly patient, generously kind, the epitome of good, unflinchingly faithful, strong yet gentle, and above all, safe and controlled to be around. His tree is overflowing with excellent and unlimited fruit—all to be shared and received.

And when he speaks, his voice is identifiable by these characteristics. His words speak love to us, and brings joy and peace to our hearts. Even when we sin, he is patient and reciprocates with kindness. When we need advice he gives us wisdom. When we are anxious, he is reassuring. When we are upset he is gentle and tender. That's what God's voice sounds like.

If this is who the Holy Spirit is, and if this is how he speaks to us, then shouldn't we give him control over our lives in entirety? As a Christian, you have full access to the fruit of the Holy Spirit. The more you know him, the more like him you will become. The deeper you experience him, the more your own character will change.

If you bear his fruit, you will give people around you a taste of Eden.

PRAYER

Father, we praise you for you are the origin of all the good and wonderful things we see in the fruit of the Spirit. Thank you for showing us how glorious you are! Help us each day to become more like you.

SONG

Holy Spirit Living Breath of God
by Stuart Townend and Keith Getty

67 What are the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and why are they given to us?

ANSWER

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are the gifts given to us by God for the building up of his Church. Amongst many others, these gifts include wisdom, faith, knowledge, healing, miracles, prophecy, discernment of spirits, tongues, teaching, giving, leadership, and mercy.

REFERENCE *Ephesians 4:8-13, 1 Corinthians 12:4-11*

DEVOTION

Every child loves Christmas, particularly the presents under the tree. Imagine if a little boy opens a gift with his name on it, only to discover a note from the giver saying, "Please give this to your sister!" And imagine the sister unwrapping a gift of her own, with instructions to give it to her brother in return.

In God's church, this is how gifts are given and received. Gifts from the Holy Spirit are not for self-indulgence. These gifts are meant for blessing others, and are designed to be passed on. "To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good" (1Cor 12:7). Therefore, gifts are given for the good of the whole body of believers.

Perhaps Person A needs wise counsel or advice? The Holy Spirit can equip Person B to be such a counsellor for A.

Does Person C need deep encouragement? The Holy Spirit can prompt Person D to seek out and give some timely words to C.

What about brothers or sisters who need healing? Or those in need of reconciliation? They too, can be ministered to by the Holy Spirit through others who can pass on these gifts with profound effect.

It is true that it is more blessed to give than to receive. Christianity is a team sport. We as members of the body receive life-giving gifts for the sole purpose of passing them on to others who God wants to bless.

PRAYER

We have received so much from you, Lord. Thank you for gifting us with skills and abilities that are unique to each person. Help us to use these gifts to serve and love the church so that we may build up one another.

SONG

O Church Arise
by Stuart Townend

68 How are the gifts of the Spirit to be used?

ANSWER

The gifts of the Spirit are to be used in love. This means to use them in an orderly way for the building up of the Church. All supposed manifestations of the Spirit should be tested and only those which are genuine and edifying should be held to.

REFERENCE *1 Corinthians 12:4-7*

DEVOTION

Churches should never be a competitive environment. If everyone in church has God's blessings and approval, what are we competing for?

Sadly, it is all too human for us to compare. In churches, brothers and sisters may at times jostle against one another, trying to make themselves more important than someone else. We compare our spiritual gifting and achievements. We fall into evaluating one another according to our own standards of spirituality.

The Bible has a much different approach. If you had to choose between being loving and being gifted, the Bible says you should always choose to be loving. Every time. In fact, if you choose to be gifted rather than loving, the Bible has some sobering words to say. "If I speak in the tongues of angels... if I have prophetic powers... if I have all faith... but have not love, I am nothing" (1Cor 13:1-2).

Fortunately, we are not faced with the stark choice between being gifted or being loving. The Bible describes Christians as being gifted AND loving. It is possible to be both, in fact we are commanded to be both. "Pursue love and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts" (1Cor 14:1). In other words, we should simultaneously pursue love and choose to be a channel of the Holy Spirit's gifts. Gifts and love are not antithetical.

The Greek word for gifts of the Holy Spirit is translated literally as "a gift of grace". If so, it stands to reason that the most gifted person is also the most gracious person. The use of any gift of the Holy Spirit should be done in the most loving and gracious way.

PRAYER

Lord, forgive us in our human tendencies to be self-centred and self-important. Help us to see that every gift you've given us is a channel of blessing to someone else. We want to be obedient and gracious in using what you've given to us.

SONG

Come People Of The Risen King
by Stuart Townend and Keith Getty

69 How is the word of God to be read and heard?

ANSWER

With diligence, preparation, and prayer for the Spirit to open the eyes of our heart as we read it, so that we may accept it with faith, store it in our hearts, and practice it in our lives.

REFERENCE *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

DEVOTION

It is reported that 2.5 billion copies of the Bible were printed worldwide between 1816 and 1975. That figure swelled to 6 billion by the year 1992. Even without considering the number of online versions available, it is clear that the Bible has never been more accessible.

But even with such access, HOW are we to read the Bible? First, the Bible is true. Jesus says, "Your Word is Truth" (John 17:17). Second, the truth is a person, and that is unique to Christianity. As much as the truth is a doctrine, it ultimately manifests itself in the person of Jesus. He says, "I am... the truth" (John 14:6). As a person, Jesus is interchangeable with God's word. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God" (John 1:1).

This means that the best possible way to read the Bible is to meet Jesus in its pages. Unfortunately, this point can be missed even by the most ardent believers. Jesus addressed a group of Bible-readers once, saying "You diligently study the scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life" (John 5:39-40). These people studied the doctrine of truth, yet failed to come to Jesus himself.

Jesus inhabits the Bible. The Bible is a story about him. It is written by the Father so that we might come to know him through Jesus. Each opportunity to read the Bible is a chance to experience God in some way. Let us make every effort to come to the scriptures often. And when you do, come to encounter Jesus himself.

PRAYER

Dear Lord, would you open our hearts so that your words may enter and take hold in our lives? We ask that the scriptures may not only be read and heard, but that it would be practiced by all who call upon your name.

SONG

Every Promise Of Your Word
by Keith and Kristyn Getty

70 Should the comfort we derive from God's sovereignty lead to any form of fatalism or passivity before God?

ANSWER

No, because God our Father is Sovereign, He urges us to seek him in prayer, and make requests of him in accordance with his will.

REFERENCE 1 *Thessalonians 5:16-18*

DEVOTION

Do you believe that your prayers to God make a difference?

On 10 May, 1940 during the World War II, the British found themselves utterly outmanoeuvred with the prospect of facing total annihilation after Germany unleashed a military onslaught at the beaches of Dunkirk. However, instead of announcing the capture or death of a third of a million, Prime Minister Winston Churchill managed to evacuate 198,000 British troops. How?

On 23 May, King George VI requested for a National Day of Prayer where the country committed the situation to God. And through their intercession, German tanks and soldiers stood idle while the evacuation took place with weather conditions expediting the process. By the time the German army renewed its attack, over 338,000 French, Belgian, Dutch, and Polish soldiers escaped with many of them returning four years later to liberate Europe.

Although we know that God is sovereign, the events of Dunkirk and instances in the Bible remind us that our prayers do matter. God not only listens to his children but also acts on their prayers when they intercede. Are you facing an impossible situation in your life? Jesus urges us to ask God for help. For God is not just an all powerful God but is our heavenly Father who will give us good things if we only ask him (Matt 7:7-11).

Because God listens to us, we should not be fatalistic or passive towards prayer. Instead, we should pray without ceasing (1Thess 5:16-18) and believe that our prayers make a real difference in our community and our own circumstances. Let us press in today and pray to our Father in heaven, for he seeks to give his children good things when we ask him.

PRAYER

Father, we know you are listening to our prayers. We praise you for your sovereignty and for your desire to give us good things. Help us to approach you unceasingly and with confidence.

SONG

I Need Thee Every Hour
by Annie S Hawks

71 Why should we pray?

ANSWER

We pray because we are God's children and prayer is one way to express our thankfulness towards and dependence upon our heavenly Father, both of which he requires of us. God promises to hear our prayers and to respond to them in accordance with his will.

REFERENCE *Psalm 62:8, 1 John 5:14*

DEVOTION

"Prayer is not overcoming God's reluctance... it is laying hold of his highest willingness." -Archbishop Richard Trench.

God longs to answer our prayers. But very often many of us are too busy to consider this fact. We find ourselves caught in the "tyranny of the urgent", where countless demands suck up our limited time and energy. Don't we often wish there were 30-hour days instead to get more done?

But our Lord Jesus Christ did not live like this. Even though he was tasked with the most important mission of the world, apostle Mark observed that Jesus regularly began his day in prayer. It was this prayerful attitude, this absolute dependence on the Father that made Jesus' life and ministry so powerful. Even though Jesus' earthly ministry lasted just over three years, its effects continue to bear fruit today.

God longs to have the same oneness with us, and that is why we pray. We pray because we are his children and it is the primary way we connect with him. We pray because, like Jesus, we are utterly dependant on him for our daily needs. We pray because our Father in heaven longs to give us good gifts, if only we will ask (Matt 7:7-11).

God longs to answer your prayers. So lift up your cares and concerns to him today, and watch him reveal his power and love in your life.

PRAYER

Father, we are so thankful to be given the blessing of prayer. We want to come before you with our cares and burdens, but also with our joy and delight. Help us to understand that prayer is powerful.

SONG

I Asked The Lord That I Might Grow
by John Newton

72 What attitude should we pray with?

ANSWER

With love, perseverance, gratefulness, and expectancy; in humble submission to God's will, knowing that, for the sake of Christ, he always hears our prayers.

We should also pray in faith, without doubting.

REFERENCE *Philippians 4:6*

DEVOTION

Jesus taught his disciples to expect God to answer their prayers, and to persevere even if they do not get an immediate answer. In Luke 18:1-8, Jesus shares the parable of the widow who brought her petitions to an unrighteous judge. She manages to persuade him to grant her justice through sheer persistence. He further writes that God expects his children to "cry to him day and night" and will not delay to answer their prayers.

But Luke presents a sobering questions in verse 8, asking "...when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?" How would Jesus regard your faith in prayer today?

Jesus teaches us to pray to God with expectation, perseverance, and faith. And the encouragement is that God listens to us not because of what we do or who we are. He listens to us because of who Jesus is and what he has done on our behalf. Because Jesus paid for our sins and has reconciled us to the Father, we can be assured that God will listen to our prayers for his son's sake.

This is good news because Jesus himself makes Luke 18 possible for us. He has bridged the gap between God and us, and encourages to live out the benefits of this reconciliation with our prayers. Are there things that are weighing you down? Do you feel troubled or heavy laden? Cast your

cares to God today because he cares for you and he will act (1Pet 5:7).

PRAYER

Lord, may we come to you with faith that you will hear and answer our prayers. Help us to be persistent and expectant before your throne, with confidence that Jesus has reconciled us to you.

SONG

A Christian's Daily Prayer

by Matthew Merker, Dave Fournier, Jordan Kaufflin

73 What should we pray for?

ANSWER

We should pray for God's glory to be seen, his kingdom to come, for all of his people, as well as for everything we need, spiritually and physically, as laid out in the prayer that Christ himself taught us.

REFERENCE *Matthew 6:9-13*

DEVOTION

What do you pray for? Our prayers reveal what our hearts long for. Jesus teaches us to pray like this (Matt 6:9-13):

"Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil."

Jesus' foremost desire was for his Father. He begins his prayer for God's name be made holy. And before he asks for his own daily bread, he asks for God's kingdom to come and his will to be done on earth. Jesus prays this way because he knows who he is: God's only son. Our prayers flow out of our primary identity and the desires attached to it. And because of what Jesus did for us on the cross, God sees us the same as Jesus: Children of God (John 1:12-13).

To pray like Jesus, we must remember who we are through the gospel. We must remember how much God loves us, how precious we are to him that he gave his only son to

rescue us from our sins. For when our first love returns to God, we will remember who we truly are.

May God's will be preeminent in how we live. May his power give us the strength to live out our calling (Eph 4:1-6), and his promises provide for all our needs when we seek first his kingdom and his righteous (Matt 6:25-34).

PRAYER

Lord, we belong to you alone. We are called by your name, and have been saved through your own son. We claim your promises this day, may your power be at work in us.

SONG

Let Your Kingdom Come
by Bob Kauflin

74 What is the Lord's prayer?

ANSWER

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

REFERENCE *Philippians 4:6*

DEVOTION

Shared with the masses during the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 6) and later reaffirmed to Jesus' most intimate followers (Luke 11:1-4), the Lord's Prayer is an example as well as an experience. Its value is best realized when we engage it in both ways.

We see the priorities of God's heart revealed (Isa 42:8).

We realize how concisely our requests can be conveyed (Ecc 5:2).

We learn that through Christ the sacred act of prayer is simple, accessible, and unpretentious (Matt 6:7, Heb 4:16).

Just think, a mere fifty words can glorify God, welcome the emergence of his eternal plans, and sufficiently communicate our needs. What a magnificent prayer indeed!

But if we only see the Lord's Prayer as a template, we miss out on the divine invitation of an experience. At the intersection of man's humility and God's intentionality, something of a mystery unfolds (Matt 6:9). The results are abundant: Edification of the individual, unification of the body of Christ, and the glorification of God. And all of this is owed to his grace.

We may never write like C.S. Lewis or run like Eric Liddell, but the Lord's Prayer offers us the opportunity to pray like Jesus. Let's do so today and always.

PRAYER

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread, and forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

SONG

The Lord's Prayer
by Shane & Shane

75 What does it mean that we are to pray to “Our Father in heaven”?

ANSWER

It means that that we, as children adopted through Christ, are to address God as our heavenly Father, knowing that he is majestic, powerful and loving towards us.

REFERENCE *Romans 8:15-17*

DEVOTION

Thousands of dollars spent on airline tickets, application fees, and agency requirements. Multiple international trips lasting much longer than vacation time allows. Years of waiting, hoping, and praying. These are fairly standard experiences when it comes to the adoption of a child.

Most adopted children have to contend with complicated and painful personal histories. We would hope that the great lengths their adoptive parents make to give them a new family might help to mitigate their feelings of rejection, insecurity, and fear.

Let's consider the great lengths that God took to make us his own. For thousands of years, God tirelessly worked toward our adoption. He had to contend with forces of evil that wanted to keep us orphaned and enslaved. Although in desperate need of a loving father, we too tried to hinder his efforts. He gave us laws and we flouted them. He made covenants with us and we broke them. He sent prophets and we ignored them.

But he persisted. And Christians are the greatest adoption story there ever was. “But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ” (Eph 2:13).

Many of us carry baggage from our earthly fathers. We've experienced emotional absence, abuse, or abandonment, in contrast to the loving kindness, protection, and guidance that a father should provide. Fortunately, we have a Father in heaven who wants us to approach him in prayer with all our needs, limitations, and vulnerabilities. He wants us to call him as our own, to enjoy a loving, personal, and eternal relationship.

PRAYER

Thank you for the great lengths you took to make me your child. Though I have some apprehension about relating to you as a father, I am in desperate need of being fathered by you. Help me come to you and receive your protection, guidance, and love.

SONG

You Made Us Your Own
by Steve and Vikki Cook

76 What does it mean that we pray for God's name to be hallowed?

ANSWER

It means that we ask God to help us grasp his holiness, and give him the worship and praise that he deserves, in order that our lives might be to the praise of his glory, never blaspheming him.

REFERENCE *Leviticus 22:32*

DEVOTION

Names are important. Whether we're registering a new company or preparing for the arrival of a new baby in the family, a name carries great significance. Do we consider this when referring to the name of God? Many Jews don't dare to write the name of God, much less speak it aloud. Many Christians seek to avoid using God's name as "swear words" or even typing "OMG" in their texts.

But what does it mean for God's name to be "hallowed"? Are the implications really captured by us typing "G-d" instead of "God"? Why does Jesus say this at the start of this prayer?

When Moses disobeyed God's instructions regarding providing water for the people of Israel, his transgression was not "believing" God, or not "hallowing" his name (Num 20:10-12). There is a notable link between the concepts of believing and hallowing. In Leviticus 22:31-32 we discover that God's name being hallowed is not only linked to his holiness but also the holiness of his people.

The implications of God's name being hallowed are twofold. We are to actively believe God regarding who he is and what he alone can do. And we are to actively believe God regarding who WE are and what Christ alone has done for US. This is the gospel message.

A request for God's name to be hallowed is a request that we would believe he is holy. We would believe that we are sinners, that he alone can change us, and that the provision of Jesus is real.

PRAYER

I pray for your name to be hallowed. I pray that all of humanity would come to believe the truth of who you are. I thank you for revealing the gospel throughout the entirety of scripture. You are truly awesome.

SONG

He Is Our God

by Bob Kauffman, Jon Althoff

77 What does it mean to ask for God's kingdom to come and will to be done?

ANSWER

That we acknowledge our glorious hope of God's coming kingdom, and pray for his rule to be established in our hearts and over all the earth.

REFERENCE *Matthew 6:33, Ephesians 3:17-19*

DEVOTION

In Biblical times, God's kingdom on earth was the nation of Israel. When Jesus prayed, "Your kingdom come," a new manifestation of God's kingdom was about to take place. It would be a far-reaching spiritual kingdom that would not be of this world, but established in the hearts of his followers (John 18:36, Luke 17:21). Those of us in Christ are part of this kingdom (Col 1:13). As wonderful as it is to be part of God's present-day kingdom, believers eagerly await the return of Jesus when his eternal kingdom will be established (Isa 9:7, Luke 1:32-22, Matt 19:28).

Like Jesus, we pray for God's kingdom to come (Matt 6:10). There is a dual meaning to our prayer. We earnestly desire the next manifestation of God's kingdom, but also for the heart of God's kingdom to be realized here and now.

Scripture attest to God's priorities. "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is One. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might" (Deut 6:5). Also, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets" (Matt 22:37-40).

God's kingdom is a kingdom of love. God's will is done when his law of love is obeyed. Though we have to patiently wait for Jesus to return, we do not have to wait to embrace his love for us, to love him back, and to share the gospel with others.

PRAYER

My heart rejoices in the priority you place on love. Help me know and believe the full measure of your love for me, that I may love you back and love others well. May your law of love reign on earth as it reigns in heaven.

SONG

This Is Our God
by Doug Plank

78 What does it mean to ask God for our daily bread?

ANSWER

That we ask God to take care of all our physical needs so that we come to depend on him as the only source of everything good that we need.

REFERENCE *Matthew 6:25-26*

DEVOTION

Do we sometimes think it would be better to depend on God less? Would it mean more freedom for us? Less hassle for him?

Imagine an infant who only needs to be fed once a day. The thought may sound divine for sleep-deprived new parents! But when we delve deeper, it's actually a terrible idea. The giving of proper nourishment, along with the frequency provided, makes feeding time an ideal opportunity for bonding between parents and babies. If that is taken away, the relationship is sure to suffer.

Our daily need for food is a constant reminder of our dependence on God. That dependence helps to forge a bond with him beyond the sustenance of food. We need to be fed physically for sure, but we also need the sustenance offered by the "bread of life" and "every word that comes from the mouth of God" (John 6:35, Matt 4:4).

The world has always praised self-reliance, but Christians know that all praise should belong to God. Our neediness is a conduit for God to receive the praise he is due. We have needs, and we take them to God. He provides, and rightly gets the glory. As John Piper writes, "That's the deal that keeps us humble and happy and keeps him supreme and glorious."

PRAYER

Father, you are an incredible provider. Forgive my foolish self-reliance and help me come to you daily with all my needs. Thank you for satisfying my hunger physically and spiritually. May you be glorified in my daily dependence on you.

SONG

New Doxology
by Gateway Worship

79 What does it mean to ask God to forgive our debts as we forgive those who sin against us?

ANSWER

That we acknowledge our dependence on Christ's blood to forgive our sins, and express our understanding of God's forgiveness to us through our forgiveness of those who have sinned against us.

REFERENCE *Matthew 6:14-15, 18:21-22*

DEVOTION

By asking God to forgive us as we forgive others, we are not asking God to ONLY forgive us to the degree we are able to forgive others. We are foremost acknowledging that God, through Christ, has forgiven our sins (Eph 1:7). We are also asserting that all believers have the ability to forgive those who sin against them.

Many Christians are more attuned to who they were as a sinner, rather than who they are in Christ (2Cor 5:16-17). We might be fear-stricken that our inability to forgive others is going to limit God's willingness to forgive us. Rather, this prayer should be received with delight that forgiving others is an outworking of our new identity (Rom 7:22).

Too often we fail to realize our core identity is no longer that of a sinner (1Cor 1:2). We are confident that the sacrifice of Jesus has secured our place in heaven, but we set aside his resurrection power by trying to achieve sanctification through our own efforts. Paul's exhortation to the Galatians rings true for us. "Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?" (Gal 3:3).

The forgiveness Christ offers is exhaustive (1Jn 1:7). We are commanded to forgive others as Christ has forgiven us (Eph 4:32).

Do you believe that to be true? Do you believe you have the ability to forgive?

PRAYER

Jesus, I praise you for providing a way for me to be forgiven. Thank you for giving me the ability to forgive others. Would you help me to release forgiveness toward anyone who has wronged me, just as you have done for me?

SONG

Nothing But The Blood
by Matt Redman

80 What does it mean to ask God to not lead us into temptation but deliver us from evil?

ANSWER

That we hate all forms of evil and temptation, and, acknowledging our weakness and dependence upon God, ask him to deliver us from both.

REFERENCE *1 Corinthians 10:13*

DEVOTION

God cannot be tempted by evil. He also does not tempt us in any way. James 1:13 clearly states, "He himself tempts no one." Rather, all of us experience temptation daily through our own desires and sinful natures. Mercifully, God knows our ability to endure, and ensures that we are not tempted beyond what we can handle. He promises to provide a way to escape so that we don't fall prey to sin (1Cor 10:13).

Professionals in fields such as aviation, law enforcement, and fire-fighting know the importance of a good escape plan. In life-threatening situations, every second counts and we need to quickly move from harm's way. The execution of an escape plan is largely dependent on knowing protocol for various scenarios that necessitate the use of the plan.

Can you imagine putting an escape plan in place for every area of temptation in our own lives? The notes section of our phones would be filled with nothing but contingency plans to deal with our propensity to sin across a large number of settings. The whole premise is depressing and overwhelming.

But praise God that he has a better way! He will provide the escape plan. All we have to do is look to him and see what it is. Rather than navigating endless complex scenarios and

routes, we get to do what we love most, "fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith" (Heb 12:2). How good it is to belong to God!

Throughout redemptive history God has always dealt with the problem of sin. Today is no exception. When you feel tempted, look to him for your deliverance. There is sure to be mercy waiting.

PRAYER

Lord, I have no doubt that I will face temptation today. But when I do, you will be right there with me. Help me to keep my eyes upward and look for your provisions of grace.

SONG

He Will Hold Me Fast
by Ada Habershon

81 What effect does a Christian's faith have on their lives?

ANSWER

Every aspect of our lives is to be lived under God's rule, for his glory, because we belong to God, who rules over every aspect of life.

REFERENCE *1 Corinthians 10:31*

DEVOTION

What does a successful life look like to you?

When King David was on his deathbed, these were his parting words to his son Solomon: "I am about to go the way of all the earth. Be strong, and show yourself a man, and keep the charge of the Lord your God, walking in his ways and keeping his statutes, his commandments, his rules, and his testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn..." (1Kgs 2:2-3)

Some people may want to be remembered for their wealth, prosperity, or social status. Others may want to be remembered for their accomplishments. But David, arguably Israel's most successful king, was known for being a man after God's own heart (1Sam 13:14; Acts 13:22). His faith in God was clearly evident in his final words to his heir. David tells Solomon two things: Be strong, and make every effort to walk in God's way so that he will live a successful life.

Do you live your life like David? Is your faith in God so critical to your life's goals and daily decisions that you too would advise your children to make every effort to walk by faith and not by sight? (2Cor 5:7)

What type of success do you desire in life? The Bible tells us that is totally possible when we commit all aspects of our

lives for God's glory and purposes. So let us today depend on his providence for all our needs, lean onto his mighty strength for the challenges we face, and make decisions to further his kingdom on earth at the expense of our own.

PRAYER

May the measurement of my life's success be counted by faith in you alone, O Lord. Help me to live a truly transformed life that reflects the holiness of the God I worship.

SONG

I Worship The Lord
by Al Gordon

82 How should we seek to use our lives for the glory of God in the world?

ANSWER

As God's redeemed image bearers, we live for the glory of God by bearing the fruit of the Spirit in our daily lives, walking in the good works God prepared for us before time, and declaring the gospel to all who will hear us.

REFERENCE *Colossians 1:9-12*

DEVOTION

Once considered as one of the most powerful men on the planet, Chuck Colson's world came crashing down in 1972 when the Watergate scandal broke. From being part of President Richard Nixon's inner circle as special counsel, Colson became prisoner #23226 of Maxwell Air Base in Montgomery, Alabama when he was found guilty of obstructing justice. But where many saw great loss, God saw fertile ground in using a broken but willing man for his glory.

After experiencing a profound spiritual conversion prior to his prison sentence, Colson went on to become a leading voice for prison reform in the United States. He found that the good he sought to achieve through human effort only led to the debacle of Watergate. However, God was greater than his failures. He used Colson's time in prison to significantly improve the lives of millions of inmates across the country.

Colson reflected, "It is not what we do that matters, but what a sovereign God chooses to do through us. God doesn't want our success; he wants us. He doesn't demand our achievements; he demands our obedience. The Kingdom of God is a kingdom of paradox, where through the ugly defeat of a cross, a holy God is utterly glorified. Victory comes through defeat; healing through brokenness; finding self through losing self."

Do you long for God to use your life for his glory in the world? Like Colson, God can use our lives when we give ourselves wholeheartedly and allow the Holy Spirit to fill us (Eph 5:18). God doesn't need our skills, intellect, or achievements. Instead, he desires US. He loves us so much that he suffered on the cross to pay for our reconciliation to the Father. Colson's life demonstrates his incredible power to use human failure for eternal good.

Are you suffering through an impossibly difficult situation? Give it to God and watch how he will make the gospel glorious by using your brokenness to make all things beautiful in his time (Ecc 3:11).

PRAYER

Father, thank you for using a broken and defeated people to exercise your glory on earth. Will you take our weak bodies and fallible hearts, and use it for eternal good?

SONG

Take My Life
by Chris Tomlin

83 What has Jesus commanded and commissioned us to do?

ANSWER

Jesus has told us to obey the great commandments, which are to love the Lord our God with all of our heart, soul and mind, and to love our neighbour as ourselves. Furthermore, he has commissioned all Christians to go and make disciples of all nations.

REFERENCE *Matthew 22:37-40, 28:19*

DEVOTION

What does it mean to love God with our heart, soul, and mind? It is not about having warm, fuzzy feelings towards Jesus, the way we might "love" ice cream, for instance. It is a love for God that involves our entire being.

It is a love for God, rooted in God's love for us, that he demonstrated in the gospel. "We love because he first loved us" (1Jn 4:19). It is a love that results in obedience. "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15). It is a love that knows and treasures God's words. "How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth" (Ps 119:103). It is a love that grows with knowledge and wisdom. "Your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment" (Phil 1:9). Finally, it is a love that transforms us. "And we all ... beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image" (2Cor 3:18), so that we would "be pure and blameless for the day of Christ" (Phil 1:10b).

It is also a love that seeks the lost. For if we are to love our neighbour as ourselves, then the greatest gift that we can give them is to share the good news that we have already received. That is why Jesus commissioned us to go and make disciples of all nations. That is why as children of God, we are all given the appointment of "ambassadors for Christ" (2Cor 5:20). On God's behalf, as representatives

of God's kingdom (for that is who ambassadors are), we appeal to our neighbours to be reconciled to God.

Today, take a few minutes to pray for those in your life who need to hear the gospel, and then go out to faithfully share it with them!

PRAYER

Dear Father, I confess that my love for you is too weak. Too easily do I get distracted by the cheap pleasures of the world. Give me a deep love for you that is rooted in your love for me, a love that overflows into obedience.

SONG

Facing A Task Unfinished
by Frank Houghton

84 How are we to obey the great commission?

ANSWER

By proclaiming the gospel to all peoples in all nations, baptising all who believe, and teaching them to obey everything Jesus has taught us.

REFERENCE *Matthew 28:18-20*

DEVOTION

Jesus gave his disciples the great commission only AFTER his resurrection. The sequence of events is significant. He was "delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification" (Rom 4:25). Because Jesus has accomplished his mission (Eph 1:20-21), all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to him (Matt 28:18). And it is on this basis that Jesus now commands us to go and make disciples of all nations (Matt 28:19).

How do we make disciples? We proclaim the gospel. We preach the good news, that we can only be made right with God by grace through faith in what Jesus has achieved for us by his death and resurrection. We appeal to people to believe in Jesus so that they might be saved (John 3:16) and reconciled with God (2Cor 5:18-20).

We baptise those who believe into the church, welcoming them as fellow citizens of God's kingdom as brothers and sisters in Christ. The church baptises those who believe, and those who believe become members of the local church. Ephesians 4:15-16 says we are "joined and held together by every joint... mak[ing] the body grow so that it builds itself up in love."

We teach believers to obey Jesus. This means living out implications of the gospel in our lives, to "be imitators of God" (Eph 5:1), "filled with the fruit of righteousness that

comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God" (Phil 1:11).

Does the great commission sound overwhelming? It is! But fear not, God has given his church apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers to equip his saints. We are all a part of the ministry, building up the body of Christ (Eph 4:11-12). So don't walk alone. Let's walk together and help one another obey the great commission.

PRAYER

Jesus, I am humbled that you have commissioned the church to proclaim the gospel. Give me faith and courage to obey, to grow in love and obedience, and to share the gospel faithfully.

SONG

Let The Nations Be Glad
by Matt Boswell

85 How are Christians to fulfil their vocations in the light of the gospel?

ANSWER

All Christians are called by God to fulfil vocations that include their responsibilities to family, local church, nation, and for some, paid work. All vocations are to be done to the glory of God by fulfilling the greatest commandments – to love God and neighbour for creation's flourishing.

REFERENCE *1 Corinthians 10:31*

DEVOTION

According to a Gallup poll conducted in 2017, more than 85% of adults admit to hating their jobs. This survey included millions of employees from nearly 200 countries. Most of us are accustomed to asking, "What do you do?" when we meet new people. From a cultural standpoint, our vocations are closely tied to how we are primarily identified. For this reason, dissatisfaction with our jobs often turn into crises of identity.

So how does this apply to Christians? We are certainly not exempt from feeling disenchanting at work. Even for people who generally enjoy their jobs, there will inevitably be days that are filled with frustrating, repetitive or thankless tasks. How do we face those obligations and still "do all to the glory of God" (1Cor 10:31)?

Adam, the very first man, was also given a job. God had given Adam the gift of intimacy and fellowship, creating him in his own image and walking with him day by day. In the Garden of Eden, Adam's instructions were "to work it and keep it" (Gen 2:19). This work was not done in exchange for the right to enjoy God's creation. Rather, it was God's plan all along to include Adam in his work. It was for God's pleasure and glory that Adam was given this role in paradise.

Although it might not seem obvious when we reply to endless emails or perform household chores, meeting our responsibilities are also acts honouring to God. Thankfully, these tasks themselves are not what define us! Just as Adam was valued by God for being more than a gardener, our worth in the kingdom is determined by much more than our professions.

Christians should seek to fulfil our vocations without expecting our vocations to fulfil us. Let us instead cling to our identity as beloved children of God. When we are secure in him, we are able to fulfil our vocations to God's glory by loving him and our neighbours.

PRAYER

Dear Lord, I want my primary source of joy in life to be found in loving and serving you. Would you remind me of this when I have bad days at work? Help me find my purpose and identity in being your child.

SONG

Worship The Lord
by Al Gordon

86 How does our faith in Christ affect our concern for the poor?

ANSWER

Jesus showed concern for our spiritual poverty, emptying himself of his riches to become poor for our sakes. Therefore, having put our faith in him, we are moved to give ourselves both in service and in kind to those who are poor, whether spiritually or materially so.

REFERENCE *Luke 14:12-14*

DEVOTION

What motivates Christians to care for the poor? Do we do so to accumulate favour in hopes that these will outweigh our sins before God? If so, then we've missed the point of the parable of the great banquet (Luke 14:12-24). WE are, in fact, the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind in that parable. We do not deserve an invitation to the banquet. It is a sheer act of grace on the master's part that we get to partake at all.

Is it our expectation that God will give us blessings in this life in return for our generosity to the poor? Luke 14:14 says, "You will be repaid at the resurrection of the just." And 1 Timothy 6:9-10 warns us against "the love of money".

As Christians, our care for the poor is rooted in who God is and who we are in Christ. God cares deeply for the poor. He declared that he is the father of the fatherless, the protector of widows, the defender of the oppressed, the one who feeds the hungry, the liberator of prisoners, and the healer of the blind (Ps 68:5, 146:7-9).

And who are we in Christ? We are God's beloved children, called to imitate him and walk in love as Christ loved us (Eph 5:1-2). We are God's ambassadors (2Cor 5:20), emissaries to a broken world, called to shine as a light in the

dark (Phil 2:15, Matt 5:14). We are a kingdom of priests to God, to reign with Jesus (1Pet 2:9).

So we are called to care deeply for the poor and all those who suffer in this broken and fallen world, because our Lord does so.

PRAYER

Dear heavenly Father, reform my heart so that I would care deeply for the poor and those who suffer. Not for any reason except that you care for them deeply, and because I am your child.

SONG

The Compassion Hymn

by Stuart Townend, Keith and Kristyn Getty

87 What is marriage?

ANSWER

Marriage consists of a covenant between a man and a woman whereby the two become one flesh and enter a fully shared mortal life. It is God's intention that marriage be entered voluntarily, permanently, sacredly, intimately, and exclusively. It is given by God for the flourishing of mankind, and as a portrayal of Christ and the church.

REFERENCE *Ephesians 5:25-33*

DEVOTION

There is something wonderful about weddings: Two people consciously and enthusiastically giving themselves in committed love to each other, making solemn vows to love and be faithful until death do them part. The excitement, emotion, and beauty of it all strike a chord deep within in us. Our hearts rejoice as if to say, "This is a picture of how things should be!"

But there is an even better, more beautiful reality than the bliss of an earthly wedding. The Bible shows us that weddings and marriages are only an imitation. The ultimate marriage will outshine the copy, much like how the real Mona Lisa at the Louvre far eclipses a black-and-white photocopy.

The Bible begins by describing the photocopy in Genesis 2, through the depiction of Adam and Eve in wedded union. It culminates in Revelation 20 with the glorious image of Christ as the groom marrying his bride, the church. This is the ultimate reality that every wedding points to.

Scripture is the greatest love story ever told. And unlike earthly marriages, this one will not end with separation by death. In fact, Christ's love for his church led him to lay

down his life on the cross so that we could be his spotless bride and be in union with him eternally.

This is what makes weddings so special. There is a longing in every person's heart for unwavering love and deep commitment. These desires are not unattainable figments of our imagination, but rooted in a reality that will one day be fulfilled in Christ. We all want to be loved the way we promise to at weddings. And it is so in Christ. Come to Jesus Christ today, who is your saviour, your lord, the lover of your soul, and your eternal groom.

PRAYER

Father, behind every longing of the human heart stands the reality of your eternal love for your people. Help me to comprehend how deep and wide is the love of Christ, and to love you because you first loved me.

SONG

O How Good It Is
by Frank Houghton

88 In what way are both marriage and singleness gifts from God to be cherished?

ANSWER

Marriage is given by God as a gift that points to Christ and the Church.

Singleness is a gift from God that allows a person to devote their time to the kingdom, and to show their ultimate hope in the true marriage of Christ and the Church, as they patiently wait for him.

REFERENCE *Ephesians 5:31-32, 1 Corinthians 7:32-35*

DEVOTION

Our culture distorts the idea of marriage. It tells us that marriage is the antidote to loneliness, that finding the right partner will complete us and make us whole. It also glamorizes singleness, telling us that a single life is an unburdened life, where there is no need to accommodate anyone else. Yet both these distortions speak the same lie, that our lives are all about our own needs and wants.

Scripture is clear that marriage is meant to reflect the union between Jesus and his bride, the church (Eph 5:32). It also states that singleness frees us to focus on “the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord... how to be holy in body and spirit” (1Cor 7:32, 34), and to experience a unique intimacy with God. In other words, both marriage and singleness are centred around God and point to union with God in the gospel.

Marital status is not our defining characteristic. From the perspective of eternity, we are heavenly citizens (Phil 3:20), a royal priesthood (1Pet 2:5), a stone in God’s dwelling place (Eph 2:21-22), and members of the household of God (Eph 2:19). When speaking of the coming resurrection, Jesus said that we “neither marry nor are given in marriage” (Matt 22:30).

So if you are married, obey God’s commands in Ephesians 5:22-32 and strive for your marriage to reflect the relationship between Christ and his church. If you are called to be single (1Cor 7:7-8), even if it’s for the current season, strive to reflect the sufficiency of Christ as we wait for his return. And if you are single and desire to be married, strive to be content (Phil 4:11) and bring your longing before God who hears and cares. God’s ultimate aim is not to change our circumstances, but to conform us to the image of his son (Rom 8:29).

PRAYER

Dear heavenly Father, you formed my frame and knitted me together in my mother’s womb. Whatever my situation in life, teach me to be content and rest in your providence for all of my days. Surely your grace is sufficient!

SONG

All That I Need
by Stephen Altrogge

89 Where is Christ now?

ANSWER

Christ rose bodily from the grave on the third day after his death and is seated at the right hand of the Father, ruling his kingdom and interceding for us, until he returns to judge and renew the world.

REFERENCE *Ephesians 1:20-21*

DEVOTION

Christianity rests on the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This means that if Christ did not physically rise from the dead, then Christianity is a farce, and there is no gospel for us to put our faith in. Paul puts it this way, "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins... we are of all people most to be pitied" (1Cor 15:17-19).

But God DID raise Jesus from the dead, not just in spirit but physically. The resurrection of Jesus and his subsequent ascension are actual, historical events that the apostles and disciples witnessed. As Peter answered the Jewish Council, "... we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20).

What does this mean for us? It means that we can approach God the Father with confidence (Heb 4:16) for Christ is alive and he intercedes for us at God's right hand (Rom 8:34). More than that, God gave us the promised Holy Spirit as a guarantee of the inheritance that we have in Christ (Eph 1:13-14). Indeed, "the Spirit helps us in our weakness... intercedes for us with groaning too deep for words... according to the will of God" (Rom 8:26-27). He teaches us all things and brings to our remembrance all that Christ has said (John 14:25), so that we may be transformed by the renewal of our minds (Rom 12:1).

We have a new identity as children of God, for we have received the Spirit of adoption as sons (Rom 8:15), and are fellow heirs with Christ (Rom 8:17). Therefore, let us pray that we would put off our old self, be renewed in the spirit of our minds, and put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness (Eph 4:22-25).

PRAYER

We thank you Lord, because you are risen and have ascended. We are no longer your enemy, because you call us your children. Help me find my identity in you and you alone.

SONG

Glorious Christ
by Bob Kauffman

90 What does Christ's resurrection mean for us?

ANSWER

Christ triumphed over sin and death by being physically resurrected, so that all who trust in him are raised to new life in this world and to everlasting life in the world to come. Just as we will one day be resurrected, so this world will one day be restored. But those who do not trust in Christ will experience eternal punishment.

REFERENCE 1 *Thessalonians 4:13-14*

DEVOTION

The significance of Christ's physical resurrection cannot be overstated. Christ claimed victory over sin, and his sacrifice on our behalf is effective (Rom 5:9-10). In him we have redemption through his blood, forgiveness of our sins (Eph 1:7), and life eternal (John 6:40).

Because of this, scripture proclaims that the resurrected Christ is the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep in Christ (1Cor 15:20), and the firstborn of all creation (Col 1:15). He is the forerunner of the new heavens and new earth promised by God (2Pet 3:13). Death is swallowed up in victory (1Cor 15:54)!

Paul writes that "the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us" (Rom 8:18), and that the whole creation groans in the pains of childbirth as it waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God (Rom 8:19, 22). Here Paul is referring to us who believe in the gospel, so that we can finally be set free from our bondage to corruption, and are free to glorify God as we were created to (Rom 8:21).

On that day, God will wipe away every tear from our eyes, and death shall be no more. There will be no more mourn-

ing, no more crying, and no more pain, for he has made all things new (Rev 21:4). And we shall be seated with Christ in the heavenly places and God will show us the immeasurable riches of his grace, in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus (Eph 2:6-7).

We cannot begin to imagine what that will be like! Indeed, "no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him" (1Cor 2:9).

PRAYER

We thank you, dear Lord, for your immense kindness to us. Lift up my eyes that I might fix my gaze on Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, and look forward to the return of the King and the restoration of his creation.

SONG

O Praise The Name
by Dean Ussher, Marty Sampson

91 Of what advantage to us is Christ's ascension?

ANSWER

Christ, having physically ascended on our behalf, just as he came down to earth physically on our account, is now advocating for us in the presence of his Father, preparing a place for us, and also sent his Spirit to be with us.

REFERENCE *Romans 8:34, John 14:3, 16:7*

DEVOTION

Have we ever asked God for a glimpse of Christ with our own eyes, that we might see him and know he is real? Yet scripture calls us to walk by faith and not by sight (2Cor 5:7). Jesus said, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (John 20:29).

Jesus said that it is to our advantage that he goes away. Because only then will the helper, the Holy Spirit, come to us to dwell with us (John 14:17), and guide us into all truth (John 16:13). What a great thing this is!

The Holy Spirit guarantees our inheritance in Christ until we acquire possession of it (Eph 1:14). He bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God (Rom 8:16). He leads us to live by the Spirit and to put to death our efforts at self-justification (Rom 8:13). He prays on our behalf with groanings too deep for words, according to the will of God (Rom 8:26-27). He teaches us what to say when we are called to preach the gospel (Luke 12:12). He blesses us with gifts that we might use them to build up the church (1Cor 12:7, Eph 4:16).

Take a moment this day to thank God for his gift of the Holy Spirit to us. Pray that he would give you the words to pro-

claim the mystery of the gospel boldly and winsomely to those who have not yet believed.

PRAYER

Father, we thank you that the Spirit prays for me in my weakness according to your will, and that Jesus ever intercedes for me at your right hand. Thank you for providing the Helper to guide us into all truth.

SONG

Across The Lands

by Keith Getty, Stuart Townend

92 What hope does everlasting life hold for us?

ANSWER

It reminds us that this present fallen world is not all there is; soon we will live with and enjoy God forever in the new city, in the new heaven and the new earth, where we will be fully and forever freed from all sin and will inhabit renewed, resurrection bodies in a renewed, restored creation.

REFERENCE *Revelation 21:1-4*

DEVOTION

The church in Philippi faced persecution for their faith in the gospel. They suffered for Christ. But Paul did not pray for an end to the persecution they faced. Instead, he comforted them with the hope that they had in Jesus, knowing it would not put them to shame because God's love had been poured into their hearts through the Holy Spirit (Rom 5:5).

Paul encouraged the Philippians to hold fast to the word of life (Phil 2:16), and to look forward to the day when Jesus Christ would return, when God would bring to completion the good work in them that he had started (Phil 1:6). He assured them that God was at work in them for his good pleasure (Phil 2:13). Peter also reminds the churches that God has "granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness... his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature" (2Pet 1:3-4).

Our hope in God is sure because it is not premised on us keeping faith in God, but on God who is for us (Rom 8:31), and whose faithfulness endures forever (Ps 117:2). God's word declares that "neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 8:38-39).

So let us lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely to us. Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us (Heb 12:1). We look forward to the day when God will wipe away every tear (Rev 21:4), and we gather with people from every tribe, language, and nation to worship God (Rev 5:9-12).

PRAYER

Father, fill my heart with joyful anticipation as I look to your return. It is you who works in me to conform me to the image of your son. I know that nothing can separate me from your love.

SONG

Higher Throne
by Keith and Kristyn Getty

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